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An ethnography of Chinese families in America: implications for family therapy

Shi-Jiuan Wu

Iowa State University

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An ethnography of Chinese families in America: Implications for family therapy

Wu, Shi-Juan, Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 1993

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An ethnography of Chinese families in America: Implications for family therapy

by

Shi-Jiuan Wu

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Signature was redacted for privacy.

In Charge of Major Work
Signature was redacted for privacy.
For the Major Department
Signature was redacted for privacy.
For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

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To my dear father, mother and my husband
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1. General introduction 1

1.2. Summary 4

**CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1. Demography of Chinese Americans 5

2.2. Previous approaches to Chinese families in family therapy 6

2.3. Paradigm shift for Chinese families in family therapy 15

2.3.1. Logical positivism and first order cybernetics 15

2.3.2. Social constructionist inquiry 18

2.4. Qualitative inquiry 20

2.5. Summary 24

**CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1. Method: Ethnographic interviews 25

3.2. Informants 26

3.2.1. Informant selection 26

3.2.2. Informant description 29

3.3. Procedure 30

3.3.1. Ethnographer 32

3.3.2. Unstructured interviews 32

3.3.3. Descriptive, structural, and contrast questions 33

3.3.4. Trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability 35

3.3.5. Focus group 37
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. General introduction

The purpose of this study is to discover the grounded experiences of Chinese families living in the United States. Chinese people began immigrating to this country during the 1840s. By 1990, there were more than one and half a million Chinese Americans (Fong, 1992). Despite the long history and large numbers of Chinese people living in the United States, many misconceptions about Chinese families exist (Hsu, 1971; Shon & Ja, 1982). In order to help Chinese families more effectively, we need to get a clearer, more accurate picture of Chinese families.

To get a more accurate picture of Chinese families, we need a new point of view (postmodernism) and a new methodology (ethnography) for studying Chinese families. Postmodernism has only recently been introduced in the field of family therapy (Anderson, 1991; Goolishian & Anderson, 1988; Hoffman, 1991; & White, 1990). Rarely, however, has postmodernism been applied to ethnic family therapy. Within a postmodern frame, knowledge is a social exchange through language (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). Understanding this exchange is a most difficult challenge. Narrative multiplicity is preferred to singular narrative, because it does not limit one's possibilities of understanding and relating (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). The stories Chinese families have living in the context of the United States are still not understood.
Postmodernism, unlike positivism, does not decontextualize the narratives, does not begin with an *a priori* narrative, hence limiting the possibly multiple narratives. It looks at the context-relevant stories and the process of how an individual describes the multiple narratives. By using the postmodernism approach, we can understand better the nature of human knowledge (Gergen, 1985) about Chinese families. Ethnomethodology shares a similar concern with postmodernism because both focus on interpretive accounts of human meaning systems (Gergen, 1985). Ethnography is the systematic process of observing, detailing, describing, documenting, and analyzing the particular patterns of culture or subculture in order to understand the pattern of the people in their everyday environment. For Chinese families outcome research has been more a focus than process research in the family therapy field. Ethnography, on the other hand, allows the researcher to examine the process of the Chinese families' living experiences in the United States.

Family therapy is a young field of study. Its roots go back only to the 1950s (Hoffman, 1981). With such a short history, concern for family ethnicity, and the particular needs of diverse families has had little opportunity for study and development. Even so, recent work suggests a growing interest in identifying approaches to family therapy that meet the needs of specific ethnic groups (Breunlin, Schwartz, & Kune-Karrer, 1992; Falicov, 1988; Ho, 1987; Karrer, & Hardy, 1990; McGoldrick, Pearce, & Giordano, 1982; and Saba, Tseng, & Hsu, 1991).
Nevertheless, the core theories of family therapy give little reference to ethnic differences in the application of the methods. For instance, Bowen (1976), Haley (1976), Mental Research Institute strategic therapy (Fisch, Weakland, & Segal, 1982), and Milan systemic therapy (Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, Prata, 1978b) concentrated on the importance of the family context without making explicit reference to the cultural context within which the family is embedded (McGoldrick, Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1991). Minuchin's theory of structural family therapy (1967) is a possible exception. His work focused on multiproblem families, and he developed specific techniques to deal with poor Black and Hispanic families.

Only a single study though it is Minuchin's work gives useful examples of changes that need to be made in order to effectively help ethnically diverse families. Clinicians rely heavily upon theoretical principles or techniques, applying the principles of a preexisting theory automatically. In doing so, clinicians limit social exchange and fail to give careful attention to the unique character of each ethnic family and the specific context within which the family lives (Goolishian & Anderson, 1992). Postmodernism, on the other hand, emphasizes conversation and suggests that the world is understood through social exchange (Gergen, 1985). Only through the mutual interaction can a new meaning of family events and experiences be generated. The concept of narrative multiplicity, therefore, replaces the idea of singularity (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). The notion of singularity assumes a
single explanation of self-understanding, however, narrative multiplicity invites a variety of ways of understanding the self.

In the study described here, narrative questions for clinical usage were developed. Each question was based on the results of the ethnographic data analysis, taking a postmodern approach, each question attempts to bring out the processes by which Chinese people come to describe, explain, or account for the world in which they live (Gergen, 1985). These narrative clinical questions, it is hoped, will help clinicians in learning "how to" understand Chinese families better, rather than telling clinicians what they should know about Chinese families.

1.2. Summary

The purpose and significance of this study for the field of ethnic family therapy have been presented in the first chapter. A theory of family therapy and a research methodology that fit postmodernism were applied in this study. Chinese families were ethnic population to be studied. A brief review of the literature is presented in the second chapter, followed by a description of the methodology of this study and the qualitative data analysis. Clinical implications and discussion are provided in the fourth chapter.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, the purpose and significance of the study were explained. The following chapter provides a brief demography of Chinese Americans. It also gives an overview of the current approach to family therapy with Chinese families, the needed paradigm shift for clinicians doing family therapy with Chinese families, and the importance of qualitative inquiry in this study.

2.1. Demography of Chinese Americans

Chinese people were the first Asian group to arrive in the United States in large numbers (Sue, 1981). Chinese immigration to the United States began during the 1840s. At this time, Chinese men, responding to the demand for cheap labor, came to the United States to help build the transcontinental railroad. Since then, Asian exclusion laws have been passed by the United States Congress. Asian exclusion laws restrained Asian from immigrating to the United States. In 1952, the McCarran-Walter Act ended Asian exclusion, but allowed only a small annual Asian immigration quota. Thirteen years later, the Immigration Act of 1965 eliminated the restrictive Asian quotas and since then, the number of Asian Americans has increased dramatically.

From 1980 to 1990, the number of Chinese Americans grew from 806,040 to 1,645,472 (Fong, 1992). Takaki (1989) reports that in 1965 approximately 39 percent of Chinese Americans were foreign-born. By
1984, 63 percent of Chinese Americans were foreign-born. Furthermore, even greater numbers of Chinese families are expected to migrate to the United States in the near future, primarily due to Hong Kong's conversion from British rule to Chinese Communist leadership, anticipated in 1997 (Fong, 1992).

2.2. Previous approaches to Chinese families in family therapy

All too often, family therapy researchers view Asians as a single homogeneous group. However, the Asian American population is composed of more than 29 distinct subgroups who differ in language, religion, and customs (Sue & Sue, 1987). Even within the Chinese community, there are many cultural differences. This is because Chinese Americans may have immigrated to the United States from any one of the numerous culturally distinct regions of China, or they may be descendent of Chinese people living in various parts of the world (Jung, 1984).

There are, however, few examples of family therapists who consider the unique characteristics of Chinese American families (Hong, 1989; Jung, 1984; Ko, 1986; Lee, 1982; and Lee, 1989). For example, Lee (1982) examined other variable including: the overall impact of the migration and relocation history, the individual and family life cycle in the context of migration, differences in rates of adaptation and acculturation in the family, strengths and vulnerabilities in the family system, and the manifestation of
emotional problems in the context of the cultural environment. These significant factors need to be carefully understood when working with Chinese families.

In her work, Lee (1982) insisted that a holistic view of the person and an interactive and contextual perspective on behavior is required in working with Chinese families. This is because Chinese people tend to manifest their emotional problems through somatic symptoms. Therefore, Lee recommended close consultation with physicians and working together as team whenever possible. Lee also emphasized importance of focusing on the person, his/her family, and community system while assessing data and treatment intervention.

Furthermore, Lee (1982) highlighted a few of recommendations that could help therapists establish a more therapeutic relationship with Chinese families. These are:

(1) Chinese families prefer to view the therapist as the "problem-solver", not a peer.
(2) Chinese families need to know that the therapist is more powerful than their illness and will cure them with know-how.
(3) The clinician's nonjudgmental listening and neutrality may be viewed as a lack of interest on the Chinese families.
(4) Willingness to assume multiple helping roles enhances the therapeutic relationship.
(5) Clinicians help family members to set up measurable short-term goals.

(6) Be flexible with regard to office hours, length of interviews, and home visits.

Overall, Lee (1982) suggested therapists take a more active and expert role to resolve Chinese families' problems.

A conceptual framework was later introduced to understand Chinese American families more systematically. Hong (1989) explained that "In order to work effectively with the immigrant Chinese American family, a therapist must be sensitive about where the individual family stands, and address the issues accordingly" (p. 20). In order to meet this requirement, Hong proposed a conceptual framework for examining immigrant Chinese American families that consisted of two factors. These two factors are: (1) Cultural issues: Chinese families have different degrees of identification with Chinese and American cultures, and (2) Problem issues: Each Chinese family has different experiences as immigrants. Similar events might be experienced differently by various families. This framework will allow a clinician to consider the salient cultural values of each individual family.

Special issues were also raised by Hong (1989) in working with Chinese American families. Even though Chinese culture emphasizes the group rather than individual, this does not mean that all family members will feel comfortable discussing their problems with one
another. It is, therefore, important to be flexible and see members of a family in individual sessions, family sessions, or a combination of both.

Often, Chinese Americans are not familiar with the concept of therapy. It was, according to Hong (1989), important for the therapist to clarify each member's expectation and define the presenting problems in a solvable way during the first session. Moreover, Chinese parents usually prefer not to disclose their problems in the presence of their children. Children also might not feel comfortable expressing their negative feelings towards their parents in front of them (Shon & Ja, 1982). Therefore, a therapist has to hold sessions with individual members to see whether there is undisclosed information.

Additionally, the problems encountered by Chinese families may require special consideration in therapy. For example, Chinese families might not present their stress, doubt, and frustration to the therapist; rather they might present a more resilient side of themselves to the therapist. The clinicians have to explore the more stressful aspects of the immigration experience and its impact on the family. Besides this, Chinese families are less likely to show direct disagreement with the therapists. The therapist has to be aware of the message behind a statement. Therefore, therapeutically, it is advisable for a therapist to maintain the status of an expert and advisor.

Moreover, the concept of the classification of Chinese-American families was categorized according to their level of acculturation in the United States. According to Lee (1989), there were four types of
Chinese-American families: (1) The traditional families which consist of all family members who were born and raised in Asian countries. Family members speak their native Chinese dialects and practice traditional Chinese teachings in their daily lives. (2) The transitional families which consist of parents and grandparents with strong traditional beliefs living with the younger generation who were born in the United States and are westernized. This type of family usually experiences a great degree of cultural conflict between the acculturated children and the traditional parents. (3) The bicultural families which consist of parents who are professional, English-speaking, and quite "Westernized" like their children. The children were born in the United States. These families have the ability to take advantages of the strengths of both Eastern and Western cultures. (4) The Americanized families which consist of parents and children who are born and raised in the United States. In these families, the roots of Chinese culture gradually disappear.

Lee (1989) suggested that these four types of Chinese-American families have different help-seeking patterns. The traditional families require more concrete assistance, language interpretation, and suffer more from adjustment disorder, depression, psychosomatic complaints, as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The assistance that the transitional families need is in solving parent-child conflicts, role confusion, and marital conflict. The bicultural families are more adaptable and require little help from mental health services. Intrapsychic turmoil is mostly presented by the Americanized families.
Until now, cultural sensitivity, conceptual framework, and classification issues related to working with Chinese-American families have been discussed by Lee (1982), Hong (1989), and Lee (1989). Nevertheless, theories of family therapy models have not been applied by these authors. The application of structural family therapy to working with Chinese families was first systematically introduced by Jung (1984). Jung stated that American families resolve problems differently than Chinese families. American families resolve their problems by negotiating the expression of feelings and ideas. On the other hand, in traditional Chinese families, interactional patterns, rules, and regulations are dictated by tradition. Therefore, when the immigrant Chinese families encounter problems, new rules regulating interactions have to be gradually developed and incorporated into the family system, bringing about some degree of acculturation into the American society.

In his work, Jung (1984) claimed that the functionally rigid boundaries in traditional Chinese families may act to reinforce dysfunctional family interactions. In most cases, therefore, the goal of therapy for Chinese families should be to reduce the rigidity of boundaries between parents and children by modifying the communication patterns so that individuals understand each other better. He believes that involving the Chinese family members in the process of change or talking with each other rather than to the therapist, coupled with aiding family members to interact in a
different manner, can be a more efficient treatment intervention than education.

Using this approach, the therapist supports the parents' traditional beliefs while at the same time attempting to modify them. Also the therapist accepts the role of expert expected by the Chinese families in helping these families solve their problems. However, structural family therapy does not focus on helping Chinese family members make significant changes in their value system.

Ko (1986) used a case study of a Chinese family from Vietnam that immigrated to Canada to illustrate the application of Minuchin's (1974) structural therapy technique. According to Minuchin, in a couple and parent subsystems, the couple has to negotiate new boundaries and relationships with parents, siblings, and in-laws. However, when working with traditional Chinese families, keeping a clear boundary between couple subsystem and parent subsystem may not be practical. Chinese are taught to listen to and respect their elders and to do otherwise may jeopardize the outcome of the therapy. Joining the whole family in the therapy process, then, becomes a very important task.

Ko (1986) stated that "The therapist can assist the spousal subsystem and the extended family to reflect, analyze, and set priorities in their individual values versus family values in order for members of the family to view a conflicting issue objectively" (p.28). Overall, it's important to discover strengths in the Chinese families' cultural values which can mobilize them to restore their healthy
balance. Ko believed that when a therapist is too anxious to apply structural therapy and overemphasizes the focus on changing the family structure, the elements of genuineness, empathy, and respect for clients are oftentimes overlooked. The therapist who neglects these elements in the joining process makes Minuchin's tactic of building a therapeutic relationship a very manipulative and authoritarian process.

Overall, some moderate success has been achieved using the previously described techniques. However, there are still several unanswered questions that must be explored. The first unanswered question is that therapists who work with the Chinese families typically perceive themselves as observers or experts and look at the structure, interaction, and communication within the Chinese family system. The therapist is not participant, but an outsider to the family system. All too often, the clinician does therapy with Chinese families based on his/her assumptions, and the therapist's narrative becomes the Chinese family's reality (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). Committing oneself to a given story as truth is limits the possibility for understanding the family. How does the therapist know what resources the Chinese family possesses without engaging in a more mutually exploratory conversational process? How does the therapist and the Chinese family engage in a process of talking about the talk? For example, rather than assuming it's a problem when the Chinese families do not have extended family support, ask the family to talk about their experiences of living by themselves in the United States. The clinician can co-construct the
new meaning with the family about the support issue in the family through conversation.

A second unanswered question from the literature concerns the clinicians' view of the usefulness of these therapy models. Little emphasis is given to the Chinese families' own experiences of family therapy. Few researchers discuss how Chinese families define the success of family therapy. Similarly, researchers do not consider how Chinese families define the problem of family therapy.

Third, most of the literature about family therapy for Chinese families seems to imply that the more Americanized the Chinese family can become, the fewer problems they will experience. This point of view does not appreciate the diversity among Chinese families. Regardless of whether or not they maintain their Chinese traditions or become highly Americanized, all Chinese people have their own unique stories. Each story has its meaning and resources, and no one story is better than the other.

A final question concerns the deficiency model and diversity model. The deficiency model has been preferred to diversity model by clinicians in working with the Chinese families (Sue & Sue, 1990). Clinicians and researchers, who are influenced by deficiency model, tend to look at the problems and how to resolve those problems for the Chinese families. Diversity model, an alternative and perhaps preferable approach is to consider the strengths of the families, how the families struggle with their hardship, and how they recreate new meaning out of their stories.
In conclusion, family therapy for Chinese families has fallen into the paradigms of logical positivism and first order cybernetics. The paradigm of postmodernism (also called social constructionism) is suggested to work with the Chinese families in the future. More detailed discussion about positivism, cybernetics, and social constructionism, will be discussed in the next section.

2.3. Paradigm shift for Chinese families in family therapy

In order to understand and work with Chinese-American families, the selection of a paradigm to use in working with Chinese people becomes especially important. Logical positivism and first order cybernetics have been adapted to help Chinese families. Due to the limitations of these two paradigms, a new approach is required to be needed for who are working with Chinese families. In this section, logical positivism and first order cybernetics and their limitation will be discussed. A different paradigm, social constructionism (also called postmodernism) will then be introduced.

2.3.1. Logical positivism and first order cybernetics

According to Guba (1990), the basic belief system of logical positivism is that there exists a reality, a truth driven by natural laws. Science is to discover the "true" nature of reality and how it "truly" works. Guba stated that the ultimate goal of science is to predict and control natural phenomena. The positivist is restrained to practice
objectivity. The best methodology for the positivists is empirical experimentalism.

Cybernetics was first introduced to the field of family therapy by Bateson. Keeney (1983) described cybernetics as a science of managing patterns and organization. Cybernetics was ignored by the mental health field for a long time. There are two "orders" of cybernetics. Orders refer to the relative position of the observer. First order cybernetics was primarily used for working with Chinese-American families in the past. First order cybernetics refers to an observer being separate from the system observed. An observer is an expert and outsider of the Chinese family system. Second order cybernetics occurs only when the observer is included in the observing system. Second order cybernetics can also be called cybernetics of cybernetics. Second order cybernetics is the basis of postmodernism.

The field of family therapy is transforming itself by applying postmodernism. Family therapy for Chinese families is still far behind and continues to use the outdated approaches of logical positivism and first order cybernetics. The Chinese family has been explained in the literature as an inanimate monolith, and not as a process generated during the passage of interaction among family members. However, Moore (1978) pointed out that the explanation of "ethnicity" is not an inanimate monolith, but process composed during the course of familial interaction. Keeney (1983) also argued that a single term like "Chinese", for example, can not adequately define or describe all the aspects of their existence. He called this phenomenon "dormitive
principle". Overall, the literature regarding family therapy with Chinese families has a tendency to search for the monolithic system that is to reduce Chinese family to categories rather than to describe their living experiences.

Actually, therapists who work with Chinese families have spent a great deal of time learning about Chinese culture. However, when they work with the Chinese families, they tend to apply that learning as reality and view that learning as a preconceived assumption while working with Chinese families. This positivist orientation suffers from the fixedness of the narrative formulations (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). It starts with an a prior narrative, justified by a scientific base (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). The therapist becomes the expert who intervenes and observes how the Chinese family interacts, communicates, and is structured based on the therapist's training and professional observation. Rarely does the therapist engage in a co-participant way and use conversational questions to facilitate the Chinese families to discover their own construction. The Chinese family's narrative is oftentimes replaced by a professional account (Gergen & Kaye, 1992).

When the therapists are influenced by positivism, they are limited by the way they understand the world. This can be shown when clinicians position themselves in a single paradigm and believes that there is only one dependable way to know a family's experience, and alternatives are suppressed or unavailable (Eisner, 1990) As Eisner stated:
The meanings we are able to construct are influenced by the cultural tools we know how to use and the materials upon which we act. (1990, p. 90)

She then proposed:

The emergence of alternative paradigms provides platforms from which to examine unexamined assumptions; in effect, their presence forces us to present our position, to defend it, and, therefore, to understand it better. (1990, p.89)

Gergen (1985) recommended an alternative paradigm- social constructionist inquiry as a foundational way for understanding the nature of human knowledge.

2.3.2. Social constructionist inquiry

Social constructionist inquiry is another way of thinking and looking at the world. Gergen (1985) defined social constructionist inquiry as described below:

Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artifact of communal exchange. (p. 266)

This inquiry is not interested in the truth of the knowledge, but the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or account for the world in which they live. It pays attention to process rather than goals. "The individual is considered within a context of social meaning rather than as an intrapsychic entity (Lax, 1992, p. 69)". From the constructionist point of view, the process of understanding is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationships. As Bruner (1986) defined, social constructionism is a philosophy of understanding.
Social constructionism starts with radical doubt in the "taken-for-granted world" (Gergen, 1985). It asks one to defer belief about normally accepted understandings received through observation and examination. It invites one to challenge the objectivity of traditional knowledge. The attempt is to break down seeming fact and open the possibility of alternative meanings and understandings.

Goolishian was the central figure in applying the concept of social constructionist inquiry into family therapy field during the '80s (Markowitz, 1992). Goolishian and Anderson (1992) stated that social constructionism places central emphasis on the role of language and dialogue in the social construction of meaning. The therapist adopts a not-knowing position which entails an abundant and genuine interest and curiosity in the client's reality and the client's evolving narrative. The therapist always expresses a need to know more about what has just been said, rather than convey preconceived understandings about what must be changed for client. The therapist is in the state of being informed by the client(s). Accordingly, the social constructionist defines therapy as a process of creating new "not yet told" personal narratives, not as a process of correction of client's narratives. The therapist is a therapeutic conversationalist who helps members of a system puzzle out a new story about their situation by facilitating meaningful dialogue (Markowitz, 1992). The therapy system is a problem-organizing system, problem-dis-solving system (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Communication and discourse define social organization, rather than social organization defining communication.
and discourse. Systems do not make problems, conversing about problems make systems (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

However, what is the significance of applying social constructionism to Chinese family therapy? Goolishian and Anderson (1992) perceived that this new social constructionist view will enable therapists to categorize different families, different therapists, and different therapies. The therapist's thinking is based on intersubjective notions of social constructionism and hermeneutics (Goolishian & Anderson, 1992). Hermeneutics refers to an attitude toward inquiry which emphasizes understanding and interpretation rather than explanation and prediction (Conran & Love, 1992). Using this approach, the therapists will then view culture as a co-participant process of exploration, understanding and interpretation. The notion of the culture is substituted by multiple cultures within a culture for Chinese families. Therefore, the paradigm of social constructionism encourages Chinese families to explore a variety of means of understanding the self.

2.4. Qualitative inquiry

The distinction between positivist and social constructionist paradigms is more meaningful than the one between quantitative and qualitative methods (Beer, 1992). For the purpose of this paper positivist and quantitative will be used synonymously as will social constructionist and qualitative. Overall, qualitative methods such as
ethnography are much more compatible with a social constructionist paradigm than are quantitative (Beer, 1992) because the former emphasizes the process and discourse.

Since the early 1900s, quantitative research has been and remains the dominant research methodology in social science. Quantitative research is a method based on positivism which emphasizes searching for factors which cause human behavior through objective, observable, and quantifiable data (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). The research subjects are viewed as passive organisms and the researcher is perceived as an objective scientist who controls the external environment and observes the effects on the subjects (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Social constructionism criticizes traditional quantitative, reductionistic models of research that focus too much on: universal facts, systems of classification, reduction of uncertainties and complexity (White & Epston, 1990), independent relationships between the knower and known, time and context-free generalization, real cause for effects, and value-free inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As Wynne (1988) suggested:

At the present stage of development of the family therapy field, a strong emphasis should be given to exploratory, discovery-oriented, hypothesis-generating research, rather than primarily or exclusively to confirmatory research. (p. 251)

Qualitative research is more theoretically compatible with this new process orientation (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1991) expected in family therapy research suggested by Wynne (1988).
What is qualitative research? Moon, Dillon, and Sprenkle (1990) defined qualitative family therapy research as an:

attempt to understand the meaning of naturally occurring complex events, actions, and interactions in context, from the point of view of the participants involved. These researchers look for universal principles by examining a small number of cases intensively. Further, they are concerned with holistic understanding of phenomena. (p. 358)

Also Bogdan and Biklen (1982) noted:

qualitative research is frequently called naturalistic because the researcher hangs around where the events he or she is interested in naturally occur. And the data are gathered by people engaging in natural behavior: talking, visiting, looking, listening, and so on. (p. 3)

Overall, qualitative research, also named naturalistic inquiry, focuses on the discovery, process, complexity, and ambiguity.

Qualitative research includes: grounded theory, ethnography, the phenomenological approaches, life histories, and conversational analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Ethnographic interviews was used in this research. Geertz (1973) explained that postmodern thinking is embedded in the social science of ethnography. Clifford and Marcus (1986) described how ethnography fits into the postmodern paradigm:

Because post-modern ethnography privileges "discourse" over "text", it foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue, and emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation... In fact, it rejects the ideology of "observer-observed," there being nothing observed and no one who is observer. There is instead the mutual, dialogical production of a discourse, of a story of sorts. (p. 126)
Leininger (1985) defined ethnography as the systematic process of observing, detailing, describing, documenting, and analyzing the particular patterns of culture or subculture in order to understand the pattern of the people in their familiar environment. Spradley (1979) described the aim of ethnography as to understand another way of life from the native point of view. "Ethnography means learning from people (p. 3)."

Leininger (1985) identified two types of useful ethnographies. One is maxi ethnography which focuses on a large study of general and particular features of a designated culture. It requires that the ethnographer has some background knowledge of the people being studied as well as knowledge of the meaning of the social structure features. Another type is mini ethnography, which emphasizes small scale ethnography that focuses on a specific or a narrow area of inquiry. It requires less cultural knowledge and takes less time. Mini ethnography is used more frequently than the maxi ethnography because of time factors and the required knowledge the ethnographer might not have.

It's also significant to use ethnography to research Chinese families in this study. One of the most cited articles about the characteristics of Chinese families is Shon and Ja's article "Asian families" published in the book of Ethnicity and Family Therapy (1982). In this article, the years of the citation ranged from 1950-1975. Another frequently cited reference is Hsu's book, Under the Ancestor's Shadow: Kinship, Personality and Social Mobility in China (1971). Many
of the citations in these two article were from sociological or anthropological studies done in the native country. These studies can provide clinicians with a more global picture of Chinese families. However, clinicians tend to view these works as objective truth when working with Chinese-American families. How each Chinese family constructs their life meaning through interacting with family members living in the United States is undoubtedly unique and rarely examined. Intensive ethnographic interviews with a small number of cases can allow the researcher to understand the uniqueness of how the Chinese-American families tell and interpret their narratives living in the United States.

2.5. Summary

A brief review of the literature related to this study has been presented in this chapter. The method, informants, procedures, method of data analysis, ethnographic data analysis are conveyed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter delineates the method of research, informants and ethnographer who participated in the study. The procedure used and the method of data analysis are described.

3.1. Method: Ethnographic interviews

In order to obtain knowledge of Chinese families from a multiple, constructed, and holistic perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a methodology consistent with social constructionism required. A few researchers have pointed out that ethnomethodological work is embedded in the social constructionist paradigm (Geertz, 1973; Gergen, 1985). Ethnographic interviews, therefore, will be used in this research.

Combining the ethnographic interview and social constructionistic inquiry consists of two steps: the ethnographic interview and writing the text. The ethnographic interview focuses on how Chinese families construct their meaning of the world through social interaction within the family and with the interviewer. Writing the text allows the researcher to interpret how Chinese families express and reflect their cultural frameworks of meaning when living in a country different from their homeland.

The following sections delineate the informants and ethnographer who participated in this study. The procedures used and the method of
data analysis will also be described. This research was approved by the Iowa State University Human Subjects Review Committee.

3.2. Informants

3.2.1. Informant selection

Nonprobabilistic sampling techniques are commonly used in qualitative research (Babbie, 1986). The issue is not generalizability, but gaining access to the cultural categories and assumptions by which one culture construes the world. Therefore, purposive sampling is chosen in this study. The researcher looks for universal principles by studying a small number of cases intensively in their natural context (Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990). Generally, eight respondents is sufficient for qualitative research (McCracken, 1988).

Falicov (1988) stated that interviewing non-clinical families has the advantage of allowing an exploration of cultural matters without the pressure of resolving a presenting problem. Non-clinical Chinese families from Taiwan living in the United States were selected for the interviews. Informants were chosen from a university town in the Midwest. In order to identify potential participants, a directory from the Chinese Student Association of Taiwan, Republic of China, was requested from the chairperson of the association. Children were not included in the directory. Chinese families who were not in the directory were not considered for the study. All the families were
considered immigrants, even though some intend to go back to their home country in the future.

There were 344 adults in the Chinese Student Association of Taiwan, Republic of China directory. Single adults were not included in this study. There were seventy-five couples in total. Ten of the couples (13.33%) had either one spouse who was a professor with the other spouse working in the university, off-campus, or staying at home. For eight couples (10.67%), either the husband, wife, or both were employed. For thirty-two of the couples (42.67%), the husband was studying at the university. For one couple (1.33%), the wife was a student and the husband worked off-campus. There were 24 couples (32%) where both spouses were students.

Occupation is one of many ways to categorize families. Drawing participants from different occupational backgrounds allowed this research to generate richer descriptions of Chinese families life stories (McCracken, 1988). The percentage of different occupational categories listed in the Chinese Student Association directory (see Figure 1) served as a baseline for deciding how many couples to interview from each occupational category.

The researcher called the 75 couples listed in the Chinese Student Association directory, described the study to them, and asked if they would like to participate in the study. The families also were asked to introduce the researcher to other families that they thought might be candidates for the study. This technique is called snowball sampling (Babbie, 1986).
Figure 1. Chinese couples in a Midwest town.
In total, the author interviewed twelve Chinese couples for this research. With the exception of three families that were interviewed together as a focus group, each family was interviewed separately. No couple in this research had been in family therapy, marital therapy, or individual counseling.

3.2.2. Informant description

A description of the occupation of each adult included in the study follows. In three of the couples, both the husband and the wife were students. In four of the couples only the husband was a student, and in one couple, only the wife was a student. The husband was employed in three of the couples, and in one couple, the husband and wife were both employed. Over all, one of the husbands worked at home while the remaining husbands either worked outside the home or were students. Six of the wives were either employed outside the home or were students, six wives worked in the home.

The demography of the informants' age, length of the marriage, and number of the children were as follows. The age of the respondents were from 24 to 44 years of age. The average age was 32 years old. The couples were married from 3 months to 17 years. The average length of marriage was 5 years. Two couples had two children, five couples had one child, and five couples had no children.

It's also important to know the length of informants' stay in this country, whether they have permanent residence in the United States, and their plan as whether to stay in this country or go back to their
home country. The length of stay in the United States for these informants ranged from 5 months to 17 years. The average length of stay in this country was 5 years. Four of the couples had permanent residence status in the United States. Two couples were unsure about whether or not they would stay in the United States in the future. Six couples were certain they would eventually return to their home country after finishing school or work.

3.3. Procedure

After Chinese families said that they were willing to participate in the study, consent letters were sent to these families. To assure the quality of the interviews, the family who was available to be interviewed first was asked whether the family could be interviewed in the Family Therapy Clinic (FTC) at Iowa State University. The reply from this family was yes. An appointment was set up. The family was interviewed by the ethnographer with a team of colleagues observing behind a one-way mirror. Team members included a faculty supervisor, four doctoral students from the marriage and family program at Iowa State University, and one Chinese translator who has a masters degree student in the family studies program at Iowa State University. This setting allowed feedback about the progress of the ethnographic interview. The ethnographer, who was also the researcher, could then use the feedback from the team to conduct the remaining interviews in families' homes setting.
It's important for the setting(s) to be representative of the organization/topic under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The informants' home was the natural setting for them to talk about their family life and living experiences in this country. Therefore, interviews for all but the first of the families in this study took place in their homes. The length of the interview ranged from 1.5 to 3 hours. In total 12 families were interviewed. Eight families were interviewed once, three families were interviewed twice, and one family was interviewed three times. Data were collected until a saturation point was attained; that is the point which no new data were collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For most of the families saturation occurred after the first interview. When more information was required from the family, a second, or a third interviews were conducted. Thus second interviews were conducted with three families and a third interviews was conducted with one family.

The interviews were recorded on audio tapes for later transcription. Field notes were utilized. Field notes were divided into two parts: descriptive and reflective (Lofland, 1971). In the descriptive part, the researcher attempted to record exactly what she saw and heard in the field. In the reflective part, the researcher noted her own speculations, feelings, ideas, hunches and impressions after the interview has taken place.
3.3.1.  **Ethnographer**

The ethnographer for this study served as the primary investigator and the interviewer. Locke (1992) agreed that research is best conducted by professionals who are themselves members of the cultural groups under investigation. Therefore, the ethnographer, a Chinese who spoke both English and Chinese/Mandarin, was the interviewer for each family. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin.

3.3.2  **Unstructured interviews**

Data were collected through in-depth unstructured interviews. Mishler (1988) argued that:

> Stories are more lively in relatively unstructured interviews... If we allow respondents to continue in their own way until they indicate they have finished their answer, we are likely to find stories; if we cut them off with our next questions,....... then we are unlikely to find stories. (p. 235)

This research was done by treating informants' answers to questions as unique narratives. Questions asked of all informants were not standardized (Mishler, 1988). Questions for each family were based on their narratives except the opening question (grand tour question). The grand tour question was used to open up the interview and encourage a verbal description of significant features of the cultural scene (Spradley, 1979). The researcher asked "What's it like to be a married couple living in this country?" Responses to grand tour questions provide unlimited opportunities for examining smaller aspects of experience (Spradley, 1979).
3.3.3. Descriptive, structural, & contrast questions

Descriptive, structural, and contrast questions emerged from the answers informants gave (Spradley, 1979). Descriptive questions were used to illicit a large sample of utterances in the informant's native language (Spradley, 1979). Examples of descriptive questions used in this study include: "Describe for me what is enjoying in life without spending much money?" "I'd like you to describe for me your experience here as a wife?" "Could you describe what is "for yourself"?" "Can you describe what its like to come from a family focusing on males?" "What is equality for all of you?" "Could you talk a little bit about the good things about Chinese life and the good things about American life?" "What is luck? Could you talk about your definition of domestic scandal?" "Please describe what you mean by 'This place is like a small version of Taipei'?" "Tell me more about what you do not want to assimilate of the American style?"

Structural questions are not as common as descriptive questions (Spradley, 1979). Structural questions can test hypothesized domains and discover additionally included terms for those domains (Spradley, 1979). Domains will be described in detail in the later section. Examples of structural questions were: "Could you give me other examples of feeling fearful?" "Do you have any special experiences living here that are very hard to forget?" "What type of activities do you arrange for your daughter?" "Among the exchange and communication with friends, you were talking about cooking. Are there other kinds of exchange?" "You both talked about exchanging
experiences and exchanging some material for the babies with the neighbor so you did not have to struggle so much. Are there other things related to this experiences?" "You were talking about feeling excluded, are there other ways you feel excluded?"

Spradley (1979) described the relational principle, the use principle, the similarity principle, the contrast principle for contrast questions. He said:

The meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is related to all other symbols........the meaning of a symbol can be discovered by asking how it is used rather than asking what it means........the meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is similar to other symbols........the meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is different from other symbols. (pp. 156-157)

Some of the examples of these from the interviews were: "Could you do a brief comparison between living in the United States and living in Taiwan based on your own experiences?" "How about the other couples here?" "Do you have similar experiences as your wife, like loneliness, or do you feel differently?" "Would you like to highlight the major differences between these two?" "When you compare your past and the present experiences with your friends, how do you feel?" "How differently do you view yourself as a wife here compared to back home?" "How would you compare yourself now and when you just got here?" "Could you elaborate a little bit more about the differences between your husband and you when it comes to eating or the value of using money?"
According to the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) (Spradley, 1979), descriptive questions always precede structural questions and structural questions always precede contrast questions. In this study, these three types of questions were used alternatively for the interviews. Responses to these questions would be expanded upon by the interviewer through the asking of examples, elaborations, and clarification. This cycle of questioning and answering continued until the informant family had nothing more to tell the ethnographer or the appointed time for interview was over.

3.3.4. Trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

To increase the "trustworthiness" of this qualitative study, four naturalistic treatments were examined: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Regarding credibility (truth value), the researcher considered confounding factors that produced effects of noninterpretability. First, the author made audio recordings of each interview. These recordings were later reviewed. Second, the author interacted with members of the dissertation committee on a continuing basis. Triangulation is another critical way to increase credibility of the research. Triangulation is to use multiple sources, investigators, and methods to cross-check data and interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To meet this criterion of triangulation, two more procedures were undertaken. First, one focus group composed of three couples was used to meet the criteria of triangulation. Second, constant comparative analysis and domain
analysis were used for data analysis to meet the triangulation requirement. In addition, member checks with source families were continuously done by the researcher either through the second interview, or the third interview, or even during the long first interview.

In this research, since the informants and the ethnographer spoke Mandarin, certain procedures to translate the audio tapes were required. A research associate who, at the time of the research, was a Chinese student with M.S. degree in counseling, translated five minute vignettes from each of the audio tapes into English. A confidentiality form was signed by this research associate. These five minutes vignettes were randomly selected by the author. The author independently translated the same five minutes vignettes into English. The author and the research associate then discussed and negotiated the translation of the 5-minute-vignette with each other. The purpose of this procedure was to reach translation equivalence (Hui & Triandis, 1985) for the data. Translation equivalence ensures that the words and sentences convey the same meaning. Following the discussions between the author and the research associate, the author listened to each tape, sentence by sentence, and translated the remainder of each Chinese conversation into English. In order to transform the English tapes into readable words, an English speaking typist was hired to transcribe the tapes onto a floppy disc. Confidentiality forms were also signed by this English-speaking transcriber.
Naturalists are interested in context-relevant transferability (applicability) rather than in generalization of the truth which is context-free. In this research, transferability was addressed by using purposive sampling to maximize the range of information. The researcher had to demonstrate that the sample selection met the criterion. Also thick descriptive data were collected to permit comparison of this context with other possible contexts.

Dependability (stability) is another concern in this research. The researcher established an "audit trail". Audit trails included the tapes (both Chinese and English), the written transcription, the interview notes, the researcher's field notes and progress notes. An audit trail allows an external auditor to examine the processes whereby the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Finally, the confirmability (neutrality) of the data, rather than the objectivity of the data was examined. The researcher revealed her underlying epistemological assumptions which led her to formulate the questions in a particular way, and finally to present her findings.

3.3.5. Focus group

One focus group composed of three couples was used in this research to meet the criteria of triangulation. Triangulation requires the use of multiple sources, investigators, and methods to cross-check data and interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A focus group is designed to obtain information in a non-threatening environment. The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants.
as they share their ideas and perceptions on a particular topic. Most focus groups are composed of 6 to 12 people (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In this study, there were 6 members in the group (3 couples).

One of the important characteristics of focus group is that participants are reasonably homogeneous and unfamiliar with each other (Krueger, 1988). However, during the formulation of this group in the study, the group members requested that they should know each other well in order to have a smooth conversation, especially when sensitive personal and family subjects might be brought up in the interview. In this research, members of the focus group were friends themselves. Prior research about focus groups did not examine how this methodology could be applied to different cultural contexts. Respecting this focus group's request for having friends in the group is a cultural consideration.

3.4. Method of data analysis: Constant comparative analysis and domain analysis

The texts of all interviews was subjected to constant comparative analysis and domain analysis specified by the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) of Spradley (1979). Constant comparative analysis looks at the numerous divided units of the interview and sorts out categories from those units (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Domain analysis investigates possible cover terms and included terms that fit the semantic relationship and comes up with symbolic category that includes other categories (Spradley, 1979).
In this study, *Data Collector*, a computer program, was used for data collecting, sorting, and domain-building. Using a computer database in qualitative study can speed up the mechanical part of the analysis and increase accuracy as well as thoroughness in investigating the data (Tesch, 1988). Traditionally, qualitative analysis relies more on index card, copying, scissors etc. In the 1980s, computer analysis in qualitative research was gradually developed and accepted in the research community (Fielding & Lee, 1992). The computer makes it easier to find deviant cases or to extract small but significant pieces of information buried within a larger mass of material (Fielding & Lee, 1992). Even if computer analysis can not do the analytical work, it helps the mechanical tasks in content analysis. *Data Collector* was utilized to do coding, sorting, and comparative analysis.

Audio tapes of the interviews, also reviewed by second interpreter, were transcribed into a written text form. All raw data were stored in a personal computer to ensure sorting capability. In order for the data to be analyzed, data reduction and data reconstruction were necessary (Halpern, 1983). First, the author read the written raw data and selected the sections to be analyzed. Sections were selected that reflected the unique living experiences of Chinese families in the United States. Discussions that focused on events in the home country were excluded as they did not relate to the research question. Second, the sections were read independently by the author and the second reviewer trained in marriage and family therapy. Two reviewers independently highlighted the key words, phrases, and developed
synthesized statements and possible themes. The two preliminary analyses were compared and integrated into one. This peer debriefing procedure is essential to maintain credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Constant comparative analysis and domain analysis were applied in a next step of data analysis. Constant comparative analysis looks at the smallest unit of the interview, and generates categories from those units (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Domain analysis searches for possible cover terms and included terms that appropriately fit the semantic relationship. A domain analysis worksheet can help to visualize the structure of each domain: cover term, semantic relationship, included terms, and boundary (see Figure 2). The number of semantic relationships in any culture is normally less than twelve (Spradley, 1979) (see Appendix A). The goals of a domain analysis are to identify native categories of thought and to gain a preliminary overview of the cultural scene the author is studying (Spradley, 1979). Domains are any symbolic category that include other categories. Such domains are the first and most important unit of ethnographic analysis (Spradley, 1979).

An in-depth analysis was applied to three families. The grounded domains which emerged from the constant comparative analysis for the first three families served as a baseline for the domain analysis of the remaining families. Domains were revised as new domains emerged. Major first-level domains generated by each individual family emerged from the first level of data analysis (see Appendix B). In the second
Figure 2. An example of schematic worksheet for domain analysis (Spradley, 1979).
level of analysis, the first-level domains were collapsed into second-level domains based upon similarities of meaning across all informant families. A summary chart of the steps of the data analysis is provided (see Figure 3).

3.5 Summary

This chapter presented qualitative methods, demographic data, and procedures. The next chapter discusses ethnographic data analysis and results of the study.
Figure 3. Steps of methodology.
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the result will be reported. The result includes three themes and 13 domains. The three themes of impact of biculturalism on Chinese families, advantages of staying in U.S.A., and coping strategies are described. They evolved from 13 second level domains. The characteristic descriptions (direct quotes from the data) and the narrative elaboration (detailed descriptions of the direct quotes) of each domain are included.

4.1. Ethnographic data analysis

Theme 1: Impact of Biculturalism on Chinese Families When Chinese families migrated from Taiwan to the United States, they experienced the impact of being Chinese and living in another country. They lived within two cultures simultaneously. This theme evolved from five domains which included alienation from Americans, shrinkage of family and social support network, wife as frustrated nurturer, relational distress, and differences in cultural values.

Domain 1: Alienation from Americans This domain includes characteristic descriptions of how being Chinese and living in the United States has an impact on Chinese families. A narrative elaboration is included.
Characteristics of Alienation from Americans

I avoided contact with Americans in the beginning because I could not speak English well; I think the main problem is English; No English, no communication; Her Chinese improves, but she does not improve her English; We cannot be relaxed with Americans because of our unfamiliarity with the culture and language; I don't know what to talk about with Americans; I can't talk too long with American; It's hard to have deep conversations with Americans; I don't know whether the topics will intrude upon American privacy; We are unsure whether our expression is appropriate or not; I don't know how to help Americans; I always present the worst part of myself in front of Americans; I feel very painful in dealing with the language problem; I know a lot more than a 20 year-old American girl, but when I try to express myself, I express myself like a child; I am much less confident here than when I was back home; We are very cautious when we are with Americans; We mainly make friends with Chinese, but not Americans; It takes a much longer time to make American friends; The only Americans we know are from school/work, that's all; We don't spend time with Americans or do things together with Americans; We are fearful of trying new things here; people view me as a boring person; I feel inferior here; I do not feel confident with myself; I know I hold back a lot; Our life is simple and boring and we do not have interesting things to talk about; We have no place to go; There's really not a lot of places you can play around; We have less entertainment activities; Time is hard to kill.
Elaboration  This domain was the most pronounced domain of this theme. Many family members described the language and cultural struggle they experienced. Not only did they have to learn another language but they tried to understand the subtlety of the culture which was hard to comprehend. They became cautious and hesitant in relation to Americans, and were not able to relax with Americans. They did not quite know what was or was not acceptable when interacting with Americans. The Americans they knew did not seem to understand how to relate to these Chinese families either. The gaps of language and culture limit friendships. Gradually, the distance between Chinese and Americans increased. Even though they might work or have classes together, most of the Chinese families stay in the Chinese community no matter how long they have been in the United States. They are in a dichotomous world. They live in a Chinese world but work/study in an American world. It's hard for Chinese to fit into the American world.

The language and cultural gap constrain the Chinese ability to relate to Americans. An increasing sense of inferiority about self slowly becomes a dominant thought for these Chinese families. Some continued to have the image of "self with no confidence" throughout their stay in this country. Some Chinese were able to gain their confidence back after a few years of staying in the United States. But there were also a number of Chinese who could not envision doing better even after many years of staying in this country. Some wondered why they always presented the worse part of themselves in front of Americans.
A sense of isolation also leads to a feeling of boredom living in the United States. Most of the Chinese families felt bored living in this country. They felt they didn't have much to do and that there were not many places to go and have fun.

Domain 2: Shrinkage of Family and Social Support Network This domain includes those characteristic descriptions of how Chinese family and social support network is shrinking. A descriptive elaboration is included.

Characteristics of Shrinkage of Family and Social Support Network
Here, our parents could not help us; Our parents could not help us to take care of the kids when they are ill, one of us has to be there to care for the kid; You could ask your mother to take care of the child and you could go anywhere when I was in my home country; I have no home to go back here; When my spouse doesn't treat me well, I have no family to rely upon; We miss our relatives very much; We miss our parents very much; We can't fulfill our filial obligations; When you have old parents, You are not supposed to travel farther away; I call my parents to find out their health situation; We seem to have fewer close friends, We have less emotional support from our friends; Our social network is narrow; It's hard to expand our social network; We live in America, but we stay in Chinese culture; We have no place to talk about our problems; It's harder to get together with Chinese families with different compositions; We don't have a wise-person here.
Elaboration  Chinese families felt that they could not get the support they used to have from their parents and friends in Taiwan. Here, they had no extended family they could rely upon except their own nuclear family. Parents were not available to back up their children and grandchildren, nor could the Chinese adult children support their parents. One thing Chinese families struggled with was not being able to fulfill their filial obligations. Some Chinese families brought their parents from Taiwan to the United States either to have a short vacation or stay here permanently. However, most of their parents were in the home country. When elderly parents were ill back home, the adult children often could not go home to visit or care for them. If their parents were healthy, the Chinese families worried about what they would do if their parents became ill. This resentment was often expressed by their families.

In terms of social support from friends, making friends with other Chinese families might seem easier than making American friends. In reality, Chinese families also experienced the difficulty of rebuilding a social network within the Chinese community. Their social network was left in the home country. Chinese families did not have enough close friends who could support them emotionally. They did not know who to talk with about family problems. Families with similar compositions tended to interact with each other more than families with different compositions. For example, couples with children mostly socialized with other couples with children. This phenomenon limited the social network for Chinese families.
In general, in the Chinese social network, a wise-person (usually the elderly) plays an important role in society. The wise-person gives advise and consults with people about problems. In this study it was rare for Chinese families to have a wise-person with whom to talk. The family itself became the main resource for emotional support. Chinese families learned to be strong, self-sufficient, and rely on its own family unit.

Domain 3: Wife as Frustrated Nurturer This domain includes those characteristic descriptions of how the Chinese wife supported the family and how both housewife and career wife experienced isolation living in the United States. An elaboration is included.

Characteristics of Wife as Frustrated Nurturer I gave up my job and came to this country with my husband; Everyone in the family is around me, I take care of my husband and children and I am the last priority; When my husband is in pain, I'll comfort him; Everything I do needs to be matched with the other members in the family; I have to do more Chinese cooking because there are no good Chinese restaurants here; I am so upset that I can not communicate with my boy in Chinese; I can't teach my boy what my parents taught me before; My boy doesn't understand my Chinese phrases and slang; I am frustrated in raising my child here; My daughter was very confused and asked "where is Joe's father" (neighbor); My daughter requests more physical expression from me, she asked me "why do Ann's parents hug Ann, you can't hug me?; I
am locked in a cage, The cage is my house; I am bored, I feel inferior; I don't have friends to help me out; I raise my kids all by myself; I don't really know what's going on out there, I feel locked in my house; I feel suffocated and I focus on my baby all day long; I need an adult to carry adult-like conversation; it's too late for me to go out to work since I have stayed home for more than ten years; I am so busy that I don't have time to take the traditional socializing role for my family. My family is more isolated.

**Elaboration** The Chinese woman typically gave up her professional job and good salary back home to come to the United States with her husband. Taking care of the husband and children became the first priority for her. She put her own needs last. She knew that one person in the family had to keep the whole family together and she took this job. Many of the Chinese women had a bachelor's degree from the home country. However, because of financial concerns as well as other reasons, only one person could pursue an advanced degree in the United States - that was always the husband. Even among the women who had chances to pursue advanced degrees, most retreated back to their home to take care of the families after they finished school. The women were the center for emotional support for the husbands and children. They would try to do everything possible for the family but not for themselves. They were patient, tolerant with the pain, and hoped the struggle would be reduced when the husbands were successful and the children grown up.
The wives also took the major role in raising the children in a bilingual world. Normally, they struggled with the children but also tried to help the children. For the Chinese-American children, there was more exposure to the external English speaking world. They are schooled in and have peer relationships with the Western world. The wife gradually realized that she was not the main learning resource for her children. She experienced the cultural, value, and language-usage differences with her children. Oftentimes, the children did not know Chinese well, the mothers did not know English well either. The mothers had a hard time transmitting what they had learned from their own parents to their own children. The conversations between the two generations usually could not last long. Mothers, who enjoyed using Chinese phrases, proverbs, and slang, experienced the most frustration over their children not being able to comprehend their talk. Chinese children also preferred that the mothers hug them as much as American parents hugged their children. In Chinese culture mothers rarely hug their children. Chinese-American children thought that the mothers did not love them when they did not show physical intimacy.

A lot of women experienced distress, frustration, loneliness, isolation, inferiority and imprisonment at home. The Chinese wives, who stayed home and took care of the children and the husbands, had a strong sense of feeling locked in a cage. However, the Chinese wives perceived that the family needs were more important than their own needs. Few of the women continued studying or pursuing their own career, these women also experienced a different kind of isolation.
Traditionally, Chinese women arrange activities for the families. But due to the high pressure of studying or working in this country, they were not able to play that role. Thus, these women also experienced social isolation from the other Chinese American families.

**Domain 4: Relational Distress** This domain includes characteristic descriptions of how Chinese couples experienced relational stress. An elaboration is included.

**Characteristics of Relational Distress** We argue more; We don't have much social support, so sometimes we argue more; When my spouse doesn't treat me well, I have no family to rely upon; We argue more because we always feel exhausted that we have no one to help us; I have no close friends here to talk to, so the only adult I could talk to is my husband; When he comes home from school, he has no facial expression, he always brings the stress home; I am always waiting for my husband to come home from work and talk to me, but it has been very frustrating that he does not want to talk to me or listen to me; Even my friend's husband is busy at work, he is willing to spend time to comfort his wife, how come you cannot?; Here, we are always under a financial pressure which we did not experience back home; I argue with my wife because she has spent a lot of money making long distance phone calls to our home country; My wife keeps interfering with my spending money on things I like; I argue with my husband more frequently because I worry so much about our financial situation; I
don't want to ask for money from my parents back home, so I am not too happy about my husband; We may have to drink northwest wind (refers to having nothing to eat and drink); We lower our expectations on material needs; We reduce our activities here, We stay home, we don't do a lot of things; Why don't you speak English to the outsider, why me?

Elaboration There were some comments about the bicultural impact on the couple relationship. Most of the Chinese couples experienced additional stress coming to this country. The stress shows up in ways such as no family support, no close friends to talk to, and constant financial anxiety that they might run out of money. They argued more to sort things out. When there was no support from the extended family, the Chinese couple tended to feel drained more easily. This created a lot of stress and tension for the couple. When close friends were left behind back home, the spouse became the main or the only person with whom to have personal and intimate conversation. The wife especially experienced more stress when her husband came home after "fighting in the world for the whole day" and preferred peace and quiet.

Chinese families tended to spend less money when they were in the U.S.A. This was because they had less security in having enough money to survive here. When the couples had opposite styles in spending money they had more conflict. One example was when one spouse spent a lot of money making long distance phone calls to the home country, the other spouse tried to make less calls to balance the budget.
Another example was when only one changed the way he/she spent money, friction between the couple would normally occur. Another family constantly fought over whether they should ask for some money from the extended family. The anxiety of running out of money forced the Chinese couple to live more frugally and do fewer things together. This also could create tension between the couple when they could not engage in entertainment as they used to.

One thing they rarely argued about in the home country, but argued about here was who would speak English to an outsider? Since they normally did not feel competent about their English ability, the couple would try to avoid speaking English as much as they could. In the United States, it became burdensome for the person in charge of communication. The one who was more comfortable in speaking English became the primary information receiver from the outside world. This changed how the family worked together and how the family adapted to change.

Domain 5: Differences in Cultural Values This domain includes informant descriptions about the differences in cultural values they experienced living in the United States. A related elaboration is included.

Characteristics of Differences in Cultural Values It's surprising to see that individual needs are more important than the family needs in the United States; Our relationships with our parents
are much stronger than the Americans social relationships with church and neighbors; American students do not believe in authority, they challenge authority; If you say no to an American even though you mean yes internally, the American will take it as no; Everytime when we went out, everyone paid their own bill, no one would pay for anybody else; You want to continue conversation, but they walk away from you; People always say hello to you which is a good experience.

**Elaboration** These Chinese families experienced value differences with Americans. They viewed family needs as more important than the individual needs, which is a very different from Americans. Chinese are more group oriented, while Americans are more individually oriented. Americans do not view people who are higher in the hierarchy as necessarily having the right idea. American dare to challenge authority. Americans are also more direct and straightforward, they would not say something they did not mean. The relationship among people in the United States is distant, even though people might say hello to each other.

**Theme 2: Advantages of Staying in U.S.A.** Even though Chinese families had many struggles, there were also positive experiences living in the United States. This theme evolved from three domains which include enhancing family strengths, simpler interpersonal systems, and educational advantages for their children.
Domain 6: Enhancing Family Strengths

This domain includes characteristic descriptions of how Chinese families had their family strengths enhanced by staying in a non-mother country. A descriptive elaboration is included.

Characteristics of Enhancing Family Strengths

Our extended family will not intervene with our family; having some distance with our extended family can help our couple relationship be more harmonious; My mother-in-law may not be satisfied with my housework back in Taiwan; I do not have to adjust to my husband's family; I will not know what to do if there's conflict in between my mother and my wife; Financially, we are more independent, we don't rely on our parents as much as before; We rely on each other more than before; We are more independent; We got stronger as a couple; We have more freedom; We can spend more time together; We are closer even though we seem to argue more; My husband will have less opportunity to have extramarital affairs; There are fewer temptations; The quality of our relationship is better; I feel more equal with my husband here than back home; I can do more things, I have larger life space; I can do male kind of things, he can do female kind of things; He treats me better; He views me more as a good friend; He does more housework; He relies on me more; We try to ask Americans questions if we don't understand; Don't be afraid to make mistakes; Don't be shy; We try to experiment with different things without being afraid; We are willing to spend some money to do things so we can broaden our views; We have to be
curious and confident; We try not to view the language barrier too seriously; This new environment stimulates us to grow; Our tolerance level for frustration increases; We got stronger; We have overcome many problems; I did not know I could do so much; My wife takes good care of the family.

**Elaboration**  The primary focus of this domain was that the Chinese families were able to identify how their strength improved by surviving in the United States. Surprisingly, as they described their experiences living in this country during the interview, they found their extended families were not affecting them as much as before. The extended families helped Chinese families a lot back home, however, sometimes the help could become a struggle for the couple, too. Examples were that the couple had to make sure their parents approve what the couple did, how the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law could get along, etc. In the United States, the daughter-in-law did not have to adjust a lot to the husbands' family.

Therefore, Chinese family life seemed to shift from extended-family-focus to couple-focus while living in the United States. Since no other social support was around, Chinese couples relied on each other more than before. They experienced more freedom as a couple without having to worry how their extended family might view them. The family communication between two generations; Chinese couple and parents, was much less complicated with distance between them. Being in another country was like training for the family, they
learned to be stronger and more independent. They could handle more things than they used to do. Chinese couples struggled more and argued more, but they also felt they were closer.

The marriage was also more stable because there were fewer opportunities for husbands to have extramarital affairs in the United States. Extramarital affairs are one of the leading factors for marital break-up in Taiwan. The wife worried less about whether her husband would leave the relationship while the couple lived in the United States. None of the husbands raised the concern that their wives might have extramarital affairs.

Even though most of the women experienced some emotional distress here, they still had some positive feedback about their staying in this country. They might not have the full equality with their husband living in the United States, but most of them did experience more equality here than in Taiwan. They had more flexibility in doing things that normally would be done by the opposite gender.

Although Chinese families struggled with language, with cultural differences, and financial stress, they tried a few solutions to make the situation better. The Chinese were concerned about asking Americans questions that might show their naiveté or stupidity. However, they would remind themselves not to be afraid and just ask questions. They would try the new experiences as long as those experiences did not violate Chinese values. They tried to spend some money on exploring new things. They tried to maintain their curiosity and confidence in the United States even though it was not that easy.
The language barrier was one of the key struggles Chinese families had. Some families decided to not let the language barrier be an excuse to stop learning.

By being far away from their families, the Chinese family discovered that they could resolve or handle many struggles together. As Chinese families stayed here longer, some families felt they could tolerate more frustration than before. The families gained more confidence and strength in dealing with various situations. They were not as panic-prone as before. The cultural experiences became a growing experience for some of them.

**Domain 7: Simpler Interpersonal System** This domain includes family descriptions of how the interpersonal system became simpler living in the United States. A narrative elaboration is included.

**Characteristics of Simpler Interpersonal System** We have fewer social activities; We can avoid many social activities; Our family can do our own things; We do not have to face the complicated interpersonal system in Taiwan; As a family, we did not have much time together in Taiwan; Our arguments are simpler; Our life is much simpler here.

**Elaboration** The whole cultural context of living in the United States had a positive impact on Chinese couples. In Taiwan, there were a lot of social activities families are invited to by the
extended families, and by colleagues from work or other social networks. When a family received an invitation, they had to go. Otherwise it meant you disrespected the family who extended the invitation. Therefore, most of the Chinese families always experienced busy social activities. It's a cultural expectation that you go to those invitations. Sometimes, it costs more money than Chinese families can afford. Families spent more time together by living in the United States.

**Domain 8: Educational Advantages for Children**

This domain includes family descriptions of how education in the U.S.A. was better for their children and how these children can develop their English skills. A descriptive elaboration is also included.

**Characteristics of Educational Advantages for Children**

Our children can receive a much more challenging and stimulating education here; My children have more freedom to go to the library; They are not restricted to go to the library; They are not penalized by the library if they wear the books out; My daughter is more independent; The school designs a lot of individualized programs for the kids; Entrance exams to get into high school and the university are very competitive back home, kids have to work terribly hard to pass those exams back home; My kids do not have to suffer the pressure of education in Taiwan; My children might teach me English in the future; My daughter speaks English best in our family; Our children will not speak broken English like we do; My
children do not have to go through the pain we went through due to the language problem.

**Elaboration** One of the key concerns for Chinese families was the children's education. Most of them felt America provides a much better educational system for the children than back in Taiwan. According to Chinese parents, the education here is more challenging, stimulating, and individually-designed. By staying here, the next generation could receive a better education and have a better future. In addition, their children could avoid the necessary entrance exams to high school and the university in Taiwan.

Chinese families came to the United States after the spouses had reached their mid twenties. The critical period of learning a new language had passed. However, they could see their young children mastering the English language. They liked their children to use the language well. Hopefully they would teach the parents in the future.

**Theme 3: Coping Strategies** This theme includes domains regarding coping strategies Chinese families developed in order to have a better life in the United States. The theme evolved from five domains which included maintenance of cultural heritage, rebuilding a social network, comparison-normalization, maintaining a long distance family relationship, and task specialization by spouses.
Domain 9: Maintenance of Cultural Heritage  This domain includes informant descriptions of how they maintained their Chinese cultural heritage while living in the United States. A narrative elaboration is also included.

Characteristics of Maintenance of Cultural Heritage  We raise our children to become Chinese, bilingual, but not just American; I like my child to be able to speak Chinese; We like our children to work hard but not play too much; We keep what is good about the Chinese life pattern; We like to work hard; We save money and we don't spend it all; We stay in the Chinese community because we can handle the Chinese language much better; We have freedom to choose intensive or less intensive word/phrases from our language; My social skills are better in the Chinese community; We live close to other Chinese so we can take care of each other more easily; There is no cultural difference that I have to face; We don't want to be melted into American society; We keep Chinese life patterns that are better and take American patterns that are O.K.; The safe way is to maintain a business-like relationship with Americans.

Elaboration  When Chinese families came to the United States, they experienced many cultural differences. Sometimes too many differences could be overwhelming for Chinese families. These families, therefore began to develop a sense of maintaining their own culture. Two major ways to preserve their culture were to provide
better educational opportunities for their children and to stay in the Chinese community. Even though Chinese children went to American schools, Chinese parents still tried to help children to speak Chinese. Education was more important than play. Chinese families kept values which they thought were important. They did not attempt to give up their important cultural values.

When Chinese families entered a new culture, they chose to stay in a much less threatening, and much safer cultural context. They lived within the Chinese community, even though they might work or study in the American context. The benefit of staying in the Chinese community was that the Chinese could use their language as they wished and with no cultural barrier. By doing this, Chinese could also maintain their dignity and confidence in their daily life. As time went on, when Chinese families gained more understanding about the American culture, they would become more involved with the American culture. Data from the interview, however, showed that Chinese still decided to socialize with Chinese, and made Chinese friends even though they stayed here for more than fifteen years. The bonding with people from the same country of origin seemed to be very strong. The decision to stay in the Chinese community and socialize with Chinese also became a way of maintaining cultural heritage.

In terms of the relationship with Americans, some Chinese choose not to have deep contact but only keep business-like relationships with Americans. This gave Chinese some contact with American, but also allowed Chinese to maintain a comfortable distance with Americans.
Domain 10: Rebuilding a Social Network

This domain includes those characteristic descriptions of the experiences Chinese families had in rebuilding their social network. A related elaboration is also enclosed.

Characteristics of Rebuilding a Social Network

We do not have our families here, When we have some problem, we try to ask help from our friends; Our friends will give us the information they know so we also know what's going on; Our friends can help us kill time more easily; We met a lot of nice Chinese people by going to church; When we have problems, we like to ask seniors; We have more general friends, less close friends; We have more friends of instrumental support, fewer friends of emotional support; I am more cautious in choosing Chinese friends because I do not want to invest unnecessarily in friendships; We prefer to make a lot of friends but do not spend too much time together; We delay making friends and focus more on study.

Elaboration

Even though it's not easy for Chinese to make Chinese friends in another country, they still played a tremendously critical role for Chinese families. These friends did not have to be close friends. Friends substitute for extended family as a major support for Chinese families.

Chinese built up their own information exchange system. There were different ways Chinese made friends. Church seemed to be one of the key sources for some Chinese families to maintain their social
network with Chinese, but not with Americans. Some Chinese families believed that Chinese at church were nicer and easier to make friends with. In their home country, a wise senior person was also the source of information. In a new land, people who stayed here longer became the symbol of a "wise man". The wise person normally was well respected by the community.

As Chinese families lived in the United States, the type of friendship seemed to change. They had more general friends and more diversity in friends, but the depth of friendship decreased. Friends became the people with whom Chinese families exchanged information, or exchanged instrumental type of help. Friends who could be emotionally supportive were rare.

There were three functions that Chinese friends had for Chinese families. First, Chinese friends, who had longer experiences living in the United States, would transfer their precious experiences to the people who just came to the U.S.A. "Transgenerational passing of information" was important for the Chinese community because families relied on words of experiences. This information could help Chinese families to be more prepared in handling different situations.

Not only do Chinese friends transfer precious experiences and information to other Chinese families, but they also provided instrumental help. Instrumental help refers to tasks like, how to prepare to have a new baby, how to take care of a baby/child, how to repair a car, how to open a bank account, emergency help, and babysitting for the children.
Having Chinese friends could make Chinese families spend spare time more easily. Some of the Chinese families were more careful in choosing even Chinese friends. Until they were sure the friends they made would become good friends in the long run, they would not invest in the friendship.

Domain 11: Comparison-Normalization  
This domain includes descriptions of what method Chinese families used to normalize their family problems. A related elaboration is also included.

Characteristics of Comparison-Normalization  
We like to listen to the other couples' problem, so we know our problem is O.K. since other couples have similar problems; We probably will have a lot of complaints if we lived together without being able to compare our problems to other couples' problem; When we realize other couples have similar problems, we know it's kind of normal and trivial; Talking about friends' problems can regulate our relationship; We learn what is positive and what is negative from friends; Knowing problems by reading the Chinese newsletter allows us to say "Yeah!, that happened to me, too".; When other wives could do something, I want to be able to do it, too.

Elaboration  
Chinese friends serve the functions of "comparison" and "normalization". Even though Chinese families did not solve personal problems by asking for external help, they had their
ways of easing the problem. They liked to know that other couples had similar problem as theirs. This way they knew their problems were not too unusual, but normal. Or they could learn from other couples' coping strategies. Feeling normal, that is not too different from other Chinese couples could ease the couple's relational stress due to staying in a different country. It's all right to have pain as long as other Chinese people experienced similar situations.

**Domain 12: Maintaining a Long-Distance Family Relationship**

This domain includes informant descriptions of how the Chinese family in the United States maintained a long-distance relationship with the extended family. A narrative elaboration is also enclosed.

**Characteristics of Maintaining A Long-Distance Family Relationship**

I talk more to my family back home because I don't quite know the language here; I miss my family so much so I call my family once a week; Family support could reduce our hardship here; One day I had toothache, the first thing I did was to call my family in Taiwan, it seemed like the ache was not that painful afterwards; I called my parents in Taiwan to find out how was their health.

**Elaboration**

When the Chinese families came to the United States, they lost the physical bonding with their parents back in their home country. In addition, when the Chinese families lived in a world dominated by a different language, English, speaking Chinese had
special meaning for the Chinese. Therefore, making long distance phone calls to their extended family became very comforting for the Chinese families. They could strengthen the bonding with their extended family. Making long distance phone calls to the home country either a few times a week, once a week, or once a month helped families to keep verbal and emotional contact with the families in the home country. Speaking their own language on the phone call eased homesickness and the feeling of isolation.

**Domain 13: Task Specialization by Spouses**

This domain includes characteristic descriptions of how the Chinese wife put all of her energy into the family without taking care of her own needs and how she became the bridge for her husband to the social world. Also, how the Chinese husband studied or worked without putting too much effort into the family, and how he became the bridge for his wife to the outside world. A related elaboration is included.

**Characteristics of Task Specialization by Spouses**

I don't focus on myself now, My husband and the children are my main concern; I try to listen to and comfort my husband when he is in pain due to the school work; I need to be strong and independent; I try to do everything possible by myself without asking help from my husband; I don't expect my husband to understand what happens at home; I don't talk a lot to my husband for fear of bothering him; my husband's success is more important than mine; I can tolerate a lot of pain; I put my dream in the
future; I delay my own needs; Even if it's quite boring now, but I know my husband will take me to travel during the break; Even my four year old daughter knows not to bother me when I am studying; In order to survive here, my husband works very hard and well, so we don't have to worry about our future; I tell my husband about how our kids and friends are doing since my husband doesn't have much time to spend with the kids and friends; I have to study harder here than back home; I prioritize my study over my family life; I don't put a lot of effort into my family; My wife takes good care of me.; She becomes my channel in understanding how our family and friends are doing other than my study; I am interested in listening and talking to my wife; He helps me to understand what is out there; I am interested in listening and talking to my husband.

Elaboration The wife was the major supporter in the Chinese family. She saw the needs of the whole family as more important than her own individual needs. When the family was doing well, whether or not her needs were met was not that important. She could delay gratifying her needs until the whole family was stabilized.

The most important job for the husband was to make sure he could do well at school or work so the family would be proud of him and he could provide the financial security for the family in the future. The husband would be working very hard at school or at work and the wife would support him in every possible way. Most of the husbands concentrated on study or work, and tended to lose touch with the social
world. Wives shared with husbands about how friends or families were doing so husbands were symbolically still connected to the social world. On the other hand, the wife, who did not work outside, needed the husband to share the information about his work in the external world. The wife could then still feel connected to the external world. Spouses were important for each other in terms of sharing information. Unlike in their country, it was much harder to have sources of information living in the United States.

4.2. Results of ethnographic data analysis

Since most of the previous literature about Chinese families is based on sociological and anthropological research in the native country (McGoldrick, Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1991), the intention of the data analysis in this study was not to do a critique regarding how the results are similar or different from previous research. Rather the purpose was to present the evolution of meaning for Chinese families living in the United States.

Three themes emerged from the thirteen second level domains. These three themes were: the impact of biculturalism on the Chinese families, the advantages of staying in the United States, and coping strategies. The informants experienced hardship living in the United States; such as alienation from Americans, shrinkage of family and social support network, wife as frustrated nurturer, relational distress, and differences in cultural values. However, as they
described their overall experiences here, they realized there were advantages of living in the United States. The advantages include enhancing family strengths, simpler interpersonal system, and better educational advantages for their children. Another emergent theme from the ethnographic interview is the coping strategies for the Chinese families. The second level domains include maintenance of cultural heritage, rebuilding a social network, comparison-normalization, maintaining a long distance family relationship, and task specialization by spouses. The inclusive experiences for Chinese-American families living in this country were multiple, complicated, and rich. A summary of themes and the thirteen second-level domains is shown in Figure 4.

4.3. Summary

This chapter presented ethnographic data analysis and the results of the study. The next chapter discusses clinical implications as well as discussion of the study.
Figure 4. Emerged themes and second-level domains from data analysis.
CHAPTER 5 CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative study described in this document examined Chinese-family-based descriptions of their living experiences in the United States. The descriptions of living experiences in the United States were acquired through unstructured ethnographic interviews. Transcripts of these interviews were analyzed to develop an ethnographic account of living experiences as described by Chinese family members who participated in ethnographic interviews.

The preceding chapters have detailed the theoretical literature of logical-positivism and social constructionism used in this study, the methodology employed in the study, and the results. The present chapter includes clinical implications, the significance of the qualitative study, a brief discussion of the result, the limitations, the implications of using the narrative approach, and questions raised in this study. Excerpts have been modified to insure confidentiality of respondents.

5.1. Clinical implications

Clinical implications for Chinese families are delineated in this section. In order to provide a different way of looking at and working with Chinese families from a narrative and conversational perspectives, clinical questions based on the non-clinical data from this study are generated. Excerpts for inclusion were selected on the
basis of the problems that emerged from the data. The design of the therapeutic questions draws on the philosophical notions of social constructionism (a subject-dependent construction of reality and knowledge), and hermeneutics (the study of understanding and interpretation).

The data presented here were non-clinical data, the Chinese families did not view themselves as seeking therapy during the ethnographic interview. However, the author utilizes some of the significant data from the interview as a tool to create more meaningful exploratory questions for future clinical families who might encounter the same concern, view the concern as a problem, and want to have more conversations about their problems.

Several critical excerpts are chosen from the Chinese family interviews. First, each exact excerpt is presented. Second, the therapeutic questions for each excerpt are created. And third, the rationale for the development of the therapeutic questions is discussed.

In the first excerpt, the struggles of speaking English are examined. The concern over English, a non-mother language, is one of the biggest concerns expressed by the informants in this research. Chinese adults who were staying at home, who were students, and who were professional workers all shared similar stories of their struggles in using English. Clinicians need to approach Chinese from a "not knowing" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988) position. Taking this position can help Chinese develop a new narrative regarding their use of English.
If clinicians share the same "take-it-for-granted" (Gergen, 1985) worldview of their language struggle, Chinese will not be allowed to generate new meaning through story-telling.

5.1.1. **Excerpt 1:**

Husband: I admit that my English ability is not too good. It's not as smooth as when I was in my country when I did things. I didn't have language problems back home. Back home, whenever I wanted to do things, I could get it done soon and it's very easy to communicate with people back home. Here, because my English ability is not very good, it makes me less confident. Actually, I have no confidence.

From this excerpt, it is apparent that the language problem was not something this husband was familiar with, the struggle is quite new and unpredictable for him. He does not know how things will turn out and this has made him tense and has led him to view himself less favorably. This husband has been in the United States for more than two years and has pursued his doctoral degree in engineering. He is married and has a five month old boy. His wife stays home to take care of the boy and support her husband. The following are some meaning-generating questions that can be raised here in order to open opportunity for new space for this husband. It is very critical that these questions are process oriented.

**Conversational questions:**

(1) "Please tell me more about your experiences related to speaking English?"
"Please tell me what is "smoothness" and how "smoothness" is important to you?"

"How did you use your mother language in your home country?" and "How is it different now?" "What is different now?"

"How do you come to realize you are less confident in using English and what do you notice about that?"

"What is "no confidence" and how is that feeling different for you now?"

The first question is to encourage the husband to explore more about his English speaking. Frequently an English-speaking clinician working with a limited English-speaking Chinese, assumes that the latter has an English problem without asking the client how he/she feels about speaking English. Searching for how the client interprets the meaning of using English is more significant than the clinician assuming that speaking English is a problem for the client.

The second question searches for the meaning of "smoothness" for the husband. His use of the word smoothness is the way that he describes his language usage. There is richness in exploration of the meaning of smoothness. Goolishian (1990) insisted that the transformational power of narrative rests in its capacity to re-relate the events of our lives in the context of new and different meaning.
Asking what is "smoothness" and how is "smoothness" important to him opens the door for change through his descriptions of the word.

The third question touches on the rich experiences this husband had in his home country in using his own language. It also addresses the transition from his country to living in the United States and what he has experienced so far in the use of the language. Most of the Chinese success stories in their home country are seldom heard. Gradually the Chinese forget their successes and develop a less resourceful way of viewing themselves. The clinician has to look at how the language usage in the past has been transformed into the present for the Chinese.

The fourth and fifth questions are to understand more about the grounded concept of "no confidence". By generating the conversational questions on the issue of confidence, rather than assuming there is nothing more to talk about in regard to confidence, the therapist shows the Chinese s/he is a respectful listener who makes no assumptions and who does not understand too quickly.

In the second excerpt problems with bilingualism are explored. Most of the family therapy literature expresses a concern over the bilingual development in a household (Ho, 1987; Lee, 1989; Shon & Ja, 1982). Little research studies examine how the bilingual family processes their bilingual development and how therapeutic conversation might open a gate for the bilingual family to reauthor their stories.
5.1.2. **Excerpt 2:**

**Wife:** Mainly the older boy has a communication problem with me. Because the youngest one is still little I have no problems with him. My older one sometimes talks half in Chinese and then says he doesn't want to talk anymore. And so we just forget about the communication because we could not really communicate well. You could blame me for that. I do not teach him Chinese very well. The thing is not that simple. The environment also affects my child. Of course, I need to work harder to teach him to speak Chinese. If we look at my family, I feel like this is the problem.

**Ethnographer:** How is that related to your communication with your boy?

**Wife:** Yes, we have different ideas. Once in a while, I would try to speak Chinese phrases to my boy, but my boy didn't understand. Sometimes, by using a Chinese phrase I could better capture what I wanted to express, but he never learned Chinese before. Since my boy has never learned that Chinese phrase, he didn't understand.

**Ethnographer:** How do you and your boy communicate?

**Wife:** If I want to talk deeply in Chinese, then my boy cannot understand. If I try to use English and it's important to express in a clear and better way, my boy does not quite know my English. Therefore, neither of us have a common language in which we have equal ability.

In this family, the child is at a different stage than his mother in language development. This 11 year old boy was born and grew up in the United States. The mother was born in Taiwan and came to the
United States at 26 years of age. She earned a Master's degree in the United States but has chosen to stay in the home to take care of her two boys. The youngest boy is 4 years old. Her husband works full time as a biologist. The scenario described includes the theme of communication with her boy, she is fluent in Chinese, and her boy is fluent in English. She seemed confused and had struggles with her current situation. It's hard for her to use her own mother language to communicate with her boy. The therapist can offer questions, opinions, speculation, or suggestions in a manner that conveys an open posture and allows the client room to shape her story (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Several linguistic questions are generated for the therapist to ask a client with a situation similar to this excerpt.

Conversational questions:
(1) "How does your boy decide to talk half in Chinese? How do you find out? What do you find out?"
(2) "How does your boy decide to talk to you and when not to continue the talk? How do you find out? What do you find out?"
(3) "How does your boy juggle between speaking English and Chinese with you? How do you juggle between speaking Chinese and English with him?" (another way of asking: "How do you both communicate in two languages?")
(4) "How do you decide to go along with your boy not continuing the talk?"
(5) "How do both of you forget about your communication problems?"
(6) "How do you not teach him Chinese well?"
(7) "How do you think your son's everyday environment affects his upbringing?"
(8) "How do you both have a relationship when language seems to be a concern?"

The purpose of the eight conversational questions is to search for the source of action (Eisner, 1990). When a Chinese mother describes her struggle with her children in dealing with the mother language, the clinician tends to view that struggle as a fact without exploring the deeper meaning of the scenario and how the mother comes up with her own interpretation. The eight narrative questions provide a beginning for the therapist to understand a Chinese mother's story telling and to provide an opportunity for the mother to have a wider space to redefine her narratives.

The first question helps the mother understand how her boy talks half English and half Chinese. The second narrative question deals with how the mother found out that her boy did not want to continue talking to her. This question allows the mother to entertain contradicting ideas simultaneously which might help her to understand the multiplicity of the situation. In the third question, the therapist is
curious about how the mother and the 11 year-old boy communicate in two languages, and how they decide which language to use.

Chinese who did not speak English in their mother country become more aware of their language speaking when they stay in the United States. Many of their stories are centered around English speaking. The distinction between speaking good English or speaking broken English, however, is too arbitrary and can not encompass the complex experiences and meaning generated from those rich narratives. Therefore, the fourth and fifth questions raises curiosity concerning the process of the communication between the mother and the boy.

Each Chinese family has its unique story of how they raise their children to speak English, Chinese or both. However, they all share the same theme of it being hard work. It's different from raising children in their own country speaking one language. In questions six and seven, the author tries to uncover experiences concerning this issue. In question six, the narrative question encourages the mother to describe how she did not teach her boy Chinese well. This conversational question can allow the mother and the therapist to co-create knowledge that is unique and specific to the mother. In question seven, the mother is attempting to understand her son's experience of living biculturally. The final therapeutic question is to put the language concern in a relational context. Goolishian (1990) agreed that to re-relate events of our lives to a new context will transform the narratives.
In the third excerpt the concern is over relationships with extended family. Research on Asian families has shown that women are responsible for taking care of the husband's family (Ho, 1987; Shon & Ja, 1982). However each family has unique way of interpreting its value system. Rather than assuming that either husband or wife might be too traditional and controlling, their unique narratives need to be explored.

5.1.3. Excerpt 3:

Husband: My wife is still with her family. This is a serious and big problem. My wife calls her family four times a week.

Wife: No, I do not do that.

Husband: My wife spends a lot of money on making phone calls to her family.

Wife: I only spend $200 on the phone each month.

Husband: Really? When a girl marries a husband, she should belong to the husband's family, but my wife still views her own family as more important.

Wife: I don't feel that I'm married to his family because we came to this country a few days after our marriage, so I don't have a particular feeling that I'm married to his family.

Husband: You call almost every day.

Wife: I do not. I only call once in a while according to my definition.
This is a 24 year old Chinese couple who came to the United States about six months ago. Both of them are graduate students. They have no children. There are two major issues in this excerpt. One is that the husband does not like his wife's distance from his family and her closeness to her own family. The other concern for the husband is his wife's spending considerable money making long distance phone calls to the home country. The couple argued a lot about these two issues. Given the situation, the therapist can take responsibility for the creation of a conversational context and dialogical process allowing for mutual collaboration. The following are conversational questions designed for couples with similar concerns.

**Conversational questions:**

(1) "How do you know that your wife is close or not close to your family?"

(2) "How is your wife being close to her family a problem in your marriage?" "Was it a problem before?" "How is the problem different now?"

(3) "What is belonging?" "How do you know a wife should belong to, or not belong to the husband's family?"

(4) "How do you both talk about this long distance calling?" "How would you like to talk about it?"
(5) "How is your coming to this country a few days after your marriage related to your relationship with his family?"
(6) "How do you decide the frequency of your phone calls to your family?"

This couple had its own values regarding how the couple should relate to each family of origin. It seemed like the husband was troubled by his wife not agreeing with his perception of how a wife should relate to the husband's family. The first question developed for the dialogue is to explore the meaning of closeness to the family of origin for both the husband and wife. Theoretically the question is grounded in the idea that hermeneutic narrative interpretation can remove the therapists from the limits of scientific objectivity (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

The second question is to search for the relationship between the wife's closeness to her family and her husband's perception of the closeness as being a problem. By asking questions from a position of "not knowing", the meaning of the family's stories will continue evolving. If the clinician views him/herself as knowing a lot about the family, new experiences will be curtailed.

When the husband said, "she should belong to the husband's family", some clinicians might have a hard time accepting this concept. In Western culture to view a wife as a possession is not an acceptable idea. Belonging to a different culture generates different meaning.
Therefore, the therapist needs to question his/her assumptions before she imposes those assumptions onto families. Asking questions on what does "belonging" mean, how the husband finds out whether a wife should or should not belong and what's the importance for the wife to belong to the husband's family, can open new space for the husband and wife to renarrate their stories.

Even though the husband is bothered by the wife's spending money on long distance calls, to assume that the couple talked through this issue is questionable. Therefore, the next question is to find out how did the couple talk about this issue at home, and how would they like to talk about the issue. This process helps the family to reinterpret their history and hopefully to reach a mutual creation of useful stories with the therapist (Goolishian, 1990).

The wife also has her stories about how she views her relationship with her husband's family. The fifth question inquires about her coming to the United States a few days after her marriage and how that event is related to her relationship to his family. This question looks for the source of her action, how that source evolved, and how the wife implements her ideas into action in relation to her husband's family. As Parry (1991) described, that the story itself is not a life, but a selection of events about a life as influenced by a person's beliefs about him/herself and others. It becomes possible to use the story to shake off constraining beliefs so they can live their stories as they choose. Their stories need no longer live them.
The last question is to tap into how the wife decides how many phone calls she will make and when she makes those calls home. Since frequency of the phone calls is a concern for the husband, having some conversation around this topic can help the couple to recreate the meaning of that experience.

These three excerpts were used as examples to design conversational questions for the Chinese families living in the United States. The key to these questions is not to look for the truth of the family, but to continue opening opportunity for the Chinese family to construct a new agency.

5.2. Discussion

The significance of this qualitative study, a brief discussion of the results, the limitations, the implications of using the narrative approach, and questions raised in this study are discussed in this segment. Previous research on Chinese family therapy tends to cite traditional sociological and anthropological literature as a reference point to understand the Chinese family culture. Some of the research was even conducted in the native country (McGoldrick, Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1991). This research examines the grounded experiences of Chinese families living in the United States.

The importance of using qualitative research in this study is to help the author understand informant information from a holistic context rather than just looking at variables based on preconceived
assumptions of the researcher. Having the informants tell their stories to the ethnographer invites the families to become researchers themselves. Chinese families define their own experiences of living in the United States rather than the ethnographer defining the experiences for them.

A deficiency model typically is used in research with Chinese. The deficiency model tends to look at problems without appreciating the complexities of the whole spectrum of Chinese families' experiences living in the United States. On the other hand, the process orientation of ethnographic interviews allows the researcher to see the rich and complicated experiences of Chinese families living in the United States. According to Wynne (1988) the field of family therapy is at a point where more process research is needed. Process research can provide a better chance for the clinician and researcher to understand how Chinese families cope with their hardships and how they redefine their own life stories.

A brief discussion of the results is important. Based on the domain analysis in this study, the participants appear to lean on Chinese traditions without taking too much advantage of Western culture. According to Lee's (1989) definition, these types of families can be called bicultural families. However, since they still have their own struggles with living in the United States, to state that a bicultural family needs little help from counseling is questionable.

The results from this study only partially support previous research on problems Chinese families experience living in the United
States. For example, even though their social network was shrinking, and had less intervention from extended family or friends, their interpersonal system was much less complicated in the United States than back home. They became more independent and stronger in facing life in the United States. Furthermore, even when they viewed themselves less confidently due to the adjustment to a new country, they also realized there could be personal growth later. A limitation of this study is the small sample size thus limiting generalizability. Also, due to the magnitude of the data, only selective sections of the manuscripts were translated into English by the research associate.

The rationale for the implications of using the narrative approach for Chinese families is rarely examined. Typically, the conventional family therapy models have been applied to Chinese families with moderate success. On the other hand, very little research has used a social constructionist viewpoint in studying and working with Chinese families. By using a narrative approach in studying Chinese families, the families becomes the expert (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). The therapist's personal narrative does not replace Chinese families' reality. Thus, the journey of therapy turns into a collaborative conversation.

Another rationale for using the narrative approach is that it allows the non-Chinese clinician to use the "not-knowing" position in order to listen more carefully and provide more conversational questions to Chinese families. The therapist does not have to be fearful of working
with these families, rather "not knowing" the Chinese families opens up more space for curiosity and speculations.

There are some possible implications of this research for a work with the other ethnic groups. The role that language plays in personal and family adjustment to a new environment needs to be considered. The role that language plays in promoting confidence and feelings of personal control are critical in the adjustment process.

Cultural and family values must also be considered in looking at adaptation to a different culture. This is particularly relevant when two generations are making adjustment to a different culture context. The younger generation tends to adopt the values of the new culture. Consequently, conflicts can occur between the older and the younger generations over which set of cultural values to adopt.

Two questions are raised by the research for clinicians to consider. First, can ethnographic interviews be therapeutic for Chinese families? Second, can ethnographic interviews be another form of understanding more about Chinese families? In this research, several Chinese families reported that they learned something new just by telling the ethnographer about their family's life stories. As they talked about their narratives of living in this country, they realized something that they had not realized. For example, while they might not do well in terms of melting into the American society, they realized that they were personally stronger after going through the struggle in the United States. Ethnographic interviews provided an opportunity for them to view the multiplicities of their life. Additional research could look
into how ethnographic interviews might help family therapists in working with Chinese families in creating meaningful narratives.

In this study, an alternative paradigm has been suggested to work with Chinese families. Data collected from the ethnographic interview were selectively used to design conversational questions based on the work of Goolishian and Anderson. The grounded experiences reported by Chinese families in living in the United States and the suggested therapeutic questions to work with Chinese families require further exploration.
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Spradley (1979) finds nine proposed universal semantic relationships. They are most useful for beginning an analysis of semantic domains.

1. Strict inclusion  
   X is a kind of Y
2. Spatial  
   X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y
3. Cause-effect  
   X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y
4. Rationale  
   X is a reason for doing Y
5. Location for action  
   X is a place for doing Y
6. Function  
   X is used for Y
7. Means-end  
   X is a way to do Y
8. Sequence  
   X is a step (stage) in Y
9. Attribution  
   X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y
APPENDIX B. FIRST LEVEL DOMAINS

All the domains emerging from each family were collected from the data. Coding for the first family was most thorough, the following coding for the rest of the families was evolved based on the unique experiences for each family living in the United States.

Coding for the first family:

Acculturation
Adjustment
Alienation
Argument
Beginning stage
Betterment
Boring
Child raising
Chinese community
Comparison
Couple relationship
Cultural context
Cultural experiences
Cultural shock
Family support
Food
Friendship
Geographic differences
Homesickness
Husband's experiences
Ideas before coming here
Inconvenience
Isolation
language
Later stage
Loneliness
Natural environment
Neighbor
Newsletter
Normalization
Preparation
Privacy
Reason to come
Relationship with Americans
Relationship stress
Religion
Resentment
Residence
Reward
Social interaction
Study
Transgenerational passing of information
Traveling
Unfamiliar with leisure activities
Unforgettable experiences
Wife has more difficulties
Wife's experiences

Coding for the second family:

Adjustment
Assimilation
Atypical experiences
Beginning stage
Change on family dynamics
Comparison
Couple's advantage
Cultural experiences
Cultural shock
Diversity in friends
Expectation of in-laws
Finance
Food
Go home/stay here
Immediate connection
Interview experiences
Language
Living environment
Meso-system warmth
Neighbor
Newsletter
No deep friendship
Simple lifestyle
Readjustment to go home
Relationship with Americans
Social network
Study
Transgenerational passing
Want to help more
Wife's experiences

Coding for the third family:

Adjustment
Accept language barrier
Beginning stage
Better quality of life
Broader life experiences for wife
Change on family dynamics
Chinese manner & appearance
Create experiences with American
Cultural experiences
Fatalistic about money
Food
Friendship
Husband's perception on wife
Isolation
Isolation from different family compositions
Lack of a wise person
Later stage
Less confident than they should be
Life satisfaction
Men's self-sufficiency
Not fearful
Personality
Reduction of entertainment
Relationship with Americans
Simple life
Single/couple
Stay in Chinese community
Stimulating life challenges
Study
Time orientation
Transportation

**Coding for the fourth family:**

Beginning stage
Child raising
Concern on reentry
Cultural experiences
Equality
Food
Friendship
Frustration
Insecurity
Language
Loneliness
Relationship stress
Relationship with Americans
Social skill
Wife's experiences
Worse quality of life

**Coding for the fifth family:**

Child raising
Chinese community
Couple relationship
Cultural experiences
Fear
Finance
Friendship
Never anticipated
Normalization
Relationship with Americans
Religion
Risk
Single
Study
Wife's support
Wife's experiences

**Coding for the sixth family:**

Beginning stage
Boring
Child raising
Couple relationship
Cultural experiences
Family support
Friendship
Food
Language
Later stage
Normalization
Personality characteristic
Relationship with Americans
Residence
Simple life
Study
Tolerance
Wife's experiences

**Coding for the seventh family:**

Child raising
Cultural experiences
Family life
Family support
Finance
Food
Inconvenience
Isolation
Language
Life style
Neighbor
Newsletter
Study
Wife's experiences

Coding for the eighth family:

Argument
Boring
Couple relationship
Cultural experiences
Family support/support family
Finance
Friendship
Husband's experiences
Language
Natural environment
Phone calls
Relationship with Americans
Religion
Traveling
Wife's experiences

Coding for the ninth family:

Adjustment
Boring
Chinese community
Comparison
Couple relationship
Cultural experiences  
Family support  
Finance  
Friendship  
Frustration  
Husband's experiences  
Independence  
Interview experiences  
Isolation  
Need for professional help  
No social support  
Normalization  
Pressure of raising child  
Privacy  
Relationship with Americans  
Single  
Social network  
Strategy  
Wife's experiences  

**Coding for the tenth interview:**  

Adjustment  
Beginning stage  
Boring  
Child raising  
Chinese community  
Couple relationship  
Cultural experiences  
Family support  
Food  
Husband's experiences  
Interview experiences  
Isolation  
Language  
Later stage  
Luck  
Personality characteristic  
Reason to stay
Relationship with Americans
Simple lifestyle
Wife's experiences
APPENDIX C. SELECTED EXCERPTS FOR EACH FAMILY INTERVIEW

Selected segments of each family interview will be presented in the following section. Twelve families were interviewed. Three families were interviewed together as a focus group. Hence, the total interviews presented here will be ten interviews. Emerged domains were coded in front of each segment. Comments (use C1 as the author's comment and C2 as the second reviewer's comment) of some segments were included at the end of those segments. These segments were derived by the Data Collector.
The first Chinese family:

1. [Ideas before coming here] Husband: It's really different to live here compared with what I thought back home.

2. [Beginning stage] [Loneliness] [No social support] [Wife has more difficulties] Husband: If the couple decide to marry and come here to study, I would tell them that this place is not really playful. It's only a small place compared with the city they are coming from, so if the wife won't study here, then she has to be prepared. It's hard to live here. It's not really pleasant. She has to tolerate a lot of loneliness. No friendship, no relatives. Don't understand English a lot. Know nothing. It's really hard in the beginning. I think that my wife will have more struggles to tell you. (C2: No social support includes friends & relatives)

3. [Have baby] [Loneliness] [Boring] [Unfamiliar with leisure activities] Husband: I mean, for example, back home, if I were lonely I could call my friends and talk to them, or I could go out and shop to the area that I always went or went to see a movie. Here, nothing is similar to what we had back home. Life is very different from what we had before. When you come home after work, I mean there is not really a whole lot of places you could shop. It's quite boring. It's really hard to kill time, so we need to have a baby. (C2: Loneliness <boring> seems to be associated with nothing to do. Solution is to have a baby.)

4. [Husband's experiences] [Transgenerational passing of information] Husband: Usually, the old folks teach the new bird. This is a necessary formula. For example, where can you go shopping; which store has cheaper price. Which material is cheaper? Actually, I have never bought groceries. How to take care of the children? If your child has some problem or disease, you will ask them. (C1: Transgenerational passing of information is related to friendship, too)

[Transgenerational passing of information] Wife: Sometimes you could hear from them why the couple argue. (Wife laugh very hardly.) (C2: So does the senior family become the therapist ?)

[Friendship] [Comparison] Husband: When one couple argues, the other couples would tell this couple that it is very normal to argue. I mean,
it's seen regularly, so that you could try to mediate for each other. If only the couple live together without comparing to the other couple, then this couple probably will have a lot of complaints, but when we look at other couples, we find that we are in the same boat. (C2: Use comparison with other similar couples to normalize their situation) (C1: Feeling normal is important. Use friendship to normalize couple's problem)

Ethnographer: So if only both of you, then...

[Comparison] [Normalization] Husband: Then our world view is very narrow minded and there are a lot of things you can not compare, but when we realize other couples have similar problems, we know that this is kind of normal. When we hear other couples argue, then we realize our problem trivial and not that significant. (C2: Again the emphasis is a normalization of the experience by comparing themselves with others in similar situation.)

Ethnographer: You discover everybody is the same. (Couple laughs.)

[Later stage] [Comparison][Normalization] Husband: You find that a lot of things are very trivial. Lately, we know one couple who got married for three months and just came here. Their current stage, at this point, is like when we just got here. (C1: Realizing triviality)

Ethnographer: How come?

[Comparison][Normalization] [Later stage] [Transgenerational passing of information] [Comparison] Husband: We have been here almost 2 years. Now we look back and compare with their beginning experience. We discovered that we walked on the same road as they do. We would tell them that how was our life look like when we just got here, and we would comfort them and tell them don't mind the problem. (C1: The couple shares their experience with the new-coming couple)
The second Chinese family:

1. [Problem shift] [No interference] Wife: We came to this country right after the next day of our wedding. It was convenient to live together. Not like the single person who comes here and feels that it's very painful and hard to adjust. We can adjust better together as a couple. When we have trouble, we can always communicate. When we came here, adjusting to married life was relatively simple. I can not imagine what type of problems a newly wed couple would have in our country. The problem might be with the father or mother-in-law or among the sisters-in-law. We have less that type of problem here. The pressure of study and adjustment to this culture, however, are the main problems. We do not have the problem of interpersonal relationships with our network here. Life here is more pure, not like in Taiwan. (C2: Important to point here about the in-laws not interfering with the couple) (C1: Reduction of interpersonal problem <pure life>; Increasing of adjustment problem)

Ethnographer: Could you talk more about the differences between living here and living in Taiwan as a couple?

[No interference][Wife's experiences] Wife: Because I am his wife, in our country, the wife has to make a lot of effort to adjust to the husband's family. The wife belongs to husband's family. A wife should adjust to the husband's family, like mother-in-law, sister-in-law, father-in-law, and also, adjust to husband's living pattern, relatives, different living environment. But coming to the United States, we are totally independent. We don't have that relationship existing here. I don't have to adjust to his family and the main adjustment is in between both of us as a couple. (C1: Less interaction with husband's family. Wife does not have to adjust to husband's family here)

Ethnographer: What are the differences in between adjusting to his family and adjusting with each other, in between both of you?

[No interference][Wife's experiences] Wife: We both can communicate. If I am not satisfied with something about my husband, I could tell him. Then he may change, or he may not change. But if dealing with my husband's relatives or his family, then I can not communicate with them equally. I can not tell my mother-in-law what I don't like about
her. It's inappropriate to tell your mother-in-law something directly. (C1: Relationship between mother-in-law & mother-in-law. Wife is not equal to mother-in-law)

2. [No interference] Wife: We went back to Taiwan for winter vacation. His mother is very nice and is outspoken and broad-minded. Even his mother will not interfere with how a daughter-in-law does things or she will not order me to do this and do that. Still, I experience the pressure. In Taiwan, it's not just two of you. But here, we always joke about, we come back to the life in between both of us because in the United States, even we have friends, but they will not enter into your family. They will not interfere with your business like your housework or how you spend money. And also your life pattern like how late you want to wake up. Something like these trivial things in life. Your friends will not interfere with you. (C1: No interference from extended family or friends. Life is between the couple. Enjoy the freedom as a couple.)

Ethnographer: Interference?.

[No interference] Wife: His mother will not interfere with us but I know the other mother-in-laws might interfere with what daughter-in-law is doing. I worry because I have never really spent time together with my mother-in-law when I was back home. I worry whether his mother will not be satisfied with what I do or whether his mother would interfere with me about what I'm doing. And I won't know until we spend time together in the future. (C1: Mother-in-law's influence wife: (1) interfere with wife (2) not satisfied with wife)
The third Chinese family:

1. [Simple life] Wife: Life here is sure and steady, unlike the life back home. The life here is very normal.

[Boring] Wife: When I say steady and sure, I mean when I have nothing to do, there's no place I can go and life becomes boring. (C2: Steady and sure means boring!!)

2. [Seniority] Husband: The life pattern here is very different from home. Back home, there's no difference in terms of seniority at school, but here there are differences in seniority at school among students. (C2: Mentor to new students. Hierarchy is important point)

Ethnographer: How come?

Husband: Probably because I have been here very long. For me, I have no wise person to lead me. When I just got here, there were people who took me and did things, but the senior students, they are all gone. (C2: Absence of wise person) (C1: Miss the senior)

3. [Friendship] Wife: It seems like in Chinese community, that people categorize each person into different categories. Like the single person will be with single person. People with boy friends or girl friends would be speaking around with people with girl friends or boy friends. The couple without children would be with couples without children, and the couples with children would be with couple with children.

[Isolation] Wife: When Chinese came here, I feel like Chinese vision becomes smaller when they come here because their life circle is much smaller so they can only see the category. Because the vision becomes smaller, they could only look at something around them. (C2: Because more narrow when they come to the United States: Isolation) (C1: Smaller vision)

4. Wife: Back home, when you have money, you could go everywhere. (C2: This might be a theme: FEAR) (C1: Fear to step out)
5. [Language] Wife: Maybe there's a barrier of the language, but because we have the language barrier, we tend to view things too seriously. Chinese do not dare to speak up because they are afraid they may make mistakes. If they are not understanding, they don't dare to ask.

[Relationship with Americans] Wife: I don't feel like the language is a communicative problem for me at this moment. It's impossible without a gap. I haven't tried to make an effort to make very good American friends. I do not make American friends on purpose. If I were American, probably I would have American friends, randomly, without my notice, but since I am a foreigner, it's hard to have friendships without awareness. (C1: Chinese professor also experiences relation problem with Americans) It must take some effort to build up a relationship between a foreigner and American because they view you differently. Before they ask you a question they might wonder whether you understand them or not so there will be a gap. Sometimes when we have Christmas or Thanksgiving and when I talk with Americans, and they would ask me whether I celebrate Christmas, I feel like it's a very stupid question. It's very unnatural to talk to me about this holiday. He or she might feel like if he or she doesn't talk about this problem, the person cannot continue the conversation. If they feel like they don't ask you that question, they are not able to continue to ask you how is your study; how is your work?

Wife: I do what I need to do and I will not violate the person. And we still have distance and we do not build up a very personal relationship.

Wife: Americans have different responses toward us. I cannot say it's discrimination, but unconsciously, they categorize us as a different group.

6. [Wife's experiences] Wife: there is a gap in between me and wives who do not study because I don't know how to get along with them. Not that I'm better than them. (C1: Gap in between wives & career women)

7. [Relationship with Americans] Wife: In terms of the relationship with the colleagues, it's more business-like. When there is business, then we would talk, but other than that, there is not much personal contact. (C1: Business contact. Not much personal contact)
The fourth Chinese family:

1. [Chinese community][Family support][Finance] Wife: Back home, one can try to act or speak like a refined, elegant or sophisticated person when one is not or the couple can give the child to the mother-in-law or my own mother to take care of the child and then the couple can watch a movie. Or to go someplace to have night dessert or midnight snack. Here, even if you want to do this, you can not do that because there is a money pressure.

[Loneliness][Frustration] Wife: When I was back home, I was very familiar with the national music hall. I could take the bus and go there. And I was able to find a few friends who wanted to go at the same time. Here, I don't have a lot of friends, and there is not a lot of friends you could talk to as a good friend. Maybe I'm picky. Maybe that's why a lot of people feel lonesome. Even if you could talk to people you don't have people you can really know each other. Also, friends that you could pull together are not a lot, so you don't want to go out because sometimes you like to have company to do something together. If you have a companion, you will be more interested in doing things........I used to give people emotional support, I am normal person who is very emotionally strong. I feel like when I face with Americans, I tend to use my inferior part to face Americans. So I look more like a person who cannot give support to people. It's a very big difference for me emotionally here. I used to feel that I had a lot of feeling and I was rich in feeling wise and I could give a lot to people. But now it seems like people tend to comfort me and tell me, "You are doing a good job." And I always feel why do I need other people to comfort me and to tell me that I can do things. I'm not inferior in doing things. (C2: Insecurity that they are incompetent.) (C1: Less companions. Role reversal: (1)Give/receive (2) Shake how one views self)
The fifth Chinese family:

1. **[Fear] [Finance]** Wife: You have to **calculate** your own **financial ability** before you buy things. In the initial stage because we felt that we still had a long way to go, so we were very frugal, and it's quite different from when we lived in our country Taiwan. When we were in Taiwan, we didn't have that feeling to be frugal. (C2: Fear of running out of money. Economics is clearly a difference between living in Taiwan & U.S.A.) (C1: Perception of spending money)

2. **[Risk]** Husband: The advisor is very important. (C2: At the mercy of academic advisor/risk) If you have a bad advisor, even though the person gives you money, but you might not be able to study, and you have to make a lot of effort (biy). Like me, I have to put oil on the bottom of my feet. (run away). Even if he wants to give me more money, I don't want to work for him. I'd like to finish and be gone as soon as I can.

3. **[Wife's experiences]** Wife: The social network is small for housewives in this country. It's like I'm locked in a cage. The cage is my house. And probably also because the environment here is different than our own country.

4. **[Isolation]** [Wife's experiences] Wife: I **don't know** American people so my **English cannot be improved**. Most of my friends are Chinese. When I was in Taiwan, I had friends who can help me but here, that I have to face the reality I need to **raise my child all by myself**, so I'm quite busy. I would tell my friends don't have children right away when they get here. They need to get familiar with the environment here and have a year of preparation, then have a child. (C2: The issue comes up again about not socially interacting with Americans--They seem isolated in their own community ) (C1: Easier to adjust without kids. Timing of having a child, get familiar with the environment first. Lack of support in raising kids for wife)

5. **[Child raising]** Wife: I think I would have different feeling based on the different developments of my children, because the more my kids encounter school, the more problems they will have. For me, I like to give my children a **bi-lingual education**. I will definitely teach my children Chinese well. If we decide to stay in America, then the school
would teach them English. I would view my kids as Chinese to educate them. And let them feel they are Chinese, not American. I believe I am a mother who is open. I don't like myself to be more conservative or more rigid. I don't know how much I will be able to do it. I will focus more on mental education. I have friends, their kids are in kindergarten, and those parents are in a hurry to teach their kids mathematics, even the three numbers of addition. (C2: Difference in Education->Important Theme)

6. [Social interaction] Husband: The interpersonal relationship is very important.

[Relationship with Americans] Wife: Yes, it's very important. Because if you are having a good relationship with Americans, then you will be able to know American society better and you can understand better how would you play your role better. (C2: Benefit of good relationship) (C1: Benefit of good relationship with Americans: (1) know American society better (2) American provides easier, faster answer for Chinese)

[Relationship with Americans] [Friendship] Husband: No matter Chinese or American, the relationship with both of them are also important. There's a lot of things you need Chinese to help you and sometimes you need Americans to help you. If you don't understand things, sometimes by asking Americans, it's easier and faster to get the answer. Of course, you could ask Chinese who have been here for a long time, but sometimes it may not be correct to ask the Chinese who have been here for a long time. Because sometimes Chinese may spread the information one by one, and sometimes it might not be correct. (Spread the words is tsiuan)
The sixth Chinese family:

1. [Relationship with Americans][Language] Wife: Initially, I refused to learn Tai Yu (a dialect in Taiwan other than Chinese). I didn't want to speak at all. Lately, I have a friend whose mother came here to visit and the mother could only speak Tai Yu, so in order to communicate with my friend's mother, I needed to speak this dialect, so I improved my Tai Yu ability. When I came to this place, I found that Chinese live closely and we have a support system. When I'm lonesome, I could find some companion, and I don't need to find Americans, so actually, I don't have to use English. I don't have to speak English. My life is very simple because I'm a housewife. I stay home all the time. However, home restrains myself. It's not very easy to make American friends. You have to be able to talk, to chat; however, time is always limited. Even I have some American friends but we usually talk superficially and we cannot talk too long. It's very hard to have deep conversation with Americans because I don't quite understand Americans or the information about Americans. Also, Americans don't quite know about Chinese. Also, I don't have a good capacity describing my country by using English. Therefore, it's really hard to improve my English. I can only watch TV. Maybe my listening ability is improving a little bit. (C2: Again the theme of her language limits friendships, etc.) (C1: Not need American friends. Lack of deep conversation with American. Limitation on language ability)

2. Ethnographer: (talking to the wife) I'd like you to describe for me your experience here as a wife.

[Wife's experiences] Wife: It's pretty painful here. You need to be strong and independent. There are two kinds of wives. One is the wife who studies, and who will have the pressure from the school. However, there is less demand toward this type of wife. Another kind of wife is housewife. I feel like housewives have more pressure. I have high expectations on myself. I expect myself to take good care of my family. I expect myself to take good care of my child. I don't want my husband telling me that since I'm not studying, how come I cannot take good care of our child. The other thing I expect of myself is to take good care of my husband, mentally and materially. I hope I can help him in his school work. If I can't, I probably would feel myself very incompetent. If I am able to help him, I would feel that I'm able to
participate, then I would feel much happier. My pressure is coming from everywhere. My pressure is that I cannot ask my husband to understand what happens to me because my husband has to study. He has to deal with his own thing, so I try to do everything possible by myself. I've become stronger. I really changed a lot. A person gets stronger whenever there is a lot of pain, but the person can also tolerate a lot of pain. If a person cannot be strong, then the person cannot tolerate the pain. I don't feel that I'm very competent, but I know my husband has pressures. Back home, I could share my burden with others and I could work, I can ask others to take care of my child; however, here I have to do everything, so I have complaints. Sometimes, my emotions are not very steady, but I try to control myself. However, if I explode, then I would be in a bad temper. Sometimes my husband feels that I am complaining too much. If I am complaining on a daily basis, it's not good, so I always try to suppress myself, but whenever I talk about my complaints, it's always the time I would explode because I hold it for so long. The reason I don't tell my husband on a regular basis is I feel like if I talk too much on a daily basis, it's not good for my husband. I read the Chinese newspaper. Sometimes I will share with my husband. It's really important for both of us to be considerate with each other, especially understanding each other's pressure. (C1: H's needs precede wife's needs. wife did not ask to be understood by husband. Handle everything including own emotion. Husband & wife have different pressures) (C2: Again, The difference between husband & wife. She is subservient to her.) (C1: Wife listens to Husband's pressure, but not vice versa.)

[Wife's experiences] Wife: I don't mean that I want my husband to give a lot of time to me; however, I'd like my husband's heart to come back. When he comes home, then he's home. After we got married, I always put my husband as number one, and I do not pay attention to myself. I delay my own needs. I like to get my satisfaction later. (C1: Wife puts all energy on husband & family, rather than some on self)

[Couple relationship] Wife: Yes. I'm pretty satisfied with what I have. I feel like even under the similar conditions here and back home, the couple usually has happier life here because back home, the whole community environment is too complex, so the family life is more complicated and not simple. Living here is simpler. Overall, it's pretty good to live here. Also, I feel that now the overseas Chinese couples
can communicate much more. Here, almost everything is done by the couple together. Everyone can contribute his or her ideas in the marriage.

3. [Wife's experiences] Wife: I expect too much of myself. I feel very sad when I see other wives study, like I'm locked in my house the whole day. The second one is that when my husband has a problem, I cannot help him. I feel that I'm very useless. I don't want to be just a pure housewife.

Husband: No? (this implied the wife is doing good)

[Child raising] Wife: Another pressure is that I'm afraid that my boy will be inferior than the other children. I hope my boy can be successful, can be like a dragon. So, I feel like I have painful fate. I have a lot of pressure. If I don't have this expectation, then I could actually live pretty comfortably. I can just take care of my boy.

4. [Wife's experiences] Wife: I told my husband recently that I feel suffocated and I focus on our boy all day long and I have been teaching my boy how to talk. My only contact is with my child and I need an adult to carry on adult-like conversation with me. I don't have that. I feel so sad and uncomfortable.

Wife: So sometimes I tell my husband the day is hard to go through and to finish because I'm not living the normal kind of life. Because it's hard to see your husband and the boy cannot see his father a lot. You want to talk to him, but you don't want to bother him.
The seventh Chinese families:

1. [Couple Relationship] Husband: We feel very satisfied mentally that we could meet each other, see each other everyday and be together.
F: I cherish this being able to be together very much. Back home, that we experience some time when we were not able to see each other because of the business, the social activities.

2. [Finance] Husband: We try to lower our life expectation and also we don't want to increase our life expectation. As long as we have food to eat, have place to sleep and everybody is safe and no accidents, this will be perfect. (C1: Not want to increase life expectation)

[Child raising] Wife: Often times, we are not very used to this. One time my daughter asked me how come I don't give her a hug before she goes to sleep. I told her that I'm very tired and I haven't taken a shower and I smell. It's American style to give your child a hug before he or she goes to sleep. We don't have this habit and custom, our parents do not do this. My daughter told me that her friends' parents always do this. Our neighbor also do this, how come you cannot do this? (C1: Children's requirement for physical contact)

Ethnographer: Your daughter requests this of you?

[Child raising] Wife: Yes, she will. I think this is one of the differences between the West and the East. Here, because the children only have the parents, they don't have other family members or relatives, so they learn to be more independent. Also, the school encourages the students to be independent. (C1: Independent children)

3. [Neighbor] Wife: We don't know much about our neighbors, but we always wonder where are the husbands, where are the fathers? How is their marital condition? What happened to them? It's inconvenient to ask. Maybe this is not a big deal for Americans, but my daughter would ask them directly.

Ethnographer: How did your daughter ask them?
[Neighbor] Wife: My daughter would ask them, "Where is Joe's father, where is Joe's dad?" Joe's mother told my daughter very directly and honestly that Joe's father is in California and then he has another new family. Another family told my daughter the father is in Kansas City, who is a bus driver, and they told my daughter that the father doesn't live with them. My daughter would just ask the question, like for example, our upstairs neighbors, there's always a man who comes here.

Wife: When my daughter was four years old, my daughter asked the man directly whether he's Joe's father, and this man told my daughter he's not Joe's father and even until now, my daughter will tell me that this man is Joe's baby-sitter. My daughter sometimes plays with this man or plays with the other kids together.

Ethnographer: Is this cohabitation?

Wife: It's not, but the man came here quite often, probably they are very good friends. I don't quite know what happened here.

[Neighbor] Husband: This is a kind of cultural gap. If we were in our home country, we probably would not ask the person directly. We could ask other people, try to find out what happened. On the one hand, we have no resource for information here. (Wife agree.) (C1: No way to know what's going on for the neighbor)
The eighth Chinese family:

1. [Wife's experiences] Wife: For example, I didn't want to go abroad, then my husband told me I'm short-sighted. Now we are in another country, but my husband still asks me to stay home and cook for him. In that case, what's the difference to come this country? I would rather stay home country and make money over there. (C2: She followed her husband. Struggle of the wife)(C1: Husband prefers wife to stay home & cook. Wife prefers to stay in Taiwan & make money. No support from Husband to help wife to cook)

[Husband's experiences] Husband: Actually I prefer my wife to stay home so I can concentrate on my study and I don't have to worry about a lot of things.

[Husband's experiences] Husband: There's just too many career women at this point. I feel like women need to be home and I will try to do my best to make as much money as I can so my wife can stay home and doesn't have to go out and make money.

2. [Cultural experiences] Wife: I feel like this place is eventually not my own country. It's very hard to understand their culture, to communicate with their culture. At school, in the class, it's not as easy as in my own country. This means it's hard to express what you want to say and what's in your mind.

[Boring] Wife: I want to add one more point. I feel like the life here is pretty boring. There's not really a lot of places you can play around. (C2: Boring. Recreative)

3. [Relationship with Americans] Wife: I don't really know a lot of Americans. I would ask them questions in the class, but I don't really spend time with them or do things together.
The ninth Chinese Family:

1. [Cultural experiences] Husband: Each country is different and the customs are different. When Americans ask you question, if you don't answer, that means that you don't have any questions. For example, if he or she wants to give you coffee and you say "no", then they would take it seriously and think that you don't really need that. For Chinese, a host would feel like you are just being polite, even though you say no, they would still give you coffee. So the customs are very different. (C1: Meaning taking: Different verbal message on same words)

[Strategy] [Cultural experiences] Husband: In this country, if you don't try to get your own right, that means you are automatically giving it up. Americans would feel that you are willing to give it up. For Chinese, they may feel that whatever rights I need to have, that you need to give it to me. But the custom here is different. (C1: Ask for what you need!!)

[No social support] Wife: I don't know whether you have the feeling that probably most of the families experience similarities. We don't really talk to people about our problems. Even if you look for people, you may not find a person who can help. And sometimes, the problem just accumulates gradually. And sometimes, you cannot find a good solution and you just hold it in. If we could have a growth or encounter group and we could all discuss and exchange our ideas and experiences, I think this would be a good idea.

[Husband's experiences] Husband: There's a proverb that in our country that if you are a gentleman, then you have to be away from the kitchen. (C1: Traditional expectation for men)

Husband: For Chinese, when a man marries, he becomes an adult, a grown-up. Before I got married, usually my mother would take care of everything, whatever would be prepared by my mother, would just have my mother to wash clothes for me.

[Family support] Husband: In your home country, you may be able to ask your mother to take care of your baby and you could go wherever you want, here it would be hard to do that.
Couple relationship] [Family support] Wife: Back home, if I get angry, I could go back to my own home, but here, I have no home to go back to.

[Finance] Wife: I feel like we are coming to this country so when we use money, we need to think more carefully. If you need to save, then you need to save. (C2: Money theme) (C1: Financial concern)

[Finance] Wife: When you are not in your home country, you really have to be careful on how you use money. It's impossible to use the money the same as how you use money back home. It's not like you won't run out of your money. If you have family support, then that might be OK. And also, we have reached certain age, it's embarrassing taking money from your own family. I still feel that before you buy things, spend money, you have to think over three times. (C2: Money) (C1: Money spending)
The tenth Chinese Interview (focus group):

1. [Couple relationship] Husband 3: If we talk about the relationship between the couples, in Taiwan there are a lot of external factors.

Ethnographer: What are the external factors?

Wife 2: Mother-in-law, father-in-law, uncle.

Wife 3: Also, marital affairs. Also, the environment, the place you work.

Husband 3: There's more temptations, just a lot. There are a lot of factors back in Taiwan that would change marital quality.

Ethnographer: The marriage is more stable here?

Husband 3: Because of the seclusion. Because the interfering factors are gone, so people can regulate themselves.

2. [Child raising] We know that it's pretty hard for the kids to study in Taiwan and since we have kids and we don't want our kids to suffer the hardship and the pain in Taiwan, and we like our kids to study here. (CI: Chinese parents prefers their kids to study in the United States)

3. [Couple relationship] Wife 1: I feel like my husband is in a more miserable situation because I listen to him less and less. I obey him less and less. I disobey his leadership more and more. (Everybody is laughing) (C2: Changes in traditional relationship the more they are here) (C1: Change of wife's position)

4. [Wife's experiences] Wife 3: If I realized which part was not good, then I would tell my husband. My husband would talk to the builder because I feel like the builder is a male, so it's inconvenient for me to talk to him. So, I have my husband talk to him. So he would communicate with the builder.

5. [Language] [Later stage] [Wife's experiences] [Relation with Americans] Wife 1: Other than not being able to melt into American society, I don't have other resentments because the cultural
backgrounds are different. My language is not very good and I'm not willing to make friends with Americans or neighbors, but I discovered that I have some problem in my language. Also, my learning ability is inferior, not too good. I cannot remember. Everyone has limited capacity, but I don't mean that I don't want to make friends. Some people have good memories. They can remember some festival so they will prepare candy. I cannot remember. If I want to socialize with Americans, I need to remember those festivals, but I cannot remember. It's not like I don't want to melt into American society. The problem is more like I cannot remember those festivals or names so I don't put a lot of effort on socializing with American friends. Even if I talk with my neighbor, I still haven't been able to interact with Americans a lot. If I could have better language ability or I could remember better, I think I would be able to go out and interact with neighbors or Americans. But I'm the kind of person who is able to adjust to any kind of different environment. I should not say I can self-entertain, but I would try to adjust. My adjustment ability is pretty strong. (C1: Limitation on socialization: (1) Language (2) Not know festivals)
APPENDIX D. EXAMPLE OF SEQUENTIAL IMPACTS FOR CHINESE FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES

Temporal domain was found from the data analysis. Some Chinese families described their living experiences in the United States based on pre-arrival, arrival, and post-arrival stages. An example of one family description from a temporal perspective will be presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sequential impacts for Chinese families in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Arrival</th>
<th>Arrival</th>
<th>Post-Arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reasons to come</td>
<td>• Language</td>
<td>• Stay in its own community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideas before coming to U.S.A.</td>
<td>• Isolation</td>
<td>• Necessary dichotomy*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparation</td>
<td>• Build up own social support</td>
<td>• New family relationship evolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wife is supportive of family</td>
<td>* Necessary dichotomy refers to living in the Chinese world, and working in the American world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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