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# Parenting of 1.5 Generation Chinese Americans' Parents: A Case Study

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## Abstract

Individuals who arrive in a new country during their childhood and early adolescence are referred to as the 1.5 generation. In this exploratory case study, five Chinese families were interviewed and examined about the effects of their parenting styles on those 1.5 generation Chinese American students. Findings revealed that these parents' parenting styles—educational values, educational practices, and family dynamics—have exerted a great impact on the students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and adaptation to their life in the US. Insights about comparisons between American and Chinese education will be inspiring to educators and scholars for culturally comparative analysis and mental health practitioners working with the adolescents of this ethnicity and their families.

**Keywords:** parenting styles, language transition, academic performance, psychological well-being

## Introduction

One of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States is Asian Americans, of which the Chinese comprise the largest group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Moreover, Mandarin was the second most common language spoken by immigrants at home in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Chinese children and adolescents who arrive in the U.S. at the ages from 6 to 12 are known as 1.5 generation immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004). They come with their parents, starting or continuing their education. Unlike their parents, who are first-generation immigrants, or other second-generation Chinese American students, the 1.5 generation has more complex educational experiences, intertwined with cultural, emotional, and linguistic adjustments and emergent family conflicts with their parents (Liu et al., 2009). The perceived distinctions between their original birth places and the U.S. might be more salient to the 1.5 generation group than other generations of Chinese Americans.

In terms of parenting, historically and culturally, Chinese parents and their parenting styles have had a great impact on their children's educational values and academic performances (Chen, 2016; Chen & Lan, 1998). Due to the influence of the Confucian philosophy, Chinese students are more

willing to accept their parents' advice and live up to or even exceed their parents' expectations on academic performance, compared to other ethnic groups in the U.S. (Chen, 2016; Chen & Lan, 1998; Zhou, 2017). What do the Chinese parents of 1.5 generation do to help and guide their children and adolescents in the U.S.? Do families with 1.5 generation Chinese Americans experience more parent-child conflicts than other Chinese American families? Parenting styles need to be explored and examined as one of the vital factors in 1.5 generation Chinese American students' academic performances, developmental results, and adaptation experiences in the U.S. (Chen, 2016).

Despite a wealth of research about Chinese Americans, a scarcity of studies about 1.5 generation Chinese American students have been found. Noticing this research gap and the increasing population of this underrepresented group (Chen, 2016), drove the focus of this study. Considering the profound impact of parenting on the group's academic performance and overall development (Chen & Lan, 1998; Chen, 2016), the parenting styles of 1.5 generation Chinese American students' parents in five families in the U.S. was studied. This case study illuminated the perceived features of these 1.5 generation students, the parenting styles of their parents, and the parents' perspectives on their parenting styles. This knowledge may help educators, teachers, parents of 1.5 generation Chinese Americans, counselors, and researchers to develop a deeper understanding of this ethnic age group and their family dynamics and, thus, better help 1.5 generation Chinese American students acclimate to U.S. school life.

## **Literature Review**

### ***1.5 Generation***

People who arrive in the U.S. in their childhood and early adolescence are defined as "1.5 generation American immigrants" (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012, p. 255). The term *1.5 generation* was first used by Korean American communities in the 1970s (Rojas, 2012). A detailed age scale developed by Rumbaut (2004) has been used for describing the sub-categories of those who arrived at different ages. Due to its prevailing usage, it was chosen to be used in this research. Based on the scale, people arriving between six and 12 years old constitute the 1.5 generation (Rumbaut, 2004).

The number of years of residence in their native country influences the 1.5 generation after their arrival in the US, in the way that they retain their initial identity at first and over time develop a hybrid identity which merges two cultural referents (Jensen et al., 2006). Rumbaut (1994) suggested that the development of ethnic identity takes different forms and paths and is segmented. The 1.5 generation immigrants' adaptation may involve a variety of identity-segmenting choices (Smith, 2014). These 1.5 generation immigrants may be trapped between the two worlds or are altogether regarded as another race with their own culture; they have been ignored by both Americans and Chinese (Zhou, 2013).

### ***1.5 Generation Chinese Americans' Languages and Their Correlations***

The 1.5 generation Chinese Americans' heritage language is Mandarin; they learn English either before coming to the U.S., as preparation, or after arriving. Research (e.g., Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Ibanez et al., 2004) has shown that the 1.5 generation's English proficiency is positively

correlated with academic achievements: higher reading and spelling scores; higher academic expectations from their parents; and better school competence. The 1.5 generation Chinese immigrants, whose heritage language has little in common with English in phonology and orthography (Guglielmi, 2008), showed that their communicative competence in English is negatively related to their psychological illness such as depression and loneliness (Lee & Chen, 2000).

Research studies also show that Chinese youths' heritage language proficiency is correlated with higher math scores and generally higher grades in school (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Jiang et al., 2017). Liu et al. (2009) found that foreign-born Chinese youths' heritage language maintenance may help them preserve their bonds with both their own families and the Chinese American community at large, and thus create a social support network that promotes their emotional well-being.

Further, research has found that students with high proficiency in both their heritage language and English show higher levels of cognitive flexibility than their monolingual English-speaking counterparts (Bialystok et al., 2005), which provides an advantageous foundation for subsequent academic achievements (Geva & Genessee, 2006). Liu et al. (2009) suggest that proficiency in both English and the heritage language may confer advantages to Chinese American youths in both their academic and emotional development. Hence, it can be seen that higher proficiency in both languages for those 1.5 generation youths is linked with their higher academic achievements and psychological well-beings.

### *Classic Parenting Styles*

General parenting styles in recent literature fall into Baumrind's (1966) classic four categories of parenting styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and negligent parenting styles. We will elaborate below. Several researchers have identified some Chinese American parents' parenting style as authoritarian (Lee et al., 2014; Wu, 2008). Those parents were found to be high in control but low in responsiveness. The authoritarian parents attempt to control and evaluate their children's behaviors through conduct rules (Baumrind, 1966).

Other researchers, Cheah et al. (2009), examined the parenting styles of 85 immigrant Chinese mothers of pre-schoolers, who were found to use an authoritative parenting style. Authoritative parents try to direct their children's activities grounded on reasonings (Baumrind, 1966). The participating mothers in Cheah et al.'s (2009) research valued high levels of warmth, reasoning, and autonomy. In addition, the children in the study showed more self-control and fewer problems in school, as reported by their teachers.

Parents with permissive childrearing styles tend to take the role of friends (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). They show low control and high responsiveness toward their children, expressing their warmth often and have high levels of acceptance and tolerance. They have low enforcement of rules and authority, giving minimal punishment to their children and allowing them to make their own decisions (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). Negligent parenting styles are low in both control and responsiveness (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). Such parents generally neglect their children and have little interaction with them. In general, they show inattentive behavior (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014).

### ***Parenting Styles of Chinese Americans***

More recently, Kim et al. (2013) conducted a three-wave longitudinal study of 444 Chinese American families (i.e., adolescents, mothers, and fathers) to identify parenting profiles and explore their effects on the adjustment of adolescent children. They found *tiger* or harsh parenting, which was believed to be a combination of Baumrind's (1966) authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, along with high academic pressure. In addition, Kim et al. (2013) found supportive parenting, similar to authoritative parenting in terms of its inductive reasoning (p. 15). They also found easy-going parenting, akin to Baumrind's (1966) permissive parenting style. Baumrind's (1966) negligent parenting style was not found in the Kim et al. (2013) study.

Kim et al. (2013) discovered that the use of shaming was an important aspect of Chinese culture and parenting, concluding that parents who used a harsher and more restrictive parenting style employed more shaming. The use of shaming resembled a parent being supportive and successful in Chinese culture and the term is unseen in previous literature.

Ng et al. (2014) put forward another peculiarity of Chinese parenting— “the Chinese notion of *guan*, which entails parents' dedication to children through both love and governance” (p.364). Such a parenting notion of controlling existed in both groups of participating Chinese parents in both Mainland China and the U.S. In traditional Chinese culture, such a parenting style, resembling Baumrind's (1966)'s authoritarian parenting, is regarded as a form of love and concern (Wu, 2008). The *guan* stemmed from “Chinese parents' feelings of worth being more contingent on children's performance” (Ng et al., 2014, p. 355).

The Chinese American adolescents aged from 12 to 17 participated in the study of Yuwen and Chen (2012); they revealed that their parents had high expectations on their academic performances and moral values and that their parents parented them in a controlling style. The style aches with the Chinese notion of *guan* (Ng et al., 2014). Their parents limited their choices of friends, established a curfew, and restricted participation in certain recreational activities. Furthermore, Lee and Zhou (2014) exemplified what a typical academic expectation or “doing well in school” means to the younger generation: “getting straight As, graduating as valedictorian or salutatorian, getting into one of the top ... schools or an Ivy, and pursuing some type of graduate education” to be a “doctor, lawyer, pharmacist, or engineer” (p. 45). Lee and Zhou's (2014) respondents also reported that their parents bought or rented homes to make sure that their children can go to the best schools. These parents also provided supplementary education and tutoring to ensure that their children were placed in the Honors and AP tracks in high school. The high parental expectations and family functioning with respect to academic performance among Chinese American families are well-documented (Chen & Lan, 1998; Lee & Zhou, 2014; Yuwen & Chen, 2012), as key factors of their parenting styles.

Both classic and specific sets of parenting styles are introduced above, with consideration of potential fluidity in parenting of 1.5 generation Chinese Americans' parents along with the changes in sociocultural contexts.

### ***Parenting and Language Proficiency of Chinese Americans' Parents***

Generational differences in the pace and degree of acculturation might lead to familial conflicts, academic concerns, and psychological issues. Due to environmental influences, children are more likely to assimilate faster than their parents (Crane et al., 2005). Although some parents acculturate well in the host culture and may bring some environmental benefits to their children (Ying et al., 2000), families of parents with low proficiency in English and children with low proficiency in Chinese were found to have the least supportive parenting style, with their children reporting the highest levels of depressive symptoms (Weaver & Kim, 2008) and lower academic scores (Liu et al., 2009).

Although there is lack of direct evidence of the relationship between parents' English language proficiency and their children's educational outcomes, research does indicate that bilingualism of immigrant Asian American parents is associated with their children's positive mental health (Liu et al., 2009; Ying et al., 2000). In terms of academic achievements, Liu et al. (2009) found a consistent pattern among Chinese American mothers; those mothers "who reported higher English proficiency had adolescents with higher reading and math achievement test scores, higher GPAs, and lower levels of depressive symptoms" (p. 580).

### ***Effect of Parenting on Chinese American Adolescents***

Yuwen and Chen (2012), in their study on Chinese American adolescents, revealed that inductive reasoning, which emphasizes providing children with rationales for their parents' decisions and rules and engages children in the decision-making process, was positively related to adolescents' mental health; this finding was consistent with research at large (Kim et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Weaver & Kim, 2008). All of these research studies have shown that youths with authoritative and supportive parenting styles experience low academic pressure, high GPAs, high educational attainment, low parent-child alienation, few depressive symptoms, and high family obligation.

### **Methods**

Prior research indicates that parenting styles and family dynamics regarding parenting may affect students' academic performance and psychological health. In an effort to understand and support 1.5 generation Chinese American youths in school, the researchers chose to implement this exploratory case study. The primary goal of the study was to explore the parenting styles of 1.5 generation Chinese Americans' parents in the U.S. To achieve this goal, a case study was chosen as the research design. Case study is an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity" (Merriam 1998, p. 27). In this study, a *single entity* refers to the 1.5 generation Chinese American students' parents. They share the same cultural and similar educational backgrounds, having been taught by their parents and educated in China with nationally designated curriculum, as well as having migrated to the same country with similar purposes, in a "bounded system" (Stake, 2005, p. 444). The participants' and researchers' native language was Chinese. They all chose to be interviewed in Mandarin Chinese.

### ***Participants***

The researchers employed purposive sampling to select participants for this study through oral exchanges. The eligible participants were from mainland China as parents of 1.5 generation

Chinese Americans; they had parented their children in the U.S. for at least one year. Five parents, one parent from each family, were recruited by researchers through social connections in a local Chinese community. To protect their confidentiality, all the identifiable information was omitted, and their last names were changed with pseudonyms of Chinese origins.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of the Participating Parents and Their Children

Name	Ms. Chao	Ms. Cui	Mr. Zhao	Mr. Wang	Mrs. Liu
Age	40-49	40-49	50-59	40-49	50-59
Years in the U.S.	13	1	27	1	13
Profession	Realtor	Trading Business	Self-employed	Professor	None
Highest Degree	Master's	Bachelor's	Master's	Master's	Bachelor's
Father/Mother	Mother	Mother	Father	Father	Mother
SES in Childhood	N/A	N/A	Low	Low	Low
Main Parenting person	Mother	Mother	Father	Father	Mother
Spouse's Age	40-49	40-49	40-49	30-39	50-59
Spouse's Years in the U.S.	14	1	15	1	13
Spouse's Profession	Driver	Trading Business	Office manager	Self-employed	Researcher
Spouse's Highest Degree	High School	Bachelor's	High School	Bachelor's	Doctorate
Number of Children	1	2	2	1	1
Age of Children	7	13 and 12	12 and 11	13	26
Grade Level-Boy/girl	1-- boy	7-- boy 6--girl	6--boy 4--boy	7-- boy	GR-- girl

Note. GR = Graduate; SES = Social Economic Status

### *Demographic Information of Participants*

The five participants and their spouses varied in terms of their educational levels, professions, and economic levels. Their educational levels included a doctorate's degree, a doctoral student, two master's degrees, four bachelor's degrees, and two with high school diplomas. In three of the families (i.e., Ms. Chao's, Mrs. Liu's and Mr. Zhao's), the parents (not their children) had lived in the U.S. for more than 13 years. Their professions included a researcher, a businessman, a property realtor, a driver, a waitress, and a student. The participants in this study were three mothers and two fathers.

### *Demographic Information of Participants' Children*

Most of the children were attending middle schools, except two—one who was attending an elementary school and another (Mrs. Liu's daughter) who was in graduate school in dentistry at the time of this study. The children's K-12 grade levels ranged from Grade 1 to Grade 7. All the parents chose public schools for their children, mostly A-rated schools.

### *Researchers*

The primary researcher took primary responsibility for collecting; transcribing and translating data; and writing up and reviewing drafts. The second researcher, a mother of two second-generation Chinese Americans, analyzed data; wrote a major part of literature review; and helped draft revisions. The third researcher, a father of a 1.5 generation Chinese American adolescent, assisted in processing the data and edited the completed draft.

As noted in Malterud's (2001) article, the researchers' backgrounds, experiences and positions play a role in "what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and

communication of conclusions” (pp. 483-484). The primary researcher in this study was also its main interviewer, whose angle of investigation relied more on the impact of parents' social economic status on their parenting styles. The second researcher had conducted a research study on second-generation Chinese American students' parents and their parenting styles. She carried a comparative lens subconsciously when deciphering and analyzing data of this current study. The third researcher, as a parent of a 1.5 generation Chinese American, analyzed the data as both a researcher and parent. Moreover, the three researchers resembled Chinese immigrants who were born in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, with the one-child policy as a division milestone shaping their individual knowledge of parenting accumulated over the years of their experiences in being parented. They viewed the same unit of the study differently, which bolstered reliability and provided more layers of understanding of the study.

### ***Data Collection***

Five parents from five families were recruited for the study. The research team tried to honor the participants' time requests as much as schedules allowed. Prior to the interview, interviewers asked each participant to complete a brief set of written questions to collect the parents' demographic information (see Table 1). The interviews were conducted in the participants' choice of location. Some interviews were conducted via phone, others in a private room. During the interviews, conversations were audio-recorded, and children were not present. The interviewers also cautioned the participants not to discuss any information regarding the conversations in front of their children. The interviews were no more than 35 minutes long, as stated in the consent form.

The interviews were half structured, starting with 20 open-ended questions; follow-up questions were used as needed. The interview questions were developed by the research team based on the existing literature (including Jiang and Senokosoff's (2016) article about second generation Chinese Americans' parents and their parenting styles) and the research questions in the current study. A semi-structured, guided, responsive conversation format was followed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The researchers were a Chinese professor and doctoral students at a U.S. university, who speak both Mandarin and English; the interviews, accordingly, were conducted in either language to participants' preference and at their comfort. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), “skin color, race and cultural identity sometimes facilitates, sometimes complicates, and sometimes erects barriers in fieldwork” when “researchers are studying people within their same ethnic group” (p. 96). To minimize this shortcoming, interviewers were trained by the leader of research team to develop consciousness of specifying items which might be taken for granted by using probes recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), such as: *Would you explain that?*; *Could you please give me an example?* and so on. The responses were mostly in Mandarin either retrospective memories of participants' parenting or their current parenting experiences.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis in case study research should be detailed and intensive “for the unit of study” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301) so that the case study can “represent the case” (Stake, 2005, p. 460). In this study, data analysis began with transcribing and translating each of the researchers' interviews from Mandarin to English; they used colors to code and write down their summarized themes in the margin of transcripts. Since there were only five interview transcripts, the researchers decided not to use any software; they used tables to categorize themes and supporting evidence from the

original text. The first phase was individual deciphering from the transcripts. Next, the team members switched their coding and tables, for member checking; the team read through the transcripts to verify and add coding into their peers' tables. More key words and phrases were identified concerning the research questions, for example, descriptive words about their parenting styles which facilitated deeper inductive coding for themes. The third phase was to merge individual themes and patterns. The team created second-round coding categories based on the patterns and topics they uncovered. For concepts and categories on which there were disagreements, the team employed external audits by sending the pieces in question to another experienced qualitative researcher for her opinions. They then combined the reconciled data by merging, adding and supplementing individual coding concepts.

## **Findings**

### ***Linguistic Transition***

All the participants reported that English was the main obstacle for their children, and their children generally experienced longer acquisition periods than parents anticipated. Youths from four participating families had studied in the U.S. for approximately one year, and their language barriers were very salient at school.

Mr. Wang started the language transition preparation for his son when they were in China by doing the following: reading the Newbery Medal book named *Holes* together with him, hiring English-major university students to tutor his son with the McGuffey's Readers, and creating as many opportunities as possible for him to live abroad and communicate with English-speaking educators. Even with such preparation, when Mr. Wang's son was tested for English for Speakers of Other Languages level after they came to the U.S., Mr. Wang was told by the teacher that his son's English was very poor.

Mrs. Liu's daughter, who had a three-year long bilingual education (i.e., Mandarin and English) in Singapore, still worked hard on English and spent more time on English reading and writing, compared to her native English-speaking classmates. Mrs. Liu advised her daughter, who had lived in Singapore in a bilingual setting for three years before coming to the U.S. at the age of 13, not to choose social science subjects, such as politics and history, in order to avoid failing those classes heavy in reading and writing.

Ms. Chao's son also had much difficulty in English reading comprehension because of the language obstacles. After one year of full immersion in English, Ms. Chao still regarded English as her son's major obstacle in study. Ms. Cui, the fourth parent, said that she had her children watch American cartoons, memorize English vocabulary, and read English books to improve their English proficiency and overcome the English language obstacles.

### ***Social Adaptation***

The majority of the participants insisted that the adolescent period before entering university was critical to their children's development of social skills. Ms. Cui emphasized the ability to live independently. Mr. Wang stated that his son was probably going to complete his university life in another city away from them; thus, he would like to teach him skills to better adapt to the society and protect himself, such as safety and self-protection from bullying. Mr. Wang emphasized safety

and bullying because his son had been verbally offended by his classmates, who called him “Asian kid in an obviously negative tone.” Mr. Wang’s son told his parents what happened at school, which might explain why he chose to play with other Asian boys after school and on weekends throughout his social adaptation. Mr. Zhao hoped that his children could start to understand and learn the reality of the society gradually. He expected that his children could learn how to communicate well and adapt to the society. He further emphasized that education should serve as the bridge to link school and society.

### ***Public Schooling as the First Choice***

All parents thought that the quality of education in the school system was important, but not crucial to success. Considering financial and commuting affordability, they all chose nearby public schools for their children. Among them, three participants selected A+ schools because these schools, as they perceived, could provide higher quality education. Mr. Wang believed that the public school system had its own research-based curriculum for educating students. Mr. Zhao thought that the school system could offer his children “the best and standard education.” Ms. Chao expressed her expectations of her son, which was for him to attend an excellent university in the future. Three participants argued that home-schooling does not provide as good of an education as public schools can. For their children’s adolescence period, they emphasized school quality, but they also believed that schooling was not a decisive factor for their children in terms of their future development and career. They attached more importance to their children’s internal factors and efforts.

### ***Diverse Viewpoints on Schools’ Multilingualism***

The parents held polarized opinions towards multiculturalism and multilingualism at school. For instance, Ms. Chao thought that knowing people from different cultures and appreciating multicultural diversity would be beneficial for her son. She believed that private schools are disadvantageous for developing a well-rounded personality and making friends because of their demographic homogeneity. Mr. Zhao also showed his satisfaction towards the proportions of various races in public schools, and he also spoke highly of his sons’ ability to speak both Spanish and English. Nevertheless, Mr. Wang expressed his dissatisfaction with the teachers’ accents in their spoken English, which were intermingled with Spanish, because he expected his son to learn the *Standard English of North America*, for instance, the *National Public Radio accent*. He prioritized English over Spanish, or any other languages, for his son’s future.

### ***Academic Achievements Expected***

Undoubtedly, the expectation of academic achievements was a dominant aspect of parenting styles among these parents. They all admitted that they valued their children’s academic achievements. Ms. Chao, for instance, thought that a good grade was evidence of being both talented and hardworking. Moreover, Mr. Zhao argued that there is a pathway from academic achievements to a future career and life, saying that education should bring a person a good career and stable income, as well as social contributions. He suggested that being a doctor could give his children more options in that they could have the same job in different countries and contribute to society on a broader scale.

### *Learning Virtues Highly Valued*

All the parents agreed that learning virtues was very important; both Ms. Chao and Mr. Wang claimed that learning virtues was more important than high academic scores. One big theme of learning virtues was the learning habit which every parent mentioned, though not all of them are satisfied with their children's academic performance. Mrs. Liu's opinion was that establishing a good learning habit at an early age would influence the child's whole life. Curiosity is another valued learning virtue. Mr. Zhao, for instance, exemplified that his sons should be interested in running wheels and the principle behind what makes the wheels run. His opinion was that "curiosity is the driving force of leading you to the deeper and higher level, as well as persistence". Other virtues which were also mentioned and valued in education included: flexible learning (not like a bookworm), concentration or attentiveness, and development of skills at a young age (from interviews with Mr. Zhao and Mrs. Liu).

### *Home Tutoring Universally Added*

All of the participants were engaged in some level of home tutoring. Ms. Cui usually browsed the school website, kept herself informed of their homework and textbook assignments, and made sure that her children completed homework on time. Mr. Zhao also tutored his children by himself and with hired private tutors. Mr. Wang kept himself informed of his son's learning content and performance reflected from homework every two weeks, especially when they had just arrived in the U.S. and his son could not understand what his teacher said in classes such as Civics. Mr. Wang spent much time tutoring his son at home, assigned him reading tasks, and helped him revise his English writing occasionally. Months later, when Mr. Wang found his son was performing better, he intentionally began to reduce his engagement. For Mrs. Liu's family, her husband would instruct their daughter mainly in natural science subjects, because she had very limited availability for her daughter in her adolescence period.

### ***Parenting Involved in the Youths' Personal Development***

#### *Respecting vs. Supporting Personal Interests*

It was unanimously agreed by all of the participants that their children's talents, interests, and choices should be valued and respected. Ms. Chao believed that strong interest made her son learn better. Mr. Zhao's son loved art, and he also thought that his son was talented in art, thus this father recognized and respected his son's artistic talent. Mr. Wang hoped his son would develop his interest in some specific fields in high school, such as robotics or programming, to motivate his future career.

Although parents showed enough respect to their children's interests, they stated that they would still show concern for more realistic and practical reasons and consciously guide them through daily conversations; these talks exerted gradual effects on their children. Mr. Zhao's son was interested in art, but Mr. Zhao worried about his future of relying on arts for a living and doubted whether an art career could generate earnings to cover basic living expenses. Thus, he chose the profession of a doctor as his son's career; he also used the family and social *facts and statistics* to prove the advantages of being a medical doctor as career as his rationale.

### *Personality Development*

Good manners and respect were also regarded as having great importance. Mr. Zhao held a belief that being good mannered, kind, and respectful was critical for human beings. Mr. Wang taught his son to respect people of different races, nations, and religious backgrounds.

### *Education in the U.S. and in China*

#### *Fewer Communication Chances With Teachers in the U.S.*

A very clear difference found in the research was that parents obviously felt that there was much less personal and face-to-face communication with teachers in the U.S., who communicated mainly through emails and phone calls. Ms. Chao felt unsatisfied because she lacked communication with teachers regarding her son's performance. She said that "unlike China, it is hard to develop long-term and deep communications with the teachers in the U.S., or establish personal relationship, to know our kids, or get specific advice from teachers on our children's study." Ms. Cui was also unhappy about the few communications and slow email replies. She spoke highly of the parent-teacher communications in China.

#### *More Free Time and More Relaxed Study Style in the U.S.*

Another big comparison was embodied in the tight-versus-relaxed education styles, when the participants compared education in China to that in the U.S. Both Ms. Cui and Mr. Wang felt that the American public education had a loose pace and less pressure to study. Mr. Zhao argued that the workload for their children from school was not heavy. Mrs. Liu also thought that American education was much more relaxed in and between semesters.

#### *Parents' Engagement More Needed in the U.S.*

The relaxed school schedule also raised an alert among the participating parents. For instance, Mr. Wang worried that his son may become a *slacker* by learning in the U.S., as a result of having more available time and less of a workload. For this reason, Mr. Wang added more academic and physical tasks for his son in his spare time, including English reading and outdoor sports activities, which he believed would facilitate his son's transition to living in the U.S. Ms. Cui had a similar opinion, arguing that "easy study makes my children lazy, and thus parents need to engage more." Ms. Cui paid more attention to her children in the U.S. than in China because her children tended to be more relaxed while studying in the U.S.

#### *Homework of Appropriate Quantity and Diversified Forms in the U.S.*

Mr. Wang reported that teachers in China assigned a large amount of homework every day and pushed students to practice for basic skills, because of the traditional Chinese education mode and the pressure of teachers' performance evaluation. He also found that teachers in the U.S. schools did not assign much homework every day; however, to his delight, the homework could stimulate students to think and innovate, for instance, by presenting a research project.

### *Advanced K-12 Math and Science Education in China*

Unlike heavy language-involved subjects, math and science gave these newcomers confidence in U.S. schools. Wang's son was regarded as a model student in his U.S. math class, regardless of his limited English proficiency upon his arrival. One of the reasons, as reported by Mr. Wang, was that his son had already learned part of the math content for the same grade level in China in advance. Ms. Chao's son was also good at math and she believed that the repetitive drilling method in his son's math class in China seemed effective in allowing him to attain high scores. Mrs. Liu also claimed that her daughter was good at math, chemistry, and physics due to solid foundation accumulated through years of schooling on these subjects in China.

## **Discussion**

### *Parenting Styles*

Based on the data collected, it appears that the five participating parents utilized different parenting styles, ranging from Baumrind's (1966) *authoritative*, Baumrind's (1966) *authoritarian*, to *easygoing* (Kim et al., 2013) or *permissive* style (Baumrind, 1966). They all mentioned "the Chinese notion of *guan*" at different occasions and to different levels (Ng et al., 2014, p.364).

Mrs. Liu was the only parent with a permissive/easy-going parenting style. She said she used hands-off methods, which meant she let her daughter learn skills such as time management through her own mistakes. Mrs. Liu provided an example that her daughter had learned to complete assignments on time after being chastised by her teacher in China. Ms. Chao, Ms. Cui and Mr. Zhao had a mixture of minor authoritative and major easy-going parenting styles. Ms. Chao still set up rules although her son did not always follow them, since she believed that authority from parents was necessary and a sense of propriety was vital to her son. Mr. Zhao neglected his son's interest in art and chose the profession of a doctor as his son's career; he also set moral standards for his son. Such an array of governance reiterates the Chinese notion of *guan* (Wu, 2008) or controlling parenting which resembles Baumrind's (1966)'s authoritarian style (Yuwen & Chen, 2012), as a repeated statement that "Chinese parents' feelings of worth" is "more contingent on children's performance" (Ng et al., 2014, p. 355). Their parenting styles seem intact regardless of their transcontinental migration from China to the U.S.

As another strategy, Mr. Zhao and his wife formed a team in parenting. Mr. Zhao stated, "I am the policeman, and my wife is the judge." Mr. Zhao assigned specific tasks and his wife took charge of rewards and penalty accordingly. Mr. Wang had the typical authoritative parenting style of explaining the reasoning behind the rules he made (Cheah et al., 2009). Mr. Wang's parenting style was reported to have a positive effect on his son and help him overcome difficult periods in his first year of arrival to the U.S.

### *Couples' Role Division in Parenting*

Generally speaking, in Chinese families, mothers are primary caregivers to their children and fathers are stricter with children, making communication more difficult between them and their children (Shek, 2006). Despite this, this research found that more fathers took major roles in parenting (Mr. Wang, Mr. Zhao and Mrs. Liu's husband). Moreover, these fathers seemed to be more easy-going and less strict than the mothers and easier to communicate with, which was akin

to Yuwen and Chen's (2012) findings. This finding may result from higher stress (Buki et al., 2003) and less available time that immigrant mothers, especially those with lower income.

In the other two families, the mothers were more involved in parenting. Ms. Chao's husband seldom participated in parenting because he always had disagreements with the wife and less time available. Ms. Chao stated that no matter how different each parent was, it was important for both parents to have the same requirements in parenting and the same attitude and responses towards children's bad behaviors to prevent the effects of parenting from disappearing. Ms. Cui's husband was reported to be busy with frequent business trips, thus making him less available for parenting.

### ***1.5 Generation Chinese Americans' Adaptations***

#### *Academic Challenges Due to Language Barriers*

Echoing the findings of many studies (e.g., Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Ibanez et al., 2004) that the 1.5 generation's English proficiency is positively correlated with their academic achievements, this study found that low English proficiency of those newly arrived 1.5 generation adolescents was correlated with low learning outcomes in the beginning of their arrival. With parental involvement and family tutoring, these students were able to make great progress in all subject areas, even within a short time period, that is, one year.

#### *Emotional Adaptations*

Mr. Wang described his son's emotional issues in great detail. His son was frustrated at his grade Cs in some subjects because of the language barriers which he could not overcome in the short term (Lee & Chen, 2000). To relieve his pressure, his son resorted to video games. Wang and his wife did not blame him; instead, they encouraged him by telling him that this was a normal process for anyone to adapt to a new setting. Mr. Wang also set up rules to avoid a potential gaming addiction. In addition to academic pressure and frustration, verbal discrimination and stereotypes were other factors that caused Wang's son's emotional hardship; Mr. Wang comforted his son by explaining that such things naturally happened in the local multi-cultural community and that his son should learn how to protect himself by respecting and socializing with different people.

#### *Their Heritage Language Proficiency*

The parents did not mention the continuity or discontinuity of their children's heritage language in this study. However, it can be inferred that their heritage language, as the main language used at home, helped to maintain their parent-child bond. Moreover, the shared language helped these newcomers make friends with other Chinese-speaking peers. Such a sense of belonging and inter-reliance could, to some extent, create a social support network to foster their emotional well-beings (Liu et al., 2009).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This exploratory case study revealed that the participating parents and their parenting styles had a great impact on their children's learning habits and virtues, academic performance and adaptations to their life in the U.S. For the 1.5 generation Chinese Americans, their parents had more potential parenting obstacles they would deal with: children's cultural adaptation, language transition,

academic challenges, developmental rebellions in adolescence, and psychological sensitivity and health. These parents had accumulated years of parenting experiences in China within Chinese educational system, and from the interviews, they did not seem to realize that they needed to make changes in their parenting styles to assist in their children's transitions to life in the U.S. The only change was more after-school engagement because of their concerns regarding the more *relaxed* American education style. School orientations and meetings between these new-coming parents and administrators, teachers, and parents would definitely help to understand cultural differences in parenting and education. Such a parenting mentorship seemed urgent, because the participating parents disclosed that there were occasional parent-child conflicts, inconsistent implementation of rules in both academic and daily lives at home, and dissatisfaction about parenting from both the parents and the youths. This study supported scholars' proposal about cultural considerations in parent training (e.g., Aleksandrov et al., 2016).

### ***Academic and Practical Implications***

Several academic implications may be drawn from this study to inform the educational community. First, it may provide insight into the discussions on why Chinese immigrant students often excel at math and science in the U.S. and how this phenomenon is linked with public education in China. In addition, it may be also fruitful to investigate whether drilling is an effective means of producing high-achieving learners in educational practices. The participating families had practiced rote and drills in schools in China, and some of the parents still used drilling as a method to tutor their children, to which they attributed their children's academic success, particularly in math.

All of the families in this study wanted their children to become proficient in oral and written English, and attached great importance to reading as the pathway. They saw English proficiency as a sign of success and acceptance. However, educators may need to be aware of the concept of multiculturalism being crucial in this transitional context and the potential loss and sacrifice of these 1.5 generation students' heritage language and cultural identity. Teachers may need to consciously develop students' multiculturalism and help students to develop acceptance of people of other backgrounds, cultural competence and global awareness, to prevent moments when 1.5 generation students do not want to speak their heritage languages or represent their cultures, even if they can, and to prevent verbal and physical discrimination and bullying among peers because of cultural or linguistic differences.

School communities and teachers should also pay more attention to newly arriving 1.5 generation students, for the sake of their academic performance and emotional well-beings. Two of the participating parents stated that they had difficulty communicating with teachers and complained about teachers' slow responses. In cases of teachers being too busy to give these students individualized attention, teachers can pair newcomers with other immigrant students, if possible, or with native-born students in the first few days of school. Teachers or counselors might also arrange pairs or small groups among parents in or across classes, or schoolwide. Several research studies have touched upon the topic of psychological-emotional stress of 1.5 generation students (Lee & Chen, 2000; Liu et al., 2009), and so has this study. Teachers need to be aware of the linguistic, academic and emotional difficulties faced by 1.5 generation Chinese American students, and 1.5 generation students in general, when they are trying to adjust to new schools in the U.S.; they should find ways to support these overlooked students—for instance, peer mentorship of

parents in knowing school systems in the U.S. and usage of a spectrum of parenting styles to fit in or modify their family dynamics in order to help their children's adjustments.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

There are some limitations to this study. The sample size of the study was small. Moreover, three mothers' and two fathers' parenting styles were different from their spouses'. Generalizability for this study is limited; however, our findings with specific scenarios or examples did support similar findings from earlier studies.

A larger study with both parents in a family would be stronger. Further quantitative studies regarding a few critical constructs, such as 1.5 generation's previous educational experiences and parenting of each parent, would also be encouraged. Another possible aspect to be explored would be the children's perspectives of their parents and their parenting styles. It would be informative to see whether and how much the children's perspectives aligned with their parents'. It would also be valuable to follow these students through college and into their adult years in a longitudinal study to investigate their perceptions of their cultural identity and how these perceptions affect their own styles of parenting in the future. Last but not least, it would be provocative to probe the parenting role of keeping heritage language and cultural identity in avoiding physical and verbal discrimination and bullying, as an expansion of the current research.

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