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**Cultural Processes and the Connections among Home, School, and Community**

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Most educators and policy makers seek to establish strong connections among parents, school personnel, and community organizations. Indeed, as the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse, it is more important than ever to develop effective programs for fostering and supporting these connections. In this chapter, we use sociocultural theory as the basis for a discussion of future directions for research on family-school-community (FSC) partnerships. We first provide a roadmap to current thinking about culture as it is applied to family dynamics and children's schooling. We illustrate these concepts with examples from the literature on parental engagement and school outreach with respect to Chinese-American families. Along the way, we discuss some of the challenges to studying culture and the family-school connection and provide suggestions for future research on cultural processes and FSC partnerships.

#### Theoretical Perspectives on Culture, Schooling, and Family Life

The sociocultural approach to studying families in a cultural context is rooted in the work of anthropologists in the 1920s and 30s, most notably Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski. This early work established an approach that is still common today, one in which family goals, beliefs, and practices are seen as responding to the family's physical and social ecologies. Important elements of family ecologies include conditions of parents' work, safety conditions and resources afforded within the community, information and resources available through media sources, the division of household labor within the family, as well as community and general societal expectations regarding children's play, school work, and other tasks (Weisner, 2002). Viewed through a sociocultural lens, parents are agentic, self-reflective individuals who modify cultural models of childrearing that are salient in their communities (D'Andrade, 1992; Quinn & Holland, 1987; Shore, 1996). Parents adapt these models in light of the resources they

and their children have access to and the daily challenges they experience. It is a common misconception that cultural approaches assume that all members of a group experience the context and associated cultural models in an identical manner. Instead, the sociocultural approach asserts that “Shared cultural practices...clearly can coexist with very different inner experiences of those practices and emotions” (Weisner, 2009, p. 182).

In the sociocultural framework, parents are seen as using the cultural tools at their disposal to attain their goals and to solve the problems presented by the ecological conditions of their lives. However, the dynamic process of parenting inevitably involves tradeoffs and can result in more or less successful solutions. For example, parents living in a dangerous neighborhood may insist that their children come home after school rather than attend an after-school program that would necessitate returning after dark. In other words, parents must evaluate the affordances of various settings and adapt cultural models to address opportunities and problems at hand, which may be incompatible with the priorities of school personnel. Therefore, it is likely that some parents will be more effective than others in supporting their children’s schooling and achievement, although they may certainly be successful in other domains (García Coll & Pachter, 2006).

In the following statement, Weisner conveys the deep and comprehensive role of culture in the life of a child:

Every cultural community provides developmental pathways for children within some ecological-cultural (ecocultural) context. Cultural pathways are made up of everyday routines of life, and routines are made up of cultural activities (bedtime, playing video games, homework, watching TV, cooking dinner, soccer practice, visiting grandma, babysitting for money)...Activities include values and goals, resources needed to make

the activity happen, people in relationship, the tasks the activity is there to accomplish, emotions and feelings of those engaged in the activity, and a script defining the appropriate, normative way we expect to do that activity. Imagine cultural pathways themselves as consisting of cultural activities that we “step” into – engage in – and walk alongside throughout life (Weisner, 2002, p. 276).

In this definition, Weisner describes culture as connected to “ecological-cultural contexts” rather than to ethnic, racial, or national membership. His concept of culture assumes that members of a community have access to variable “pathways” rather than a single, monolithic way of living. He includes activities, values, and resources in his definition of culture rather than characterizing it solely in terms of beliefs. He conveys the agency of the individual in relationship with others rather than assuming that cultural norms are imposed unilaterally on community members. Finally, in his definition, cultural processes evolve and change over the lifetime of each individual rather than being transmitted intact from one generation to the next.

The sociocultural approach articulated by Weisner has far-reaching implications for the development of effective family-school-community partnerships. Most importantly, it suggests that school staff must be aware of salient cultural practices as well as the structural or ecological conditions that families face in their everyday lives. To illustrate the ways in which a sociocultural approach can inform the development of effective FSC partnerships, in the next section we provide a selective review of the literature on parenting and children’s school achievement within Chinese American families.

### **Understanding FSC Partnerships within Chinese American Families**

We begin with an overview of research on parental involvement within Chinese American families. In this review, we use the terms “involvement” and “engagement”

interchangeably to refer to the activities parents engage in home and school to support their children's academic achievement. In addition to summarizing research findings, we show how inquiry regarding parental involvement is strengthened when attention is paid to five important principles raised by sociocultural theorists: (a) awareness of the appropriate level of analysis for understanding cultural processes; (b) attention to the contemporary and historical contexts of cultural models about parenting; (c) consideration of intragroup-variability, and of stability as well as change in beliefs and practices; (d) awareness of parent involvement behaviors that diverge from those typically employed by white, middle-class, nonimmigrant parents; and (e) focus on the culturally specific meanings of involvement practices to parents and children. We then turn to the "other side" of the partnership – namely, educators' outreach efforts to connect with families who are Chinese American. Lastly, we make recommendations for future research to illuminate the factors that can contribute to successful programs.

### **Selecting the Appropriate Level of Analysis**

Most sociocultural theorists are loath to equate culture with a large structural unit such as nation, race, or ethnicity, as it is quite clear that there is diversity within one group of people originating from, for example, the same country (Gjerde, 2004). However, some argue that research using categories such as these can serve a heuristic purpose, capturing the blend of beliefs, practices, and structural features that together comprise a cultural community. Overall, we agree with Valsiner (2001), who argues that productive inquiry can occur at multiple levels, ranging from "microscopic (linked with discourse and conversation analyses), mesoscopic (culture as exemplified in 'beliefs'), and macroscopic (culture as analyzed through generic social representations)" (pp. 22-23). The question becomes which level is appropriate for studying a particular phenomenon, as well as how we can conceptualize and study the links among levels.

With respect to studies of Asian heritage families, we argue that the omnibus category of *Asian American* – a term that encompasses at least 24 nations of origin – is not an effective lens for examining *cultural* differences (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012). However, by narrowing the focus to Chinese Americans, researchers are somewhat more able to identify cultural practices related to schooling and family life, particularly if they are mindful of the variability associated with socioeconomic status, national origin or ancestry, language use, religion, the length of time since immigration, and reasons for immigration. We provide some discussion of these factors in the next section.

### **Attending to the Historical and Contemporary Context**

To the extent that researchers and school personnel are familiar with the sociohistorical forces that have affected Chinese American children, parents, and grandparents, they will better understand the cultural meanings of parental involvement. The beliefs and actions of contemporary Chinese American parents have been shaped by the conditions that prompted immigration to the United States from the mid-1800s onward, including corrupt and repressive governments, popular rebellions, population pressures, and natural disasters (Zhou, 2009). Many Chinese immigrants who are today rearing their children in the US directly experienced violence, deprivation, and the negative effects of educational reforms during the Cultural Revolution (Dryburgh, 2013). We can expect these experiences to affect the cultural meanings of education, involvement in schooling, and hardship. These personal and collective events have some impact whether they are experienced firsthand, filtered down from stories by members of a previous generation, or communicated through friends and family still living in China. The important point here is that the cultural models of this particular group – including their beliefs about education and strategies for supporting the achievement of their children -- derive not just from

ethnic membership per se, but from circumstances and experiences located in distinctive historical moments.

In addition to considering the context that prompted families to leave China, it is also important to understand the receiving context encountered by different waves of immigrants to the United States. Throughout much of the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese immigrants were met with suspicion and hostility when they arrived in the United States. Their numbers were eventually restricted by strict anti-immigration laws which pertained to all but the most highly qualified government officials and students, and called for the deportation of Chinese individuals already residing in the United States. In 1929, the national origins system set the annual quota for Chinese immigrants at only 100 individuals, compared to, for instance, nearly 66,000 for the United Kingdom (LeMay & Barkan, 1999). Although the Chinese Exclusion Acts were repealed in 1943, a quota system continued to limit immigration primarily to highly educated members of the professions. Thus, researchers characterizing Chinese immigrant parents as holding high expectations for their children's achievement should not assume that these expectations are associated with being Chinese per se, but may be a response by a relatively elite class to a hostile environment.

In past decades, the number of rural and less educated immigrants has grown, but there is still a positive immigrant selection effect. Chinese immigrants are still more educated than those who do not migrate and they have overcome many barriers that necessarily required significant social and financial resources (Feliciano, 2005). Racial bias continues in the present time, although not as virulent as the racist treatment that Chinese immigrants received in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For instance, in many contemporary high schools where athletics and social skills are highly valued, Chinese American students may be stereotyped as “nerds” and excluded from



some school activities (Li, 2012). These current conditions shape the approaches Chinese American students take to schooling. For instance, the tendency of Chinese American students to remain relatively quiet in class should not be attributed necessarily to respect for the teacher's authority. Rather, researchers should consider alternative interpretations, such as the possibility that Chinese American students may refrain from speaking up in class to avoid attracting negative peer attention.

In summary, it is clear that studies of parenting among immigrant groups should take account of the sociodemographic and economic context of the sending as well as receiving countries. Immigrants who have made it to the United States cannot be assumed to represent the sociodemographic or even cultural norms of their sending context. And the specific challenges and opportunities that they face in the receiving context will determine which cultural practices are needed to be successful and which are not. By considering the dynamic features of the contexts of immigration, research can move beyond over-simplified assertions about the cultural beliefs and practices of the "Chinese culture."

### **Consideration of Intra-group Variability and Change over Time**

Within the sociocultural literature, it is customary to refer to community members' access to shared models of childrearing and education. But there is also a strong interest in how values, ideas, and practices are understood or misunderstood and then debated, altered, and sometimes rejected by the members of a particular group. This dynamic process of debate – along with changing structural conditions – results in change over time. In the literature on Chinese American families, it is rather common to gloss over this heterogeneity and to attribute parent beliefs and actions to the influence of Confucianism, conceptualized in terms of a small number of constructs like filial piety which are presumed to be understood and enacted in similar ways

by all group members. In this section, we explore the ways in which Confucianism has been conceptualized by researchers interested in its effects on socialization practices of contemporary Chinese American parents. We wish to indicate the need for research that ~~problematises the salience of Confucianism and~~ examines variable interpretations of its effect of Confucianism on family dynamics.

Several aspects of Confucianism are commonly viewed as relevant to parental involvement in learning (Chua, 2002). We begin with the concept of *ren*, which refers to a lifelong striving to become a genuine, sincere, and humane person. Confucius characterized the process of becoming *ren* as one of self-perfecting, and he believed that human perfectibility could be sought by anyone (Ames & Rosemont, 1999; de Bary, 1991; Li, 2003). The process of becoming *ren* is thought to involve determination, diligence, perseverance, concentration, and humility, attributes that in turn affect one's academic success (Li, 2012). However, there are different interpretations as to how those energetic efforts should be directed. When explaining the nature of *ren*, some scholars have linked this process of self-betterment to engaging in sincere and productive interpersonal roles and relationships. Others assert that it is more accurately linked to intellectual development through study and learning rather than to cultivating human relations. This difference of opinion suggests that, at the very least, researchers should not assume that becoming *ren* is necessarily a driver of high academic achievement.

The role of parents has been characterized by such terms as *chiao shun*, referring to parents' duty to train or teach children expected behaviors (Chao, 1994), *guan* referring to parents' positive efforts to care for and govern their children (Chao, 1994) and *cha chiao*, referring to family education and the important role of parents as their children's teachers (Chen

& Luster, 2002). In return for their parents' guidance, training, and nurturance, children are expected to be filial by genuinely respecting and honoring their parents (Ames & Rosemont, 2009). Here again, we note variability in scholars' characterization of an important Confucian construct. On one hand, some describe it as an absolute mandate that cannot be challenged, as in the following quotation from Zhou (2009): "[T]he child's filial responsibility is the debt owed to parents for a life time; a child is expected to suppress his or her own self-interest to satisfy parental needs whether these needs are appropriate and rational or not" (p. 194). However, others have argued that filial piety should not be understood as simple obedience or as being subjected to coercive control but rather should be situated within a harmonious, loving family environment and should bring enjoyment for children (Rosemont & Ames, 2009).

This apparent confusion about the implications of filial piety are in turn connected to unclear statements about the connection between Confucianism and parenting style in Chinese American families. It is frequently asserted that Confucianism itself is conducive to a harsh and controlling style of parenting. For example, Zhou (2009) has claimed that Chinese fathers, in particular, "are not supposed to show too much affection to children, play with them, or treat them as equals. This image of stone-faced authority often inhibits children from questioning, much less challenging, their parents" (p. 194). However, others have argued that Confucianism is in fact consistent with warm and supportive parenting (Kim, Wang, Orozco-Lapray, Shen, & Murtuza, 2013). Indeed, Kim and colleagues' longitudinal analysis of Chinese American parent- and adolescent-reports found that fathers were much more likely to be supportive than strict, and were rarely harsh (Kim et al., 2013). Similarly, Huang (2014) has argued that contemporary Chinese mothers are far less harsh than they are portrayed in Chua's 2011 book about "tiger

mothers.” These contradictory findings indicate a need for more careful study of the connection between Confucianism and parenting in this population.

Finally, we note that scholars of modern Chinese history strongly question whether Confucianism is *at all* influential in contemporary life: “The abolition of examinations in the Classics in 1905, the collapse of the empire a few years later, and the subsequent rejection of Confucianism as the state ideology made its study seem less useful as a conceptual tool for understanding contemporary Chinese politics, society, and ways of thinking. Also, the belief that the single most important key to another culture lay in the texts of its ‘sacred books’ began to be abandoned in the twentieth century...” (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 376). Given the skepticism evidenced by serious inquiry into the role of Confucianism in contemporary life, we suggest that researchers should not assume that Chinese American parents are guided by Confucianism and the associated values regarding parent and child roles. A productive alternative is to actually assess parents’ views with respect to these beliefs and values, as in studies by Costigan and Su (2008), as well as Fung and Lau (2009).

### **Parent Engagement in Conventionally Preferred Activities**

Given that most Chinese American students do well in school, it may seem surprising that Chinese American parents do not engage in certain conventionally-recognized forms of involvement as often as do parents in other ethnic groups. For instance, analyses of the 1988 to 2000 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), a large and nationally representative data set, found that Chinese and other Asian American parents were less likely than European American parents to discuss school, help with homework, or participate in school events, although they were more likely to help their children prepare for standardized achievement tests, plan for college, limit their time in leisure activities and household chores, and provide home

resources such as a computer (Mau, 1997; Pearce, 2006; Pearce & Lin, 2007; Peng & Wright, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Furthermore, analyses by these authors suggest that parental engagement in discussions, homework help, and participation in school events were either unrelated or negatively related to achievement for Asian American students. Chao (2000) has suggested that Chinese American parents become increasingly less “managerial” in their involvement as their children move out of elementary school, and are relatively more focused on placing their children in high-quality learning contexts within the conventional school system as well as in community and after-school programs.

Few studies have been conducted to understand how Chinese American parents make decisions about how to allocate their time and resources in support of their children’s education. Certainly, constraints such as lack of time, language barriers, and financial pressure may hamper their ability to attend conferences or participate in cultural or sports activities (Chua, 2002). In addition to these practical matters, parents who are focused on academic achievement may value students’ extracurricular activities as an opportunity for fun, but not as something that requires parental involvement. Even parent-teacher conferences may be perceived as uninformative, especially if parents are aware of how their children are doing in a supplementary schooling program. Huntsinger and Jose (2009) suggest that some Chinese American parents find grading rubrics used by many schools to be too vague, and instead express a preference for knowing their child’s class ranking, which is rarely if ever provided in American schools. Clearly, this is a topic that deserves further study (see Yamamoto & Li, 2012 for an interesting study of families with preschool aged children). Furthermore, it is of interest to look at how parenting differs with respect to child gender, as there are preliminary indications that Chinese American parents treat male and female children differently (Crockett, Reed, & Russell, 2010).

### **Culturally Specific Forms of Parental Engagement**

Exploratory research suggests that Chinese American parents may employ a number of strategies other than homework monitoring and participation at the school site that are likely to boost their children's school achievement. These parental actions draw upon the capital inherent in social relationships at the level of the community, the extended family, and the immediate family. For many Chinese American parents, particularly those living in ethnic enclaves, their community may support children's school achievement in a number of ways. For example, many Chinese American parents draw upon community capital by enrolling their children in supplementary classes (Zhou & Kim, 2006; Zhou, 2009). These local institutions provide formal instruction and also provide children with additional exposure to adults who presumably place a high value on education and traditional values (Zhou, 2009). Academic achievement is also emphasized in ethnically-oriented media, as illustrated by Chinese language newspapers that report on the results of national, state, and local scholastic competitions (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Attending supplementary lessons also helps Chinese American children connect with peers whose families may share similar values about the importance of schooling.

Chinese American parents may also help their children indirectly by activating their social capital. In their qualitative study, Li et al. (2008) found that parental messages were supported and amplified by the parents of the students' friends, normalizing the expectations of Chinese parents for their children. These authors have noted that parents who had not themselves attended secondary school assisted their children by identifying other adults to monitor schoolwork, serve as role models, and generally reinforce the importance of educational achievement. Chinese American children are thus assisted through close ties to peers and immediate family, as well as via "weak" ties to higher status community members identified and recruited by parents.

### **Cultural Meanings of Parent Engagement Practices**

The presence of very high expectations for stellar academic achievement is the strongest and most frequently replicated feature of cognitive socialization provided by Chinese American parents. Even when socio-economic status is controlled, Asian American parents expect that their children will attain higher levels of education than African American, European American, and Latino parents do (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). In general, researchers have found a strong positive association between high parental expectations and children's achievement in white families, even when controlling for prior achievement levels; however, the evidence regarding Asian American families is contradictory (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010), prompting some researchers to argue that high expectations constitute a form of psychological control that is harmful to children's self-esteem, family relationships, and intrinsic interest in learning.

Within the literature on parenting, the construct of psychological control is defined as behavior that manipulates children's emotions, such as saying things to make them worry or feel isolated, alternately showing affection and hostility or criticism, or making affection contingent on performance (Barber, 1996; Silk, Morris, Kanaya, & Steinberg, 2003). There is some evidence that Chinese American parents are more likely to use psychological control than are European American parents, although the evidentiary base is far from convincing or complete. For example, Qin and her colleagues' qualitative study characterizes Chinese American parents as expressing love and acceptance of the child contingent on high achievement (Qin et al., 2008). Chinese American parents have also been reported to use the practice of shaming, strong emotional appeals, lengthy verbal reprimands, nagging, and lecturing (Chen et al., 2012; Fung, 1999; Miller & Fung, 2012).

Research conducted to date has failed to establish whether or not Chinese American parents' use of psychological control has the same damaging effects on their children as it does

among European American families. Some studies emphasize that certain techniques accomplish the cultural goal of motivating high academic achievement without discernable negative effects on the children. For example, Chua (2002) found that Chinese American children, who were raised to experience a sense of filial piety, responded to parent narratives about their own hardships with a sense of thankfulness to their parents for sacrificing their own quality of life. In contrast, other research suggests that the association between parent psychological control and student psychological outcomes is similar in both groups. For instance, in a longitudinal study of Chinese American adolescents and parents, less parental psychological control (i.e., presence of warmth and reasoning; absence of hostility, control, shaming, and punitive behaviors; and relatively more democratic practices) was associated with fewer depressive symptoms, less alienation from parents, and a stronger sense of family obligation (Kim et al., 2013). Similarly, another study of Chinese American families found that mothers' reported attempts to limit their children's autonomy was related to adolescents' self-reported symptoms of depression and mild psychological distress (Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2008).

In the future, researchers may be able to resolve some of these contradictory findings by paying closer attention to the structural differences already discussed, particularly the length of time family members have resided in the US and the conditions under which they arrived. Parental pressure to achieve may be interpreted as relatively benign by children of immigrants because they are aware of the hardships their parents endured. In contrast, second- or third-generation Chinese American students may attribute psychological control to lack of caring on the part of their parents, to the detriment of their self-perceptions and motivation to achieve.

Measurement issues may also contribute to the contradictory findings concerning psychological control. Studies that rely on brief surveys normed on European American families



are unlikely to uncover the nuanced meanings that a behavior holds for parents and children. For example, although the act of shaming a child may seem harsh and even hostile, it is possible that it serves primarily as a device for arousing the child's emotions so that they pay close attention to a crucial socialization message (Quinn, 2005). There is a particularly pressing need to validate measures of parental control, parental support, and autonomy with large samples of Chinese Americans and to construct new measures that include culturally-relevant items. Researchers might also investigate alternative methods, such as directly observing parent-child interactions, because standard cross-cultural comparisons may mask true differences (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). At the very least, measurement equivalency should be investigated and low reliability coefficients should not be ignored.

Other caveats to blanket assertions about the effects of psychological control can be noted. For instance, research should more carefully examine the extent to which psychological control is applied in all domains, or primarily in the domain of learning and academics (Wang & Chang, 2010). It is also important to identify parents' intentions for engaging in particular behaviors. A Chinese American parent who overtly compares her child to a higher-achieving peer may intend to provide a concrete example of an attainable standard, not to humiliate or hurt that child (Chao, 1994; Li et al., 2008). At some point, children are able to discern when controlling behavior is a function of concern and care, or is rooted in hostility or rejection, and it would be of great interest to explore how these perceptions develop in children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

At the same time, it is important for studies to look holistically at children's well-being to document the costs as well as the benefits to individual students of parental practices (Louie, 2004). For instance, if Chinese American children are more inclined than children from other

cultural groups to criticize themselves when they do not do well, they may work hard to improve their performance, but consequently may be put at risk for anxiety and depression. Parental controlling behaviors should also be examined in the context of other actions, as well as the context in which parents are making choices about how to treat their children. For example, Miller and Fung (2012) found that Chinese American parents tended to mix strong criticism with playful language and nonverbal expressions of affection toward their young children.

### **School Outreach to Chinese American Parents**

Very little has been written about school partnerships with Chinese American families. Presumably, the relatively high achievement of these students makes it less likely that they or their parents will be targeted for specific programs or interventions. However, this assumption is based on a stereotypical view of Chinese students and does not consider intra-group variability on academic outcomes (Louie, 2004), nor does it examine the relative difficulty that many Chinese American children have with verbal expression when they attend schools where they are in the minority (Li, 2012). In addition to the tendency to overlook the academic needs of lower achieving Chinese American students, few studies have examined how school outreach to parents can ameliorate some of the internalizing problems that have been found among a disproportionate number of Chinese American students.

In contrast to the lack of school outreach programs targeting the Chinese American community, a number of well-documented approaches have been developed for other ethnic/racial groups. This work can help point to future directions for work with Chinese American families. One type of program builds on the work of Moll and González, which advocates building on the “funds of knowledge” that adults in a community have accrued over the course of their daily lives (e.g., González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Within this approach,

school staff members make a focused effort to learn as much as possible about the everyday activities and specialized knowledge of families in the school district. Often, this objective is accomplished by scheduling teacher visits to the home or encouraging teachers to attend community-based events. We would argue that future work should examine the potential of the funds of knowledge approach to strengthen FSC partnerships with Chinese American families. It might be particularly important to explore how to minimize teachers' anxiety about conducting home visits, as well as the fears of family members, who may feel as if they are being judged by the school (Edwards & Alldred, 2000).

A second approach to forming partnerships with parents from underrepresented or nondominant groups is exemplified in the work of Bryk and colleagues (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk et al., 2010). They were able to improve the Chicago Public School (CPS) system's partnerships with Latino and African-American parents by inviting them to participate as volunteer aides in the classroom. Over time, even parents who were initially hesitant to enter the school building or interact with teachers found that they were able to make a significant contribution by tutoring children and otherwise assisting with academic tasks. Some parents extended this involvement to include more broad-based community advocacy. At this point, they often felt empowered to make more assertive demands or more pointed critiques of problematic features of the institutions in their community. Unlike the funds of knowledge approach (González et al., 2005), the strategies utilized in the CPS study focused less on identifying and building on indigenous cultural models and everyday practices, and more on trying to build parents' self-confidence about their ability to contribute to children's intellectual development. It is difficult to know whether this approach would be successful for Chinese immigrant parents due to language barriers and lack of availability during school hours.

A third approach is to find ways for schools to act as brokers in the formation of peer networks among parents. Several recent studies suggest that when low-income or low-SES parents have formed a more extensive network among the families in their children's class, not only do their own children benefit socially and academically but there is also a positive effect on the school community as a whole (Park & Holloway, 2014). To the extent that many Chinese American parents are already accustomed to drawing upon friends and family members as role models for their children, it may be effective for schools to deepen this practice and expand it to a wider network of families. However, it is crucial to conduct research to better understand Chinese American parents' perceptions of American schools and their interactions with teachers to inform the development of FSC partnerships for these families.

### **Conclusions**

We have argued that researchers interested in studying FSC partnerships in a cultural context should adopt a theoretical framework that permits these relationships to be studied in a nuanced and informative manner. As Valsiner (2001) has noted, "Culture is not an 'independent' (or 'dependent') 'variable', but a label that denotes a systemic organization of the semiotic and historical nature of human psychological processes in their wide range of manifestations" (p. 10). Culture offers individuals a number of pathways that lead to certain experiences and offers a way to interpret those experiences and activities. Moreover, the existence of multiple pathways suggests variability within and across individuals as collective representations of childrearing are agentically communicated, contested, and adapted by each parent. These processes necessarily result in change over time and across situations; as cultural communities change in response to events and resources, then available pathways will change accordingly. Research based on these key sociocultural tenets is well positioned to inform successful programs linking families,

schools, and communities.

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