

CHINESE IMMIGRANT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:  
A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

A Dissertation

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by

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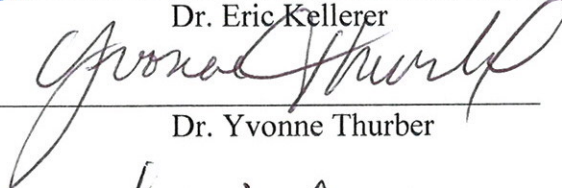
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Chinese parents who are immigrants in the United States.

## ABSTRACT

Throughout American history, parental involvement has been a “hot topic” in American education. Parents have great influence on their children’s schooling. Chinese immigrants are one of the largest populations in the United States, which introduces new challenges for American teachers. Along with the increasing numbers of Chinese in the United States, many American teachers have limited knowledge and resources to help them. Using Joyce Epstein’s six types of parental involvement and Grolnick and Slowiaczek’s three dimensions of parental involvement as a theoretical framework, this study investigated 10 Chinese immigrant parents in northwest of America. The purpose of this study was to explore how Chinese immigrant parents’ heritage, culture, and beliefs affect their understanding of American education. In addition, this study explored the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents’ participation in their children’s cognitive development.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
Chapter I Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Background .....	4
Chinese Educational Beliefs .....	8
Research Questions .....	9
Description of Terms .....	10
Significance of the Study .....	12
Overview of Research Methods .....	15
Summary .....	17
Chapter II Review of Literature .....	18
Introduction .....	18
Theoretical Framework .....	19
The Significance of Parental Involvement .....	27
Benefits of Parental Involvement .....	28
Parental Involvement among Chinese Immigrant Families .....	29
Cultural Beliefs .....	32
Immigration .....	34
Acculturation .....	35
Family Social Status .....	38

Diverse Classrooms Challenge Teachers.....	39
K-12 Professional Development Related to Parental Involvement .....	41
Criteria of Culturally Responsive Teaching .....	43
Development of International Awareness: A Look at the Past and Future.....	44
Chapter III Design and Methodology .....	46
Research Design.....	46
Participants.....	49
Data Collection .....	52
Analysis of Data.....	55
Limitations .....	59
Chapter IV Results	
Introduction.....	61
Participant Profile .....	61
Family 1 .....	64
Family 2 .....	64
Family 3 .....	65
Family 4 .....	66
Family 5 .....	67
Family 6 .....	67
Family 7 .....	68
Family 8 .....	69
Family 9 .....	69
Family 10 .....	70



Research Questions .....	71
Research Question 1 .....	72
Research Question 2 .....	88
Research Question 3 .....	98
Conclusion .....	100
Chapter V Discussion	
Introduction .....	102
Summary of Results .....	102
Parenting Style .....	105
Traditional Chinese Parenting .....	105
Christian Parenting .....	107
Intergenerational Gap .....	108
Acculturation Challenges .....	111
The Factors in Other Research .....	112
Family Income .....	113
Educational Background .....	114
Culture and Acculturation .....	115
Gender in Parenting .....	116
Recommendations .....	117
Cultural Translators and Interpreters .....	117
Learn About the Local School Culture .....	118
Recommendations for Teachers and Schools .....	119
Bridging Culture .....	120

Conclusion .....	120
Recommendations for Further Research.....	123
Implications for Professional Practices.....	127
References.....	129
Appendix A.....	156
Appendix B .....	157
Appendix C .....	162
Appendix D.....	164
Appendix E .....	166
Appendix F.....	167
Appendix G.....	169
Appendix H.....	172
Appendix I .....	174

## List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Parental Educational Background</i> .....	50
Table 2 <i>Parents' Occupations</i> .....	51
Table 3 <i>Background Information on the 10 Chinese Immigrant Families</i> .....	63
Table 4 <i>Parental Beliefs</i> .....	73
Table 5 <i>Percentage of Factors for Parental Motivation</i> .....	78
Table 6 <i>Percentage of Two Factors of Parental Involvement</i> .....	84
Table 7 <i>Percentage of Each Factor that Affects Parental Involvement</i> .....	90

## List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement</i> .....	25
Figure 2 <i>Three Themes Related to the Research Questions</i> .....	72
Figure 3 <i>Flowchart of Parental Attitude</i> .....	74
Figure 4 <i>Flowchart of Parental Motivation</i> .....	77
Figure 5 <i>Flowchart of Parental Involvement</i> .....	83
Figure 6 <i>Factors that Affect Parental Involvement</i> .....	89
Figure 7 <i>Factors of Building Relationships</i> .....	98
Figure 8 <i>Chinese Immigration Population in the United States, 1980-2013</i> .....	124
Figure 9 <i>Top Destination States for Chinese Immigrants in the U.S. 2009-2013</i> .....	125

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Parental involvement is an important topic in education. Researchers have suggested high levels of parental involvement improve children's success in school, including great scores, good school attendance, high motivation, and positive school performance (Allen, Thompson, & Drapeaux, 1997; Callahan, Rademacher, & Hildreth, 1998; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Jones & Velez, 1997; West, 2001). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) encouraged schools to actively involve all parents in their children's schooling (West, 2001). Involving parents who come from different cultures has become a challenge for teachers due to the numerous number of immigrant families to the United States. This study focused on Chinese immigrant parents and their children. Research has shown teachers do not have enough experience to help Chinese immigrant parents and students (Camarota, 2005; Contreras, 2002; Gonzales, 2001). Camarota (2005) stressed the struggle American teachers have communicating with Chinese students and their parents is due in part to the process of acculturation of the Chinese immigrant parents and students. From Gonzales's journal, Chinese immigrant families and teachers often feel "mismatched" or "disconnected" with each other (Gonzales, 2001). This study represents an effort to help educators understand the struggle of Chinese immigrant parents trying to be involved in their children's education; gain a better understanding among teachers, Chinese immigrant parents, and Chinese students; and find an appropriate level of parental involvement for Chinese immigrant parents. The theoretical framework for this study was derived from Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001) and Grolnick and Slowiaczek's three dimensions of parental involvement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

In recent years, there have been pervasive studies on the impacts of parental involvement on children's education (Epstein, 1995). These studies provide evidence effective parental involvement has a positive relationship with students' behavior in school (Fan & Chen, 2001). However, research has also suggested parents who have different backgrounds may have different views of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2005).

Over the past two decades, a large number of Chinese people have entered the United States. Chinese immigration has experienced rapid growth in the United States. Yu and Berryman's (1996) study of the relationship among cultural beliefs, self-esteem, acculturation, and involvement for Chinese immigrants found there was a significant correlation of these factors among Chinese immigrants. In a new culture, the development of self-identity and social belonging poses not only challenges but also barriers for immigrants who are experiencing two distinct cultures (Sandhu, 1997). It is not hard to imagine that Chinese immigrants face multifaceted challenges in the process of acculturation. The difficulties which Chinese immigrants have faced were assessed in the following areas by Wong (1982): culture, language, discrimination, social isolation, unfamiliarity with the living environment, and homesickness. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrant parents still hold high expectations for their children's education and plan to reeducate themselves in the new culture (Chao, 2009; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Li, 2006; Zhong & Zhou, 2011). Chinese immigrant parents believe the value of education is the most important expectation they can have of their children.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to bridge this misunderstanding between Chinese immigrant parents and American teachers by exploring Chinese immigrant parental beliefs, perceptions, and roles regarding their children's education. The reasons to focus on Chinese immigrants are many.

Chinese immigrants have become one of the largest growing immigrant populations in the United States (Camarota, 2005; Li, 2006; McCabe, 2012). McCabe (2012) stated that Chinese immigrant populations are trending toward higher growth rates each decade since 1960 in the United States. Just after Latinos, the Chinese immigrant population represents the second-largest immigrant group and accounts for 4.5% of the foreign-born population in the United States (McCabe, 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that there are about 4.3 million members of the Chinese population residing in the United States, including 2.9 million native-born citizens of young Chinese. Some researchers have stated that children of immigrants are the fastest growing population; in 2005, there were more than 10 million school-age children of immigrants in the United States (Camarota, 2005). It is estimated that one out of five students in school today is either a student who has newly arrived in the United States or a student with at least one parent who has recently immigrated (Camarota, 2005; Capps, Hagan, & Rodriguez, 2004). The educator faces a big challenge to work with these immigrant parents and their children.

Multiculturalism becomes a condition of life in this educational global village, especially in the reality of today's American education. Multicultural education has its roots in African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos, who have an extensive historical presence in the United States (Banks, 2004). However, the increased presence of students from other parts of the world has posed new challenges to the educational field with some teachers feeling "unprepared" because they have limited knowledge of other immigrant families' original cultural background (Gonzales, 2001). For instance, different families in various cultures hold different perceptions of parental involvement. Research has demonstrated that parents with different backgrounds may have different views and interpretations of the meaning of parental involvement (Alexander,

Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994; Jeynes, 2005; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Zhou, 2012). Despite this fact, attention that has been devoted to Chinese immigrant parents and students by the educational system have been inadequate (Ovando, 2003). Moreover, the current educational system has failed to recognize the potential of immigrant students and to assist them in their acculturation to the United States (Chun, 1995; Contreras, 2002; Suzuki, 1995).

Parental involvement is a significant component of children's success in school (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Jeynes, 2007; Sirvani, 2007). Previous research on Chinese immigrants and their children's education concluded that Chinese immigrant parents show less involvement in American schooling. Thus, both teachers and Chinese parents feel disconnected or mismatched when interacting with each other in schools (Gonzales, 2001). The issues revolving around Chinese immigrant parental involvement and the ways to motivate their involvement were the central focus of this research study. Given the gap in the professional literature, this was an important issue to address.

## **Background**

With the rapid increase of Chinese immigrants to the United States, Chinese immigrant students and parents are becoming a significant segment of the school population. It is hard for teachers to make connections with Chinese immigrant families without understanding their cultural background. Zhang (2008) stated that culture plays an important role in communication, both intraculturally and interculturally. As an educator, the researcher sought to understand the background of Chinese immigrant parents for an in-depth exploration of the communication patterns of Chinese immigrant parents with schoolteachers.

It is good to understand Chinese immigrant families through knowledge about their culture. Li (2007) explained traditional Chinese culture includes three streams of philosophy,



which are Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Basic Chinese values, such as filial piety, humbleness, loyalty, moderation, benevolence, patriotism, and thriftiness, from Confucianism are seldom taught in American mainstream classrooms. Instead, the virtue of being modest and disciplined at home may be overlooked in the American classroom where students are encouraged to think creatively and critically (Olsen, 1997). In Chinese culture, it is often considered rude and disrespectful to challenge ideas from the textbooks and teachers, and talking too much is regarded as arrogance. Thus, Chinese students often prefer to stay silent in classrooms (Huang & Gove, 2012; Louie, 2004).

For moral education, the difference between Eastern and Western culture is even more obvious. Take the traditional standard of being a Chinese “lady,” for example: “Three obedience and four virtues” are the basic requirements of being a lady, which means “obey her father before marriage, her husband when married, and her sons in widowhood.” “Four virtues” means “high morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work.” Although this is the 21st century, and such standards may seem unreasonable to many, they still infiltrate the Chinese woman’s lifestyle. Chinese parents also educate their children at home this way, both consciously and unconsciously.

*Analects of Confucius* is a collection of sayings and ideas of Confucius, written by his followers (Chuang, 2002; Huang & Gove, 2012; Li, 2010). Learning from Confucius helps teachers gain a great understanding of Chinese culture and make a comparison with American culture. Teachers can better understand Chinese immigrant students’ acculturation experience and migration struggles by knowing something from Confucianism. If teachers were to implement culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms, they would have a well-developed

understanding of the Chinese culture. Therefore, teachers and students would both benefit, and a mutually respectful environment would be created.

In Chinese culture, besides Confucianism, the other two philosophies are Taoism and Buddhism. Taoism was created by Lao Zi, whose masterpiece was *The Classical Virtue of the Tao*. Buddhism was created by Sakyamuni. Chuang (2002) examined Taoism and Buddhism in his study and stated that the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism “have increasingly been integrated into psychology literature” (p. 23). Taoism regulates natural processes, such as no love without hate, no light without dark, no male without female (Li, 2010). Li (2010) stressed that Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism mixed and combined with the Chinese culture and mainstream philosophy after the Song Dynasty.

Based on these three philosophies, Chinese students have been taught to be good listeners and follow the teacher’s instruction in class. Yao (1985) found that Asian children learn best in well-structured, quiet environments. Asian students are less likely to reveal their opinions, tend to hide their abilities, and seldom challenge their instructors (Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995). Students’ individual emotions are quickly stamped out during the class time. They passively copy down notes from the teacher in class. For example, during the class, the student must stand up to answer the teacher’s question. If the student gets it wrong, he or she must remain standing until someone else provides the right answer. This may function like a warning to other students that they must study harder. American education is different, as it encourages students’ critical and individual thinking (West, Noden, Edge, & David, 1998). Chinese teachers usually punish ignorance; however, in America, teachers reward knowledge. Chinese students seek the teachers’ approval and to make decisions based on the teacher’s choice.

In addition, if students want to go to a better school or university, they must have excellent academic achievement. If students desire to get better jobs or a better social status in the future, they must have a higher degree. The prerequisite to realizing these dreams is to sign up for all kinds of objective classes to improve the level of academic achievement, such as Olympia math, English courses, and physical chemistry class. These classes are called “cram school” in China. Thus, under the Chinese educational system, students are like learning machines. They have a photographic memory and instant recall but can never be creative. This is why some American educators feel that the Chinese students do very well with standardized tests but have a low ability to be innovative.

Parents play another important role in Chinese education. This goes hand in hand with the introduction of the one-child policy. The one-child policy leads parents to be willing to sacrifice everything to provide the best possible education for their children (OpenLearn, 2008). Researchers Kim and Fong (2013) found Chinese parents are extremely invested in their children’s education. With high expectations for their children’s education, Chinese parents are highly involved in their children’s learning at home (Kim and Fong, 2013). It is difficult to imagine, but it is common in China to see hordes of parents or grandparents waiting outside schools with refreshing food for their children who are taking exams. Many researchers have stated that parental involvement in children’s education is beneficial for children’s school success (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In China, parents are often involved in their children’s home learning (Gu, 2008; Kim & Fong, 2013). Chinese parents tend to be more involved in the home setting instead of participating in school (Chao, Kanatsu, Stanoff, Padmawidjaja, & Aque, 2009; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Chinese parents believe that teachers should be responsible for their children’s education at school (Kim & Fong,

2013), and the parents' role is separate from that of the school (Chi & Rao, 2003). In addition, there are differences between Chinese mothers' and fathers' roles in their children's education.

Research points out Chinese parents play an important role in their children's home-based learning involvement (Kim & Fong, 2013). Especially under the one-child policy, both Chinese mothers and fathers are heavily involved in their children's education. In the Chinese culture, fathers have more influence on children's learning tactics (Feng, 2007), and mothers are more focused on their children's lives (Jankowiak, 2002). Kim and Fong (2013), in their research, interviewed 10 Chinese parents and suggested that both the Chinese father and mother play an important role in children's education. However, it is still hypothesized that differences exist between Chinese mothers' and fathers' roles in their children's education. In China, the old saying "strict father, kind mother" highlights some differences between the mother and the father (Kim & Fong, 2013). During their involvement, Chinese fathers might be more disciplinary and more punitive, while mothers are kinder and supportive.

### **Chinese Educational Beliefs**

Huang and Gove (2012) examined Confucianism's influence on Chinese immigrant families in the United States, specifically in education. They believed that Confucianism has a significant influence in personal, familial, and social relationships in the Chinese culture. Academically, most Chinese people live their lives with traditional values of Confucius, a central Chinese thinker and philosopher. Based on Confucius's philosophy, the Chinese people believe that education is ranked above all other values (Kou & Fan, 1982). Chinese immigrant students are often encouraged by their parents to keep studying, learning, and achieving great grades.

One journal entry in the OpenLearn curriculum (2008) stated that a high standard of education has a significant influence in today's Chinese society. The Chinese people believe a

high standard of education is associated with higher social status. Researchers have found that Chinese people believe that educational success leads to a better life, including a higher social status, a good job, a high-quality living standard, respect, and better relationships with others (Cheon, 2006; Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2008; Lien, 2006; Louie, 2004). Thus, education is central to most Chinese families. Chinese parents show high expectations for their children's educational achievement.

Chinese parents' high expectations lead them to strongly emphasize results, so students are constantly studying for a never-ending series of exams. Zhang and Carrasquillo (1995) conducted a study of Chinese parents' influence on their children's academic performance and stated Chinese parents are renowned for their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their children's education. Also Zhang and Carrasquillo stated that Chinese students try very hard to meet their parents' demands and expectations for doing well academically. Chao (2009) explained in her study that Chinese students willingly accept authority from their parents.

High expectations and an emphasis on high-academic achievement lead many Chinese students to suffer from the exam culture in China's educational system. In America, students are stressed by the SAT and ACT. As one can imagine, Gaokao, the entrance exam for college, is a stressful experience for students in China. The Chinese educational system has taught students that obtaining excellent academic achievement in learning is the students' responsibility.

## **Research Questions**

Previous research has shown that parental participation and expectations are the most salient variables related to their children's academic achievement (Hildebrand et al., 2008; Li, 2007; Patrikakou, 1997; Pen & Wright, 1994; Seiginer, 1983). In this ongoing research, this study sought to uncover how Chinese immigrant parents perceive American education through

their own perspectives and beliefs. The study also aimed to explore the main factors that prevent Chinese immigrant parents' participation and how those barriers might be overcome.

The study was adapted from a theoretical framework from Joyce Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement and Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) three dimensions of parental involvement. After review the two theoretical frameworks, the study was designed to examine the following questions:

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience with their involvement and communication with their children's schools and teachers?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parental involvement in their children's education?

### **Description of Terms**

This section will be used to discuss terms related to this study.

**Acculturation.** A process by which individuals or groups adopt another culture without completely relinquishing their own culture. Aspects of the adopted culture may include beliefs, values, social norms, and lifestyles (Berry, 1980).

**Buddhism.** Brien (2014) stated Buddhism has played an enormous role in shaping the mind-set of Chinese people in politics, literature, philosophy, aesthetics, and medicine. Buddhism first reached China during the Han Dynasty (Brien, 2014). Foy (2014) stated in his journal article "Buddhism in China" that Taoism is another key force of Buddhism's success in Chinese culture. Buddhism and Taoism have similar perspectives of philosophies and meditation practices (Foy, 2014).

**Chinese immigrant parents.** People who originate from China but currently reside in the United States, regardless of their citizenship status (Reeves& Bennett, 2004).

**Confucius.** A Chinese thinker, editor, politician, educator, philosopher, and founder of the Ru school during the Spring and Autumn Period (551–479 BC) of Chinese history (Riegel, 2013). *Analects of Confucius* is a collection of sayings and ideas of Confucius, written by his followers (Van Norden, 2002). It is a good book to gain knowledge of Chinese culture and to compare with American culture.

**Cram school.** Also called *buxiban* in Chinese, it is a specialized school to help students pass all kinds of examinations (Lu, 2013). It is a flourishing industry in China. Chinese parents like to send their children to cram school to gain a large amount of knowledge for success in academic competition (Shin, 2009).

**Gaokao.** The full name is National Higher Education Entrance Examination, which is the make-or-break moment for many life prospects. It could be equated to the SAT in America. This is an academic examination held annually June 6–8 in China. Every year, over 10 million students apply for Gaokao in China (Siegel, 2007).

**One-child policy.** It is officially the family planning policy in China, the population control policy of the People's Republic of China (Guan, 2007). As the name of the policy suggests, a couple is allowed to have only one child. However, the policy allows rural families to have a second child, if the first one is a girl or is disabled (Ouyang, 2013). If both parents are the only child in their family, they are also allowed to have two children (Ouyang, 2013). This policy is aimed primarily at people who reside in mainland China.

**Parental involvement.** The level at which parents are involved in their children's school and education. This can occur in many ways, such as volunteering in school, attending school

events and parent–teacher conferences, assisting with homework and learning at home, and understanding their children’s strengths and weaknesses in learning.

**Social status.** In this study, the family’s social status refers to the parents’ financial background, educational background, and occupational background. To be specific, it is measured by whether or not parents have good communication with their children’s teachers, friends, and other parents, or whether or not the parents have the ability to coach their children through homework.

**Taoism.** A philosophical and religious tradition in Chinese culture (Chiu, 2014). Lao Zi was the founder of Taoism. Chiu (2014) explained that Tao in English means “way,” “path,” or “principle.” Taoism emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao. Taoism has influenced Chinese culture and society and also surrounding countries in Asia (Chiu, 2014).

### **Significance of the Study**

Parental involvement has become an important issue in today’s American education, especially for immigrant parents. As demographics shift in the United States, they affect every aspect of education. Classrooms are becoming more integrated with a wide variety of students who have different cultural backgrounds (Lee, 2000). The important key for the teacher is to understand the students, including immigrant students who come from different cultures and are included in mainstream education, in order to be better prepared to teach them. Some teachers work on improving and expanding their curriculum for immigrant students in the classroom and gaining knowledge about immigration background. However, some teachers feel uncomfortable with a diverse classroom.

Lee (2006) examined some of the reasons why teachers may feel uncomfortable with diversity in the classroom and how these teachers’ discomfort with diverse students in the



classroom can adversely affect the students' educational experiences. He stated that teachers not only lack resources to accommodate the needs of students, but they also lack knowledge of the students' culture and other backgrounds. Therefore, teachers may lose their desire to learn about the immigrant students (Lee, 2006). They also feel challenged about how to effectively communicate with immigrant families. How might teachers overcome the uncomfortable feelings they have?

Not only might teachers feel uncomfortable with immigrant parents, but parents also have the same feeling when communicating with schools. Some parents who do not speak English very well or are uncomfortable speaking English may not know what is expected of them. Researchers have conducted several qualitative studies, which have indicated that due to low English proficiency, Chinese immigrant parents show difficulties in assisting their secondary school-age children's homework (Li, 2007; Yang & Rettig, 2003). On the other hand, some Chinese immigrant parents are in the working class, and due to their extended work schedule, they cannot be involved in their children's schooling during regular school hours. Language and socioeconomic status are barriers to influencing Chinese immigrant parental involvement. However, culture plays the most significant role in communication between Chinese immigrant parents and their schools.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the NCLB Act, which emphasized a shared responsibility between schools and families in their children's educational success. NCLB encouraged parents' participation in their children's school education. The NCLB Act stated,

Parents are encouraged to participate in every aspect of their child's school education, which ranges from parents gaining information about their children's school

performance, to developing and implementing activities policies related to parental involvement in collaboration with school personnel. (Title 1, No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2014)

Based on the NCLB Act, a school must encourage all parents, including parents from nondominant groups, to be involved with the school. The school should also evaluate those parents who are immigrants, people with disabilities, and those who have limited English proficiency (Title 1, NCLB Act, 2014).

Therefore, parental involvement plays an important role in American education. NCLB encourages schools to develop parental involvement from parents who may come from diverse backgrounds (Hidalgo, Epstein, & Siu, 2005). During the process of immigrant parental involvement, misunderstanding usually happens among teachers, immigrant students, and parents due to a limited knowledge of each other. The goal of this study was to help teachers, schools, and Chinese immigrant parents “to develop and maintain relationships,” and “to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss” (Fan, 2001, p.27).

This study examined how Chinese immigrant parents are involved in their children’s school education and what problems they experience during the involvement and communication process with the school and teacher. The findings in this study are targeted to help both Chinese immigrant parents and teachers gain a better understanding of each other and a means of communicating with each other. Accordingly, teachers can help Chinese immigrant students be more successful in their education. The ultimate goal for schools is to do everything possible to successfully involve all parents, successfully educate all students, and successfully help them transition to the world of adults. This includes Chinese parents and students.

## Overview of Research Methods

This qualitative research design was conducted through a phenomenological approach to explore Chinese immigrant parental attitudes and behavior regarding involvement in their children's education. The study was conducted in two phases, including data collection and an analysis phase.

The data collection phase used individual interviews as the main data collection method. Before the data collection phase began, the researcher sent an informed consent form to every participant. The participants knew the researcher's goals, methodology, risks, discomforts, and benefits after reading the informed consent form. The participants were required to sign the informed consent form when they agreed to participate in this study. All of the participants had a good educational background and proficiency in English. The informed consent form was in English only and didn't include Chinese.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that "phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individually lived experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). One example of phenomenological approaches is Patton's (2002) study of individual experience, "how people perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 104). Derived from Marshall and Rossman's and Patton's philosophy of phenomenology, this phenomenological study involved in-depth interviews with 10 Chinese participants from 10 different Chinese immigrant families. This qualitative research approach was designed to uncover the "life experiences" of the participants.

Creswell (2013) stressed that all participants have something in common as they experience a phenomenon. Individual interviews with 10 Chinese participants in this phenomenological study were designed to gain insight into aspects of Chinese immigrant

parents' attitudes, feelings, behaviors, perspectives, and cognitive/intellectual involvement in their children's education. The interviews were conducted on two separate occasions, a total of 20 interviews with 10 participants. The participants were asked to answer the interview questions and to provide their opinions. Because Chinese was the native language of both the researcher and the participants, the interview process was conducted in Chinese. With permission from the participants, all of the interviews were audio recorded for data analysis and translation. Transcripts were coded and themes emerged regarding the experiences of the 10 Chinese parents. Each of the interviews was conducted in approximately 60 minutes.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated, "In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation" (p.208). Roberts (2006) stated that, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research tends to use exploratory approaches and produce textual data rather than numbers or measurements. Researchers have stressed that the data analysis steps in the phenomenological approach are generally similar for all psychological phenomenologists (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Marshall and Rossman (2011) listed seven data analytic procedures: organizing, immersing, generating categories and themes, coding, offering interpretations, searching for alternative understanding, and writing the report. According to these theories, the second phase of data analysis in this qualitative study involved building on the data from the first and second interview transcriptions, as the researcher highlighted significant statements, sentences, and quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Next, "clusters of meaning" (Moustakas, 1994) were used to place these significant statements into themes. Textural description was used to describe what the participants experienced. All of the qualitative analysis

was essential for this study. It allowed the researcher to verify the real contribution of each participant, observe, and participate in the discussion (Azevedo, Behar, & Reategui, 2011).

### **Summary**

This chapter included an introduction to this study, the reason for this study, and the method used. Based on the description in this chapter, this phenomenological study was a natural, qualitative research approach designed to uncover the “life experiences” of Chinese immigrant parents. “A phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 84). The phenomenological study will continue to explore Chinese immigrant parents’ roles regarding their children’s education in the United States.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined parental involvement quite broadly, including two parts: school-based activities and home-based activities. Parents participate in school events and volunteer at school, then when at home, help their children with homework and discuss school events or courses. The relationship between a home and school has been identified as a critical factor in children's academic success. The United States is becoming more multicultural every day. Many immigrants are coming to the United States, which makes it difficult for schools and teachers to understand how to communicate with these immigrant families, how to encourage immigrant parents to participate in American education, and how to help immigrant students be successful in school. In this chapter, the researcher will explore parental involvement in literature. First, the theoretical motivation of this study was drawn from the concept of Epstein (2001) and Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), including the definition of parental and familial involvement and the significant relationship between parental involvement and students' educational achievement. Second, parental involvement among Chinese families, along with culture beliefs, immigrant, acculturation, and family social status, will be reviewed. Last, teachers' challenges in professional development related to communicating with Chinese immigrant students and parents will be discussed, as well as how to research these circumstances. In addition, suggested methods of handling relationships between teachers and immigrant families will be examined.

### **Theoretical Framework: Examining Parental Involvement of Chinese Immigrants**

Parental involvement has become a “hot topic” in American education. Bronfenbrenner (1986) stated that home and school are two significant factors that influence a child’s development. Parents play an important role in their children’s home learning. When parents are involved in their children’s education, they are the key in keeping a connection between home and school (Chavkin, 1993; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Also, parents are the first and only teachers who will stay constant through a child’s lifetime (Cordry & Wilson, 2004). Parental involvement is necessary for a child to succeed in school (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Kelley-Laine, 1998; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; Pelletier & Brent, 2002; Sheldon, 2002). The theoretical framework of this study was derived from Joyce Epstein’s six types of parental involvement and Grolnick and Slowiaczek’s (1997) three dimensions of parental involvement.

Epstein (1986) found that all parents want to promote their children’s academic achievement by communicating with teachers, attending school activities, collaborating with teachers, implementing home instruction, and simply participating in their children’s education. A host of literature suggests that there are benefits to parental involvement, including increased children’s academic achievement, improved test scores, increased attendance, improved morals and attitudes, better behavior, better ethics, and strengthened relationships between parents and children (Cordry & Wilson, 2004; DeCusati & Johnson, 2004; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Kelley-Laine, 1998; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

However, parents may not find the right way to be involved in their children’s education. Often, they don’t know where to start or how to positively communicate with the school. One problem with parental involvement may involve a parent who has different perceptions about what parental involvement is (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). Culture is another variable that

can change perception about parental involvement (DeMoss & Vaughn, 2000). To understand the impact of parents on student achievement, one must examine what constitutes parental involvement and the effect it has on children.

There have been various definitions of parental involvement. Most definitions include a range of parental involvement in activities, such as schoolwork, interpersonal relationships between and among teachers and children, and parenting skills. Russell and Granville (2005) mentioned that most parents recognize the great range of roles and responsibilities they have in their children's education. Steinberg (2001) revealed that some types of parental involvement include attending school programs and parent-teacher conferences, learning at home, and other extracurricular activities. Steinberg (2001) believed that parental involvement is the most effective method in improving children's academic achievement.

The definition of parental involvement from other researchers are, "the degree of parental involvement can promote children's skills and cognitive development and fosters high expectations for school success" (Baker, Kessler-Skar, Piotrkowski, & Parker, 1999, p. 371).

Baker, et al. (1999) addressed 15 specific behaviors of parental involvement:

[The parent] calls the school, discusses with the teacher, shows respect for the schools, discusses the school day with the child, oversees homework, helps the child practice skills, writes stories with the child, reads with the child, works on projects with child, takes child to library, takes child to cultural activities, monitors child's television viewing, is interested in what happens at child's school, responds to notes sent home, and facilitates transitions to school. (p. 371)

How can teachers and administrators be prepared to create partnerships with families and communities? Dr. Joyce Epstein (1995) developed a framework for defining six types of parental



involvement within the school, family, and the community. Epstein believed that school, family, and the community all play a vital role in a child's educational success. The framework of six types of involvement helps educators develop more comprehensive programs of school–family–community partnerships. The main reason to create such partnerships is to help all children succeed in school and in future life (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's six types of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Each type of involvement not only includes many different practices of partnership but also has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families and requires rethinking the definitions of some basic principles of involvement (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997).

The first type of parental involvement is parenting, which refers to a parent's responsibility to provide a positive attitude while helping their children become confident inside and outside the home. The learning environment should be healthy through the provision of discipline, nutrition, and needed guidance. Outside the home, neighborhood meeting scan help families and schools to understand each other. This can help parents gain an understanding of and confidence about parenting and child development, learn about changes in home learning conditions as children proceed through school, and experience support from the school and other parents. For teachers, this type of parental involvement can help them gain an understanding of family and student diversity, such as different backgrounds, different cultures, concerns, goals, needs, strengths, and efforts. However, cultural differences can have an effect on parents' perception about involvement (Wright, 2009). The school must seek to encourage all parents.

The second type of Epstein's framework of involvement is effective forms of communication from school to home and home to school about school programs and children's

progress. This communication includes teacher home visits, parent conferences, school orientations, open houses, phone calls, school newsletters, weekly folders of student work sent home, report cards, and clear school information on policies, programs, reforms, and transitions. For example, parent–teacher conferences are one method to successfully communicate between teachers and parents. These types of communication support two-way, three-way, and multi-way channels that connect schools, families, students, and the community. The goal of communication is to keep families informed about what is happening at the school and maintain contact with the teacher and the school. However, it can be challenging for teachers to consider parents who do not speak English well or do not read English well during the communication.

The third type of Epstein’s framework of involvement is volunteering, which includes the recruitment and organization of parental help and support. Parents can always find some way to help at school, whether in sporting events, volunteer work, or serving on councils to support their children’s education. Parents can participate in an annual survey to let their school know what is needed and to provide suggestions for improvement. Epstein and Sanders (2002) explained that volunteering involves anyone who supports school goals and children’s learning or development in any way, at any time, and any place, not just during the school day. When volunteering, parents not only feel welcome and valued at school, but they also understand the teacher’s job. The school should make flexible schedules for volunteers, provide training, and recognize efforts so that participants are productive. Epstein (2008) stated, “Activities that facilitate volunteerism improve the recruitment, training, and schedules of volunteer stakeholders to support students’ activities and school programs” (p. 12).

The fourth type of Epstein’s involvement framework is learning at home. Epstein (1995) offered that providing information and ideas to parents about helping children at home with their

homework and curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning can be essential forms of parental involvement. For instance, parents can listen to their children, have regular conversations, read together, assist with homework, complete calendars with activities, and work on summer learning packets. In addition, parents can plan family trips or outings and let children learn from daily life. Epstein stated that learning not only happens when working alone, but also when sharing interactive activities with others at home. Parents should encourage, listen, respond, praise, guide, monitor, and discuss with children at home, not just while “teaching” school subjects (Epstein, 2008).

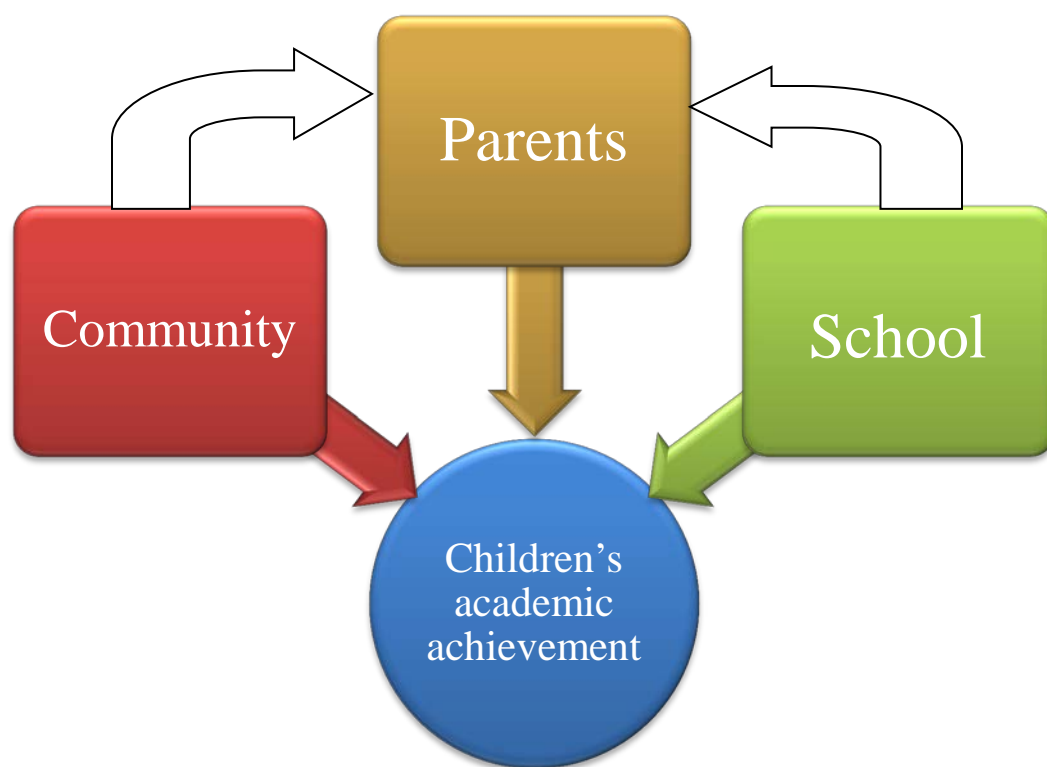
The fifth type of Epstein’s involvement framework is decision making, when parents have opportunities to work with the school to help make beneficial decisions for their children. Parents can learn more about school policies and programs for the development of their own professional skills. Challenges in communication can arise when beginning partnerships with parents in school decision making (Epstein, 2008). The school must be careful to include all parents from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Training should be offered to enable leaders to serve as representatives of these families which have different backgrounds with mainstream’s families.

The sixth type of Epstein’s involvement framework is collaborating with the community. Everyone has a responsibility to educate children; it should not be left to the school and teachers. Thus, there is a need of integrated resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development (Epstein, 1995). The community should support students and families in community health and provide cultural, recreational, and social support. Collaborating with the community means not only involving neighborhoods where students’ homes and schools are located, but any neighborhoods,

regardless of low- or high-socioeconomic status, and also the community, by using strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools. The challenge can be to assure fair opportunities for all students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services. This type of collaboration with community, schools, and families can make meaningful partnerships that contribute to the education of students.

Epstein and Sanders (2002) defined parental involvement as how parents support their children, so they can be successful in education through collaboration with their school and community (see Figure 1). The six types discussed provide a detailed framework of parental involvement—parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community—and are all significant components for successful parental involvement.

Figure 1 *Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement*



Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) suggested that parental involvement has three dimensions that affect a child's schooling and motivation. The first is behavioral involvement in relation to how parents take an interest in their children's education, such as attending school events or volunteering at the school. Personal involvement demonstrates parents' positive attitudes about school and education to their children. Cognitive and intellectual involvement requires parents to help children develop their academic knowledge and intellectual skills, for example, by reading books and helping with a project (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Epstein's six types of parental involvement are behavioral dimensions of parental involvement. Expectations from parents will show an attitude of personal involvement.

Parents' expectations about their children's education is demonstrated through personal attitudes. Parents' positive expectation scan promote their children's educational success through their own involvement. Parents can be successful in this promotion by participating in their children's school life, such as parent–teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, school activities, and personal communication with their children's school (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Fan and Chen (2001) presented a meta-analysis on parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Fan and Chen believed parental involvement has a positive influence on students' academic achievement. They also portrayed “parental involvement as the remedy for many problems in education” (p. 1). The meta-analysis included over 2,000 articles, papers, and reports spanning more than ten year period. Fan and Chen narrowed down the research to several hundred studies used for their topic. They found that the strongest correlation was between parents' expectations and their children's educational achievement. Children do better with high expectations from their parents. However, a lack of expectations from parents can be transferred without communication (Chen & Lan, 1998). Good communication between parents and children is essential in this process (Trivette & Anderson, 1995). Ford, Follmer, and Litz (1998) found that communication has positive effects on children's attitudes.

Parents' expectations can be a powerful, personal influence in children's performance. The degree of expectation is largely related to parents' cognitive and intellectual involvement in their children's education. Parents who have high expectations for their children are more likely to provide involvement, such as reading a book, helping with homework, teaching math, and going to the library. Parents' educational levels also affect their involvement in their children's education. Parents with a high level of education are able to help their children practice skills useful for school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

## **The Significance of Parental Involvement**

The literature on parental involvement shows that parents can command a powerful influence on their children's lives. Parental involvement in children's education has often been seen as the most significant factor in a child's learning process. Conway (2008) found that parental involvement has a strong, positive effect on a child's achievement in school, through support such as leading in reading at home, partnering to help their children with a project, and going to the library. Steinberg (2006) conducted a study over three years in nine high schools involving 12,000 students and their parents. Steinberg used a series of parental involvement activities and concluded there was a positive correlation between parents becoming involved in their children's education and the children's improvement in academic achievement. Most research has shown that parental involvement has a significant positive impact upon a student's achievement.

Great parental involvement translates to improved children's academic achievement, higher self-esteem and self-worth, positive learning attitudes, and low dropout rates (Fan & Chen, 2001). According to Henderson and Berla (1994),

The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is able to:

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning
2. Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers
3. Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. (p. 160)

Henderson and Berla (1994) examined 85 studies that provided evidence for the significance and benefits of parents' involvement in their children's education. The research showed that when parents were involved in their children's schooling, children made significant improvements in academic achievement. Henderson and Mapp (2002) stated that regardless of income and background, students do better when their parents are involved in their academic careers. Students will yield high grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, improve their behavior, and exhibit better social skills (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Henderson and Mapp (2002) wrote that "parent involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement" (p. 38).

### **Benefits of Parental Involvement**

Regardless of ethnic background, children receive benefits from parental involvement, including achieving better grades, good attendance, high aspirations and motivation toward school, and a positive attitude about school (Olsen & Fuller, 2010). Research has also shown that not only do students obtain benefits from parental involvement, but also parents and schools benefit as well (Epstein, 1995). Through continuous involvement in their children's education, parents are more sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs. When parents are aware of what their children are learning because of their involvement, they are better able to help with their children's learning activities at home. Through involvement, parents have an opportunity to better understand the teacher's job and the school's curriculum, which in turn promotes collaboration among parents, teachers, and the school (Pena, 2000).

Policymakers and educators agree that parental involvement in children's education is helping the children to succeed (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Effective parental



involvement in education also improves relationships between parents, teachers, principals, and administrators (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Schools with highly involved parents are more likely to experience higher morale (Olsen & Fuller, 2010). Teachers and principals will have a better understanding of families' diversity and will be better able to show respect to every family. Parental involvement not only affects children's education but also affects the school environment (Olsen & Fuller, 2010).

### **Parental Involvement among Chinese Immigrant Families**

Cultural diversity has become a hallmark of the American educational institution. A *Washington News* report in 2012 stated that the influx of Asians moving to the United States has surpassed that of Hispanics for the first time (Yen, 2012). Asians are the fastest growing population in the United States. The bulk of Asians in the United States originates from six countries, with China ranking the first among them (Yen, 2012). As the largest visible minority group in America, the U.S. Census did a community survey in 2007, finding a total of about 3.5 million Chinese living in the nation today. Chinese immigrant parents tend to be different than parents from other cultural groups (Shin, 2009). "They exhibit an inactive participation in their children's school" (Shin, 2009, p. 33). As a result of the dramatic increase of Chinese immigrants into the U.S. school system, schools and teachers around the country face particular challenges in helping Chinese immigrant students become successful in their academics and in encouraging Chinese immigrant parents to become involved in their children's schooling.

The increasing number of Chinese immigrant students entering American schools poses a new challenge for today's teachers who must work with those Chinese immigrant students and their parents. The incorporation of Chinese immigrant students' culture in school content becomes especially difficult when knowledge about their home country is not readily available

(Banks, 1995). Such lack of incorporation may lead to academic failure. Ho (2003) shared a quantitative study of teachers' attitudes towards Chinese immigrant parental involvement. The study identified teachers' perspectives on the most important institutional factors that affect parental involvement (Ho, 2003). The data of this study were taken from 1,056 teachers and 2,500 parents, and took over one year to collect. Ho stated that, as a result, teachers' attitudes and parents' efficacy and backgrounds might have some impact on teachers' practices of parental involvement; therefore, systematic studies of the relationship between teachers and parents should happen in Asian families and schools (Ho, 2003).

Literature on Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education suggests that most of these parents prefer home-based activities rather than school-based involvement (Li, 2001; Zhong & Zhou, 2011). Several researchers have found that Chinese immigrant parents show low rates of direct school involvement, such as volunteering or attending parent-teacher conferences (Li, 2006; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007). Other research findings report that parents from the Chinese culture trend higher in rates of indirect parental involvement than in direct school participation (Sy, 2006; Wu, 2006). Li (2006) shared a qualitative study to explore Chinese immigrant families' educational expectations and parental participation in their children's education. Five Chinese parents who had immigrated to Canada were examined in the study. Li stated in the study that cultural values and beliefs and immigration experiences as visible minorities had a great impact on Chinese immigrant parents' educational expectations. Language barriers and different cultural values were the other two main factors that affected Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's schooling (Li, 2006). Some teachers complain that they feel discouraged by Chinese immigrant parents' noninvolvement behavior. Shin (2009) stressed a comparison of parents from Asian immigrants,

Asian Americans, and Caucasian Americans that American teachers feel that Chinese parents only care about their own work, and they have no idea how their children are doing in school. For example, many immigrant parents never return phone calls to discuss their child's progress, or they ignore parent-teacher conferences, or do not attend school events (Shin, 2009). It seems that no matter what the school does, Chinese parents simply don't want to be involved (Hidalgo, Siu, Bright, Swap, & Epstein, 1995).

However, Chinese immigrant parents' lower involvement in school activities does not necessarily indicate the parents' lack of interest in their children's education. Based on different culture and beliefs, Chinese immigrant parents show different attitudes toward their children's education than mainstream parents' attitudes show (Li, 2006). Researchers have examined the parents' perspectives on their children's reading, writing, and mathematics learning and homework, and on the parents' involvement in and communication with mainstream American schools through 26 middle-class Chinese immigrant parents (Li, 2006). Li (2006) stated, "Chinese immigrant parents place an exceptionally high value on education and are actively engaged in their children's education at home" (p. 29). Chinese immigrant parents believe that valuing an education and parental involvement at home are two major factors that contribute to their children's success in school (Hidalgo et al., 2005; Siu 1996). Other research suggests Chinese immigrant parental involvement is at a low rate in relation to direct school involvement and a high rate in relation to direct home participation (Sy, 2006). Chinese immigrant parents are more concerned with basic literacy skills and home monitoring of performance (Li, 2006), for example, checking for understanding of what the children learn in school, teaching children to print and write properly, teaching children to spell correctly, and helping children's literacy

learning. Some Chinese immigrant parents would like to participate in their children's home learning rather than engage in school events.

Although reports demonstrate challenges in involving this group of parents, it would be incorrect to say that Chinese immigrant parents do not care about their children's learning, based solely on the lower levels of participation in school activities. However, why these Chinese immigrant parents show less involvement in their children's schooling remains largely a mystery. Hwa-Froelich and Westby (2003) explained in their research that Chinese immigrant parents are inactive, especially in participation in their children's school lives, because of the Asian cultural belief of the relationship of home and school in education (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003). Chinese parents believe that home and school are two separate parts of a child's education. A parent's role is coaching and monitoring a child's education at home. The teacher's job is teaching a child at school. Hwa-Froelich and Westby believed that culture is a factor that affects Chinese immigrant parental involvement, but it is not the only one. The literature identifies other factors, such as levels of acculturation, immigrant status, language barriers, and lower social status. All of these factors should be considered as important indicators in order to obtain a higher understanding of parental involvement among Chinese immigrant parents (Hidalgo et al., 2005; Sy, 2006).

**Cultural beliefs.** Studies indicate that traditional Chinese culture believes that home and school are separate educational sectors (Lee & Manning, 2001). Researchers have found that Chinese immigrant parents tend to be more involved in home instruction and monitoring children than directly interacting with their children's school (Chao, 1996; Sy, 2006). Chao (1996) explained that Chinese immigrant parents believe that good parental involvement at home will improve their child's academic achievement. Chao (1994) stated in her study of Chinese

immigrant parenting style that Chinese parents seem to educate their children on ideologies of training, which means “a more rigorous teaching, educating, or inculcating” at home (p. 1117). Chao continued to explain in her study that the concept of training involves two aspects of parental involvement: *jiaoxun* and *guan*. The concept of *jiaoxun* means the parents have the authority to stress a set standard of conduct; the concept of *guan* means the parents are responsible to teach, monitor, and discipline their children at home.

Culture shapes what parents believe about their children’s academic achievement (Oches & Schieffelin, 2001). Chinese immigrant parents do not allow their children to engage in fun activities until they are academically sound (Lew, 2006). Chinese immigrant parents track their children’s studying by engaging in their children’s after-school time. For example, they may bring their children to cram schools, Chinese language schools, or other extracurricular activities (Hidalgo et al., 1995). As Hidalgo et al. (2005) stated about Chinese immigrant parenting styles in their literature review,

Chinese parents tend to monitor their children more closely, moralize more often, emphasize greater sense of family obligation, value grades more than general cognitive achievement, evaluate more realistically a child’s academic and personality characteristics, be less satisfied with a child’s accomplishments, and believe more in effort and less in innate ability as a factor in school success (p. 640).

Literature suggests that the traditional values of Confucius held by Chinese immigrant parents positively affect their children’s academic performance in schools. A Confucian embraces the belief that nothing is more important than formal education, and high education leads to high social status. Li (2001) pointed out in his study that parents believe children who grow up in a Chinese culture family are motivated to pursue excellence. Thus, Chinese

immigrant parents regard education as the most important thing in their children's lives. Chinese parents also emphasize the cultivation of moral character and cultural integration more, such as filial piety and children's commitment to take care of their parents, things that are not always primary goals of schools in the United States. Lieh-Mak, Lee, and Luk's (1984) study of Confucian ethics' influence on parental involvement among traditional Chinese families found that a child with behavioral problems might be marginalized by virtue of his or her failure to fulfill the important duty of filial piety demanded by Confucian ethics.

Parents from different cultures hold different expectations for their children's education (Alexander et al., 1994; Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Parental expectations have been credited as one of the most salient family factors that contribute to children's academic achievement (Sluzki, 1979). To understand the expectation of Chinese immigrant parents, it is essential to contextualize their experiences. For example, Li (2001) conducted qualitative interviews with seven Chinese immigrant parents, examining their expectations. The author found that Chinese immigrant parents have high expectations for their children in Chinese tradition and a deeply rooted cultural heritage. Li stated that the other two factors of personal life experiences and acculturative attitudes also shaped Chinese immigrant parental involvement (Li, 2001). Hence, one cannot fully understand the experiences of Chinese immigrant parents without knowing about their history of immigration.

**Immigration.** Chinese immigrants are defined as people who have kept their ethnic origin as Chinese and are living in the United States. The number of Chinese immigrants in the United States was 1.6 million and made up 4.1% of all immigrants in 2006 (Terrazas & Devani, 2008). Shin (2009) compared three kinds of parents—Asian immigrant parents, U.S.-born, Chinese-American parents, and Caucasian-American parents—and Asian immigrant parents

showed the lowest levels of involvement in children's schooling. Caucasian–American parents showed the highest level of school-based parental involvement.

On the other hand, the research found that U.S.-born, Chinese–American parents had a higher involvement than Chinese immigrant parents in American schools (Shin, 2009; Siu & Feldman, 1996). This finding suggests that English proficiency has a significantly positive relationship among Chinese immigrant parents and schools. Certain literature asserts that the two important factors of limited English proficiency and unfamiliarity with American educational systems frequently provide a challenge to Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's schooling (Lew, 2006). Siu (1996) stated that Chinese immigrant parents' lack of English proficiency, along with an unwilling attitude to be involved in school activities, may elevate Chinese immigrant parents' unwillingness to participate in their children's school setting.

Similarly, Turney and Kao (2009) found that the greater the length of Chinese immigrant parents' residence in the United States, the more familiarity they had with the American educational system. The literature finds a positive relationship between the length of parents' residence in the United States and their English proficiency. These findings suggest that improved English proficiency and knowledge of dominant cultures need to be considered when addressing Chinese immigrant parental involvement.

**Acculturation.** According to Berry (1980), acculturation is a process by which individuals or groups adopt another culture without completely relinquishing their own. It is considered to be one of the most important variables in understanding intragroup differences (Atkinson, 1983; Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980). Acculturation takes place when an individual begins to interact with the dominant culture (Atkinson, 1983). Aspects of the adopted culture may include beliefs, values, social norms, and lifestyles.

There are a number of studies on the acculturation of adults and immigrant children, but few studies have examined the acculturation of both groups together. Generally, the pace of individual acculturation varies, with children usually adjusting more rapidly than adults (Baptiste, 1993). Meanwhile, the process and extent of acculturation differ among individuals. Some become quite assimilated into their new culture and can easily abandon their native one, while some adhere almost completely to their heritage culture and struggle to define their ethnic identity (Baptiste, 1993). Thus, interfamily conflicts in acculturation between traditional values of parents and the new values embraced by Chinese immigrant children occur frequently.

The development of acculturation conflicts may be normative in immigrant families (Sluzki, 1979). The cultural gap often exists between two generations: Parents retain the values and behaviors normative in their original culture, while their children progressively adopt mainstream American values and behavior (Ying, 1996). This difference may become the main reason of conflict between Chinese immigrant children and their parents. The degree of conflict within Chinese immigrant families depends on the differences in social background and economic status. Parents who socialized throughout their childhood and early adulthood in their country of origin are more likely to have a stable and established sense of Chinese identity (Sluzki, 1979).

Parental expectations have been accredited as one of the most salient family factors that contribute to children's academic achievement (Sluzki, 1979). The traditional values of Confucius held by Chinese immigrant parents positively affect their children's academic performance in schools. However, Chinese parents fail to recognize the effects socio-cultural dimensions of education may have on their children's educational development (Wong, 1982). Chinese parents emphasize moral character cultivation and cultural integration, such as filial



piety (children's commitment to take care of their parents), which are not usually primary goals for schools in the United States. In a traditional Chinese family, a child with behavior problems might be marginalized by virtue of his or her failure to fulfill the important duty of filial piety demanded by Confucian ethics (Lieh-Mak, Lee, & Luk, 1984).

During the process of acculturation, parents feel dismayed, even betrayed when their immigrant children express dissenting views and make choices inconsistent with their parents' wishes (Ying, 1996). Meanwhile, children may experience identity confusion: Mainstream society views them as not American, while their parents view them as being too American. "Banana" is the word used to describe American-born Chinese, because they are yellow in appearance but white in cultural values. Thus, some are suffering from depression, anxiety, lack of bilingual proficiency, cultural conflicts, and learning and behavioral problems at school (Yao, 1985).

Under such pressure, Chinese immigrant students need mental support from their parents. However, Chinese immigrant parents may be suffering from their own depressive symptoms during their acculturation process. The language barrier has always been regarded as the most important and immediate factor that limits the ability of first generation immigrants to function effectively in the host country as a minority (Wong, 1982). Although Chinese immigrant parents dream of finding a job with more potential, better opportunities, and higher salaries, language limitations often force them to take jobs that are both financially and emotionally unrewarding (Ying, 1996).

In summary, acculturation within Chinese immigrant families is a complicated situation. It is parallel, and, at the same time, interactional because both adults and children are in the process of acculturation. On top of that, adults' depressive psychological symptoms can

influence children's outcomes.

**Family social status.** Another important factor influencing Chinese immigrant parental involvement is family social status. Hoover-Dempsey et al.(1997) stated that family social status has often been examined in relation to parental involvement. The degree of conflicts within Chinese immigrant families depends largely on differences in social background and economic status. The family's social status includes family income and parents' educational attainment and occupations (Sy, 2006). Studies have found that Chinese immigrant parents with greater financial resources, higher levels of education, and professional occupations are more likely to participate in their children's education than parents who are from a lower socioeconomic status (Louie, 2004). For example, Louie interviewed both middle-class and working-class Chinese immigrant families in his study and found working-class parents were less likely to provide guidance in their children's education than their middle-class counterparts.

Parents with lower levels of education and English skills had difficulty with the school or in helping with their children's homework (Hill & Taylor, 2004). These results were similar to Vellymalay's (2012) study sample that was comprised of 40 high-achieving Asian students from different grades, along with their parents. Questionnaires were used to collect data related to the parents' socioeconomic background and their involvement strategies in their children's education at home. The study used in-depth interviews with students to gather information on their parents' involvement. As a result, Vellymalay (2012) stated that the study showed a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and involvement. Most parents from a high-socioeconomic background show a high level of involvement in ensuring their children's educational success.

On the other hand, the finding of Vellymalay's study indicates that parents' economic and academic backgrounds serve to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the values that

need to be placed on their children's education (Vellymalay, 2012). Other literature stresses that the parents' educational status influences their capacity to be involved in their children's education. Research suggests that the parents with a higher education background are able to be involved in their children's reading, writing, math, and literacy practice (Li, 2006). Also, children with parents from a middle-class background experience gains in terms of good skills, behavior, values, and life attitude from their parents, which are crucial to their academic success.

However, some Chinese immigrant parents who are working hard in America have limited interaction with mainstream culture and little time to care about their children's education. In addition, literature shows that Chinese immigrant parents seem to lack familiarity with mainstream schools and are less involved with the school (Hidalgo et al.2005; Li, 2006; Siu, 1996). Lower social status, lack of familiarity with American schools, and less involvement among some Chinese immigrant parents can gradually intensify "misunderstanding" between Chinese immigrant parents and school teachers. These Chinese immigrant parents have difficulties being involved in their children's education both at home and in school. Thus, teachers are playing another important role of helping students' academically and encouraging these immigrant parents to participate in their children's education.

### **Diverse Classrooms Challenge Teachers**

Berry (1980) classified four dimensions of acculturation, which are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. In a study of life satisfaction among Chinese immigrants in the United States, those with both Chinese and non-Chinese close friends and who enjoyed both Chinese and mainstream American activities reported greater satisfaction (Ying, 1996). Thus, "integration" may be the best dimension of acculturation. Teachers need to make

integration the goal for curriculum design for Chinese immigrant students in their diverse classrooms.

Research indicates that intentional interaction between teachers and immigrant students should include not only language proficiency but also an awareness of the experience that students, families, and teachers bring into each interaction within the classroom (Gonzales, Moll,& Amanti, 2005). However, some teachers feel disconnected or mismatched when they interact with Chinese immigrant students in the learning community of the school (Gonzales, 2001). The reasons may include language inefficiency and conservative Chinese culture. Because not all Chinese immigrant students and parents speak English as their first language, communication is limited. Thus, teachers are unfamiliar with immigrant students' context outside of school. Concerning conservative Chinese culture, some Chinese parents seldom share much about their families. A traditional Chinese value says, "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," meaning that a family should never share problems in public. Thus, in order to overcome the mismatch during the interaction between some teachers and Chinese immigrant students, adjustment of traditional teaching strategies is needed.

According to this study, teachers should ask the following questions when teaching Chinese immigrant students:

1. How can I be prepared with limited professional development for an increasing number of Chinese immigrant students?
2. What's the perception of parental involvement from Chinese immigrant parents?
3. How can I include materials about cultures which I have no knowledge, from a distant place in the world?

4. How do I work with a local Chinese association to develop international awareness and learning about cultural resources?

### **K–12 Professional Development Related to Parental Involvement**

Research has shown that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement (Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Craft, 2003; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Wang, Wildman, & Calhoun, 1996) and is linked to school success, lower dropout rates, high attendance, and a higher graduation rate (Barnard, 2004; Ma, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Trusty, 1999). Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Gree, Wilkins, and Closson (2005) provided several suggestions for school and teacher practices that invite parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested the first step focuses on enhancing school and teacher capacities for inviting parental involvement; the second step includes the school enhancing parents' capacities to be effectively involved.

Strategies to enhance school and teacher capacities for inviting parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) include

- Create an inviting, welcoming, and safe school climate, including trust through mutual respect; develop strong office–staff skills; provide comfortable environment for parents; support parent–teacher conversations; and facilitate parent networking.
- Empower teachers to encourage essential parental involvements, as well as school attention to improve positive, trusting parent–school relationships; systematically seek parents' ideas, perspectives, opinions, and questions about school; and develop dynamic in-service programs that support teacher efficacy for involving parents.

- Learn about parents' goals, perspectives on child's learning, family circumstances, and culture; encourage two-way communication by asking questions; listen to parents' perspectives on their children's learning; and seek parents' suggestions.
- Join with existing parent–teacher–family structures to enhance involvement; for example, use the parents-teachers conference to invite all families' participation; encourage varied activities to diverse family groups; and use after-school programs to increase parent–teacher communication.
- Offer a full range of involvement opportunities through standard approaches, such as parent–teacher conferences and student performances, and offer individualized invitations to specific family at school.
- Increase opportunities for teachers, parents, principals, and staff to participate in student-centered events at school, and use these events to seek parents' comments and suggestions for involvement in their children's learning (p. 13).

Parents' trust in teachers influences their responses to involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Schools that create a safe, empowering, and trustworthy environment are effective at establishing and maintaining a great parental involvement (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Griffith, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lawson, 2003).

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested strategies to increase parents' capacities for effective involvement:

- Communicate clearly with all parents, regardless of educational level, race, and religion, and encourage them to play a role in their children's school success. Schools should offer all information in multiple formats and give clear ideas about where to get important information.

- Offer information describing what parents do when they are involved. Support the wide range of activities different families employ. Listen to parents' ideas about involvement. Give parents suggestions for helping their children.
- Offer information about behavioral and attitudinal effects of parental involvement, and ask feedback on their perceptions of their involvement with and influence on their children.
- Create and support parent and teacher networks in schools that seek to share information on grade-level learning goals. In this way, the development of trust among parents, teachers, and other staff continues (p. 16).

### **Criteria of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Culturally responsive teaching is based on the premise that students learn best when academic skills and content are situated within the students' frames of reference and living experience (Gay, 2000). Banks (1995) stated that education must be transformative so that it can empower marginalized groups. Ladson-Billings (1992) explained that culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Culturally responsive teaching can align the curriculum with the experiential perspectives of diverse students' cultures, ethnically and racially. This leads to more effective teaching. The framework established by Gay (2000) includes such criteria as knowing about the lives of the students and their families, demonstrating cultural caring, building a learning community, establishing communication across cultures in the classroom, promoting students' active construction of knowledge, and designing instruction that builds on what the students already know, while stretching them beyond the familiar. Developing culturally responsive teaching is an effective way for teachers to know about their

students' background and family. It is useful for teachers who don't have much knowledge about other cultures (Gay, 2000). Based on Gay's theory of culturally responsive teaching, learning about Chinese immigrant students' culture is, in essence, learning about the students. Gay (2000) stated that culturally responsive teaching encourages teachers to collaborate with immigrant parents and their associations. For example, teachers can present information about the latest school events for Chinese people. Moreover, providing voluntary opportunities for Chinese parents can improve interactions between teachers and Chinese parents outside of school. Through different interactive activities, teachers can observe the differences among immigrant people and the cultural reasons behind them (Gay, 2000). This can increase the level of understanding between teachers, students, and parents, while the students and parents' ethnicity can be understood and respected.

### **Development of International Awareness: A Look at the Past and Future**

Teachers need professional development to be prepared for increasingly diverse classrooms. Promoting inclusiveness between nonimmigrant and immigrant students is necessary, but without the teachers' support, it is impossible to be implemented. Teacher development must include developing international awareness.

To include learning materials about cultures from distant places in the world is challenging for those teachers who have limited knowledge of other cultural values. Gonzales et al. (2005) found that teachers who are self-aware and able to honor the perspectives, beliefs, and values of others can be more culturally responsive. This creates an environment that discourages stereotyping a culture and encourages equity and social justice.

Research shows that implementing cultural awareness through appropriate teaching practices helps bridge disconnections between teachers and students, and it has been found to



enhance teachers' connections and relationships with their students and families. This connection has been noted to be particularly important when working with immigrant students (Copple, 2003). Therefore, when teachers develop their cultural perspective, their ability to connect with Chinese immigrant students is enhanced. Through teacher development, it is possible to bridge the unfamiliar with the familiar, so teachers can have a better understanding of the Chinese immigrant students' world outside of school. Without teachers who have developed their global awareness, it is quite unlikely that a curriculum with international awareness can be effectively applied in the classroom.

## **Chapter III**

### **Design and Methodology**

This chapter will introduce the design and methodology that was used to examine the problem of Chinese immigrant parental involvement in schools. It will also increase awareness of barriers to Chinese immigrant parental involvement, such as inadequate language proficiency, cultural barriers, and unfamiliarity with the American school system. These barriers make communication between Chinese immigrant parents and schools difficult. This research was designed to examine the following questions:

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience with their involvement and communication with their children's schools and teachers?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parental involvement in their children's education?

Results will provide a better understanding of how barriers can hold Chinese immigrant parents back from being involved in their children's education. Conducted as phenomenological approaches in qualitative study, the main data collection points were individual interviews with Chinese immigrant parents and their families.

### **Research Design**

The study was conducted in Idaho, a state in the northwestern region of the United States. The first group of Chinese immigrants came to Idaho in search of gold as miners or as providers of support services, such as restaurants, stores, and laundries (Wegars, 2003). Today, the Boise Chinese Association (BCA) in Boise, Idaho, has over 600 registered members. The BCA has

become one of the largest and most influential associations in Idaho. With the increase of Chinese immigrants coming to Idaho, more Chinese immigrant children have enrolled in many school districts. Challenges are always present as increasing numbers of Chinese immigrant children and parents come to the schools. This study focused on Chinese immigrant parents and children in the Boise school district.

The nature of this study was qualitative, consisting of in-depth individual interviews among Chinese immigrant families for the purpose of data collection. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined qualitative research as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 17). Qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning rather than reporting outcomes (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell’s definition of qualitative research, the goal of qualitative research attends to phenomenological approaches to explore the depth, richness, and complexity inherent in a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and helps researchers understand people and the sociocultural contexts in which they live (Creswell, 2008).

Willis (2007) stated, “phenomenology distinguishes phenomena from noumena” (p. 53). In other words, the phenomenological approaches focus on experience by listening to the different stories from the participants (Bound, 2011). This phenomenological study focused on Chinese immigrant parents and their involvement in their children’s education by continually pointing out the need to understand how Chinese immigrant parents view their involvement and the influence from culture, belief, immigration, acculturation, and other influences around them.

Bound (2011) stated that phenomenology begins with an experience through the narration of participants and investigates the effects and perceptions of that experience. This study focused

on an experience collection of a participant via an individual interview. “This method examines the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants” (Bound, 2011, p. 2). The researcher made an appointment with each Chinese immigrant family participant for an individual interview. Phenomenology offers the researcher the ability to investigate a myriad of experiences from participants (Bound, 2011). During the individual interviews, the researcher focused on the collection of data related to 10 Chinese immigrant parents’ cultural, educational, and family background, as well as their financial condition, their children’s information, and their perception of their involvement in their children’s education. This phase aimed to identify the factors that influence Chinese immigrant parents’ attitudes toward involvement in their children’s schooling. During the interview process, the participants used their own language of Chinese to answer the entire question and to communicate with the researcher during the interview. Patton (2002) stated it was important to gather in-depth data by asking questions and listening to participants’ descriptions in their own languages and on their own terms in an authentic world.

Before the individual interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents, the researcher piloted the interview questions with four Chinese immigrant parents who were not part of the 10 Chinese immigrant parents for this study. Because the purpose of the pilot test was not to collect data, the small size was good to verify the design and setting of the interview questions. Iraossi (2006) stated that during the pilot interviews, the survey designer should evaluate the competency of the questionnaire and estimate the length of the survey. The pilot test is a preliminary test of data collection questions, allowing the researcher to test the questions or to make corrective changes or adjustments before actually collecting data from the target population (Dave, 2014).

This qualitative study aimed to explore Chinese immigrant parents' personal attitudes and involvement in their children's education in the United States. The individual interview became the main data collection procedure associated with this phenomenological qualitative study. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stressed that the method of interview is probably the most cited in the entire field of qualitative research. "Collecting data solely from person that would be more of a philosophical endeavor" (Giorgi, 2009, pp. 95–96). Collecting descriptions from participants is an attempt to discover the meaning of a particular phenomenon (Englander, 2012). The phenomenological approach for the qualitative study is not only used to examine an individual subject but also to present to an intersubjective community (Zahavi, 2001b).

### **Participants**

The data collection in this study was taken from 10 Chinese immigrant families. They went to the same church, Chinese Christian Church in northwest of America, thus the interviews were usually conducted on Sunday afternoons after the church service, or the interviews were conducted in their homes by phone or e-mail appointment. The researcher used the church directory to make contact with congregants. The 10 Chinese participants were all from mainland China and had lived in the United States at least eight years. Their ages ranged from 33 to 45 years old, and they had at least one child currently enrolled in an elementary public school. If more than 10 individuals responded, the participants would be have been randomly selected for the study. These Chinese immigrant families from mainland China were selected because the vast majority of Chinese immigrants come from this area. Another reason was many of these Chinese parents were first-generation immigrants who originated from China but resided in the United States, and their children were born in America. The problem of origin culture, acculturation, and language poses a significant challenge among these Chinese immigrant

parents. In addition, for a Chinese family, a couple will usually have their first child when they are 27 years old. For this study, the Chinese participant age ranged from 33 to 45, and the participant had at least one child enrolled in elementary school.

Five of the 10 Chinese immigrant families had one child, four Chinese immigrant families had two children, and one Chinese immigrant family had three children. The average age of the eldest child was 9, and the average age of the second and third children was five. All the 10 Chinese immigrant families spoke both Chinese and English at home. The spouses of the 10 participants came from highly educated backgrounds. All of the parents from the 10 families at least had bachelor's degrees. One mother had earned Ph. Degree in the United States; one mother had earned Ph. Degree in China. Most of the fathers had earned master's degrees in the United States, and four of ten fathers had earned Ph. Degree.

Table 1 *Parental Educational Background*

<b>Education</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Mother</b>
<b>High School Graduate</b>		
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	1	4
<b>Master's Degree</b>	5	4
<b>Ph.D.</b>	4	2

Ten Chinese immigrant families were from the middle-class level. Most of the mothers from the 10 Chinese immigrant families were housewives, while their husbands worked in companies as engineers, managers, or leaders in Boise. During the study, only one family's father is still waiting for job offer.

Table 2 *Parents' Occupations*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Mother</b>
<b>Engineer</b>	5	1
<b>Employee</b>		1
<b>Homemaker</b>		7
<b>Speaker</b>	1	
<b>Leader</b>	3	
<b>Attorney</b>		
<b>Accountant</b>		1

The spouses of the 10 participants who participated in the interviews had at least one job. A working father and a homemaker mother were most common in the 10 Chinese immigrant families. Vazquez-Nuttall, Li, and Kaplan (2006) stated that “upper-middle class, suburban community schooling with a family structure [is] comprised of a two-parent, economically self-sufficient nuclear family with a working father and a homemaker mother” (p.86). In Chinese culture, mothers play a more important role than the fathers do in children’s education. Research shows that mothers are typically more involved than fathers in all aspects of their children’s education by monitoring their children’s behaviors, helping with homework, and providing emotional care and life care (Gronlinck & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Traditional Confucian values emphasize that Chinese mothers usually take the role of supervisor in their children’s education, while Chinese fathers are the breadwinners. Although mothers have an important role in their children’s daily life, both mothers and fathers make great

efforts to express their opinions on involvement. Base on traditional Confucian values, the Chinese immigrant fathers may not volunteer information without being asked specifically.

### **Data Collection**

This phenomenological study in qualitative research was conducted by the researcher through individual phenomenological interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents. Creswell (2013) stated when educators think about qualitative research, they often have in mind the process of collecting data in a specific setting. Creswell also mentioned, “Another aspect of qualitative data collection is to identify the types of data that will address the research question” (2013, p.212). In an individual phenomenological interview, the data collection procedure “involves typically interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.79). Kvale (1996) stated qualitative interviewing is based on conversation. The “conversation” (Kvale, 1996) in phenomenological research can be identifying the “shared experience” (Campbell, 2011). What experience was shared? In this phenomenological study, the data collection was conducted through the research question directed toward discovering how participants behave, think, and feel; how they account for their experiences and actions; and what opportunities and obstacles the participants face (Berg, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Researchers have cautioned that the phenomenology must allow the data to emerge. “Doing phenomenology” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) means capturing “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (Kensit, 2000, p.104). In this phenomenological study, the questions were directed to the Chinese immigrant parents’ experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions about parental involvement in their children’s education. Groenewald (2004) mentioned, “Husserl called it bracketing when the inquiry is performed from the perspective of



the researcher.” Bracketing in this study entailed asking the Chinese immigrant parents to set aside their experiences about involvement in their children’s education. How the Chinese immigrant parents think, feel, and reflect in the most direct way to be involved in their children’s education. Bracketing personal experience may be difficult for the researcher. Creswell (2013) explained that interpretations of the data always incorporate the assumptions that the researcher brings to the topic (p. 83).

Kvale (1996) remarked that the interview is a conversation between two persons about one theme of mutual interest. Through the interview, the researcher attempted to understand the participant’s personal experiences. At the root of phenomenology is the “view of the personally lived experience in order to be able to discover the meaning of it” (Englander, 2012, p. 16). In this phenomenological study, the research question focused on discovering the meaning of a phenomenon of Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education. The initial step of data collection process is to select participants. When it came to selecting the participants for this phenomenological study, the researcher considered whether or not the participants had the necessary experience. Based on this issue, the researcher in this study selected participants who reported having had specific experiences, such as being an immigrant from China and a heritage culture from China. To be specific, in this phenomenological study, the researcher recruited participants from Christian Chinese Church. Most of the participants were immigrants from China and had lived in the United States for at least eight years. The researcher focused on participants from 33 to 45 years old. The children who were from 10 Chinese immigrant families were not included as part of this study. The researcher scheduled individual interviews with each of the 10 Chinese immigrant participants by either e-mail or phone (see Appendix D). The numbers of participants in this study are 10 Chinese immigrant parents from 10 different families.

The interview was conducted on two separate occasions to provide an in-depth study regarding Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes and behavior about involvement in their children's education. There were a total of 20 interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents. Each interview took approximately one hour. First, the researcher took a few minutes to get initial information from the participants. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher introduced herself, explained this study's goal, and asked questions about the participant's background. Getting to know the background of participants set an intimate atmosphere for the interview process. The interviewees felt free and willing to talk more with the researcher. Also, the researcher was able to modify the questions better after obtaining the participant's background information. Second, according to the initial information, the researcher aimed to clarify some themes with the participants. During the interview, Chinese was used because it was the mother tongue of all participants and the researcher. It ensured that all participants and the researcher would not misunderstand each other. In addition, it assured the data would be reliable and grounded in reality. The researcher also took notes in Chinese, and an audio recording was made to provide a detailed record of the interview. The notes were used for reminding the researcher what happened in the interview. Some parts of the notes were translated into English for research needs. Interview locations were chosen based on where the participants wanted to meet. Most of the time, the interviews were conducted on a Sunday at church or at participants' homes. As well, most of the participants in the interviews were mothers from each family.

It is possible to have a pilot test prior to the actual interview. The pilot test involved four Chinese immigrant volunteers who were not from the 10 Chinese immigrant participants. The small group of volunteers had similar characteristics to the target population. The pilot test meeting was conducted with the small group of individuals before starting the actual interview.

The purpose of the pilot test was to determine whether or not the interview questions were likely to work as expected. However, data collection from in-depth phenomenological individual interviews may transcend what the researcher knows about the phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that “phenomenological interview is the study of lived experiences” (p. 148), and it is a way to understand those experiences to develop a wide view of the world. The researcher wanted to suspend her preunderstanding in order to discover the broader wide meaning of the phenomenon.

The researcher recorded each interview by smart phone with the permission of all interviewees. Also the researcher recorded field notes after each interview. Lofland and Lofland (1999) stated that field notes are crucial for the researcher to retain data gathered in qualitative research. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants. Only the researcher had access to the study, including audio files and notes. No individual identities were used in any report or publications that may result from this study. Easton, McComish, and Greenberg (2000) stressed that during research, equipment failure and environmental conditions might seriously threaten the research undertaken. It is significant aspect of research for the researcher to keep the data stored safely. A copy of the interview questions and e-mail or the telephone script can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E.

### **Analysis of Data**

After completing the data collection section, the researcher started the process of analyzing the data. Riemen (1986) stated that the phenomenological study tends to follow a structured analytic approach. “The structure of phenomena is the major finding of any descriptive phenomenological inquiry” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 9). Creswell (2013) stated that in phenomenology, “the researcher analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant

statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes” (p. 80). Following the analysis, the researcher developed a “textural description of the experience of the persons and structural description of how the persons experienced it” (Creswell, 2013, p.80). Then the two textural and structural descriptions were combined to “convey an overall essence of the experience” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80).

As an overview of how to analyze data in a phenomenological study, the data analysis steps for this study were generally similar to the steps of all phenomenologists who discuss the methods. The first step of this phenomenological data analysis by Moustakas (1994) mentioned is “describe personal experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). The researcher had an initial understanding of a participant’s own experience of the phenomenon. It is good for the researcher to go through the data and develop significant statements. In this part, the researcher started a preliminary exploratory analysis by reading the 10 interview transcripts carefully. Creswell (2013) stated, “qualitative researchers analyze their data by reading it several times and conducting analyses each time” (p. 238). Each transcript was an important component relevant to the study topic. The researcher obtained a deeper understanding of the data supplied by the participants after reading through it several times. In this phase of developing significant statements, the researcher read the transcripts to list significant statements and reduce overlapping and redundancy. Moustakas (1994) stated the purpose of phenomenological reduction is to reach a pure subjectivity.

The next phase is called “units of meaning.” In this critical phase, the statements illuminating the researched phenomenon were extracted (Creswell, 2013; Groenewald, 2004; Holloway, 1997). Moustakas (1994) stated that the units of relevant meaning extracted from each interview are to be carefully scrutinized. In the “meaning units” phase, the researcher took the

significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information (Creswell, 2013). Through rigorous examination, the researcher listed the nonredundant units of meaning within the holistic context. For example, the researcher tried to elicit the essence of the units of meaning related to the study questions:

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience with their involvement and communication with their children's schools and teachers?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parental involvement in their children's education?

Hycner (1999) remarked that the researcher needs even more judgment and skill in this part. Cited from Hycner's (1999) book, "particularly in this step is the phenomenological researcher engaged in something which cannot be precisely delineated, for here is involved that ineffable thing known as creative insight" (pp. 150–151).

It is important for the researcher to identify significant topics by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Sadala & Adorno, 2001). Holloway (1997) and Hycner (1999) stressed reading the recorded interview carefully and listing nonredundant units of meaning to derive clusters of appropriate meaning. Clusters of themes and central themes are determined as "which expresses the essence of these clusters" (Hycner, 1999, p. 153).

These significant statements and units of meaning are then used to write a description of *what* the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon and *how* the experience happened (Creswell, 2013). The first description is called a "textural description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 82), which is what the participants experienced and includes verbatim examples. In this

description, the researcher wrote a summary about Chinese immigrant parents' experiences of involvement in their children's education. What problems did they face during the involvement? The next step is to write a "structural description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 194) that reflects on the context and setting in which the phenomenon was experienced among Chinese immigrant parents. Hycner (1999) wrote,

Whatever the method used for a phenomenological analysis, the aim of the investigator is the reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject. Each individual has his own way of experiencing temporality, spatiality, materiality, but each of these coordinates must be understood in relation to the others and to the total inner "world." (pp.153–154)

Finally, in the data analysis, the researcher concluded the development by writing a composite description of the phenomenon, which incorporated both the textural and structural descriptions. This composite description presented the essence of the experience from which the themes emerged (Creswell, 2013; Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) stated that "it is typically a long paragraph that tells reader 'what' the participants experienced with the phenomenon and 'how' they experienced it" (p.194). In this phase, the researcher needs to transform participants' expressions into appropriate scientific discourse to support the study (Sadala & Adorno, 2001), but generating and analysis by rigorous data is not enough; the researcher needs to "go beyond the data to develop ideas" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 139).

As issued earlier, phenomenological data analysis tends to be a structured analytic approach. Van Manen (1997) discussed the phenomenological data analysis by calling it a "phenomenological reflection" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 77). Creswell (2008) stated phenomenological data analysis occurs through the methodology of the simplification of ideas, analysis of specific statements, description of the structure, and a search for all possible

meanings. Kleiman (2004) stated that in a phenomenological data analysis, the researcher works with the rich descriptive data, and then common themes begin to emerge.

## **Limitations**

Every study has limitations. Ismail (2004) stressed that limitations are factors that may influence research outcomes. Factors, such as the size of samples, honesty of all responses, background of participants, and method of data collection, can affect the research findings (Ismail 2004). Although limitations are not within the researcher's control, they need to be reported within the study in order to help readers understand that these limitations were taken into account during the study.

The current study had some limitations. First and foremost was the study only examined 10 Chinese immigrant families in Idaho. The size of the sample was relatively small and may not have been representative of Chinese immigrant parents in other locations.

Second, the Chinese immigrant families all had high educational backgrounds, steady and generous incomes, and were long-term residents of the United States. Other types of sample participants, such as those with low-level educational backgrounds, working-class Chinese immigrant families, and newly emigrated families, were excluded from the data collection.

Third, Idaho is an agricultural and industrial state located in the northwestern region of the United States, with limited Chinese immigrants living there. The findings cannot be representative of all Chinese immigrants in the United States. Accordingly, the current study results may not directly represent the problem of all Chinese immigrant parents.

Fourth, the current study was used as a self-report to collect information for the open-ended questionnaire. It is possible to have misunderstood the findings and misinformation

reported. Fifth, Chinese immigrant parents are the only type of participant in this study. The scope of data collection did not include a wide range of participants. Later research should collect input from teachers and examine teachers' perspectives of immigrant parental involvement.

Last, this study was by nature a qualitative research study. When one conducts a study by using both quantitative and qualitative data together, it provides a better understanding of the research problem than either type alone (Creswell, 2013). If the study to collect the data using the quantitative methods, and using the outcome from the quantitative study to get an in-depth analysis of the response by qualitative may better understand the barriers that Chinese parents find in being involved in their children's education.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the qualitative individual interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations (Chadwick, Gill, Stewart, & Treasure, 2008) of Chinese immigrant parents, and how this affects parents' involvement in the education of their children. Interviews in a qualitative method are believed to provide a "deeper" understanding of social phenomena (Chadwick et al., 2008). The interview questions were developed based on the research questions for this qualitative study. Ten participants from 10 Chinese immigrant families were interviewed regarding their attitudes, beliefs, experiences, challenges, and barriers to their children's education in America. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, translated, coded, and finally, themes were developed. The first section of this chapter presents participants' profiles.

#### **Participant Profile**

This section describes the background information of each of the 10 Chinese immigrant families. This information includes the parents' education level, current occupations, number of children, and years of residence in America. The information was obtained through 20 face-to-face individual interviews. To protect their identities, the participants were given an identification number, and that number was used in data analysis and the profile.

Two fathers and eight mothers from 10 Chinese immigrant families took part in this study. Five of the 10 families had one child, four of the families had two children, and only one family had three children. For the families with one child, two of them had one son and three of them had one daughter. Four families had two sons, and one family had two sons and one

daughter. The 10 families' children were all in elementary school, except one who was a college sophomore. The study was focused on middle-class families, and the majority of the participants had graduate degrees. Two mothers only had undergraduate degrees. Of the 10 families, three mothers had jobs outside of the home, and other mothers were homemakers. Eight of the fathers were science and engineering majors. Two fathers were theology majors. The 10 families had all resided in America for at least eight years. Table 3 describes the background information of the 10 families in this study.

Table 3 *Background Information on the 10 Chinese Immigrant Families*

Participants Identification		Education		Occupation	Years in USA
Number		China	USA		
<b>Family 1</b>	Father	Bachelor	MD	Engineer	8
	Mother	MD	College	Homemaker	
	Son		Grade 1		
<b>Family 2</b>	Father	PhD		Senior Engineer	10
	Mother	College		Homemaker	
	Daughter		Grade 6		
<b>Family 3</b>	Father	MD	PhD	Senior Engineer	9
	Mother	Bachelor		Homemaker	
	Son		Grade 3		
<b>Family 4</b>	Father	Bachelor		Speaker	8
	Mother	PhD	MD	Homemaker	
	Daughter		Grade 2		
<b>Family 5</b>	Father	College	MD	Not working	11.5
	Mother	MD	PhD	Material Engineer	
	Daughter		Grade 4		
<b>Family 6</b>	Father	Bachelor	MD	Engineer	8.5
	Mother	Bachelor	MD	Homemaker	
	Son		Grade 1		
	Son		Grade 2		
<b>Family 7</b>	Father	Bachelor	PhD	Product Leader	17
	Mother	Bachelor	MD	Homemaker	
	Son		Grade 6		
	Daughter		Grade 5		
<b>Family 8</b>	Father	Bachelor	MD	Leader	15
	Mother	Bachelor	MD	Accountant	
	Son		College		
	Son		Grade 4		
<b>Family 9</b>	Father	MD		System Engineer	10
	Mother	Bachelor		Inspection work	
	Son		Grade 3		
	Son		Grade 1		
<b>Family 10</b>	Father	MD	PhD	Leader	12
	Mother	Bachelor	MD	Homemaker	
	Son		Grade 4		
	Son		Grade 1		

*Note:* \*Red mark indicates the mother was interviewed for the study. \*Yellow mark indicates the father was interviewed for the study.

**Family 1.** The researcher made an appointment with the mother of Family 1 via phone and met her at a church on a Wednesday morning. Before she met with the researcher, she had dropped her son off at chess class. Her son was in the first grade, and he really loved to play chess. Family 1 had been in the United States for eight years. Before the family moved to Idaho, they lived in New Mexico while the father was obtaining his Master of Science degree. The mother was going to obtain a certificate of nursing in a college, but she was not able to pursue it. The father found a new job in Boise, so Family 1 moved to Idaho. The mother did not continue with her nursing studies. At the time of the study, the mother, a homemaker, took classes at home. She told me she understood that parents have an important role in their child's education. She believed that involvement is the responsibility of both parents to their child. However, her husband was so busy that he did not have much time to be involved in his son's education, and this placed most of the burden of responsibility on her. She did not know how best to fulfill her responsibility to support her child in education. She said, “在教育中，我一直在寻求一个对我和对我儿子都适用的方法。I am still exploring a good way to be involved for my son and me.” She told me she did not like to be a volunteer at school, because she did not feel comfortable with too many children around her. “One time a week is enough for me to help the teacher at school. I am not comfortable with too many kids. That is also why I just have one child,” she said. The researcher learned that language was a barrier for her when she had to talk with schoolteachers or be a volunteer in class.

**Family 2.** Family 2 had been in the United States for 10 years and had a daughter in grade 6. The researcher met with the father at his home during an afternoon. He was an engineer and worked four days a week. The mother was a homemaker. During the interview, the mother took her daughter to tennis class, so she was not at home. The father had obtained his PhD in

materials physics in China and had worked in Japan for six years. His daughter was born in Japan. The father said their family came to the United States to provide a better education for their only daughter and so he could get a better job. The father told me that, after over 10 years in the United States, language was no longer a barrier for both him and his wife. He and his wife had flexible schedules and would like to volunteer as classroom helpers in their daughter's school. The father said he had taught Chinese culture workshops and Chinese calligraphy on Chinese New Year, and he had also taught a math class. He said, "To be a volunteer at school is good for both my daughter and me. My daughter feels more self-confident due to my involvement at her school." The father said he had many roles in his daughter's life. Sometimes he needed to be a guide or a leader, but when supporting his daughter's education, he saw his role as that of a helper. He wanted to establish a friendly relationship with his daughter so he could help her anytime.

**Family 3.** Family 3 had been in the United States for nine years and had one son in grade 3. The mother earned a bachelor's degree in medicine in China. The father earned a PhD degree in science and engineering in the United States. The mother was a homemaker. She told me that her husband was so busy and did not have much time to be involved in their son's study. Therefore, most of the time she played the main role in their son's schooling. She helped with homework, played during family time, and brought him to chess class. She also worked as a volunteer at her son's school. She said she wanted to obtain an education degree in the United States, but she found it was too hard to arrange the time between staying with her son and studying. Therefore, she gave up the attempt to get a degree in the United States and chose to be a homemaker. When responding to the questions about her role in their son's schooling, she thought she could fill different roles, such as leader, helper, educator, and friend. She loved to be

a volunteer in her son's class. "It is the best way to know my son and his teacher," she said. However, she thought that language and culture were barriers in school involvement. She said that her English skill was not too bad, but she still thought that language blocked her from communicating with schoolteachers sometimes. The mother could not always completely understand what the teacher was talking about. In addition, both the mother and the father believed that culture was a barrier to communication. They were not quite sure what kind of question they could ask a teacher or how they could ask a deep question.

**Family 4.** Family 4 had been in the United States for eight years, and the daughter was in grade 2. The mother had a PhD degree in children's literature in China. The father earned a bachelor's degree in China and obtained his master's degree in the United States. The researcher met the mother in a church in the morning. Both the father and the mother were dedicated Christians. They came to the United States for a better educational opportunity for their daughter and for their personal development. The researcher learned from the mother that she believed parents are the best and the first teachers for their children. Any child is from God and to educate the child is the parents' responsibility. When responding to the questions about the role she played in her child's schooling, the mother said, "I think I am a supporter and coordinator." To illustrate what she called a supporter and coordinator, the mother said that she could be an assistant to help the teacher's teaching in the class, and also she could do the work of coordinating to solve her daughter's problem between school and home. The mother said, "For example, based on different culture and language, the teacher cannot completely understand my daughter's needs. Thus, to be a volunteer in my daughter's classroom, I can be a translator between the teacher and my daughter. For example, I can do some preteaching at home with my daughter. On other hand, I can help the teacher get a better understanding about my daughter."

When the researcher asked about any barriers to her involvement, the mother mentioned she had not experienced any barriers during her involvement. She believed everyone was different, she trusted in God, and everything would be solved.

**Family 5.** Family 5 came to the United States in 2003. They stayed in Alabama for five years and had resided in Idaho since 2008. Their daughter was born in Alabama and is now in grade 4. Her new baby brother was born in December 2014. The mother obtained her doctoral degree at the University of Alabama, and she was a material engineer in a big company. The father obtained a bachelor's degree from Boise Bible College. The researcher interviewed the father at his home. At the time of the interviews, he had just finished a job interview by phone and was still looking for work. When responding to the question about his role in his daughter's education, the father said most of the time his wife did the work with his daughter, even when he was at home. He said that he and his wife tried to divide the work based on who was most competent in the specific area. For example, the father was not good in math, but the mother was, and so the mother took an important role when doing math work with their daughter. The father said there were no language problems when communicating with schoolteachers and other native English speakers. He enjoyed his work as a volunteer at his daughter's school. He said parents were the first teachers of their children. Involvement was an effective way to know both teacher and child.

**Family 6.** Family 6 had resided in the United States for eight-and-a-half years and had two sons. The elder son was in grade 2. The younger son was in grade 1. Both sons were born in the United States. Both the father and mother earned bachelor degrees in China. The father obtained his master's degree in science and engineering from Ohio State University, and the mother obtained her master's degree in education administration from the same university. The

father found a job working for a company in Idaho. The mother was a homemaker and participated in many activities with other mothers when her sons went to school. She was involved in her sons' school at least once a week. Her elder son first went to school when he was 3 years old. At that time, he could not speak any English, and both his teacher and his mother felt frustrated. She told me her son's teacher had asked her to visit her son's class frequently. At that time, she did not feel comfortable about communicating with her son's teacher. When the researcher asked the question, "What is your role in your children's education?" she was stunned for a few seconds before she replied to my question. Then she shyly said, "I am a mom. That's all." I learned from the mother that both she and her husband thought cultural diversity was a barrier even after eight years in the United States.

**Family 7.** Family 7 had resided in the United States for 17 years and had three children. The eldest son was in grade 6, the second child was a daughter in grade 5, and the youngest son was in grade 3. The father had a doctoral degree from Princeton University. The mother, a homemaker, earned a bachelor's degree in education in China before joining her husband in the United States. The researcher learned that for both the father and the mother, language was no longer a barrier after over 17 years of residence in the United States. The mother said the only problem was sometimes her teaching method was different from her children's teachers and that may confuse the children. However, her children appreciated her involvement because they thought their mother had made them better learners. The mother loved to be involved in her children's school. The mother said, "I help students do their projects, tutor them in math, and help teachers prepare teaching materials." As she responded to the question about the role she played in her children's education, she said she was a learner. The mother said parents are definitely the first teachers of their children. On the other hand, children could also be good



teachers for their parents. The mother said, “My children learn a lot from my husband and me, but they also teach us a lot.” While teaching her children, the mother learned how to build up each child as a unique individual.

**Family 8.** Family 8 had been in the United States for 15 years and now had two sons. The elder son, a sophomore in college, was born in China. The younger son, in grade 4, was born in the United States. The mother was an accountant and worked for a company in Boise. The father was an engineer and worked for a different company in Boise. Both the father and the mother had a busy work schedule every day. The mother said her husband did not work a regular 9-to-5 shift. He worked from 2 a.m. to 2 p.m., so most of the times she helped with their younger son’s homework and gave him extra work to do. The mother said she tried to be involved in her son’s school, but she was too busy. She said, “Most of the time I am focused on his study at home more than at school.” The mother indicated that she had no problem talking with schoolteachers or other native English speakers. However, the mother mentioned her husband sometimes did not feel confident when communicating with schoolteachers, because most of his colleagues were Chinese.

**Family 9.** Family 9 had been in the United States for 10 years and had two sons who were born in the United States. One son was in grade 3, and other was in grade 1. Both the father and the mother earned degrees in engineering management in China. They immigrated to the United States because the father had been offered a good job as an engineer in a company in Boise. At the time of the interviews, the mother had just been offered a job for doing inspection work in a private company. The mother told the researcher her parents would come over from China to help them care for their two sons while she worked. The mother said, “I would love to learn with my kids at home by reading books every day and playing games with them. However,

I do not have much time to be involved in their school.” The mother said that, although she had been in the United States for over 10 years, because of her different cultural and linguistic background, she still could not always express herself fluently in English when communicating with schoolteachers.

**Family 10.** Family 10 had resided in the United States for 10 years and had two sons. One was in grade 4 and the other was in grade 1. The couple came to the United States to pursue advanced study. The father obtained a master’s degree in China and his doctoral degree in the United States. He was a team leader in a company in Boise. The mother had earned a bachelor’s degree before immigrating to America. She had since obtained a master’s degree in accounting from an American university, but she had to stay at home to take care of the housework and their two sons so her husband could concentrate on his work. She told me that at first she could not accept her role as a homemaker, but now she really enjoyed the life of a homemaker. The mother said taking care of her two sons and her husband made her very busy. When the researcher asked the question, “What is your role in your sons’ education?” she said without hesitation that she was a good helper. She said, “I help a lot with my sons’ studies because it is one of my jobs.” The mother told me she thought language was no longer a problem influencing communication with the school and teachers. However, the mother believed culture was a problem for her when she was involved in her sons’ school.

The individual interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant families in this qualitative study were designed to gain insight into aspects of Chinese immigrant parents’ attitudes, feelings, behaviors, perspectives, and cognitive involvement in their children’s schooling. A total of 20 interviews were conducted and audio recorded in Chinese with the 10 Chinese immigrant families.

## Research Questions

This section presents a comprehensive summary of the findings obtained from the 20 individual interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience in their involvement and communication with their children's schools and teachers?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parents' involvement in their children's education?

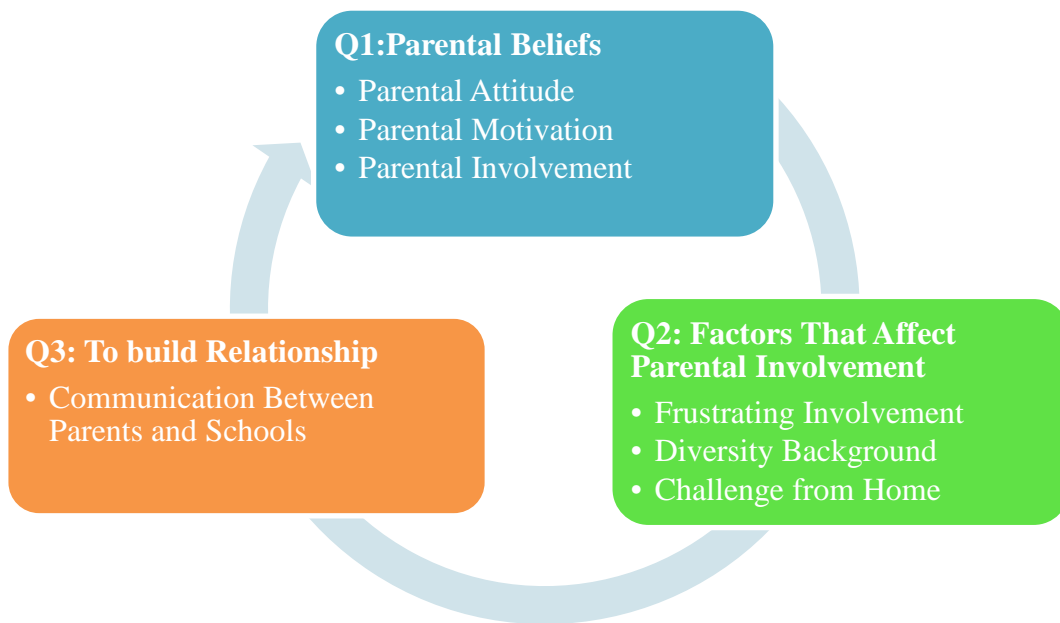
Each of the three research questions will be summarized. The quotations in this study that support the themes were translated from Chinese to English. The translation of these quotations from each interview stays as close as possible to its original meaning in Chinese. Three major themes emerged from data analysis that described parents' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, challenges, and barriers to involvement in their children's schooling in America. The three major themes and categories are as follows:

1. Theme 1: Parental Beliefs
  - a. Category 1: Parental Attitude
  - b. Category 2: Parental Motivation
  - c. Category 3: Parental Involvement
2. Theme 2: Factors That Affect Parental Involvement
  - a. Category 4: Frustrating Involvement
  - b. Category 5: Diversity Background

- c. Category 6: Challenge from Home
- 3. Theme 3: Build Relationship
  - a. Category 7: Communication between Parents and Schools

Based on the data analyses, a model was developed to represent the three themes related to the research questions (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 *Three Themes Related to the Research Questions*



The model presents aspects related to parents' beliefs about involvement in their children's education, the challenge parents encountered when trying to be involved in their children's education, and how schools and teachers helped the parents overcome these barriers. Each research question of the model is presented in detail with quotes from the interviews.

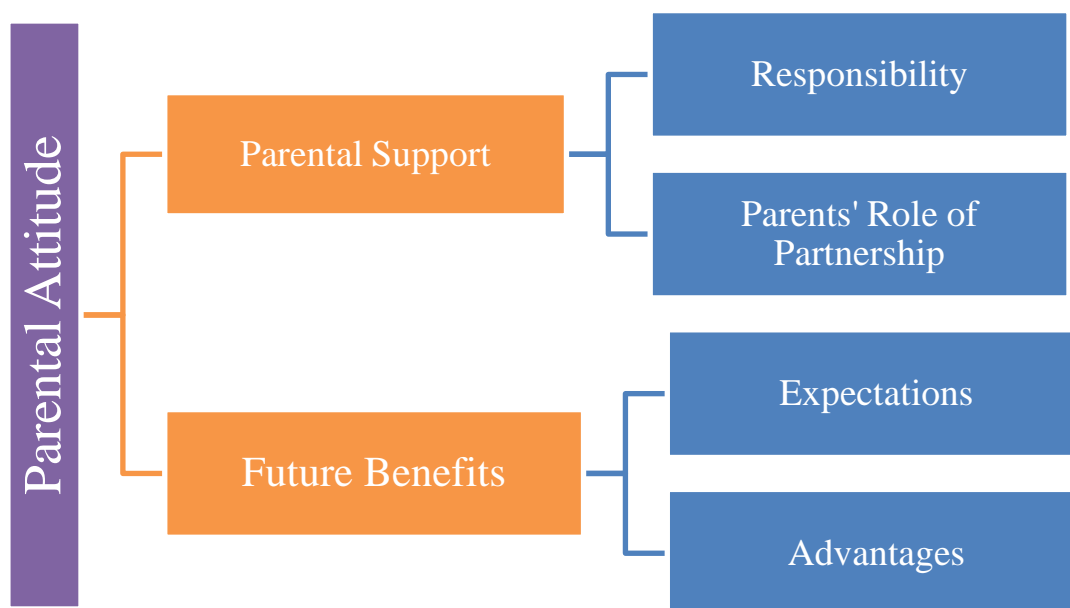
**Research question 1.** The first research question sought to explore the beliefs of 10 Chinese immigrant families concerning involvement in their elementary school-age children in America. This research question asked the following: What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience in their involvement and communication with their children's schools and

teachers? Interview data showed that all the Chinese immigrant parents expressed a strong willingness to be involved in their children's education, but there were still some problems during the involvement. Based on the interview data, four major categories were identified that contributed to the first research question: parental attitude, parental motivation, and parental involvement. Table 4 demonstrates the relationships among each of these findings under the theme1 of parental beliefs.

Table 4 *Parental Beliefs*

Category	Third Coding
Parental Attitude	Parental support
	Future benefits
Parental Motivation	Foster child's learning habit
	Foster child's literacy
	Build relationship with child
Parental Involvement	Home-based involvement
	School-based involvement

*Parental attitude.* After two interviews with each Chinese immigrant family, parental attitude was one of the categories under the theme of parental beliefs for the first research question. All of the participants believed that parental attitude affects children's motivation and willingness in education. According to the interview data, parents support significance and future benefits were identified as relevant for describing parental attitude. The flowchart in Figure 3 shows the finding of parental attitude.

Figure 3 *Flowchart of Parental Attitude*

*Parental support significance.* The interview data showed all of the participants agreed that parental support has a great significance because of the parents' responsibility for their children. Ten participants used terms of "responsibility" and "positive impact" to highlight this significant support. All of the participants believed parents have a significant role in being involved in their children's learning. During the interview, terms like "very important" and "very necessary" were used many times. Five of the 10 participants mentioned that a positive impact will directly affect a child's education. For example, in Family 3, the mother of one son said,

对于我来说，我认为家长在孩子的学习中起着重要的引导作用。首先，每个孩子在这个世上，就好像一张白纸。父母有责任带领孩子有一个正确的发展，这是做父母的主要责任。在学习上支持他，帮助他做父母必须的工作。如果家长都没有重视和履行自己的职责，这是对孩子和对自己的不负责任。家长对孩子学习的重视和培养，可以让一个孩子在有更好地发展。

For me, parents play an important role of guider in their children's study. First, every child comes to this world like a piece of white paper. Parents are responsible for guiding their children through the right development, which is the primary responsibility for parents. Parents must support and assist their study. If parents don't attach importance to their responsibility and do their jobs, they are irresponsible to their children. Parents'

attention and cultivation are helpful for their children's better development.

The father in Family 2 said, “作为家长，只有你真正参与孩子的教育了，你才能更好地了解孩子，也只有了解了孩子，才能使你的教育更有目的性。你的教育方式才能对孩子起到作用。As parents, only when you are really involved in your children's education can you know your children better; only when you know your children better can you better know the purpose of your education for your children. Then your approach to education can work for your children.” All the participants believed that the parents' role in supporting their children's education is not debatable. It is the parents' responsibility.

*Future benefits.* This factor refers to parents' expectations for their children's future education and life. “Chinese parents grounded their expectation for their children in Chinese tradition, their deeply rooted cultural heritage” (Li, 2001). Li (2001) stated that parents' personal life experiences and acculturative attitudes usually shaped their expectations for their children. All of the participants wished their children could go to a good college or obtain an advanced degree. The Chinese parents believed that a higher degree would benefit their children's future lives, such as in finding a better job. Family 1 mother said,

我不是一个强势的母亲，但是我认为每一个作为父母的都希望自己的孩子将来能有一个好的生活一份好的工作，我也不例外。我希望我的儿子学习成绩优秀，这样为他将来能找到好的工作打基础。

I am not a tiger mom, but I think all parents hope their kids will have a good life and a good job. I am no exception. I hope my son will get excellent academic records. It lays a foundation for a good career in his future.

Family 7 mother of three children said in the interview,

我觉得，我自己是一个凡事要求严格的妈妈。我希望我的孩子在学习的各方面都可以取得好的成绩。我希望我的孩子将来能成为一个博学的[人]。在如今的社会，无论是在中国还是美国，知识的积累对每个人都是很重要的。[你拥有的]知识越多，[你的]竞争力就越强。[所以]我希望我的孩子从小就有一个好的[知识]

基础。

I think I am a mom who is strict on everything. I hope my kids do well in all respects and they can be educated in the future. In the present society, in both China and United States, it is important for everyone to accumulate knowledge. The more knowledge you have, the more competitive power you have. So I hope my kids can have a good foundation of knowledge from their childhood.

Six of the 10 participants showed high educational expectations for their children, but three of the 10 participants expressed different views. For example, Family 5 father said in the interview, “当然，我作为一个父亲，[我]对我的女儿的学习有高要求。[高要求]无庸置疑是对我女儿将来的生活有好处，但是我也不愿意给她太大的压力。我希望的女儿可以在轻松[和]愉快的[环境下]学习和生活。Surely, as a father, I have high demands for my daughter’s study, which is doubtless good for her future life. But I don’t want to push her too much. I hope my daughter can live and study in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere.” “我希望[培养]我的女儿对学习有兴趣[并且]自己自愿去学习，不是[在]父母压力下[去学习]。家长在孩子的学习过程中是一个支持和帮助的角色，并不是一味的逼迫[孩子学习]。I want my daughter to feel interested in learning and have a willingness to learn but not under pressure from parents. Parents should support and assist their children’s learning but not force their children to learn,” the father from Family 2 explained. Family 6 mother of two sons said,

我有两个儿子，我[目前]没有太多的关注[对孩子学习高标准]，也许不久的将来我会[对孩子有学习有高的要求]，但是现在他们还小，我更多的是希望从小培养他们有一个好的学习习惯和学习兴趣。我觉得一个好的学习习惯的养成对孩子的将来很重要。

I have two sons. Currently, I do not have too much concern about this part [high expectation on educational achievement]. Maybe in the future, I will start to pay more attention, but now they are too young. What I hope is that they can build on a good habit



of studying and be interested in studying. I think it is very important to build a good habit for my children's study in the future.

*Parental motivation.* Parental motivation is another important category under the theme of parental beliefs for the first research question. According to the data from interviews, foster a child's learning habit, foster a child's literacy, and build a relationship with the child were identified to describe parental motivation. All participants in the interviews showed high motivation for their children's education. Figure 4's flowchart shows the findings under this category.

Figure 4 *Flowchart of Parental Motivation*

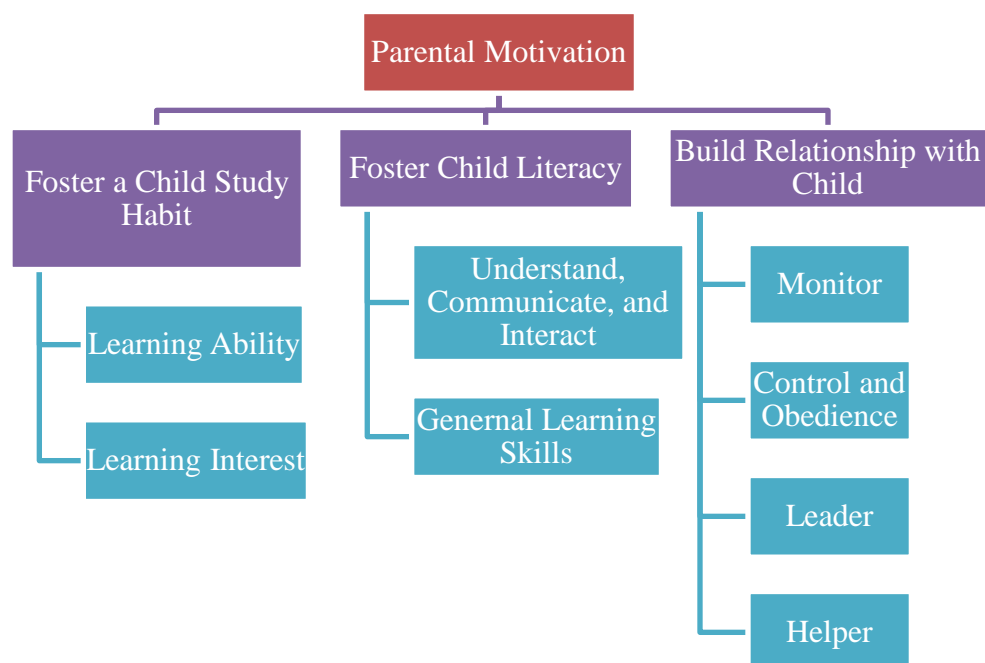


Table 5 shows the percentage from participants' responses about each the factors under the category of parental motivation. The ten Chinese immigrant parents show 43.3% high percentage in build relationship with their child during the involvement. They also believe that foster children's learning habit and literacy are important in their elementary level.

Table 5 *Percentage of Factors for Parental Motivation*

	Foster a child's study habit	Foster child's literacy	Build relationship with child
Frequency of participants' responses	10	10	10
Percentage of participants	100%	100%	100%
Codes/Total codes	93/263	56/263	114/263
Percentage of codes	35.4%	21.3%	43.3%

*Foster a child's study habit.* The factor of fostering the children's interest pertains to parents' motivation to build their children's learning ability and learning interest. According to the interviews, the 10 participants stressed the importance of fostering the children's study habits for their future education. Family 4 mother stated in the interview,

我觉得对于我孩子来说，在现在这个阶段，培养她有一个良好的学习习惯十分重要。一个好的习惯对于将来的学习起着至关重要的作用。〔学习〕习惯就要从小抓起。对于她这个年龄正是最重要的任务之一。那么，怎么培养一个良好的学习习惯呢，就我个人认为，学习能力和学习兴趣十分重要。作为家长，在这两方面对孩子的帮助也是十分关键。就我女儿来说，她不是在这里〔美国〕出生的，英语也不是她的母语，所以我很重视培养她用英语学习和对英语学习的兴趣。我会经常带她去图书馆，看英文的儿童书籍。和她一起，每天保证一定量的英语阅读。其实，这期间也是对我自己的一个提高和进步。因为我也存在着〔英语〕语言的问题。

I think it is important to build good habits of studying at this stage for my children. A positive learning habit is a significant key for their study in the future. It is a long process to build positive learning habits. However, how do parents foster a positive learning habit for their children? Personally, I think the two important elements are learning ability and learning interest. As a parent, it is crucial to provide help with these two aspects. For my daughter, she was not born here [the United States], and English is not her first language, so I am paying much attention to fostering her motivation in using English to study. Usually, I often take her to the library to read some children's books in English. We arrange a special time for English reading. Actually, it is also good for me to improve my English proficiency, because language is also one of my barriers in daily life.

The interview data clearly showed the parents believed fostering a learning habit was a significant key for their children during elementary school. For instance, Family 10 mother mentioned several times in the interview that

学习习惯很重要，养成好的学习习惯，让他对学习产生兴趣。像我大儿子，你都不需要去管他，他就自己去学习。另外，我两个儿子，老大培养好了[学习习惯]，对老二也是一个很好榜样。这对他们以后的学习都有好处。我自己也轻松。

Building good learning habits can be helpful for my son's motivation in study. For example, I do not need to take too much care about my older son's learning at home, because he can do it through his self-awareness. On the other hand, I have two sons. I think if my older son has a positive habit in learning, it will be a good model for his younger brother. It is also good for me.

Family 9 mother pointed out,

我儿子 他们在这里[美国]出生，虽然我们在家里都是说中文，语言对于他们来说不是什么问题。因为是男孩吗，所以比较顽皮，我的任务就是要培养他们一开始在学习中就有好的习惯，比如说阅读，写作，分享。读完书，才可以去玩什么的。

My sons were born here, so they do not have any problems in language, even if my husband and I are only speaking Chinese at home. I have two boys; they are so naughty. At their elementary age, my first goal for them is to foster a learning habit, such as in reading, writing, and sharing. When they finish reading, then they can play. It is one of my rules for them at home.

Some of the parents emphasized children's learning initiative.

Family 8 mother said, “让他自己主动去学，慢慢的把兴趣养成了，以后他就自己愿意去学，而不是被动的去学了。Let him engage in active learning. When he is interested in the learning, he will engage in active learning instead of passive learning.” Family 1 mother said, “虽然我儿子还只是一年级，但是我觉得学习习惯，兴趣和能力的养成，这个对他以后能学好是很重要的。My son is in the first grade, but building the learning habit and fostering the learning interest and learning ability are important goals, because it will help him learn better in the future.” All the parents believed it is a long process for building their children's learning

habits.

*Foster child's literacy.* Family 2 father stated in the interview, “学习能力很重要，我要求我女儿对所学的东西要会灵活运用，会用自己的语言表达出来。而且能很好的与老师，同学在学习中沟通。这样他自己的能力才能逐渐的提高。Learning ability is an important key for children in their study. I asked my daughter not just to copy knowledge from the teacher. She must explain the knowledge in her own language. On the other hand, she can have meaningful communication with her teacher and classmates. Then her own learning skills can be improved in the learning.” Family 5 father mentioned,

首先我要求我女儿要认真听，积极回答问题，听同学讨论。你先要听懂了，然后才能与人沟通，我女儿也许是遗传了我，我的表达能力就不是很好，所以我很重视培养她的沟通能力。我每次都会想办法促使她去多说，大胆地说。我会给她时间，让她去整理她的思路，慢慢的说。这里并不是说她有语言的问题，只是我觉得他在表达方面有些欠缺。

First, I require my daughter to listen to the teachers carefully, answer questions, and participate actively in group discussion in the class. Only when you understand what others talk about can you have meaningful communication with them. My ability to express is not good. Perhaps my daughter inherits it from me. So I pay a lot of attention to her language competence. I always try to encourage her to speak more and speak out. I will give her enough time to organize her thoughts and then let her take her time to speak. This does not mean that she has a language problem; I just found her wanting in the ability of expression.

Family 7 mother said, “我会每天和孩子们一起读书，讲故事，然后和他们一起讨论，各抒己见。孩子们都很喜欢讨论。My children and I have family time for reading every day. After each time of reading, we will have a discussion time for sharing about the reading together. They told me they are really enjoying it.” All the parents shared their ideas during the interviews. In summary, all of the participants reiterated the importance of fostering their children's learning habits, learning interest, learning ability, and learning literacy as significant parts of their children's education.

*Build relationship with child.* All of the parents in the interviews stated that building a relationship, especially a positive relationship, with their children is an essential task in their family life. The participants believed that a positive relationship between the parents and children is a foundational component for children's education. Family 9 mother said, “和孩子门建立一个友好的相互关系是很必要的。It is necessary to build a positive relationship with your kids.” Family 8 mother said,

我是一个会计，我的工作很忙，所以我和孩子沟通的时间比起其他全职妈妈来说会少很多。但是即便这样，我还是很注意和我孩子的沟通方式，让他觉得我是他的朋友，愿意和我分享他在学校和老师与同学发生的任何事。这样我就知道他需要什么和我要如何去帮助他。

I am an accountant. I have a busy job schedule, so the communication with my children is much less than other homemaker moms. However, I still attach importance to the communication with my son. I want to make him feel that I am his friend so he will be willing to share with me what happened to him with his teachers and classmates in school. Then I can know what he needs and how to help him.

Family 3 mother said,

我是一个全职的妈妈，我总是在思考怎么让我的儿子能接纳和顺服我的命令。我觉得更多的时候我们应该是先和孩子沟通，和他建立互相信任，互相尊重的彼此关系。然而，在产生歧义时，我们也需要做到换位思考来解决问题。做家长的必须用心去了解和理解孩子的行为。

I am a homemaker. I am always thinking of how to make my son accept and obey my orders. I think parents should focus more on communicating with children and building a relationship of mutual trust and respect with each other. Yet, when there is conflict, we need to solve problems as if standing in our kids' shoes. As parents, we must try our best to understand our children's behavior.

All of the participants believed that building a trusting, understanding, and caring relationship with their children will foster their motivation and reduce challenging behaviors. For example, Family 10 mother said, “与孩子建立一个相互信任的关系十分重要。孩子与父母之间有了足够的信任，才可能更多的和父母沟通。It is necessary to have a trust relationship with children. When children have more trust in their parents, they would like to communicate

more with them.” Family 1 mother said, “我还在不断的探索中，怎样和我的儿子之间建立相互信任的关系。I am still in the process of exploring how to build a trust relationship with my son.” However, six of the 10 participants mentioned it is necessary for parents to take the time to build a relationship with their children. Family 2 father said, “作为父亲，我觉得我在我女儿的学习生活中有很多角色。但是，无论哪种角色关系的建立，我觉得都需要父母花时间，精力来陪伴孩子，来建立彼此之间的关系。As a father, I think I can have many roles in my daughter’s life, but no matter which role was built in our relationship, first, I need to spend time and energy in my daughter’s education. Then, the positive relationship can be built up through time.” Family 4 mother pointed out a similar opinion, “作为父母，只要你肯花时间，花精力来陪伴孩子，就是一种很好的沟通方式。让孩子知道你有多么的重视她。她才会同样的对待你。Pay more attention to your children. That is a good way to let them know how much you care about them. Then you can get equal treatment from your children.”

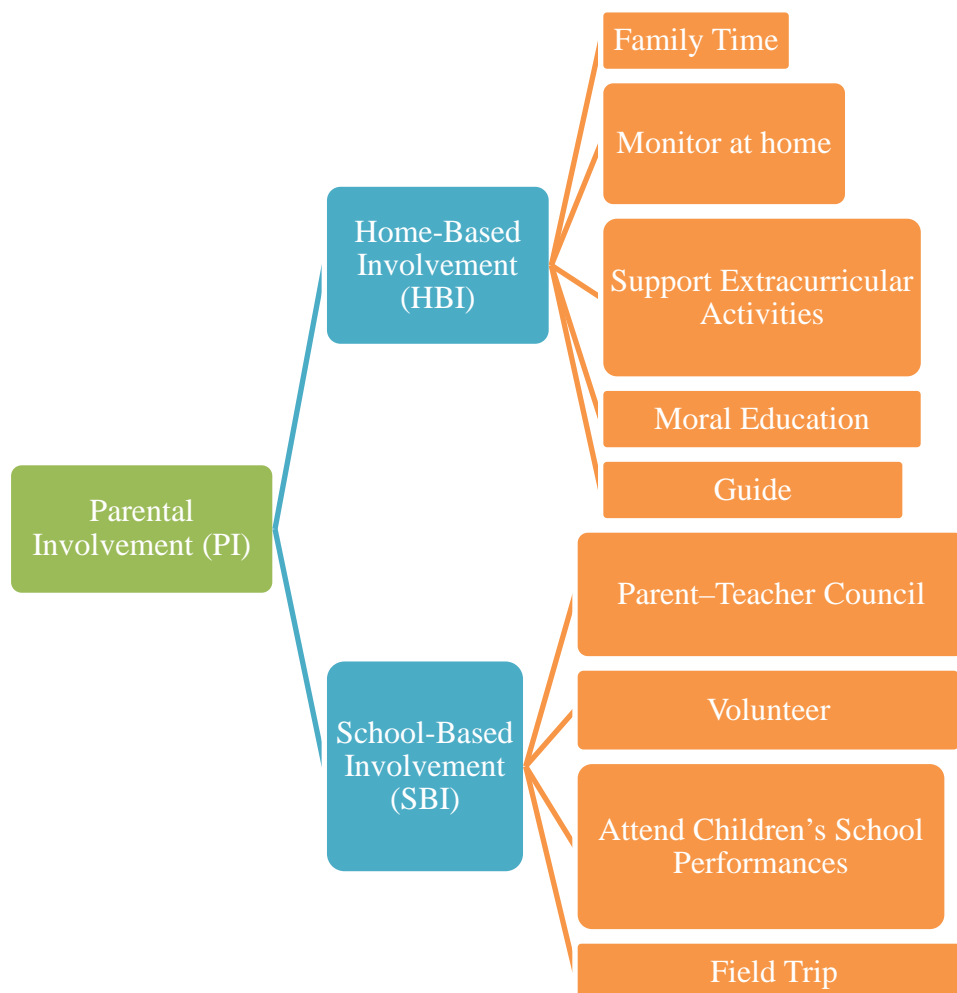
Participants also shared the importance of meaningful positive relationship as an essential component to gain a thorough understanding of children’s preferences, interests, and behaviors. For example, Family 6 mother said,

我觉得，家长与孩子建立一个积极的关系有助于更好的了解孩子，比如孩子的兴趣，爱好，学校的表现。这样可以让家长知道自己的孩子到底需要什么，怎样更好的引导和教育自己的孩子。当你了解了孩子，在各个过程中，也就和孩子建立了彼此之间的关系。这样也就促进孩子和父母之间关系的一个良性循环发展。  
In my opinion, a positive relationship is good for parents to get more understanding about their children, such as their children’s hobbies, interests, and performance in school. In this way, parents know what their children really need and how to guide and educate their children better. In the process of knowing your children, you build a close relationship with them, which improves the virtuous cycle of the relationship between children and parents.

*Parental involvement.* Parental involvement is the third significant perspective under the

theme of parental beliefs that relates to the first research question. Two components of home-based involvement and school-based involvement were identified to describe parental involvement. Figure 5's flowchart shows the relationship among each of the findings under this category of parental involvement.

Figure 5 *Flowchart of Parental Involvement*



According to the parents' responses, the types of home-based involvement were establishing family time, monitoring at home, supporting extracurricular activities, providing moral education, and guiding work. The school-based involvements were attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, attending children's school performances, and chaperoning

field trips.

Table 6 *Percentage of Two Factors of Parental Involvement*

	Home-Based	School-Based
	Involvement	Involvement
Frequency of participants' responses	10	10
Percentage of participants	100%	100%
Codes/total codes	179/281	102/281
Percentage of codes	63.7%	36.3%

Table 6 highlights the percentage of the two factors of parental involvement according to the participants' responses during the interviews. Ten participants believe that to be involved in home and school learning for their children is important. The result shows 100% participants agreed to be involved in their children's home and school learning. However, based on Chinese culture, most of the participants still show a higher percentage of home-based involvement than school-based involvement. The percentage of codes under home-based involvement is 63.7% and 36.3% on school-based involvement.

*Home-based involvement.* All participants reported that common forms of their involvement in their children's education at home are setting the family time with children, monitoring homework, supporting extracurricular activities, listening to the child reading, and brainstorming about school projects. The ten participants stated they were involved in their child's education at home every day for at least 30 minutes. All participants considered the quality and amount of time of parents' home-based involvement would have positive effects on their children's academics. Family 10 mother said,



我是一个全职妈妈，我儿子放学后，我的职责就是陪伴他 和他一起学习。 这也成为了我生活的一部分。他每天的作业是必须辅导完成的，然后还有读书时间。这些大概有半个小时左右。然后我会和他交流下这一天他在学校的情况，比如，今天在学校发生的事，或是他和老师同学之间有趣的事情。 开心， 不开心的事我都希望他于我分享。之后我们还有固定的练琴时间。我会坐在他旁边陪他练习。有时 他弟弟也会在旁边观看。 我希望同时也培养他弟弟对钢琴的兴趣。我准备晚饭的时候， 我的两个儿子就自己在一旁玩耍。晚饭后，我们有家庭时间，这时我们会一家人一起做活动，例如下棋，阅读圣经故事。当然，如果是夏天，我们会一起去图书馆，公园等地方，因为天黑的晚嘛。

I am a homemaker. It is my responsibility to accompany him and monitor his study at home. This became part of my life. He must be tutored to finish his homework, and he has reading time after that. It takes about half an hour to do his homework. And then we talk about his school, for instance, what happened in school or something interesting that happened between his teachers and classmates. Whether he was happy or unhappy at school, I hope he can share anything with me. We have regular time to practice the piano and I sit next to him. Sometimes his younger brother watches him playing as well. I hope this will help to develop his younger brother's interest in piano. When I am cooking dinner, my two sons play by themselves. After dinner, we have family time. We do some activities together, such as playing chess and reading Bible stories. Of course, in the summer, we go to the library and parks, because it gets dark so late.

Family 7 mother said,

我对我孩子的要求还是满严格的。每天大概都会有两三个小时的时间吧，因为我有三个孩子吗。所以会花的时间多些。如果有作业，我会陪他们完成。有时周末我们会去图书馆看书，他爸爸会带他们去游泳馆锻炼等等。我们希望孩子们除了学校的学习外，可以接触生活的个各方面和积累生活方面的知识。

I am strict with my children. I spend about two to three hours studying with them every day. Since I have three children, it takes me more time to work with each of them. If there is homework, I will help them to finish it. We often go to the library on weekends, and sometimes their daddy takes them to swim. We hope that our children can be exposed to every area of life and accumulate knowledge of every field.

Family 9 mother said, “其实，我觉得每个孩子都是很聪明的，他通过你跟他说他自己的观察，就能学会很多东西，所以父母在家的言行教育是很重要的。Actually, every little child is very smart; he can learn through the way you are talking to him or his own observations, and so parents' involvement of teaching and caring is important at home.” Family 4 mother shared similar opinions: “我相信对孩子的教育的第一人是父母，而不是其它和孩子相关的

人。父母应对孩子进行言传和身教。父母在孩子家庭教育中起着至关重要的作用。家庭教育的好坏同时关系到孩子在学校的表现。I believe parents are significant people and the first teachers for kids, not others. Parents should teach their kids through their actions as much as their words. Parents have an important role in children's education at home. A good education at home is related to a child's performance at school." Family 6 mother of two sons reported, "每天我接他们放回学回来, 就会问你今天在学校都学了什么, 他们就会一一和我分享。这点我感到很欣慰。Every day, when they are back home, I ask them what they learned at school, and they tell me. It makes me feel delight because they like to share with me." During the interviews, all of the participants mentioned it was their responsibility to support their children's learning at home, and they would love to devote time and energy to work with their children at home.

*School-based involvement.* According to the responses from all participants, the types of school-based involvement were attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, attending children's school performances, and chaperoning field trips. All participants reported they would like to be involved in their children's school, regardless of how busy they were and whether or not language and culture were barriers. However, seven of the participants also reported that, undeniably, language and culture are problems during their involvement at school. For example, Family 1 mother said,

只要我儿子学校有任何活动, 再忙我和他爸爸都会尽可能去参加。如果他爸爸没空, 我都一定会去参加, 即便我的英语不是很好。反正有时我儿子还可以给我翻译一下。但是就我个人而言, 我不是很喜欢去我儿子学校。因为我也不知道要怎么和老师还有其他孩子沟通。多半时候是因为听不懂吧, 所以也挺尴尬的。

As long as there are events in my son's school, his dad and I will arrange our time to participate no matter how busy we are. If his dad is not available, I will surely participate, even though my English is not good. My son sometimes is able to translate for me. Personally speaking, I don't like to go to my son's school that much, because I don't know how to communicate with his teachers and other kids. Most of the time, I did not understand what they said, so I was embarrassed.

Family 7 mother stated a different opinion:

我很喜欢参与我孩子的学校活动。他们爸爸很忙，所以参与学校活动这方面就只有我了。我觉得直接参与孩子的学校学习，可以让我第一时间了解他们在学校的情况，而不是被动的在家里等消息。我通过和老师的交谈，课堂的观察，可以了解我孩子的表现，例如是否积极回答老师问题，参与课堂讨论。同时也让我自己知道如何帮助他们在学业上进步。这对我和孩子都有好处。

I enjoy participating in my kids' school events. My husband is so busy in his job, so most of the time I am the only one who can participate in school events. I think the involvement in school events allows me to know how they are doing in school, but not waiting passively at home for a report from the teacher. Through talking with their teachers and observing in the classroom, I can know my kids' performance, such as whether they answer teachers' questions actively and engage in group discussion. Meanwhile, this lets me know how to help my children to improve their study outside of school. It has many benefits for both my children and me by involvement in their school.

Family 5 father shared a similar opinion, “多和学校老师沟通，我可以更多的了解我女儿在学校的表现，知道她哪里不足哪里表现的好。这样我也可以更好的配合老师在家里对我女儿的教育。Communicating with my daughter's schoolteacher and asking about her academic performance at school will help me to know what subjects are my daughter's weaknesses and strengths, so I can assist my daughter at home.” Family 4 mother pointed out,

我愿意做志愿者帮助老师做教学用具，帮老师在课堂上分发材料和帮助老师管理学生。这样，我不仅可以了解我孩子在班上的学习表现，同时我还可以了解她的行为是否规范。因为文化背景，语言的不同，所以我很重视行为这方面，例如她是否尊重老师和同学，是否规范课堂行为。我认为行为规范也是学校表现的一个重要部分。

I am willing to be a volunteer to help the teacher prepare teaching material, distribute materials in the classroom, and monitor classroom management. By doing so, I can observe my daughter in class. Meanwhile, I can know if she is well behaved. Because of the difference in cultural background and language, I pay a lot of attention to her behavior, for instance, whether she respects her teachers and classmates and whether she behaves well in class. I think behavior is also a very important part of school performance.

The mother of Family 8, who had lived in America for 15 years, stated, “我觉得家长的参与也让孩子更积极的参与学校的各项活动，例如各项体育活动。所以即便我和我老公很忙，也

会关注我儿子学校的各项活动，并且尽可能的安排时间参与。I think parental involvement can positively support the child through attending school activities, such as school sports.

Although my husband and I are so busy, I will keep my eyes on my son's school events. When I get any information, I will arrange time and try to attend it.” Family 6 mother had two sons: one is in grade 2 and another is in grade 1. She said, “我儿子才上小学一二年级，所以我没有太多的关注他们在学术上的表现。毕竟现在还小吗。我更多的询问老师他们在学校的行为表现。这样我也知道怎么规范他们的行为，在这个阶段。My two sons are in grade 1 and grade 2, and so I am not concerned about their academic achievement, because I think they are too young. Most of the time, I will ask their teachers about what is happening or what is going on with my sons at school. Then I can know what I should do to support the teacher's work at home.” Family 10 mother said, “我是个全职妈妈，所以我有很多时间参与学校活动，例如做志愿者，参加学校活动。我也很开心我能为我儿子做些事。I am a homemaker, so I can have more time involved in my son's school, such as being a volunteer and joining a field trip. I feel good that I can do something for my son.” All the participants stated in the interviews they believed that parents' support and encouragement are necessary for the children in their education. The participants also stated that children of elementary ages seemed to be more accepting of parents' involvement in their schools. Family 3 mother said, “我儿子很高兴我到他的学校去，他觉得特有面子的感觉。My son is very happy and excited when he knows I will be a volunteer in his class. He looks proud because I am there.”

**Research question 2.** The second research question addressed the topic of factors that affect parental involvement: What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents'

participation in their children's cognitive development? Three categories under this research questions are frustrated involvement, diverse backgrounds, and challenges from home.

Figure 6 *Factors That Affect Parental Involvement*

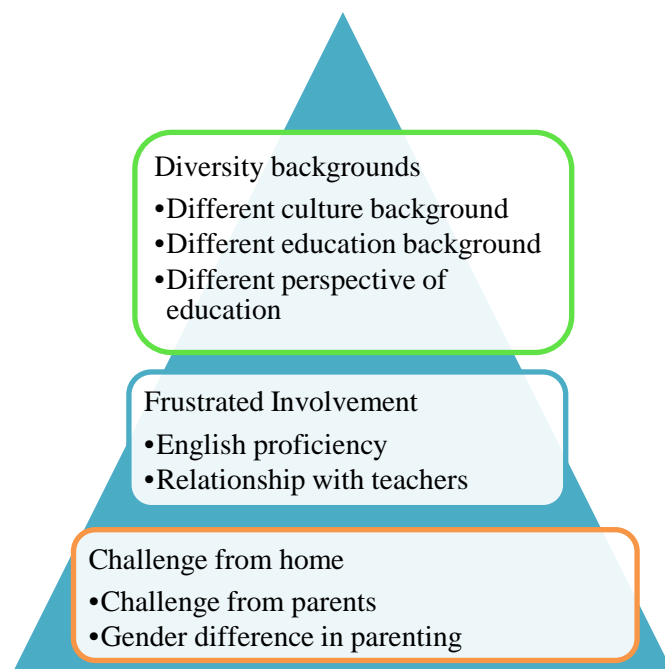


Figure 6's pyramid shows the relationship of each category. The category of challenge from home is on the bottom of the pyramid. It shows usually happened problem in each of ten Chinese immigrant families. According to the Chinese participates' responses, they all have problem in different parenting style and gender in parenting. In the middle part of pyramid is frustrated involvement. Most of Chinese immigrant participate shows they feel unconfident in English proficiency and frustrated in relationship with teachers. In the study, the top of factor that affect Chinese immigrant parents' involvement is diversity background. Based on different culture background, education background, and perspective of education, the ten Chinese immigrant parents mentioned it is difficult for them to find an appropriated way to communicate with teacher and be good involved in their children's schooling. Table 7 shows the percentage of three factors.

Table 7 *Percentage of Each Factor That Affects Parental Involvement*

	Frustrated Involvement	Diverse Backgrounds	Challenges from Home
Frequency of participants' responses	10	10	10
Percentage of participants	100%	100%	100%
Codes/Total codes	110/302	135/302	57/302
Percentage of codes	36.4%	44.7%	18.9%

The data in Table 7 describe the percentage of participants' responses of factors that affect the parents' involvement in their children's school. One hundred percent of participants mentioned they had problems during the involvement in their children's learning. According to the data from participants' responses, 110 codes were related to frustrated involvement; 135 codes were related to diverse backgrounds; and 57 codes were related to challenges from home. The highest percentage was 44.7% on diverse background, because most of the participant mentioned they had difficulty building relationships with American teachers, and 36.4% from the participants' responses showed frustrated involvement. For example, few participants mentioned lacking linguistic ability during involvement at school. The last 18.9% believed problems from home affect parents' involvement in their children's learning.

*Frustrated involvement.* Limited English proficiency contributed to the participants' unsatisfactory experiences during communication with schoolteachers. All of the parents in the interviews had resided in the United States at least eight years. The majority of the participants mentioned that their linguistic ability was a problem but not the biggest barrier when they were

involved in their children's education. Family 7 mother said, “我不认为我有任何交流上的问题。当然我指的是语言。I do not think I have any problem with the English language. Of course, I only mean the language ability, not relevant other parts.” However, Family 1 mother had a different response: “我们在中国学的英语 大多是哑巴英语。 为什么呢， 光是书本上的，到了这里，遇到实际问题，就不会表达了。要说读和看应该没什么问题， 我觉得我在表达方面最欠缺。这个需要锻炼。Our English is a “mute” English, which means we might not have a problem with reading, but we cannot use the language to express our ideas. I think it is my weakness in communication. It must be improved.” Family 9 mother said, “虽然我觉得我没有什么交流的障碍，但是我同事讲一些个笑话时，我还是不知道如何和他对话。我觉得这和语言能力无关，还是我们成长环境不同。Although I do not think language is my communication barrier, I still cannot exchange jokes with my colleagues. I think it is the problem of cultural environment, not language ability.” Family 3 mother said, “我觉得我的英语水平需要不断的提高，不然慢慢的我都要看不懂我儿子的课本了。If I do not improve my English proficiency, one day I might lack understanding of the academic language used in my son's schools.” Family 10 mother told a story about her son and her:

如果我不加强我的语言能力，不要说和老师沟通了，就是和我儿子沟通起来也会比较费劲。例如有一次，我和我儿子说到他的作业。 我不知道要如何更好的用英文解释， 而我儿子也不明白我说的中文意思。我们两在这个问题上花费了很长时间。最后，我儿子放弃与我的讨论。我们俩都很不开心。他说与其和我解释这个问题，不如就把问题留哪里算了。

If I do not improve my English, I will have difficulty in communicating with my son's teacher and even have trouble communicating with my son. For example, as my son and I were discussing his homework, I did not know how to explain it better in English, and my son did not understand my meaning in Chinese. We spent a long time on this problem. Eventually, my son gave up discussing the problem with me. We ended up being unhappy. He said he would rather let the problem be than get an explanation from me.

Another challenge experienced by the Chinese immigrant parents was establishing friendships with American teachers. As reported by a number of Chinese immigrant parents in the study, in China, it was very common and easy for them to establish more personal relationships with schoolteachers, for example, to talk with teachers about their children's education or other issues, give gifts to teachers on holidays, or have dinner with teachers. However, when facing American teachers, they have no idea how to make friendships with them due to different cultural and language backgrounds. Family 3 mother told me another story:

如果是在中国，面对一个中国老师，最起码我们有一样的语言和相似的文化背景，我也知道怎样和老师沟通和建立良好的关系。可是现在我面对的是一个美国老师，我不知道该如何进行一个有效的沟通。例如我不知道一些话我该怎么表达，我也不确定老师是否完全理解我的意思。这中间又会不会存在相互误解的可能。总之，在语言表达和与老师关系的建立方面我还是有些不自信的地方。

If I were in China, at least Chinese teachers and I share the same language and cultural background. And I know how to communicate with teachers and build a good relationship with the teacher. But I am currently facing an American teacher, and I do not know how to effectively communicate. For instance, I do not know how to convey some words more meaningfully. I am not sure we understand each other a hundred percent. Does there exist any misunderstanding between the teacher and me? In short, I am not confident in language and building relationships with American teachers.

Family 1 mother said,

你说要是在中国，家长和老师之间很容易建立关系。例如咱给老师送点礼物什么的，请老师吃个饭，和老师聊聊天。这都可以建立感情。可是，这些在美国就行不通啊。有时问老师，我儿子在学校表现怎么样啊，老师都说挺好挺好的。我也就不知道该如何在说下去了。另外，我也不是很喜欢去我儿子他们学校做志愿者。有时候，觉得自己处在那里傻乎乎的不知道该做什么，不该做什么。再加上英语一般，也不能与老师很好交流。而且，我老公也说：“你英语又不怎么好，去哪里也不知道要干什么。”也许我老公说的也对。

In China, it is easy for parents to build relationships with teachers. For instance, we can give gifts to teachers, invite teachers for dinner, or freely chat with teachers. These help to develop relationships. However, it does not work in the U.S. Sometimes when I asked my son's teacher how he was doing in school, the teacher usually told me he was doing good. And then I did not know how to continue the conversation. In addition, I do not like to volunteer in my son's school. Sometimes I felt silly there because I did not know what I should do and what I should not do. And my English is not good enough to communicate with his teacher. My husband said to me, "Your English is not good and



you do not know what to do in his classroom.” Perhaps my husband is right.

The mother said, based on Chinese culture, giving gifts to the teacher is a common practice to show parents’ respect and gratitude to the teacher. However, the mother reported that she was not sure whether it is appropriate to keep this tradition of giving teachers gifts in America.

Feeling embarrassed, Family 10 mother responded, “我不知道怎么处理在送礼给老师这件事上。老师会喜欢什么样的礼物？花多少钱在买礼物上会比较合适？对于我来说这些都是问题。I do not how to deal with the problem of giving a gift to the teacher. What kind of gift will be expected for the teacher? How much money should I spend for a gift? It is hard for me to deal with it.”

*Diverse backgrounds.* The factors of different cultural backgrounds, educational backgrounds, and perspectives of education were mentioned from all participants during the interviews. The majority of participants believed that diverse backgrounds create many barriers for them when they are involved in their children’s education. Family 1 mother said, “美国人的教育观点吧，就是给孩子足够的自由，让他们自己选择自己的兴趣爱好。可是咱中国父母做不到啊。如果咱不管不问，那孩子会发展成什么样啊。In the American culture, parents respect their children’s interests. American parents provide children too much freedom. To be a Chinese parent, I cannot provide too much freedom and too little discipline for my child. It is giving too many responsibilities to children and is not good for the children’s future development.” Family 4 mother said,

例如我女儿，她有很多中国式的习惯和行为。这些习惯和行为未必是美国人可以接受的。如果我不对她的行为做管理和约束，就有可能对她在学校的生活造成不好的影响。小孩子就是小孩子，她还没有分辨对错的能力，这时候就需要做家长的来帮助他们判断。我觉得家长对孩子的管理和引导也有助于孩子在学校得到老师的认可。

My daughter has many behaviors within the Chinese culture, which an American might not be able to accept. If I have a lack of control and guidance for my daughter, these behaviors will bring troubles to her school life. Kids are kids; they are not able to make correct judgments in many cases. So I think parents' disciplining and guiding the children are good for them to be accepted at school.

Family 10 mother pointed out, “我肯定要管我儿子了。不光是学习，交朋友什么的都是要管的。Of course, I monitor my son anytime and anywhere, not just monitoring his academics, but also when he makes friends. I must ensure a good moral education for my son.” Family 6 mother said,

我儿子他们喜欢玩ipad，在那上面看一些视频什么的。当然，我不反对他们用ipad看视频，这也是可以帮助他们了解更多的课本之外的知识。也是他们在学习之后的寓教于乐吗。但是有是他就玩过头了，不想看书，总是拿着ipad玩。这时，我就要规定他们看ipad的时间。帮他们制定一个好的时间规划。中国不是有句老话吗“玩物丧志”，我觉得就是这个道理。

My sons like to play on the iPad. They watch some videos on it. Of course, I am not against it because it helps them broaden their knowledge more than textbooks. After all, it is an era of science and technology. But sometimes they went beyond the limit. They did not want to do homework and only just played on the iPad. Then I needed to allocate time for my sons to study and play on the iPad. This is a Chinese saying: “excessive attention to trivialities, that you have no serious ambition.” I think that is true.

Family 3 mother said,

我觉得文化背景的差异是很大的一个障碍。比如说，我和我老公是第一代移民，我们初到美国时都已经快三十了，对我们而言，这里一切都是陌生的。而且刚来吗，怎么都有些沟通上的障碍。而我儿子从小受的是美式的教育。也没有语言上的问题。这和我们从小受的教育和生活的经历是完全不同的。

I feel a different cultural background is the biggest barrier to me. For example, my husband and I are the first immigration generation in our family. When we came to America, we were close to 30 years old. With the new environment, new life, and language barriers, everything was so hard for us. We had a long time to adjust ourselves. However, for my son, he was born in the United States, accepts American education, and has no problem with linguistics. These are totally different background experiences for us.

All participants believed that different backgrounds relating to culture and education are significant barriers to them during participation in their children's education. Family 9 mother

mentioned, “有时我很想和我儿子的老师沟通，可是我不知道要怎么做。因为文化的不同吗，我又没有在美国受过系统的教育，没有这方面的知识。又怕自己的一些行为会让老师不高兴。 Sometimes I would like to have a conversation with my son’s teacher. However, I do not know what to do and how to do it. Based on different cultural and educational backgrounds, I worried my behaviors would make each of us feel uncomfortable.” Family 6 mother pointed out, “我不理解为什么所有的课程，例如数学，英语，科学知识等等的课程全部由一个老师来教。那老师又是怎么样来同时教物理和艺术这两门课呢。这在中国的学校是完全不可能发生的。 I do not understand why all subjects, such as math, English, science, and others, are taught by one teacher in my son’s school. I cannot imagine—how does one teacher work for all different subjects? How does a teacher deal with subjects such as art and physical education? Anyway, it is impossible in a Chinese school.”

*Challenges from home.* As it was demonstrated in Figure 6, the challenges from home was one of the categories in this research question. Challenges from home represented the problems parents have while supporting their children’s education inside the family. According to the parents’ responses, the two factors of challenges from parents and gender difference in parenting were identified to describe the challenges from home. Two mothers who had a busy work schedule mentioned that home challenges refer to work and life challenges that obstruct their involvement in their children’s education. In the 10 families, there were two families where both parents were working parents. The mothers from the two families stated they lacked sufficient time to be involved in their children’s education. Family 8 mother explained, “中国式的家庭就是做妈妈的，白天要上班，晚上回家了要做饭照顾一家人。一天工作下来，从时间上来说，根本没有那么多。精力上也是。等你打理完一切了，孩子也要睡觉了。 In a

Chinese family lifestyle, to be a mom, I have to work during the daytime, and then after I come back home, I need to take care of everything at home. Actually, I do not have too much time and energy to take care of my children after work. Sometimes, when I have finished everything, the children have already gone to bed.” Family 9 mother said, “我和我老公都上班。虽然时间精力都有限，但是也尽力抽时间陪孩子。My husband and I are both working parents. Although it is difficult for us to pay more attention to and spend more time with our children, we try our best to do it.”

Other participants remarked that Chinese parents want to control their children and ask them to obey the parents’ orders. Family 7 mother said, “有时候，我会和我孩子的老师在某些事有不同的观点。这时我孩子就会觉得很迷惑。有时候孩子想按照他们的方式，但是这是我不接受的。如果我坚持我的方法去纠正他们，他们就会觉得很难以接受。Sometimes my teaching method is different from my children’s teachers, and that may confuse my children. Sometimes they want to do things in their own way, which I may not agree with. If I insist on correcting them, they find it hard to accept.” Family 3 mother said, “那我小时候，那是父母说什么，我就做什么，没有那么多问题的。When I was a child, I just obeyed what my parents said and followed directions without any questions.” Family 1 mother explained, “就咱们中国而言，为孩子们选择一个好的学校，好的专业，规划一个好的未来就是做父母的责任。孩子们不懂，有时也不一定喜欢，但是他们必须要听从我们做父母的。我们也是为他们好啊。In Chinese culture, it is the parents’ responsibility to take care of their children, for example, choose a better school and make decisions about the major in school. Children may not understand why their parents do this for them and may not like the parents’ decisions for them, but they have to follow their parents. The parents hope their children have a better life in the

future.” Family 5 father pointed out a different opinion, “我也想我女儿都听我的安排，但是我同时也要尊重她的选择。如果她不喜欢，那我也没办法。Of course, I want my daughter to follow my decision, but I also should respect her choice. If she does not like the decision I made for her, I think I will not push her.”

In addition, the majority of participants remarked that the parents played different individual roles in the parenting of their children. In 10 families, only two families had both parents working, and in the other eight families, the father worked and the mother was a homemaker. Six of the eight mothers in the interviews mentioned that in their homes, their roles were taking care of children, communicating with schoolteachers, reading to their children, tutoring children’s homework, and dropping off and picking up children after extracurricular activities. Family 10 mother said, “我儿子放学回来，我陪他学习，陪他读书。When my son comes back home, I monitor my son as he does his homework.” Family 4 mother said, “我每天给我女儿读书在她睡觉前。I started to read books to my daughter at bedtime.” Family 1 mother mentioned, “那我儿子他爸爸工作忙，那就只有我接送他去学校和国际象棋课。有时只有我去开家长会。His daddy is so busy with his work, so it is my job to drop off and pick up my son at school and chess class. Sometimes, I am the only person to attend my son’s parent-teacher conferences.”

Two fathers in the interviews explained that most of the time they contributed to specific areas in their children’s lives. Family 2 father said, “我是学物理的吗，所以我主要负责我女儿的数学上的一些问题。其它的吗，都是她妈妈负责。My major is materials physics, so most of the time I will take care of more questions on math for my daughter. Her mother will take care of other subjects in my daughter’s life.” Family 3 mother said, “我儿子他爸就是陪他

下下棋。My husband plays chess with my son during family time.” Family 5 father said, “我会带我女儿去公园玩，去骑自行车，去游泳。这都在周末。On the weekends, I bring my daughter to play in the park, ride a bicycle, and to swim.”

**Research question 3.** The purpose of the third research question was to solicit opinions from the 10 Chinese immigrant parents regarding Chinese parental involvement in children’s education. According to the data from the interviews, language proficiency, cultural background, and relationship building with teachers were the three main problems when they participated in their children’s school. Participants provided their own ideas and suggestions to help immigrant parents overcome the barriers. The third research question asked what strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parents’ involvement in their children’s education?

Figure 7 *Factors of Building Relationships*

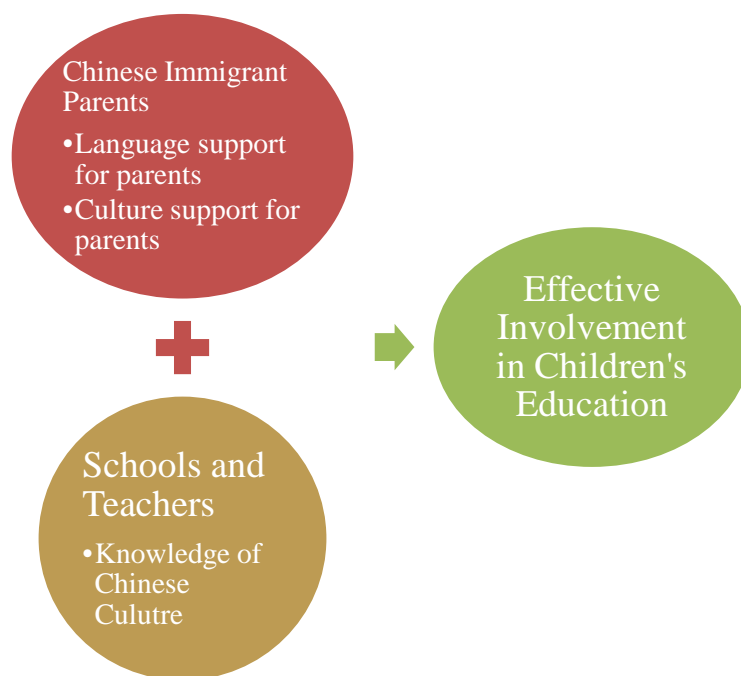


Figure 7 shows the relationship of Chinese immigrant parents and schools and teachers. All of the participants believed that meaningful parental involvement in education was critical to

their children's academic achievement, and also parents have a major influence in their children's achievement in school and life. However, schools and teachers are another important factor. The ten Chinese immigrant parents believe that educating their children is not only parents' or teachers' responsibility. Both parents and teachers must have collaboration work and make effective involvement in children's education. In the study, some problems still existed for the ten Chinese immigrant parents when they participated in their children's education. The majority of the Chinese immigrant parents in the interviews mentioned that language often factored as one of barriers to communication, understanding, and relationship building among immigrant parents, teachers, and other school staff. Family 1 mother stated, “我英语不好，我觉得要是学校能够提供翻译人员，那就能够很好的帮助我和老师的沟通。当然，我自己也是要加强我的英语学习的。My English is not good. If the school can support a translator for us, I think it would benefit both the teacher and Chinese immigrant parents to have effective communication. Of course, I need to improve English learning in my life.”

Family 6 mother mentioned, “再怎么讲，英语也不是我们的母语，都是后来学的。所以有时候还是会存在这样那样的问题，不论你是否愿意。Anyway, English is not my first language. We learned the English language when we were in middle school. Therefore, the problem exists, whether you like it or not.”

Family 10 mother said, “作为英语是第二语言的我们，还是需要在生活中不断的练习和提高我们的语言能力。As an English as a second language learner, we still need to improve our language ability in our life.” Family 3 mother stated that different cultural values and unfamiliarity with American culture and school systems affected her involvement in her son's schooling. Family 2 father pointed out a similar opinion as the Family 3 mother:

我们叫美国人老外，”其实在这里，我们自己才是“老外。”做为“老外”，我们对美国的教育体系，文化都存在着不清楚不明白的地方。加之文化背景的不同，所以在遇到问题时 就不知道该怎么说，找谁去说。因此我觉得学校应该为我们这些“老外”提供一些详细的对学校教学的介绍。让我们更好的了解学校，了解老师。这样也帮助我们建立一个关于美国学校教育文化的背景知识。

We call American people “foreigners.” In fact, we are real foreigners here. As foreigners, we do not have a clear understanding of the American educational system and culture. I mean we do not have an educational background through K-12 in America. Moreover, due to the different cultural background, I do not know how to express myself and whom I can talk to when I encounter a problem. So I think the school should provide someone who can inform everything about the school to foreigners like us. It can help us to know the school and the teachers better. It also helps us build background knowledge of the American school education.

All the participants believed that it is both the parents and teachers’ responsibility to educate the children. It is a collaborative work between the parents and teachers. Family 4 mother said,

对于孩子的教育，不是我单方面努力就能实现的。这需要学校，老师和家长的相互配合完成。我要支持学校的老师来对孩子进行一个有效的教育。如果我不支持的话，老师对孩子的教育是无效的或是效率不高的。同时我也要努力把学校教育和家庭教育能够很好的衔接在一起。这就需要老师和家长的配合。我觉得老师也需要有这方面关于中国文化，教育的背景知识。这样我们也好建立相互的了解。避免一些因为文化不同而造成的不愉快。

My children’s education cannot be accomplished by my own effort. School, teachers, and parents should collaborate. I want to support the schoolteachers to educate my kids effectively. If I do not do that, the teachers’ education for my kids is not effective. Meanwhile, I want to make efforts to connect school-based education and home-based education that is good to coordinate work between teachers and parents. I think the teachers also need the background knowledge of Chinese culture and education value. And it is helpful for us to understand each other and avoid something unpleasant due to the cultural difference.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, qualitative interviews with two Chinese immigrant fathers and eight Chinese immigrant mothers were used to explore their behaviors, perspectives, and barriers of involvement in the education of their elementary schoolchildren in the United States. Through



the interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents, the study aimed to gain an understanding of how Chinese immigrant parents' sociocultural beliefs and life experiences influence their involvement. The discussion and conclusion about the findings will be represented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This qualitative study used individual interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents to collect the data. The ten Chinese immigrant parents emigrated from mainland China and stayed in America at least eight years. Qualitative interviews were the main method of data collecting, which allowed the Chinese immigrant parents to describe their personal experiences of involvement and provide rich data regarding involvement in their elementary children's education in America. The study exposed that all Chinese immigrant parents who participated in this study were involved in their children's education inside and outside of school. The ten Chinese immigrant parents believed that involvement in their children's education was beneficial for both parents and children. However, all of the participating Chinese immigrants pointed out some barriers that were crucial issues and impacted their involvement. This chapter presents several themes that emerged from the findings related to the barriers. The discussion is based on the findings from individual interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents in this study, along with other research literature. The purpose of the recommendations was to help Chinese immigrant parents and American teachers gain a better understanding of each other and what research can be continued in the future.

#### **Summary of the Results**

The findings in Chapter 4 are regarding the experience of 10 Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education. The study explored what are the 10 Chinese immigrant parents' behaviors, perspectives, and barriers of involvement, and how they adjust themselves

during the involvement in their children's education. The 10 participating Chinese parents in this study immigrated to the United States for different reasons, including getting a better education for their children, pursuing graduate study, seeking a better life for their family, and finding an advanced career. The 10 Chinese immigrant parents were all from mainland China and had lived in the United States at least eight years. During their many years in America, some families made smooth adjustments in immigration, and some did not. However, all participants in the study believed their involvement led to their children having more positive attitudes towards learning, better school performance (especially academic performance), fewer behavioral problems at school, and an increase in self-esteem. In the study interviews, all participating Chinese parents mentioned they were involved in their children's school activities, including parent-teacher conferences, school performances, and communication with teachers. Some mothers in the study who were homemakers sometimes volunteered in their children's classes. Due to many years living in America, most of parents thought language competency was not a big problem for them to have meaningful conversations with teachers. The ten Chinese immigrant participants in the study stated their involvement in their children's education also mutually benefited them with chances to know their children's behavior at school, the school's and teacher's requirements, and an understanding of the school's curriculum and programs. Just as one mother mentioned, “通过参与，在家我可以更好的帮助我的孩子。During the involvement, I can do better at helping my children at home.” However, one mother said sometimes she still felt a little weak in language. For example, the mother worried about not pronouncing the teacher's name correctly. She said, “我担心我的发音关于老师的名字。有时候，我不能很准确的说对老师的名字。这让我很尴尬。你知道，在中国，如果你说错别人的名字是很不礼貌的。I am worried about my pronunciation of the teacher's name. Sometimes, it is hard for me to pronounce the

teacher's name correctly the first time. It makes me very embarrassed. You know, in Chinese culture, it is impolite if you speak a wrong name.”

In the study, the participants provided several problems of involvement, for example, lack of time, unfamiliarity with American school culture, and a different cultural perspective.

Family 9 mother just found a new job recently. She said, “我刚刚得到以现在的工作。我感到压力很大。然而，学校的活动多半都是在周内的时间举行，可是这个时间对于我来说有时又很难有空参加。I just got my present job. There is a lot of pressure at work. However, the school activities usually take place during weekdays, and so sometimes it is hard for me to participate.” Family 1 mother mentioned,

我并不是经常出现在我儿子的课堂上。说实话，我不是足够的熟悉美国的老师和文化。在中国，家长是不被要求参与到孩子的课堂学习中的。这与美国的教育方式是不同的。所以啊，当我做志愿者时，我就担心我做的有没有按老师的要求，毕竟我没有这方面的经验啊。

I do not often get involved in my son's class. Actually, I am not familiar with the American teacher and American culture. In China, parents are not required to be involved in the children's class. It is a different culture in America. Thus, when I was a volunteer in his classroom, I was worried about doing it in a correct way, because I do not have these experiences.

Some participants stated, based on Chinese cultural value, they highly respected and trusted the teacher. They believed the teacher would take care of their children at school. Family 10 mother said, “如果我过多的询问老师我孩子在学校的表现，就感觉我好想不信任老师一样。If I ask the teacher too much about how my sons are doing in school, it looks like I am not trusting the teacher.” According to the 10 Chinese immigrant parents reported in the interviews, the top three major factors influencing their involvement in this study were parenting style, the intergenerational gap, and acculturation challenges.

**Parenting style.** Some researchers have indicated that the Chinese immigrant parents who attend college or graduate school in America are more knowledgeable about the U.S. school system than those without educational experience in America (Chen, 2013; Wang, 2008). Chen (2013) also stated the parents hold high educational expectations for their children, regardless of the parents' educational levels. Most of the Chinese immigrant parents in this study earned higher educational degrees in American universities. They all had a different understanding of the meaning of success, different educational expectations for their children, and different parenting styles, but almost all had high educational expectations for their children. The Chinese immigrant parents in this study believed that encouraging their children to attend a university will enable their children to find well-paying jobs after graduation. Family 3 mother mentioned, “如果我儿子能够进入好大学，当然这对于他将来只会是百利而无一害。If my son can attend a top-tier college, of course the benefits will be profound for him.” All of the Chinese immigrant parents in the study assigned their children extra homework, including math and reading, and extra activities, including playing the piano, playing the violin, and playing sports.

**Traditional Chinese parenting.** Based on traditional Chinese parenting, all of the Chinese immigrant participants in the study believed that focusing on their children's academic achievements was helping their children prepare for attending high-ranking universities. For example, Family 3 father said his daughter played the piano and flute when she was young and had won several prizes in local competitions, but the father explained, “她不需要在这方面多有成就，我们就是希望这个特长和奖状能够对她将来申请好的大学做到帮助。She does not need to be a famous, just use these records of winning the competitions as a resource to help her get into the best university in the future.” All of the Chinese immigrant parents in the current study required their children to learn to play one or two instruments, such as piano and violin.

Some children learned both instruments. Family 1 mother said, “我们教会的孩子基本都会弹钢琴拉小提琴什么的。我也希望培养我儿子音乐方面的兴趣。我也没得选啊，总不想我儿子落后与其他人吧。The children in our church all learned to play piano or violin. I also foster my son to be interested in playing an instrument. I have no choice. I do not want my son behind others.”

Most of the Chinese immigrant parents in this study pointed out a similar opinion that sometimes their children may not inwardly want to do extra home activities, such as playing instruments. Family 6 mother explained, “我知道有时我孩子就是被我逼着去做些他未必喜欢但我又要求的事。但是我确信就我的经验而言，我给我孩子做的决定都是对他好的。I know sometimes if my children are forced to obey my order, they are unlikely to go in the direction I want them to pursue. However, I believe that my decisions are the best for my children based on my many years of life experiences.” In the study, many Chinese immigrant parents have the same opinion that they are traditional Chinese parents, even if they have been in America a long time. Their children must follow their parents’ orders at home unless the children leave home and do not need financial support from their parents. The parents have as much direct pressure to accomplish goals based upon their values.

All of the Chinese immigrant parents believed that punishment is necessary for their children’s misconducts, but physical punishment is not used well in America. Family 8 mother said, “在我们这一代，什么人没挨过打啊。挨打在中国是在寻常不过的事了。可是在美国，那是绝对行不通。In my generation, everyone experienced physical punishment when we were children. It usually happened in every Chinese family. In America, [she shakes her head] we are not allowed to do this.” Some Chinese immigrant parents in the study felt confused about

how to correctly punish their children's misconducts. Family 10 mother said, "Sometimes, I want to physically punish, but I worry about the risk after the punishment. I just punish very lightly then stop." Some in the study adopted the American way, like rewarding or encouraging the children to do what they want them to do. All of the participating parents felt frustrated when their Chinese traditional parenting style conflicted with the American parenting style.

**Christian parenting.** Almost all of the Chinese immigrant parents considered they were keeping their traditional Chinese parenting style, but on the other side, they had changed some ways of parenting during the process of parenting and acculturation. All of the Chinese immigrant parents in this study became Christians after immigrating. Nine families' parents were all baptized after coming to the United States, except one family's parents; they were Christians when they were in China. All of the Chinese immigrant parents wholeheartedly received God as their Savior. Some Chinese immigrant parents stated that based on the Bible, the parents should encourage their children's talents and interests and rarely push their children to do what they do not enjoy, because God makes everyone with unique strengths. However, this philosophy is in contrast to traditional Chinese parenting, and this confuses Chinese parents about their parenting. Some Chinese immigrant parents emphasized that in China, parents seldom apologized to their children, but after they became Christians, they believed that every human being makes mistakes based on the Bible, and they thought it was not hard to apologize to their children. Family 9 mother said, "如若我们出现歧义, 我们就会去在圣经神的话语中寻求帮助。我们会以神的话来做准则。If we have a disagreement, we will seek from the Bible to find the answer. We are following the code of conduct presented in the Bible." Family 3 mother said, "我很为我的儿子感到骄傲, 因为他在六岁的时候就自己决定耶稣做他的救主, 没有什么比这个更荣耀的了。I am so proud of my son. He accepted Christ when he was 6 years old. Nothing else

compared to that.” Chinese immigrant parents in the study more or less changed their traditional parental expectations of their children after becoming Christians. Although the parents believed that their children’s academic achievement is important for their children’s future life, they also believed serving God is another expectation for their children.

**Intergenerational gap.** Chinese immigrant parents hold to their traditional Chinese culture and values, which may cause an acculturation gap with their U.S. raised children (Kwak, 2003). Rick and Forward (1992) pointed out children in immigrant Chinese families have wide exposure and interaction with their host culture daily and more quickly adopt new values and lifestyles than their immigrant parents. In contrast, the immigrant parents have had a well-established identity of home culture, so they may have more difficulty obtaining comfort with the new culture and integrating into the host culture like their children (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000). Chinese immigrant parents tend to maintain traditional values from their heritage culture, but their children are influenced by the individualistic values of American culture. Therefore, “being Chinese” has different meanings for Chinese immigrant parents and their children (McKay & Wong, 1996). In this study, most of the Chinese immigrant parents were concerned about the differences between Chinese and American cultures causing an extra gap between them and their children.

According to the interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents, most of the parents pointed out as their children grow up, it were more difficult for them to understand each other. Family 3 father said, “我女儿想把头发染成紫色，我就告诉她没门，别想。她很理解为什  
么我不准许。我也不明白好好地染什么紫色。不伦不类的，什么样啊。My daughter wants to dye her hair purple, and I told her to forget it. She does not understand why I am not allowing it, and I also do not understand why she wants to do it. Neither fish nor fowl.” Based on Chinese



culture, for children, “any deviation from the norm may garner undesired attention. Conformity in appearance and behavior is highly valued” (Huang, Ying, & Arganza, 2003, p. 206). The children from Chinese immigrant families are highly acculturated by attending U.S. schools and having native-speaking friends. They are influenced by American culture and feel confused about their parents’ demands related to Chinese culture. The children feel confused about their identity. Six of the mothers in the study were deeply concerned about how to answer their children’s question of “Who am I?” Family 3 mother said,

我们的中国朋友看我孩子是美国人，但是他会说中文，吃中国饭，过中国的节日。在学校，我孩子的同学老师看他是中国人。我儿子又是问我，他到底该和别人介绍自己是中国人呢，还是美国人呢。我也不知道怎么准确的回答他。  
Our Chinese friends take my son as an American, but he speaks Chinese, eats Chinese food, and celebrates some Chinese festivals. At school, his classmates and teacher take him as Chinese. My son asked me, how does he introduce himself to a stranger? A Chinese? Or an American? I do not know how to explain it.

As a result, an intergenerational gap between Chinese immigrant parents and their children becomes wider and wider.

Some Chinese immigrant parents in the study mentioned another intergenerational gap represented as language competency. Most of the children from the 10 Chinese immigrant families were born in America, and they attended school when they were old enough. The children did not have any problems in their language competency, even if they had a Chinese living style in their daily life, such as speaking Chinese Mandarin and having Chinese friends. In contrast, compared with their children, language competency was not strength of the Chinese immigrant parents. The ten Chinese immigrant parents had high levels of education. It meant that they had studied English for at least six years in high school and at least two years in college. English is a compulsory course for over 90% of all college students in China (Xu, 2002). However, when the Chinese immigrant parents came to America, the language was still a barrier

to them. Most of Chinese immigrant parents commented they could pass the English tests required for immigration as a skilled worker, but they could not communicate as freely as they wished in English with their children's teachers or their peers, even with their children. Family 4 mother said, “对于我来说, 英语作为一个表现阅读和写作能力比作为一个沟通工具更为容易些。For me, English is easier as a reading or writing skill than as a tool for communication.”

Some Chinese immigrant mothers mentioned in the interviews when they have a conversation with their children's teacher, their children were faster to catch and understand the teacher's meaning than they were. When they asked their children to explain for them, the children looked unwilling. On the other hand, the Chinese immigrant parents were worried about their children feeling disappointed in them. The barrier in communication more or less undermined and affected their authority in their children's eyes. “Many parents with knowledge of English still lack understanding of its nuances or the academic language used in schools” (Sobel&Kugler, 2007, p. 64). Some Chinese immigrant parents commented most of time they felt frustrated to make conversation with their children because they do not have a clear explanation of their children's academic question in English, and the children are also not proficient at Chinese. Neither language could be effectively used between them and their children when they talked about their homework.

While Chinese immigrant parents try to find an appropriate balance between their traditional cultural values and American culture, they are forced to adapt to the host culture's expectation for their children. However, most of the Chinese immigrant parents said they enjoyed the American educational philosophy of “joy in learning,” but they still required their children to accomplish their high expectations of their children's academic achievement. Family 7 mother said, “我孩子问我为什么对他们有那么多的要求而他们的朋友都没有。我只告诉

他因为你的父母是中国人。My children asked me why they have many expectations that their American friends did not have. I told them because your parents are Chinese.” Several Chinese immigrant parents in the study said their children could not understand the relationship between great academic achievement and being Chinese. The Chinese immigrant parents stated in the study they try to maintain Chinese traditions in daily life, because they do not want their children to forget their Chinese heritage. The Chinese immigrant parents wished to learn more about mainstream culture, but sometimes it was difficult for them to achieve this goal. Chi (2012) stated that acculturation is a process of change, and Chinese immigrant parents in the process acculturate to the new culture at a slower rate than do their children. A greater parental acculturation might enable Chinese immigrant parents to culturally and socially integrate into the host culture so as to foster positive parenting involvement through this process (Zhong, 2011).

**Acculturation challenges.** The participating Chinese immigrants believed that acculturation was a crucial event in their life. In the interviews with the 10 Chinese immigrant parents, they all expressed they had experienced less acculturation to American culture than their children, which brought significant problems of involvement in their children’s schooling. The literature stated that intergenerational gaps in acculturation between immigrant parents and their children result in stressful parenthood (Liu, 2014), including less communication, less understanding, and less involvement. The findings of this study supported the results. Most of Chinese immigrant parents indicated due to the larger intergenerational gap with their children, the more problematic was their involvement. The Chinese immigrant parents stated that although they had resided in America for a long time, they still kept some parenting philosophy under the Confucian mottos. Family 5 father illustrated how he used *guan* and *jiao* to discipline his daughter to follow his rules at home. Family 5 father said, “My daughter may not understand the

meaning of my parenting behavior, but she follows my authority because she is told to do so.”

The traditional values of Confucius held by Chinese immigrant parents positively affect their children’s academic performance in school. Chinese immigrant parents stress academic achieving excellence by learning at school and working hard at home. It is different than the concern in American culture to nurture children’s originality and creativity and to enhance children’s self-esteem and confidence. The Chinese immigrant parents became aware that the expectation of academics under American culture did not match their requirement for their children. Some Chinese immigrant parents mentioned they felt disappointed about their children’s school and teacher, because most of time in the class the children are playing. Some parents commented the teacher always told them how their children were great at school, but the teachers were not much concerned about academic outcomes. Under Chinese culture, parents focus on helping their children make a career choice that leads to economic success and a good life. One mother said her son’s teacher did not understand why she had many questions about her son’s academic outcomes. The Chinese immigrant parents in the study also indicated they still maintained high-academic standards for their children, but they also were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of American culture and Chinese culture. They tried to adjust their traditional Chinese parenting to an American context.

### **The Factors in Other Research**

The United States is becoming more diverse with growing numbers of immigrants from different cultures around the world. Consequently, American schools have enrolled an increasing number of children who are from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Chinese immigrant parents and children are the fastest growing minority group in the United States (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002). In the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report, the Asian population grew over three

times faster than the total population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) and has recently passed Hispanics as the largest group of immigrants in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2013). The Chinese immigrant has been the largest Asian subgroup (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002). Chinese immigrant parents face various challenges, including language barriers, social status, and cultural values. Some researchers have documented that while parental involvement in schools has a positive effect on children's academic achievement, immigrant parents who are Asian exhibit lower levels of participation with schools than white parents (Desimone, 1999; Portes & MacLeod, 1996). However, researchers have also noted that many parents who come from minority groups have expressed a desire to be involved in their children's school activities (Huang & Gibbs, 1992), but the problems still exist during their involvement. In this section, the study reviewed literature related to the barriers of Chinese parental involvement, then compared other researcher's finding with this study's findings.

**Family income.** Some literature stated that family income is one of the family demographic characteristics that influence parents' involvement in their children's education (Flour, 2005; Mandell & Sweet, 2005; Zhong, 2014). The research indicated that parents from high-income families can invest more financial support to their children's education than parents from low-income families (Kao & Tienda, 1998). Family income not only influences the ability to support financially, but it also influences parents' collaboration with teachers and schools (Hill & Craft, 2003; Zhong, 2011). The research revealed that parents with a higher income background are more likely to collaborate with their children's teachers (Zhong, 2011), and they believe they have more rights that entitle them to be involved in school (Yonezawa, 2000). In contrast, parents from low-income backgrounds have less confidence in communicating with their children's teachers (Benson & Martin, 2003). The research stressed that some Chinese

immigrant parents in the working class do not have adequate time, energy, and educational ability to nurture their children's education (Lee, 2006). The socioeconomic status is a significant component that influences parents' involvement in their children's school. In this study, all of the participating Chinese immigrants were middle-class families. Two of the 10 families' father and mother were both working parents. The other seven families' fathers and one family's mother had a great job in local companies. The 10 Chinese immigrant parents have a good financial support in their children's education. However, other researchers have pointed out that family income alone does not significantly influence parental involvement (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, & Urajnik, 2002); other factors, such as educational background, may also predict the level of involvement (Anguiano, 2004).

**Educational background.** Turner and Johnson (2003) stated the parents' educational backgrounds make a unique, positive contribution to parenting, which influences children's academic outcomes. In this study, parents from 10 Chinese immigrant families all achieved higher levels of education. A number of Chinese immigrant parents in the study had earned higher educational degrees from American universities. The parents' successful educational experiences may influence their children in setting goals for their own education, which in turn influences the children's educational outcomes (Anguiano, 2004; Zhong, 2014). These parents from high levels of educational backgrounds also had high expectations for their children's education and desired to be more involved in their children's schools. However, for parents with low educational levels, a lack of educational experience, language competency, and familiarity with the educational system may hinder their involvement (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Chen (2013) examined the relationship between English proficiency and involvement with four Chinese immigrant parents. The findings in Chen's narrative analysis showed that language

competency plays a critical role that influences participants' parenting upon immigration. Without a strong knowledge of the English language and background, Chinese immigrant parents have difficulty understanding of the structure of U.S. schools (Chen, 2013), which may lead to less self-confidence in their school involvement. In addition, language barriers could severely limit Chinese immigrant parents' ability to communicate with schoolteachers and get involved in school activities (Chen, 2013; Zhong, 2014). Most of the Chinese immigrants who participated in the study reported that language competency did not strongly influence their involvement in their children's school. However, problems caused by using a second language influenced their experiences, but they believed that the issue related to acculturation was more important than language proficiency.

**Culture and acculturation.** The research stated that being unfamiliar with American culture is another critical challenge for Chinese immigrant parents during their involvement in an American school (Jiang, 2011). In this study, 10 Chinese immigrant parents reported they had several worries, uncertainties, and questions when interacting with teachers outside of the Chinese culture. These pressures made the Chinese immigrant parents overly cautious about their behaviors in their communication with schoolteachers and involvement in the classroom. Jiang (2011) and Chen (2013) stated that due to differences in cultural norms and values, Chinese immigrant parents are anxious their behavior will not be recognized, understood, and accepted, which forces them to avoid involvement in school. The literature listed several concerns about the anxieties from Chinese immigrant parents: for example, difficulties in establishing friendships with American teachers, wondering if the teacher will accept their cultural heritage, and having a different culture and educational values (Chen, 2013; Jiang, 2011). In addition, the research has also stated another important factor of the acculturation gap that influences

parenting behavior is immigration (Ma, 2006). Ma (2006) commented the gap of acculturation can be described the difficulty in communication between immigrant parents and their children. The ten Chinese immigrant parents also stated the more problems their children had in communication, the more difficulty the parents had in understanding their children.

**Gender in parenting.** Gender in parenting is another fundamental factor that shapes patterns of involvement (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001; Zhong, 2011). In the study with two fathers and eight mothers, both fathers and mothers from 10 Chinese immigrant families demonstrated in their family that they tended to have equal involvement in their children's routine care. Hung (2005) conducted a study with a large sample of Chinese immigrant parents to examine the relationship between gender of parental involvement and children's academic outcomes. The finding in Hung's study indicated the mother was more involved than the father in their children's education. In the 10 Chinese immigrant families, most of the mothers attended their children's school, talked with the teacher, and monitored their children's home learning. The father in the 10 Chinese immigrant families spent more time playing with the children. Some literature stated fathers are more involved in play activities with children, and mothers are generally responsible for their children's education (Lamb & Lewis, 2004; West, Noden, Edge, & David, 1998; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Based on Chinese culture, the father believes his role is to work hard and support a better life for his family. The role of the mother is to take care of the children. Research in this area has suggested that different cultural norms and values may make parents have different perspectives and types of involvement (Hung, 2005; Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Zhong, 2014).

Other factors influence Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education are represented by a lack of access to teachers, communication challenges,



unfamiliarity with school structure, personal growth history, and religion. Research has suggested that based on parents' various backgrounds, the factors influencing parents' involvement may also be different (Chen, 2013; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Ladky & Peterson, 2008).

## **Recommendations**

In this qualitative research study, the Chinese immigrant parents reported due to many differences in beliefs, attitudes, and expectations toward education and barriers from immigration, they had low confidence in being involved their children's education, especially participating in their children's school. They worried if American teachers understood their cultural values and practices or if American teachers understood what the parents' concerns were about their children's education. In this section, the study adopted advice from the 10 Chinese immigrant parents and other literature that could to help parents and their children succeed in American schools.

**Cultural translators and interpreters.** Chinese immigrant parents and their children are fast increasing as members of American schools. During the interviews with the 10 Chinese immigrant parents, they all reported wanting more opportunities to have meaningful communication with teachers. Due to some problems of immigration, Chinese immigrant parents mentioned that language barriers more or less blocked them from school involvement. The Chinese immigrant parents thought they should be given the same opportunities to benefit from involvement as native English parents receive. A number of Chinese immigrant parents reported that schools should support cultural translators and interpreters, which are necessary to help parents and teachers have meaningful conversations. One mother illustrated cultural translators and interpreters as mediators between Chinese immigrant parents and teachers who play a

critical role in facilitating successful communication. Another mother said, “Cultural translators and interpreters should be provided for us.” The Chinese immigrant parents believed that a cultural mediator could help translate between the culture of the school environment and their families. Many Chinese immigrant parents reported translated documents were necessary for parents to obtain a complete and individualized understanding of their children’s educational matters. To provide this information of their children’s education, school policy and teachers’ feedback help them to be involved at home. The Chinese immigrant parents highlighted a cultural interpreter and translator should have a background in the field of education and placed much importance in understanding Chinese language and culture. One mother attested to the important role of a cultural interpreter and translator can play: “我的秘书懂英文和西班牙文。他每次都帮我翻译文件或是做口译，帮客人明白和解决问题。所以他对我来说很重要。My assistant spoke English and Spanish. He translated documents and interpreted to our clients and helped them to understand and resolve any problems. My assistant was so important to me and my clients.” The Chinese immigrant parents believed that a cultural interpreter and translator could enhance understanding and create a relationship between family and school and also could support the Chinese family as full participants in the assessment process and delivery of educational services. It also solves the problem of having their children to be interpreters in the meetings.

**Learn about the local school culture.** In the study, a number of Chinese immigrant parents mentioned differences between Chinese and American schools in teaching style, school curriculum, classroom setting, and concerns from the teacher. Although having lived in the United States for a long time, the Chinese immigrant parents still thought it was a learning process for them when their children attended American schools. All of the parents in this study tried to learn more about their children’s school. The school should be supportive with providing

staff to help immigrant parents get more information about the school and American educational system. Some Chinese immigrant parents mentioned they also tried to learn more about the school by talking with their children about their life at school. Chinese immigrant parents said, “我们都明白父母在孩子教育中的重要性，但是又有几所学校有类似这样的方案来帮助家长更好的参与学校教育呢。We all understand the importance of parental involvement in school, but few schools have designed programs that support us for better involvement.”

**Recommendations for teachers and schools.** In the study, Chinese immigrant parents pointed out their children’s school often focused on aspects of involvement about what the parents can do. The school wants parents to support school development and academic achievement, but the school also should look to what the school can do to support families, especially for immigrant parents. One mother said, “家长的参与，不是家长一方面努力就可以的，这也需要学校的努力付出。Parental involvement is not solely a responsibility of the parents. Schools also need to make some effort.” Chinese immigrant parents suggested the schools should get to know immigrant parents and their needs to reach out to parents. For example, the school should have staff available that speaks languages other than English for immigrant parents. Researchers have stated that once teachers and parents can reach out with each other in same language, a meaningful personal connection will be made (Lever, 2013). Researchers also have stated that school staff who speaks a foreign language should also be able to understand the culture (Bohon, MacPherson, & Atilas, 2005; Tinkler, 2002). However, everyone in the school should have some relevant knowledge of the immigrant family’s culture and make the school and the classroom a welcoming place for immigrant families. Research has suggested the schools and teachers need to make immigrant parents and their children feel their heritage is important by valuing the immigrant families’ cultural and language differences

(Lever, 2013; Tinkler, 2002). It is also important to boost immigrant parents' and their children's self-esteem and increase motivation (Lever, 2013).

**Bridging culture.** Bridging culture is a program to help teachers and immigrant parents gain more understanding of each other outside of school life. The program is focused on deepening an understanding of cultural differences. Literature stated that some American teachers still feel it is difficult to communicate with some immigrant parents and their children, even after having been prepared to teach children from other cultures (Lever, 2013; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fish, & Greenfield, 2000). The best way to bridge the cultural gap among teachers, immigrant parents, and their children is to have teachers who relate to immigrant families' lives outside of school and in understanding immigrants' lives and behaviors (Bohon, et al., 2005; Lever, 2013). The goal is to help teachers reach out to Chinese immigrant parents to learn about their backgrounds and their cultural and educational values. At the same time, it is important for immigrant parents to learn about the American educational system and to know what is going on at school. Teachers have another crucial role in school involvement where they need to be careful to avoid bias or stereotypes about immigrant children and their families. It is important for teachers to bridge the cultural gap while better facilitating immigrant parents to be involved in an American school.

## **Conclusion**

Immigration is one of the social components in the United States that has helped to make America the most culturally diverse country in the world. The qualitative research with 10 Chinese immigrant parents has revealed information regarding their cross-cultural parenting experiences. The research questions examined in this qualitative study were

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience in their involvement and

- communication with their children's schools and teachers?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
  3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parents' involvement in their children's education?

To Chinese immigrant parents, there are various factors affecting their parental involvement inside and outside of school. Although all the Chinese immigrant families in the study were considered to have a similar original cultural background, education background, immigration background, and social status, individual differences can never be overlooked among the 10 Chinese immigrant families. Every individual is different, considering the factors that makes the difference, such as language proficiency, personality, gender, and family environment. The current study of 10 Chinese immigrant parents revealed they have different educational expectations for their children, different parenting approaches, and different attitudes for American schools and teachers. For example, almost all of the 10 Chinese immigrant parents became Christians after immigration. Due to different levels of maintaining Chinese traditional educational values and following God's words, the 10 Chinese immigrant parents shared different beliefs of parental involvement. Some Chinese immigrant parents still held traditional educational values for their children to reach academic excellence. Some Chinese immigrant parents on one side are keeping their Chinese tradition parenting style and on the other side have changed some ways of parenting for their children using a Bible-based curriculum. As shown by the interviews with the 10 Chinese immigrant participants, the extensive individual differences impacted general characteristics of parental involvement for the Chinese immigrant parents. Chen (2013) stated in the literature "many interrelated and interdependent factors related to the

immigrant process, the host culture and the culture of origin, and individual differences are all factors that affect the immigrant parents' involvement" (Chen, 2013, p. 156).

In terms of parents' perceptions of their roles in their children's education, the 10 Chinese immigrant parents aimed to fulfill the school's requirement in their children's education, such as monitoring homework and attending school activities. In the study, most of the Chinese immigrant parents came to the United States in search of a better future for their family and their children. They were seeking a better education and life for their children. They believed they played a key role in their children's school academic performance and held high expectations in the home culture for their children. However, in the process of immigration, the host culture and home culture interacted with the Chinese immigrant parents' parenting beliefs and behaviors. For example, the 10 Chinese immigrant parents indicated their high expectations for their children were significantly shaped by Chinese traditional culture and challenges in adjusting to American culture. The 10 Chinese immigrant parents were at different levels in the process of acculturation to American culture, as well as holding different perceptions of the value of Chinese traditional culture. In the current study, the 10 Chinese immigrant parents were at different levels in their perceptions of Confucian values and Christian values in their parenting. Furthermore, their parenting beliefs and involvements were individualistic, shaped and influenced by their personal historical and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, vary on a continuum of Chinese traditional culture and acculturation of American culture that influenced the Chinese immigrant parent's involvement. It also becomes a gap between Chinese immigrant parents and their children.

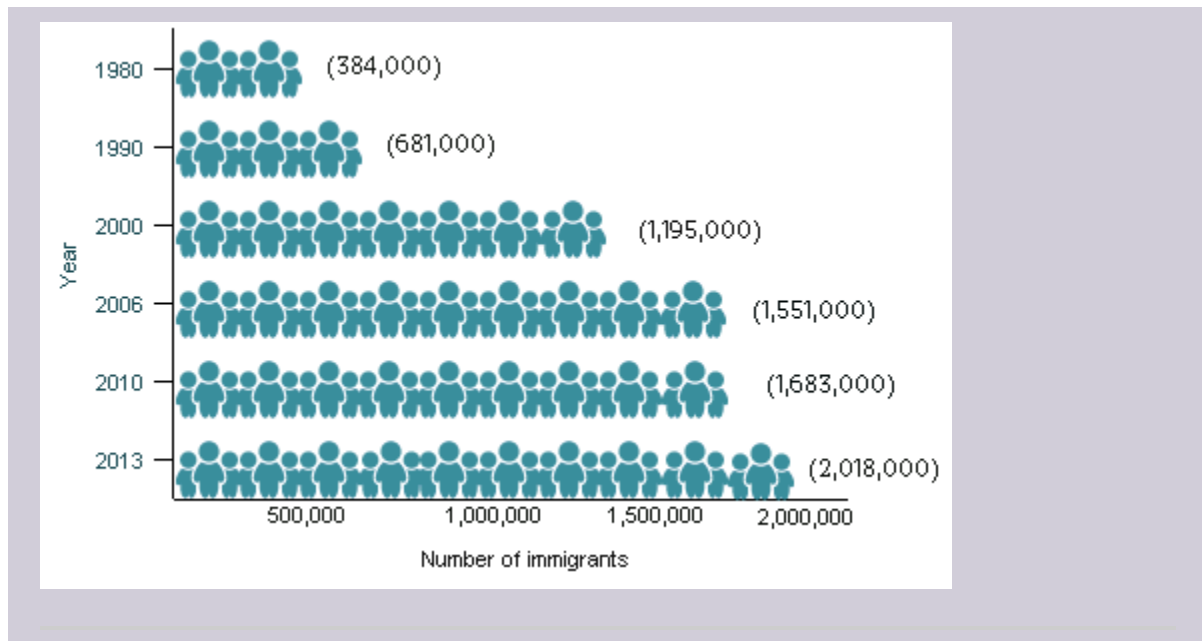
In this study, Chinese immigrant parents had individual parenting beliefs and experiences of participation in their children's education. The immigrant parents had in common their belief in their important role in their children's schooling, but the role was not only for them. Schools

and teachers also have a crucial role in children's education. With the increasing diversity of school populations, the growing number of multiracial children, and especially individual differences in Chinese immigrant families, it is essential to offer educators the opportunity to improve their knowledge about immigrant children and families' racial and cultural identities. It is important for teachers to recognize cultural bias or stereotypes about immigrant students and their families. In the study, the 10 Chinese immigrant parents were active participants in their children's education; however, their involvement might differ from the mainstream conception and practice of parental involvement. In addition, to better meet the immigrant children's and families' needs the teacher must always start with the individual child and family, and the focus should shift from individual differences. Furthermore, it is important that teachers support a productive and reciprocal partnership between the school and the immigrant families, discarding the stereotype about Asian American parents as being less involved in school. The findings in this study showed all parents are willing to participate in school activities, but are possibly influenced by individual differences, such as cultural strangeness and limited schedules. Schools and teachers should create a variety of roles and opportunities to invite immigrant parents' involvement. In that way, it may also reduce barriers to immigrant parents' active participation in their children's education. Schools, teachers, and parents should all put forth effort in participating in their children's education and improving academic achievement.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In the United States, the number of Chinese immigrants is growing rapidly. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), Figure 8 demonstrates the number of Chinese immigrants residing in the United States was approximately 2.01 million in 2013.

Figure 8 *Chinese Immigrant Population in the United States, 1980–2013*

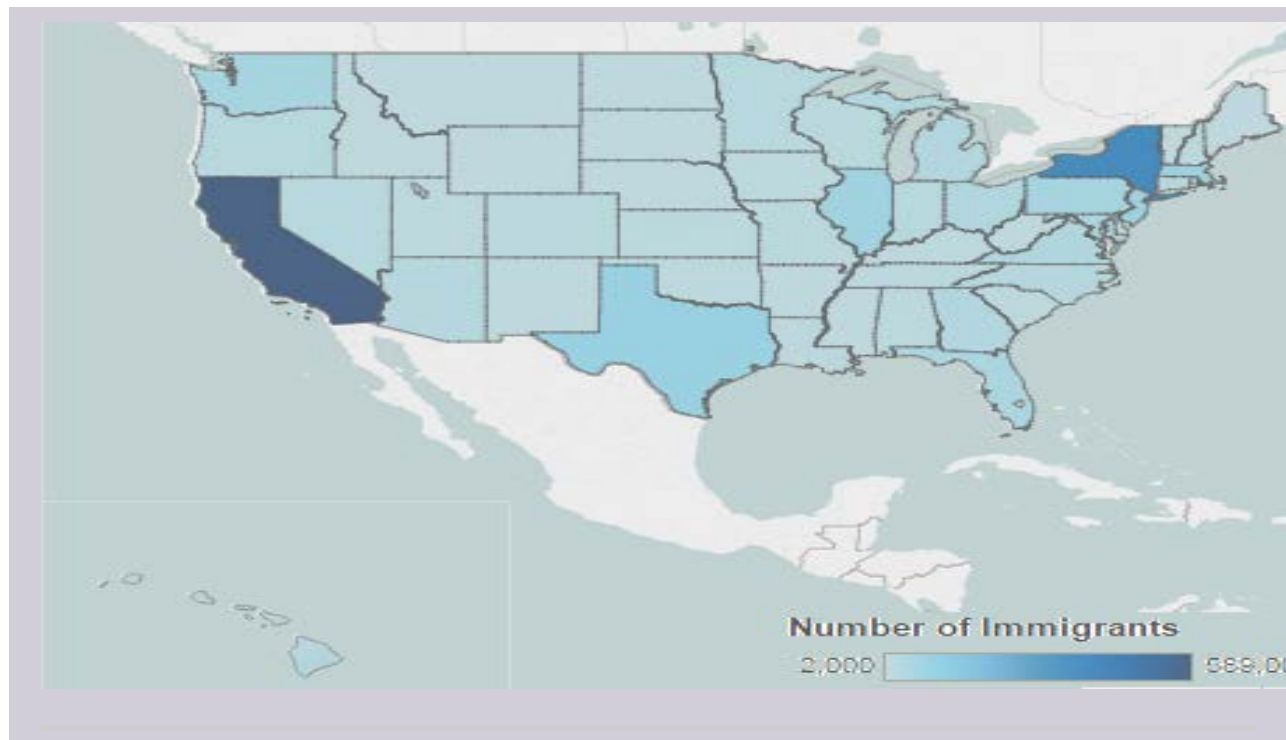


*Note.* Adapted from data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2006, 2010, and 2013 American Community Surveys, and 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Census.

According to the large number of Chinese immigrants residing in America, much more needs to be known about this population. In addition, Figure 9 demonstrates the largest number of Chinese immigrants was settling in the U.S. cities of New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco metropolitan areas. The report showed that most immigrants from China have settled in California (31%) and in New York (21%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The three metropolitan areas accounted for about 46% of the Chinese immigrants in the United States (Hooper & Batalova, 2015).



Figure 9 *Top Destination States for Chinese Immigrants in the U.S. 2009–2013*



*Note:* Pooled 2009–2013 ACS data were used to get statistically valid estimates at the state level for smaller population geographies. Adapted from the Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

According to Figures 8 and 9, the Chinese immigrant population is the fastest growing minority group and will play an important role in the growth and prosperity of the United States. The many children from immigrant families who are enrolled in American schools will impact the schools' educational achievement. Parents' involvement is a potentially important factor in their children's educational success. Most parents want the best for their children, including Chinese immigrant parents. The number of Chinese immigrants in Idaho is a smaller rate than the three metropolitan cities listed. The current research study investigated Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's elementary schools in Idaho. The study was conducted with 10 Chinese immigrant parents who were from mainland China and had lived in America for at least eight years. The 10 Chinese immigrant parents were randomly selected from the Chinese

immigrant population in Idaho. It was a small sample size in the study. The findings from this small sample size of parents' beliefs, behaviors, experiences, perspective, and barriers of involvement in American elementary school may differ with other Chinese immigrant parents who are residing in the metropolitan areas in the United States. In the future, the study would like to recruit Chinese immigrant parents from metropolitan cities, such as Los Angeles, where there is a large population of recent Chinese immigrants. Chinese immigrant parents in other geographical locations might yield different insights. Therefore, for future study, the researcher would like to compare the results of two Chinese immigrant parents who are from Boise and Los Angeles.

Chinese immigrants are, in fact, very different with diverse ethnic subgroups within the Chinese immigrant community (Chen, 2013). The subgroups, such as immigrants from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, share an Asian cultural origin but have different subcultural identities and histories. In future studies, the Chinese immigrant participants should be selected from mainland China with similar historical, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, while living in different states such as Idaho and California. People who are living in Los Angeles may have greater stress from life, job, and social areas than people living in Idaho. Chinese immigrant parents living in Los Angeles may have differences in parental beliefs, parenting styles, parenting behaviors, parenting experiences, immigrant acculturation, and social support. The current study showed a variance in Chinese immigrant parental involvement in Idaho. For example, most of the Chinese immigrant parents in the study became Christians after immigrating. Their parenting styles and beliefs more or less changed from their traditional ideology. In future studies, comparing the effects of parental involvement among Chinese immigrant parents from Idaho and California on their children's educational achievement could

be a focus, as well as the strategies used to help between Chinese immigrant parents and schoolteachers to better understand each other.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

The current qualitative study presents an example of 10 Chinese immigrant families, through 20 interviews to explore their parental beliefs, behaviors, challenges, and barriers of involvement in their children's education. Individual interviews with each Chinese immigrant parent helped foster an understanding of the immigrant parents' experience. A phenomenological approach explores identity conflicts and issues through a series of in-depth interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The results of this study will be helpful to American educators to know about Chinese immigrant parents' beliefs and behaviors about involvement in their children's school, while understanding Chinese immigrant groups in general. Better understanding the needs and problems of Chinese immigrant parents in their children's education can improve the parental rate of involvement, as well as support a reciprocal relationship between schoolteachers and immigrant parents. As mentioned before, every Chinese immigrant parent is an individual, and the educators need to focus on immigrant parents at an individual level, looking at all the aspects that make up his or her personal identity, instead of automatically holding present cultural stereotypes for any individual or racial group.

Parental involvement is very important in children's education. The study provides schoolteachers and educators alike with contextual knowledge regarding Chinese immigrant families and their children's educational behavior. The researcher would like to help educators understand the strengths of Chinese immigrant family dynamics, while adjusting to the traditional parental involvement concepts and how to increase Chinese immigrant parental involvement. Although this study is mainly concerned with Chinese immigrant families, many of

the findings can contribute to understanding other immigrant groups and help educators to ensure the success of all students and parents based on their personal and cultural assets, as well as design effective programs based upon this knowledge.

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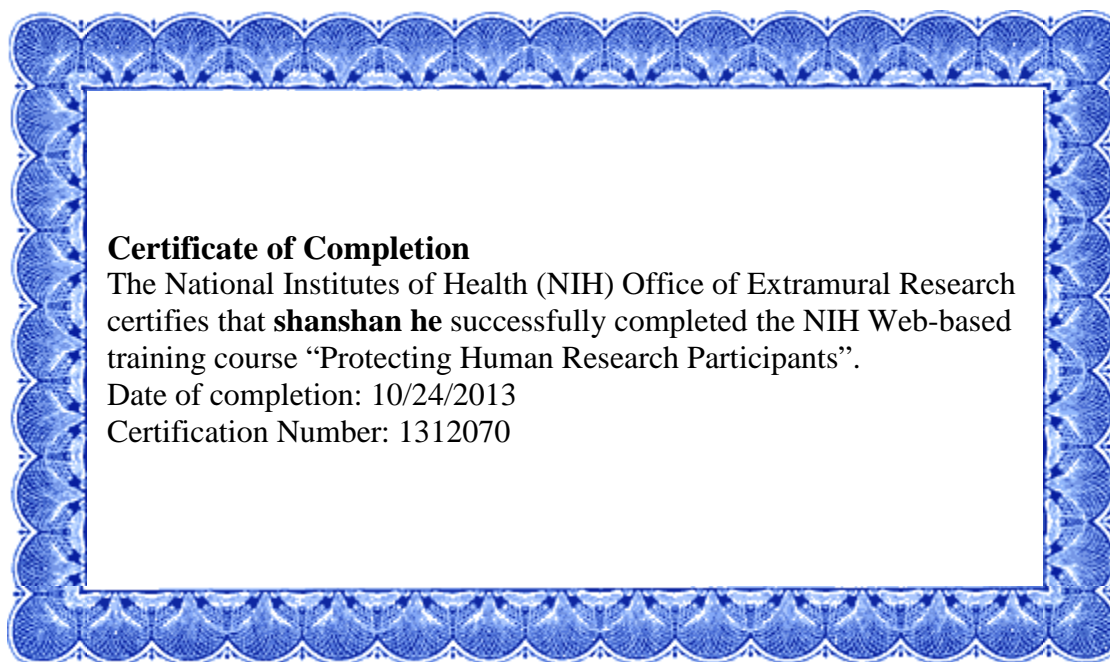
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**Appendix A: NIH Research Certificate**



## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Form**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

(Name)

My name is Shanshan He, I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Graduate Studies in Education at Northwest Nazarene University conducting a research study related to problems Chinese immigrant parents may experience related to their involvement in American public schools and with American teachers. My goal is explore the barriers Chinese immigrant parents perceive in participating in their child's education.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are between the ages of 33-45, come from China, and have at least one child currently enrolled in a public school.

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will answer a set of interview questions and engage in a discussion. This discussion will take twice. Interviews will be audio taped, and may last up to approximately 60 minutes each time.
3. You will be asked to read a debriefing statement at the conclusion of the interview.
4. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. For this research project, the researchers are requesting demographic information. The researchers will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may refuse to answer them.
3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet and on a password protected thumb drive and the key to the cabinet will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the

Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

### **BENEFITS**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand how Chinese immigrant parents perceive American education from their perspectives and beliefs, and to explore what are the main factors that prevent Chinese immigrant parents' participation and how to help them to overcome those barriers.

### **PAYMENTS**

There are no payments for participating in this study.

### **QUESTIONS**

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, please feel free to contact me by email [she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu), or 626 518-2335.

### **CONSENT**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

*I give my consent to participate in this study:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be audio taped in this study:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

**Appendix B cont. (Chinese Version)****同意书**

(姓名)

我叫何珊珊，我是西北拿撒勒大学教育管理专业的在读博士生。目前我在从事一项研究关于中国移民父母在参与其子女的教育中所遇到的问题。我希望通过这个研究可以更好的探索其中的障碍并帮助中国移民的父母更好的参与其子女在美国的教育。

如果您符合要求年龄在33至45岁，来自中国大陆，并且至少有一个孩子目前在公立小学就读，您将有幸被选中参与本次研究。

如果您同意参与此项研究，我们将进行以下的项目：

1. 您将被要求签署同意书，并自愿参与此次研究。
2. 您将被要求参与两次采访并回答关于研究的相应的问题。每次采访将历时一个小时并进行录音。
3. 在采访结束后，您有权了解采访结果。
4. 我们会将采访结果以邮件的形式发送给您，您可以经行确认核实。

**风险评估**

1. 在采访期间，如果讨论的一些问题可能会让您不舒服或者心烦意乱，您可以随时地拒绝回答任何您不想回答的问题或停止参与此次研究。
2. 对于这个研究项目，研究人员要求人口统计信息。研究人员将尽一切努力来保护您的机密性。然而，如果您回答这些问题都不舒服，您可以拒绝回答。
3. 保密性：参与此次研究可能涉及个人隐私的损失。然而，您的采访记录会尽可能的被保密处理。在此次研究中，任何个人身份将不会被用于任何报告或是出版物中。所有

的数据, 音频磁带和磁盘将被保存在一个锁着的文件柜中, 并和一个密码保护的驱动器中。一切保密措施严格按照 Federal wide Assurance Code, 本研究数据将被保存三年。之后所有关于此项研究的数据将被摧毁 (45 CFR 46.117)。

## 收益

您参与此次研究将不会有任何直接的好处。然而, 您提供的信息可以帮助教育工作者更好地了解中国移民的父母参与其子女的教育中所面临的的问题, 并从他们的角度看待美国教育和信仰, 探讨是什么因素阻止中国移民父母的参与以及如何帮助他们克服这些障碍。

## 付款方式

此次研究将不支付任何费用。

## 问题

如果您有任何问题和忧虑关于此次研究, 请在任何时间通过邮箱 she@nnu.edu, 或是电话 626 518-2335 联系我。

## 同意

如果您同意参与此次研究, 您将收到一份同意书的复印件。

**您是以自愿的形式参与此次研究。**您可以在任何时间取消参与。您决定是否参与这项研究将不会影响您现在或是将来成为一名西北拿撒勒大学的学生。

**我同意参与此次研究:**

---

**参与者签字日期**

**我同意音频录音在此次采访中:**

---

参与者签字日期

我同意直接性的引用在此次采访中：

---

参与者签字日期

---

研究者签名日期

该项目将由西北拿撒勒大学人类研究审查委员会秉着保护人类与研究的职责审查此次研究。

### **Appendix C: Participant Debrief**

Thank you for your participation in this study.

After we have the opportunity to analyze the data, we will email you the results and ask for feedback. Mainly we want to ensure that we captured the essence of our discussion, accurately portraying our discussion and your thoughts. This study will concluded by March 31, 2014.

#### **Questions**

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, Shanshan He can be contacted via email at [she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu) or call 626-518-2353.

Thank you for your participation!

Shanshan He  
Doctoral Student  
Northwest Nazarene University  
HRRC Application# 742014

**Appendix C cont. (Chinese Version)****参与者汇报**

十分感谢您参与此次研究。

在我们对数据进行分析后，我们会将结果以邮件的形式发从给您。您可以给与我们任何的回馈信息。这样做的主要目的是希望确保我们讨论的准确性和对您想法描述的真实性。本研究总结将定于2014年3月31号。

**问题**

在此期间，如果您有任何问题，您可以随时通过邮件[she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu)或是电话626-518-2353联系何珊珊。

再次感谢您的积极参与

何珊珊

西北拿撒勒大学博士生

HRRC 编号#742014

## **Appendix D: Verbatim Instructions**

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

### **Audio-Recorded Interviews**

These procedures will be completed at church or any other location decided upon by participant (library, NNU Campus, or another public location). Each interview will take a total time of 60 minutes. This process is completely voluntary and you can select to suspend your involvement at any time. You can select to answer questions that are of comfort to you and are not obligated to answer all of the questions.

Do you have any questions or can I clarify anything?

Thank you for your participation.

Shanshan He  
Doctoral Student  
Northwest Nazarene University  
HRRC Application# 742014



**Appendix D cont. (Chinese Version)****文字指令**

您好\_\_\_\_\_,

感谢您愿意参与此次研究。

**音频记录采访**

这个环节将在教会或是您愿意的其他地点（例如：图书馆，西北拿撒勒大学校园，或是其他一些公用场所）经行。每一次的采访大约历时60分钟左右。

在这个采访环节中，您完全是自愿的，您可以选择随时暂停。同时您可以选择您感觉合适的问题回答。您没有义务一定要回答所有的问题。

您还有任何问题吗？

十分感谢您的参与

何珊珊

西北拿撒勒大学博士生

HRRC 编号#742014

## **Appendix E: Interview Questions**

### **First interview**

1. Tell me about your own education experience?
2. Why do you believe it is important to be involved in your child(ren)'s education?
3. What is your role in your child's schooling?
4. Tell me why your child is motivated and whether it is related to parental involvement.
5. Tell me how do you help your children do well in school?
6. How many hours a day do you spend engaged in schooling your children at home? Tell me about these experiences.
7. How do you think parents can be successfully involved in their child's education?
8. What are your goals, expectations, and dreams for your children?
9. Tell me about your child's involvement at school.
10. Tell me about your experiences while being involved in your children's school?
11. Talk about your comfort level with your children's teachers or other school staff?
12. How do you feel when you visit your child's school? What do you notice and how does it make you feel?
13. Do you have the expectation of a strong educational experience for your child at school? Is this expectation being met at your child's current school? Why or why not?

### **Second Interview**

1. What are some of the factors you think that have caused your child(ren) to be successful at school?
2. Tell me about some of the barriers you experience when you are involved in your child's schooling?
3. Tell me the benefits to your child(ren) when you are involved in your child's education?
4. Tell me about your experiences being involved in your child's school day? How do you feel about those experiences?
5. Tell me about any conflicts relating to culture or attitudes you may have experienced with your child's teacher during the involvement?
6. What advice can you give to other parents who are thinking about being involved in their children's schooling?

## **Appendix F: Email to Participants**

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Dear\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participation in the study. I want to let you know more about the study. The attached is the detail about this study. If you have any questions about the study, please let me know.

As a participant, you must be:

- ✓ Ages range of 33-45 years old
- ✓ From Mainland China
- ✓ Live in United States at least 8 years
- ✓ At least one child currently enrolled in elementary public schools

If more than 10 individuals respond, names will be randomly selected for the study.

Thank you again for your participate.

Shanshan He  
Doctoral Student  
Northwest Nazarene University  
HRRC Application# 742014

**Appendix F cont. (Chinese Version)****至参与者**

日期

尊敬的\_\_\_\_\_

十分感谢您参与此次研究。 在这里我希望通过这封邮件您可以对这次研究有一个更好的了解。

关于这次研究的一些细节您可以查看附件。 如果您有任何的问题，请随时与我联系。

作为一名参与者您需要具备以下要求：

- 年龄在33岁至45岁之间
- 从中国大陆移民来美国
- 最少在美国居住8年以上
- 至少有一个孩子现在就读于美国公立小学

如果参与此次研究的志愿者多于10人，我们将随机从报名者中选取。

感谢您的参与与支持。

何珊珊

西北拿撒勒大学博士生

HRRC 编号#742014

## Appendix G

### Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership – Shanshan He

#### **Dissertation Title**

Chinese Immigrant Parental Involvement in United States Public Elementary School: A Qualitative Research Study

#### **Purpose Statement**

Chinese immigrants have become one of the largest growing immigrant populations in the United States (Camarota, 2005; Li, 2006; McCabe, 2012). Researches show American teachers do not have enough experience to be help to those Chinese immigrant parents and students (Camarota, 2005; Contreras, 20002; Gonzales, 2001). The **purpose** of this study is to investigate communication between Chinese immigrant parents and American teachers by exploring Chinese immigrant parental beliefs, perceptions, and parental roles regarding their children's education. The theoretical framework that will serve as a foundation for this study is derived from Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement and Grolnick and Slowiaczek's three dimensions of parental involvement.

#### **Research Questions**

*The study was designed to examine the following questions:*

1. What problems do Chinese immigrant parents experience with the involvement and communication with school and teacher?
2. What are the factors that affect Chinese immigrant parents' participation in their children's cognitive development?
3. What strategies could be adopted to help overcome barriers to Chinese parental involvement in their children's education?

#### **Methods**

The phenomenological study is a natural qualitative research approach designed to uncover the 'lived experiences' of participants. Ten individual, audio-recorded and transcribed interviews will be conducted on two separate occasions (20 total interviews) to provide an in-depth study regarding Chinese immigrant parental attitudes, behavior, and cognitive/intellectual involvement in their children's education. Transcripts will be coded and themes will emerge regarding the experiences of the 10 Chinese parents. In addition, the interview questions will be piloted with a panel of subject matter experts in order to address validity and reliability.

If you have suggestions or thoughts, do not hesitate to contact me at [she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu) or 626 518-2335.

**Appendix G cont. (附件)****教育领导学博士课程——何珊珊****论文题目**

关于中国移民父母参与美国教育的定性研究

**目的陈述**

中国移民已经成为在美国日益增长的移民人口最多的国家之一 (Camarota, 2005; Li, 2006; McCabe, 2012)。研究表明美国教师并没有足够的教学经验在帮助中国移民家长和他们的孩子。此次研究的目的在于通过调查中国移民家长与美国教师在沟通中的问题进一步的探索中国移民家长在对于参与其子女的教育问题上所持的信念，观点和角色。研究的理论框架将建立在Joyce Epstein的父母参与子女教育的六种行为和Grolnick和Slowiaczek的父母参与子女教育的三个维度。

**研究问题**

此项研究将讨论一下问题：

1. 中国移民父母在参与子女在美国教育中所经历的问题。
2. 是什么因素影响中国移民父母参与其子女在美国的教育。
3. 什么样的方式方法可以帮助中国父母来克服这些障碍。

**研究方法**

现象学的研究是一个自然的定性研究方法,旨在揭示参与者的“生活经验”。此次研究将对10个中国移民父母分别经行两次参访（总计20次），并希望通过采访提供一个深入研究关于中国移民

的态度、行为和认知/知识参与孩子的教育。此外, 研究者将对面试问题进行考察, 希望对参与者提供一个具有专业性, 有效性和可靠性参访。

如果您有任何的意见和想法, 请不要犹豫的联系我。我的邮件地址是[she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu)或是致电给我 626-518-2353.

**Appendix H: Make an Apportionment with Participant by Email or Phone**

Date

Dear\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation in the study. I want to make an apportionment with you for our first (second) individual interview. Could you please let me know what time is available for you this week? Where would you prefer to meet together? If you think of any other questions or have concerns prior to our interview appointment, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu) or call me at 626-518-2353.

Thank you again and I look forward to hearing from you.

Shanshan He  
Doctoral Student  
Northwest Nazarene University  
HRRC Application# 742014



**Appendix H. cont. (Chinese Version)****预约邮件**

日期

尊敬的\_\_\_\_\_

感谢您参与此次研究。在这里我希望和您预约下我们第一采访（第二次采访）的时间。请您告知我您在本周内何时有空。以及您希望在什么地点进行此次采访。如果您仍有任何的疑问，请您随时联系我。我的邮箱地址是[she@nnu.edu](mailto:she@nnu.edu)，联系电话:626-518-2353.

再次感谢您的参与。我们恭候您的佳音。

何珊珊

西北拿撒勒大学博士生

HRRC 编号#742014

## Appendix I: The Permission Letter from the Church Board



博义西华人基督教会  
**Boise Chinese Christian Church**

1422 N Eldorado St, Boise, ID 83704

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To Whom It May Concern,

It is certified that Shanshan He, a member of the Boise Chinese Christian Church (BCCC) and a doctoral candidate in the department of Graduate Studies in Education at Northwest Nazarene University, has been granted access to the BCCC member directory by the BCCC Board of Deacons for the purpose of data collection for her thesis research on the Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education in the United States. Please note that the church members' participation in the said research is completely voluntary. This letter is only for the authorization of initiating contact with church members and doesn't represent any endorsement of the said research by the BCCC Board of Deacons.

Zengtao Liu

Present, Boise Chinese Christian Church Board of Deacons.