THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
IN THE POST-CHINATOWN ERA: A CASE STUDY
OF THE ROLE OF A CHINESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL

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Previous research attempted to explain the “model minority” phenomenon through conventional cultural theories, and attributed the success of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) students to the Chinese cultural values or to individual families. Such arguments are de-contextualized and do not take into account the social context that the immigrants are embedded. This dissertation argues that cultural values per se are inadequate to explain the success of Chinese immigrants unless such values are reinforced through the ethnic community, and thus become a form of social capital that the immigrants can draw on.

Building on the conceptual framework of social capital theory, this qualitative case study is designed to investigate the role that a Chinese language school, as the center of the ethnic Chinese community, plays in (re)producing social capital in the post-Chinatown era. This study focuses on how social capital within the Chinese language school influences the school adaptation and the academic performance of the CICA children. It further explores how the CICA children identify themselves in terms of ethnicity, and how they position the Chinese language school in their understanding and crafting of their ethnic identity.
The participants in this study are fifteen Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students aged 10-16, and thirteen Chinese immigrant parents, who come to the Chinese language school regularly. Data are collected through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analyses.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that the Chinese language school plays multiples roles in the lives of Chinese immigrants. Social capital embedded in the ethnic community, in forms of friendship with co-ethnic peers, social norms and social control, influences school adaptation and academic achievement of the CICA children. Finally, the Chinese language school provides the CICA children an “affinity” group and a sense of belonging, and thus helps them not only understand but also accept who they are.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF A CHINESE ETHNIC COMMUNITY IN A POST-CINNATOWN ERA

Depend on your parents at home and on your friends away from home (在家靠父母，出门靠朋友).
--A Chinese proverb

Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans have been painted as a “model minority” since the 1960s when the second wave of immigration brought in many Chinese professionals and those with financial resources. “Model minority” has become a buzz phrase in public discourse and academia. For example, in 1966, U.S. News and World Report featured an article titled “A Success Story of One Minority Group in the U.S.” The article stated,

At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities . . . At a time it being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift the Negroes and other minorities . . . The Nation’s 30 thousand Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own—with no help from anyone else . . . Chinese Americans are winning wealth and respect by dint of their own hard work. (Chun, 1995, p. 96)

More recently, Fortune magazine dubbed Chinese Americans, along with other Asian Americans, the “super-minority;” the New Republic heralded, “the triumph of Chinese Americans” as “America’s greatest success story;” and Commentary magazine referred to Chinese Americans as “a trophy population.” The New York Times announced
that Chinese Americans are “going to the head of the class;” and the *Washington Post* said in a headline, “Chinese Americans outperform others at School and Work” (Wu, 2002). The stereotype of “model minority” has been reinforced through these media reports.

In Search of an Explanation: From Culture to Social Capital

Researchers have attempted to answer the question, “Why are Chinese successful?” Or in Ogbu’s words, “Why do they succeed in crossing cultural/language boundaries?” (Ogbu, 1987, p. 327) The primary argument has been about the importance of cultural values in explaining the phenomenon of the “model minority.” Culture was defined by early anthropologists as “tradition” or “a sum total of social inheritance” (Erickson, 2005, p.35). The conventional cultural theories argue that Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans draw on their cultural capital grounded in Confucianism, which values education, family obligation, collectivism, respect for elders, and an emphasis on success derived from effort rather than from natural ability (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson 1996; Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Lin & Fu, 1990; Louie, 2005; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999). According to this line of thinking, the traditional Chinese cultural values and beliefs give rise to high educational aspirations that, when combined with strategic investments, translate into remarkable levels of aspirations and attainment on the part of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) children (Siu, 1996). In this view, Chinese culture provides the Chinese immigrants and their children with a way of life in the new world and helps them make sense of it; and Chinese culture is the vehicle for a successful adaptation to the mainstream American society (Eisenhart, 2001).
However, Ogbu (1978, 1987) argues that the traditional cultural theories are de-contextualized in that they exclude the larger historical, political, economical and community context in which the minority groups are embedded. Ogbu (1992) lists the limitations of the conventional cultural theories:

There are several reasons for their limitations: (a) they often take an ahistorical perspective on minority school learning problems; (b) they tend to analyze the problem of minority schooling out of context; (c) they ignore the minorities’ cultural models and the effects of these models on the group’s interpretations of and responses to schooling; (d) they ignore that group’s cultural frame of reference and identity; and (e) they are generally non-comparative in their approaches. (p. 288)

According to Ogbu (1987), three factors seem to account for the success of the Chinese. First of all, as a voluntary minority or an immigrant minority, the Chinese do not perceive cultural and language differences “as markers of identity to be maintained,” but as “barriers to be overcome in order to achieve their long-range goals of future employment” (Ogbu, 1987, p.327). Secondly, Chinese immigrants have a dual frame of references in regards to the opportunity structure in America. The immigrants often compare their current life in the new country to their previous life in the home country; rather than to the life of the White middle-class in America. When making such a comparison, they find that life may not be great in America, but it is much better than that “back home.” Finally, the trust relationship between the Chinese community and American schools facilitates school adaptation and academic success of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) students. Even when the Chinese immigrants recognize, experience, and resent prejudice and discrimination, they respond to it by
working harder. They believe that good education and upward mobility are the only ways to repudiate discrimination. Ogbu (1992) concludes,

One finds in voluntary minority communities an educational climate or orientation that strongly endorses academic success as a means of getting ahead in the United States. Equally important, one also finds culturally sanctioned high and persistence academic efforts. In these communities, social, peer, and psychological pressures not only encourage students to perform like Whites but also to surpass Whites in academic achievement. (p. 291)

Ogbu is among the first to point out that group differences in orientations towards school and achievement outcomes are not always or only linked to cultural differences (Eisenhart, 2001). Ogbu has made a significant contribution to the literature on student achievement and raised important points regarding the way historical circumstances and modes of incorporation into the dominant society affect the way various groups understand and respond to schools. Ogbu’s work has brought need attention to the importance of historical and social structural factors in understanding the achievement gap among minority groups. Many scholars have been influenced by his work and have gone on to conduct important research on student achievement. Although his cultural ecological theory has a far-reaching impact on how scholars think about the relationship among race, minority status, and education attainment, Ogbu’s (1987, 1993, 1994) work has been criticized for the broad categories on which it relied and the generalizations about students’ behavior and culture that it fostered (Gibson, 2005).

Initially, my study draws on Ogbu’s idea that the minority community is important in explaining the achievement gap. However, there are two main differences between the current study and Ogbu’s work. First, even though Ogbu and I both study minority communities, the focuses and perspectives are different. Ogbu studies
community through a cultural lens, and the community forces he focuses on include the cultural model; the cultural and language frame of reference; the degree of trust or acquiescence minorities have for White Americans and their social institutions; and the educational strategies\(^1\) (Ogbu, 1992, p. 289). He assumes that the community forces held by immigrant parents would simply be inherited and accepted by their children. As Lee (2009) contends, “Ogbu’s work underestimates inter-generational differences between parents and children” (Personal communication). The current study, however, studies the ethnic community through a sociological lens. My focus is on how the parents' interpretation of and responses to schooling are passed on to their children through the participation in the ethnic community.

My second point draws from Ogbu’s later work on the experiences of black students in an affluent suburban community. In this work, titled, *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*, Ogbu (2003) acknowledges that Black parents do value education, and expect their children to work hard, make good grades, and graduate from high school. He gives an example that Black parents so admire the standards of education in an elite suburban community that some of them move there, in spite of the financial burden. But Ogbu goes on to suggest that these Black parents’ strategies are inadequate; they do not work. The question is: Why don’t the strategies work?

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\(^1\) Cultural model is used to mean people’s understandings of their world, which guide their interpretations of events in that world and their actions in it. Cultural/language frames of references are either ambivalent/oppositional or non-oppositional. Degree of trust or acquiescence in a relationship with White Americans and their institutions refers to how much the minority groups trust White Americans and its institutions. Educational strategies encompass the attitudes, plans, and actions minorities use or do not use in their pursuit of formal education (Ogbu, 1992, pp. 289-290).
In my study, similar to the Black parents in Shaker Heights, the Chinese immigrant parents also move to LaBella Heights (pseudonym) for their children’s education. Their strategies seem successful. The question is: Why is there a discrepancy in terms of the outcomes of the strategies? My study suggests that the missing link could be the ethnic community, in this case, the Chinese language school, as a mechanism to reinforce, legitimatize and disseminate the values. In other words, it is not because African American parents do not value education, but perhaps because these individual family values are "lost in translation." These values are not reinforced into a social norm that could counterbalance the oppositional culture.

Moreover, if it were the Chinese culture that leads to the social and economic success of Chinese immigrants, neither traditional cultural theories nor Ogbo’s theoretical work on immigrant minorities can explain the differences within the Chinese American communities. Why is the fact that about 20 percent of Chinese aged 25 and older have less than a high school education, the second highest among Asian population surveyed (Asian Indian: 9.8%, Chinese: 19.2%, Filipino: 9.2%, Japanese: 6.6%, Korean: 9.8%, and Vietnamese: 30%)? (U.S. Census7a, 2004) In other words, neither culture as tradition nor their particular status as voluntary minorities are adequate to account for the intergroup achievement gap among Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans.

In search of an alternative explanation to the different outcomes of academic performance and social mobility among minority groups, sociologists have proposed social capital theory as a conceptual framework (Bankston, 2004; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Kao, 2004; Noguera, 2004; Ream, 2005; Schmid, 2001; Stanton-
Salazar, 1997; White & Glick, 2000; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). This framework calls on the researcher to explore cultural meanings in a specific social context; or as Foley (2004, 2005) suggests, to take into consideration of the role that community plays in interpreting and reinforcing cultural values. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is to contextualize the cultural values in a Chinese ethnic community. This dissertation seeks to understand how the cultural values are reinforced and institutionalized through a Chinese language school and thus become social capital that shapes educational experiences and ethnic identity formation of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) children.

In this study, I am not arguing that social capital theory is a better explanation than cultural theories. Instead, I look at the “model minority” phenomenon through a sociological lens. This sociological perspective adds to our understanding of the mechanisms through which cultural practices are enacted in the local community. In other words, I am interested in understanding the role that the ethnic community plays in engaging the members in certain cultural practices. The focus of this dissertation is neither on the cultural values per se, for example, pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, and values that contribute to school success and social mobility, nor on demystifying or unraveling the “model minority” stereotype (Lee, 1994, 1996, 2003). Rather, this study seeks to understand the social context in which culture is practiced; the process through which cultural values are legitimized, and therefore become a force of social control and social support. This study further examines the social relationships or “webs” to which cultural values are gravitated. By exploring the social relationship embedded within one Chinese ethnic community, the social norms and social control, I attempt to provide one
piece of a bigger puzzle. I argue that the access or lack of access to social capital embedded in the ethnic community may explain the intergroup and intra-group variability in academic success and social adaptation.

The fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted at a Chinese language school that I call Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Between the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2008, I spent forty-four Saturdays in the field, collecting data and volunteering in the CCLS. I attended community events, such as the Chinese New Year celebration, the panel discussion after the Virginia Tech shooting, and the fundraiser for 5.12.2008 earthquake in China, just to name a few. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of documents. The participants of this study were 15 (8 boys and 7 girls) Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children, aged 11-16, and 13 first generation Chinese immigrant parents, who came to the CCLS regularly.

Why is this Study Needed?

Early studies of Chinese communities focused on the ethnic enclave in Chinatown in the metropolitan area in the East and West Coast (Kwong & Miščević, 2005; Wong, 1998). As Chinatown’s golden age ended in the 1980s, when the new immigrants with high education and financial resources moved into suburbs, new ethnic communities have emerged. However, the studies on these contemporary Chinese communities, especially those located in the Mid-West inland area, are scant. Unlike the Chinese communities in the coastal areas, which have been well established and have accumulated social capital in over a hundred years, the new communities in inland are still in the process of
establishing social structures, and seeking a sense of collective ethnic identity. The immigration experience of the newcomers in the inland area is different from those who reside in the coastal areas. Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Chinese immigrants in the inland, and to listen to their stories. The present study conducted in a Chinese community in Greater Cleveland Area, Ohio, is among the first that explores Chinese and Chinese Americans living in the Mid-West inland.

Furthermore, it explores the role of a Chinese language school in a community made up of members who reside in a distance from each other. In an absence of proximity due to the new residential patterns, the Chinese language school has become a cultural mecca, where the new immigrants get connected with co-ethnics. I argue that it is the social relations, social norms and social control embedded in the ethnic community that shape educational experiences and ethnic identity formation of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide a compelling picture of how a Chinese language school shapes educational experiences and ethnic identity formation of the CICA children through the social relations with co-ethnics, social norms accorded to the ethnic community, and social control. Drawing on the conceptual framework of social capital theory, this research explores how the CCLS helps the 1.5 generation\(^2\) navigate through and adapt to the American school system. It further examines what roles the CCLS plays in the development of an ethnic identity among the Chinese immigrants and

\(^2\) The term of “1.5 generation” has been used to describe immigrants who were born outside of the U.S., and came to America as children or adolescents. This designation distinguishes individuals from first generation immigrants, who came to the U.S. as adults, and from second generation, who were born in the U.S. (Holloway-Friesen, 2008)
their children. This study seeks to present “insiders’” perspectives on the role of the ethnic community in their process of “becoming Americans.”

Why Community Matters?

The individual is helpless socially, if left entirely to himself….If he may come into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors (Hanifan, 1916, p. 130-131).

Although social capital within families or so-called family social capital\(^3\) is important in exploring the school outcomes and social mobility of immigrant children and children of immigrants (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Lareau, 2000; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994), families don’t function in isolation. To the contrary, there is interdependence and interconnections between families embedded in the community. Cremin (1990) argues, “In a socialized democracy, the community itself would become educative in the diurnal business of contending with public issues and solving public problems” (p. 179). Along the same line, Longo (2007) suggests that limiting education to individual families overlooks important assets of communities and community institutions.

For immigrants, the ethnic community is more important in their process of adapting to the new culture and social environment. And the ethnic community serves as

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\(^3\) Family social capital was defined by Coleman (1990) as the norms, social networks, and relationship between parents and children. There are five indicators of family social capital: family structure, quality of parent-child relations, adults’ interest in the child, parents’ monitoring of the child’s activities, and extended family exchange and support (Ferguson, 2006a).
the locus of support, which is a main argument of this dissertation. Rose (1981) vividly describes,

> They [the immigrants and refugees] do not live in a vacuum. They are part of an intricate sociopolitical web that must be seen as the background against which any portrait of their travails must be painted and any dissection of their innermost thoughts and feelings must be pinned. (p. 11)

In a study of Vietnamese refugees in Northern Virginia, Haines, Rutherford, and Thomas (1981) focus on the maintenance, extent and structure of social ties in the ethnic Vietnamese community. Haines et al. conclude, “[T]he community is the major, or the most desired, source of practical and emotional support” (p. 315).

Furthermore, Coleman (1990) argues that the stability and the strength of an ethnic community play a vital role in supporting the growth of family social capital, because the communal social capital allows parents to “establish norms and reinforce each other’s sanctioning of the children” (p. 318). Along the same vein, Zhou and Bankston (1994) suggest that the social capital generated within the immigrant community can offer a system of supports and constraints that promote advantageous actions.

Therefore, instead of looking at the roles of individual families or the family social capital (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994), this dissertation focuses on social capital embedded in the ethnic community. I have endeavored to understand how participation in the Chinese language school influences the CICA students’ school experiences; and how a membership of the Chinese ethnic group provides the CICA students an advantage in school adaptation and scholastic outcome. While not ignoring the role of traditional Chinese cultural values, I
highlight how cultural values have been transformed into social capital in the ethnic community, which may shape the attitude towards education and the school experience of Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children.

**Conceptual Framework: An Overview**

Part of what was missing from much of the earlier research was a careful analysis of schooling and an understanding of the ways in which process that were related to the socialization and sorting of students in school influenced the academic performance of immigrant students. As the focus on experience of immigrant students shifted to a more careful analysis of schooling practices, the concept of social capital took on greater importance. (Noguera, 2004, p. 181)

I discuss social capital theory as the conceptual framework of this dissertation in detail in chapter II. A definition of social capital, however, is necessary to introduce the concept underlying the current study. Although Bourdieu is known for his theories of capital and is the first to systematically analyze social capital, according to Putnam (2000), the term of social capital was first coined by Hanifan. In the article, titled *The Rural School Community Center*, Hanifan (1916) urges people to get involved in the community and accumulate social capital. He defines social capital in this way:

> In the use of the phrase *social capital* I make no reference to the usual acceptation of the term *capital*, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, good will, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit… (p. 130)

Hanifan (1916) believes, “The more the people do for themselves the larger will community social capital become, and the greater will be the dividends upon the social investment” (p. 138). The theoretical framework of this dissertation is built upon Hanifan’s idea of community social capital. Even though Hanifan’s definition of social
capital encompassed the main elements in later interpretations, “his conceptual invention apparently attracted no notice from other social commentators and disappeared without a trace” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

Like sunken treasure recurrently revealed by shifting sands and tides (Putnam, 2000, p. 19), the concept of social capital was revived and (re)defined by sociologists and economists over the years, among whom Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam are prominent. Chapter II discusses the definitions of social capital by them and the differences between their understandings of the concept. For this study, social capital within an ethnic community is defined as social relationships with co-ethnics, social norms, social support and control that arise from the social relations. Social relationships embedded in the CCLS bind individual families to the ethnic community and transform the expectations and aspirations on academic success of individual families into a social norm. Conforming to the social norm, therefore, has become an effective means of social control for the younger generation.

Research Questions and Significance of the Study

The following research questions guided data collection and analysis in this dissertation:

1. What role(s) does the Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) play in the process of migration and social adaptation to the American society?

2. How do the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) students and their parents utilize the social capital (re)produced by the Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) for school adaptation and academic success?
3. How do the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students who attend the Contemporary Chinese Language School construct their identities in terms of ethnicity? How do they position the Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) in their understanding and crafting of a collective ethnic identity?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to empirical studies of immigrant children by foregrounding the importance of the ethnic community in the children’s school adaptation and formation of ethnic identity. Moreover, it explores the impact of the Chinese ethnic community in a post-Chinatown era on the immigrants and their children through the social capital lens. Thirdly, this study shifts the research focus from individual families to a broader social context. In explaining the CICA students’ academic achievement, I attribute their success to the collective efforts by the ethnic community; rather to individual efforts or characteristics.

I argue that social relations with co-ethnics, social norms, and social control are main sources of social capital embedded in the Chinese language school. This dissertation suggests that the ethnic community plays a pivotal role in school adaptation and academic success of immigrant children. However, further research is much needed to investigate the way in which the whole ethnic community can be involved into the process of educating immigrant children. For other racial/ethnic communities, the study provokes discussion that if the community can actively engage its members and transform the essence of its culture into a social force that compels academic excellence and upward mobility, will it increase the chance of success for the minority children? The case study of the CCLS not only provides an alternative perspective of the familiar
cultural phenomena, but also presents a critical missing piece in the puzzle of immigrant adaptation that begins at the margins of contemporary American society in a post-Chinatown era.

The contributions of this dissertation are threefold. First, it brings needed attention to the Chinese ethnic community in a post-Chinatown era. Previous studies on Chinese communities have focused on the ethnic enclave—the Chinatown. But in the 1980s, the golden age of Chinatown came to an end, and Chinatown is no longer the center of the ethnic community. With the new immigrants moving into suburbs, the “ethnoburb” has emerged. Few researchers have studied this new phenomenon. This study is among the first to look into the Chinese language school as the center of such an ethnoburb located in the inland area.

Second, this study disputes the claim of conventional cultural theories that the success of a minority group is inherent in its culture, suggesting “there is no room for human agency” (Erickson, 1987, p. 343). This study argues that the immigrant parents are active agents who use culture as a local community practice to achieve desired goals. As Erickson (2000) suggests,

the person engaged in the practical conduct of everyday life can be seen as not simply following cultural ‘rules’ or as responding to cultural symbols always in the same ways, but as being strategic—an active agent who uses culture as tools adaptively, employing novel means when necessary to achieve desired ends. (p. 37)

Thus, this study suggests that it is not cultural values per se that account for the success of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans; rather these values are transformed
into social norms and become a legitimate form of social control through the parents’ active participation in the local community of practice.

Third, previous research focused on the factors that contribute to academic achievement and identity formation, but did not pay much attention to the mechanism through which those factors come into play. This study suggests the missing mechanism lies in the Chinese language school, the center of the ethnic community. Social capital in the form of social relationships with co-ethnics, social norms, and social control is the mechanism.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II explores the conceptual framework of this study—social capital theory. I review the literature on social capital theory: what is social capital? What are the properties and functions of social capital? What is the “dark side” of social capital? What is the relationship between social capital and children’s academic achievement? And what role does social capital play in the process of assimilation and ethnic identity development?

Chapter III discusses the history of Chinese immigration, putting this study within a historical context. I briefly review the history of Chinese immigration between 1840s to the 21st century. I divide the history into two periods: the early immigration (1840s-1965), and the reviving new Chinese immigration (1965-2007). The chapter goes on to describe the local social context—Chinese community in Greater Cleveland Area, where the study was conducted. Because of the changing residential patterns, there is a need for a community center for new Chinese immigrants. The CCLS was established to meet the
needs of the contemporary Chinese immigrants living in the suburbs.

Chapter IV describes the study’s methods. In this chapter, I discuss my research design, methods of data collection and analysis, and the trustworthiness of this study. It also details my experiences of navigating in the Chinese school and community with a constant negotiation of my identity as an “outsider” researcher and an “insider” member.

Chapters V to VII contain the substantive findings from the study. The fifth chapter focuses on the roles of the CCLS in a post-Chinatown era. I write about how the CCLS provides a social platform for community members to network; what information is disseminated through the network; how the CCLS serves as a surrogate family for the immigrants who left behind the extended family and social relationships in the process of migration; and how the ethnic community serves as a mechanism for social control. In Chapter VI, I focus on how the CICA students make sense of their American education, and how they frame the role of the CCLS in their understanding of educational motivation and achievement. In Chapter VII, I explore how the CICA students understand their ethnicity. I argue that the CCLS plays an important role in crafting the CICA students’ ethnic identity. Finally, the eighth chapter summarizes my major findings and discusses the implications of the study and directions for future research.

In the pages that follow, I provide a portrait of a very specific group of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, who regularly come to the Chinese language school in Greater Cleveland Area. This study is hardly a comprehensive inquiry into the experiences of all Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans. Nevertheless, I believe this study provides a much-needed window into the complexities of how Chinese
immigrants and Chinese Americans as well as their children understand the role of the ethnic community in the children’s educational experiences and identity formation.

A central part of this study is how the CICA children come to understand education and their identity in relation to the ethnic community, a process that involves shifting perspectives and cultural outlooks, as happened with migration and a mixing of two cultures. When interpreting the school success and ethnic identity development of the CICA students, I have sought to look beyond individual families or familial social capital and focus on the broader social context in which the families are embedded.
CHAPTER II

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The fact that Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans continue to be identified as a “model minority” coupled with their phenomenal increase within the American population, draws research attention. A considerable body of research has been conducted to explore the adaptation of Chinese immigrants and to explain their success in the American society. Not until the recent past, however, has social capital theory become a conceptual framework to explain school outcomes and social mobility of immigrant children and children of immigrants (Bankston, 2004; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Kao, 2004; Noguera, 2004; Ream, 2005; Schmid, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; White & Glick, 2000; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). Even when the theory of social capital does apply, scholars focus on social capital within families, or so-called family social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

Coleman (1990) argues that the stability and the strength of an ethnic community play a vital role in supporting the growth of family social capital, because the communal social capital allows parents to “establish norms and reinforce each other’s sanctioning of the children” (p. 318). Along the same vein, Zhou and Bankston (1994) stress, “the (ethnic) community is not simply the sum of isolated families, but is contained within a set of structural parameters maintained within the group as well as imposed from outside” (p. 825). To explore these contentions, this qualitative study uses social capital theory as
the conceptual framework to understand how social capital within the Chinese ethnic community plays a role in the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) students’ educational achievement. This research further explores how social capital is mediating the cultural practice from home country and the new cultural practice in the receiving society, and what role social capital plays in the development of an ethnic identity among the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) children.

To contextualize this study, I first review the literature on the social capital theory, its definitions and properties, the positive functions and “dark side” of social capital (Field, 2003). I then move to a focus on how social capital, especially communal social capital, influences the immigrant students’ academic achievement. Finally, I review the literature on assimilation, specifically the notion of segmented assimilation; and how social capital theory intersects with segmented assimilation theory, and what role the social capital plays in the process of the CICA students’ assimilation and identity formation.

Definitions of Social Capital

In an effort to understand the effects of social capital on children’s wellbeing, such as reducing teenage pregnancy, delinquency, academic failure, and child maltreatment (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Putman, 2000), sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists alike have assumed a key role in conceptualizing social capital (Ferguson, 2006a, 2006b). As discussed in the previous chapter, the term of social capital was coined by Hanifan (1916). According to Hanifan, social capital refers to tangible substances and intangible support, such as good will,
fellowship, sympathy and social intercourse. The first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital, however, was produced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1977) initially defines social capital as “a capital of honorability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance in a political career” (p. 503).

Further, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refine social capital as “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 119). This definition focuses on the benefits accruing to individuals by virtue of participation in groups and on the construction of social networks for the purpose of creating this social resource.

Bourdieu (1980) believes that both the density and durability of ties are vital components of social capital. Social capital represents the aggregated of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249)

He also acknowledges that the value of an individual’s ties, or “volume of social capital possessed by a given agent,” depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (e.g., cultural, social, and economic
capital) possessed by each connection. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes that social network is not a natural given and it must be constructed through “investment strategies, individual or collective” aimed at transforming contingent relationships into “social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (p. 249). He further suggests that for these strategies to be effective over the long term, they must involve “durable obligations subjectively felt or institutionally guaranteed” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249).

Critiques of Bourdieu’s definition contend that he views social capital as the exclusive property of elites or the privileged, designed to maintain and secure their relative position and their superiority. For example, Bourdieu believes that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital. He also believes,

the possessors of an inherited social capital, symbolized by a great name, are able to transform all circumstantial relationships into lasting connections. They are sought after for their social capital and, because they are well know, are worthy of being known; they do not need to ‘make the acquaintance’ of all their ‘acquaintances;’ they are known to more people than they know, and their work of sociability, when it is exerted, is highly productive. (p. 251)

Therefore, Field (2003) contends that Bourdieu neglects the possibility that less privileged individuals and groups might also find benefit in their social relationships. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) believes social capital is a means to “bring together individuals as homogeneous as possible in all the pertinent respects in terms of existence.

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Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between three general types of capital: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economic capital refers to monetary income as well as other financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property rights. Cultural capital includes long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects such as painting, and formal educational qualifications and training.
and persistence of the group” (p.250). This view underestimates the value of weak ties or bridging social capital.

Unlike Bourdieu, James Coleman believes that social capital is not just limited to the powerful, but also can convey real benefits to poor and marginalized communities. Coleman (1988) initially defines social capital as a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure (p. 98). In other words, social capital consists of social relationships, and it facilitates the achievements of certain ends (Astone, Nathanson, Schoen, & Kim, 1999). The social structure provides group members with opportunities to exchange information and to facilitate collective goals or desirable outcomes. For example, Coleman (1988) describes how the wholesale diamond market in New York City operates in a closed community. The community is composed of Jewish people with a high degree of intermarriage, who are living in the same community in Brooklyn, and going to the same synagogues. In the process of negotiating a sale, a merchant will hand over to another merchant a bag of stones for the latter to examine in private at his leisure. There is no formal insurance that the latter will not substitute one or more inferior stones or a paste replica. But the close social relationships provide enough insurance that is necessary to facilitate the transactions in the market. In the absence of closed social relationships and a high degree of social trust, the market would operate in a much more cumbersome, less efficient fashion, or the transaction would not take place.
Coleman (1988) believes that social relationships, information channels, and shared social norms are the fundamental forms of social capital. According to Coleman, social relationships as a form of social capital depend on three elements: obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of the social networks. Supposing A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future; this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on B (Coleman). Take the Korean rotating-credit union as an example. The union is composed of a group of friends and neighbors living in the Korean community. Each member contributes to a central fund that is then given to one of the members until each receives a payback. Members of the union hold an obligation and a high degree of trust to each other in the expectation that others within the network will act reliably and competently.

Moreover, the social relationships provide a channel to exchange information among people who engage in the networks. Information channeling is an important form of social capital in that information can facilitate actions and reach desirable outcomes. However, the quality of the information shared depends on the social trust. Individuals engaged in relationships characterized by a high level of social trust are more likely to openly share information and to act with caring and benevolence toward one another than those in relationship lacking trust (Coleman, 1988). Finally, shared social norms accompanied by sanctions are a powerful form of social capital that strengthens families by leading family members to act selflessly in the family’s interest, facilitates the development of nascent social movements through a small group of dedicated, inward-looking, and mutually rewarding members, and in general leads persons to work for the public good. (Coleman, 1988, pp. S104-105)
Furthermore, Coleman (1988) underscores the importance of social capital in the creation of human capital. Human capital refers specifically to individuals’ training and educational attainment, generally embodied in diplomas, credentials, and certifications (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In a case study of Asian immigrant families, Coleman finds that a number of Asian immigrant families purchase two copies of textbooks needed by the child. One copy is for the child, and the other is for the mother to study in order to help her child succeed. Coleman argues that the human capital of the immigrant parents may be low, but the social capital in the family available for the child’s education is high. On the contrary, if the parents’ human capital is high, but they are not part of their child’s life and do not pay attention to the child or if their human capital is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside the home, this human capital will be irrelevant to the school outcome for the child. Coleman argues without social capital, human capital is negligible for academic success; “if the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child’s educational growth that the parent has a great deal, or a small amount, of human capital” (p. S110).

In addition, Coleman (1994) suggests that social capital plays an important role in children’s development. He states, “The set of resources (or social capital) that is inherent in family relations and in community social organization are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person” (p. 300). For example, in an analysis of 4,000 students from the public schools in the High School and Beyond (HSB) sample, Hoffer (1986) finds that when other family resources are controlled, the dropout rate for students with high family social capital is 8.1%, whereas the rate for those with low
family social capital is 30.6%. This study also investigates the impact of social capital within the community on dropout rates. Since the social relations that constitute social capital are broken down each time the family moves, the families that move often have less communal social capital than those that do not move. The HSB data reveal that dropout rate for students whose family has not moved is 11.8%, 16.7% if the family has moved once, and 23.1% if it has moved twice. Therefore, Hoffer concludes that social capital both in the family and in the community have considerable impact on reducing the probability of dropping out of high school. Along the same vein, researchers find that social capital has positive impact on children’s wellbeing, such as reducing teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and child maltreatment (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Putman, 2000).

Despite his contribution of introducing the concept of social capital to American sociology, and the merit of his highlighting the importance of social capital in creation of human capital, Coleman’s definition of social capital is not without limitations. Portes (1998) criticizes Coleman for tending to overstate the role of close or dense ties (e.g., the ties or relationship between parents and children, between the families and the community, and among the community members), and underestimated the importance of weak ties (e.g., the relationship between a group member and a non-group member) or absence of ties. Burt (1997, 2001) argues that it is weak ties or absence of ties that facilitate individual’s mobility, because he believes that close or dense networks tend to convey redundant information, whereas weak ties can be sources of new knowledge and
resources. Moreover, like Bourdieu, Coleman’s view is naively optimistic, and he pays little or no attention to the “dark side” of social capital (Field, 2003).

After Bourdieu and Coleman, a number of theorists have completed research on social capital, among whom Robert Putnam stands out as the most widely recognized proponent of this theory. Putnam (1993) defines social capital as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (p. 167). Social capital contributes to “collective action by increasing the potential costs to defectors; fostering robust norms of reciprocity; facilitating flows of information; embodying the successes of past attempts of collaboration; and acting as a template for future cooperation” (p. 173). Putnam (1996) refines social capital as “networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 56). According to Putnam (2000), the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have values, and like other types of capital (e.g. economic capital and human capital), social capital influences the productivity of individuals and groups (p. 19). Putnam (2000) further develops the concept of social capital, “Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to prosperities of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms or reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19).

Furthermore, Putnam introduces a distinction between two basic forms of social capital: bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive). Bridging social capital tends to bring together people across diverse social divisions, and it tends to generate broader
identities and wider reciprocity rather than reinforcing a narrow grouping. *Bonding social capital*, however, is based on family, close friends, and other near kin. Bonding social capital binds people from a similar sociological niche, and it tends to reinforce exclusive identities and maintain homogeneity (Putnam, 2000).

Although Putnam’s contribution is monumental, his work has attracted a lot of criticism. First of all, Misztal (2000) alleges that Putman fails to provide an account of the production and maintenance of social capital (p. 120). Further, Misztal criticizes that Putnam promotes a “romanticized image of community,” and he fails to see that networks can foster both trust and distrust (p. 121). Misztal argues that Putnam underestimates the importance of politics and his view of social capital had a tendency to overlook the role of the state (p. 120). Lownders and Wilson (2001) similarly criticize Putnam’s theory as “too society-centered, undervaluing state agency and associated political factors” (p. 629).

Bourdieu regards social capital as an asset used by elite groups in their jockeying for positions. For Coleman, social capital could also serve as a resource for the relatively disadvantaged, but he shares with Bourdieu an emphasis on the asset belonging to individuals or families. Putman has stretched the concept further, and regards it as a resource that functions at societal level (Field, 2003). Despite the differences among the definitions of social capital, the consensus is growing in the literature that social capital has certain properties that are important for understanding how it comes into being. The following section examines the properties of social capital.
Properties of Social Capital

Like other forms of capital\(^5\) (economic capital or human capital), social capital is the product of prior human action, and it accumulates or decreases with the change of social relationships. Astone et al. (1999) describe the properties of social capital as inalienable, depreciable, and fungible with respect to specific activities. Alienability in economy refers to the ability to exchange a capital resource with one another. Social capital is inalienable in that it cannot be exchanged with or given to another individual who does not belong to the social networks or who does not build social relationships within the networks.

Depreciation means the value of a capital resource decreases when it is not maintained. Social capital depreciates if group members engage less in activities that maintain the social relationships and trust (Putnam, 2000). For example, one person has lived in a community for a long time and has established extensive social relationships with other community members. Therefore, he accumulates a great stock of social capital in this community. If he moves far away from this community, the efforts required to maintain the social relationships will increase. If he is unwilling or unable to increase the efforts, the value of relationship as a form of social capital will gradually depreciate. As Bourdieu (1980) acknowledges, social capital is not a natural given, and the acquisition of it requires deliberate investment of other capital resources and construction of social networks.

\(^5\) Capital is defined by Samuelson (1976) as an input to economic production, which is distinguished from other inputs, such as land or labor, in that a capital input is itself an output of a prior productive process.
Fungibility refers to the ability of a capital resource to be used in a variety of ways. Social capital is fungible in that social networks, for example, can serve for different purposes. However, Coleman (1988) suggests, “social capital is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others” (p. S98). For instance, the social capital among gang members is valuable or indispensable for individuals who engage in organized crime, but it is useless to facilitate their entry to other careers.

Positive Functions of Social Capital

As mentioned previously, the empirical literature has indicated that social capital can have a positive impact on children’s wellbeing, including school attrition and academic performance, cognitive and social development, and prevention of delinquency (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Putnam, 2000). This section reviews the existing literature on how social capital functions to facilitate the desirable outcomes. Three basic positive functions of social capital have been identified: (a) as a source of social control; (b) as a source of family support; and (c) as a source of benefits through extra-familial networks (Portes, 1998).

First, social capital serves as a source of social control. Social norms as a form of social capital set boundaries for members as what socially accepted behaviors are. Any behaviors that are incongruent with the norm will be sanctioned by other members. Take Zhou and Bankston’s (1994) study as an example. Zhou and Bankston investigate how social capital influences the adaptations of the second generation of the Vietnamese
immigrants in New Orleans. The finding of their study indicates that norms shared in the tightly knit Vietnamese community promote value conformity and constructive forms of behavior. Zhou and Bankston state,

Because the norms of individual families stem from the ethnic community and are supported by it, the forms of behavior expected by parents and by others around the children are essentially the same, . . . What is considered bad or good is clearly specified and closely monitored by these networks. The community is watchful and ever-vigilant, providing effective social control on individual families and the younger generation. Both parents and children are constantly observed and judged by others under “a Vietnamese microscope.” (p. 831)

Second, social capital as a source of family support is evident in the empirical literature. Recent research has shown that immigrant children from intact families or from families associated with tightly knit social networks consistently show better psychological conditions, higher levels of academic achievement, and stronger educational aspirations than those in single-parent or socially isolated families (Zhou, 1997). For example, Sanderfur and McClanahan (1994) examine the social capital among single parent families, and its impact on school achievement and attribution, teenage pregnancy, and other adolescent outcomes. They find that social capital tends to be lower for children in single-parent families, and therefore, those children have lower educational achievement and less desirable personal outcomes. Along this line, Parcel and Dufur (2001) examine how social capital both in the family and at school affected student’s achievement in math and reading. The results indicate that stronger home environments promote math achievement, while parental knowledge of child location helps reading. Parcel and Dufur conclude that family social capital is helpful to child’s success in school. As Coleman (1988) suggests the importance of social capital in the
creation of human capital, Kao (2004) argues “while having well-educated parents should increase educational outcomes among children, it is the social capital embedded within the parent-child relationship that allows parents’ human capital to be transferred to children” (p. 173).

Third, the most common function attributed to social capital is as a source of network-mediated benefits beyond the immediate family. Whereas Coleman stresses the closed networks through family as a necessary condition for the emergence of social capital, other theorists highlight the function of social capital as a source of benefits through extra-familial network. Extra-familial networks are important in studies of ethnic business enclaves and ethnic niches. Enclaves are dense concentrations of immigrant or ethnic firms that employ a significant proportion of their co-ethnic labor force and develop a distinctive physical presence in urban space (Portes, 1998). Studies of New York’s Chinatown (Zhou, 1992); of Miami’s Little Havana (Portes, 1987); and Los Angeles’ Korean town (Light & Bonacich, 1988) consistently highlight the role of community networks as a source of vital resource for ethnic business. In all the cases, mobility opportunities are entirely network-driven, meaning members have privileged access to jobs in the enclaves, while outsiders are restricted. The power of the network is such that entry-level openings are frequently filled by contacting kin and friends in remote foreign locations rather than by tapping other available local outside workers (Sassen, 1995).

The literature on social capital has strongly emphasized its positive functions. However, social capital has its “dark side” (Field, 2003; Putnam, 2000). It is important to
acknowledge the negative social capital to avoid romanticizing it as “unmixed blessing,” and to keep the analysis of the concept within the bounds of serious sociological analysis (Portes, 1998).

The “Dark Side” of Social Capital

Recent studies have identified four major negative consequences of social capital: (a) reinforces inequality (Lin, 2000), and status attainment (Lin, 1999); (b) excludes “outsiders”; therefore, limits the new resources of the “insiders” (Burt, 1997); (c) restricts individuals’ freedom (Putnam, 2000); and (d) under certain circumstances, downgrades the social mobility (Field, 2003; Portes, 1998).

First of all, social capital can promote inequality in large part because access to different types of networks is very unequally distributed (Field, 2003). Depending on the process of historical and institutional constructions, each society has provided unequal opportunities to members of different groups defined over race, gender, religion, caste, or other ascribed or constructed characteristics (Lin, 2000, p. 787). As Edward and Foley (1997) suggest, “Access to social capital depends on the social location of the specific individuals or groups attempting to appropriate it . . . the social location of the social capital itself affects its use value” (p. 677). For example, immigrants who are located in disadvantaged socioeconomic positions tend to associate and interact with those of similar ethnic background and socioeconomic characteristics. Therefore, they are embedded in social networks poor in social capital, and they share a relatively restricted variety of information and influence (Lin, 2000). Furthermore, the neighborhood where the immigrant family lives and the parents’ social networks influence the children’s peer
group, which may further perpetuate inequality through the generations. Therefore, social
capital is viewed as both an asset in its own right that is unequally distributed, and as a
mechanism that can promote further inequality (Field, 2003).

Second, the same social networks that bring benefits to members of a group
enable it to exclude “outsiders” from access to and utilize social capital. As Waldinger
(1995) points out, “the same social relations that enhance the ease and efficiency of
economic exchanges among community members implicitly restrict outsiders” (p. 557).
Drawing on an empirical study of friendship ties in Britain, Pahl and Spencer (1997)
criticize community development strategies based on

old style ties based on gender, race or ethnicity as a way of empowering
disadvantaged categories on the ground that these may, unwittingly, have added
to their troubles by making it more difficult for such close-knit groups to develop
bridging ties. (p. 102)

Along the same line, Field (2003) suggests that although dense and localized
networks can help strengthen bonds, particularly among those who face similar
experiences of exclusion or danger, they do not give much access to others who could
help bring benefits that are situated or controlled outside the community.

Furthermore, community or group participation necessarily creates demands for
conformity, and thus, the individual’s freedom is restricted. As a positive function, social
capital can be an effective source of social control. However, the intense community life
and strong enforcement of local norms can reduce the privacy and autonomy of
individuals. As the case study by Zhou and Bankston (1994) describes, “The community
is watchful and ever-vigilant . . . Both parents and children are constantly observed and
judged by others” (p. 831). Moreover, Coleman (1988) suggests that a community with
strong and effective norms about socially accepted behaviors can keep people from “having a good time” (p. S105). He continues that social control not only reduced innovativeness, but also deviant actions that may benefit the community.

Finally, social capital can exert a leveling-down effect on the aspirations of marginalized group members (Harper, 2001; Ledeneva, 1998; Portes, 1998). Portes suggests that when group solidarity is cemented by a shared experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society, downward leveling norms are in operation to keep members of a disadvantaged group in a state of continued subjection. The downward leveling norms emerge when the mobility of a particular group has been blocked by outside discrimination. Portes continues, “That historical experience (of being discriminated) underlines the emergence of an oppositional stance toward the mainstream and a solidarity grounded in a common experience of subordination” (p. 17). Many members of the marginalized groups have responded to their social isolation and their constrained opportunities with resentment toward the middle-class America, rebellion against all forms of authority, and rejection of the goals of achievement and upward mobility. In the perspective of “oppositional culture,” school achievement is seen as unlikely to lead to upward mobility; efforts toward academic achievement are regarded as “acting white;” and high achievers are seen as sell-outs to oppressive authority (Ogbu, 1987; Zhou, 1997). The rejection of academic pursuits is especially intense among members of marginalized groups, who have less access to social capital, and whose peer network strongly discourage learning.
Social capital can serve as public goods; however, its “dark side” should not be neglected. Mafia families, prostitution and gambling rings, and youth gangs offer so many examples of how social capital embedded in such social structure can lead to downward mobility (Portes, 1998).

Social Capital and Academic Success

In light of the mounting evidence that social capital can serve as a positive source of social control, family support, and extra-familial benefits, researchers have been compelled to examine how social capital interacts with such factors as race, class, and cultural capital; and how social capital impacts the academic performance of minority students. Coleman’s (1994) notion of social capital provides a conceptual link between the attributes of individual actors and their immediate social context, including home, school, and community. According to Coleman, social capital resides in forms of social networks that produce benefits for individual involved. As he states, “the function identified by the concept of social capital is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests” (Coleman, 1988, p. S101). Coleman argues that individuals embedded in dense and bounded social networks are more likely to accumulate social capital.

A notable example of applying Colman’s concept of social capital is conducted by Furstenberg and Hughes (1995). Utilizing data from a longitudinal study of 252 children of teenage mothers, Furstenberg and Hughes investigate whether and how much the availability of both family-based and community-based social capital contributes to at risk children’s wellbeing and their life chances. The results find that both within-family
and community-based social capital play an important role in helping at risk youths negotiate their way out of disadvantage, and social capital appears to be related to the markers of socioeconomic success in early adulthood. Moreover, building on Coleman’s work, Goddard (2003) examines how relational networks, social trust, and norms as forms of social capital contribute to students’ academic achievement. Data were collected from 2,429 students and 444 teachers in 45 urban elementary schools in a state in the Midwestern United States. The results indicate that students in schools characterized by high levels of social capital have higher passing rates on the state-mandated assessments on both mathematics and writing.

Following this line of thinking, scholars have suggested that children from some immigrant groups are successful in American schools because they come from families with close, emotionally intense, bounded networks (Bankston, 2004). Family social capital is defined by Coleman (1988) as the relationships between parents and their children (as well as relationships between children and other family members residing in the house), which encompass the time, efforts, resources, and energy that parents (and other adults in the house as well) invest in the children. Further, Ferguson (2006a) describes five indicators of family social capital: family structure, quality of parent-child relations, adult’s interest in the child, parent’s monitoring of the child, and extended family exchange and support (p. 4). Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) examine the role of family social capital or familism in academic achievement of Mexican origin and Anglo adolescents. Data were collected among 2,666 Anglo and 492 Mexican origin students enrolled at six suburban San Francisco Bay Area high schools. Findings indicate
that the presence of kin in combination with a high belief in, and contact with family members implies a milieu in which adults find support for societal values, whereas adolescents find support for school success. Along this vein, Lareau (2000) compare the involvement of working-class parents with that of middle-class parents in their children’s education. She concludes that working-class and middle-class parents share the same desire to help their children succeed in school, but they differ in the cultural capital they bring to the task, and in the social capital they invest in their children’s education.

Social capital does not exist solely within the family, but within the community as well. Communal social capital consists of the quality, structure, and density of social relationships and interactions between and among parents and families, as well as the collective social relationships between parents and local community institutions (Coleman, 1988). Coleman and Hoffer (1987) propose four general components of community social capital: supportive social networks; civic engagement in local institutions; trust and safety; and degree of religiosity. Ferguson (2006a) adds quality of school and quality of neighborhood as additional indicators of communal social capital.

Numerous studies have revealed that families embedded in a community with high stock of social capital have increased access to information, and other sources of capital (e.g., physical capital, human capital, and cultural capital), which can lead to positive impacts on children’s cognitive and social development (Coleman, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Stevenson, 1998).

In the case of immigrant communities, Zhou (1997) suggests that ethnic social capital plays an important role as a buffer between individual families and larger society;
and helps individuals negotiate their way out in the mainstream culture. She contends that ethnic community moderates original cultural patterns, legitimizes traditional values and norms, and enforces standards. Along the same line, Goddard (2003) suggests that when immigrant students have access to various forms of social support, and respect social norms such as doing homework and getting good grades in school, their chances of academic success are enhanced. This situation resembles that described by Zhou and Bankston (1994) in their study of second generation Vietnamese youths in New Orleans. Zhou and Bankston observe that

> Although intact families are important in the Vietnamese community, they do not function in isolation. Rather, they are contained in a web of social and kinship relations. While young people are certainly members of a social group as individuals, much of their involvement in the group is mediated by their families. Strong normative integration of families is accompanied by a high degree of consensus over value and behavior standards, which functions to support goal attainment in the community. (p. 830)

The findings indicate that the relatively high average level of achievement among Vietnamese American students is maintained by cultural values conducive to achievement and by bounded social networks that support these values. Zhou and Bankston (1994) conclude that “in this particular ethnic community, the social capital made available to children is more important than the human capital and other individual characteristics of parents in determining the adaptation of immigrant children” (p. 840).

Similarly, in an ethnographic study of Chinese Americans, Siu (2001) observes that Chinese families’ views on education and child-rearing are greatly influenced by their community. “Communities are important sources of support and resources for families” (p. 121). Further, Siu finds that Chinese parents rely heavily on informal social
networks seeking information about the qualities of schools, the teaching style of specific teachers, and the extra-curricular activities. Siu suggests that schools should establish a positive relationship with existing Chinese community and work with indigenous leaders to reach out Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, especially the newcomers.

Mobility, Suburbanization and Social Capital

The Chinese are the oldest and largest ethnic group of Asian ancestry in the United States, and their migration history dates back to the late 1840s. In the next chapter, I will detail the immigration history of the Chinese, with a specific focus on the differences between the early and the contemporary Chinese immigrants, and the changing pattern of residence. In this section, I focus on how the geographic mobility of Chinese immigrants and suburbanization impacts the formation of ethnic neighborhoods, and the (re)production of social capital.

In the pre-World War II era, the Chinese ethnic communities were essentially isolated enclaves located in the inner city. Chinatown is an example of such an ethnic enclave. These ethnic enclaves consisted of a small number of the merchant class and a vast working class of sojourners (Zhou, 2003). With the influx of new immigrants after the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965, the Chinese community has experienced unprecedented demographic and social transformation from a residential apartheid to a suburban ethnic community. Although Chinatowns continue to exist and to receive new immigrants, who may have limited financial capital, English proficiency and education,

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6 Sojourners were temporary immigrants who intended to return home after making money in the U.S. (Zhou, 2003).
the ethnic enclaves are no longer the primary centers of contemporary Chinese immigrants.

Contemporary Chinese immigrants come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and have varied levels of human capital. Many of those contemporary immigrants, especially the affluent and highly educated and skilled, avoid the ethnic enclaves and move into the suburbs upon arrival. In a study of the geographic mobility of the first generation Chinese immigrants in three large metropolises—New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, Fang and Brown (1999) conclude that the new first generation Chinese immigrants tend to disperse to suburban areas and to areas outside of the respective metropolises from concentrated ethnic residential areas. This dispersion is associated with greater educational attainment and higher levels of English language proficiency (p. 153).

Suburbanization has been a feature of American life since the mid-nineteenth century. Jackson (1985) argues that suburbanization resembles a privatization of social life; it weakens the sense of community, and thus it spells the end of authentic civic life. He concludes:

[A]major casualty of America’s drive-in culture is the weakened “sense of community” which prevails in most metropolitan areas. I refer to a tendency for social life to become “privatized,” and to a reduced feeling of concern and responsibility among families for their neighbors and among suburbanites in general for residents of the inner city….The real shift, however, is the way in which our lives are now centered inside the house, rather than on the neighborhood or the community. (p. 272)
Along the same line, Putnam (2000) believes that suburbanization undermines civic engagement and community-based social capital. He describes the consequence of suburbanization in this way:

As suburbanization continued, however, the suburbs themselves fragmented into a sociological mosaic—collectively heterogeneous but individually homogenous, as people fleeting the city sorted themselves into more and more finely distinguished “lifestyle enclaves,” segregated by race, class, education, life stage, and so on. (p. 209)

Putnam argues that the increasing social segregation reduces opportunities for social networks crossing class and racial lines, and disrupts the sense of community “boundedness.” He states, “This physical fragmentation of our daily lives has had a visible dampening effect on community involvement” (p. 215).

For the Chinese immigrants, suburbanization is a relatively new phenomenon. Nevertheless, moving to the suburbs has a greater impact on the social life of Chinese immigrants. In the process of migration, the social networks with extended family members and friends were disrupted and left behind. Putnam (2000) describes this process as a repotting, “[F]or people as for plants, frequent repotting disrupts roots systems. It takes time for a mobile individual to put down new roots” (p. 204). When the immigrants move to the suburbs where people keep to themselves, asking little of their neighbors and expecting little in return, these newcomers find themselves isolated. It is difficult for them to “put down new roots” in such environment. The contemporary Chinese immigrants yearn to have a social space, where they can rebuild social networks, and socialize with their “own people.” Therefore, in 1990s, many Chinese ethnic communities were established in suburbia (Logan, Zhang, & Alba, 2002). These new
ethnic communities provide higher status living context than do the ethnic enclaves in Chinatown, and thus have become an alternative destination for successful immigrant families. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss how one such suburban ethnic community has been established, and what role it plays in the lives of the new immigrants and their children.

Social Capital and Ethnic Identity

For immigrant children and children of immigrants, social capital not only influences their school outcomes, but shapes their adaptation to the new culture, and helps the newcomers negotiate, define, and construct their ethnic identity. What the assimilation theories are, and how social capital theory intersects with the assimilation theories is what we turn to next.

Classical Assimilation Theories

Assimilation is not a static or unchanging concept; rather, its definition has evolved steadily as American society has changed with the influx of new immigrants. Assimilation as a paradigm for the social-scientific understanding of immigration is traceable to the middle 1930s, when the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) defines acculturation or cultural assimilation.

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149)
Later, the SSRC (1954) refines acculturation as “cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems” (p. 974). This definition describes only one dimension of assimilation, namely, the cultural changes, which are induced by contacts between ethnic enclaves and their encompassing societies. Park and Burgess (1969) add a social dimension to the concept of assimilation. As social contact initiated interaction, assimilation is its final perfect product. The nature of the social contacts is decisive in the process. Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where contacts are primary, that is, where they are the most intimate and intense, as in the area of touch relationship, in the family circle and in intimate congenial groups. (pp. 735-736) Park (1950) suggests that assimilation is a progressive and irreversible process, in which the cultural differences will eventually diminish, leading to “a common cultural life.” Along the same vein, Berry (1951) defines assimilation as “the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture” (p. 217). Rose (1956) characterizes assimilation as “the adoption by a person or group of the culture of another social group to such a complete extent that the person or group no longer has any characteristics identifying him with his former culture” (p. 557). Blau and Duncan (1967) add yet another dimension to the concept of assimilation—socioeconomic assimilation. According to Blau and Duncan, the purpose of social assimilation is to attain the average or above-average socioeconomic standing, as measured by indicators such as education, occupation, and income. They believed assimilation inevitably leads to social mobility. Alba and Nee (2003) call for a more

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7 An autonomous cultural system is one which is self-sustaining—that is, it does not need to be maintained by a complementary, reciprocal, subordinated, or other indispensable connection with a second system (SSRC, 1954, p. 974).
sophisticated conception of socioeconomic assimilation. They define socioeconomic assimilation as “minority participation in mainstream socioeconomic institutions on the basis of parity with ethnic-majority individuals of similar socioeconomic origins” (p. 28). In other words, members of the immigrant minority groups should have the same life chances in the pursuit of contested goods, such as desirable occupations, as those from the majority groups.

While assimilation was painted as a natural process leading to the social and cultural homogeneity, Warner and Srole (1945) believe that assimilation is not only affected by internal group characteristics (e.g., skin color, origin, language, religion), but also by social and institutional factors, such as social class, phenotypical ranking, and social relationships between the mainstream and the racial/ethnic groups. They argue that racial/ethnic minorities may have the same socioeconomic opportunity as a result of assimilation; their social mobility, however, is likely to be confined within racial-caste boundaries.

Along the same line, Gordon (1964) argues that seven variables or basic subprocesses are involved in assimilation: (a) change of cultural patterns to those of host society (cultural or behavioral assimilation); (b) large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level (structural assimilation); (c) large scale intermarriage (marital assimilation); (d) development of a sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society (identificational assimilation); (e) absence of prejudice (attitude receptional assimilation); (f) absence of discrimination (behavior receptional assimilation); and (g) absence of value and power conflict (civic assimilation; p. 71). In
Gordon’s view, the first stage of assimilation is the cultural or behavioral assimilation or “acculturation.” However, acculturation does not automatically lead to other stages of assimilation. It is structural assimilation that is “the keystone of the arch of assimilation” (p. 81). Gordon explains, “Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow” (p. 81). Like other classical assimilation theorists, Gordon believes ethnic groups will eventually lose all their distinct characteristics and identity as they pass through the stages of assimilation. He anticipates, “The price of such assimilation, however, is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values” (p. 81).

Central to the classical assimilation theories are the assumptions that there is a natural process by which diverse ethnic groups come to share a common culture and to gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society; that this process consists of gradually deserting old cultural and behavioral patterns in favor of new ones; and that this process moves inevitably and irreversibly toward complete assimilation to the mainstream culture (Berry, 1951; Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950; Rose, 1956; Zhou, 1997). From this point of view, distinctive ethnic traits are sources of disadvantages (Child, 1943; Warner & Srole, 1945), which negatively affect assimilation. Therefore, ethnic immigrants must free themselves from their old cultures and abandon their native languages in order to begin rising up from marginal positions (Zhou, 1997).
Segmented Assimilation

There are theoretical debates over the applicability of the classical assimilation theories based on the experience of the White European immigrants, for understanding the assimilation experience of racial minorities in the United States (Blauner, 1972; Espiritu, 1992; Stanfield, 1993). Some believe the differences in assimilation between White and ethnic minorities are a matter of degree (Kristol, 1972; Sowell, 1981). They argue that despite their origins, all immigrants undergo a period of struggle and adversity before they are accepted by and assimilated to the mainstream. Further, they suggest that assimilation is a linear process, in which the immigrant groups slowly relinquish traditional ethnic practices in favor of more beneficial host-culture behavior (Berry, 1951; Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950; Rose, 1956). As Gans (1979) describes, ethnicity is increasingly a “symbol” acknowledged only intermittently, for instance, during the holidays or the occasional ethnic festivals. Along the line, Tuan (2001) argues that for White ethnics, “whether to identify ethnically, which parts to identify with, and what actions to be taken to demonstrate one’s ethnic loyalties has become a personal choice” (p. 27).

However, the critics argue the assimilation experience of “colored” minority groups is greatly different from that of White Americans with European origin (Almaguer, 1994; Barrerra, 1979; Kibria, 2000). Because of their physical appearance, racial minorities do not have the “personal choice” as their White counterparts do. A racial and/or ethnic identity is imposed on them, and they are continuing to be seen and treated
as “others.” Therefore, Tuan (2001) suggests, “Owing to the significance of socially defined racial categories and the status and material inequities they produce, racial minorities do not have the option to follow the assimilation path that their white counterparts have taken” (p. 28). Instead, the racial and ethnic minority immigrants and their children are undergoing a process of segmented assimilation, in which assimilation outcomes vary, and the integration into the American mainstream represents just one possibility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The theory of segmented assimilation places the process of becoming American in a social context, which consists of segregated and unequal segments. Portes and Zhou (1993) observe three distinctive patterns of assimilation: (a) time-honored upward mobility, indicating the acculturation and economic integration into the White middle-class; (b) downward-mobility, a pattern leading to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; and (c) selective assimilation, a pattern leading to successful economic integration, with delayed acculturation and deliberate preservation of the traditional values and solidarity of the ethnic community. Depending on a range of internal and contextual factors, the contemporary immigrants adopt a different pattern of assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). The important internal factors include education, English proficiency, origin, age upon arrival, and length of residence in America (Zhou, 1997).

However, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that it is the contextual factors that determine the pace and the outcome of assimilation. Three decisive contextual factors
have been identified: the context of reception; the social status of the immigrants; and the social capital within the ethnic community (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997).

*How immigrants are received: The context of reception.* Along with the internal factors, the context that immigrants find upon arrival in their new country plays a decisive role in the course of assimilation. The contextual factors of the receiving society include the government policies and the attitude of the mainstream Americans. Through the American immigration history, the government responses to the immigrants have been exclusion, passive acceptance, and active encouragement (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). When enforced by law, exclusion precludes immigration or forces immigrants into an underground and disadvantaged existence. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 proscribed entry of Chinese labors on the premise that Chinese endangered the good order of certain localities (Lowell, 1996). The second alternative response is to grant immigrants legal access to the country without any additional effort on the part of the government to facilitate their adaptation. This neutral stance places newcomers under the protection of the law but does not provide any assistance or compensation for their unfamiliarity with the new environment. A third option occurs when the government takes active steps to encourage a particular inflow or facilitate its resettlement. For example, the U.S. government is directly involved in the recruitment of different categories of foreign workers and professionals in short supply, for example, registered nurses, athletes, and culturally unique artists.

The attitudes of the host society and its reception of the immigrants play an important role in the process of assimilation. It is believed that the more similar the
newcomers are to the mainstream, in terms of physical appearance, social class status, language, and religion, and so forth, the more favorable their reception and the more rapid their integration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance. For this reason, White European immigrants face little difficulty in being accepted and gaining access to the upward mobility, whereas the nonwhite immigrants face greater obstacles in assimilating into the White middle-class mainstream.

**Social status: Class and race.** The class and racial status are crucial because they shape the immediate social conditions for immigrants’ adaptation. Such social conditions include the neighborhood and the community where the immigrants live, the availability of jobs, the quality of schools which their children attend, and the peer group that the immigrant children associate. The class status of immigrants has a significant impact on the adaptation outcomes of the children. Those from middle-class background are able to benefit from financially secure families, good schools, safe neighborhoods, and other supportive formal and informal organizations, which ensure better life chance for them (Zhou, 1997). Children living in poor and underprivileged neighborhoods, however, confront a generally disruptive social environment. These children suffer from unequal distribution of economic and educational resources, which seriously curtails their chances for upward mobility (Davis, 1993)

Class status influences the assimilation of immigrants in ways closely related to racial status. Regardless of their social class origin, the racial minority immigrants face greater obstacles en route to upward mobility and social acceptance, because of their
ascripted physical differences. As Portes and Zhou (1993) describe, “It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap” (p. 83). This “handicap” associated with skin color essentially delays the entry of racial minority groups into full participation in the American economy. According to the U.S. Census of Bureau (2005), between 2004 and 2005, the average poverty rate among Asians was 10.5%, and 22% for Hispanic origins (any race), compared to 8.5% for non-Hispanic White.

Under such a social environment, some immigrant groups try to overcome the barriers and conform to the mainstream norms, whereas others react to racial oppression by constructing an oppositional culture (Ogbu, 1987). The former groups believe education is the only way for upward mobility; therefore, immigrant parents put high emphasis on their children’s education. The oppositional culture believes that school achievement is unlikely to lead to upward mobility, and regards high achievers as “uncool,” “nerdy,” or “acting white” (Gibson, 1988; Ogbu, 1987). The adversarial outlook can exercise a powerful influence on the assimilation of the newcomers and their children. It can lead to downward mobility or confine immigrants and their children to the bottom rung of the society.

Social capital and segmented assimilation. When all immigrant groups are facing the cultural and structural barriers, what enable some to withstand the leveling downward pressures from the oppositional culture? Social capital, grounded on ethnic relationships, provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Such ethnic communities can cushion the impact of a new and
unfamiliar culture on the newcomers, and provide them with tangible and intangible supports.

First, if the new immigrants are embedded in an ethnic community rich in social capital, they can translate their education and occupational skills into economic returns, and therefore assimilate into the middle-class mainstream. For example, in a community where a substantial number of co-ethnics have high education degrees, hold professional occupations, or are independent entrepreneurs, the new immigrants are offered a range of opportunities, from employment in the professions to jobs within the ethnic enterprise. Second, a strong ethnic community often enforces norms against divorce and marital disruption, thus helping preserve intact families. Furthermore, the tightly knit community can provide support for parental control and reinforce parental authority (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Upon arrival, parental authority has been challenged by the new lifestyle, and the influences of the oppositional youth culture. Without support from the community, parental control wanes quickly, and isolated families are vulnerable to downward mobility. On the contrary, in a well-integrated community, immigrant parents support each other’s effort in guiding their youths, and reinforce the cultural and social norms in the community. The ethnic community slows down the process of assimilation while “placing the acquisition of new cultural knowledge and language within a supportive context” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 54). In this social context, immigrants and their children are likely to take the pattern of selective assimilation.
In the above-mentioned study, Zhou and Bankston (1998) observe that the young Vietnamese are living in a tightly knit ethnic community, which is “watchful and ever vigilant.” In such a community, what is considered as good or bad is clearly specified and closely monitored by the co-ethnics. Therefore, the behaviors and attitudes of the second generation of Vietnamese are channeled to conform to the social norms embraced and enforced in the ethnic community. Zhou and Bankston conclude that the social capital embedded in the Vietnamese community provides the children a better route to upward mobility.

Jointly, these three contextual factors—the context of reception, the social status of the immigrant group, and the availability of social capital in the ethnic community— influence the patterns of assimilation of the immigrants and their children. No matter how motivated and ambition the immigrants are, if the receiving society is hostile, where the government either excludes or passively accepts them, the future prospects of the immigrants will be dismal. In the United States, immigrants are often subject to racial discrimination, because of their physical characteristics. Without mediating by the ethnic community, the newcomers, especially those with limited financial resources, English proficiency, and education, are likely to devolve to the lowest rung of the society.

**Segmented assimilation and ethnic identity.** The pattern of assimilation shapes the development of self and accounts for the identity shifts among immigrants and their children. The conventional assimilation theories believe assimilation is a linear process, in which the ethnic culture will eventually diminish (Berry, 1951; Gordon, 1964; Park,
1950; Rose, 1956), and ethnic identity will become an option, or a “symbolic ethnicity”\(^8\) (Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 94).

The segmented assimilation theory, however, argues the mode of ethnic identity formation is a complex process that is hinged on the path of assimilation the immigrant groups take. For those who have achieved upward mobility, ethnicity may become optional and a matter of personal choice. Alba and Nee (2003) observe symbolic ethnicity increasingly characterizes later generation Asians. They explain:

Like white ethnics, third- and later-generation Asians speak English as their mother tongue, often knowing only scattered phrases of Chinese or Japanese. They enjoy ethnic cuisine when they like, and observe ethnic rituals and holidays with an often superficial understanding of their cultural content. (p. 95)

On the contrary, if a socially defined racial minority group wishes to assimilate, but finds that the paths of upward mobility are blocked on the basis of race, the group may be forced to take an alternative pattern of assimilation. Subject to racial discrimination and confined at the bottom of the society, the immigrant groups may react to the exclusion and subordination with resentment, and construct an identity in resistance to the dominant white society (Zhou, 1997). In a study of the development of racial and ethnic identity among the second generation of West Indians and Haitian Americans in New York City, Waters (1994) observes three types of identity: a Black American identity, an ethnic or hyphenated national origin identity, and an immigrant identity. Waters believes the American-identified youth were assimilating to the

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\(^8\) Alba and Nee (2003) defined “symbolic ethnicity” as “a form of limited-liability ethnicity that allows individuals to ‘feel ethnic’ occasionally in family and leisure-time activities but carries few commitments in everyday social life” (p. 94).
American Black subculture in response to their experiences with racial discrimination and their perceptions of blocked social mobility. Waters explains,

The lives of these youngsters basically lead them to reject the immigrant dream of their parents toward individual social mobility and to accept their peers’ analysis of the United States as a place with blocked social mobility where they will not be able to move very far. (p. 812)

Portes and Stepick (1993) note a similar trend of downward mobility assimilation among Haitian youth in Miami. And Perlmann and Waldinger (1997) call this trend of downward mobility as a “second generation decline.”

The third mode of ethnic identity formation is closely related to selective assimilation and the social capital within the ethnic community. Selective assimilation takes place when the process of assimilation is embedded in a co-ethnic community of rich social capital to slow down the cultural shift and promote partial retention of the parents’ native language and norms (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Language defines the limits of the communities and nations and leads to bounded national identities and ethnic solidarities (Portes & Rumbaut). Through use of the same language, individuals learn to identify each other as members of the same bounded ethnic community. The parents’ social relationships also influence the type of identity the children develop. Waters (1994) suggests that despite social class, parents who were more involved in the ethnic community seem to instill a strong sense of ethnic identity in their children, who either adopt an ethnic or hyphenated national origin identity or an immigrant identity. For these children, their ethnic identity is the key to upward social mobility, and they believe their parents’ values, such as value of education, hard working, and strict discipline, help them to succeed in the United States.
Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on social capital theory, its definition and properties; its positive functions and “dark sides” and its relation to academic success and segmented assimilation. Key questions for the ensuing analysis are how communal social capital influences the school outcomes and adaptation of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students. For this purpose, we need to examine how the CICA students understand education in American schools, and how coming to the Chinese language school influences their educational aspirations and school performances. This study further addresses the following questions: How do the CICA students understand their ethnic identity? How salient or important are their ethnic identities? What role does the communal social capital play in the CICA students’ identify formation?
CHAPTER III
THE CHINESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007a), the Chinese (excluding Taiwanese) population in the United States was 2.9 million, compared to the number of 237,000 in the 1960s. In a period of over 40 years, the increase has been ten-fold. The most important factor accounting for the enormous growth has been immigration. For example, according to the American Community Survey—Asians: 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a), over 2 million Chinese in the United States were foreign born. Many of the Chinese are new immigrants who have migrated since 1965. The places which attracted these new Chinese immigrants included major metropolitan areas, especially on the east and west coast. In 2007, over half of the Chinese population were living in two states: New York (512,632) and California (1,121,433; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007b). The new Chinese immigrants in the coastal areas have drawn a great deal of attention by researchers. However, studies on the Chinese who settled in the Midwest have been scant. In 2000 there were over 30,000 Chinese living in Ohio (Ohio Department of Development, 2001). However, there has been little discussion of these new Chinese immigrants. The present study conducted in a Chinese community in the suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, is among the first that explores Chinese and Chinese American youth in the Midwest. Unlike the Chinese immigrants in the coast areas, who can tap into social capital from a well-established ethnic community, the new immigrants in Ohio do not have a physical ethnic community to rely on, and they are in the process of establishing
the community, seeking a sense of ethnic identity, and generating social capital. Their experience of becoming an American is different from those who reside in the coast areas. Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Chinese immigrants in the hinterland/Midwest, and to understand their immigration experiences. In exploring the experiences of the new Chinese immigrants in the Cleveland area, this chapter begins with a brief discussion of the history of Chinese immigration. Next is a focus on the Chinese immigrants of this region, situating this study in its historical and social context. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the call for a community center and the development of the Chinese language school.

The History of Chinese Immigration

Although seen as “forever foreigners,” the Chinese are one of the oldest immigrant groups in America. They arrived in the late 1840s (Kwong & Miščević, 2005). However, the first large influx of Chinese immigrants to the United States dated back to the 1850s (Wong, 1982). The first to sail across the Pacific Ocean to the west coast of America were Chinese merchants motivated by the Gold Rush in 1849. Being the class that sought and recognized opportunities overseas, the Chinese merchants were among the few who had the money to undertake the trip. In 1850, 500 Chinese arrived in California (Kwong & Miščević, 2005). These pioneers spread the news back to China that California was not only rich in gold and silver, but also a land of opportunities. Between 1851 and 1860, over 41,000 young Chinese men made their way to America, hoping to make their fortune in California or the “Gold Mountain” and have a better life (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services [INS], 2000). These early Chinese
immigrants worked as miners, railroad workers, farmers, fishermen, and domestic servants. As the number of Chinese immigrants increased, Chinese enterprises, such as laundry services, Chinese restaurants, and grocery stores, sprouted and spread throughout the western frontier. It was estimated that between 1870 and 1900 approximately 40% of Chinese on the west coast, especially in San Francisco and Sacramento, were entrepreneurs (Takaki, 1989).

The number of Chinese immigrants continued to increase over the years until the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Economic competition with Whites led to local anti-Chinese violence, and escalated into a national anti-Chinese movement. The first major anti-Chinese violence took place in Los Angeles on October 24, 1871, when a White mob of several hundred people surrounded Chinatown, and hanged 15 and shot 4 Chinese people. Homes and businesses were also looted. It was estimated that the loss to Chinese Americans in money was from $30,000 to $70,000. In a similar incident in the Sacramento Valley, a White mob tied up four Chinese and burned them to death (Kwong & Miščević, 2005).

An even more systematic attack on the Chinese was carried out through a spate of anti-Chinese legislation. For example, the Sidewalk Ordinance of 1870 outlawed the Chinese pole method of peddling vegetables and carrying laundry. Traditionally, the Chinese carried heavy loads balanced on a flat pole (bian dan) which rested upon their shoulders. The Sidewalk Ordinance was directed specifically against the Chinese because non-Chinese used wagons or carts to peddle their goods. In 1871 the Cubic Air Ordinance required that each adult have at least 500 cubic feet of air or living space.
Violators of this ordinance would be fined and/or imprisoned. This law was directed against the Chinese who were living in cramped quarters in extended family living situations (Wong, 1998). The Queue Ordinance passed in 1873 was another example of anti-Chinese legislation. It ordered the Chinese prisoners to cut their long braided hair or the so-called “queue,” which was a prescribed Chinese hairstyle of the time. After the passage of the Queue Ordinance, gangs of Whites began to attack Chinese males, cutting off their queues and wearing them as trophies (Wong, 1998).

Enactment of these local laws was followed by a series of lawsuits by Chinese Americans who succeeded in overturning all except the Sidewalk Ordinance. Even though the Chinese were able to overturn some of the legislation, the local anti-Chinese violence, nevertheless, escalated into a national movement. The California Workingmen’s Party was the driving force of the anti-Chinese movement and Chinese exclusion. In 1877 the party coined the slogan, “The Chinese Must Go,” and advocated direct acts of violence “to rid the country of cheap Chinese labor as soon as possible and by all means in our power” (Kwong & Miščević, 2005, p. 92). With the support of the unemployed, the California Workingmen’s Party managed to elect one third of the delegates to California’s Second Constitutional Convention, and prescribed a course of the state that embodied its anti-Chinese ideology. The new California Constitution of 1879 denied suffrage to the Chinese and specified that neither corporations nor any state, county, municipal, or other public works would be allowed to employ, directly or indirectly, any Chinese. It also stated that Chinese were not eligible for citizenship in the state of California (Kwong & Miščević, 2005).
The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the capstone of the anti-Chinese movement. The Act suspended the entry of Chinese laborers to the United States, and specified that no state or federal courts were allowed to grant citizenship to the Chinese. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, along with other discriminatory legislation, such as the Scott Act of 1888 and the Geary Act of 1892, marked a dramatic shift in the course of American immigration history. The Anti-Chinese Movement and Exclusion Acts brought an end to the era of free immigration and “signaled that America was prepared to enact exclusionary legislation in order to maintain white racial purity” (Kwong & Miščević, 2005, p. 102). The number of Chinese immigrants dropped dramatically from 123,201 in 1871-1880 to 61,711 in 1881-1890 (Department of Homeland Security, 1998).

From the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 to the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act in 1943, Chinese immigrants were banished to isolated ghettos, and their lives were mostly confined within the boundary of Chinatown. This period of time is known to the Chinese Americans as Exclusion Era or the Silent Decades (Kwong & Miščević, 2005).

The New Chinese Immigrants

Not until the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 did Chinese immigration revive. The Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, was regarded as an extension of the Civil Rights Movement. The Act abolished the national

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9 The Scott Act of 1888, signed by President Cleveland on October 1, 1888, permanently banned the immigration or return of Chinese laborers to the United States and ended the exit visa process. (Retrieved October 22, 2008 from http://immigrants.harpweek.com/ChineseAmericans/2KeyIssues/ScottAct.htm)

10 The Geary Act of 1892 is an act to prohibit the coming of Chinese persons into the United States. “Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that all laws now in force prohibiting and regulating the coming into this country of Chinese persons and persons of Chinese descent are hereby continued in force for a period of ten years from the passage of this act” (Retrieved October 22, 2008 from http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/1892gearyact.html).
origins quota system, and established a system of preferences whereby family
reunification was given the highest preference (Center for Immigration Studies [CIS],
1995). The preferences were as follows:

1. Unmarried adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens;
2. Spouses and children and unmarried sons and daughters of permanent resident
   aliens;
3. Members of the professions and scientists and artists of exceptional ability;
4. Married children of U.S. citizens;
5. Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens over age 21;
6. Skilled and unskilled workers in occupations for which there is insufficient
   labor supply;
7. Refugees given conditional entry or adjustment—chiefly people from
   Communist countries and the Middle East;
8. Applicants not entitled to preceding preferences, that is, everyone else.

The Immigration Act of 1965 has a great impact on Chinese immigrants. First of
all, the Chinese immigrants were treated as equal to those from other nationalities, thus
ending almost a century of bias against the Chinese. Second, under the 1965 law, Chinese
Americans could sponsor their immediate families to come to the United States, and new
immigrants could migrate with their spouses and children. This scenario is significantly
different from the one that existed in the 19th and early 20th century, when the immigrants
arrived as individual laborers and their spouses were prohibited entry. Because of the
chain migration, the number of Chinese increased from 9,657 in 1951-60 to 34,764 in
1961-70 (Department of Homeland Security, 1998). Furthermore, the new immigration
law also encouraged highly educated and skilled professionals in areas such as science,
technology, and arts. According to the American Community Survey Report, 50% of
Chinese aged 25 and older had a Bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to about 30% of
the same age group of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a).
The second wave of the new Chinese immigration was in the early 1980s after the Cultural Revolution\textsuperscript{11} (1966-1976) in China. During those chaotic ten years, many intellectuals were accused of being “reactionary bourgeois authorities,” and therefore they, along with their family, were severely purged and relocated in remote rural areas for re-education. They were forced to do heavy manual work as a part of the re-education. After the Cultural Revolution, when China opened its doors to the outside world, many intellectuals saw the hope to leave their totalitarian country and avoid further purgation. In the decade between 1981 and 1990, 346,747 Chinese immigrated to the United States, which was the largest number in Chinese immigration history (Department of Homeland Security, 1998).

The third wave of Chinese immigration started after the June 4th Tian An Men Square Protests of 1989. The participants were mainly college and university students and professors, who protested against political corruption and demanded freedom of speech and of the press, and called for democratic reform of the rule of the Chinese communist party. The protests commanded widespread support from the urban workers who were alarmed by growing inflation and corruption. After deliberation among Communist party leaders, the use of military force to resolve the crisis was ordered, and a deep divide in the politburo resulted. In Beijing, the resulting military response to the protesters by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) government left many civilians dead or injured. The reported tolls ranged from 200–300 (PRC government figures) and to

\textsuperscript{11} The Cultural Revolution started in October 1966, when Chairman Mao Zedong, the founder of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), criticized “reactionary bourgeois authorities.” The movement lasted for 10 years, when many intellectuals were severely criticized, punished, and relocated in remote areas to be re-educated.
2,000–3,000 (Chinese student associations and Chinese Red Cross). Following the violence, the government conducted widespread arrests to suppress protesters and their supporters, cracked down on other protests around China, banned the foreign press from the country, and strictly controlled coverage of the events in the PRC press. Members of the Party who had publicly sympathized with the protesters were purged. The violent suppression of the Tian An Men Square protest caused widespread international condemnation of the PRC government (Nathan, 2001).

The Tian An Men Square protests in 1989 created a very uncertain political climate, and some active participants in the protests fled the country to the United States seeking political asylum. Others who were disgusted by the government massacre found ways to leave China in an attempt to pursue freedom. Thirty-two thousand Chinese immigrants were admitted to the United States during 1989 (Department of Homeland Security, 1998).

The Early and New Immigrants: A Contrast

The post-1965 Chinese immigrants differed significantly from the earlier immigrants. First, unlike the early immigrants who came primarily from rural areas in Southern China, the new immigrants comprised a much more diverse group, including large numbers from different parts of China: Beijing, Shanghai, and other provinces. Most of the new immigrants spoke Mandarin and/or a local dialect, rather than the Taishan, a Southern dialect, spoken by the earlier immigrants (Wong, 1998).

Second, in contrast to the early immigrants or so-called “sojourners” who came to the United States and wished to make a fortune and then return home, the new
immigrants migrated to America primarily for better education and political freedom and stability. The newcomers wished to make America their permanent home and to commit themselves to the new country. This mindset can best be described by the Chinese phrase “落地生根 (after reaching the ground, grow roots).” As soon as they were eligible, many applied for legal permanent residence or U.S. citizenship. In fact, 41% of the Chinese in America are naturalized U.S. citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007b).

Finally, the educational attainment and economic resources possessed by the early and the new immigrants were different. The early immigrants were usually poor and less educated, whereas the new immigrants, especially those from the middle class in Hong Kong12, arrived with significant savings or economic resources. Many newcomers from Mainland China had high education credentials, training, and specialized skills, which transformed into economic capital. According to the American Community Survey, the median household income for Chinese was $65,000 in 2004, which was $15,000 more than that of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a). Although there were economically disadvantaged immigrants, the traditional images of early Chinese as

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12 Hong Kong Island and the South Kowloon Peninsula were ceded to Britain in 1842. In 1898 the British extended their scope of control by leasing the New Territories (NT) for 99 years. In the 1980s, when the NT lease was coming to expire, there was uncertainty toward the future of Hong Kong. Negotiations on the future of Hong Kong formally started between the Chinese and British governments in September 1982, and were concluded in September 1984. The Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong was signed in December 1984 and ratified in May 1985 by the two countries. Under the Joint Declaration, it was agreed that Hong Kong would revert to Chinese rule and become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China on July 1997. The Chinese government guaranteed the preservation of Hong Kong’s current economic, social, legal, administrative and judicial systems for a period of 50 years or until 2047 (Liu & Yue, 1996). In fear of life under Chinese Communist rule, 134,182 people left Hong Kong for Canada, the United States, Australia and Britain between 1986 and 1989 (Pan, 1994). The vast majority of these emigrants came from Hong Kong’s middle-income, highly skilled professional and entrepreneurial groups (Pan, 1999).
“coolies” or as “penniless” do not apply to the majority of recent Chinese arrivals (Wong, 1998).

The Chinese Immigrants in Cleveland, Ohio

The first Chinese to come to Ohio arrived in the mid 19th century. Most of these migrants did not come directly from China but moved from the West Coast. A majority of Chinese Ohioans were located in northeastern Ohio, where they worked in factories or established their own businesses to provide their fellow Chinese Americans with traditional Chinese products (Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, n.d.).

The Chinese immigrants began arriving in Cleveland in the 1860s. However, their numbers were very small. In 1880, Chinese immigrants in Cleveland were counted in the census with the Japanese, totaling 23 (Chang, 1997). The population grew very slowly. By 1890, the census showed a total of 38 Chinese living in Cleveland, and by 1900, the number was just about 100 (Chang, 1997). In the early 1930s, the Chinese population had grown to 800. Most of the Chinese were owners of restaurants, waiters and cooks, or operators of laundries (Fugita, et al., 1977).

The Chinese population in the Cleveland area increased by about 100 between 1930 and 1960, and the 1960 census reported a total population of 905. After the passage of the Immigrant Act of 1965, there was an influx of Chinese from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some of the young Chinese who came to the U.S. for higher education chose to stay permanently and were now establishing families in all parts of Cleveland and the suburbs. Beginning in the late 1970s, a small number of engineers and scientists escaped the turmoil in the People’s Republic of China and came to Cleveland for graduate study.
By 1980, it was estimated that about 2,000-2,500 Chinese were living in the Greater Cleveland Area (Chang, 1997). In 2000, over 30,000 Ohioans claimed Chinese ancestry, among which 6,185 were estimated to live in Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria, Ohio (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The new residents came from central and northern China and diluted the Cantonese concentration of the earlier settlers. Following the national trend, the new Chinese immigrants in the Cleveland area were better educated, and they advanced into the professions of engineering, medicine, and the sciences (Chang, 1997).

Chinatown: The Symbolic Cultural and Ethnic Community Center

Cleveland’s Chinatown was established in the late 19th century (Cleveland Ohio’s Chinatown, n.d.). The first Chinese settlement was on the west of Ontario Street and then expanded to the area between Public Square and St. Clair Avenue. Compared to the Chinatown in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, the Cleveland Chinatown was very small. Nevertheless, it was a symbolic cultural and ethnic community center for the early immigrants, and served as an acculturation agent for many newcomers.

In early history, Chinatown’s associational structure was organized according to regions of hometown, trade, and kinship. The two most important associations in Cleveland at that time were On Leong Tong and the Hip Sing Association, which were “societies of merchants engaged in mutual aid, self-discipline, matching funds and investment opportunities, and dispute reconciliation” (Chang, 1997, p.1). In the late 1920s, due to the expansion, some of the Chinese immigrants moved east around E. 55th Street at Cedar Avenue and Euclid Avenue. In the early 1930s, the Chinese immigrants settled around Rockwell Avenue and E. 21st Street. Since then, the Cleveland’s
Chinatown has reached from the block on the south side of Rockwell Avenue to the area between E. 21st St. and E. 24th St. (Chang, 1997).

As an entry port for immigrants to America, Chinatown was continually replenished with the traditional culture and values of the homeland. They celebrated traditional Chinese festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, and the Moon Festival. The early immigrants remained attached to their country of origin. For example, Chang (1997) describes that Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, stopped at Cleveland on one of his worldwide tours and spoke at Old Stone Church in 1911. Chang writes,

Meetings were held at the Golden Dragon Restaurant on Public Square to rally support and to raise funds for his [Dr. Sun’s] revolutionary movement to overthrow the rulers of the Qing Dynasty. On February 11, 1912, four months after the founding of the Republic of China, a celebration was held at Old Stone Church and a telegram of congratulations was sent in the name of the Chinese residents of Ohio to Dr. Sun, president of the Chinese Republic. (pp.1-2)

Another example was the fundraising during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). The Chinese community in Cleveland rallied behind the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the Cleveland Chinese Student Club, and later the Chinese Relief Association to support the war effort and civilian relief. According to Chang (1997), between 1937 and 1943, $180,000 was donated by the Chinese community members, among whom 500 residents pledged $3,000 a month. In the summer of 1938 the Cleveland Chinese Student Club published a quarterly entitled the Voice of China. “Its editorials and articles strongly criticized the U.S. policy of selling scrap iron and oil to Japan, pointed out the weakness of the Neutrality Act, and urged the public to boycott Japanese silk” (Chang, 1997, p. 2).
The population of Chinese immigrants in Greater Cleveland Area was growing very slowly until 1979, when the formal diplomatic relations were established between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China (Kwong & Miščević, 2005). The new immigrants, many of whom were from highly educated middle or upper middle class families, were able to move into the suburbs, whereas the working-class were still steered to Chinatown. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the affluent immigrants moving into the suburbs, the golden age of Chinatown came to an end (Kwong & Miščević, 2005). Nevertheless, Chinatown is still a convenient place for newcomers who do not speak English and do not yet understand the ways of American culture. They can find employment in the ethnic enterprises in the enclave as well as learn how to open a bank account, speak English, and understand their rights and responsibilities as members of American society. In Chinatown, there are bilingual social services, translation services, Chinese stores and restaurants, Chinese mass media, and information network, all of which cater to the needs of the new immigrants (Wong, 1998). Even for those who live in the suburbs, Chinatown is a place where they can find familiar food supplies and ingredients, and where they could eat authentic Chinese cuisine.

Moving to the Suburbs

Contemporary Chinese immigrants tend to have high educational credentials and work in professional jobs. Their residential patterns are distinctive from the early immigrants. In earlier times, Chinatown was the place in which the Chinese lived in Cleveland. Now, these newcomer professionals with the economic means prefer to live in integrated suburbs, away from ethnic enclaves. Data from the American Community
Survey—Asian: 2004 indicates that Asian Americans are more likely to reside in the suburbs than in the central cities of the 102 largest metropolitan areas in the United States. 54.6% of Asian Americans, including 50% of Chinese in these metropolitan areas live in the suburbs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a). Many immigrant professionals have never experienced life in Chinatown. Settling down in the suburbs is part of the “American Dream,” and means “making it” (Kwong & Miščević, 2005).

Since the weakening of the most virulent forms of exclusion, especially after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, Chinese professionals have chosen to live near universities, hospital complexes, and the corporate research labs where they work. In the Greater Cleveland Area, for example, many Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans work as doctors and researchers for the Cleveland Clinic Foundation; or in academia at neighboring universities, such as Cleveland State University, Case Western Reserve University, or the University of Akron, to name just a few. Contemporary Chinese immigrants tend to stay permanently and rebuild their lives in the United States. The immigrant parents in my study want their children to grow up in a safe and clean environment, where there are good public amenities, a reasonable cost of living, and proximity to white-collar professional jobs. For example, according to city data, in 2007, the crime index in LaBella Heights was 80.4, whereas it was 841.3 in Cleveland\footnote{Higher numbers on the crime index mean more crimes. In 2006, the average U.S. crime index was 320.9 (www.city-data.com).}, meaning the crime rate in Cleveland was ten times higher than that of LaBella Heights. But more importantly, Chinese immigrants with the financial resources choose a neighborhood where there is a good school district. For example, in 2007, LaBella High...
School was ranked 132 out of American Top 1300 high schools. That was why many of the Chinese parents I met decided to move to LaBella Heights. One mom recounted,

We, Chinese, put much emphasis on education. We used to live in Lakeview Village, and because we heard that the quality of the LaBella High School is good, we moved to LaBella Heights. In LaBella Heights, the housing is much more expensive than that of Twins Village. But I feel it is worth it. We, Chinese, emphasize education, and the learning environment. We, Chinese, believe that learning environment has a direct relationship with success.

The accelerated pace at which the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans have been flocking to the suburbs since the 1980s has produced a new phenomenon—”ethnoburb.” Li (1999) coins the term “ethnoburb” to denote a suburban area in which one ethnic group, although it may not be a majority in terms of population, is present in a concentrated enough fashion to appear as a recognizable ethnic residential and business cluster and maintain a high degree of economic activity and social interaction among its members. Living in the ethnoburb, many new Chinese immigrants increasingly resist the assimilation espoused by the mainstream society. Dr. Woo, the Chinese language school principal, described the resistance as “against the trend.” He said,

Since the first day when the CCLS was founded, I thought while the world was emphasizing assimilation, we were trying to diverse it by teaching Chinese. The world is trying to be united, and our kids can finally learn English and be a natural part of the united process. But we are teaching them something else [Chinese]. We are against the trend. But then we found it is necessary to go against the trend [by teaching Chinese language and culture].

Many Chinese professionals, who are from elite social backgrounds and have higher educational attainment and economic resources, have posed a challenge to the established paradigm of the conventional assimilation pattern: ethnic-enclave-to-suburb, a pattern of melting-pot social mobility (Kwong & Miščević, 2005). For this population,
they may not experience life in an enclave, and they adopt the strategy of “acculturation without assimilation” (Gibson, 1988). They consider themselves as proud U.S. citizens, but meanwhile, they keep a strong sense of their Chinese ethnicity, and want their children to carry on the cultural heritage. However, individual efforts are limited, and thus there is an urgent call for a community center, where the immigrants can rebuild social relations, and generate social capital in the new land. The Chinese language school became the natural center for social networking. Dr. Woo described that the mission of the Chinese language school was “to promote a true understanding between the Americans and the Chinese.” He continued,

The main purpose is to promote a multicultural interaction or exchange. Both cultures have quintessence. We hope our kids can learn both. That is truly our mission. Our kids were born and raised here in the U.S. They are more or less Americanized. [We think] it will benefit the kids, if they know some Chinese. Take Jews for an example. They never forget their own culture and language. There are many schools teaching Hebrew, and it is efficient. Although Jews are small in numbers, they are very successful. [Most of] the Chinese immigrants are highly educated, and they can be a bridge to connect the two cultures, and to promote the image of modern China among Americans. That is what we have always wanted to do.

As contemporary Chinese immigrants moved into the suburbs, Chinatown was no longer a center for the community. As the human relationships offered by the family and the kinship weakened, there was a need for a social place, where contemporary Chinese immigrants could mingle with others who spoke the same language and shared a common cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the movement to preserve Chinese language and cultural values became strong. When asked about his motivation to start the Chinese language school, Dr. Woo answered in this way:

In 1994, 1995, many Chinese students settled in the U.S., because after “6. 4” [Ti
An Men Square Demonstration on June, 4, 1989], finally, the U.S. government decided that the Chinese students could stay in U.S. [for political asylum]. Many of those students got their green card, and could stay legally. Many exchange students with J-1 visa [who were sponsored by Chinese government] and those who came with their own means also stayed… In 1989 and 1990, many started a family, and it was a baby boomer time. By 1994 and 1995, many kids were 4 or 5 years old. People agreed that the kids should learn some Chinese. Unlike the east or the west coast, there have been a lot of Chinese immigrants and Chinese language schools. We are in the Middle West, where the Chinese are only a handful. So Chinese, most of whom were students at Cleveland State, Cleveland Clinic, and Case Western, got together and had a meeting at Cleveland State…We decided to establish the Chinese school. At the beginning, we had only about 30 kids. There were some full-time moms, who tried to teach their kids Chinese at home. But it was not efficient. So we organized the school. Actually, many Chinese schools were established around the same time, i.e. in 1995. Probably, people think it is necessary [to establish a Chinese school].

More importantly, the Chinese community needs a central organization to represent it and negotiate its’ rights and benefits with the local governments; to help newcomers and their children to fit into the mainstream American society. Since its establishment, the CCLS became a place that could meet the needs of the contemporary Chinese immigrants. Dr. Woo described the role of the CCLS,

As a community center, the CCLS can represent the Chinese community to deal with local government or local community. As an organization, we can negotiate our rights and benefits. After all, the organization has more power than individuals. I think the CCLS can promote the exchange of two cultures. For the Chinese community, it is easier for us to be accepted by local community [as a whole], and to fit into the mainstream culture.

The History of the Chinese Language School

On a Saturday afternoon in March 1995, Dr. Woo and five other community members had a summit in the student lounge of Cleveland State University. At the summit, they discussed many issues, such as the mission of the CCLS, the development plan for the school, the recruitment of students and teachers, the textbooks, the tuition,
and the site for the school. At the end of the summit, they divided the responsibilities among the present community members. On April 1, 1995, a conference was held in Cleveland Clinic, where approximately 30 parents attended the meeting. At the conference, 11 parents were elected as the first board members of the Chinese language school, and Dr. Woo was nominated as the school principal.

As a trial, the CCLS opened for three weeks between May 6th and May 27th, 1995. There were three Chinese language classes, with about 30 students. On June 10th, 1995, the Chinese school started the first official summer session in the institute of Cleveland Clinic Foundation. The session ran for 10 weeks, and there were four Chinese language classes and one drawing class. Fifty-five CICA students attended the Chinese school. By the end of August, the mission statement and school policies were distributed at the parent conference. A year later, by the end of 1996, the number of students increased to over 100, and there were seven Chinese language classes, one Chinese as Second Language (CSL) class, and six extra-curricular classes, including folk dance, painting, martial arts, Chinese chess, and so forth. As most of the founding members lived in the city of LaBella Heights, the Chinese language school moved to LaBella High School in 1997.

LaBella Heights is an affluent town 17 miles south of Cleveland. It is estimated that the median household income in 2007 was $89,400, compared to that of $46,597 in Ohio. The median house/condo value was $279,900, which was more than twice the Ohio median value. The Chinese are only 1.6% of the total population in LaBella Heights, however, this number is significantly higher than that of the state (Chinese is 0.3% of the
total population in Ohio). Moreover, LaBella Heights has a high rate of education attainment. For the 25 years and older population, 50.4% have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher; and 21.9% have a graduate or professional degree, compared to the same age population in Cleveland, the numbers are 11.4% and 3.8%, respectively (See Table 1.). In terms of occupations, the most common fields for males are professional, scientific, and technical services (12%), finance and insurance (9%), health care (8%), and educational services (5%); whereas for females, the most common jobs are educational services (18%), health care (15%), finance and insurance (8%), and professional, scientific and technical services (7%). These percentages are much higher than the Ohio average\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{14} All the statistics cited here were retrieved October 23, 2008, from http://www.city-data.com.
Table 1

*A Comparison of Cleveland and LaBella Heights*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cleveland</th>
<th>LaBella Heights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median house or condo value</td>
<td>$89,700</td>
<td>$281,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$28,512</td>
<td>$89,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11.4% with a Bachelor or higher degree</td>
<td>50.4% with a Bachelor or higher degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.8% with a graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>21.9% with a graduate or professional degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Index</td>
<td>841.3</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com) 1. This was median household income in 2007. 2. This measured the education for population 25 years and older. 3. This was crime index in 2007.*
Since its inception, the CCLS has grown dramatically, now drawing 400 students from Northeast Ohio and some parents drive as far as eighty miles one-way to come to the CCLS. The school now offers nineteen Chinese language classes from K-12, five Chinese as a second language (CSL) classes, four math and SAT preparation classes, and twenty-two extra-curricular programs and activities. When asked about the reason for its fast development, Dr. Woo, the CCLS principal, explained,

Actually, we’ve never had any advertisement. It is a word of mouth. One came and told his/her friends and relatives, and they came and so on. I think the main reason for our fast development is that the Chinese school plays a role of community center, where Chinese culture is a cohesive force to connect all Chinese and those who are interested in the culture.

The following chapters will explore what role(s) the CCLS plays in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans; how individuals bring together their social and economic resources to generate social capital in the ethnic Chinese community; and how the CICA students position the social capital in their academic achievement and identity formation.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Research Design

This dissertation is a qualitative case study the role a Chinese language school plays in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans residing in Ohio. Case study has been defined in terms of a process of conducting investigations (Becker, 1968; Wilson, 1979); a unit of analysis (Stake, 1995); or its end product (Merriam, 1998). For the purpose of this study, the case study is conceptualized as a qualitative study of one particular Chinese language school in LaBella Heights (a pseudonym), a suburb of the Greater Cleveland Area, Ohio. Merriam (1998) suggests that the rationale for choosing a case study design depends on what the researcher wants to know, or what questions the researcher is interested in. Moreover, case study is a particularly suitable design when the researcher is interested in a process rather than an outcome (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I am interested in the process through which social capital is generated and accumulated in the Chinese community via a Chinese language school, and how the creation of social capital impacts the CICA students’ school outcomes. Further, I am interested in the development of ethnic identity among the CICA children, and what role social capital within the community is playing in the process.

Finally, a case study is often selected when the case explored is unique (Stake, 1995). The Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) (a pseudonym) is located in a unique geographical area. Unlike the East and West Coast areas, the oldest and earliest
Chinese settlements in the United States, the Greater Cleveland Area is home to relatively new immigrants, especially those who came after the 1980s (Chang, 1997). More than 60 percent of all Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans are living in California and the Greater New York Metropolitan region; and thus they draw a great deal of research attention (Chen, 1974; Kwong & Miščević, 2005; Wong, 1998). The research on Chinese immigrants in the Greater Cleveland Area has been scant. Therefore, the study of the CCLS is among the first to explore the experience of participating in the ethnic community among Chinese and Chinese American youth in Ohio. Moreover, in the coastal areas, the Chinese communities have been well established; whereas in Greater Cleveland Area, since the new immigrants tend to live in the suburbs, and Chinatown is no longer a central place for the newcomers, Chinese language school was established to meet the needs of contemporary Chinese immigrants. Further, the contemporary Chinese are in the process of establishing their community, seeking a sense of ethnic identity, and generating social capital across a broader region. Their experience of becoming American is different from those who reside in the coastal areas. Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at inland Chinese immigrants, and to understand their immigration experiences. As a community center, the CCLS is an ideal site to understand how social capital is (re)produced and what role it plays in the lives of the contemporary Chinese immigrants and their children.

Research Site

As described in the previous chapter, the Chinese language school was first established in Cleveland in 1995. With most of the founding members living in LaBella
Heights, the Chinese language school moved to LaBella High School in 2001. The high school, built in 1898, is located in a quiet residential neighborhood. LaBella High School has a reputation for high academic quality and placement of graduates into top colleges. According to *Newsweek*, in 2008, among 1,425 public schools nationwide, LaBella High School ranked 132\textsuperscript{nd}, 1\textsuperscript{st} in Greater Cleveland Area, and 4\textsuperscript{th} in the state of Ohio. Moreover, LaBella High School was named a Blue Ribbon School\textsuperscript{15} for the 2008-2009 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). LaBella High School also has had four Presidential Scholars, including two Chinese Americans. Because of its academic excellence, many Chinese families moved to LaBella Heights. Now Chinese made up 1.6\% of the total population in LaBella Heights, and it is the third largest minority group, following African Americans (6.1\%) and Asian Indians (2.3\%).

During the week, LaBella High School holds approximately 1,800 students and 200 teachers, administrators, and staff. On Saturdays, however, the school puts on a different “hat,” serving as a Chinese language school and a Chinese community center. With many Chinese participants in and around the building, the high school bustles with various activities. There are different clubs and groups, which have their own terrain. Entering from the front door, the lobby on the left is where the Ping Pong Association (PPA) meets. When I first started my fieldwork, there were only three ping pong tables and a handful of players. Now the PPA has six tables and 25 members, including two non-Chinese Americans. Some “early birds” come before 2 p.m. to set up the tables and

\textsuperscript{15} The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels. In addition to being honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school receives a plaque and flag signifying their status, these schools serve as models for other schools throughout the nation (U.S. Department of Education).
to start practicing. People coming in later have to sign up and wait their turns. While they are waiting, they chat with each other about their occupations, families, and children.

Straight ahead from the front door is the Hall of Fame, where the portraits of the National Merit Semifinalists\textsuperscript{16}, the Commended scholars, and the winner of the 2007 United States Presidential Scholarship are placed. Under the picture, a plaque states

The seniors pictured in this hall are those who have been named as semi-finalists and commended students in the 2008 National Merit Scholarship program. These students qualified because their scores on the PSAT taken when they were juniors were among the highest in the state.

Over 1 million students started in the 2008 Merit Program. Based on their qualifying scores, about 15,000 students have been named semi-finalist. Commended scholars are among approximately 35,000 students nationwide. (Fieldnote, April 26, 2008)

In the spring of 2008, among the 25 honor students in LaBella High School, eight were Chinese Americans, and the winner of the Presidential Scholarship was also a Chinese American. The stories about these students and their families are frequent topics of conversation among parents, especially for moms who gathered in a particular hallway of CCLS.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{16} The National Merit\textsuperscript{®} Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955. High school students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT\textsuperscript{®})—a test which serves as an initial screen of approximately 1.5 million entrants each year—and by meeting published program entry/participation requirements. Of the 1.5 million entrants, some 50,000 with the highest PSAT/NMSQT\textsuperscript{®} Selection Index scores (critical reading + mathematics + writing skills scores) qualify for recognition in the National Merit\textsuperscript{®} Scholarship Program. More than two-thirds or about 34,000 of the approximately 50,000 high scorers on the PSAT/NMSQT\textsuperscript{®} receive Letters of Commendation in recognition of their outstanding academic promise. About 16,000 students, or approximately one-third of the 50,000 high scorers, are notified that they have qualified as Semifinalists (National Merit Scholarship Corporation, retrieved October, 31, 2008, from http://www.nationalmerit.org/nmsp.php).
While their children are in classes, the moms have their own activities: Yoga, Latin dance, aerobic exercise, and Chinese folk dance. When they are on break, the pictures on the wall and their children’s education are always in their conversation.

In front of the school library, there is a smaller lobby, where the seniors learn and practice ballroom dance. Some of the seniors are visitors from China, whereas others are permanent residents or citizens of the United States. For many of the seniors, the Chinese school is the only place to meet other Chinese people and enjoy the company of people who speak the same language.

The corridor between the PPA and the lounge is where the Tai Chi club practices. Compared to the hustle and bustle of the PPA and the Moms’ Club, the Tai Chi club is more relaxing, and the practice is noncompetitive and self-paced. Tai Chi, often described as “meditation in motion,” promotes serenity through gentle movement, connecting the mind and body. Simply watching the members gliding through dance-like poses is relaxing for me.

In the lounge, there are always parents who do not take part in any activities. They either chat with others, or do their own things: reading, surfing on-line, taking a nap, or doing work. There are two gymnasiums. In the older and smaller one, people play basketball; and the newer and bigger gym is divided into three sections. On the far left, people play badminton. There are four nets, and people either play single or doubles matches. In the middle of the gym, two teams mixed with both men and women are playing volleyball. They take the game seriously, and they have an on-duty referee to regulate the game. On the far right is a basketball court. Sometimes a small group of
people are playing basketball. In addition to the gymnasiums, Chinese parents gather in the auditorium, where the parents can have a close conversation. On special occasions, such as the Chinese New Year and the Chinese Speech Competition, the auditorium is packed with parents and children.

Between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., the children study Chinese language and culture, or SAT math. The Chinese language classes are usually small in size, having between 8 and 15 students in each class. Even though it is a Chinese language school, and students are supposedly to learn Chinese, it is interesting to see that all the students talk in English among themselves in class or during the break. Some teachers insist that the students speak Chinese to them; whereas other teachers speak a mix of Chinese and English themselves and do not consistently enforce the rule. As Dr. Woo, the principal of the Chinese school, described that the CICA students feel at home in the CCLS, and thus they do not always follow the rules. For example, they are not always punctual to class, and they talk among themselves when the teacher is talking.

In the SAT math class, however, the dynamic is quite different. The students are older, most in middle school or high school. The students have a different attitude towards the class, because they know the SAT math preparation class has a direct effect on their academic achievements. The teacher assigns pages of math problems for the students to practice in class, and then they go over the problems together. The students are usually quiet in their seat and busy solving the problems. There are fewer interactions among students.
As in regular school, the bell rings periodically to signal a change in classes. From 4 to 5 p.m., children move from pencil and paper tasks to various locations for gymnastics, drawing, folk dance, martial arts, and other lessons. Some of the club members also switch their role to an extracurricular teacher; for example, some Mom’s Club members teach folk dance to children in different age groups; and a PPA member teaches Chinese checkers (wei qi).

Site Selection

As a first generation immigrant from Mainland China, I have also been interested in the migration experiences and social adaptation of my co-ethnics. Because the town in which I went to school and am now living is small with a population of 6,000 people, there isn’t a Chinese community. And thus I have never been engaged in any ethnic community activities and I’ve had very few social networks with co-ethnics in the United States. When I heard that there is a Chinese community in LaBella Heights, I was eager to meet my co-ethnics and to (re)connect with my cultural roots. Later in this chapter, I reflect on how my “insider” identity may have influenced my perceptions and interpretations.

I contacted the school principal, Dr. Woo, and introduced myself and my proposed research on the ethnic community. Dr. Woo was very responsive and welcomed me to the community and the CCLS.

Besides my natural or take-for-granted “insider” role, I selected the CCLS as my case mainly because of considerations that bear directly on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter II. First, Coleman (1988) defines social capital as closed systems of
social networks inherent in the structure of relations between persons and among persons within a social group to promote cooperative behavior and to serve specific needs of its group members. But social capital is intangible, and therefore, it needs to be supported by tangible ethnic social structures and be understood in such social structures. Ethnic social structures are manifested in various economic, civic, socio-cultural, and religious organizations lodged in an ethnic community, as well as in social networks arising from co-ethnic members’ participation in it (Zhou & Kim, 2006, p. 6). An examination of specific ethnic social structures, in this case, the CCLS, can provide insight into how social capital is generated and accumulated within an ethnic community, while illustrating how cultural capital and social capital interact to create a social environment conducive to the CICA students’ educational achievement.

Second, unlike previous research which focused on working class and low-income Chinese Americans (Louie, 2004; Wong, 2008), this study focuses on an upper middle class Chinese American community. The community members coming to the CCLS are well-educated, have professional occupations, and high annual income. According to a survey for demographic information (see Appendix A) (N = 51), 36 or about 70% reported that at least one parent held a doctoral or postdoctoral degree, and 11 or over 20% reported at least one parent held a master’s degree. Thirty-three surveys indicated that their family annual income was over $100,000, and two reported the number was over $500,000. One mom commented, “Probably no one here [in the Chinese language school] is not in the middle class, in terms of the family annual income.” This might be an overstatement, but it seems that the Chinese immigrants
coming to the CCLS were confident about their social status, and felt comfortable about their lives in the U.S. Moreover, the most common occupations among those surveyed were professors, IT or computer programmers, doctors, engineers, and other professionals (such as managers, accountants, marketing analysts, and nurses). The survey did not attempt to be comprehensive, but to give a snapshot of the demographics of the people who were coming to the CCLS, and what capital they brought along with them into the community. It was linked to the research question: How is social capital generated in the Chinese community via the Chinese language school? The survey was a response to my interest in how the high stock of human capital and cultural capital of the parents transformed to high social capital in the community; and how the resulting social capital played a role in the CICA children’s academics and social adaptation. My preconceptions or assumptions are: (a) high stock of human capital and cultural capital are successfully transformed into high stock of social capital; (b) high stock of social capital ultimately results in school success and social adaptation. These assumptions are in accord with the existing literature on social capital. For example, as discussed in Chapter II, Kao (2004) argues high stock of human capital measured by parents’ education has to be transferred into social capital to increase educational outcomes. Without social capital, human capital is irrelevant to children’s development (Coleman, 1988).

Third, the CCLS had 12 years of history, and thus, interpersonal relationships have been established over the years, and the social networks among parents and among other community members are relatively stable. Finally, the Chinese language school has more than 400 students and connects more than 2,000 community members. Thus it
provides an ideal site to observe social interactions among the CICA students and among other members. It also gives me access to ample participants with whom to co-construct the meaning of social capital within the ethnic community.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through participant observations in the CCLS, and through semi-structured interviews with the CICA students and their parents. In addition, I conducted document analysis of media accounts, ethnic newspapers, and Chinese language school curriculum. The data are by no means comprehensive and generalizable. However, generalization is not my intention. As Denzin (1983) contends, “The interpretivist rejects generalization as a goal and never aims to draw randomly selected samples of human experience” (p. 133). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1982) argue that generalizations in qualitative study are not only undesired, but they “are impossible since phenomena are neither time- or context-free” (p. 238). Data collected in this study provide a strong basis for an analysis of the (re)production of social capital and its roles in the lives of CCLS members. The goal is to “produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation” (Schofield, 2001, p. 330).

Participant Observation

In order to understand the lived experiences of the contemporary Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans in the Greater Cleveland Area, I had to first immerse myself into the ethnic Chinese community. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) write

With immersion, the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find
meaningful, and how they do so. In this way immersion gives the field researcher access to the fluidity of others’ lives and enhances his sensitivity to interaction and process. (p. 2)

As a participant-observer, I immersed myself in the CCLS to “get close” (Emerson et al., 1995) to the Chinese community over the two year period from 2006 to 2008 (see Table 2). I usually wore a sweater, jeans and sneakers in the Chinese school, because such attire helped me fit in the casual atmosphere at the school setting, so that the parents and other community members would see me as one of “them.” But more importantly, among the student participants, my youthful looking and casual dressing helped distinguish me from the teachers or other “authorities.” I preferred the students to view me as approachable, and as someone they can trust.
Table 2

Phases of Fieldwork and Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>FOCUS: data coll.</th>
<th>negotiating ROLE</th>
<th>DATA COLL.</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I.</td>
<td>whole community</td>
<td>Intensive work on negotiating access and relationships; introducing my research to participants; building trust; establishing my role was a primary concern during this phase of the research</td>
<td>Participant observation and fieldnotes</td>
<td>Analytic memos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September-December, 2006</td>
<td>approx. 4 hours/week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II.</td>
<td>Chinese language school level</td>
<td>Getting to know more students, teachers, and parents during this phase and establishing relationships with them</td>
<td>Participant observation in specific classes; Survey for demographic information</td>
<td>Analytic memos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January-May, 2007</td>
<td>approx. 4 hours/week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III.</td>
<td>Student Level Parent Level</td>
<td>Working most closely with student and parent participants;</td>
<td>Participant observation focused on students participants and their parents student interviews; Parent interviews</td>
<td>Analytic memos; Coding of the interview transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2007.-June, 2008</td>
<td>approx. 6 hours/week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the first two phases of the study (September 2006-May 2007), I focused on negotiating my way into the community and establishing social relationships with the community members. I was trying to “enter into the matrix of meanings of the researched, to participate in their system of organized activities, and to feel subject to their code of moral regulation” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2). I spent three to four hours per visit in the Chinese school\textsuperscript{17}. In order to “get close,” I participated, either as an observer or as a participant, in all major school and community events, such as the Chinese New Year celebration, the school board meetings, the teachers’ meetings, and the Chinese speech competition, and also organized donations for the “May 12\textsuperscript{th} Earthquake,” and so forth. I sat in the classrooms and observed the interaction between the teacher and the students, and among the students. I also walked back and forth in the hallway between class sessions, so that I could overhear the conversations among the students, and sometimes I chatted with them. I deliberately sought out parents at times and in places where they were likely to congregate. These included ping pong club, the Mom’s club, the lounge and the gyms. While observing the ping pong club or the Mom’s Club, I distributed the survey for demographic information, asking the community members about the length of residency, their occupations, education, and expectations for their children’s education. I also chatted with community members about the reasons to come to the Chinese school. Immersion allowed me to observe the social surrounding of the CCLS and the social

\textsuperscript{17} Chinese school meets once a week from 2:00-5:00 on Saturday afternoon. I sometimes came earlier to talk to parents or other community members. I also stayed late to do interviews or help with cleaning or with other chores, which was a way to give back to the community.
relationship among the participants; and to understand how people made sense of activities and interactions that represented the generation and maintenance of social capital. By the end of December 2006, I was seen either as a doctoral student at Kent State University working on a dissertation, a researcher doing a study about the community, or simply as another Chinese community member. However I was perceived in the community, I became a regular visitor and a familiar face in the Chinese language school over the course of my two-year study. By the end of the first year, I was able to walk around in the Chinese school confident that I would run into students or parents who I knew.

I started interviewing the participants during the third phase of the study (September 2007-June 2008). I will talk in more detail about responsive interviewing in the next section.

By the end of each visit, I recorded the observations by writing detailed fieldnotes. Fieldnotes are conceptualized as “accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner” (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 4-5). Fieldnotes preserve experiences as they occur, and provide a resource for future reflection and analysis of such experiences. My fieldnotes recorded day-to-day experiences and casual conversations I had with the CICA students, parents, teachers, and other community members. The fieldnotes consisted of the notes I took either during or right after the conversations, and descriptions of settings, events, people, and artifacts I observed in the Chinese school. However, it proved impossible and undesirable to simply write down everything that happened. Rather, Emerson et al. suggest that writing
fieldnotes involves active interpretation of the indigenous meanings, and making sense of experiences of people under study. Following Emerson’s advice, I wrote down my initial impressions of the CCLS and people in it.

Moreover, I paid special attention to key community events or activities happened in the CCLS, such as the celebration of the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year, or the “Spring Festival,” the Chinese speech contest among the CICA students, the Board of Education meeting, and the Student Council election. Finally, I observed and wrote down what I perceived were significant or meaningful to people under study. For example, socialization and exchanging information on education were perceived as important for members of the Mom’s Club; whereas having a good workout and competition were more a focus of the ping pong club. While writing the fieldnotes, I also recorded my own thoughts, feelings, insights, and speculations. As Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggest, “The idea is to stimulate critical thinking about what you see and to become more than a recording machine” (p. 163). The following is an excerpt of fieldnote one, describing my first field visit.

Saturday morning, I was wondering what I should wear. I don’t want to overdress, so that I won’t feel out of place. But I don’t want to under-dress, so that I won’t give the principal and teachers a first impression that I am not serious about the study. So finally, I picked up a pair of jeans and a cream-colored sweater blouse, which I felt casual and comfortable.

After an hour and forty five minute driving, we arrived at LaBella High School. I saw a few Chinese women were chatting, and I said “Ni Hao (Hello in Chinese)” to them. I asked one of the women whether she knew Principal Woo, and where I could find him. She told me where the principal could be, and asked whether I had an appointment with him. I introduced myself and told her that I have set an appointment with Dr. Woo. When she knew I am a Ph. D student at Kent State University and I may do a research here at the Chinese school, she seemed enthusiastic and agreed to show me around the school and take me to see Dr. Woo.
She told me that she is a parent and does some volunteer work for the Chinese school. Her five-year-old daughter goes to school here every Saturday. She showed me the school and told me that now there are over four hundred students, and the oldest are high school students. There are over 20 classes in the school. Unfortunately, the doors of the classrooms were closed, and I could not see well how many students were in the class, and what age group the students were. When we got to one of the entrance where Dr. Woo usually is, he was not there. …Finally, I found Dr. Woo in the gym. He was in a blue T-shirt and shorts and he was playing, so I waited until they had a break. I went up to him and introduced myself, and asked whether I could talk to him for a few minutes about my research and the school. He was in the middle of the game, so he asked me to look around the school and he would talk to me after he finished (Fieldnote, 10/26/2006).

Participating in the Chinese language school and accumulating a detailed description of people in it, and activities and events that were meaningful for them are the initial steps in data collection. My experiences as a participant-observer enabled me to lay the groundwork for the study as a whole. Observations shaped the questions I asked in the semi-structured interviews. To pursue indigenous experience of social capital in the ethnic community, I talked and listened to the participants and delved into their perspectives.

Immersion in the Chinese school also helped me gain the confidence of the students, parents, community members, and school personnel. However, given the size of the Chinese school and limited school days, I was unable to know all school participants. My Chinese ethnicity did not automatically grant me trust from all members. This meant that sometimes I would be eyed with suspicion, especially when I tended to talk to parents or ask them to fill out the survey. I encountered questions, such as “Why me?” “What do you want from me?” “Why do you need to know this information (e.g., immigration status, household income, and education attainment etc.)?” Although I
repeatedly introduced who I am and what I am doing, and assured them that all the information would be keep confidential, some parents still refused to be interviewed or just to talk to me. The students, however, were less suspicious and more willing to talk. They came to know me as a doctoral student at Kent State University doing a research. Some students even volunteered to recruit participants for my study.

*Responsive Interviewing*

Responsive interviewing is a dynamic and iterative process, in which interview questions adapt to varying relationships between the researcher and the conversation partners, and change as the purpose of the interview evolves (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15). During the third phase (September 2007-June, 2008), along with doing participant observations, I did semi-structured interviews or responsive interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) with 15 CICA students (8 boys and 7 girls), aged from 11-16, and 13 parents\(^\text{18}\), who came to the Chinese language school regularly. I chose two higher level Chinese language classes (the 10\(^{th}\) and 11\(^{th}\) grade) and one SAT math preparation class to talk about my study and recruit participants, because of my primary interest in talking with older students, who could better understand the interview questions and articulate their thoughts. The student participants either signed up for the interview voluntarily, or they were referred to me by friends or parents. Some students were interested in participating, but their parents did not consent. Both the parents and the student participants signed consent forms for me to do the interview. The parental consent form was in both Chinese

\(^{18}\) The reason that the number of parents interviewed did not match that of the students is because Eric and Audrey are brother and sister. Also Jay, the youngest participant of this study, passed away because of a heart problem, and I felt inappropriate to interview his parents.
and English; whereas the student consent form was only in English. All the parents interviewed were first generation immigrants. Among the student participants, four were born in China and came to the United States with their immigrant parents at different ages, and thus they were defined as 1.5 generation. The rest were all born and raised in the United States and they were defined as second generation. The average number of years the students had been to the Chinese language school was 6, with the longest of 10 years and the shortest of 1 year. A few of the student participants started the Chinese language school as young as 3 years old. With respect to the participants’ names, I assigned all student participants an English pseudonym because when the students talked among themselves, they addressed each other by their English names (See Table 3). All parents interviewed are first generation immigrants, except for Ms. Reed, who is a Caucasian American and married a Singaporean Chinese. Chinese-language pseudonyms were assigned to them (See Table 4).
Table 3

Characteristics of Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Generation Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Years at CCLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia\textsuperscript{19}</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>7 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.5 generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.5 generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brynn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5 generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.5 generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>4 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} generation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>7 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{19} Alicia started the Chinese school at a young age and went up to the second grade; then she stopped for three years, and just came back to the Chinese school for a year.
Table 4

*Characteristics of Parent Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Generation Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Years at CCLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kwan</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>9 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Soo</td>
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<td>Ms. Louie</td>
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<td>Ms. Cho</td>
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<td>Dr. Woo</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Medical doctor</td>
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<td>Mr. Sun</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
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<td>Mr. Lee</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Manager of Financial investment</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
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<td>Mr. Zhou</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Insurance company</td>
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<td>Mr. Liu</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
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<td>Mr. Ma</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Publishing Company</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
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<td>Mr. Lin</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Medical doctor</td>
<td>9 yrs</td>
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On average, each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to one and a half hours. All the interviews with student participants were conducted in English, except one with Brynn, a 1.5 generation immigrant child, who preferred to talk in Chinese. All the interviews with parents, who are first generation immigrant, were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, except one with Mrs. Kwan, and translated and transcribed in English. All interviews but one were audiotaped and fully transcribed.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the Chinese school, either before or after the classes. However, at the convenience of the study participants, I did interview with Jenny, Joanne, and Nicole at their respective homes. I found in a more relaxed and casual atmosphere, such as that at home, the participants were more likely to speak openly.

Based on an interpretive-constructivist approach, the responsive interviewing model emphasizes that neither the interviewer nor the conversation partners are neutral or automatons; rather, they are human beings with feelings, personalities, interests, and experiences. Who we are and in what we are interested greatly affect what questions we ask and how we interpret and understand others’ experiences. Thus, Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that the researcher be self-aware of his or her own opinions, experiences, expectations, and even biases, and continually reflect on them. They continue,

Rather than pretend to have no biases, it makes more sense to examine your preconceptions and work out how your feelings might slant the research and then with this understanding in mind, work to formulate questions to offset your biases. (p. 82)

My Chinese ethnicity and personal experience of migration certainly shape my research interests, my relationship with the participants, and my interpretation of their life
stories. As a first generation Chinese immigrant, I am frequently asked, “Where are you from?” “How long have you been in America?” “Do you like it in our country?” And many times I got compliments from “real” Americans, “You speak English so well.” “You don’t have much accent.” I am not offended by the questions or the comments, and I take my Chinese-ness as granted. Chinese is part of who I am. I’ve never thought such seemingly innocuous questions could result in an identity crisis in the second or later generation.

In his book, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*, Mr. Wu, a second generation Chinese American, describes his feelings when he is constantly asked, “Where are you really from?”

I am disappointed by these tiresome episodes because strangers have zeroed in on my race and seem to be aware of nothing else. Taken together, their questions are nothing more than a roundabout means of asking what they know could not be directly said, “What race are you?” Their comments imply that I am not one of “us” but one of “them”. I don’t belong as an equal. My heart must be somewhere else rather than here. I am a visitor at best, an intruder at worst. I must know my place, and it is not here. (Wu, 2002, p. 80)

So does this feeling of disappointment and frustration hold true for all second and later generation? How would the 1.5 generation identify themselves? How does this label affect their sense of ethnic identity and belonging? What role does the ethnic community play in their identity formation? Those are the questions that interested me. Based on this research interest, the central issues I explored with the student participants were:

- What are the reasons for them to come to the Chinese language school?
- How do they understand their ethnic identity? What does it mean to be “Chinese” in America? How does coming to the Chinese language school play a role in their understanding?
- How do they view the social relationships with co-ethnic peers? What role do the social relationships play in their regular school experience?
The issues I discussed with the parents included:

- What are the reasons for them to send their children to the Chinese language school?
- How close is their relationship with other co-ethnics?
- What information do they share among parents?
- What role do they think the Chinese language school plays in their lives and in their children’s lives?

The interviews followed the tree-and-branch pattern (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For example, in the student interviews, I divided the questions into four equal parts: Background or Demographic Questions, Social Networks, Information, and Social and Cultural Norms. Each part was covered with main questions, which were logically related to the conceptual framework of social capital theory. In this model, the social capital theory was the trunk of the tree, and each form of social capital (social networks, information, and social and cultural norms) as well as demographic information were the branches.

However, these interview questions were fluid and flexible. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, responsive interviewing must be flexible to accommodate new information, to be adaptive to the experiences that conversation partners have had, and to adjust to unexpected situations (p. 35). Therefore, I adjusted the interview questions based on what I have observed in the field, the responses from my conversation partners, and the analysis of previous interviews.

*Document Analysis*

Documents have been used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material or artifacts (Merriam, 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (2006)
categorize documents into three groups: personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents (p. 133). Personal documents refer to any first-person narrative that describes an individual’s action, experiences, and beliefs, including autobiographies, personal letters, and intimate diaries. I obtained copies of the CICA students’ assignments that teachers shared with me because they shed light on the CICA students’ understanding of their Chinese heritage.

Official documents are those produced by organizations, institutions, and companies, and in this case, by the CCLS. I collected documents such as the minutes from the school board meetings, CCLS newsletters (on-line), news releases (on-line), a statement of philosophy (on-line), the school memoranda, notices, and miscellaneous documents. These materials were informational, acknowledging the school functions and various school-related events and activities. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest, the analysis of such data “lends contextual richness and helps to ground an inquiry in the milieu of the researcher” (p. 234).

In sum, I observed the social interactions among the CICA students and among other community members, the social relationships among members, the information passed through the social networks, and the social norms and values conducive to CICA students’ educational achievements. Through responsive interviewing, I understood what it meant to the CICAs to be part of the community through participation the Chinese language school; and what benefits, especially in terms of educational achievement, they have through the membership. Through participant observation, responsive interviewing, and document analysis, my data were “well-endowed with good description and dialogue
relevant to what occurs at the setting and its meaning for participants” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 122).

Data Analysis

Erickson (2004) suggests that data in qualitative research do not appear to the researcher; rather, they must be found, identified, and defined in a process of repeatedly searching through a set of information resources (p. 486). Data analysis is the process that aims to extract meanings and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative that is comprehensible to readers (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 201).

Data analysis occurred in three phases. In the first phase, while I was in the field, I did recursive data analyses through writing analytical memos and annotations on fieldnotes. Graue and Walsh (1998) state, “Memos are written notes to yourself about the thoughts you have about the data and your understanding of them” (p. 166). Denzin (1994) writes that memo writing is a tool for sense making that leads to decisions concerning “what will be written about, what will be included, [and] how it will be represented” (p. 503). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggest that “these memos can provide a time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they related to larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues” (p. 165).

Reading other ethnographies and case studies on Chinese Americans facilitated the generation of concepts and themes, encouraging me to relate the ideas that emerged from the fieldwork to the literature and the conceptual framework (Fang & Brown, 1999; Li & Skop, 2007; Logan, Zhang, & Alba, 2002; Pan, 1994, 1999; Siu, 2001; Wong, 2008).
In addition, I presented the study at national conferences, and local faculty brown bag lunch meetings. These opportunities and the feedback I got from peers urged me to reflect on the emerging findings in constructive ways.

The second phase of data analysis was influenced by the first phase. I read the fieldnotes, the analytic memos, and the interview transcripts, looking closely and systematically at what were observed in the field, and what was said by individual participants. The initial step was to recognize the concepts, themes, events, and topical markers in the fieldnotes and interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Further, I defined and refined what specific concepts or themes meant by the participants, and developed a coding list for each concept and theme. Boyatzis (as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pp. 216-217) suggests a series of questions that help researchers develop codes.

1. What am I going to call it (label it)?
2. How am I defining it?
3. How am I going to recognize it in the data?
4. What do I want to exclude?
5. What is an example?

After I recognized, defined, and refined the concepts and themes, I began physically coding the data, which involved re-reading all the fieldnotes and transcripts line-by-line, and labeling or coding each data unit that matched the concepts, themes, events, or topical markers. I started with a systematic open coding, and then moved to focus on coding. In initial open coding, Emerson et al. (1995) suggest the researcher should generate as many codes as possible without considering relevance to established concepts or to the primary theoretical framework, because such open coding suggests a myriad of possibilities and directions (p. 155). With the help of NVivo, a qualitative data
analysis software, I generated 121 free nodes or open codes. After open coding, I compared the codes and focused on “key, rich, or revealing” nodes, on which a substantial amount of data had been collected and which reflected recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 157).

After focused coding, I found the following recurrent themes: (a) besides offering Chinese language and culture classes, the Chinese language school played multiple roles in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and their children, such as providing a social platform, establishing social ties, exchanging information, and serving as a surrogate family; (b) the CICA students are compelled to conform to the social norm that “good universities” are the only route to social mobility; and (c) the CICA students’ understanding of their ethnic identity varied, but the social capital within the community plays a crucial role in their development of self.

The purpose of coding data is to engage the researcher in an analytic process, in which he or she moves beyond the particular study to a more general theoretical dimension or issue (Emerson et al., 1995). Building toward theory is the third phase of data analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In the third phase, I wrote theoretical memos about a variety of ideas, issues, insights, or concerns. Such memos elaborate the researcher’s understanding by making connections and positing hunches about what is going on (Emerson et al.). I looked beyond the Chinese community, and looked for broader implications of what I learned from this case study.

In conclusion, the process of qualitative data analysis is like climbing a mountain. As Dey (1993) describes it,
The mountain is climbed bit by bit, and while we are climbing, we focus on one step at a time. But the view we obtain is more than the sum of the sequence of steps we take along the way. Every so often, we can turn and look to the horizon, and in doing so we see the surrounding country from a fresh vantage point. This climb, with its circuitous paths, its tangents and apparent reversals, and its fresh vistas, reflects the creative and non-sequential character of the analytic process. Process may be slow and laborious, but it can be rewarded with some breath-taking revelations. (pp. 53-54)

Trustworthiness

In this section, I address the central questions: “How do I know that this qualitative case study is believable and accurate?” And “Did I get it right?” (Stake, 1995). Morgan (1983) notes that the criteria for evaluating the quality of an inquiry are rooted in the assumption of the paradigm in which it is designed. Interpretive-constructivism, which is the underlying paradigm for this study, is built on the idea that reality is socially constructed, “based on a constant process of interpretation and reinterpretation of the intentional, meaningful behavior of people, including researchers” (Smith, 1989, p. 85), and “truth is ultimately a matter of socially and historically conditioned agreement” (p. 73). Moreover, the constructivist label suggests that social inquiry is not independent of human mind, and it is neither possible nor desirable to separate investigator from the investigated. Therefore, it is inappropriate to evaluate the quality of a constructivist inquiry by the conventional positivist benchmarks of “rigor;” internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). Instead, naturalistic inquirers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to address the issue of trustworthiness, and evaluate the adequacy of a qualitative inquiry (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 2001).
In order to enhance the credibility of this study, I used data source triangulation\(^{20}\) (Denzin, 1984, 1989), which involves a variety of data sources, for example, observation fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and documents. The major strategy to establish transferability is using thick description, which provides an extensive and careful description of both the transferring and the receiving contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). By reading the thick description, readers will be able to determine the similarities or fittingness between contexts, and hence, whether findings can be transferred (Merriam, 1998). An audit trail can enhance both dependability and confirmability. In order to develop an audit trail, Merriam suggested that the investigator should describe in detail the process in which the data were collected and analyzed. Thus I kept a journal on how the data were collected, how they were coded, how the categories were developed, and how methodological decisions were made throughout the study.

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, I did member checks and peer debriefing. Guba and Lincoln (1989) consider member checks as “the most critical techniques for establishing credibility” (p. 341). In member checks, the researchers solicit participants’ views of the accuracy of the findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2007). Thus, for instance, I returned the interview transcripts and the rough draft of the study to the study participants, and asked them whether I captured the true meaning of what they said, or whether their understandings have been changed over the course of this study. Stake (1995) suggests that participants should “play a major role directing as well as

\(^{20}\) Triangulation follows from navigation science and the techniques deployed by surveyors to establish the accuracy of a particular point (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997). Triangulation is defined as a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 1998, p. 97).
acting in case study. They should be asked to examine rough drafts of the researcher’s work and to provide alternative language, critical observations or interpretations” (p. 115). Moreover, peer debriefing provides an external check of the trustworthiness of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the role of the peer debriefer as a “devil’s advocate,” who asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher’s feelings and emotions. As a way of peer debriefing, I worked closely with an advisor who provided feedback on findings and interpretations.

Researcher Roles: Insider versus Outsider

LeCompte (1999) suggests that the first task that a novice researcher should accomplish is to construct a field identity, which provides an introductory position or initial identity for a researcher new to the research site (p. 12). Such role must be defined by a simplified and non-technical language, and it must be acceptable and understandable to the participants (LeCompte; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Thus, when I talked to people in the CCLS, I always introduced myself as a Ph. D. student at Kent State University doing my dissertation study on the Chinese community. I used doctoral student as part of my identity because in Chinese culture, we respect and look up to people with knowledge. I included KSU in my self-introduction, which added to the legitimacy of the inquiry and held a respected position among community members, many of whom were KSU alumni.

As a researcher with Chinese ethnicity, I can be considered an “insider” studying Chinese immigrants and the Chinese American community. An insider or native researcher is defined as a scholar or researcher of color studying his or her own racial or
The role of an “insider” facilitates a certain rapport with individual informants, and enables more intimate access and a deeper understanding of the site (Vő). Foley, Levinson, and Hurtig (2001) argue the contributions of “insider” ethnographers are tremendous.

[“Insider” ethnographers] construct insider ethnographic knowledge using conceptual tools from the academy, and they present this knowledge in a way that renders their subjects’ actions and beliefs comprehensible and sympathetic to outsiders and insiders alike. [The] insiders’ contributions are crucial in bringing to light the dynamics of culture that may lead to the design of more democratic educational arrangements and hence the attainment of greater equality of opportunity and achievement. (p. 37)

Further, the “insider’s” role or co-ethnicity enabled me to fit unobtrusively into the research site, because when “they” (people coming to the Chinese language school) saw me, they just saw another Chinese face, and assumed that I was one of “them” (Kang, 2000). My fluency in both Mandarin and English enabled me to communicate with the parents, community members, and CICA students. The participants felt more comfortable in talking to me with the language they preferred.

However, Loo (1980) suggests that ethnic researchers do not automatically gain the trust of co-ethnic communities. Aguila (1981) argues that on one hand, ethnic researchers are regarded as ethnic and cultural members; but they are social strangers or “outsiders,” on the other hand. He further suggested that ethnic scholars may encounter suspicion and resentment by co-ethnics in terms of their level of acculturation or assimilation; therefore, researchers are not absolutely inside or outside of a homogenous socio-cultural system. During the initial site visits, my Chinese ethnicity and status as a graduate student at Kent State University provided me with entrée into the community,
yet being Chinese and a graduate student did not provide instant rapport or trust among the Chinese community members. As discussed earlier, I encountered suspicion and distrust when I talked to some parents, who were reluctant to reveal information on their immigration experience, their occupation, and their expenses on their children’s education and extra-curriculum activities. Even at the end of my two-year field work, I still had not gained trust from all parents. When I tried to contact some for an interview, they would find a reason to refuse to be interviewed or postpone the interview to a future unknown date.

Johnson (1975) suggests that fieldwork is based on the culmination of individualized interactions; it is a continuous, ongoing series of interactions and negotiations. Therefore, to establish a trust relationship in the field, I constantly negotiated and renegotiated my interactions with participants, and my role as an ethnic “insider” and “outside” researcher.

Conclusion

Through this study I have learned how important it is to involve the participants and the whole ethnic community into the study. As Lincoln (1995) suggests, researcher should respect the collaborative and egalitarian aspects of research. Moreover, I received valuable feedback and great support from the community, especially from Dr. Woo, Ms. Kwan, and Mr. Sun throughout the study.

Dr. Woo commented that my study accurately captured the multiple roles of the Chinese language school in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and their children. He suggested that in the further study I should examine how the Chinese school is viewed in
the local American community, and focus on the bridging function of the Chinese school. Mr. Sun volunteered both of his sons for my study. Mr. Sun suggested that I should downplay the success of Chinese immigrants. Instead, I should advocate a “normal life” for the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students, because they are already under great pressure from their parents and from the society to excel. Finally, Ms. Kwan, who herself is a law school student, constantly provided me with emotional support. I also drew some potential research idea from her thesis on the relationship between learning Chinese cultural heritage and ethnic identity development among adopted Chinese children. It would be interesting for future researcher to exam the role the Chinese language school plays in those adopted Chinese children and their American family.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide some transparency to the study, for example, how the site was selected; how data were collected and analyzed; and what procedures have been taken to ensure the trustworthiness or authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this study (Creswell, 2007).

In what follows, I look at the academic performance and socialization of the CICA students by examining their experiences in CCLS. The next chapter introduces the roles of the CCLS, and the development of social capital in the ethnic community through CCLS. I argue that CCLS as a community center plays multiple roles in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and their offspring. CCLS provides a social platform for parents and other community members to establish social relationships; it disseminates information regarding education, employment, health, and finances through social
relationships; and it serves as a surrogate family providing tangible and intangible support to the community members, and gives them a sense of “home.” In this unique social place, the CICA students compete with each other, and are compelled to excellence; in this unique social place, the CICA students develop their sense of identity and understand who they are and what it means to be “Chinese.”
CHAPTER V

THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF CCLS: THE (RE)PRODUCTION AND ACCUMULATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

CCLS’s Mission:

*Build an inter-cultural mainstream community through volunteering, leadership, collaborative efforts, by providing multi-cultural exchange, education and services.*

*To foster: Collaborative efforts, volunteering, and leadership.*

*To promote: Multi-cultural exchange of arts, language and Chinese heritages.*

*To enrich: Lives of individuals and families*

*To enhance: US-China understanding, friendship and links*

Previous research has been conducted to explore the adaptation of Chinese immigrants and to explain their success in the American society. One explanation is the cultural argument, which emphasizes the effects of Confucianism, Chinese cultural characteristics, and behavior patterns (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996; Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Lin & Fu, 1990; Louie, 2004; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999). Based on this essentialist cultural argument, the Chinese possess identifiable characteristics that encompass traditional cultural values, practices, and codes of conduct. These characteristics are formed in the homeland and transplanted with modifications by Chinese immigrants in the new land, where they are transmitted and perpetuated from generation to generation (Fukuyama, 1993). According to this view, the cultural
inventory that facilitates success in social adaptation and academics includes high
achievement value and orientation, industriousness, perseverance, future orientation, and
ability to postpone immediate gratification for later rewards. The assumptions
underpinning the cultural argument are that some minority groups, in this case, Chinese,
are successful because they have essential cultural characteristics that lead them to
succeed; whereas other groups may lack the necessary cultural characteristics for school
success and social mobility. Zhou and Kim (2006) argue that the cultural argument is
dangerous because it tends to overlook the broad social context, and attribute the outcome
of adaptation and social mobility to individual minority groups. Furthermore, if it is the
Chinese culture that leads to success and upward social mobility, the cultural theories
cannot explain why some Chinese are stuck at the bottom rung of the social class.

The structural argument, however, emphasizes the role of the social context in
explaining the different educational outcomes and social mobility among minority groups.
Structuralists believe that social structural factors, such as social class, race, labor market
conditions, and residential patterns, interact with individual factors to determine the
meaning of success, to prescribe coping strategies, and to determine a minority group’s
chance of success. According to the structural argument, cultural values and behavior
patterns can be conducive to upward mobility only when they interact with a wider set of
advantageous structural factors. For example, when a particular group arrives with a
higher social class status and encounters a favorable structure of opportunity in the host
society, this group has a better chance of success and upward social mobility (Zhou &
Kim, 2006).
Not until the recent past, however, have sociologists of education proposed an alternative conceptual framework that draws on the social capital theory to explain school outcomes and social mobility of immigrant children and children of immigrants (Bankston, 2004; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Kao, 2004; Noguera, 2004; Ream, 2005; Schmid, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; White & Glick, 2000; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). These scholars focus on social capital within families, or so-called family social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In a recent study, Wong (2008) examines the role of communal social capital in supporting the academic lives of low-income working class Chinese American youth. The community she studied is an ethnic enclave located in Chinatown. As discussed in Chapter III, the contemporary Chinese immigrants, however, tend to move away from ethnic-specific, central city enclaves to suburbs where they are spatially dispersed among, and racially mixed with, the majority white community. With the new immigrants moving to the suburbs, the notion of “community” is expanded. Community is not confined by proximity, but includes dispersed “heterolocal” communities (Li & Skop, 2007). Li and Skop explain,

In these suburban communities, recent immigrants arrive in a metropolitan area and quickly adopt a dispersed pattern of residential location, all the while managing to maintain and re-create a cohesive community through a variety of means, at a variety of scales, from the local to the transnational. (p. 231)

In this chapter, I take into account the new geographic residential patterns, and look into a Chinese language school located in one of such ethnoburbs. Contemporary Chinese Language School is located in LaBella Heights, an affluent suburb, and it serves as the community center that connects the Chinese families reside in the Greater
Furthermore, this chapter tends to shed light on the way how social capital is (re)produced and circulated through the Contemporary Chinese Language School. Zhou and Kim (2006) discuss the ethnic community:

The ethnic community thus is not simply understood as a neighborhood where a particular ethnic group’s members and/or businesses concentrate, nor as geographically unbound ethnicity in the abstract. Rather, it contains a common cultural heritage along with a set of shared values, beliefs, behavioral standards, and coping strategies with which group members are generally identified. It also contains social institutions and interpersonal networks that have been established, operated, and maintained by group members. (p. 5)

This chapter argues that social capital must be supported by tangible social structures in the ethnic community in order to generate resources for upward social mobility. Social structures are manifested in various economic, civic, socio-cultural, and religious organizations lodged in an ethnic community, as well as in social networks arising from co-ethnic members’ participation in them. Therefore, an examination of the CCLS can provide insight into how community forces are sustained and how social capital is generated within one social structure in the ethnic community. This study further illustrates how culture and structure interact to create a social environment conducive to educational achievement and social adaptation. The foci of this chapter, then, are how the individual familial social capital is transformed to social capital in the community through the participation in the CCLS; and what roles the CCLS plays in the (re)production and accumulation of social capital within the ethnic community.
Chinese Americans are the oldest and largest ethnic group of Asian ancestry in the United States. After the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, the Chinese immigrants have increased dramatically. In just the last decade (1998-2008), nearly 1.7 million Chinese immigrants were admitted to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007b). Among the influx of Chinese immigrants, 21.3% are children under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a).

Unlike the early immigrants who tended to cluster in Chinatown, the new Chinese immigrants live in a diverse residential neighborhood. With the new immigrants moving to the suburbs, there was an urgent call for a new community center. The Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) was built in 1995 to meet the needs of the new immigrants, and has been an integral part of the social structures of the ethnic community in the Great Cleveland Area. The CCLS is a member of the Chinese School Association in the United States (CSAUS), which was founded in 1994. CSAUS has now evolved into an umbrella non-profit organization of more than 300 member schools, covering 41 states and all major cities. The number of students enrolled has exceeded 60,000. Services and impact have reached out to tens of thousands of Chinese-American families (CSAUS website). The original purpose of the CSAUS was to preserve language and cultural heritage in the second and succeeding generations. However, CSAUS has grown.
rapidly and evolved to a much broader range of functions beyond the preservation of ethnic language and culture. The CSAUS describes its goals as follows:

The goals of CSAUS are to provide information, networking, services to member schools in promoting Chinese language and cultural education, helping the younger generation to preserve and appreciate Chinese heritage, bridging educational and cultural exchanges and friendship between USA and the People’s Republic of China, and representing its member schools in marketing and maximizing organizational efforts to gain resources and supports from related institutions in the United States and from China. (CSAUS website)

As a member of CSAUS, the Contemporary Chinese Language School (CCLS) as the community center connects families and provides formal and informal mechanisms of cooperation. It plays various roles in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans. One parent described the roles of the Chinese school in this way: “The kids can learn some Chinese culture and language, and we [adults] can chat, go shopping, and have dinner after school. The Chinese school provides us a social platform.”

CCLS as a Platform for Socialization

For most American children, families are the main means of transmitting cultural norms and values, and shaping social contacts and future opportunities. For immigrant children, however, families alone are not enough. First of all, the traditional bonds, practices, and values that hold families and communities together have been disrupted in the process of immigration (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Coming to America means leaving the extended families and social networks behind. Second, the social environments in which many new immigrant families live are socially isolated or even hostile, and they lack meaningful connections to mainstream institutions (Zhou & Bankston). Ms. Kwan
described her neighborhood as “extremely hostile,” where people are “snobs” and look down on her.

I don’t know it is because I am Chinese or more because I am a single parent. You don’t have money, you don’t have any power, and you don’t have any connections. They are not the most warm people, you know. So it was difficult.

Therefore, the newcomers need a place to socialize with, in Ms. Kwan’s words, “our own people;” to re-establish social networks; and to develop a strong sense of ethnic identity. The CCLS also functions as a social service organization, operating a wide range of programs, such as Teens Club, Mom’s club, ping pong club, Thai Chi club, senior’s club, summer camp, festival celebrations, and family counseling. Through the membership and participation in the activities, the parents and community members establish their social relations.

A third reason is that some immigrant parents may lack adequate knowledge of how to adapt to the mainstream society. For example, unlike many Chinese parents who came to the U.S. to pursue a higher education, Brynn’s mom came through a marriage, and she “knows nothing about the American school system.” So Brynn turns to her co-ethnic peers in the Chinese school for help. “Other kids’ parents have either a Ph.D. or a Master’s degree, and they know everything. They are very good at math and physics. So if I have any problems, I will go and ask them. They will help me.”

As a platform for socialization, the CCLS actively engages both adults and young members of the ethnic community. On Saturday afternoons, while the kids are immersed in Chinese language and culture in the classrooms, the school bustles with various activities. As Mr. Lee describes, “the best thing about the Chinese school is that it
provides a place for adults to exercise and participate in all kinds of activities, such as volleyball, basketball, badminton, and ping pong.” All these activities provide ample opportunities for interaction among co-ethnics, and thus help strengthen ties among members while also reinforcing the leadership roles of the CCLS. The consensus among the parents with whom I talked was that the CCLS has become a cultural mecca, where immigrants can mingle with others who speak the same language and share a common heritage. As Ms. Kwan describes it, “I am not in China, but I have this little space [the CCLS] that they are Chinese, you know, they are the same kind of people.” The common immigration experience and cultural heritage have brought the Chinese immigrants and their children into a dense social structure made up not only of family and friendship ties, but also of connections to the ethnic community and the broader mainstream society.

Dr. Woo, the principal, believed that the CCLS provides a social place where parents can make friends and build networks.

I think the CCLS provides a social platform, which is very important. Without this social platform, many people would not know each other. Though work, they can only know a few people. But in the CCLS, people are from all walks of life. The parents come every week, and they can make some friends here. The old Chinese proverb says, “You depend on your parents at home, and on your friends to go out (在家靠父母，出门靠朋友).” In the U.S., you don’t get much help from parents or families, and you can only depend on your friends. You may not trust anybody as a friend, but in the CCLS, you trust each other, because you speak the same language, and you all have kids in the same school. The parents come to the CCLS regularly and become acquainted with one another.

Through the CCLS, the Chinese immigrants have built social relationships with co-ethnics. These social relationships, as a form of social capital, furnish co-ethnic members, especially the newcomers, with both intangible (e.g., emotional, cultural, and spiritual) and tangible support in the forms of assistance with employment, education,
and housing. For new immigrants, the CCLS not only provides resources and support, but more importantly it helps them negotiate their entry to the mainstream culture. Dr. Woo explained,

It is all about “us.” It is not easy [to live in a foreign country]. Everyone has his or her worries and needs. The CCLS as a social platform is trying to pave the way for the newcomers. I mean, if we fail, we hope the newcomers will learn from our lessons and will not make the same mistakes.

Even for those who have settled down in this country for a long period of time, the CCLS is still a central place for socialization, where they talk in Chinese and share the same values. Ms. Louie is an active school board member, and she is in charge of the maintenance of the CCLS web site. She described how socialization with co-ethnic peers is definitely different from that with American colleagues.

The socialization with Americans is superficial, and we don’t have a deep relationship. One reason is we are pretty busy, and second, the cultural backgrounds are different. For example, we may not like what they [Americans] like, and vice versa. But when we, Chinese, are together, it is easier to talk to each other. Besides, we don’t have the language barrier.

Through the CCLS, parents make friends and reestablish social relationships in this new land. Ryan’s mom describes, “If the kids are getting along, and we [adults] don’t have language barrier, and we share similar cultural background, we will go out and have fun together. Through the CCLS, some of us become really good friends.”

The social relationships with co-ethnics built through active involvement in the CCLS provide important, albeit partial, social capital for the ethnic community members. Various community-oriented activities operated by the CCLS have created multiple memberships for the Chinese. Such a “dense set of associations” (Coleman, 1990) gives
the Chinese immigrants and their children a particularly strong network of social relations in the ethnic community.

*CCLS as a Surrogate Family*

*Like the Americans go to the church on Sundays, we come to the Chinese school on Saturdays.*
---A Chinese immigrant parent

The CCLS not only offers academic and enrichment programs, but it serves as the locus of social support and control, network building, and social capital (re)production. Even though the Chinese school does not have any religious or spiritual components, some community members compare going to the Chinese school to going to church. As Ms. Kwan describes it, “I just feel at home. I feel that I am with my people. That is how I feel. It must be the same feeling as, you know, if you were Christian, you go to the Christian church.” The role of religion in the adaptation of post-1965 immigrants to the U.S. has been well documented by scholars (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Min, 1992; Warner & Wittner, 1998; Yang, 1999). Religious institutions, such as churches, have been an important dynamic in the lives of new immigrants, both as a venue of reproduction of ethnic cultures, and as a force for acculturation and change (Dolan, 1975; Palinkas, 1998; Yang, 1999). However, the role of nonreligious community institutions has not received as much attention in the literature. Like religious institutions, the CCLS is regarded as a surrogate family, providing tangible and intangible support to the Chinese immigrants and their children.

I first met Ms. Kwan in her Chinese class in the CCLS. In that class, she had about 20 students, aged 10 to 15. Ms. Kwan gave instructions in a combination of
Chinese and English, because it was an intermediate class. Ms. Kwan has been teaching at the CCLS since 1999, and she is well respected and liked by her students and the parents. Ms. Kwan was a candid and straightforward person. When asked about the role that the CCLS plays in her life, she told me her personal story. Ms. Kwan came to the U.S. in 1989 after the “June the 4th Tian An Men Square Affairs.” She married an American man and they have a daughter and son. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last long, and Ms. Kwan is now divorced. She describes that she did not have any family in the United States, except her two children. So for her, the CCLS is like a family, which provides her a sense of “home” and security. She explained:

You know, I’ve always considered the Chinese school home to me. I have been teaching in my class that “中文学校是我家” (Zhong Wen Xue Xiao Shi Wo Jia [The Chinese school is my home]). That is really how I feel.

Ms. Kwan further explained that this sense of “home” or belonging comes from the knowledge that people coming to the CCLS are “the same kind of people,” or in her own words, “our own people.”

Being a single parent, I know this [the CCLS] is the organization that I definitely can count on. You know, I feel definitely connected. I will do everything for the Chinese school . . . I just feel these are our own people. You know, we are all Chinese here, and they are all similar to me, and they are all professionals. You know, I think we think more alike. So I feel more at home.

In the process of migration, the social ties with the extended family and friends are disrupted, and the immigrants have to depend on themselves and on the newly developed kinship embedded in an ethnic community to survive and move upward. As Dr. Woo recounted earlier, “In the U.S., you don’t get help from your parents and family. So you must depend on your friends (出门靠朋友).”
The CCLS serves as a surrogate family, not only for the immigrant parents but also for the 1.5 generation CICA children. Jim was born in China, and came to the United States at age 9. He looks shy and even timid. His parents are divorced, and his father and other relatives are left behind in China. Now Jim is living with his mother, stepfather, and one half-brother in the U.S. He feels “alienated” in America. He described his feelings this way:

I just don’t have relatives here [in the U.S.] to like, talk to. And at Christmas time, I hear my American friends talking about having parties with their families. But we can’t really do that, because, like, nobody’s here with us, and we’re just like, four people sitting around the Christmas tree.

So for Jim, coming to the Chinese school is like a homecoming:

It’s a feeling of like . . . you’re home . . . I kind of miss China because all my relatives are living in there. So when I come here [to the CCLS], it kind of reminds me of the atmosphere.

Ron Wakabayashi, former director of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), observes, “Asian Americans feel like we’re a guest in someone else’s house, that we can never really relax and put our feet up on the table” (Tuan, 2001, p. 4). The CCLS provides the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans a sense of being at home, where they can relax and do things they normally would not do outside of the Chinese school setting. For example, Joanne acts like two different persons in her regular American school and the Chinese school. Joanne was born in the U.S., and she was 14 years old when I first met her. Her father is one of the founding members of the CCLS, and is elected president of the Chinese School Association in the United States (CSAUS) since 2008. Joanne started the Chinese school since she was six, and has been coming for eight
years. She described how she feels differently about the Chinese school and her regular American school in this way:

At the American school, I feel . . . Since I am kind of new there, I don’t know many people, except for the Chinese. So I am just really quiet. People tend to think that I am shy, and they think I am really, really nice, because I am quiet and shy. But at the Chinese school, I am really outspoken, I am really hyper, I jump around and I laugh a lot, because I am more comfortable, since I have been going to that [Chinese] school since I was 6.

Dr. Woo observed the different behaviors of the CICA children, and he believes that the differences owe to the children’s sense of feeling at home.

The kids here are naughty. But in their American schools, they are well behaved. In American schools, for example, they are not allowed to run in the hallway. But here, you see, during the break, the kids are running around. I think they must feel at home.

As a surrogate family, the CCLS furnishes co-ethnic members with both intangible (emotional, cultural, and spiritual) and tangible support in the forms of assistance with jobs, education, and housing. Ms. Kwan described how the Chinese school provides her emotional support when she needs it the most.

For years when I lived with my husband, I really didn’t have my own friends. I went wherever his friends were. But when we divorced, his friends remain friends with him. All a sudden, I am kind of on my own. Then I moved to an extremely hostile town. So life was difficult. I don’t have a particular or specific need. I think it is more an emotional support, you know, to know that there is an organization here . . .

When tragedies happen in the community, the CCLS not only provides emotional support, but helps with donations or other services. Mr. Sun, the treasurer of the Chinese school, recounted the functions of the school.

There are some people passed away due to disease, or accidents. When there is a family tragedy, we form a group to help the family with donations, or other
things. Some people don’t speak much English, so you have to help them contact the funeral home, and such. There are many things involved.

For example, I received the following e-mail from the Chinese school in February 2008, asking for donations for a community member.

Dr. [Zhao] has been an employee in the Cleveland Clinic as a post-doctor. He is suffering from liver cancer and is almost coming to the end of his life. Dr. [Zhao] will leave his wife and two children, one in college, and the other 3 years old. His wife currently does not have a job, so supporting the family when Dr. [Zhao] passes away will be very hard. We all should help them during this difficult time. No matter how much you give, it will be very helpful to them. We also should respect their privacy and not visit them. Thank you for your help and support toward their family during this time. (February 29, 2008)

Mr. Sun told me that the abovementioned Dr. Zhao had passed away, but his wife was emotionally stable owing to the support from the community. The CCLS also raised $9,000 for his family. This is just one of many cases that the CCLS takes the role of a family to support its community members. In the summer of 2008, the youngest participant of this study, Jay, an 11-year-old boy, died of heart failure. His parents were devastated, and it was the CCLS and other community organizations that helped the family with the funeral arrangements. During that time of deep sorrow, more than 70 people from the ethnic community visited the family and sent their condolences. The parents expressed their gratitude to the CCLS and the whole ethnic community in a local Chinese media, and they repeatedly said that if it were not for the CCLS and the ethnic community, they would not have known how to handle their son’s sudden death.

In November 2008, another community member, Dr. Zhong, 52 years old, died of a heart attack. Dr. Zhong was an active participant of all community events and his wife, Ms. Zhong, taught SAT math at the CCLS. Dr. Zhong was a heart surgeon, and his
sudden death was a shock to the ethnic community. But the CCLS responded to the tragedy quickly and sent out an e-mail to urge people to donate for the family and help with the funeral service.

Hi All:

We are terribly sorry to inform you that Dr. [Zhong] died of heart attack on November 1 in his Atlanta apartment. Dr. [Zhong] had been actively participating in community events. His wife, [Ms. Zhong], is one of our SAT Math teacher at our Chinese School. They have a lot of friends in Metro Cleveland area. CCLS is organizing funeral service in LaBella Heights, OH. We need to do something to help [Zhong’s] family.

Now, [Ms. Zhong] is in Atlanta to deal with all kinds of documentation work. [Zhong’s] mother and sister-in-law are at [Zhong]’s home that is located in LaBella Heights, OH. They need help from us. If you are willing to send meals to them, please contact [Ms. Hong], who is in charge of arranging meal schedule for the family. According to our working situation, we encourage you to send dinner to the family.

[Mr. Long] and [Mr. Lee] are working on the issues of shipping [Zhong] back to LaBella Heights and arranging funeral services. We hope the funeral service can be conducted on November 8 or 9. [Zhong]’s friends, [Mr. Liang], [Mr. Zhou], and [Mr. Yao] will fly from Atlanta to Cleveland with [Ms. Zhong].

Since the income of [Dr. Zhong] is not high, [Ms. Zhong] may have a hard time to deal with the extra cost and sudden change in her life. CCLS ask for help to donate money to this family.

Thanks.

CCLS (November 4, 2008)

As a surrogate family, the CCLS provides the members with intangible support, that is, emotional support and a sense of “being at home” or a sense of belonging. For newcomers, the CCLS is a bridge connecting them from the familiar home cultural practices to the unfamiliar mainstream society, and it provides them some comfort and security in the process of migration and assimilation. For long time residents, even if they
do not have specific needs, the CCLS is a central place where they can be with their “own people.” Moreover, the CCLS helps the community members in times of family tragedy and disasters. In Ms. Kwan’s words, the CCLS is an organization that its members can “definitely count on.” The CCLS is like an idealized version of a church in the sense that it provides a sanctum where the immigrants can put aside the stress and pressure of assimilation and acculturation, where they can seek support from each other, and where their traditional values and culture are appreciated and reaffirmed by co-ethnics.

*Information Flow through the Social Relationships in the CCLS*

Information that inheres in social relations is defined as an important form of social capital (Coleman, 1988). Coleman argues that information is important because it provides a basis for individual and/or collective action. One means of acquiring information is through social relations that are maintained for other purposes (Coleman, p. S104). As mentioned earlier, the CCLS provides a platform for socialization. Through the membership of the CCLS and participation in the community activities, parents and other community members establish their social relations. These relations thus become channels through which information is exchanged. Lin (2001) defines exchange as “a series of interactions between two (or more) actors in which a transaction of resources take place” (p. 143). So what information has been exchanged among the Chinese community members? What role does the acquired information play in the lives of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans? It is to these questions that I turn next.

*Information on education.* Children’s education is one of the main topics in parents’ conversation. Wherever I went, I could hear parents talking about their children.
It was the third period of school, and the CCLS was bustling with the extracurricular activities for children including folk dance, martial arts, painting, Chinese chess, and gymnastics. In the auditorium, there was a gym class for young children, aged 5 to 6. Six girls and one boy were in the class. Their parents (mostly moms) took the first row of the seats, watching their children, giving them some verbal encouragement in English, and chatting among themselves in Chinese. I sat right behind the parents in the second row, and overheard the conversation between two moms. Ms. Ke and Ms. Tong were talking about sending their children to the Kumon\textsuperscript{21} reading and math program. Ms. Ke wanted her 5-year-old daughter to start the Kumon program. Since Ms. Tong has a seven-year-old daughter who went to the Kumon program before, she had some experience with this after-school program. Ms. Ke started the conversation asking Ms. Tong about Kumon.

Ke (K): Have you heard about Kumon? I want my daughter to start as early as possible.

Tong (T): Sure. My older daughter went to Kumon before. But now she has ballet, piano and regular school work, so I withdrew her from Kumon. Maybe in the summer when her regular school is not in session, I will let her start Kumon again.

K: How was it [Kumon]?

T: It is supposed to improve the kid’s reading and math. It costs $100 for one subject per month and $75 for each additional subject.

\textsuperscript{21}Kumon is an after-school math and reading program that employs a unique learning method designed to help each child develop the skills needed to perform to his or her full potential. Kumon started 50 years ago in Japan by Mr. Toru Kumon. Now Kumon has centers in 44 countries around the world, and it has more than 1,500 centers in North America. Kumon program fosters: (a) a mastery of the basics of reading and math; (b) improved concentration and study habits; (c) increased self-discipline and self-confidence; (d) a proficiency in material at every level; (e) performance to each student’s full potential; and (f) a sense of accomplishment (http://www.kumon.com/about/default.asp?language=USA).
Parents not only share information on after-school programs, but also on the strategies to discipline their children. The following excerpt of a fieldnote is an example.

The lounge was relatively quiet, when the students were still in classes. Some parents were reading newspapers, some were surfing on-line, some were resting, and others were chatting. At the corner of the lounge, two parents were talking about the public school. Later on, another mom joined their conversation, and they were talking about how to discipline their children at home. The dad said that he tried to threaten the kids to withdraw them from their favorite things, such as soccer, coming to the Chinese school, or TV time, but nothing worked. A mom who joined the conversation later said, “You have to find something that they really enjoy. My daughter likes [pop star] Miley Cyrus. And I told her that if she doesn’t study, I will not buy the CD for her any more. That works. Also, I asked her to stand still, if she disobeys.” “Stand still? For how long? One hour? Two hours? It doesn’t work,” the dad asked. (Fieldnotes, May, 3, 2008)

Later in an interview with Ms. Cho, I asked her how beneficial it was for her and her children to come to the CCLS and make friends. She replies, “I think it is very beneficial, and I get more information.” When I further asked what kind of information she got through the social relationships, she replied,

Like how to educate our children and what activities are appropriate for kids . . . When I talk to other parents, they tell me some supplementary materials are good, and then I will give them a try. I think it is helpful, I mean, knowing how other parents teach their children.

Information is not only passed through informal conversations among parents, but also through community media, such as a local Chinese-language newspaper, the CCLS Newsletter, and an on-line journal. Winners of various regional and national academic decathlons get front-page coverage, with pictures and extensive reports about their families. For example, an article, titled “Year 2008 winner of the Dr. Jennie S. Hwang Award—one from our own community, Rachel Shi” in the local Chinese media (May 2008), reported that Rachel is a sophomore at Baldwin Wallace College, majoring in
physics and pre-engineering with a minor in business administration. She won the highly
dependent Dr. Jennis S. Hwang Award of 2008. The Award aims at encouraging
women to pursue science, engineering, and technology-related education and professions.

The CCLS also organizes seminars on how to educate children and deal with
children’s behavioral and psychological problems. For example, a member of the Mom’s
Club told me the club organized a lecture by a mom, whose two children were both
accepted into elite universities, Yale University and Harvard University.

Another example is the panel discussion on the CICA children’s psychological
wellbeing organized by the CCLS. The Virginia Tech Shooting in April 2007 was a
wake-up call for immigrant parents, who might push their children too hard to succeed.
The CCLS realized that the students might be under great pressure from parents at home
and from peers at school. Therefore, the CCLS called for the parents and the whole ethnic
community to pay more attention to the psychological wellbeing of the children, and to
have a candid conversation between the parents and the children. The CCLS organized a
panel comprised of parents, student representatives, CCLS school board members, and
experts on children’s psychology. All parents and teenage students were encouraged to
attend the panel discussion. The panel included the following topics:

As a minority teenage child, how to deal with peer pressure? How to be involved
in school and community activities? And how to use the Chinese School as a
platform to build up leadership skills and quality, etc.? (Personal communication,
April, 25, 2007)

The CCLS also invited a school psychologist to talk about the common challenges
faced by minority students every day, signs of stress as well as strategies to deal with
stress. A Teen Club was also initiated at the discussion to help the CICA teenagers build a supportive co-ethnic peer group.

Through the interpersonal ties among community members, the local media, and organized events, parents share information and personal experiences of educating their children. The common goal is to promote educational achievement and excellence as well as psychological wellbeing. Lin (2001) suggests that an elementary exchange, evoking a relationship between two or more actors and a transaction of resources, contains both social and economic elements. The CCLS not only provides a common ground for social exchange, but also for informational exchange about economics, in forms of job opportunities, business opportunities, and financial investment.

*Informational exchange about economics.* The CCLS as a central place for informational exchange about economics plays a vital role, especially in the newcomers’ lives. The new immigrants may not have direct access to information, such as how to buy a house, how to invest their money, how to find the best rate for a loan, and where to find a job. Because the CCLS connects people from all walks of life, it is a one-stop shop for the new immigrants to get the information or the referral or recommendation. Dr. Woo described the information exchanged among the community members:

> The parents come to the Chinese school regularly and they become acquainted. I think it certainly helps for job hunting. If some people are laid off, they will show it. Others will ask what is wrong, and if they know there is a job opening, such as an accountant, or a computer specialist, they will share the information, or even refer you for an interview. In American culture, recommendation is very important in applying for jobs. So the information shared among the community members helps find a job. I know some cases that people made friends in the Chinese school, and helped one find a job.
Ryan’s mom just graduated and got her degree in accounting. She agreed that the social relations in the Chinese school open more opportunities for her to find a job.

Now I just graduated, and I talk to people and ask whether they know any company needs an accountant. I think it is an opportunity. It may not find me a job, but at least, I get the word out. Maybe some friends need an accountant, and they want to hire someone they know and trust. We are all Chinese, and it will be convenient in many ways.

For local ethnic businesses, the Chinese school is an ideal place for advertisement. Once during a field visit I met a Chinese dentist who had recently relocated his office close to LaBella Heights. From his Chinese patients, he heard of the CCLS, and he wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to advertise for his new office. So he and his daughter were giving away flyers in the CCLS (Fieldnotes, May 31, 2008).

Mr. Lee, the head of LaBella Financial Group, agreed that coming to the Chinese school provides him an opportunity to meet potential clients. “Sometimes people will call me and say, ‘My friend told me about you, and recommended you. Can we meet at the CCLS?’ or ‘Are you coming to the CCLS? I have something that I need to consult you.’ No problem.” As a matter of fact, when I was interviewing Mr. Lee, a man came to him and asked for his cell phone number for a business matter. They exchanged phone numbers, and Mr. Lee promised to call after the interview.

Further, the CCLS organizes some seminars on financial issues, such as how to buy a house, how to file a tax return, and other financial issues. As Mr. Sun described, “We give an opportunity to Chinese businesses, such as the local real estate agent. They organize a workshop on how to buy a house. Doctors give us a lecture on preventive care. We all benefit from it.”
Recently, because of the financial crisis in American economy, the CCLS organized a seminar: Crisis and Chance: Financial Crisis and New Plans. The advertisement for this seminar was sent through the member listserv. It read:

The current financial crisis has affected most of us. We all want to know what we can do to reduce loss. CCLS invited Mr. [Lee] to present a seminar at Chinese School. We will offer a chance for mutual communication and find relative plans for reducing loss. Mr. [Lee] has more than 17 years experience in finance, insurance and investment. [LaBella Financial Group, LLC], the company he founded, has been servicing local Chinese Community for many years. We believe he will show us good information and try to convert the crisis into good plans. (October, 31, 2008)

In order to promote local ethnic businesses as well as to benefit the community members, the CCLS has reached an agreement with some stores, dentist offices, and restaurants that the community members with a special discount card provided by the CCLS can have 5%-10% off on agreed items or services. Further, on the CCLS web page, there are ads for real estate agencies, restaurants, a financial investment company, grocery stores, beauty shops, after school programs, and so on.

By participating in the CCLS, these Chinese immigrants establish social relations with co-ethnics, and these social ties become channels for information exchange. Parents share information and experience of children’s education, such as which schools or school districts to choose, teacher qualifications, tutoring programs, extracurricular activities, and other supplementary materials. After the shooting incident at Virginia Tech, the CCLS has emphasized the importance of children’s psychological wellbeing, and called for parents to release pressure on children. The panel discussion provided parents and teenage students information on signs of stress and strategies to deal with it. The CCLS started a candid conversation between parents and their children. In addition to
information on education, the CCLS provides the community members a place to exchange information on economics, such as labor market, employment opportunities, financial investment, and real estate investment. Local businesses also use the CCLS as a place to promote business and attract potential customers.

Conclusion

The impact of the CCLS has reached far beyond teaching Chinese language and culture. The CCLS plays multiple roles in the lives of Chinese immigrants. The most significant role is that it serves as a community center that meets the social and cultural needs of the contemporary Chinese immigrants. First, the CCLS has become an important physical site and social platform where formerly unrelated immigrants come to socialize and rebuild social relationships. Even though some contemporary Chinese immigrants may have assimilated into the middle or even upper middle class American society, they still yearn for a social place to reconnect with co-ethnics or their “own people.” Thus, the CCLS has become an important community of cultural practices to meet such demands of contemporary Chinese immigrants.

Secondly, the CCLS serves as a surrogate family for the immigrants and their children in the United States. Coming to America presents many challenges to the immigrants and their family, including losing support from extended family and close friends. The CCLS provides the newcomers with intangible support (i.e., emotional support) and tangible support (e.g., finding a house, a job, helping in family tragedy, etc.). The CCLS is considered as “home” by some community members, and provides the sense of belonging, comfort, and security.
Finally, co-ethnic ties are rebuilt through the participation in the CCLS, where immigrants get together and pool their individual resources to (re)produce social capital in the community. These social relations with co-ethnics often facilitate the exchange of valuable information, such as information on education and economics. The information enables individuals and their families to surmount structural barriers, and bridge the new immigrants to the mainstream society while maintaining their own cultural heritage and ethnic identity.

Through the multiple roles, the CCLS has (re)produced and accumulated social capital in the ethnic community, in forms of social relationships with co-ethnics, support from co-ethnics, and information shared among co-ethnics. In the next two chapters, I take a close look at how the social capital in the ethnic community influences the academic achievement of the CICA students; and how social capital is positioned in the CICA children’s identity formation and development.
CHAPTER VI
SCHOOL ADAPTATION AND SUCCESS:
AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION FROM SOCIAL CAPITAL WITHIN THE ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Hanging out with these Chinese people, you can really see how, like, much talent there is and what you’re up against. . . . In American schools, you usually feel that you’re better, but once you come to Chinese school, you really see how many people are better than you, and that pushes you forward a little bit.
A 12-year-old Chinese American female

With their scholastic success, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans gain more and more visibility and attention in the media and public discourse. One explanation in both popular and academic circles for understanding Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students’ educational achievements is their ethnic culture mediated by the family (Astone, Nathanson, Schoen & Kim, 1999; Hao, & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). This explanation carries great weight with the student participants in the current study who believe that the Chinese and, indeed, Asians in general have at least one thing in common—the ethnic culture they draw upon within their families to value education and to do well in school in order to go to a “good university.”

However, family alone cannot account for school success. In a study of 1,245 high school students from four ethnic backgrounds: African American, Hispanic American, Asian, and non-Hispanic White, Ritter and Dorbusch (1989) find that parental education and family structure are less predictive of individual differences in terms of
high school grades. Ritter and Dorbusch suggest that “something associated with being Asian is having an impact in school performance independent of the family process variables” (p. 70). They believe that community context is an important but often neglected variable in understanding the achievement differences among minority groups. Moreover, the CICA children are living in between two competing cultural worlds: one is their immigrant parents’ social and cultural world that is closely related to the land of origin; and the other is their American peers’ social world that is characterized by youth culture. Therefore, families are only part of cultural influence. For instance, children from families that hold high expectations for academic achievement and stress hard work may still perform poorly in school, if they are under the influence of oppositional youth culture (Portes & Stepick, 1993). One immigrant parent in the CCLS commented, “I could teach my children Chinese language and culture at home. But one person’s influence is limited.”

Furthermore, Chinese immigrant families do not function in isolation. Many families turn to the ethnic community for financial and/or emotional support. As the previous chapter argues, the CCLS serves as a surrogate family for Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans living in the Great Cleveland area. Recent research has shown that immigrant children from families associated with tightly knit social networks have higher levels of academic achievement, stronger educational aspirations, and fewer psychological problems than those in socially isolated families (Portes, 1995; Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). Thus, this chapter explores how the social capital within the CCLS, in the forms of social relations with co-ethnics, social norms,
and social control, influences the CICA students’ school adaptation and academic success. In other words, how does membership in the CCLS provide the CICA students with a competitive advantage in American schools? In addition to looking at how the CCLS shapes the CICA students’ attitude toward their families, ethnicity, and school achievement, this chapter argues that the social relationships with co-ethnics, embedded in the CCLS, bind individuals to the ethnic community and thereby provide members with both support and social control from other members. The findings further indicate that the CCLS, as the community center, connects individual families and helps to transform the expectations and aspirations for academic success of individual families into a social norm. Conforming to the social norm, therefore, has become an effective means of social control for the younger generation.

In explaining the school success and upward mobility of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, one must take into account the activities and attitudes that are conducive to education, and consider how those activities and attitudes fit the opportunity structure in the larger society. Cultural difference theories suggest that Chinese cultural values lead to actions that meet the demands of the mainstream society, and result in school success and social mobility. Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy (1989) argue that “cultural values are as important to successful adaptation as gravity is to physics” (p. 156). However, this study suggests that the cultural values per se are inadequate to account for the favorable outcomes unless the values are reinforced through a well-integrated ethnic community and thus become a vital form of social capital that the immigrants can draw on. In the case of the CCLS, it is the social relationships with co-
ethnics that serve as a mechanism for social control, which encourages activities and attitudes conducive to achievement. Therefore, I suggest that the reason for the CICA students’ school adaptation and success lies not only in the familial cultural values, but more importantly in the social relations embedded in the ethnic community that reinforce these values. For example, Ms. Cho described how the social relations with co-ethnic peers reinforced the value of education, and positively influenced her children.

The Chinese parents [in the CCLS] are well educated and have high education degree. Their children are excellent students . . . So I think the environment is good, and the influences are subconscious. It is not necessary for me to tell my children that they should do well. When they look around and see other Chinese kids are doing excellent, they are motivated to do well and move upward.

In this chapter, I further describe that the CICA students, who maintain close ties to the ethnic community through participation in the CCLS, are more likely to be supported and constrained by the systems of social relations that confer specific meanings of cultural concepts, codes of conduct, and academic standards.

Friendship with Co-Ethnic Peers

When she [Jenny] came to the Chinese school, she found out so many kids like her were learning Chinese. So when we tried to teach her Chinese at home, she was not against it. Moreover, she has made a lot of new friends in the Chinese school, or she becomes even closer to her friends through the Chinese school.

A Chinese immigrant parent

Given its centrality, the CCLS serves as a primary mechanism for integrating younger generations into the community’s system of ethnic relations. Through the CCLS, the CICA children make friends with their co-ethnic peers, and receive encouragement and approval for their general academic orientations. These are forms of social support
inherent in particular patterns of social relations within the ethnic community (Zhou, 1997).

Immigrant parents hope the friendship with co-ethnics will engage the children more in the ethnic community, and thus they are less likely to be over-assimilated or “Americanized.” For many immigrant parents, Americanization means disrespect of authority and elders, the devaluing of education, and the glorification of violence. Becoming Americanized is perceived as detrimental to the children’s achievement and their overall mental health (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1997). The CCLS, therefore, is a counter force for “Americanization.” Ms. Cho believed that the kids coming to the CCLS do not have bad habits, like drug use or dating at an early age, and the CCLS provides a positive learning environment.

The following conversation between Olivia and I provides another example of CCLS’ positive influence.

Tan (T): What do you like about this Chinese school?

Olivia (O): I like meeting other Chinese people.

T: Why do you think it is important for you to meet other Chinese people? What do you like about it?

O: I like about it, because it is people from my culture. . . . A lot of Chinese people immigrated here are really smart and bright. I like to meet them, so I know what they are alike.

T: Do you think meeting smart people makes you proud that you are one of them?

O: Yeah. Sometimes it does make me feel confident. My mom always wants me to be around with right people, so they can influence me.
The friendships with co-ethnic peers make the CICA children adhere to the values and norms prescribed by their families and serve as a chief mechanism of social support and social control. In this section, I explore how the friendship with co-ethnic peers involves the younger generation in the ethnic community, and how, in turn, it accounts for the school adaptation and desirable school outcomes of the CICA students.

**Friendship with Co-Ethnic Peers and School Adaptation**

For the 1.5 generation CICA children, friendships with co-ethnic peers help the newcomers navigate their way through the American school system, and facilitate positive school adaptation. In this sense, friendships established in the CCLS serve as a vehicle of assimilation, helping newcomers learn to react and behave toward other student groups, and adjust to a new life in America. Brynn was born in China and she came to the United States at age 10. When she first came, she did not have the knowledge or “know-how” in the American school. Brynn’s mom, who has a two-year associate degree from a Chinese institution and came to the U.S. through marriage, cannot help her. Brynn recounted how her co-ethnic friends taught her social skills and provided her support in terms of orientation to American school routines and rules.

When I was in China, there were no extra-curriculum activities. You go to school, go home and do your homework. When I came to the U.S., there were some activities that require social skills. I did not know how to socialize with others. In the schools in China, you are forced to memorize things and study. There is no social life. So when I came to the Chinese school [the CCLS], they [my co-ethnic peers] started teaching me social skills. They taught me everything. Before I knew them, I could not make any American friends, because I really did not know how to socialize. Now I have made many American friends. I go to the school prom, and I can talk to people [American students] and dance with them. They [the friends in the Chinese school] were born in the United States, and they taught me how to have fun. Kids in and from China don’t know how to have fun and enjoy life.
In addition to social skills, Brynn goes to her co-ethnic peers for help if she has any academic problems. Unlike her mom, the parents of her co-ethnic peers have degrees in higher education, and thus can help their children with schoolwork. “They [my co-ethnic peers] are very good at math and physics. So if I have any problems, I will go and ask them. They will help me out.” Owing to her co-ethnic peers, Brynn was nominated as a rising star by the LaBella High School Academic Board in 2007.

Jim has a similar migration experience to Brynn’s. He was also born in China, and came to America at age 9. He had difficulties with English and social life when he first came. It is the friends in the CCLS that help him with social skills.

My tutor helped me learn the language, but not as much as social life. And my parents didn’t really know like, social life, as much. So I had trouble with that [social skills] until like fifth or sixth grade. Then I, like, when I came here [the CCLS], yeah, I guess they [the co-ethnic peers] helped me to, like, open up more to other people and talk. They just taught me how to, like, start a conversation with people, because I didn’t really know how to do that at first. So when I met new people, I would be like, silent to them, and now I can like, think of ideas to talk to them about and converse.

In both cases, the tightly knit social relationships with co-ethnic peers become a crucial source of social capital for the 1.5 generation CICA youths. The relationships embedded in the CCLS provide help and direction to enable the younger generation to combat the disadvantages associated with their immigration status, limited English proficiency, and lack of knowledge on how to navigate and adapt to the American school system. Co-ethnic peers are a crucial source of information for immigrant children and a guiding agent that helps newcomers to integrate to or fit in the American schools.
Friendship with Co-Ethnic Peers and Social Support

Self-control and indirect communication are valued among the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American families, whereas expressive self-disclosure of emotions may be viewed as immature (Zhou, 1997). Therefore, the friendship with co-ethnics also provides a venue and support for the CICA children to express their emotions and feelings.

Joanne’s story illustrates this. When I first met Joanne in the CCLS, it was Halloween of 2006. She was the only one who dressed up for the occasion in her class. She looked like an ancient Chinese warrior in the movie, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Joanne was 14 years old, and she was born and raised in the United States. She started Chinese school when she was six, and has a lot of friends in the Chinese school.

In Joanne’s own words, compared to other Chinese friends, she is very Americanized. But unlike her American peers, she finds it difficult to express her affections or feelings to her immigrant parents. Instead, she talks to her co-ethnic peers in the CCLS and seeks for emotional support. She recounted her friendships in the Chinese school this way:

> When I talk about my ideas with Brynn, it’s really just to express myself. And I talk about what I actually do want to do, instead of what I have to do. ‘Cause I don’t really talk to my parents, like the American children do. I just kind of tell them what I have to do, and if they need to help me with something, like homework, or I have to go to the store to buy something or things like that. But to talk about my feelings, emotional pressures, I talk to my friends. They have the same views and values, because our parents are basically the same, when it comes to expectations and rules.

Because of the similar experience of growing up in a Chinese immigrant family in America, the CICA students have developed understanding and empathy toward each other. They complain about their problems to their co-ethnic peers and rely on each other for emotional support. Jenny described,
We’re all like, “oh, our parents want us to do this and that” . . . It is OK, because they [the parents] are giving us a choice, they want us to be successful, and earn money, and have a good place in the society.

As a vital form of social capital, the social relations with co-ethnic peers help the CICA children bridge the world of their immigrant parents and the one of their peers, and find a way to be “in between” both worlds.

Furthermore, the co-ethnic friendship networks act as a protective buffer and support mechanism in the face of social exclusion and racial discrimination. Strong bonding ties also encourage a natural affinity, familiarity, and sense of empathy between them and their co-ethnic peers. For example, Joanne’s family just moved to LaBella Heights, because of the reputation of LaBella school district. Now Joanne was a freshman at LaBella High School. Along with 13 other Chinese American students, Joanne was listed on the freshman honor roll. Despite her academic success, she described her work in American school as chores that she has to do, but not what she wants to do. Instead, being more involved in the Chinese school activities is her passion and, in her words,

It is really like a hobby. If you really like dancing, then you dance at every opportunity you can, and you try to learn more about dancing. So I like Chinese school, and I want to be involved as much as possible.

When I asked the reason why she was so passionate about the Chinese school, she explained,

Well, at my old school, there were not many Chinese people. So I felt really left out. They group you into these little groups, like the crooks, the nerds, and whatever. So I don’t feel very welcome there. But in the Chinese school, I felt like it didn’t matter. Those stuff never mattered, because it didn’t matter how smart you were, or how pretty you were, or whatever, it just mattered how much fun you were to be with.
The friendships with co-ethnic peers provide the CICA children an avenue to express their emotions and feelings, and to be who they are. Through the friendships, the CICA children are engaged in a system of social relations. For the CICA children who are living in between two cultural worlds, the friendships with co-ethnic peers may be more important in affecting their school adaptation than individual characteristics or individual family background.

*Competition among Co-Ethnics and Academic Success*

However, the co-ethnic friends can also be competitors, and the competition among the CICA students is likely to become a compelling force for academic excellence. When asked from where the motivation to excel came, Jenney answered, “Well, from everyone [in the CCLS] around me. There’s a lot of competition.”

Alicia admitted that even though she has been friends with other Chinese peers, they are all competitors at the same time, and the competition among them can get uncomfortable.

We’re all good friends, but sometimes it’ll get a little uncomfortable, because you don’t want to seem as you’re . . . you don’t want to seem as if you’re working that hard, because that will compel them to work hard. It’s all very competitive. I mean, like, sometimes you’ll feel really uncomfortable, because you want to be better than them, but you’re still friends at the same time.

Alicia gave another example of how her co-ethnic peers could be competitors. Gigi is a good friend of Alicia, and they go to the same middle school and the CCLS. They share the same goal of going to Harvard. But when it comes to academic excellence, they are competitors. For instance, there is only one full scholarship offered by the
Western Reserve Academy each year, and the two girls are competing to get the scholarship.

Nicole regarded the competition between her and her Chinese friends as “friendly competition.” She explained,

I guess it’s friendly competition, ‘cause they’re like, my friends. Like, ‘cause you have a goal, like, to reach, or something to beat, you know? But it’s not like . . . it’s [not] like, bad feelings. ‘Cause, like, ‘cause you’re still friends with them, but they- they, like, both of you know they’re gonna compete with each other.

The competitions among the co-ethnic peers become a motivation, and compel the CICA students to excel. Alicia believed that the friendship with co-ethnic peers was important, because, in her words, “one thing is it helps me, like, try to get better, and another thing is, like, you can, like, you can see where they are, and kind of set like, a line of where you need to be.” Therefore, the social relations with co-ethnic peers not only reinforce the value of education, but also set up a high standard for the CICA students. To reach the standard and to surpass their co-ethnic peers become a strong motivation for them to achieve academic excellence.

Friendship with co-ethnic peers is an identifiable set of social relations in the Chinese community. It helps newcomers adapt to and navigate their way through the American school system; it serves as a safe place where CICA students can express themselves, share problems and secrets; and the “friendly competition” motivates CICA students to do well and pushes them for academic excellence. The social relations with co-ethnic peers engage the CICA students in the community, which provides them access to tangible and intangible support.
Social Norms

Coleman (1988) argues that shared social norms accompanied by sanctions are a powerful form of social capital.

[Social capital] strengthens families by leading family members to act selflessly in the family’s interest, facilitates the development of nascent social movements through a small group of dedicated, inward-looking, and mutually rewarding members, and in general leads persons to work for the public good. (p. S104-105)

Among the parents and students whom I talked to in the CCLS, the norms constantly mentioned are “work hard to go to an Ivy League University or other elite university,” “Chinese kids are all straight A students,” “Chinese kids are all going to good universities,” and “doctor is the career that the children should pursue.” The CICA children also are reminded that their parents have sacrificed everything for their education, and thus are compelled to conform to the social norms. For instance, when asked about the values she learned from the CCLS, Jenny replied,

We all know that education is important and we’re all trying to get good grades. We want to have a good life . . . From our Chinese background, we also know that you have to work hard, ‘cause most of our parents came over from China, and they had to work hard in like, colleges and stuff.

Reinforced by the community, these social norms are internalized by the CICA students, and thus become a direction, guiding them to adapt to the mainstream society without over-assimilation or “Americanization.”

“Our Chinese kids all go to good universities.” According to the survey \( N = 52 \) asking the parents’ expectations on their children’s education, 30 parents or about 58% expected their children to obtain a doctoral degree, 13 or about 25% parents expected their children to get a master’s degree, and 7 parents expected at least a bachelor’s degree
from their children. Only 2 parents said it would depend on the children. The sample of
the survey is small; however, it gives a snapshot of what the Chinese parents’
expectations are. The findings from my interviews with the parents parallel the survey
results. Chinese parents whom I interviewed in the CCLS seem to have a shared goal for
their children that they will do anything for their children to go to a “good university” and
have a good life. The elite universities come with a high price tag, but Mr. Lee said,
“Supposed she [Jenny] could go to either Harvard or Case Western. We will not stop her
from going to Harvard because of financial reasons.”

The consensus among the immigrant parents is that a “good university” must be
an Ivy League or an elite university. As Ryan observed the difference, “My [American]
friends never talked about Ivy League. They think it is great if they can go to Ohio State.
[But] the Chinese parents are always talking about so and so goes to Harvard or Yale.”
Along the same line, Brynn commented, “Chinese parents tell their kids that they must go
to Harvard or Yale. It is losing face or a shame, if you go to other universities.”

Mr. Zhou has volunteered as the Chinese school board member for years. We are
acquainted as we came from the same city in China, and thus we are “Tong Xiang”
(people from the same locality). Mr. Zhou has two children, and the older daughter is a
junior in Henry High School. When I asked what universities he and his daughter were
thinking of, he smiled and said, “The good ones, of course.”

Tan: What [university] are on your good university list?

Zhou: We [Chinese parents] have high expectations on our children. We want
them to go to a good university, such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown
University, Cornell University, U Penn, and Columbia University.
Similarly, Mr. Lee defined what a “good university” was for his daughter.

Tan: So what are good universities? Like, Harvard and Yale?

Lee: Yeah, the Ivy League universities. Or some good public universities, like Berkley [University of California at Berkley], are not bad. Case [Case Western Reserve University] is not bad, either. If she can only go to Case, that is not a problem. I sometimes tell her if she goes to OSU [Ohio State University], I will have no problem with it, if that is her best option.

For the parents, Ivy League universities are their first choice for their children, and the state universities are a backup or their last resort. Influenced by this norm, Nicole put Ohio State University in the same category as community colleges, and considered it as a “bad school.”

Nicole (N): Like, me and my friend, we like, joke around, saying we’re both going to go to Stanford together.

Tan (T): That’s your goal, then?

N: I don’t really care what college I go to, as long as it’s not bad.

T: So what school is not bad, what is a ‘bad school’? What do you consider as a “bad” school?

N: Like, community colleges [laughter] and, like, Ohio State.

T: Is Ohio State a bad school?

N: Well, I’d rather not go to Ohio State, and, like, my parents want me to go to a good school.

T: So what are your parents’ expectations on you?

N: Just get into whatever school you can, as long, like, as you can tell that, like, they say like, as long as they can tell, like, that I’ve worked hard to get there, then it’s okay. But like, Harvard would be nice [laughter].

T: So they did say that if you can go to Harvard, that would be great?
N: Yeah, or any other college like that, like Stanford, Yale . . . Ivy League schools.

Even though many parents admit that going to an elite university will not guarantee success, they believe that a degree from an Ivy League university is a sign of “making it,” and thus they constantly urge their children to conform to the norm. As Brynn observed, “The parents in the Chinese school have either a doctoral or a master’s degree. So they have only one goal for their kids. That is Harvard or Yale.” The parents start instilling this social norm by enrolling the children into the CCLS, an environment in which the social norm is reinforced. Jenny described how the CICA children have been told about the elite universities since they were very young.

There are so many successful people here in LaBella Heights. Like, they’re all going to . . . and you hear all these names . . . Harvard, Yale, and Duke and all those . . . and, like, all the parents, all the Chinese parents, are always talking about all the good schools. And I think all of us have heard all of those names since we were young. It was like, if you want to do well, you should go to a really good college like those.

Growing up in a Chinese family and a tightly knit community, where the CICA students have been told about the elite universities since they were little, the CICA children have internalized the social norm, and the Ivy League has become their personal goal for higher education. Because of her academic excellence, Alicia is considered as a “nerd” by her American peers. She defended herself, “I don’t think I’m as much as a nerd. I just work harder because I care about my grades, and I’m competitive.” She continued talking about her long term goal.

Alicia (A): And I have a long term goal set up, which I want to go to a really good college, so I work for that myself, and I just really care about my grades and everything, so I work . . . try really hard.
Tan (T): And you said you have set up a long term goal for yourself, so what is your goal—long term goal?

A: I wanna go to Harvard.

T: Oh, you want to go to Harvard? Where did you first hear about Harvard?

A: My mom told me about it, when I was around . . . sometime around six [years old]. And she told me about it, and, I don’t know . . . I think she told me that she wanted me to go there, and from then on, I kind of, like, saw Harvard as my goal.

Bill is another example. Bill was 12 years old when I interviewed him, and he is the youngest son of the Chinese school principal. Bill started the Chinese school when he was five. He didn’t know any colleges and universities except Harvard, Yale, and MIT. When I asked him where he first heard about these universities, he replied, “Harvard and Yale, I know because a lot of people [in the Chinese school] talk about them. They are really famous. MIT, when I was small, I got a sweater. It says MIT, and my parents told me about it.” Now MIT is Bill’s goal for college. When asked whether his parents compared him with other Chinese kids, he said, “Like they talk about it when they are mad. If we have a bad test grade, like a C, it will be like, ‘How are you supposed to get into Harvard?’”

In the community, going to an elite university is the social norm, and conforming to the norm will bring great honor to the family as well as the whole community. The “model” parents, whose children are accepted by the elite university, are invited to give a lecture on their experience of educating children. In the local media, there are extended reports on the student’s success and his/her family. For instance, in the local Chinese
media, there was a report on Luci Yang, the 2007 President Award\textsuperscript{22} winner. Luci was a senior at LaBella High School, and she had excellent school records (Her SAT score was 2390 out of total 2400; and PSAT score was 238 out of 240). Luci was accepted by MIT, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the Business School of University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Duke University, Chicago University, and Stanford. She went to visit Harvard, Yale, MIT, and U Penn with her parents, and decided to go to the Business School of Harvard. Luci’s story is widely spread among the parents and the CICA students, and parents express their wish that their own children will “make it” some day. I asked Brynn, a freshman at LaBella High School, whether she had heard about Luci’s story, and how she felt about it.

Tan (T): I saw a picture of the girl, who won the presidential scholarship last year. Do you know her?

Brynn (B): Luci? Yeah. She is super smart, and she won all kinds of Olympia, and competitions. She got a lot of offers from elite schools, and she finally decided to go to Harvard.

T: How do you feel about that someone who you know got the presidential scholarship and went to Harvard?

B: She is super smart. Now my mom bugs me to get the presidential scholarship. It is impossible for me. As long as I get accepted by a fair university that my mom doesn’t feel too shameful, I will be happy.

When I asked Ryan’s mom whether it was true that the Chinese parents were always talking about the Ivy League universities, she replied,

We always talk about the Ivy League. And if we know someone’s kids are going to Harvard, we will tell Ryan. So he knows that those schools are great. He sometimes says that he wants to go to Stanford or MIT. He likes MIT. I told him, “If you like those schools, you should study hard.”

\textsuperscript{22} In 2007, there were 121 senior students across America who won the President Award.
The norm of going to an elite university derives not only from the parents’ belief that good education is the key to success, but also from the perception of “blocked mobility” (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Alicia has been told about the “glass ceiling” by her parents, and described her understanding of the term this way:

My mom was talking to me about glass ceiling. And it’s like a ceiling that you can’t see on, like, the Asians. Like most Asians, they hold, like . . . when they grow up, they hold a good job. But very few of them are in the top places, because the glass ceiling is also like, a social thing. Like, they don’t see what they’re doing wrong, but, it’s like, they’re always different. When people look at you, you’re Chinese. My mom was telling me, like, “If you’re applying for a job, and you’re equally as good as an American, of course, the boss is gonna choose the American because you’re different, you’re just not . . . them.”

Alicia’s account suggests that the Chinese immigrant parents have either personally experienced or perceived “blocked mobility” by discriminatory practices in the mainstream society, particularly in areas where education does not have a direct effect, such as leadership, politics, entertainment, and sports. Alicia’s statement on glass ceilings echoed the findings from previous studies that Asian Americans’ investment in education and professional training does not translate into incomes commensurate with similarly educated Whites (Chang, 1997; Hirschman & Wong, 1981; Tuan, 2001). As Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center, remarks,

On the one hand, you have a higher number of professionals and college education [Asian American] employees than in the work force in general. However, you also have a situation where Asian Americans have to have more education and training and years of experience in order to make salaries comparable to their white counterparts. (As cited in Lavilla, 1998, p. 16)

Although Asian Americans have achieved entry-level employment in a range of white-collar fields, glass ceilings blocked advancement into higher-ranking positions.
This phenomenon is described as a “worker bee syndrome,” meaning Asian Americans are good enough to be grunt workers but not good enough to be queens (Lavilla, 1998). Therefore, many Chinese immigrant parents consider good education as a necessary credentialing mechanism to safeguard against racial discrimination, and going to an elite university will give their children an advantage in what is feared as an uneven playground.

Social Control

As discussed in the previous chapter, the members of the Chinese community have an access to both tangible and intangible supports provided by the CCLS. However, they are also subject to social control in the community. Social control in the Chinese community takes two forms: social comparisons and affirmation. Social comparisons are mainly imposed through the informal channels of the “Chinese microscope” (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). People coming to the Chinese school are like living in a big family, and they know each other well. In such a tightly knit community, comparisons and judgments are pervasive.

Parents constantly compare their children with others’ children and with the social norm. Nicole recounted, “And, like, there have been Chinese kids, who’ve like, been to Harvard from this area that my parents know, so they [my parents] like, tell me to like, be like them. Parents, like, compare, like what colleges their kids go to.” Similarly, Jenny stated, “Like, sometimes our parents are just like, ‘Oh, look how well they did on the SATs, you should do that well, too.”

Olivia has also been told by her mom, “Why can’t you be more like this person?”
Or “How well she does it. And if you work harder, you could do this well.” Olivia sometimes gets annoyed by her mom’s comparison. But she believed that her mom was right. “She is trying to tell me, ‘why don’t you be like this person?’ because they are the models. And she wants me to set up a good example, especially for my little brother.”

In such a context, where the immigrant parents consciously push the children to do well in school, and where social contacts within the ethnic group promote academic achievement as a means to upward social mobility, the CICA children conform to the social norms and the social control. Olivia continued,

A lot of Chinese people immigrated here are really smart and bright . . . If somebody did something that was really good, I could try to do something like it or live up to that standard . . . So in a way, it is pushing me to be better.

Jenny believed that people coming to the Chinese school were mostly “super successful and super smart.” In such an environment, if one is not successful in school, he or she will feel out of place. So for her, being around other Chinese students, who share the same goal (e.g., going to an elite university), motivates her to do well. Alicia also describes the positive influence of coming to the Chinese school:

Because you see, around you, like, all the good kids, and, in American schools, you don’t feel like—you feel more relaxed because you see you’re better than most of the people, so you don’t work as hard. But once you’re among the other Chinese kids, you really see how much—like, how many good kids there are, so that pushes you to work harder.

If social comparisons and competitions are effective mechanisms to enforce the social norms, affirmation of advanced skills in Chinese is equally important. As Bankston and Zhou (1995) argue that advanced skills in the parent native language may act as a conduit for social capital, solidifying children’s ties to the ethnic community and
maintaining their exposure to the norms it embraces and the measures it uses to enforce those norms. In the CCLS, there are Chinese speech contests and Chinese composition contests every year. The competition and the award ceremony, attended by most of the Chinese community members, serve as a strong formal affirmation of accomplishment. These community-based activities also involve the younger generation in the ethnic community.

Social Comparison as “A Double-Edged Sword”

I think it [social comparison among parents] is a double-edge sword. I mean, it could be a good thing, but it could be a bad thing. Some parents compare their own kids with other kids, which, if not handled properly, would put great pressure on the kids. . . . Some kids actually don’t listen to their parents at all. The more the kids are “rebellion,” the more the parents want to talk to other parents and see how they educate their kids. But each kid is different, so are the parents. Why do you want to compare them? And why do you want them to be the same?

--The principal of the Contemporary Chinese Language School

As discussed above social comparison among Chinese parents serves as an effective mechanism of social control, which encourages attitude and behaviors conducive to academic success, and disavows “over-Americanization,” such as dating at an early age. The social norm of going to an Ivy League or an elite university compels the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children to academic excellence. However, the intense community life and strong enforcement of such social norms can backfire. For example, Mr. Sun acknowledged that some of the CICA children, including his own sons, strongly oppose the norm of going to Yale and Harvard. He recounted,

We, Chinese, emphasize education, and sometimes, they [the CICA children] strongly oppose it. Many parents talk about their kids going to Yale and Harvard.
My sons oppose it. But I agree with my sons. We cannot teach our kids that education is only about going to a good school [university or college]. More importantly, education is about your principles and value system . . . Harvard only enrolls 1250 students every year. Can we all send our kids to Harvard? That is not realistic.

When asked why he opposed the idea of going to Harvard and Yale, Frank, a ninth grader at Henry High School, replied,

Their parents [the Chinese parents] do try to encourage them [the CICA children], and push them to go to good schools, like Harvard and all that, but that is like . . . I know you should try to get to a college like that, but when your parents only say Harvard, or Yale, or Princeton . . . like, you don’t really know what kind of options you have, and you don’t know what you are able to reach.

Frank used an acquaintance as an example that the CICA children blindly follow the path that their parents set up for them. Moreover, Frank criticized that the social norm of going to Harvard or Yale deprived the CICA children of their autonomy in deciding what they want to do and what they want to become.

All she [Frank’s acquaintance] knows is Harvard. Like she wants to become a doctor, because, of course, her parents told her that a doctor is gonna earn more money in the future. She doesn’t really know what she likes. All she knows is her parents want her to be a doctor, and doctors earn more money, and therefore she wants to be a doctor. And she wants to go to Harvard to earn a [medical] doctoral degree. But Harvard doesn’t even specialize what she wants to learn. Her parents told her that Harvard is the best, Yale is the best, and Princeton is the best. Everyone has said it. They don’t really tell her what is best for her. They don’t say what kind of options you have. . . . When the kids are younger, the parents told them, “You should become this, or you should become that.” But for most of American students, it is what you really like to do, what you love doing, then you go for it. So there are just different expectations. Like, American parents want you to do what you like. Most of Chinese, Asian parents, they want you to be what they expect you to be.

Other study participants also mentioned that sometimes they are annoyed by their parents comparing them with other Chinese kids, and feel the pressure to meet the high expectations of “others.” For example, Olivia likes to be friends with “smart” and
“intelligent” Chinese people, because it makes her proud and confident about herself. But when asked about whether she felt any pressure to be around these “smart” and “intelligent” people, she replied,

There is a lot of pressure...In my school, there are three honor classes, and I am in all of them. There is a lot of pressure, because you are put into a group of people that all of them expect you to be the smartest one and to get them an A for the project. People found out that you made a mistake, or they found out something they would never imagined that happened to you or something, they would be like, “Oh, my gosh, look at the person she did something wrong, and I didn’t do that.”... I think it is also another thing about being in the top, top, top classes. ‘Cause if you get a bad grade, you don’t like it. It is really uncomfortable, and you don’t want other people to know about it, ‘cause they might go, “Oh, my god, she got a worse grade than I did. I can do better than her.”

For some of the CICA students, if they cannot meet the expectations to be the smartest or to be perfect, they will feel “uncomfortable,” or even consider it as a “problem.” When I asked Nicole whether she experienced any problems or difficulties at her regular American school, she replied,

Not really, except that, like, because you’re Chinese, like, and they [Chinese students] all generally get good grades, they [parents, teachers and peers] expect you to do that, too. ...it’s like, a little bit more pressure, because if, like, if you don’t do as well as somebody else, then they’ll go, ‘Oh, I did better than blah-blah-blah.’ You know?

Social comparison gives the CICA students great pressure; however, the way they deal with the pressure is to compare themselves with their Asian/Chinese American peers. Olivia compared herself with an Indian friend at school, “One girl, she is under a lot of pressure, since she is in 8th grade math class. And there is a lot pressure on her to be perfect. I am glad that I am not her.”

Comparing her parents with other Chinese parents, Nicole thought her parents were not as bad, and they were “more laid back.” She explained,
I mean, I don’t think that my parents are as bad as some other, like, Chinese kids’ parents. Like, they’re really… they’re like, really… they [other Chinese parents] have really high expectations. I know other kids who have parents that are kind of, like are like, strict and really, like they’re really tight with them, and have really high expectations… that their kids, like, are like… always have to study and stuff.

For the 1.5 generation students, they tend to find comfort when they compare themselves with their peers living in China. Jim came to the U.S. at age 10, and he knew how the competition in China was like.

Tan: Do you feel pressured to live under this kind of surroundings that everyone wants to succeed, and everyone is trying to be the best… do you feel this kind of competition and pressure?

Jim: Yeah, like, but it’s not as much as like, in China, because in China, everybody tries to do it, and it’s really hard, and in America, like, not all people want to be, you know, successful academically. So it’s not as much as the pressure in China, but I think there’s still pressure.

No matter how the CICA students perceive and deal with the pressure, they transform the pressure into a motivation for success. When asked about how he dealt with the pressure, Jim continued,

Well, I kind of feel like, yeah, I feel pressure to like… ‘cause my mom sees articles in the newspaper and like, you know, somebody got into Harvard or Yale full scholarship, and she would tell me these things…and it would just like… it kind of gives me a motivation to work harder, to like, show her that I can achieve too.

The pressure from the social comparison motivates the CICA students to comply with the social norms that are preached and reinforced by the ethnic community. In fact, they believe (or maybe they are made to believe) that their parents want the best for them, and want them to have a “good life;” and going to Harvard or Yale is the way to a “good life.”
To a certain degree, social capital within the ethnic community can serve: (a) as a source of social control; (b) as a source of family support; and (c) as a source of benefits through extra-familial networks (Portes, 1998). However, social capital has its “dark side” (Field, 2003), and too much social control can result in restricting individuals’ freedom and autonomy (Putnam, 2000). Future research should examine the negative consequences of communal social capital, and explore the possibility that some CICA students use “bad grades” or dropping out of school as a resistance to the social control imposed on them by their parents and by the ethnic community. Moreover, the lack of access to the social capital in the ethnic community may explain the revolt of latter generations.

Conclusion

To sum up, the educational aspirations of the CICA students come not only from their family, but also from the ethnic community. Familial social capital alone cannot account for the school success of the CICA students. It is the CCLS that connects individual families and reinforces the efforts and values of parents. As the center of the community, the CCLS creates a distinctive set of social relations with co-ethnics, which shape attitudes and behaviors that are conducive to academic success and upward mobility. Furthermore, the CCLS holds the CICA students to a system of social norms and values directing them toward desired patterns of behavior.

This examination of how the CCLS plays a role in promoting academic achievement provides an alternative explanation of why Chinese immigrant and Chinese American students seem to be successful in American schools and why this phenomenon
appears to be related to being a member of the ethnic community. The social relations with co-ethnic peers, the social norms, and social control are the major source of social capital within the ethnic community that contributes to the CICA students’ adaptive scholastic outcomes. However, we also need to be aware of the “dark side” of social capital, and be cautious about using social comparison as a mechanism of social control. In the next chapter, I explore what role social capital plays in the process of identity formation of CICA students.
CHAPTER VII

“WHO AM I?”

SEEKING THE ANSWER FROM THE ETHNIC COMMUNITY

I think everybody is gonna think about “Who am I?” They are gonna think about this question at some point of their lives. What does it mean to be a Chinese?

--A Chinese immigrant parent

The story of how an immigrant group comes to terms with its new social surroundings and is assimilated into the mainstream of the host society is the cloth from which numerous sociological and economic theories have been fashioned. The notion of assimilation has become the master concept in both social theories and public discourse to depict the expected path to be followed by new immigrants in America. As discussed in chapter II, the conventional assimilation theories suggest that assimilation is a linear process, in which the “foreignness” of newcomers will gradually disappear with increasing contact with mainstream culture, implied in the image of the “melting pot” (Porter & Washington, 1993). However, unlike White European immigrants, whose ethnic identity is a matter of personal choice, racial minorities do not have the privilege to choose who they are or who they want to be. An ethnic identity is imposed on them by virtue of their physical appearance, and ultimately they are seen as “foreigners” or “outsiders” (Kibria, 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Tuan, 2001).
Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) describe immigrants as living in the margins of two cultures. “Paradoxically, they can never truly belong either ‘here’ or ‘there’” (p. 92). Situated within two cultural worlds, immigrant children and children of immigrants develop a sense of self in relation to both reference groups (i.e., the mainstream American culture and the traditional home culture) and to the social label placed on them by their peers, the ethnic community, and the larger society. Based on their social similarity or dissimilarity with the reference groups, immigrant children and children of immigrants see and compare themselves with those around them. Their social identities, forged in terms of those contrasts with others, represent the way they self-consciously define the account of who “we” are versus who “they” are. Ethnic identification begins with the application of a label to oneself in a process of self-categorization, involving not only a claim to membership in a group but also a contrast of one’s group with other groups (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco).

This chapter, therefore, begins with how the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American (CICA) students understand their ethnicity. Field (2003) suggests social capital is of value, not only in the acquisition of credentials but also in the evolution of a secure self-identity. Thus the chapter further explores the following questions: In what ways do social relationships with co-ethnic peers in the CCLS influence students’ negotiation of ethnic identity? How does the social capital within the ethnic community empower the CICA students? And how do the CICA children position the CCLS in their negotiation of the ethnic boundaries, defining who they are, and the construction of a collective ethnic identity?
The CICA Children’s Understanding of Ethnic Identity

In this study, I use the definition of ethnic identity by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001). Ethnic identity refers “to a feeling shared by individuals in a given group and based on a sense of common origin, common beliefs and values, common goals, and shared destiny” (p. 118). Ethnicity along with race, gender, and class decide how individuals make sense of their identities (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Identity is fluid and flexible, changing over time and from context to context. The findings of this study suggest that although there are individual variations in self-identification, understanding, and perceptions among these teens, their ethnic identities can be classified into two general types: a Chinese identity, and a hybrid identity or a hyphenated American identity. Yet there are some Chinese immigrants and their children who are experiencing an “identity crisis,” and are still seeking the answer to the question: “Who am I?”

*Self-Identified as Chinese*

The 1.5 generation tends to stress their nationality, in this case, Chinese, and their birthplace, China, as defining their identity. For these teens, they feel proud of being Chinese. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Brynn was born in China and came to the United States at age 10. When asked about her ethnicity, she recounted,

> After all, we are Chinese. Take the Americans as an example. Their grandparents immigrated to the United States. But except knowing they are Americans, they know nothing about their originality. Now I have a green card. But even when I get the citizenship, I will still say I am a Chinese, not an American.

Brynn continued to describe how the society perceived Chinese as “forever foreigners.”

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23 A “green card” gives immigrants official immigration status (i.e., Lawful Permanent Residency) in the United States (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services).
It doesn’t matter how long you have been here in the United States, we, Chinese, are still considered as a minority. When they [Americans] see European descent Americans, they will say that they are authentic Americans. Even if we have our citizenships, when they see us, they will still say that we are Asians or Chinese.

The frustration or even anger expressed by Brynn is hard to miss in this passage. She believes a double standard is operating in defining who Americans are. Americans of European descent can choose whether or not to identify their ethnicity, and which part of their ethnicity they want to identify; whereas Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans do not have the option or freedom. “Chineseness” and therefore an assumption of “foreignness” stubbornly clings to them despite generational or immigration status.

Questions such as “Where are you really from?” and “When are you going back to your country?” may cause hidden injuries of race (Osajima, 1993) that affect the CICA students’ self-esteem, and their identity formation. Dr Woo, the CCLS principal, observed,

Because you look different, some American kids ask you questions, such as “When are you going back to your own country?” or “Where are you from?” The [American-born Chinese (ABC)] kids would say, “I am an American. Why do you ask me such questions?” . . . For a while, the [ABC] kids have doubts about their identity, because other kids don’t think [ABC] as Americans. Even though the teachers teach them that America is a cultural melting pot, where everyone can come and live together, you don’t feel comfortable being around by majority of either Whites or Blacks.

Because of the perpetuation of “forever foreignness” by media and popular discourse, even the immigrant parents believe they as well as their children are “outsiders” of the mainstream American culture, and they are “foreigners” residing in a “foreign” country. A mom explained,
No matter what, you are Chinese, and you cannot assimilate into the American culture completely. I don’t know enough American culture to teach my kids. They only get to know the surface of American culture at school. They are ABC [American-born Chinese], and they can’t be Americans any way. If they don’t understand American culture, it is understandable. But if they don’t know any Chinese culture, who are they? They must keep their Chinese heritage, and learn the language.

The strong sense of belonging and obligation of keeping the Chinese cultural heritage and identity is what the immigrant parents wish their children to have, and that is why parents send their children to the CCLS on weekends. In the CCLS, the belief that “Chineseness” is not a barrier to overcome is reinforced. Furthermore, it has become a motivation for the CICA children to accept who they are and to prove to the peers that even though Chinese is a minority in this country, it is a “model minority.” As Brynn recounted,

Since they [the mainstream Americans] see us as Chinese, why don’t we accept who we are, and know about our history and culture? Since we are a minority in this country, we should prove ourselves to others.

There are also involuntary reasons for the study participants to identify themselves in ethnic terms. They believe that they do not have the option of doing away with ethnic and racial labels since their physical differences remain salient markers, influencing how they are defined, responded to, and treated by “others.” Peter was one of the participants, who thought it was “silly” to try to detach from one’s ethnicity, and divert attention away from one’s “Chineseness.” Peter was born in China and came to the U.S. at 6 years old. According to him, he is a popular student in both the American school and the Chinese school. He is smart and gets good grades at school. But he is not seen as “nerdy,” because he plays football and has many Caucasian friends in school. In
many ways, he appears “Americanized.” Surprisingly, when I asked about his ethnicity, he identified himself as a Chinese.

Tan (T): If I ask you to identify yourself as a Chinese, a Chinese American, or an American, how would you identify yourself?

Peter (P): A Chinese.

T: A Chinese? Won’t you say you are a Chinese American?

P: No, because I am a Chinese. I think it is silly to say I am a Chinese American. A Chinese is a Chinese.

T: But you are a Chinese living in America, and you have been here for a long time. You speak English, and are immersed in an American culture. So it seems to me that you are more an American...

P: No. I came from China. I was born and raised in China. So I am still a Chinese.

Joanne is a second generation Chinese American, but like Peter, she believes that the unhyphenated label, American, is reserved for describing people with European descent, and will not be accepted by others if used to describe people like herself. She said, “’Cause essentially I am a Chinese. If I call myself an American, it just doesn’t feel right.”

However, ethnicity is a socially constructed concept, and its meaning is constantly negotiated, revised, and changed. Ethnic identification is accordingly a fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic process. Joanne illustrates this point. When I first met Joanne in the fall of 2006, I asked about her ethnicity. She identified herself as a Chinese American. A year later, when I did the interview with her and asked the same question, she redefined herself as a Chinese. Joanne explained this change in her understanding of ethnicity,
Well, I first thought that was just where you were born. Like, if you say “American Chinese,” you mean you were born in America. Or Chinese American, you were born in China but came to America. But now I feel like it is more how you feel who you are. If you feel more like an American, then you call yourself an American. If you are proud to be an American, then you call yourself an American. But I feel more proud to call myself Chinese, because I came from a more interesting culture.

For Joanne, as well as other second generation Chinese Americans, there is a dual frame of references: the American culture and the Chinese culture. They learn the American culture from school, the street, and from the media; whereas their immigrant parents and more importantly, the CCLS, indoctrinate them into the Chinese culture. Joanne referred to being an American as being “slow, lazy and mean;” whereas being a Chinese means to “have good manners and have quicker ways to do things.”

Like sometimes they [the Americans] are slow, they will say things, sometimes they are too lazy. And when they joke around, it’s mean, sometimes. When the Chinese people joke around, it is like we are friends, just being friendly. Chinese people have more manners. There are these little habits that Chinese have that are very different from Americans, like their ways of talking to adults, their ways of handling things, their ways of working with environment and their surroundings, and how they adjust. I think when you are a Chinese, you find quicker ways to do things.

The participants who self-identified as Chinese not only accept who they are, but feel proud of their ethnicity. Joanne continued,

Being a Chinese in America makes me feel like I know more about the world, and I understand more background of things. I can have two different points of views, because there is an American way of looking at things, and there is a Chinese way. So I do feel special.

Along the same line, the second generation participants in this study believe that they are living in both cultures. It is the parents’ wish to expose the CICA children to a range of cultural events and to give them the choice to seek further knowledge. Unlike
what Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) suggest that immigrants belong to neither culture, the CICA students fuse aspects of both cultures in a process of developing a hybrid identity.

_A Hybrid Identity_

_European-born Chinese (A-B-C)._ A majority of the student participants (10 out of 15) self-identify as a hyphenated ethnicity, for example, Chinese-American, Chinese-Hungarian, or Euro-Asian. It seems they all construct a hybrid identity, but their understanding of it varies. The first group of children identify themselves as Chinese-Americans simply because their parents are Chinese. For those children, they do not share the sense of peoplehood as do their parents. They refer to Chinese people as “they” not “we,” and they see China as their parents’ home country. America, instead, is the children’s motherland. They are referred to as American-born Chinese (A-B-C), or to be more accurate, they are Americans born to Chinese parents.

Nicole is an example. She refers to herself as an A-B-C or American-born Chinese. Chinese is the heritage that her parents passed on to her.

> My parents are Chinese, so, like, they speak Chinese around me, and, you know, you eat Chinese food because that is what my mom makes. So I am part of the [Chinese] culture, sort of, through my parents and food.

But she was born and living in an American culture. So when I asked her, “So [will] you say you are a Chinese?” she agreed, but added, “But I’m an American at the same time.”

_Alicia identifies herself as a Chinese-American, because Chinese is her originality, but America is her “home country.”_

_Tan (T):_ If I ask you to identify yourself as an American, as a Chinese, or as a Chinese-American, so how would you identify yourself?

T: A Chinese-American. So why do you identify yourself this way?

A: Because, like, I really like America and living in America, but I feel that I’m different from all Americans, because I- I’m trying, like, harder, so . . . on the other half, I’m Chinese, and, plus, my originality is Chinese, and . . . but I really enjoy living in America, and I feel it’s, like, my home country.

Alicia refers to China as her parents’ home country. “When they [her parents] talk about China, they usually talk in a positive tone, because, I guess, that’s also where they grew up, so . . . they feel that that’s their home country.” But at the meantime, Alicia cannot deny the fact that no matter how much she wants to blend in, she is just not one of “them.” When I asked Alicia how she felt about being different and not being one of “them,” she replied, “Well, I feel kind of . . . I mean, like, I kind of wish I were an American, because I wouldn’t have to be as, like, that much better.”

For this group of youth, being an American is a part of their identity, though they are aware of their differences from the mainstream White Americans. These youths want to “blend in,” and claim their American identity. But they know that identifying solely as an American is not an option for them, because of their “Asian looks.” In other words, the physical characteristics do not conform to commonly accepted notions of what an “authentic” American looks like. Therefore, those physical differences are seen as barriers to assimilation and equality in American society.

Jay also acknowledges his physical difference, and regards the stereotype based on those physical differences as a “bad thing.”

Tan (T): Okay, but they [the American peers] notice you’re different from them, right?
Jay (J): Yeah, probably. That’s usually a bad thing.

T: Why is it a bad thing?

J: They make fun of me, ’cause I’m too smart, and I know everything and all that crap.

These statements vividly convey the dilemma the participants have been facing. As a racialized ethnic group, they have learned by watching how others respond to them that the mainstream society views them as outsiders or “forever foreigners.” Despite being native-born Americans, they are not perceived as such since they do not fit the image of what a “real” American looks like (Espiritu, 1992; Jiobu, 1988; Tuan, 2001).

Bicultural identity. Unlike the first group of children who regard the Chinese cultural heritage as baggage they have to carry because of their parents, the second group believe their bicultural and bilingual competencies give them an advantage in school and in the future job market. They believe coming to the CCLS helps them achieve bicultural and bilingual competencies, which have become an integral part of their sense of self.

Julian is an example. His father is an American, and his mother is a Chinese immigrant. When I asked him to identify himself, he responded,

I would have to say Chinese-American, because I’m immersed in both cultures. And I think that, because we’re kind of in-between, and we have parts of both American and Chinese cultures, it can let us have more freedom in it, and it allows us to also immerse in other cultures. Personally, I feel better that I’m half Chinese and half American, because . . . being able to be immersed in two different cultures is just such a good thing for someone.

Along the same line, Frank also fuses both cultures in the process of developing his ethnic identity.
I will call myself Chinese American, ’cause I go to an American school, live in an American environment, and grow up with American music and American TV . . . American . . . basically, a lot of things. Therefore, I have the American culture. But when I come to the Chinese school, or at home, I am immersed in a Chinese environment. Therefore, I learn about Chinese New Year, I learn about Chinese major events and things like that. So basically, I learn both of them, and be able to put them together. So I have knowledge about Chinese and American. So I would say I am a Chinese American.

Olivia has a multicultural background and she is tri-lingual. She is a 13-year-old eighth grader. Her mom is a Chinese immigrant and her dad is a Hungarian American. Olivia speaks English, Chinese, and Hungarian. When asked about her ethnicity, she believes the three cultures are all important to her and all are part of who she is.

Tan: You mentioned a couple of times “my culture.” So if I ask you to identify yourself as a Chinese, a Chinese American, or an American . . . Your case is a little different, because your dad is Hungarian. How would you identify yourself?

Olivia: I will say I am Chinese-Hungarian. I am an American, because I was born here. But I will consider, like, like, [having all three cultures] . . . I am very glad I do have those [cultures], and I can learn from different people.

Unlike the first group who consider their physical and cultural difference as a “bad thing” and wish they were not different from White Americans, the second group believe learning the Chinese language and culture not only provides them a different perspective of looking at things, but also an awareness of cultural diversity. Julian explained,

It’s good to learn any new language, because learning a new language, along with your native language, really increases the way you think about things, and it broadens your view on life and culture. Learning Chinese definitely opened me up a lot more to different cultures. Being immersed in both American culture and Chinese culture at the same time made me a lot more open to other people’s cultures also.
Julian’s worldview is organized around comparing and contrasting experiences and opportunities in the two cultures.

Being able to compare China’s side of the story with what I’m learning in American schools gives me a whole different view on what I’m learning, and being able to process the information from two different countries’ points of view.

Moreover, the second group participants believe that bilingual or multilingual competencies give them a competing edge in their education and in the global economy. Olivia mentions that being trilingual will be an advantage for her when it comes to apply for college. “I think the language part is really appealing, because I have another language interpretation, which is also an open spot for me. I have three languages, and I guess it will look good on my resume.”

Julian and Frank talk about how China has become a growing superpower in the global economy, and therefore, it is important to be bilingual and bicultural. When asked about why it was important for him to keep the Chinese part of his ethnic identity, Frank explained, “China is gonna play a major role in the future. Learning about it will basically also give you an upper hand. Learn what they learn, and speak Chinese.” Along this same vein, Julian recounted,

Well, first of all, I think, since China is such a growing and expanding country right now, it’s just extremely important for anyone who wants to go into business later, or just for jobs later in life, to be able to speak Chinese. I know a lot of people in the U.S. are doing business with China now. When the people who are in Chinese school now are adults, there’s going to be even more Chinese-American business going on.

A pluralistic view. Similar to the second group, the third group also builds their ethnic identity on both cultures and self-identify as Chinese Americans. But the third group has a broader view of the social context, and they acknowledge that America is a
plural and diverse society. Their Chinese ethnicity represents diversity in America. I asked Jenny whether she would change to a White American, if she could.

Jenny (J): I don’t think it makes much of a difference if you’re an American or not, because, in our environment, there aren’t very many of those people.

Tan (T): What do you mean?

J: Like, our schools, and Chinese school, obviously, we don’t have very many just Americans. Everyone’s some kind of mix.

T: Like what kind of mix?

J: Like some people are African-American, some people are Korean, some people are Japanese, some people are like, Polish.

Echoing Jenny’s account of America, Jim believes that America is a diverse society and being Chinese is just a part of the diversity.

Tan: When you identify yourself, you say you are a Chinese-American. So do you think it’s important to keep this Chinese part of yourself, or why is it important?

Jim: I think it’s important because, you know, a lot- like, these days we talk about diversity a lot. And I think we need more diversity in America, because it’s not really that important anymore now. I think we need to bring that [diversity] back. And I think it’s important to not lose your, like, old cultures and your old ways, and you should remember them.

*Color-blind*. On the opposite end of the spectrum, this group of participants is “color blind,” and they do not see any difference between them and their White American peers. They do not have the sense of a collective ethnic identity; instead, they see themselves as individuals. Audrey is an example of this group. Audrey’s father is an American of German descent, and her mother is a Chinese. She identifies herself as a Euro-Asian.
Tan (T): Have you ever been asked that where you are from or why you look different from others?

Audrey (A): They ask where I am from, but they don’t ask why I look different. I’m just feeling like everybody else.

T: Ok. So they assume that you are not an American, is that why they ask?
A: No. Just people come from different places, and they just ask.

T: Nobody asked you who you are or what you are?
A: Just asked what my ethnicities are. That is all.

T: So people do ask. When people ask you that question, how do you feel?
A: I don’t really care.

T: You don’t care. So have you asked yourself this question, like, who you are or what you are? Does the question of identity come to you?
A: No. I am just who I am. I just like being me.

T: So who do you think you are?
A: A person who likes watching movies, having fun, and hanging out with friends.

Bill is another example. He identifies himself as a more Americanized Chinese, and he has more American friends than Chinese friends. “I actually talk to my American friends more. And I usually go and stay over [at my American friends’ house]. We usually make more play dates than [I do with] Chinese friends.”

Even though many of the participants self-identify as Chinese Americans, their understandings of the ethnic identity vary, and the foundations of the self-development are different. For some, Chinese ethnicity is passed onto them by their parents, regardless of their own wishes. Chinese ethnicity is also imposed on them by the larger society,
because of their physical differences. For others, it is a blessing to be bicultural and bilingual. They believe they are living in and belong to both cultures. The bicultural and bilingual competencies are an integral part of who they are. Similarly, some are proud of being Chinese, and believe that their Chinese-ness represents diversity in a pluralistic society. Yet for some, America is a “color blind” society, and they do not see any differences between them and their White American peers.

An “Identity Crisis”

There are, however, some Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans who are experiencing an “identity crisis,” and are still seeking the answer to the question, “Who am I?” Eric is Audrey’s older brother. But unlike Audrey who sees no differences between herself and her American peers, Eric is confused about who he is. Unlike the stereotype depicting Chinese as short and nonathletic, Eric is a six foot tall, muscular young man. In his regular high school, Eric is a good student, and won a President Award in 2007. But he is not considered as nerdy; rather, he is seen, in his own words, as a “big Asian,” because he is tall and he can lift as much as, or even more weights than the school football players can. Eric seems to be a confident young man until I asked him about his ethnic identity.

Tan (T): So how do you feel about your own ethnic identity, then?

Eric (E): I have no idea what I am. I don’t know . . . like having half of German and half Chinese in me. You have no idea who you are. You could be one thing or another.

T: So you are still confused, or . . .

E: Yeah, maybe. I have no idea which side of the bridge I am on.
Eric is not the only one who has questions about his ethnic identity. Dr. Woo acknowledged that not only the children but also the immigrant adults might have experienced an “identity crisis,” because, in Dr. Woo’s words, “They may feel that they cannot fit in their working culture. They don’t have much communication with their colleagues.”

CCLS and Ethnic Identity

No matter how the CICA children perceive themselves in terms of ethnicity, the CCLS is positioned as important in crafting their ethnic identity, and helping them make sense of being Chinese in America. First, findings of this study suggest that coming to the CCLS and establishing social relationships with co-ethnics provide the CICA children with an “affinity group” (Gee, 2001). It helps the CICA children develop a sense of belonging and peer acceptance. In the CCLS, the CICA children learn from the “affinity group” or the co-ethnic peers how to resist imposed perceptions and identities from mainstream culture.

Second, as an institution, the CCLS reinforces an institutional or collective ethnic identity on its participants through teaching of Chinese traditions, cultures, values, and principles of the CCLS. Moreover, the CCLS provides Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children a social place, where their ethnic identity is recognized and respected. The CCLS serves as a “house of mirrors” to reflect positive image of Chinese and China, and to deflect the misconceptions or misrecognitions by the society. Finally, the CCLS provides the CICA children with a dual frame of references, or as a parent vividly
described, the CCLS opens “a window” for the CICA children, through which they can see the Chinese culture and way of life.

An “Affinity Group”

I have some American friends, but I feel close to my Chinese friends [in the CCLS], because we are all Chinese.

--A 1.5 generation Chinese American Student

First, the CCLS provides the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children with an “affinity group” (Gee, 2001) or in a parent’s words, “the same kind of people,” and thus helps them develop a sense of belonging. It is a shared hope among the parents that the CICA children constitute their affinity group through the friendship with co-ethnic peers, and develop an allegiance to the ethnic community. Gee (2001) suggests

What people in the group share, and must share to constitute an affinity group, is allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group’s members the requisite experiences. The process through which this power works, then, is participation or sharing. (p. 105)

For Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children who are living in the margin of two cultural worlds and may feel they belong to neither world, this affinity group is vital in their understanding and crafting ethnic identity. By participating in the CCLS and establishing friendship with co-ethnic peers, the CCLS creates and sustains a collective ethnic identity. Stanton-Salazar (1997) argues

The social networks exhibit their potential to empower young people according to the number and quality of relationships potentially available within them. Such relationships become key precisely because they represent interpersonal ties to people committed to and capable of transmitting vital, diversified resources. (p. 7)

Mr. Lin, a middle aged father, told me how his daughter, Amy, changed and became more self confident after she’s been to the CCLS for three years. Amy is eight
years old, and goes to a school where she is the only Chinese in the class. Mr. Lin told me that Amy has very low self esteem and self confidence. But Mr. Lin observed that when Amy comes to the CCLS and is surrounded by co-ethnic peers, she seems comfortable and confident. This sense of comfort and confidence comes from her affinity group, which is made up of co-ethnic peers in the CCLS. Mr. Lin attributed this change in his daughter to the CCLS,

The Chinese school definitely provides the environment. It not only provides the opportunity to study Chinese, but also provides the opportunity [for the kids] to see, “Oh, I am not alone. There are other people that look like me, and I am one of them, and I am not alone here.”

Ms. Reed is one of a few Caucasian women in the CCLS, and she is in charge of the PTA and the Teen Club. Ms. Reed is at her late thirties or early forties, and her husband, Mr. Reed, is a Chinese Singaporean. She is always well dressed, as many other Chinese moms are. (As mentioned in previous chapter, just as people go to church, the CCLS is a place for social gathering, so some people dress up for it.) Ms. Reed always has her laptop and Blackberry with her. If she is not talking to any parents or students, she will be using the laptop or Blackberry. When asked how she became involved into the CCLS, she replied that it is all because of her only daughter, Candy. Candy is 11 years old, and she is a 5th grader. Ms. Reed told me that Candy is one of only 3 Asian students in her school, and that she is bullied because of her Chinese appearance. But among her co-ethnic peers in the CCLS, Candy is happy and confident. Ms. Reed added, “My husband’s family is living overseas, so the Chinese community is like a family to us. I know many people here, and we celebrate the Chinese New Year with other community
members.” Also, in order to help the CICA students build an “affinity group,” Ms. Reed initiated the Teen Club for teenagers to get together and form a strong bond.

Brynn is another example. As discussed earlier, Brynn came to the United States at the age of 10, and English was a barrier in her adaptation to American schooling. Her classmates in the American school used to laugh at her broken English. But in the CCLS, her American-born co-ethnic peers corrected her pronunciation, and taught her social skills. Brynn is also a member of the folk dance club in the Chinese school. They are invited to perform on different occasions by colleges and universities. For example, in April of 2008, the dance club performed at a local university for the event “Relay For Life” sponsored by the American Cancer Society. And in May of 2008, they were invited to perform at the Columbus Asian Festival, and they even met the mayor of Cleveland. Brynn’s mom observed that Brynn has become more comfortable and confident about who she is, since she started coming to the CCLS. When she is laughed at because of her ethnicity, Brynn will now challenge her peers, “Do you know how to speak Chinese? Do you know anything about China?”

An Institutionalized Ethnicity

Furthermore, as an institution, the CCLS creates economic, social, and cultural ties among adults, and in turn, nurtures the intergenerational relationship between children and their parents by maintaining and reproducing heritage cultures, traditions, and language. In the process of cultural practices, the CCLS authorizes the “Chinese-ness” as an institutional identity or I-identity (Gee, 2001), and it calls the participants to maintain their ethnic roots. For example, in the CCLS, the students are taught about
Chinese history and civilization, and they are told to be proud of being “炎黄子孙，龙的传人” (the offspring of the greatest Chinese emperors, Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang; and the offspring of the dragon people). In a Chinese speech contest, a girl of eight or nine years old recited a poem, titled, “I am proud to be Chinese”. The poem read,

> Among the green eyes and blue eyes, here I am
> a Chinese with black eyes.
> Between the White and Black, here I am
> a Chinese with yellow skin.
> I am proud to be Chinese.
> I am the offspring of a great history and culture.
> My ancestors invented the four greatest inventions:
> printing, paper making, compass, and gunpowder.
> I am proud to be Chinese.

This sense of pride is constantly reinforced through the teaching in the CCLS. The institutionalized identity, in turn, empowers the Chinese immigrants and their children.

Ms. Kwan referred to her daughter as an example to illustrate how the CCLS empowers her to not only accept her ethnic identity but to be proud of it.

Because she [my daughter] has lower self-esteem, when people call her “China girl,” for her, it is harassment. That is terrible for her, you know. If some people call me “China girl,” I won’t think it is an insult. I think, “Oh, ok. That is my identity.” But for her, it was. I think she didn’t understand what it really meant to be a “China girl.” She told me that she wished she had blond hair, she wished she didn’t look so different, she wished she looked like the girl next door, you know, who is a blond girl. She asked why she had to look like this way. She had a problem. So when people called her “China girl,” she immediately felt it as an insult. She used to come home and cry. So finally, when I enrolled her to the Chinese school, she learned stuff, and it really helped her. I remember my daughter came back home . . . she was in elementary school. She told me, “Guess what, mom? When they called me ‘China girl,’ I told them, ‘So what? I know things you don’t know. I know how to count in Chinese.’” Then the other kids immediately said, “Oh, can you tell me?” All a sudden, she felt a power, you know. And she said, “Yeah, I can teach you.” She started teaching other kids Chinese. And ever since that, she has no problem. So I can see from my own
experiences, how important it is for kids, especially those with Chinese heritage, to study Chinese culture, because that’s really empowering them.

Tan: What role do you think the Chinese school plays in her change from feeling bad to be called a “China girl” to feel empowered? What role does the Chinese school play?

Ms. Kwan: The whole thing, you know. Without the Chinese school, it would not have happened. You know, you realize when you have been in a group, there is a group power. You know, [Chinese language school] empowers them in both ways, providing the language skills, but also providing a home.

The source of this empowerment is the CCLS. The process through which the empowerment takes effect is authorization (Gee, 2001); that is, the traditions, the culture, the values, the rules, and the principles of the CCLS allow the school principal, teachers, and other community leaders to “author” the meaning of being Chinese in America, and to negotiate the rights and responsibilities that go with the label of “Chinese Americans.”

The institutional power of the CCLS is compared to that of Jewish communities. Mr. Sun believed that the CCLS can promote and reinforce the sense of community.

There are only six million Jews in the United States, but they control the economy, the politics, the media, and many more. Why can they be so powerful? That is because they have a strong sense of community. We need a strong Chinese community.

Dr. Woo hopes that the institutional power and the collective identity will change the misperceptions of Chinese in America, and help the future generation fit in the mainstream culture.

I want the local Americans know that Chinese people are not like what they have read about. There are many negative reports on Chinese and China. So I want to do my part [as the CCLS principal] to change their impressions. If only I can change their impression a little bit, that is worth it. I mean, I want to do something practical for the community, so that our children can fit in the American culture.
Joanne observed how the perception of her as a “Chinese girl” changed, because of the collective ethnic identity and the group power. Before moved to LaBella Heights, Joanne was the only Chinese in her school, and she was seen as “weird” because of her physical differences. But in LaBella Heights, where the CCLS is located, Chinese are the third largest minority group, following African Americans and Asian Indians. Moreover, in LaBella High School (LHS), 7 percent of the student populations are Asian or Pacific Islanders, comprising the second largest minority group in LHS. So in Joanne’s worlds, people are “really accepting [Chinese]” or even “like Chinese.” Through the institutional power, the CCLS ensures and enforces that the CICA children are recognized in a certain way, and not others. In Joanne’s case, the institutionalized “Chinese-ness” is not “weird”, but accepted and likable.

Recognition of Ethnicity

However, no matter how the CICA children self identify themselves, and no matter how strong the institutionalized identity created and upheld by the CCLS is, their identities must be recognized by others in their daily interactions and dialogues. Taylor (1994) suggests that one cannot have an identity of any sort without recognition. For example, the CICA children in this study felt that they could not identify themselves as unhyphenated Americans, because such identity was reserved for Americans of European descent. Even if the CICA children dare to identify themselves as such, this unhyphenated American identity would not be recognized and accepted by mainstream Americans. In other words, unlike Americans of European descent who can choose whether or not to identify their ethnicity, and with what part of their ethnicity they want
to identify, the CICA children do not have the option or freedom. As Alicia put it, “As much as I try to blend in, I mean, like, I look Asian and everything... When people look at you, you’re Chinese.”

For the CICA children, whose “American-ness” is denied by the mainstream society, the CCLS provides the recognition of their ethnic identity. Dr. Woo recounted,

In the Chinese school, they [the CICA children] know who they are, like the movie “Who Am I?” by Jackie Chen. They can associate themselves with their co-ethnics. Their ethnic identity is recognized and respected. I think they come [to the CCLS] because they find their identity is recognized here. Without the identity recognition, they won’t come.

Dr. Woo’s account echoes Taylor’s (1994) view that identity is partly shaped by recognition or misrecognition by others. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) use the metaphor of “social mirroring” to describe how our sense of self is profoundly shaped by others. They argue that when the reflections mirrored back is positive, the individual will be able to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth and competence; whereas if the reflected image is negative, people may be oppressed and imprisoned in a false and reduced mode of being. Jenny described that she was annoyed by the stereotypes of Chinese.

Well . . . most of my life is around being Chinese, being smart, being able to do that- when it’s with sports and stuff, I get annoyed that I am Chinese. Everyone seems to think that Chinese people can’t play sports, which we can. And people seem to think that Chinese people are just nerds and they can’t go to do something social or fun.

Even when the immigrant parents provide positive mirroring at home, it can hardly counteract the intensity and frequency of distortions that the children encounter in their lives. However, when the individual parents are connected through the social ties in
the ethnic community, their efforts become a collective action. The CCLS, therefore, becomes a “house of mirrors” which reflects positive images to compensate for the distorted reflections that the immigrants and their children encounter in their daily lives. For example, in the CCLS, the community members can get a free copy of local Chinese Journal. In the Chinese Journal, there are extended reports on famous and successful Chinese Americans. Their stories flow through the social networks embedded in the CCLS, and become inspirations for the CICA students. Furthermore, those stories are proof that Chinese have “made it”, and realized the “American dream.” For the CICA children, who still have questions about their ethnic identity, the CCLS reinforces the positive image of Chinese in America, and constructs a sense of pride about who they are.

**Bridging Cultural Differences**

Not only does the CCLS project positive images of Chinese Americans, but also it provides a “bridge” between the American culture and the Chinese culture. It is the CCLS’ goal to change the Discourse (Gee, 2001), that is, the discourse or dialogue and the interactions between Chinese and the mainstream society. The mission of the CCLS “is to promote a true understanding between the Americans and the Chinese. The main purpose is to promote a multicultural interaction or exchange [between the two cultures].”

In order to bridge the cultural differences between the two cultural groups, the Chinese school offers Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) classes to the local community, and provides short-term workshops on Chinese language and culture to local businesses. Now there are four Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) classes with over
50 students. CCLS also invites artistic troupes from China to perform in the local community. Dr. Woo described the profound influence of one artistic troupe on the local Americans in this way:

The performance by the “Little Red Flower” artistic troupe was the most successful. And the images held by local Americans have been changed, and the Chinese school became famous overnight. The locals saw the young artists were no different from their own kids, and they were surprised by the young talents. The local newspapers had report on the performance. There were a few American families who adopted Chinese children, and after the performance, the parents came to me and wanted to send their adopted kids to our Chinese school. Even years after the performance, people still talk about it.

The school also actively participates in local events, such as the Columbus Asian Festival, Columbus China Day, and Relay for Life sponsored by the American Cancer Society. As a result of the CCLS’ effort to reach out, the local community has become more interested in and responsive to the needs of Chinese community. For example, a local public library expresses its interest in working with the CCLS to better serve the Chinese community. The library wants to know more about what type of resources (i.e. desired fiction, CDs, tapes, etc. in Chinese), branch locations that are most accessible to the community around LaBella Heights, as well as general information on the services and programs that the Chinese community may be interested (Personal communication, January 8, 2009).

Moreover, the CCLS has become more involved in political events. For example, in the U.S. Presidential election of 2008, the CCLS hosted a rally for Barack Obama, and
invited the first Chinese American governor, Mr. Gary Locke, to campaign for Obama. CCLS also urged community members to vote,

To show the positive image of the Chinese American community, to tell people that we value our rights as US citizen, please go to the election polls on November 4th, to cast your vote. CCLS encourages all of you, the citizen of USA, to show up at the poll. The action you are taking now will greatly benefit our children and our future.

The collective efforts to bridge the cultural differences and change the negative images of Chinese immigrants are crucial for the CICA children to develop and maintain their Chinese ethnicity.

“Windows to Two Cultures” and Ethnic Identity Formation

Finally, the CCLS produces and reproduces social capital across the globe, which facilitates the maintenance of cultural heritage and language by organized “sojourn.” The term “sojourn” is conventionally defined as voluntary travel to a different cultural context for a period of time for work or for study (Rong, 2006). In this study, I use “organized sojourn” to describe the experience of the CICA children who participate in the “In Search of Roots” summer camp and go back to China every summer. The experience of organized sojourn provides the CICA children with a dual frame of reference, or in Mr. Sun’s words, “a window to the Chinese culture.” This experience also allows the CICA children to explore their cultural heritage, and then determine for themselves how they want to think of themselves in relation to the dual heritage.

Suppose that these [CICA] kids are living in a house. In the front of the house, there is a window open to the American culture, which is their native culture.

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24 Gary Locke was elected governor of Washington in 1996 and was re-elected in 2000. He is the first Chinese American governor and he is recently nominated as the Secretary of Commerce by President Obama.
Why don’t we open another window at the back of the house? Through this window, they can see the Chinese culture. As far as how the two cultures influence their lives in the future, they can decide.

The summer camp “In Search of Roots” is sponsored by the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, and overseas youths with Chinese origin around the world are invited to participate. In the United States, the Chinese School Association of the United States (CSAUS) is authorized to organize it. As a member school of the CSAUS, the CCLS participates in the summer camp each year. A publication by the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs (as cited in Louie, 2001) states, “The young generation of Chinese living abroad have little understanding of their forefathers’ traditional culture, no mentioning a national consciousness.” Therefore, the purpose of the Root-searching summer camp is to “deepen the understanding of the heritages for overseas youths of Chinese origin and promote the exchange among youths of similar backgrounds all over the world” (www.csaus.org). In 2006 when I first started my field work, the summer camp was held in Beijing, China. It was estimated that 5,000 overseas Chinese youths around the world attended this camp. In 2007, the summer camp went to Hunan Province, where Mao Ze Dong, the first president of P.R.C. was born, and at the location of the base for the Chinese Revolution\(^{25}\). A few of the study participants attended the camp. In 2008, the summer camp met in Shanghai for a week, and then went to Shen Zhen, the earliest special economic zone in Southern China for another week. The CCLS organized a team of 18 students to attend the camp.

\(^{25}\) The full-scale civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the National Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), broke out immediately following World War II and lasted for two more than two decades. In 1949, as a result of the Chinese Revolution, the CCP defeated KMT and ended the civil war. The People’s Republic of China was established on October 1, 1949, and Mao Ze Dong was elected as the first president of PRC. (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88312.htm)
The organized sojourn has a great impact on those CICA children who have had the opportunity to attend the Root-searching summer camp. First, from talking to the students and their parents, I find that the camp provides the CICA students an opportunity to visit China, a country that they have previously learned about in books, in the American media, or from their grandparents and parents. Through the organized sojourn, the CICA children, especially the second generation, develop first-hand knowledge of the cultural norms, traditions, and social and political structures of China. This knowledge makes it possible for them to bring information about China back to their co-ethnic peers in the United States, further laying a solid foundation for a continuing interest in learning the language and culture, and being more involved in ethnic community affairs. Jenny described the summer camp as “cool,” and explained that she learned a Chinese folk dance, Chinese calligraphy, and Chinese jokes (Xiao Hua). And she believed that her knowledge on China has increased through the experience. Similarly, Joanne described her experience in the summer camp as “a lot of fun.” She recounted,

The camp was a lot of fun, because all of us are from different countries, like I am a Chinese American, maybe there is a Dutch Chinese, German Chinese, all those “Hua Yi” (people with Chinese origin), they all came together in China . . . We got to communicate with them, because even though we all spoke different languages, we are all essentially Chinese. That is what brought us all together . . . We were all really different, but what brought us together is the fact that we are all Chinese, we speak Chinese, and our parents are basically the same, because they have the same expectations and morals. It is great being with them, because they showed us a part of the world that we’ve never been to. And they told us a little about their lives in that part of the world. So it helped us a lot. We found out different ways associating with others, different ways talking to them, and being with people.
As Joanne stated, even though they are all different in so many ways, they are all Chinese. Through the organized sojourn, they have learned how to think and behave like Chinese children and developed social skills to help them function appropriately in that society. This hands-on learning experience not only helps the CICA children develop survival skills, adjustment strategies, and cultural empathy, but also allows them to learn how to develop psychological and sociological adaptive strategies for a self-determined, life-long, bicultural and bilingual life.

Furthermore, through the organized sojourn, the CICA children develop a dual frame of reference, with which they compare and contrast their personal experiences in the cultural and racial contexts of the United States and China (A. Louie, 2001; Rong, 2006). The knowledge and understanding of Chinese history, art, architecture, cuisine, language, and traditions as well as the new development in social structure and economy, instill a great sense of pride in these CICA children. The Root-searching experiences allow the CICA children to understand better about their ethnicity, and thus enable them to see things in a different perspective.

This dual frame of reference facilitates the growth of self-confidence, and helps the CICA children develop a healthier perception of themselves, their immigrant parents, their co-ethnic peers, and the ethnic community. Cook and Fullon (2002) suggest, in doing so, the immigrant children start to deconstruct the negative stereotypes that have long haunted their mental constructs; they replace the stereotypes with a more positive reconstructed identity as Americans of Chinese heritage. This positive reconstruction of
ethnic identity, in turn, leads to an orientation toward higher career aspirations, more active participation in the community activities, and higher educational achievement.

The organized sojourn experience presents the CICA children with a different cultural ecology, in which Chinese are not a minority group, and they are not discriminated against because of their physical features. Olivia described how the experience impacted on her, “I feel that I am not at the very bottom [of the American society], and I feel that I am at the top. I like that feeling. It makes me feel confident about myself.”

Social capital generated by the organized sojourn has not only influenced the individuals who participated in the summer camp, but also the whole ethnic community. The CCLS provides a social place where the children can share their sojourn experience with one another. I observed that at one of the Teens’ Club meetings, Brynn, Joanne, and other sojourn children gave a presentation on their summer camp experience. They showed the pictures of the places they visited during the camp, and talked about the activities they were engaged. This first-hand knowledge and experience give all children an understanding of different lifestyles, world views, work ethnics, child-parent relationships, student-teacher relationships, and so forth. As a result, the CICA children have a different view of their parents’ expectations on them. As Joanne stated, “Compared to the life of the kids in China, our life here [in U.S.] is not too bad. We complain all the time. But seriously, compared to those kids, we had nothing to complain about.” The sojourn experience helps all children be more involved in the CCLS, and
motivates them to learn more about the culture and language. Ryan’s mom described how Ryan became more interested in learning Chinese after the trip to China.

Like this time we went back to China, and he found out that he could actually use what he had learned in the Chinese school. So he found it useful. When we came back, he has more motivation to learn Chinese. He is more active when I read him a Chinese story, or he reads himself.

Through the organized sojourn, the CCLS not only provides the CICA students with social capital generated in the ethnic community, but also with transnational social capital. The “In Search of Roots” summer camp opens a window for the CICA children to see and experience the Chinese way of life in person. It provides first-hand knowledge of Chinese culture, traditions, and values. By participation in the summer camp, the CICA students have developed a dual frame of reference, which facilitates the formation of a healthy ethnic identity.

Conclusion

Growing up in America is not easy for immigrant children and the children of immigrants. As discussed in chapter 2, children who are racial minorities do not have the privilege to choose who they are or who they want to be, because of their physical differences. Instead, an ethnic identity is imposed on them based on the physical features. So for the 1.5 and second-generation CICA children, how do they understand their ethnicity? The findings of this study suggest that the CICA children have different understandings of their ethnicity, and their self-identifications fall into two main categories: the Chinese, and a hybrid or hyphenated ethnicity. Yet there are some immigrant adults and children who are seeking the answer to the question: “Who am I?”
Furthermore, this study explores what role the social capital within the ethnic community plays in the process of developing a sense of self. The findings indicate that the social capital within the ethnic community plays a crucial role in negotiating and defining the meaning of being a Chinese in America. First, the social relationships with co-ethnics provide an “affinity group”, and help the children realize they are not alone and there are many successful Chinese in American society. Second, the collective ethnic identity or the institutionalized (I-identity) “Chinese-ness” empowers them to fight against the stereotypes and misperceptions they encounter in their daily lives. Moreover, as a community center, the CCLS promotes the success stories of Chinese Americans through local Chinese media; bridges the differences between the local American community and the Chinese ethnic community; and works to change the negative images held by mainstream Americans. Therefore, the CCLS as a “house of mirrors” deflects the negative images of Chinese and reflects the positive images of Chinese and China, so that the CICA students can feel proud of who they are.

Finally, the CCLS generates social capital across the globe by organized sojourn. The first-hand experience of living in China helps the CICA children develop a dual frame of reference, with which they situate and compare their life experience in two social contexts. They are more open to their Chinese heritage, and recognize that there is nothing wrong with being Chinese in America. When they are called “China girl” or “chinks,” they can proudly respond, “So what? I know things you don’t know,” or “I am coming from a more interesting culture.” By learning the Chinese language and culture, either through the organized sojourn experience or through the teaching in the CCLS, the
CICA children are empowered, and they do not see themselves as “out of place” or inferior to the mainstream Americans.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
WITHIN THE ETHNIC COMMUNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE NEW GENERATIONS

The possibility for our grandchildren to come to the Chinese school is very slim, because you can imagine that our children are not so good at Chinese. It is unpredictable who they are going to marry in the future. If they marry a Chinese, they might send their kids back to the Chinese school. Otherwise, the chance is very slim. I have calculated it and I can predict that if 50 percent of the third generation comes back to the Chinese school, it will be a great achievement.

--A first-generation Chinese immigrant parent

For immigrant children and children of immigrants, growing up in America is not an easy process, and it is often confusing and intimidating. These children are living between two cultural worlds—one of their immigrant parents and ethnic community, and the other of American peers. Thus, they are constantly under pressure from parents and the ethnic community, on one hand, to maintain cultural heritage and identity markers; and from American peers, on the other hand, to assimilate to American youth culture and become “Americanized.” This dissertation has illustrated how the CCLS serves as a buffer for the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children between the two cultural worlds. To be more specific, this study has focused on how the CCLS helps the CICA students navigate through the American school system, and how the CICA students position the ethnic community in their experiences of school adaptation and educational achievement; and in understanding and crafting a collective ethnic identity.
The Glass Ceiling and the Way Out:
Social Capital in the Ethnic Community

Even though Chinese immigrants have been living in the United States for over a century, they are viewed as “forever foreigners,” and thus have experienced “blocked mobility” (Sue & Okazaki, 1990) or the so-called “glass ceiling.” The term glass ceiling refers to “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991, p. 1). Chinese immigrant parents have either personally experienced or perceived “blocked mobility” by discriminatory practices in the mainstream society, and thus, they believe good education defined by going to an Ivy League or an elite university is the mechanism to safeguard against discrimination, and it guarantees upward social mobility.

Although I agree that certain Chinese cultural values, such as the importance of education, may be conducive to the CICA students’ school adaptation and academic success, I have suggested that cultural values per se cannot account for the favorable outcomes unless the values are reinforced through a well-integrated ethnic community and thus become a vital form of social capital, on which the immigrants can draw.

Furthermore, in the fierce competition with “Americanized” youth culture, individual families must depend on co-ethnics to reinforce the shared norms and thus control the younger generations. The social relations with co-ethnics, the social norms shared among co-ethnics, and the resulting social control are the main ways in which social capital is maintained and distributed in the Chinese ethnic community. As has been argued
throughout the dissertation, the ethnic community may provide a missing piece in explaining the successful school adaptation and academic excellence of CICA students. Particularly important is the role the CCLS plays in the formation of an ethnic identity. What follows are the major findings of the dissertation that have important implications for the research on new generations of Chinese Americans.

Summary of Findings

*CCLS as a Surrogate Family of Support and Control*

In the new land of America, immigrants have confronted great challenges, such as alienation, discrimination, language barriers, financial difficulties, and lack of knowledge that is necessary to adapt to the American social context. The newcomers cannot rely on their extended families, because the social ties with kinsmen and friends in the home country are disrupted in the process of migration. Thus, they turn to the ethnic community for support, comfort, counsel, and a sense of belonging.

As the center of the ethnic community, the CCLS provides the immigrants a platform for socialization and re-establishing social relationships with “our own people.” The social ties with co-ethnics weave its members into a fabric of both support and control that is, to a large extent, conducive to successful adaptation to American society. For adults, the CCLS provides job opportunities and information that may be unavailable or may not be easily accessible in the larger society. Furthermore, the CCLS helps newcomers settle down, and facilitates their adaptation to the mainstream American society without losing the cultural heritage. As a surrogate family, the CCLS furnishes its
members with tangible and intangible support in everyday life, and especially in crises, such as family tragedy, economic crisis, and natural disaster.

The social relations embedded in the ethnic community also create a high degree of consensus over community-prescribed values and norms, and thus become an effective mechanism of social control. For example, in the CCLS, children’s good behavior and achievements receive public recognition and praise; whereas “bad grades,” “dating at an early age,” “drug use,” and “dropping out of school” are considered as shameful, not only to the individual student, but also to his or her family, and even to the whole ethnic community. The social support and control effectively reinforce consistent standards and guide young people away from the oppositional youth culture and toward conforming to the social norms.

**CCLS as a Force for School Adaptation and Academic Success**

For the CICA children, the CCLS is more than a place to learn Chinese language and culture; rather, it provides children with the image of people like themselves and helps them see their own customs and traditions as worthwhile. The friendship with co-ethnic peers helps the 1.5 generation in particular navigate through the American school system, and adapt to American schooling. As a cushion or buffer between the two cultural worlds, the friendship with co-ethnic peers provides the CICA children with emotional support and a venue to express their feelings.

The “friendly competition” among co-ethnic peers offers direction and encouragement in academic success, and it is indeed a compelling force for the CICA students to be “straight A students” and to go to an elite university. These have become
social norms shared among parents and students in the CCLS. Systems of social relations with co-ethnic peers exercise social control over the CICA students, reinforcing both traditional cultural values and aspirations to upward mobility.

Zhou and Bankston (1998) explain how individual family values are transformed into social norms, an important form of social capital, in the ethnic community: “These social ties connect families and link parents to like-minded co-ethnics, lending legitimacy to parental expectations as well as providing a microcosm within which parental values and wishes are not alien or outlandish” (p. 222). When the CICA students are well integrated into the ethnic community through participation in CCLS, they are connected to a system of social supports and resources. At the same time, they must abide by the social norms.

Social comparisons among parents serve as a force or drive for the CICA students’ academic achievements. In the small milieu of the CCLS, immigrant parents constantly compare their children with others, and push them to be like those who are successful and who are considered to be “role models.” The social comparisons compel the CICA students to reach the standards or goals set up by the parents and reinforced by the ethnic community. However, the social norms and social comparison can add great pressure on the CICA children, and constrain their options of who and what they want to be.

Acquisition of the advanced skills in Chinese language is yet another mechanism of social control. The process of acquiring parental native language literacy allows children to communicate more effectively with parents and/or other family and
community members, who prefer to speak Chinese at home and in the ethnic community. In the course of this intergenerational interaction, the value of education is reinforced, and habits and attitudes conducive to academic excellence are promoted. The students who are proficient in their parents’ native language seem to be more receptive to parental guidance, the social norms shared in the ethnic community, and more likely to display a positive attitude toward future education (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Thus the acquisition of advanced skills in Chinese language acts as a conduit for social capital, solidifying children’s ties to the ethnic community and maintaining their exposure to the social norms that the ethnic community embraces.

**CCLS: “House of Mirrors” and Ethnic Identity**

Growing up in America, Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children have confronted such questions as “Where are you *really* from?” or “When are you going back to *your country*?” These seemingly innocuous questions constitute a public discourse that depicts Chinese as “forever foreigners” which may, in turn, cause uncertainty or even doubts among the CICA children about who they *really* are. Moreover, in American schools, the CICA children may be bullied and called names, for example, “China girl,” “Chinks,” or “PC (pocket calculator),” and so forth, because of their physical features and the stereotype that all Chinese are good at math and science. These experiences make the CICA students feel “alienated,” or “out of place” in American schools. As discussed in Chapter VII, some of the CICA students have low self-esteem and low self-confidence as a result of these sorts of experiences.
In such a social context where the Chinese are projected as “foreigners” or “outsiders,” the CCLS provides a buffer to protect the CICA children from the hidden racial injuries (Osajima, 1993). The friendship with co-ethnics serves as an “affinity group,” (Gee, 2001) which gives the children a sense of belonging. The CCLS is vividly described as a “house of mirrors,” which reflects the image of “the same kind of people,” and helps the children realize that they are not alone. This sense of belonging is a tremendous source of empowerment for the CICA children.

Not only is their ethnicity or, to be more specific, their Chinese-ness recognized, but also it is institutionalized by the teaching and practices in the CCLS. In the process of cultural practice the CCLS authorizes the meaning of being Chinese in America, and imposes an institutionalized identity or I-Identity (Gee, 2001) on its members. I-Identity, in turn, empowers the members of the institution. The source of this power is neither individual nor nature, but an institution, namely, the CCLS.

Furthermore, the CCLS actively reaches out to the local American community in order to bridge cultural differences between the American culture and the Chinese culture. The CCLS aims at changing the public discourse, that is, the way people talk about and interact with Chinese. It may not change the “foreign” image of Chinese, but it is hoped that a positive image will be established. As a result, the younger generation will be well accepted and integrated into the mainstream American society. The positive image of Chinese also helps the CICA children understand and accept who they are.
Reinforcement of The “Model Minority” Stereotype?:

Revisit the Purpose of this Study

I started with a discussion of the “model minority” stereotype in introduction, but I have not debunked the popular myth of Chinese children as overachievers. While other researchers are trying to demystify or unravel the “model minority” stereotype (Lee, 1994, 1996, 2003), I have concentrated on investigating why Chinese are successful and what may explain the “model minority” phenomenon. By doing so, I might confront such questions as whether the purpose of this study is to reinforce Chinese as a “model minority” stereotype. Second, what is the purpose of the study if it simply confirms what everyone already knows?

Regarding the first question, I think it is necessary to take a closer look at the common perceptions of Chinese in America, and examine the basis of these perceptions. My intention, however, is not to reinforce the “model minority” stereotype. I am fully aware that there are individual differences among Chinese, and not every Chinese person is successful. In fact, 13.4% of Chinese were living below the poverty level in 2004, compared with about 9% of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007a). By focusing on the reasons for success, I hope this study will provoke some introspection among those who fail to make it in America and to those who are stuck at the bottom of the social rung. How can they come together as a community? How can they pool the limited resources together and generate richer social capital in such a community? How can they engage their children into the community? And how can they transform the
essence of their culture into strong social norms that support and control the younger generation?

I have discussed how the ethnic community shapes the CICA students’ school experience and helps the children develop a collective ethnic identity. Although the ethnic community is no panacea, it plays a pivotal role in explaining the school adaptation and academic achievements of the CICA students. Zhou and Bankston (1998) suggest,

An individual’s destiny cannot be determined merely by individual traits and aspirations; it does not depend completely on either the beliefs and habits held by the individual and the ethnic groups or the structure of socioeconomic opportunities imposed from the outside. Individuals participate in immediate social structures that influence their beliefs and habits and facilitate or frustrate their making use of the opportunities offered them. (p. 231)

Regarding the second question, I think the importance of the ethnic community is often overlooked and undermined in the study of immigrants’ adaptation. The popular wisdom is that Chinese are successful because of the cultural values and/or because of individual family characteristics. While not denying the importance of cultural values, I have suggested that culture alone is not adequate to explain the success of Chinese. Cultural values will become a powerful mechanism only when they are reinforced and institutionalized by the close-knit ethnic community, and thus become a social force that controls the behaviors of younger generations. The purpose of this study is not to confirm the popular wisdom about Chinese cultural values, but to foreground the importance of organizing the ethnic community through the lens of social capital. In this case study, I have attempted to show how institutions like the Contemporary Chinese Language School shape the educational experiences and ethnic identity formation of the CICA
children through social relations with co-ethnics, reinforcing social norms within the ethnic community, and developing mechanisms of social control. This study aims to shed light on “insiders’” perspectives on the role of an ethnic community in their process of “becoming Americans.” In the journey to pursuing the “American Dream” the immigrants depend heavily on the social structures of the host society, but more importantly, on the social structures of the ethnic community. Cultivating social capital embedded in the ethnic community and embracing their ethnicity are the key strategies for school success, social adaptation and upward mobility.

Social Capital in the Ethnic Community

The success of the Chinese is a puzzle composed of many pieces. Focused on the importance of a Chinese ethnic community, this dissertation may provide one missing piece of the puzzle. What follows are several conclusions that have important implications for the new generations of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American children. First, as has been argued throughout this study, the ethnic community has played a vital role in immigrant children’s school success and social adaptation. The CCLS, as the community center, provides a prime example. The same cultural background and ethnicity have brought individuals together in the CCLS, forming social relationships with co-ethnics, exchanging information, and reinforcing social norms. Social relations, information, and social norms are main forms of social capital embedded in the ethnic community, which provides community members with ongoing support. Participation in the CCLS helps bind the younger generation to their co-ethnic peers and
to the ethnic community in large. Thus the CCLS has become the locus of social support and social control.

Second, this case study of a Chinese ethnic community adds a new level of detail to theories of segmented assimilation. It sheds some light on how social capital within the ethnic community plays a role in the assimilation process of Chinese immigrants and of their children. Unlike the classical assimilation theories, assuming that assimilation leads to complete assimilation to the mainstream culture, segmented assimilation theories believe the outcomes of assimilation may vary, depending on the social context that the racial/ethnic minorities are embedded. Whereas many studies in the genre of segmented assimilation emphasize on macro contextual influences (e.g., the context of reception, class, and race) on group adaptation, this dissertation focuses on micro and local impact of the ethnic community. In order to help Chinese immigrants successfully adapt to the mainstream American society, the CCLS plays a dual role: a vehicle of acculturation, on one hand; and a mechanism for lagged assimilation, on the other hand. The CCLS cushions the impact of a new and unfamiliar culture on the newcomers, and provided them with supports in the process of adaptation. But at the same time, the CCLS deliberately preserves the traditional values and fosters solidarity of the ethnic community. For the CICA children, the CCLS attempts to slow down the process of becoming “Americanized.”

Third, in looking at the ethnic community as a resource, I have suggested that social capital theory offers a way of conceptualizing how the ethnic community can create a central place for (re)producing, accumulating and distributing social capital. In
the process of cultural practice, immigrant families need support and direction from other families and reinforcement from the entire ethnic community. For younger generations, their parents’ expectations and preaching reinforced in the community become legitimate social norms that compel them to conform. Social relations with competitive co-ethnic peers are yet another driving force for school success and social adaptation. Thus I conclude that social capital theory is a useful analytical tool to guide future empirical investigations, examining how social capital interacts with other social factors, such as social class, race and gender, and how such interactions impact immigrant children’s academic achievement and social adaptation.

Limitations

This dissertation certainly has its limitations. First, it is a single-case study, conducted in one social institution of the ethnic community, namely the Contemporary Chinese Language School. Even though the CCLS is the center of the community, there are other social settings and institutions where the community members are connected with each other, providing support and control. For example, there are several Chinese Christian churches in Greater Cleveland Area, one of which holds service in LaBella High School on Sundays. In order to have a full-fledged understanding of the roles of the ethnic community, multiple cases and multiple site studies are needed. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest,

By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings. (p. 29)
Future research should investigate the social functions of other institutions, such as the Chinese churches, and examine how these social institutions work together for the public good of the ethnic community as a whole.

Second, this case study might unintentionally oversimplify the complex phenomenon of “model minority.” As Guba and Lincoln (1981) note, “Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs” (p. 377). It is not my intention, however, to generalize the findings of this case study. Many factors contribute to the success of Chinese, such as the cultural values, the family backgrounds, individual characteristics, the ethnic community, and the larger social context. The current study of the ethnic community only presents a piece of the big puzzle. Future studies should take into account each factor and how they interact or intersect with each other, and how such interaction influences the immigrant children’s school success and social adaptation. Further comparative studies are also necessary to compare and contrast the Chinese community with other racial/ethnic minority communities. What kind of social relationships exist in other communities? Do the social relationships support and control the community members, especially the younger generations? What are the mechanisms of social support and social control?

Finally, the dissertation may be limited by my personal biases. The conceptual framework of social capital theory was constructed at the early stage of the study and has been the guidance for data collection and analysis. Therefore, the study might be accused of being “out to prove” that this is the most valuable framework. My personal
immigration experience and Chinese ethnicity may also shape the interpretation and the approach to this study.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

In spite of the limitations, I believe the findings of this study nevertheless have implications for future research on immigrant studies, for policy making, and for educational practice as well.

*Gender, Biracial Identity, and Adopted Chinese Youth: Implications for Research*

Well, girls are more social than boys. Like, at school, when we [girls] sit at our lunch tables, we can choose. And mostly all the Asian boys are at one table, but the Asian girls are with other people, not just together. . . . I think that the boys need . . . when they’re together, I think they need more of a common characteristic that makes them all sit at one place, and the girls are more accepting of friends.

--A 13-year-old American-born female student

*Gender and social adaptation.* Although gender difference in academic performances has been well documented, studies on the role(s) that gender plays in the process of social adaptation and identity construction among immigrant children are scant. Lei (2003) suggests that identity construction is a never complete process, which is laden with commonalities, loyalties, power struggles, and survival instincts. Lei continues, “It [identity construction] is at once an instinctive process that occurs from the inside out, involving community, acceptance, and comfort, but also a forced process from the outside in, which imposes on us fixed categorizations and monolithic depictions” (p. 159). Therefore, what we need to examine is how the racialized and gendered identities are constructed for the immigrant females and males and by them.
For example, as the above quote describes, Asian girls are more social than Asian boys; Asian girls can sit with others at lunch, whereas Asian boys are sitting at one table. So what accounts for the differences in socialization between Asian girls and Asian boys? Is the clannish behavior of Asian boys a strategy to respond to harassment, discrimination, and racism they faced in school? What are the gender differences in acculturation rate and patterns between immigrant females and males? How do immigrant females assimilate to the mainstream American culture differently from their male counterparts? How do the assimilation patterns affect their understanding and construction of who they are? Those are the questions that future research should address.

**Biracial or multiracial identity.** Chinese in the United States register one of the highest outmarriage rates of any racial minorities, producing a visibly growing number of biracial or multiracial Chinese children (Khanna, 2004; Kitano et al., 1984; Lee & Yamanaka, 1990). Analyses of U.S. Census data show that over 67% of Chinese married a spouse of a different race in 1990 (Lee & Fernandez, 1998). Although there is a recent increase in research on biracial and multiracial individuals, such research focused heavily on the identities and social adjustments of Black-White mixed race children (Khanna, 2004). Few studies have examined the racial/ethnic identity development among biracial or multiracial Chinese youths.

In search of racial/ethnic identity and a sense of belonging, biracial or multiracial Chinese youths may encounter more challenges than mono-racial Chinese. As discussed in Chapter VII, some of the biracial participants were experiencing an “identity crisis.” Khanna (2004) suggests that in the absence of clear-cut and objective criteria for judging
who belongs where, biracial or multiracial individuals often rely on others’ perceptions of them in the development of their racial/ethnic identity (pp. 117-118). Furthermore, others’ perceptions exert more influence on one’s identity formation when the subject is in a state of uncertainty (Backman, Secord, & Pierce, 1963; Israel, 1956). This may pertain to biracial and multiracial youths, who encounter ambiguity about where they belong racially and ethnically. Therefore, it would be interesting to see whether Eric’s (as discussed in previous chapter) perception of his racial/ethnic identity would change after a longer period of time being immersed in the Chinese ethnic community and being around co-ethnic peers. Future research should also examine the relationship between ethnic cultural exposure, ethnic language use, and ethnic identity development among biracial or multiracial youths.

Identity of adopted Chinese children. In 2007, Americans adopted 5,453 children from China, the largest number from any country outside the U.S. (Adoptive Families, 2008). In the Contemporary Chinese Language School, there are Chinese as Second Language (CSL) classes for adopted Chinese children and their White parents. The adopted Chinese children are not the focus of this dissertation, but it will be interesting to investigate the role that the ethnic community plays in the identity development of those adopted Chinese children. In studying Korean adopted young women, Palmer (2001) argues that adopted children face a number of unique challenges in their identity construction. Palmer states,

Their [Korean adopted young women’s] choices on which group to identity appear to be limited. In the white community, where the majority of these adoptees live, they tend to be viewed as racial minorities—different [difference] based upon their physical appearance. And in the Korean/Asian American
community, they generally lack sufficient knowledge of Korean/Asian American culture. Thereby, one of their most difficult struggles seems to be in their attempts to gain acceptance (fit in) in either one of the communities (as well as other communities represented in the United States). (p. 178)

Furthermore, Kim (1995) suggests if the parents who adopt trans-culturally or internationally possess little knowledge of their adopted children’s ethnic and cultural heritage, and if the parents do not make efforts to expose their adopted children to their birth culture, the children may feel uncomfortable with his or her physical appearance, ashamed of their origin, and tend to disassociate themselves from the birth culture heritage.

The involvement in the ethnic community seems to be an antidote to the disassociation. In the CCLS, the adopted Chinese children are exposed to their birth cultural heritage, and they are given the opportunity to learn their mother tongue. The parents also have an opportunity to learn their adopted child’s ethnic and cultural heritage. More importantly, I would argue that being around people who share similar physical features gives the adopted children a sense of belonging and a sense of home. However, such assertions need further empirical support. Future research should examine how the adopted Chinese children understand their ethnic identity, and how they position the ethnic community in their understanding and constructing their identity.

*Bilingualism as a Conduit for Social Capital: Implications for Policy*

Bilingual education has been an ever-controversial subject of educational policy. Whereas on the surface language is the means of effective communication, it is indeed a symbol of cultural and ethnic identity; and it is an instrument of power (Suárez-Orozco &
Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In the United States, where it is often referred as a “melting pot,” the controversies of bilingualism suggest a number of paradoxes.

On one hand, the policy makers have deep reservations about bilingual education. Rather than being considered as a potential asset of immigrant groups, the native language skills are seen as a threat to the integrity of the English language, as a threat to the loyalty of the American national identity, and as a symbolic refusal to assimilate to American culture. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) suggest, “These critics fear that teaching children in a language other than English will undermine the American culture and doom students to academic failure, eventually handicapping them in the job-market” (p. 140). This dissertation is an antidote to such fears. Although there is a need for more research on the relationship between bilingualism and academic achievement, the participants of this study believe that the mastery of a second or third language presents an obvious labor-market advantage in this era of globalization (Snow, 1997).For example, as discussed in Chapter VI, the study participants believe that China is a growing power and will play a major role in the global economy. Learning the language and Chinese culture gives the children an advantage in future job market.

Furthermore, researchers have argued that advantages of bilingualism include cognitive and social development. August and Hakuta (1997) argue that by shifting from one language code to another, bilingual or multilingual speakers may develop cognitive flexibilities that allow them to approach new language tasks more creatively. This argument is evident in the response of Dr. Woo to the question about the impact of the CCLS on the children’s academic performance in American schools. Dr. Woo replied,
I think coming to the Chinese school makes them smarter. The Chinese proverb says, “The more skills you have, the better off you are (艺多不压身).” Learning Chinese helps them develop their logic. That is good for them. I’ve never heard any parents complain that because of learning Chinese, the children’s regular school work is lagged behind. Some even say that learning Chinese helps them in their overall academic performance.

Along the same vein, Sommer (1999) suggests bilingual or multilingual speakers can easily navigate linguistic boundaries, and bilingualism or multilingualism provide them a different perspective of life and open a new horizon. Julian is an example of illustration. When asked about the effects of learning Chinese on his regular school performance, he described it this way:

When I’m thinking, reading or writing, when I think about definitions of words and meanings of different languages, I can think of them on a whole different level than if I hadn’t been learning Chinese.

In general, researchers have argued that bilingual or multilingual speakers may have advantages in “their overall linguistic, cognitive, or social development” over monolinguals of the same socioeconomic background (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 138).

Although it is debatable whether there is a causal relationship between bilingualism and academic achievement, the findings of this dissertation suggest that bilingualism is a potential asset for future labor-market. Future research should examine whether bilingualism acts as a conduit for social capital, and how bilingualism solidifies children’s ties to the ethnic community and maintains their exposure to the social norms embraced by the ethnic community.

Despite its advantages, bilingual education in the U.S. is facing many problems, among which the most common problems are the shortage of funding and the dearth of
certified bilingual teachers. Under such challenging circumstances, policy makers should consider embracing the ethnic community in the development of bilingual education programs. For example, in the CCLS, the teachers are bilingual, some of whom are certified to teach Chinese as a second language. They can serve as proper Chinese language models to the CICA student. For the newly arrived immigrant children, they can learn English from their American-born co-ethnic peers. In turn, the immigrant children teach Chinese words to American-born co-ethnic peers. In such a setting, the immigrant children are in intimate and reciprocal contacts with English speaking co-ethnics, and they would not feel the pressure and embarrassment to learn English as they would in the ESL class at an American school. So how the policy makers embrace the ethnic community and promote bilingual education in the ethnic community is the question to which future research should pay more attention.

Involvement of the Ethnic Community in Educating Immigrant Children: Implications for Educational Practice

The implications for educational practice are closely related to the heart of this dissertation that ethnic community plays a vital role in the immigrant children’s school adaptation and academic outcomes. American schools have been criticized as social institutions controlled and manipulated by the dominant groups to maintain the status quo. Carnoy (1998) contends that the dominant socioeconomic class that controls social, political, economic, and educational institutions uses its power to maintain, or reproduce, its favored position and to subordinate socially and economically disadvantaged classes (pp. 6-7). Critical theorists, Apple and King (1977) argue that special social groups and
classes decide what is considered as legitimate knowledge and how it is distributed in schools. Apple and King suggest,

In clear terms, the overt and covert knowledge found within school settings, and the principles of selection, organization and evaluation of this knowledge, are value-governed selection from a much larger universe of possible knowledge and selection principles. Hence they must not be accepted as given, but must be made problematic-bracketed, if you will--so that the social and economic ideologies and the institutionally patterned meanings, which stand behind them, can be scrutinized. (p. 343)

Although Giroux (1988) agrees that critical educators should examine and redefine the notion of power, school culture, and legitimate knowledge, he does not believe in debunking existing forms of schooling and educational theory; nor rejecting the dominant ideologies completely. Instead, Giroux suggests that educators rework them, contest the terrains on which they develop, and build upon them the democratic possibilities inherent both in schools and in the visions that guide the actions (p. 185). Giroux further suggests that an emancipatory curriculum should be built upon the cultural and social experiences of the subordinate or oppressed groups.

This dissertation has argued that the ethnic community plays a pivotal role in immigrant children’s school adaptation and academic success. Therefore, in developing an emancipatory curriculum and a critical pedagogy, educators should take the historical and social experiences of the ethnic group as a starting point, and involve the whole ethnic community in decision making: what is meaningful knowledge to them? If the ethnic community is not involved, the educational reform will not be successful. As Valenzuela (1999) suggests, “When goals, objectives, and strategies are systematically
blind to the experiences of the ‘other’s’ history and culture, and especially their folk understandings of education, they are sure to meet with limited success” (p. 263).

As the locus of social support and social control, the ethnic community can represent its members to negotiate with schools to develop a curriculum, which the community members deem relevant to their daily experiences. Furthermore, as a buffer between the two cultural worlds, the ethnic community provides love, comfort, supervision, ambition, role models, and hope; meanwhile, it protects the children from the oppositional youth culture that they are likely to encounter in daily lives. Or in De Vos’ (1992) words, the culturally constituted patterns of community cohesion and supervision can “immunize” immigrant youth from the more toxic elements in their new settings. Thus, educators should embark on establishing trust relationships between schools and the ethnic community; and mobilize and utilize the social capital embedded in the ethnic community to protect and promote the welfare of immigrant children.

The Future of the Chinese Language School

What will the future of the Chinese language school and the ethnic community look like? As the opening quote suggests, the intermarriage with non-Chinese will be a key factor in shaping the future of the Chinese school as well as the community. I have discussed earlier in this chapter that Chinese have the highest rate of outmarriage, which results in an increasing number of biracial or multi-racial children. For these children, they may (or may not) acknowledge their Chinese originality, but the cultural boundaries between who is “us” versus who is “them” will become less distinctive over time. The Chinese language school may still exist, but the number of population it serves may
reduce. As the parent predicts in the opening quote, “If 50 percent of the later generation comes back to Chinese school, that will be a great achievement.”

Another possible scenario is the student population shift from majority of mono-racial Chinese to majority of biracial/multiracial Chinese or non-Chinese, who are interested in learning the language for utilitarian purposes. Thus the notion of ethnic community will be less clear, and the sense of belonging will be weakened.

The second factor that plays a vital role in the future of Chinese community is the reversed migration, that is, the overseas Chinese in the U.S. return China for development opportunities. Mr. Gao, the president of American United Chamber of Commerce (AUCOC), explains, “With the rapid development of the Chinese economics, an increasing number of Chinese overseas professionals, students and entrepreneurs are thinking of going back to China to fully develop themselves” (December, 17, 2007, People’s Daily Online). Along the same vein, Mr. Sun, the Contemporary Chinese Language School treasurer, explained the impact of reversed migration on the future of the Chinese school in this way:

In my opinion, in a couple of years, the Chinese school will reach its peak, and then will maintain its level. The reason is simple. Now the Chinese immigrants are like the Taiwanese 10 years ago. They are from a wealthy family, and their purpose of coming to the United States is to have an American diploma, and learn some knowledge. Then they will go back to China. It is not necessary for them to stay in the U.S. So our student population will decrease.

The trend of intermarriage and reversed migration will result in the contracting of the ethnic community. Although Chinese America has been and will always be a part of American life, the Chinese-ness will become increasingly symbolic, without a constant replenishment or source of renewal the Chinese ethnicity. How will the contracting affect
the social capital embedded in the community? Will the lack of communal social capital be a possible explanation of the later generation revolt? These are the questions that future research should address.
APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC AND FAMILY BACKGROUND SURVEY
Demographic and Family Background Survey

Directions:

There are two versions of the survey. The first two pages are the Chinese version, and the third page is the English version. If for some reason you cannot see the Chinese version, please go to page 3, and fill out the English version. They are the same survey, so you only choose one to fill out and send it back to me at gtan@kent.edu. Thank you for your time!

问卷调查

1. 请问您的出生地:
   a. 中国大陆
   b. 美国
   c. 非中国大陆，非美国

2. 请问您来美国多长时间了?
   a. 不到 5 年
   b. 5 到 10 年
   c. 超过 10 年

3. 请问您所获得的最高学位?
   a. 博士学位
   b. 硕士学位
   c. 学士学位
   d. 大专学位
   e. 高中毕业
   f. 以上都不是

4. 请问您的先生或太太所获得的最高学位?
   a. 博士学位
   b. 硕士学位
   c. 学士学位
   d. 大专学位
   e. 高中毕业
   f. 以上都不是

5. 请问您的职业是________________________________________

6. 请问您的先生或太太的职业是________________________________________

7. 请问您家庭的年收入是
   a. 家庭年收入在$500,000 以上
b. 家庭年收入在 $250,000$ 到 $500,000$ 以上

c. 家庭年收入在 $100,000$ 到 $250,000$ 之间

d. 家庭年收入在 $75,000$ 到 $100,000$ 之间

e. 家庭年收入在 $35,000$ 到 $75,000$ 之间

f. 家庭年收入在 $16,000$ 到 $35,000$ 之间

g. 家庭年收入在 $16,000$ 以下

8. 就教育而言，您对您的孩子/她的期望是：
a. 博士学位
b. 硕士学位
c. 学士学位
d. 大专学位
e. 高中毕业
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHINESE IMMIGRANT AND CHINESE AMERICAN PARENTS
Questionnaire for Chinese Immigrant and Chinese American Parents

1. Where were you born?
   a. In mainland China
   b. In the U.S.
   c. Outside mainland China and United States

2. How long have you been to the United States?
   a. Less than 5 years
   b. 5-10 years
   c. More than 10 years

3. What is your highest educational achievement?
   a. Doctorate or professional degree
   b. Master’s degree
   c. Bachelor’s degree
   d. Some college
   e. High school
   f. N/A

4. What is your spouse’s highest education?
   a. Doctorate or professional degree
   b. Master’s degree
   c. Bachelor’s degree
   d. Some college
   e. High school
   f. N/A

5. What is your occupation/profession?

6. What is your spouse’s occupation/profession?

7. In terms of family annual income, where do you think your family belongs?
   a. $500,000 or more
   b. $250,000 to $500,000
   c. $100,000 to $250,000
   d. $75,000 to $100,000
e. $35,000 to $ 75,000
f. $16,000 to $ 30,000
g. $ 16,000 or less

8. What is your expectation for your children in terms of their education?
   a. Doctorate or professional degree
   b. Master’s degree
   c. Bachelor’s degree
   d. Some college
   e. High school
REFERENCES
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