AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF IMMIGRANT
CHINESE CANADIAN MOTHERS OF SONS WITH DISABILITIES:
PARENT INVOLVEMENT, COPING, AND RELATED BELIEFS AND VALUES

by
YUAN LAI-BOVENKERK
B.A., Tunghai University, Taiwan, 1985
M.Ed., The University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A., 1990

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
August 2000
© Yuan Lai-Bovenkerk, 2000
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Sep 8, 2002
Abstract

This thesis examined the experiences and perspectives of immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in the areas of parental involvement in education and coping with parenting stress. In-depth interviewing, supplemented by questionnaires, was utilised to gather data. Ten women, most of whom were newly immigrated, whose school-age sons had various disabilities and who spoke English as a second language, participated in the study. The mothers' acculturation level to Canadian ways of living was generally low. Devotion to the children was at the heart of parent involvement and coping. Inability to speak English fluently posed a major barrier to the involvement of these women in their children's education. It also restricted their ability to seek community resources. These women valued their children's education and worked with them at home. The degree of the mothers' participation in school was generally less than that of their involvement at home. The women made comparisons of education in Canada and that in the Asian countries where they came from, and stated their preferences for qualities possessed by teachers. The mothers expressed some conflicts with the schools, and they mostly tried to avoid confrontation. Self-reliance, self-control, a belief in family support, as well as a belief in fate helped them to cope. Readily available interpreter services and information in Chinese about service agencies serving children with disabilities and their families would be helpful to Chinese Canadian women like them.
Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................... ii
Table of Content.............................................................................................................. iii
List of Tables................................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ vii
Dedication........................................................................................................................ viii
Acknowledgements....................................................................................................... ix
Chapter One: Introduction............................................................................................. 1
  Background of the Problem........................................................................................... 1
    Students with Disabilities........................................................................................... 1
    Parent Involvement.................................................................................................... 1
    Parental Stress and Coping....................................................................................... 2
    Related Beliefs and Values....................................................................................... 2
    Chinese Parents of Children with Disabilities......................................................... 3
  Rationale....................................................................................................................... 3
  Purpose of the Study..................................................................................................... 3
  Research Questions...................................................................................................... 4
  Clarification of Terms................................................................................................. 4
Chapter Two: Literature Review...................................................................................... 5
  Students with Disabilities........................................................................................... 5
  Parents of Children with Disabilities......................................................................... 7
  Parent Involvement....................................................................................................... 7
    Parent Involvement Practices................................................................................... 8
      Parent involvement in regular education................................................................. 8
      Parent involvement in special education............................................................... 8
      Minority parents’ involvement............................................................................. 8
    Barriers to Parent Involvement.............................................................................. 9
    Parent-Teacher Relations......................................................................................... 10
  Parental Stress and Coping....................................................................................... 11
    Parents of Children with Disabilities and Coping with Stress............................. 11
      Stress..................................................................................................................... 11
      Resources.............................................................................................................. 12
      Coping strategies................................................................................................. 12
      Minority parents................................................................................................... 13
    Help Seeking............................................................................................................ 13
  Beliefs and Values....................................................................................................... 14
    Locus of Control....................................................................................................... 15
      In relation to coping.............................................................................................. 15
      In relation to action taking................................................................................... 16
    Minority Groups...................................................................................................... 17
  Chinese Parents of Children with Disabilities.......................................................... 18
    Cultural Influence.................................................................................................. 18
    Research on Chinese People.................................................................................. 19
      Research in Asia................................................................................................. 19
      Research in North America................................................................................. 20
    Cultural Beliefs and Values.................................................................................... 21
      Family................................................................................................................... 21
      Value of education............................................................................................... 21
      Value of self-control............................................................................................ 21
      Value of interpersonal harmony......................................................................... 22
      Fate....................................................................................................................... 22
    Attitude toward disabilities.................................................................................... 23
  Qualitative Research.................................................................................................. 23
Chapter Three: Methodology......................................................................................... 26
  Method....................................................................................................................... 26
List of Tables

1. Parent Background Information ......................................................... 29
2. Overview of Shared Themes ................................................................. 35
List of Figures

1. Overview of the factors that could play a role in parent involvement and parental coping...27
2. Overview of shared themes and suggested patterns.................................94
This dissertation is dedicated to

the ten women who participated in this research
and other women whose stories have shaped my understanding
of immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities,

and

my parents,
who have been waiting for this moment,

and

my son, Ling Shan,
who has taught me the joy of being a mother.
I want to thank my thesis committee for their guidance, feedback, and support. In addition, I thank Dr. Sally Rogow for overseeing the thesis throughout the years, laboriously editing the lengthy drafts with "imperfect English" (she did not have a chance to edit this section), and reviewing the drafts in a timely fashion; Dr. Art More for his willingness to serve as co-supervisor and administrative support; Dr. Whittaker for his enthusiasm in this research, consultation in developing the interview schedule, and reviewing the English versions of the acculturation and identity questionnaires to ensure the meaning of the items remained the same; Dr. Ishiyama for his ongoing interest in the research and assistance in conceptualising the questionnaire data; and the feedback from the External Examiners, Dr. Marvin Westwood, Dr. Jim Anderson, Dr. Lee Gunderson, and Dr. Anita Mak.

It would not have been possible to conduct the research without the assistance from the participating School Boards, principals, and teachers as well as S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to locate the research participants. Many other persons were contacted and their help is much appreciated.

Special thanks go to my friends: Lena, who helped conduct several interviews, Ling, who translated the Cantonese tapes into Mandarin, and Yuko and Jeff who offered their help and emotional support.
Chapter One: Introduction

The present study focuses on the involvement of immigrant Chinese Canadian women in the education of their children with disabilities who spoke English as a second language, as well as the mothers’ coping with stress related to raising their children. Qualitative interviewing is the choice of research method, supplemented by questionnaire data, to explore the parents’ experiences and perspectives in the two areas of interest, along with their beliefs and values.

Background of the Problem

Presented below are educational problems faced by students with disabilities, the benefits which parent involvement could bring to these students, how parents’ coping with stress could affect parental well-being and parent involvement, exploration of beliefs and values in relation to coping and parent involvement, and finally the little researched Chinese parents of children with disabilities in North America. A rationale is given, research questions are posed, and terms used in the thesis are clarified.

Students with Disabilities

Equal educational opportunities have been granted to students with disabilities in North America to help them strive for equal outcomes. Under the School Act adopted in 1989, students with disabilities in British Columbia (B.C.) are to be educated in regular classrooms, where appropriate. In practice, these students have been increasingly integrated, with educational support to help meet their special learning needs (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1994a). Equal opportunities for students with disabilities who come from ethnic minority backgrounds in North America or who have limited proficiency in English are often in jeopardy. It has been documented that providing educational services to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in urban areas is a challenge faced by educators in the United States (Department of Education, 1996). In B.C., similarly, in-service teachers were found to be inadequately prepared to meet the needs of students coming from “the wide range of languages, cultures, nationalities and races to be found throughout the Province” (Shapson, Ames, Painchaud, & Petrie, 1997, p. 8). There is also a lack of communication between special and language educators for students whose first language is not English (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Cummins, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1994). As such, successful integration of minority students with disabilities who are learning English as a second language presents a challenge to schools in B.C.

Parent Involvement

An understanding of the interface between school and home, two important contexts in a child’s life, is needed in order to achieve the best results for the child’s schooling (Power & Bartholomew, 1987). Parent involvement in children’s education is one form of that interface. An extensive review of the factors that affect school learning affirms that parent involvement benefits student learning for different subgroups of students and for students of all ages (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Furthermore, successful education of children with disabilities is in some ways dependent on parents. Parental input has played an important role to date in advancing the right of children with disabilities to an appropriate education in North America (Turnbull, Turnbull & Wheat, 1982; Strickland, 1982). Besides, parent involvement is an integral part of developing educational programs for these children (U.S. Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975; B.C. School Act, 1989). In addition, parents know their children and are able to provide valuable information to educators (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Wolfendale, 1986). Unfortunately, a trend of passive participation of parents of children with disabilities has also been documented (Goldstein & Turnbull, 1982; Hilton & Henderson, 1993; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Morgan, 1982; Strickland, 1982; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Yoshida, 1982).

Parent participation is important in designing educational programs for exceptional minority students (Chinn, 1979). The parents can provide an understanding of cultural perspectives to mainstream educators (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994). Yet, it has been noted that the participation of minority parents is lower than that of mainstream North Americans (Chinn, 1979; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1992; Harry, 1992; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Nixon, 1991). The low rates of minority participation may be attributed to current structural barriers (Harry, 1992; Hanson, Lynch, & Wayman, 1990; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987) as well as some ethnic/cultural practices and beliefs that run counter to established practices in North American schools (Harry, 1992; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Lauer, 1992; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987;
In any case, Dornbush and Ritter (1992) warn that low rates of participation of minority parents could lead to perpetuation of inequality.

Parental Stress and Coping

There is some indication that how parents cope with caring for their children with disabilities and how they are involved in their children's education are related. Successful parental participation in their children's education has been found to reduce parent stress (Beresford, 1994; Gallagher, Beckman, & Cross, 1983). On the other hand, Wilgosh (1990) noted that the effort of and the time spent on being involved and advocating for children could create more stress for the parents. Furthermore, teacher sensitivity to parental role and concerns could assist in working with parents (Nixon, 1991; Wilgosh, 1990).

Coping is an effort to manage stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Parents of children with disabilities often experience a great deal of stress (Beresford, 1994; Bubolz & Whiren, 1984; Dyson, 1997; Ingstad, 1990; Scorgie, Wilgosh, & McDonald, 1998). Two types of stress have been consistently identified: (a) the emotional stress of parenting the children, and (b) stress arising from child-care demands (Ingstad, 1988; Wilgosh, 1990). It has been found that personal coping resources (such as physical health, beliefs, and previous coping experiences) help parents to cope with stress (Beresford, 1994). Social support networks have also been found to be important resources (Beresford, 1994; Hancock, Wilgosh, & McDonald, 1990; Nixon, 1991; Wilgosh, 1990). Beresford (1994) suggested that support from one's spouse was the most significant form of social support. Another important source of emotional and informational support are other parents in similar situations (Hancock et al., 1990; Nixon, 1991; Scorgie, Wilgosh, & McDonald, 1996). In contrast, support from social agencies are often of practical nature and are mostly utilised in times of crisis (Beresford, 1994).

It has been reported that many parents have limited knowledge about support services available to children with disabilities and their families (Beresford, 1994; Lavelle & Keogh, 1980; Sontag & Schacht, 1994). Parents from ethnic minority groups appear to know even less about support services (Beresford, 1994; Chan, 1986; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Sontag & Schacht, 1994). Limited knowledge aside, a lack of what appear to be culturally relevant services has been linked to minority people's infrequent utilisation of mainstream services (Sue & Sue, 1999; Wong & Piran, 1995). Minority people may also not approach mainstream agencies because of their cultural beliefs and practices (Christensen, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). It has been stated that culture plays a role in how one copes with stress (Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, help-seeking behaviour has been found to vary across cultures (Bentelspacher, Chitran, & Rahman, 1995; Lin, Tardiff, Donetz, & Goresky, 1978; Sue & Sue, 1999; Tata & Leong, 1994). The effect of cultural values and beliefs is discussed in the next section.

Related Beliefs and Values

Little research directly investigates beliefs and values of parents of children with disabilities. Control beliefs appear to have implications for both parental coping and parent involvement. The locus of control construct (LOC) refers to an individual’s belief as to whether he or she has personal control over events or whether the events are determined by external forces such as chance or luck (Paulhus & Christie, 1981). The LOC construct is frequently cited as a major element in coping. Generally, those who believe that outcomes are contingent on their own actions appear to cope better and are more adaptive than people who depend on external controls (Landau, 1995; Lefcourt, 1966; Lefcourt & Davidson-Katz, 1991; Rotter, 1966, 1975; Strickland, 1989). Several studies of parents of children with disabilities generally support the view that internality is associated with better coping (Beresford, 1994; Frey, Greenberg, & Fewell, 1989; Gallagher et al, 1983; Rimmernan, 1991).

There is no research on the relationship between LOC and parent involvement. Parent involvement may be viewed as a form of action taking. It has been reported that people who believe that they have personal control for what happens to them are more likely to participate in social action (Rotter, 1982; Strickland, 1965). It has also been noted that people who believe in external LOC may be involved in social action. Levenson (1981) stated that people who believed that the important events in their lives were controlled by “powerful others” tended to participate in social action because they believed that they could influence those in authority. Klandermans (1983) argued that the two kinds of theorisation are both justifiable. Darling (1988) found that parents of
children with disabilities exhibited activism (defined as seeking information and control as well as challenging authority) when they became frustrated from repeated negative experiences with professionals. Professionals who work with children with disabilities have a powerful role and a great deal of authority in the lives of the parents (Lavelle & Keogh, 1980; Nixon, 1991). Darling's (1988) finding is suggestive of a relationship between one's expectancies of external control (specifically by people in power) and action taking.

Beliefs about LOC varies across cultures (Bond & Tornatzky, 1973; Dyal, 1984; Guthrie & Lonner, 1986; Hsieh, Shybut, & Lotsof, 1969; Lao, 1989; Mahler, 1974). For example, people from Eastern countries have been generally found to be more external than those from Western countries (Guthrie & Lonner, 1986). However, research on minority people, LOC, and coping or action taking is sparse and inconclusive. In terms of coping, cultural values like emotional restraint, or self-control, as well as indirect communication styles have been linked to Asian Americans' low incidence of acting-out behaviours and the ways in which they express psychological stress (Leong, 1986; Sue & Sue, 1999). Honour of family has also been found to explain why some Asian Americans do not utilise mainstream services (Sue, 1994). In terms of parent involvement, different ethnic belief systems may deter immigrant minority parents from being involved in their children's schools (Harry, 1992; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993). It has been noted that many immigrant minority parents may not be familiar with the concept of parental participation in schools (Chan, 1986; Harry, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993), which could further deter the parents’ participation.

**Chinese Parents of Children with Disabilities**

Based on the few studies that were conducted in Asia and in the U.S., there is some suggestion that Chinese parents of children with disabilities tend to cope with emotional restraint and family support, and make little use of formal services (Cheung & Kan, 1987; Pearson & Chan, 1993; Shek & Tsang, 1993; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). Lack of proficiency in English, lack of knowledge of existing services, and mainstream services where no staff spoke Chinese languages may account for under-utilisation of mainstream services by Chinese immigrant parents living in the United States (Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). A belief in fate has helped Chinese people to cope with adversity and disappointment (Lin, 1939; Smith, 1991). It has also been linked to how Chinese parents of children with disabilities cope with stress (Ching, 1982; Shek & Tsang, 1993).

In terms of parent involvement, two cultural values are posited to be relevant: the high values placed on education and on interpersonal harmony. Chinese people have traditionally valued education (Lee, 1989; Huang & Gibbs, 1987; Suen & Ng, 1986). This value is likely to motivate and sustain parent involvement. The value placed on interpersonal harmony (Chan, 1986; Ho, 1975; Leung, 1987; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987) may deter parent involvement when there are disagreements with authority figures. Another factor that would play a role in parent involvement and coping is the degree to which Chinese people are acculturated to Canadian norms. Those with higher levels of acculturation are likely to adapt better (Chataway & Berry, 1989; Zheng & Berry, 1989).

**Rationale**

Little is known about how Chinese Canadian immigrant parents of children with disabilities are involved in their children's education or how they cope with stress and the demands of child care. Chinese people are the second largest ethnic group in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, a large proportion of whom speak Chinese at home (Canada, 1991). In the Vancouver School District and in the province of British Columbia as a whole, Chinese is the second most common language, next to English, which students speak at home (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1996). As such, there is a need to examine the experiences and perspectives of Chinese Canadian immigrant parents of children with disabilities who speak English as a second language, in order to facilitate the development of appropriate services for the children and their families.

**Purpose of the Study**

Mothers bear the most responsibility in caring for children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994). This study applied a qualitative research design to investigate the experiences and perspectives of Chinese Canadian mothers in raising children with disabilities who speak English as a second language in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Specifically, the study examines (a) the nature of the mothers' involvement in their children's education; (b) how they cope with
challenges they face in parenting their children; and (c) what they believe and value in both coping and parent involvement. Demographic information, such as length of residency, English proficiency, and acculturation level, was also examined.

**Research Questions**

This study was exploratory. Research questions were as follows:
1. What is the nature of the involvement of these Chinese Canadian mothers in the education of their children with disabilities?
2. What is the role of the parents’ beliefs and values in their involvement?
3. How do the parents cope with the stress and demands of raising their children?
4. What is the role of the parents’ beliefs and values in how they cope?
5. Is there a relationship between how the parents cope and get involved in their children’s education? If so, what is the relationship?

**Clarification of Terms**

1. Minority groups, according to the thesaurus in the ERIC database, refer to “subgroups within a larger society that are distinguished from the majority and each other by race, national heritage, or sometimes by religious or cultural affiliation.” American Indians, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans are some of the examples given in the database.
2. The term, the mainstream, is used in this thesis to refer to the majority that is distinguished from minority groups, as stated above.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following is a review of literature on issues affecting students with disabilities, parent involvement, parental stress and coping, beliefs and values, and Chinese parents of children with disabilities. Literature on qualitative research is also reviewed here.

Students with Disabilities

The term, students with special needs, is used in the school system in British Columbia to include students with disabilities. B. C. Ministry of Education (1994b) defines students with special needs as those “with special intellectual, physical, learning, perceptual or behavioural/emotional needs which must be met in order for them to benefit from an educational program” (p. 7). These students require additional educational support resources and materials to assist them to develop their individual potential (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1994b). Students who are exceptionally gifted or talented are also included. In this study, the term, students with disabilities, is used to specify the nature of their special needs. Parents of children who are exceptionally gifted or talented are not the subject of this study.

Special schools were established in the early 1800's in North America, and, beginning in the 1930's special classes were established in public schools. Since the 1960's there has been a movement away from the traditional service delivery models of segregated schools and special classes in regular schools to models in which students are being increasingly integrated into regular classrooms in the neighbourhood schools (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Harry and Kalyanpur (1994) noted that one underlying value on which special educational policy in the U.S. were based was equity. Equity has been an important issue in North America since the human rights movements began in the 1960's and is incorporated into the Canadian Charter of Freedoms and Rights. The civil rights movement, asking for the minority's equal access to the same services provided to the mainstream groups, led to an awareness of the rights of people with disabilities (Kauffman, 1989). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which was subsequently superseded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has established the rights of all children to free appropriate public education and granted parental rights to safeguard their children’s educational rights in the United States. Stainback, Stainback, Courtnage, and Jaben (1985) regard the integration of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms over the years as part of the educational evolution of progressive inclusion.

In 1989, B.C. School Act adopted an integrated model of service delivery and required that students with disabilities be educated alongside their non-disabled peers in regular classrooms, where appropriate. The B.C. School Act (1989) states:

Unless the educational needs of a handicapped student indicate that the student’s educational program should be provided otherwise, a board shall provide that student with an educational program in classrooms where the student is integrated with other students who do not have handicaps.

In practice, most school districts in B.C. have adopted “full inclusion” as a model of service delivery. The B.C. Ministry of Education (1994a) reported that the majority of the students with disabilities in B.C. were integrated in the regular classrooms for more than half of the time spent in school.

Students with disabilities who come from ethnic minority backgrounds often need additional educational support beyond that given to their mainstream peers (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Chinn, 1979; Cummins, 1989; Harry, 1992). The educational needs of the exceptional minority students are complex for several reasons. These students are said to be in double jeopardy because of the combined effect of a disability and lack of a reflection of their minority culture in the school curriculum (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Cummins, 1989; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987). Meeting their educational needs has been a challenge for both Canada and the United States. The U.S. Department of Education (1996), in its twentieth Annual Report to Congress, noted that exceptional minority students were not appropriately served. The report stated:

While significant progress has been made toward providing a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities and improving results for those students, several
challenges remain. Two of these challenges are highlighted in this report— inclusion in regular education settings and providing services to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in urban areas.

Shapson, Ames, Painchaud, and Petrie (1997), echoed much the same view in their report after reviewing the teacher education programmes at the Faculty of Education of the University of British Columbia. In particular, Shapson et al. (1997) noted that B.C. pre-service teachers were not adequately trained to work with their prospective students which are likely to come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and highlighted this area of substantial challenge faced by the faculty:

The increasing diversity to be found in the classrooms throughout British Columbia, from urban to suburban to rural areas, is placing extra demands on the ability of teacher education programmes to prepare graduates for the wide range of languages, cultures, nationalities and races to be found throughout the Province. (p. 8)

Most schools in North American multi-ethnic societies are structured upon the mainstream middle class culture (Cummins, 1989; Hanson et al., 1990; Huang & Gibb, 1992; Moodley, 1992; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). One consequence of the lack of minority cultures reflected in the mainstream curriculum and material is that minority students may experience the crisis of personal identity and cultural identity, which can affect their academic learning (Cummins, 1989). Cummins (1989) cited Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi’s (1986) finding that minority students without disabilities who tend to experience academic difficulty “appear to have developed an insecurity and ambivalence about the value of their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the dominant group” (p. 112). In contrast, minority students who immigrated after about ten years of age “often appear to have better academic prospects than do students of similar socioeconomic status (SES) born in the host country, despite less exposure to the school language” (p. 112). The better academic prospects were attributed in part to the fact that these students “have not experienced devaluation of their identity in the social institutions (e.g., schools) of the host country” (Cummins, 1989, p. 112). Similarly, Cummins (1989) noted that minority students in special education programs were at risk of academic under-achievement and lack of self-esteem.

Assessment, which is required before special educational support services are provided, also poses problems for minority students. Over-representation of ethnic minority students in referrals for special education has often occurred (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Chinn, 1979; Gersten & Woodward, 1994). Fear of “potential charges of discrimination or mis-assessment, as well as the fear of lawsuits” has resulted in under-representation in recent years (Gersten & Woodward, 1994, p. 313). The problems are due to the fact that it is sometimes difficult to determine the cause of learning problems in students of minority backgrounds (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Lee, 1989). Assessing minority students who speak English as a second language poses special challenges. For one thing, it is often difficult to distinguish between school failure that is associated with lack of English language proficiency and that associated with underlying learning problems (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Cummins, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1994). In addition, there is a lack of normative data when assessing language minority students (Gersten and Woodward, 1994). Assessment tools in English, standardised on students of mainstream cultural backgrounds, may not be valid for minority students (Lee, 1989). As well, tests developed in language minority students’ emigrant countries may be inappropriate for the students who are learning two languages at the same time (Schiff-Myers, Djukic, McGovern-Lawler, & Perez, 1993). Lee (1989) noted that successful assessment of Asian American students “often depends on informal instruments and on the professional judgment of the evaluator” (p. 41), and urges that referral and assessment take account of the cultural backgrounds of the students.

Lack of interface between special and language education is another problem for exceptional minority students with limited English proficiency (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Cummins, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1994). Baca and Chinn (1982) stated: “One of the problems in serving linguistically different exceptional children has been the lack of communication and collaborative efforts between bilingual educators and special educators” (p. 40). Cummins (1997) defined bilingual education as
the use of two languages of instruction at some point in the students’ education to teach subject matter content. Cummins (1989) pointed out that in many special education programs there was little emphasis to promote the child’s first language.

Parents of Children with Disabilities

Parents of children with disabilities have been the subject of many studies in educational and psychological fields in North America. Two major issues have been investigated: how parents cope with caring for their children (Beresford, 1994; Bubolz & Whiren, 1984; Crnic, Friedrich, & Greenberg, 1983; Dunst, Trivette, & Cross 1986; Gallagher et al., 1983; Hancock et al., 1990; Ingstad, 1988; Nixon, 1991; Scorgie, Wilgosh, and McDonald, 1998; Wilgosh, 1990), and parent involvement (Darling, 1988; Harry, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Strickland, 1982; Turnbull et al., 1982; Wilgosh, 1990). Similarly, research studies of minority parents of children with disabilities have focused on either coping (Pearson & Chan, 1993; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989) or parent involvement (Harry, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1987). The research interests are in line with the day-to-day issues faced by parents of children with disabilities. Winzer (1993) identified three critical issues faced by the parents: (a) the child’s education, (b) acceptance of the handicapping condition, and (c) the child’s future. Wilgosh and her graduate students interviewed more than eighty Canadian families of children with disabilities over three decades, and she identified six relevant issues: (a) parental coping with child’s disability, (b) the need for support services; (c) effects on family life; (d) advocacy; (e) parents search for the best educational opportunities; and (f) the child’s future (Wilgosh, 1990). Some of the issues fall under “coping,” some under “parent involvement,” and others incorporate both.

There is some suggestion that parental coping and parent involvement are related. Parental perception of their children’s educational programs has been related to parental stress (Gallagher et al., 1983). Gallagher testified before the U.S. Congress that parent participation relieved parental anxiety (quoted in Turnbull et al., 1982). Beresford (1994) noted that, after parents sought out the best options for the child’s education, parental stress seems to be reduced. Yet, the effort of getting involved and advocating for children took time and energy from parents who were already experiencing a great deal of stress (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Wilgosh, 1990). In any case, both Nixon (1991) and Wilgosh (1990) stated that professionals’ sensitivity to parental coping styles and knowledge of parental concerns is important in order to work with parents.

Parent Involvement

From an ecological, holistic perspective, a child cannot be isolated from his or her family environment, and intervention on a child’s behalf must be based on understanding the interface of important contexts in a child’s life (e.g., home, school, and community) (Power & Bartholomew, 1987). Parent involvement in children’s education is one form of the interface of home and school. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) defined parent involvement as “the dedication of resources by the parent to the child” (p. 238), and listed the practices of parent involvement in education as participation in school events and activities (such as fund raising), contact between home and school, help with homework, attendance at meetings, and volunteering to help in the classroom. Parent involvement has become an increasingly important topic in education (López & Scribner, 1999). Parents; perspectives are invited in the planning of educational programs for students with disabilities (Gallagher et al., 1983; Silverstein, Springer, & Russo, 1992). In British Columbia, the 1989 School Act stipulates that schools must consult with parents of children with disabilities regarding their children’s educational programs and placement. The Special Education Advisory Committee to the B.C. Ministry of Education went further to recommend that educators seek parent input and consider suggestions from parents (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1994b).

Parental involvement in a child’s education has many benefits. Consistency and continuity between home and school has been shown to benefit a child’s learning (McAllister Swap, 1992). In an extensive review on what influence school learning, with data gathered from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and multidisciplinary studies, Wang et al. (1993) found that parent involvement was associated with school learning and student behaviour for various student populations of all ages. Of the variables that influence school learning, metacognitive processes of the student, classroom instruction and management, and home environment and parental support are critical (Wang et al., 1993). With regard to home environment and parental support, it was found that “the home functions as the most salient out-of-school
context for student learning, amplifying or diminishing the school’s effect on learning” (Wang et al., 1993, p. 278).

**Parent Involvement Practices**

Parent involvement is examined in two settings, regular and special education. Involvement of minority parents in the two settings is combined in its discussion.

**Parent involvement in regular education.** Parent involvement is recognised as important by teachers, administrators, and teacher educators (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Hughes, Ruhl, & Gorman, 1987). Many parents have also expressed a wish to be more involved in their children’s schools (Epstein, 1984; Epstein, 1986). On the other hand, some researchers reported that many teachers had little contact with parents (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Epstein (1984, 1986) reported that a large number of parents were excluded from many of the traditional forms of home-school communication, such as sending notices home, talking with parents on open-school nights, and asking parents to check students’ homework. In Canada, a recent, large-scale study examining the involvement of parents in the education of their elementary school children reported that a high percentage of the parents were involved in their children’s education as measured by both behaviour and attitude (Norris, 1999). Norris (1999) noted that parental time appears to be finite, in that, “overall, parents who are more involved at school are less involved at home and those that are more involved at home are less involved in school” (p. 78). For example, parents of lower SES backgrounds and single parents, who were reported by their children’s teachers as less involved in school, reported that they were involved at home (Norris, 1999).

**Parent involvement in special education.** In general, parents of children with disabilities desire to be involved in their children’s schools (Giangreco, Cloninger, Mueller, Yuan, & Ashworth, 1991). However, passive parent participation was generally noted (Goldstein & Turnbull, 1982; Hilton & Henderson, 1993; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Morgan, 1982; Strickland, 1982; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Yoshida, 1982). On the other hand, Salisbury and Evans (1988) compared parent involvement in regular and special education across all age groups in a metropolitan/rural area in the U.S. and reported that mothers of students with disabilities, both mild and severe, had more opportunities to be involved, were more satisfied with their involvement, and perceived more personal influence on their children’s education than mothers of students without disabilities.

One possible explanation for the above contradiction is that parent involvement may be low in special education, but it is even lower in regular education. Secondly, parents tend to report satisfaction with their children’s educational programs (Goldstein & Turnbull, 1982; Johansson, 1981; Lynch & Stein, 1982). For example, Goldstein and Turnbull (1982) suggested that parents reported satisfaction with meetings with teachers because the meetings “kept them in touch with their children’s education” (p. 361). Thirdly, because parent involvement is mandated in the planning process in special education, parents indeed have more opportunities to be involved. Salisbury and Evans (1988) reported that, for mothers of students with disabilities, satisfaction with involvement correlated with the degree to which opportunities for involvement were made available. On the other hand, while parents of students with disabilities had more opportunities to be involved, they are not always active participants at meetings in which their children’s education programs are planned (Goldstein & Turnbull, 1982; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Morgan, 1982; Sontag & Schacht, 1994; Strickland, 1982; Yoshida, 1982). Johansson (1981) found that parents of non-disabled children in Kamloops, B.C., who had frequent contacts with their children’s schools reported satisfaction with the quality of education provided and felt that “formal active participation in decision making is not necessary” (p. 8). Strickland (1982) suggested that parents often agreed with school decisions because they might not have enough information about their rights to ensure that they were treated as equal partners in the decision making process. Salisbury and Evans (1988) noted that the parents’ ratings of their perceived influence on school decisions were lower than their ratings for opportunities and satisfaction, while the perception of personal influence was not correlated with either opportunities or satisfaction.

**Minority parents’ involvement.** Input from parents is important in designing educational programs for minority students with special needs (Chinn, 1979). Input from minority parents could provide mainstream professionals with the perspectives of minority cultures (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994). For one thing, such perspective could enable teachers to make informed
interpretations of a child’s behaviour (Lee, 1989). Educators’ cultural sensitivity could also foster better communication with minority parents (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Chinn, 1979; Rogow, 1985). Many minority parents have expressed the desire to be involved in their children’s education (Chavkin, 1989; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Huang & Gibb, 1992). For immigrant parents, education is often regarded as the route to their children’s success in the future (Huang & Gibb, 1992). However, minority parents’ participation in their children’s schools has been noted to be far less than that of mainstream parents (Chinn, 1979; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1992; Harry, 1992; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Nixon, 1991; Sontag & Schacht, 1994).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Identification of barriers to parent involvement could lead to removal of the barriers and subsequently successful collaboration between home and school (López & Scribner, 1999). The attitudes and skills of both teachers and parents have been identified as barriers to parent participation (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Morgan, 1982). For example, Leitch and Tangri (1988) noted the lack of knowledge about how both parties could use each other as resources more effectively.

It has been reported that teacher education programs have not adequately prepared pre-service teachers, especially in undergraduate training, on how to work with parents (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Knight & Wadsworth, 1998; Shapson, Ames, Painchaud, & Petrie, 1997). Hughes, Ruhl, and Gorman (1987) found that two thirds of the teacher training colleges in the U.S. which responded to their research (72% response rate) stated that they offered an entire course on working with parents. However, Chavkin and Williams (1988) reported that only 4% of the teacher educators responded that they taught a complete course on parent-teacher relations, 15% provided the relations as part of a course, and 37% devoted only one class period on the topic, even though almost all stake holders in education “concurred on the need for teacher training for working with parents” (p. 87). Ten years later, Knight and Wadsworth (1998) in a national survey of teacher education institutions throughout the US found that family-focused courses were often integrated within the generic special education courses, with about one to two hours per semester in discussion of family issues. Knight and Wadsworth (1998) noted:

Despite the presence of a strong rationale and support from theoretical literature, legislation and research for the inclusion of families within the educational process, teacher educators and those responsible for setting guidelines for teacher preparation have embraced the concept on only a limited basis. (p 217)

Research has shown that some teachers do not seek help from parents (Dawson & McHugh, 1987; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Hilton & Henderson, 1993; Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Some teachers see the parents’ main role as supervising homework, and prefer not to involve parents in instructional or curricular development (Constantino, Cui, & Faltis, 1995; Moles, 1982). Some teachers blame parents for students’ problems and difficult behaviour (Dawson & McHugh, 1987; Hilton & Henderson, 1993; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Morgan, 1982; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Some teachers often perceive parents as uninterested, unable, or unwilling to be involved in schools (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Storer, 1995). School culture also has an effect on parent involvement. For example, many parents preferred informal and frequent contact with their children’s teachers (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1993; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). In contrast, many schools adopt formal decision making procedures (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Wall, 1982). Wall (1982) pointed out that “the use of overly sophisticated ways of advising and decision making with families who are not ready or even interested in this kind of participation’ (p. 18) may alienate parents.

It is generally recognised that parents want to be involved as partners to help their children develop their full potential. However, demands of parents’ work outside of the home (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Moles, 1982) and demands of family life (Dawson & McHugh, 1987; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Moles, 1982) often pose barriers to school participation. Lack of understanding of the school system is another barrier (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). As well, some parents regard teachers and principals as experts (Wall, 1982). Many parents also feel uncomfortable talking with teachers (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Moles, 1982; Strickland, 1982; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990;
Wall, 1982). The following factors have been found to deter the involvement of ethnic minority parents:

- limited proficiency in English (Darling, 1988; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993),
- lack of familiarity with the school system (Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993),
- lack of awareness of available services provided by the school (Lynch & Stein, 1982; Sontag & Schacht, 1994),
- discomfort or hesitancy in interacting with teachers or other personnel (Chavkin, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Dombusch & Ritter, 1992; Harry, 1992; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987),
- trust that teachers were doing their best (Harry, 1992; Leitch & Tangri, 1988),
- a respect for teachers as the “experts” (Chavkin, 1989; Harry, 1992; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Lynch & Stein, 1987),
- different ethnic belief systems (Harry, 1992; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993), and
- an insufficient number of teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds in North America (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Christensen, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993).

Parent-Teacher Relations

Parent-teacher relationships have an important role in determining and shaping parent involvement. Power and Bartholomew (1987) identified four patterns of home-school relationship (avoidant, competitive, merged, and collaborative) and regarded the collaborative pattern as most beneficial. The collaborative pattern was marked by two-way communication between parents and teachers, by the sharing of information, and by the ability of parents and teachers to express concerns freely (Power & Bartholomew, 1987). Cancian and Armstead (1992) viewed collaboration as democratisation in a relationship, while Light and Kleiber (1981) noted that collaboration entailed the equitable distribution of information, power, and responsibility as well as close cooperation and open communication between all parties involved. Ascher echoed the same concept when he described the critical elements that sustained collaborative parent-teacher partnerships:

- commitment, egalitarian decision-making, a sense of ownership by participants at all levels, clarity about roles, clarity and flexibility about both methods and goals, and ability to bridge different institutional cultures, training, and patience concerning the collaborative process itself. (as cited in Nettle, 1991, p. 381)

Reports of parent-teacher interactions are mixed. Epstein (1986) noted that parents’ attitudes toward the public elementary schools and teachers were positive. Lynch and Stein (1982) found that parents of children with disabilities reported many positive responses regarding their children’s schools and teachers. Hughes and Ruhl (1987) found that special education teachers who were members of the Council for Exceptional Children reported high frequency and variety of contact and collaboration with parents. On the other hand, there is a suggestion of a lack of satisfactory relationships between parents and regular educators (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Moles, 1982) as well as between parents and special educators (Gallagher et al., 1983; Giangreco et al., 1991; Hancock et al., 1990; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1985). Furthermore, one-way communication, with the direction flowing mainly from school to home, a sign of a lack of collaboration, is often noted (Epstein, 1986; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Harry, 1992; Johansson, 1981).

It has been reported that different belief systems and different communication styles contribute to dissonance between minority parents and special educators (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987). Yacobacci-Tam (1987) stated: “The direct cause of . . . conflicts is often a lack of knowledge about the variety of behaviours associated with cultural values and traditions” (p. 46). Harry and Kalyanpur (1994) identified four areas of special education practice that contributed to the dissonance: beliefs about parenting styles, educational goals (such as cultural values of independence), family and community concerns (e.g., efforts to preserve family
reputation), and the pragmatics of communication (e.g., parents’ discomfort with direct questioning; formal, efficient, and professionalism vs. indirect and personal relationships).

Parental Stress and Coping

The literature on stress and coping indicates that coping mediates stress and is important to personal adjustment and feelings of well-being (Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed a cognitive-based, process-oriented definition of coping: “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stressed that that there were individual differences in how people reacted to and managed stress. The existence of stressors does not necessarily lead to adverse health; how one copes may be more important in determining health outcome (Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Culture and social structure, along with the demands, constraints, and resources of the social environment, shape how we appraise harm, threat, or challenge and how we cope with the stress in our lives (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals have their own commitments, agendas, beliefs, and values, which also play a role in cognitive appraisals of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Adaptation may require personal or environmental changes, or both (Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In sum, individuals are both shaped by and shape their social environments.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) propose two major categories of coping strategies, problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies. While emotion-focused strategies are intended to ease negative emotions (e.g., controlling oneself and one’s emotions in the face of adversity), problem-focused strategies are directed to reduce stress by taking actions or applying cognitive restructuring to deal with problems that cause stress. Emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies may be used at the same time or sequentially (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that coping processes were complex, variable, and multidimensional. For example, no one coping strategy will work in every situation and coping well in one context does not necessarily mean coping well in another. A “goodness of fit” between environmental demands and individual capacities as well as the availability of resources are required for adaptive coping (Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Parents of Children with Disabilities and Coping with Stress

Following the Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) theorisation above, three factors are discussed in examining how parents cope with stress related to raising their children with disabilities. These are stress, resources, and coping strategies.

Stress. Research has shown that many parents of children with disabilities face a great deal of stress (Beresford, 1994; Bubolz & Whiren, 1984; Dyson, 1997; Hancock et al., 1990; Ingstad, 1990; Scorgie et al., 1998). Two types of stress experienced by the parents have been consistently identified: (a) emotional stress and (b) stress arising from child-care demands (Ingstad, 1988; Wilgosh, 1990). Shock, denial, anger, guilt, self-pity, frustration, hope, acceptance, taking on the challenge, and taking action are some of the common parental reactions in the process of adapting to the child’s disability (Nixon, 1991; Shapiro, 1983; Ulrich, 1972). In general, these parents have greater child-care demands than those of children without disabilities and express a need for practical help in the household and for respite care (Adams, 1988; Dunst et al., 1986; Gallagher et al., 1983; Ineichen, 1986; Ingstad, 1988). Darling (1988) noted that society has not provided sufficient resources to people with disabilities, making it necessary for parents to advocate for services for their children. Involvement in advocacy can create additional stress for parents (Beresford, 1994; Darling, 1988; Nixon, 1991; Wilgosh, 1990).

Child characteristics, such as gender, age, and the nature of the handicapping condition, are related to parental stress. Parents of boys have been found to have higher stress level than parents of girls (Frey et al., 1989). As the child grows older, parents may experience stress different from when the child is young (Beresford, 1994; Gallagher et al., 1983). Beresford (1994) suggested that the child’s physical appearance and the existence of behaviour problems affected the availability of social supports, which in turn affected parental stress. For examples, Frey et al. (1989) found that parents of children with communication problems experienced high levels of stress, while Gallagher et al. (1983) found that parents of children with unusual care-giving demands experienced greater stress than those without. Scorgie et al. (1998) stated that research regarding the effect of severity of disability on family coping was inconclusive, but pointed out that families who scored highest on
stress were more likely to have children with severe disabilities. On the other hand, there is some suggestion that severity of disability may not be as taxing as unusual care-giving demands or the child's communication difficulties. Graffi and Minnes (1989), in a review of literature on stress and coping in care givers of persons with traumatic head injuries, found no linear relationship between severity of head injury and care giver stress. The researchers pointed out that "subjective burden," caused by the psychosocial functioning of persons with head injuries (such as making complaints and changed behaviour), created more stress to their care givers than motor dysfunctions (i.e., the objective severity of the disability) did.

A common source of stress for parents is other people's attitude toward disabilities. People's attitudes toward disabilities have been generally negative, induced by myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes (Malakpa, 1993). Goffman's (1963) classic work on stigma, defined as a situation in which an individual was disqualified from full social acceptance, provides insights as to the negative attitude. He studied stigma attached to people with deviance from the norms. There were three types of stigma: physical, one's character (moral, addiction, suicidal attempts), and "the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion" (p. 4). He emphasised that some people who did not meet the demand normals had of them may not suffer or feel shame, as when a person was "insulated by his alienation, protected by identity beliefs of his own" (p. 6). Parents of children with disabilities carry "a courtesy stigma," as Goffman calls it. Goffman (1963) described: "the individual . . . is related through the social structure to a stigmatised individual--a relationship that leads the wider society to treat both individuals in some respects as one" (p. 30). Types of disability play a role in public attitude; there is indication that attitudes toward people with physical disabilities were more positive than toward those with mental disabilities, and this finding appears to cross cultural boundary (Westbrook, Leggey, & Pennay, 1993).

Resources. The availability of resources affects the appraisal of one's situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Wilgosh (1990) reported that parents had the capacity to cope and get on with their lives after the initial shock upon learning their children's disabilities. However, they need support and services in order to regain the balance in their personal and family lives (Beresford, 1994; Bubolz & Whiren 1984; Ineichen, 1986; Ingstad 1988; Lavelle and Keogh, 1980; Wilgosh, 1990). Wills and DePaulo (1991) noted that distressed people used a variety of resources to deal with their situations. Beresford (1994) also found that parents of children with disabilities utilised "a wide variety of coping resources" (p. 193). Two basic types of coping resources, personal and socio-ecological, were identified by Beresford (1994).

I. Personal resources:
- the physical health and stamina of parents;
- their beliefs and ideologies (e.g., adopting a day-to-day approach to life);
- previous experiences of how they coped with various stress;
- parenting skills; and
- personality traits (e.g., optimism and locus of control beliefs).

II. Socio-ecological resources:
- social support or social networks;
- practical resources;
- maternal employment;
- family environment;
- marital status; and
- socioeconomic circumstances.

Scorgie et al. (1998) corroborated these findings and noted that time, which is often overlooked, to be an important component of parental coping.

Coping strategies. The availability of resources affects the choice of coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The choice of coping strategy is also determined by the nature of the stressor (Aldwin, 1994; Beresford, 1994). In general, problem-focused strategies enable parents of children with disabilities to make adaptive adjustments while emotion-focused strategies are often linked to poor adjustment (Beresford, 1994). However, Beresford (1994) highlighted that problem-focused strategies mostly applied to controllable stressors and emotion-focused strategies to uncontrollable stressors (such as a disability) (Beresford, 1994). As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) warn, "not all sources of stress in living are amenable to mastery [through problem-focused
Beresford (1994) listed helpful coping strategies as reported by parents of children with disabilities:

- focusing on “one step at a time” and not worrying about the future;
- maintaining coping resources by developing their personal strengths and by developing themselves as persons;
- soliciting moral or emotional support from one’s spouse;
- soliciting practical and emotional support from one’s extended family and friends;
- applying cognitive strategies to make one feel better or feel that one should be thankful, (e.g., comparing the situation as it is now to what it could have been, or comparing the situation to other situations in their life);
- religious belief;
- focusing on the positive side of life; and
- use of formal support at crises or as a last resort.

Some of the strategies are emotion-focused, some problem-focused, and some are both (Beresford, 1994). For example, seeking social support contributes to both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping (Beresford, 1994; Wills & DePaulo, 1991).

Minority parents. Parents of children with disabilities from minority groups may experience extra stress (Beresford, 1994; Nixon, 1990). For example, minority parents often have limited knowledge about existing services available to them or to their children (Beresford, 1994; Chan, 1986; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987; Sontag & Schacht, 1994). Lack of resources may increase the level of any preexisting stress. For immigrant minority parents, they may not be familiar with the different categories of disabilities (Harry, 1992; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987), and may object to their children being labelled as having a disability (Harry, 1992). The difficulty to accept a disability or that related to dealing with professionals who believe the child has a disability could create tensions or problems for the immigrants.

Help Seeking

The availability and use of social support has been found to relieve stress for parents of children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994; Frey et al., 1989; Hancock et al., 1990). Since seeking social support, or help seeking, is an important coping strategy and could contribute significantly to the well-being of the parents, it is discussed separately here. Wills and DePaulo (1991) provide a theoretical framework of help-seeking for coping with emotional distress. The two researchers note that there were two main sources of social support, namely, informal supports (consisting of spouse, friends, and family) and formal supports (provided by social agencies, social workers, counsellors, therapists, and physicians). Wills and DePaulo (1991) state that “there seems to be a sequence of help-seeking efforts” (p. 355). This sequence is similar to help-seeking pathways proposed by Rogler and Cortes (1993), who referred it as “the sequence of contacts with individuals and organisations prompted by the distressed person’s efforts, and those of his or her significant others, to seek help as well as the help that is supplied in response to such efforts” (p. 555).

Wills and DePaulo (1991) described the sequence of help seeking: Distressed individuals usually first seek help from informal sources of support, and, as the problem becomes more serious, formal supports are sought; in some cases both types of help may be utilised simultaneously (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). The level of distress and preferred sources of support are the bases of what Wills and DePaulo (1991) called the pyramidal pattern of help seeking. Parents of children with disabilities seem to follow the same pattern. For example, Beresford (1994) noted that parents often first faced their problems on their own as well as relied on their spouses and other parents for support, and utilised formal support in times of crisis or after other means have been employed without avail.

Informal support often provides emotional support, “namely, reassurance of self-worth, ability to talk about worries and negative feelings, and affirmation of acceptance by another person” (Wills & DePaulo, 1991, p. 363). Beresford (1994) noted that support from one’s spouse offered both emotional and problem-solving support. Other parents of children with disabilities are found to offer important emotional and informational support (Hancock et al., 1990; Nixon, 1991; Scorgie et al., 1996; Scorgie et al., 1998). Pillemer and Suitor (1996) raised what they called “status
similarity” as to why other people in similar situations were an important source of support; they noted that “empathic understanding, which is critical to the support process, is more likely to come from similar others” (p. 477). Pillemer and Suitor (1996) pointed out that distressed people were often aware of the importance of status similarity and sought (or accepted) support from people who were “in the same boat.” As to formal support, parents of children with a variety of handicapping conditions generally know little about available services (Beresford, 1994; Lavelle & Keogh, 1980; Sontag & Schacht, 1994). Formal support is mainly utilised in times of crisis, such as when parents become infirm or are unable to maintain the care of their children (Beresford, 1994).

Social support does not always mediate stress and can bring “interpersonal stress” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pillemer & Suitor, 1996). Pillemer and Suitor (1996) stated: “Although most researchers have emphasised the positive effects of social support on psychological well-being, there are both theoretical and empirical bases upon which to suggest that negative interactions with network members may have particularly detrimental effects” (p. 470). For example, overly helpful people can create more stress than help. Thus, resources could be two-edged swords (Beresford, 1994; Gallagher et al., 1983). On the other hand, interpersonal stress could indirectly bring in both tangible and psychological resources for the parents. Darling (1988) noted that society’s failure to provide sufficient resources and services may cause frictions between parents and professionals, but, at the same time, may spur parent advocacy to lobby for more services and resources. Parent advocacy, in turn, could bring about a sense of personal growth for the parents (Adams, 1988; Wilgosh, 1990).

Culture not only impacts how one perceives the problems of psychological distress (Cheung, 1983; Rogler & Cortes, 1993; Sue, 1994), but also help-seeking behaviour (Bentelspacher et al., 1994; Lin, Tardiff, Donetz, & Goresky, 1978; Sue & Sue, 1999; Tata & Leong, 1994). Certain cultural values, such as self-control or emotional restraint, have been found to explain why many Asians in North America do not utilise mainstream services (Christensen, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989; Sue & Sue, 1999; Wong & Piran, 1995). Honour of family is also mentioned (Sue, 1994). On the other hand, underutilisation of mainstream services by people of Asian backgrounds in North America, whether they have children with disabilities or not, have been found to relate to lack of culturally relevant services and culturally competent professionals (Sue & Sue, 1999; Wong & Piran, 1995).

Beliefs and Values

Examining parents’ beliefs and values in relation to their involvement in their children’s education and how they cope with parenting stress implies that behaviour depends upon values and beliefs. Yet, the link between parental belief systems and behaviour has been found to be non-linear (Goodnow, 1988; Sigel, 1985; Sigel, 1992). Context and the task at hand, as well as demographic, sociocultural, and personal/psychological factors, all play a role (Goodnow, 1988; Sigel, 1992). Goodnow (1988) found that the link between parental belief and parental behaviour was stronger for fathers than mothers and for middle-income parents, and that the link was stronger with actions that allowed broad prediction. Schiebe (1970) regarded that the supposition that behaviour depended upon values and beliefs could serve as an organisational guide to open a discussion of a limited set of topics and to “discover an interesting coherence in a wide range of observations, and to pose some promising questions for further research” (p. 2).

A belief system consists of, “in some organised psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every one of a person’s countless beliefs about physical and social reality” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 2). Beliefs are “inferences made by an observer about underlying states of expectancy” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 2). Values are ends, not means (Bem, 1970; Rokeach, 1968). Rokeach (1968) referred to a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-states of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative mode of conduct or end-states of existence” (p. 160). Bem (1970) posited that beliefs and values were closely tied together, and stated,

If we come to believe that something is true, then we persuade ourselves that it is desirable as well. . . . because we believe something to be desirable, we persuade ourselves that it is true (p. 27).
McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Sigel (1999) concurred; they stated that, if a parent valued something, he or she was more likely to engage in actions that were believed to foster such a value.

In terms of specific beliefs and values, Frey et al. (1989) found parental belief systems (in terms of comparative self-appraisal to other parents in similar circumstances and perceived control over life events) to be a major factor affecting parenting stress, psychological distress, and family adjustment for parents of children with disabilities. Beresford (1994) found that parents who focused on the positive and those who adopted the approach of taking one step at a time reported these strategies to be helpful in coping with the daily stresses and chronic strains of caring for their children with disabilities. Religious beliefs which offer explanations about the child's disability, and a belief that the parents are specially chosen to care for the child and will be given the strength to cope are also helpful coping resources (Beresford, 1994; Hancock et al., 1990). Beliefs regarding locus of control, which have been extensively studied involving various groups of people, appear to have implications for both parental coping and parent involvement, and are discussed below.

**Locus of Control**

Rotter (1966) introduced the concept of internal versus external control of reinforcement, which he defined as a generalised expectancy whether a reinforcement was perceived to be contingent on one's own behaviour or outside one's own control. In other words, locus of control belief refers to an individual's belief as to whether he or she has personal control over events that are important to the individual, or whether the events are determined by external forces (Paulhus & Christie, 1981). Lefcourt (1992) stated that, over the years, the LOC construct has been merged with other terms, such as perceived control, self-efficacy, and causal attribution, "each of which deals with aspects of perceived causality and control" (p. 412). Lefcourt and Davidson-Katz (1991) believed that there was much overlap in the meanings of the different terms, and that "more is to be gained by ignoring the differences and concentrating on the convergent results that have been reported with cognate variables" (p. 261).

In relation to coping, LOC beliefs are frequently cited as important antecedents to coping (Lefcourt, 1992; Lefcourt & Davidson-Katz, 1991). In general, internality of the LOC construct is associated with better psychological and physical health (Landau, 1995; Lefcourt, 1966; Lefcourt & Davidson-Katz, 1991; Rotter, 1966, 1975; Strickland, 1989). While people who believe that they are in control (internals) are often engaged in problem-focused coping, which has generally been linked to better adjustment, those who believe that fate, luck, or chance is in control of their lives (externals) are more likely to engage in emotion-focused coping, which has its own adaptive functions under certain circumstances (Lefcourt & Davidson-Katz, 1991). Lefcourt and Davidson-Katz (1991) suggested that internals were more versatile than externals in that they utilised a variety of coping strategies, emotion-focused or problem-focused, depending on circumstances. On the other hand, Rotter (1975) noted that the relationship between LOC and adjustment was curvilinear in that externality was often associated with passivity and extreme internality was maladaptive because there was always a limit to personal control.

There is a suggestion that LOC per se does not provide direct moderator effects on stress (Lefcourt, 1982; Lefcourt, Martin, & Saleh, 1984; Sandler & Lakey, 1982; VanderZee, Buunk, & Sanderman, 1997). The effect of LOC on how people cope with their experiences is complex and may involve more than one moderating variable (Lefcourt, 1982; Lefcourt & Davidson-Katz, 1991; Rotter, 1966). Social support is one such variable. Internals has been found to perceive or seek more social support, or make better use of the social support available to them, than externals, and, as such, internals with a high degree of social support are more adaptive in the face of stress than those without (Grace & Schill, 1986; Lefcourt et al., 1984; Sandler & Lakey, 1982; VanderZee et al., 1997).

Parents of children with disabilities who are internals are found to be better adjusted (Beresford, 1994; Frey et al., 1989; Rimmerman, 1991). Frey et al. (1989) found that, among a group of parents of 48 young handicapped children, both mothers and fathers who had a positive belief system (composed of comparative appraisals, coping efficacy, and belief in personal control) had less stress, as well as better family adjustment. On the other hand, Beresford (1994) noted that "externals" coped better when they held external beliefs about the cause of a disability, instead of holding themselves responsible, and concluded that the relationship between LOC orientation, coping, and adjustment was not linear.
As to the relationship between social support and LOC, Rimmerman (1991) found that, in a study of 24 mothers of young children with severe mental retardation in Israel, the mothers’ internal LOC beliefs and perceived social support served as buffers against pessimism. Rimmerman and Stanger (1992) failed to support the hypothesis that mothers with internally focused LOC would demonstrate greater utilisation of their support systems. Rimmerman and Stanger (1992) found that there was no simple, linear relationship between the utilisation of social support and LOC, and pointed out that mediating variables, such as age of the mother, child’s level of functioning, and existence of other family members with disabilities affected the mothers’ seeking social support. In other words, internals who are older and who perceive their children’s functioning as more severe tend to utilise more social support. Internals with more than one child with a disability also reported seeking more social support (Rimmerman & Stanger, 1992).

In relation to action taking. There is some indication that internal LOC orientation as well as perceived control and self-efficacy is related to participation in social action (Abramowitz, 1973; Gootnik, 1974; Klandermans, 1983; Rotter, 1966; Rotter, 1975; Strickland, 1989). Abramowitz (1973) found that internal LOC in political sphere was related to political activism. Sherkat and Blocker (1994) found that the longitudinal data on the political development of sixties’ activists indicated that their participation in the protests of that era was positively related to self-efficacy, among other factors. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found that American middle-class college students who scored higher on indices of psychological empowerment (composed of personality, cognitive, and motivational aspects of personal control and competence, i.e., LOC, self-efficacy, desire to control their environment) reported a greater amount of citizen participation, that is, involvement in community organisations and activities “without pay in order to achieve a common goal” (p. 726).

People with external locus of control were also found to be associated with social action taking. Levenson (1974) differentiated among those with a belief in chance, that is, those who perceived the world as unordered and unpredictable, from those who believed in the influence of powerful others in their lives, that is, those who perceived order and predictability in their world. Applying her own scale, Levenson (1974) found that there was no main effect between LOC orientation and involvement in an anti-pollution group, but that men, as opposed to women, who were internals or who believed in the power of other people over them were more involved and had more information on the social cause at hand. Reviewing research on the LOC construct using Rotter’s I-E Scale and sociopolitical action-taking in two decades, Klandermans (1983) pointed out that both internals and externals were equally likely to participate in sociopolitical action. He noted that externals who believed that they were powerless and that the system was to blame tended to be engaged in sociopolitical action-taking, while those who scored high on the internal orientation were also involved.

Self-efficacy refers to a belief whether one has the capacity to accomplish one’s goal (Bandura, 1977). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) noted that there were small but significant relationships between self-reported parent efficacy and three of the five indicators of parent involvement, a form of action taking. This finding appears to run parallel to Wilgosh’s (1990) finding that parents who were actively engaged believed that their initiatives brought about educational gains for their children with disabilities, equivalent to a sense of self-efficacy. On the other hand, Levenson’s (1974) conceptualisation of the relation between a belief in powerful others and action taking is applicable to parents who advocate for their children with disabilities. Darling (1988) concluded that parental activism or what she called parental entrepreneurship, a career like pattern of continuing advocacy aimed to seek information and control and challenge authority in order to secure services for their children, often emerged as a response to repeated negative experiences with professionals as well as from interacting with other parents in similar situations. Darling (1988) found that, in the process of developing activism, parents felt powerless and had come to resent the fact that professionals were in control of their lives. Professionals who work with children with disabilities have been noted to play a powerful role in the lives of parents (Lavelle & Keogh, 1980; Nixon, 1991). Conversely, encountering a professional who “willingly shared information with and sought advice from parents” could “end a career of entrepreneurship” (Darling, 1988, p. 147). This is similar to Klandermans’ (1983) contention that externals who held the view that they were powerless were more likely to be engaged in sociopolitical action-taking.
Minority Groups

Research has shown that the LOC construct appears to vary across different cultural groups (Guthrie & Lonner, 1986). For example, studies have supported the generalisation that Asians are more external than North Americans (Bond & Tornatzky, 1973; Dyal, 1984; Hsieh et al., 1969; Lao, 1989; Mahler, 1974). Different cultural groups within a multi-ethnic society like the U.S. have also been found to vary on LOC. For example, Park and Harrison (1995) found that acculturation is positively correlated with personal control and interpersonal control. These researchers found that Asian American college students scored significantly lower than their mainstream counterparts in terms of the two types of control, while Asian American students who scored higher on the level of acculturation had significantly higher control than those with low-to-medium scores.

Research on minority people's LOC and its relations to coping or action-taking is limited and inconclusive. Dion, Dion, and Pak (1992) found that personality construct of hardiness (composed of locus of control, perceived control, and self-esteem) mediated the stress level of Chinese immigrants in Toronto. Dion et al. (1992) found that those who experienced discrimination and who scored low on hardiness reported high stress, whereas those who experienced discrimination and who scored high on hardiness reported little or no stress. Morris (1992) found that LOC differentiated black mothers of sons with handicaps in terms of self-esteem, attitude toward the child, and the ability to gain access to resources, in that mothers with internal LOC were better adjusted than those with external orientations. The finding that internality is associated with better adjustment is consistent with that among the general population, as mentioned above.

African American college students who were engaged in civil-right movements were more internal than the control group (Gore & Rotter, 1963; Strickland, 1965). African and Hispanic American parents of children with disabilities who believed in their ability to exercise control over their children's education were found to be involved in school-related parent involvement (Seefeldt, Denton, Galper, & Younoszai, 1998). Externality is also associated with involvement in social actions. Harry (1992) found that a group of low-income Puerto Rican parents of African descent who had children with disabilities "would only exert control when they were at the end of their tether" (p. 480). She linked repeated negative experiences with parental activism. This concurs with Darling's (1988) observations of mainstream parents. On the other hand, Greathouse, Gomez, and Wurster (1988) found that, among a group of low-income black and Hispanic parents who were involved in the Head Start programs, intervention programs for at-risk children, which included children in poverty and children with disabilities, feelings of control over their lives were unrelated to their involvement in their children's programs.

Cultural values such as emotional restraint as well as the honour and the role of family have contributed to how people of Asian backgrounds cope with stress (Sue & Sue, 1999). In terms of parent involvement, it is noted that minority parents may not be familiar with the concept of parental participation in schools and their participation rate was low (Chan, 1986; Harry, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993). Beliefs in fate, tapped in the construct of LOC, may vary along different cultural groups. Beliefs in fate or luck have been generally linked to maladjustment in the West (Lin, 1939; Rotter, 1966). However, there is a suggestion that luck or fate may be viewed differently by different cultures (Parsons & Schneider, 1974). For example, there is a distinction between religious fatalism and a belief in mere "luck" (Munro, 1979; Nagelschmidt & Jakob, 1977). Khanna and Khanna (1979) noted that the law of karma in Buddhism and Hinduism was a basic principle that governed human behaviour, in which one's actions were said to have effect on subsequent lives and this life was likewise predetermined by an individual's actions in his or her former lives. In this view, fate is viewed as a direct result of personal doing, which implies there is personal control in fate (Khanna & Khanna, 1979; Niles, 1981).

Chinese Parents of Children with Disabilities

I will first discuss cultural influence on Chinese people who live in Asia and North America. Then, I will discuss the research on Chinese people, either conducted in Asia or in North America.

Cultural Influence

Culture is shaped by the complex interactions between the differing physical and ecological conditions of the regions and their concomitant social and political conditions (Kim, 1993; Triandis, 1989). Triandis (1980b) separated culture into two categories: physical and subjective. Physical
objects are essential to the physical culture while subjective culture is constituted by "subjective response to what is man-made (myths, roles, values, and attitudes)" (Triandis, 1980b, p. 2). Triandis, Bon tempo, Leung, and Hui (1990) highlighted the view that culture was constantly evolving when they defined subjective culture as composed of cultural constructs that were "shared by speakers of a particular dialect, living in geographical proximal locations, during the same historical period" (p. 302). As well, cultures do not shape individuals in the same manner (Aldwin, 1994; Bond, 1991). There is great heterogeneity within any large group of people, and within-group variances are larger than between-group differences (Bond, 1991; Triandis, 1980b). On the other hand, Hsu (1981) noted that

in spite of exceptional individuals and regional differences, a majority of the people of each society do act according to their society's accepted and usual patterns of behaviour in their day-to-day business of life (p. 2).

Lin (1939) noted that Chinese people strongly identified with their own culture. Smith (1991) concurred by quoting James Watson's observation that Chinese cultural unity was reached even among people in the lowest rung of the society: "In China most villagers already identified themselves with an overarching 'Chinese culture,' an abstraction they had no difficulty understanding" (p. 6). Strong cultural identification may be associated with cultural homogeneity or unity. Lin (1939) observed cultural homogeneity in Chinese history and stated, "The common historical tradition, the written language, . . . and the cultural homogeneity achieved through centuries of slow, peaceful penetration of a civilisation over comparatively docile aborigines, have achieved for China the basis of the common brotherhood" (p. 16). Smith (1991) gave a list of reasons for Chinese cultural unity:

1. The ideographic nature of the Chinese characters "providing extraordinary continuity across space as well as over time" (p. 6);  
2. The civil service examination system "produced a highly literate, culturally homogeneous social and bureaucratic elite—one that served as a conscious model to be emulated by all levels of Chinese society" (p. 6) and "continued to reward orthodox patterns of thought and behaviour until the throne abolished it in 1905" (p. 272);  
3. The Chinese government exerts political and social control mechanisms in an attempt to "standardise conduct, regulate customs, maintain status distinctions, and promote ideological orthodoxy by means of carefully crafted systems of law, education, ritual, religion and propaganda" (p. 7).

Other researchers also noted Chinese cultural continuity. Hsu (1981) argued that social and cultural changes did not necessarily follow economic development, using China and Taiwan as examples. Bond (1991) noted that Chinese people, whether in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, were more similar to one another in values and less similar in degree of modernisation. Shenkar and Ronen (1987) noted some differences in language, religion, industrial development, political and economic systems, and modern social ideology in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, four predominantly Chinese countries, but they also noted "The perseverance of [social] norms, which are considered more resistant to change in general, and particularly so for the Chinese" (p. 264).

Similarly, the Chinese who migrate to other parts of the world tend to retain much of Chinese cultural influence and way of life (Bond, 1991; Chan, 1986; Dion & Yee, 1987; Kok & Liow, 1993). Kok and Liow (1993) found that many Chinese people in Singapore adhered to their cultural and religious traditions. Bond (1991) concluded "that Chinese ethnicity is proof even against immersion in a foreign linguistic, political, and social environment" (p. 114). On the other hand, intercultural contact becomes frequent and cultural boundaries become elusive with international trade, travel, migration, and telecommunication (Ang, 1993; Berry, 1989). Ang (1993) believed that it was often difficult to pinpoint one's cultural identity based on one's ethnicity only.

Acculturation is often a by-product of immigration. The Social Science Research Council in the U.S. defines acculturation as "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" and acculturation for the individual is "the changes which individuals undergo during the acculturation of their group" (as cited in Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986, p. 292). Cultural change could manifest itself in the areas of behaviour, identity, values, and
attitudes (Berry, 1989; Suinn, 1994). Berry (1989) identified four stages or strategies of acculturation (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation), depending on the degree the individual maintains his or her cultural/ethnic practices and identity. Integration refers to the state that an individual maintain relationships with both home and host cultures, assimilation refers to the state that an individual only maintains relationship with the host culture, separation refers to the state that an individual maintains relationship only with the home culture, while marginalisation refers to the state that an individual maintain relationships with neither culture.

Acculturation has been related to mental health (Berry, 1989; Chataway & Berry, 1989; Rogler, 1994; Zheng & Berry, 1991). The "stresses of migration and minority status" often occur in the process of acculturation (Ying & Miller, 1992). Berry (1989) listed factors contributing to acculturative stress: knowledge of the new language and culture, whether the motives for the contact are voluntary or involuntary (e.g., immigrants versus refugees), frequency of contacts with the larger society, whether the contacts are pleasant, whether the contacts meet current needs, whether full participation in the larger society is denied or facilitated, whether the larger society is culturally plural or monolithic, education, employment, gender, prejudice, and discrimination. Nevertheless, minority people can adjust well in the interface between their ethnic culture and the mainstream culture without negative effects. Minority people with a high degree of acculturation to North American life are often believed to be well adjusted. Bi-culturals, people who identify with both home and host cultures, were found to adjust well (Atkinson & Thompson, 1993; Bautista de Domanico, Crawford, & De Wolfe, 1994). There is also evidence that minority who do not speak English could equally adjust well (Griffith, 1983). Triandis (1980a) delineated a theoretical framework for the study of bilingual-bicultural adaptation. He stated that, basically, adjustment required the development of skills, such as fluency in language and appropriate behaviour, in another culture; however, in many multiethnic communities, there may be enough minority group members so that people may have a satisfactory life independent of the majority group.

Research on Chinese People

Because of a shortage of empirical data, studies on Chinese adults, including those who do not have children with disabilities, conducted in Asia and in North America are discussed below. Since Chinese people who relocate to other countries often retain many of their Chinese cultural practices and identify with Chinese culture, studies done in Asia are relevant for discussion.

Research in Asia. There is some literature on parent-teacher communication and collaboration in Taiwan. Y. L. Guo (1998), for example, found that parent-teacher collaboration in an elementary classroom mostly focused on day-to-day classroom routines, and that teachers were leading parents in the partnership. As to coping, Chinese people have a saying: "Problems within the family should not be discussed outside the family" (Bond, 1991, p. 91). This saying implied two aspects of Chinese coping: (a) honour of the family, and (b) reliance on family support. Another popular saying is that one only needs to sweep away the snow in front of one’s own door, not to mind the frost on your neighbor’s roof. A lack of social mind and public spirit throughout Chinese history (Hsu, 1981; Lin, 1939) is likely to have had an impact on Chinese people’s reliance on family support and on themselves.

Research findings support the importance of self-reliance and family support to Chinese people. Shek and Cheung (1990) found that Chinese working parents in Hong Kong, who did not have children with disabilities, often relied on themselves to cope with stresses related to family matters. Bentelspacher et al. (1994) reported that Chinese families in Singapore who cared for mentally ill family members often utilised self-directed coping strategies and seldom sought help from either informal or formal support networks, and, at the same time, the Chinese reported a higher level of stress than other ethnic families in the same country. Kok and Liow (1993) found that Chinese single parents of children without disabilities in Singapore tended to seek help from the family for emotional and financial problems, although they sought more help from professionals than from family members for information and practical support.

Parents of children with disabilities in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan either rely on themselves or enlist help from their own family circles to help them parent their children, with little use of external resources (Cheng & Tang, 1995; Cheung & Kan, 1987; F. S. Guo, 1998; Pearson & Chan, 1993; Shek & Tsang, 1993). Pearson and Chan (1993) found that mothers of children with learning disabilities in China experienced more stress and less social support than mothers of
children without disabilities. The mothers reported that their husbands and maternal grandparents provided the most support, while little support was offered by professionals or government officials (Pearson & Chan, 1993). In Taiwan, F. S. Guo (1998) found that eleven families of children with mental handicaps were satisfied with informal social support and expressed dissatisfaction with formal social support.

In Hong Kong, Shek and Tsang (1993) investigated the coping responses of Chinese parents of preschool-aged children with mental handicaps and found that most parents relied on themselves and their spouses, but seldom sought help from relatives, in-laws, their own parents, friends, or professionals. Cheng and Tang (1995) reported that Chinese parents of children with disabilities mainly relied on themselves to cope, but they also sought some social services to meet their children’s needs. Cheung and Kan (1987) compiled an anthology of essays written by parents and siblings of people with mental handicaps on how they coped with caring for their disabled family members. The mothers either relied on themselves or sought help from their spouses and their daughters.

Research in North America. Discrimination and limited English proficiency have been found to be sources of acculturative stress for Chinese people (Christensen, 1987; Dion et al., 1992; Chataway & Berry, 1989; Zheng & Berry, 1991; Ying & Miller, 1992). Dion et al. (1992) noted that the experience of discrimination was correlated with higher levels of psychological symptoms among a sample of the members of Toronto’s Chinese community, the majority of whom were born outside Canada. Half of the Chinese Canadian immigrants in Christensen’s (1987) study reported problems related to feeling discriminated against, feeling that they did not belong, and language difficulties.

Constantino et al. (1995) reported that newly arrived Chinese immigrants with little English proficiency in the United States were not much involved in their children’s schools. In that study, the ability to speak English was seen by both teachers and parents as the major barrier to parent involvement. Constantino et al. (1995) found that, although the teachers considered parent-teacher conferences to be important to involvement, the parents did not fully understand the purpose of the meetings and often did not attend. This is consistent with the fact that Asian American parents, including Chinese, may not be used to the concept of parental participation (Chan, 1986; Harry, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993).

Like their counterparts in Asia, Chinese people in North America tend to either rely on themselves or seek help from their families, and seldom utilise mainstream services to cope with their problems (Christensen, 1987; Lin & Lin, 1978; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). There is some indication that Chinese people in North America, with or without children with disabilities, do not utilise the mainstream services because of their adherence to Chinese cultural practices and cultural values. Christensen (1987) suggested that it may not be so much the lack of knowledge of existing services or the lack of culturally sensitive services, as it is reliance on family resources, other informal support, and the value of self-control that prevented immigrant Chinese Canadians in Montreal, who did not have children with disabilities, from seeking help from mainstream professionals. Christensen (1987) found that in a sample of sixty immigrants of Chinese origin residing in Montreal, family (83%) was the first choice of help for most psychological and interpersonal problems and friends (78%) the second choice, while the mainstream social services were least utilised (3%) even though twenty-seven percent of the respondents knew about the public services. Of those who sought help from social services, most sought only practical help, for example, housing. It was also found that Chinese immigrants in Montreal utilised few services provided by their own cultural communities. This coincides with the fact that Chinese people in Asia seldom utilised their local services (Cheung, 1987). In addition, Christensen (1987) reported that the majority of the Chinese immigrants perceived themselves to be in control of their feelings. Similarly, Shen Ryan and Smith (1989) suggested that Chinese American parents of children with disabilities did not commonly make use of public services, due to the value of emotional restraint and the practice of family support. Chinese people’s value of emotional restraint or self-control has been reported elsewhere (Dion & Yee, 1987; Wong & Piran, 1995).

Shen Ryan and Smith (1987) reported that Chinese parents of children with disabilities in the U.S. did utilise some services to meet their children’s special needs. However, lack of English language proficiency, lack of knowledge of existing services, and lack of familiarity with the social
systems of the new country deter Chinese parents of children with disabilities from seeking help (Chan, 1986; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). Sue (1994) noted another factor that contributed to the fact that Chinese American families seldom sought help from outside of their family circle; they did not want to bring shame to the family name. Reliance on the family for support also tends to preclude the need for Chinese people to seek help from outside (Lin & Lin, 1978).

Cultural Beliefs and Values

Beliefs and values are the products of cultural conventions and personal experience (Goodnow, 1988; Sigel, 1985). There is empirical support that beliefs and values derived from cultural transmission differentiate groups better than those derived from personal experience (Goodnow, 1988). Presented below is a discussion of some cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes pertaining to Chinese people that have been linked to coping or have implications for parent involvement.

Family. Chinese people often feel a great deal of moral and legal obligation to take care of their elderly, their children, and their disabled family members (Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). On the other hand, Baker (1979) noted that the needs of individuals for support and protection were often met within the Chinese family at the sacrifice of individual freedom. Bond (1991) noted dysfunctional families are especially acute in Chinese society. . . precisely because there are fewer personal and institutional supports outside the cradle of the family. Many Chinese learn early to ‘swallow anger’ and to tolerate the intolerable because they do not see how they can live outside their family of origin or marriage. (pp. 6-7)

Value of education. Chinese people have traditionally placed a high value on education (Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lee, 1989; Lin, 1939; Suen & Ng, 1986). Educational opportunities are highly competitive in many Chinese societies (Chan, 1976; Hallman, 1985). Suen and Ng (1986) noted that Chinese parents often cited their children’s future and education as a reason for the decision to immigrate to Canada, and stated, “Like the majority of immigrants, Chinese parents do not hesitate to make personal sacrifices, such as career changes, relocation, etc. to ensure their children’s future” (p.12).

Value of self-control. Chinese people are socialised to control their feelings (Bond, 1991; Lin, 1939). Bond (1991) noted that Chinese people did not easily express negative emotions in public. Lin (1939) traced this value to a dominant school of philosophy in Chinese history:

The Sung philosophy has a tremendous confidence in the power and supremacy of the mind over emotions, and an overweening assurance that the human mind, through its understanding of oneself and of one’s fellow-men, is able to adjust itself to the most unfavourable circumstances and triumph over them. (pp. 40-41)

The value of self-control has implications for conflict resolution. Chiu and Kosinski (1994) found that Hong Kong students scored significantly higher on moral discipline, an index of self-control and moderation, than their American counterparts, and this value correlated with their use of avoidance or accommodation to handle conflicts. In a similar vein, Shenkar and Ronen (1987) noted, “The Chinese preference for restrained, moderate behaviour suggests that one should avoid overtly aggressive behaviour. . . ‘honest confrontation,’ is viewed by the Chinese as aggressive” (p. 268).

Value of interpersonal harmony. Harmonious human relationships are valued by Chinese people (Bond, 1991; Chan, 1986; Hsu, 1981; Lin, 1939). Lin (1939) stated that Chinese society was “built on the principle that a man is not an individual but attains his full being only in living in harmonious social relationships” (p. 45). Shenkar and Ronen (1987), in a review of relevant research on four predominantly Chinese countries (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), suggested that Confucian philosophy, one of tenets being interpersonal harmony, continued to provide the foundation of Chinese cultural traditions and values in Chinese societies.

This principle of harmony has relevance for conflict resolution (Chiu & Kosinski, 1994;
Leung, 1987; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). The Chinese have been noted to mainly apply indirect modes of communication and adopt "non-confrontational" attitude in conflict situations (Chan, 1986; Leung, 1987; Ma, 1992; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). As an example, Leung (1987) found that Chinese college students in Hong Kong preferred bargaining and mediation more than their American counterparts, for they believed that the two approaches could reduce animosity. Lin (1939) observed that Chinese people are "slow to quarrel and quick to patch up" (p. 56). Smith (1991) noted that, throughout Chinese history, "intermediaries were essential to all forms of social intercourse" (p. 269) and that "so many aspects of life and thought hinged on compromise and conciliation" (p. 269). In the same spirit, Chan (1986) noted that it was not uncommon for Asian American parents of children with disabilities not to confront their children’s teachers for fear of offending them.

**Fate.** Fate is a common belief among Chinese people (Hsu, 1953; Lin, 1939; Smith, 1991). Lin (1939) viewed that fatalism was "a Chinese mental habit" (p. 189). Hsu (1953) noted that, for the Chinese people, "luck, chance, and fate are taken for granted in life, which is considered to be full of ambiguity, complexity, and unpredictability" (p. 122). Smith (1991) provided an in-depth examination of the concept of fate in Chinese culture and stated, "Throughout Chinese history we can see a profound ambivalence regarding human destiny" (p. 14). He summarised that there were two opposing views toward fate among the Chinese people. One views fate as something predestined. Smith (1991) stated, "nearly every Chinese believed that certain aspects of life were fixed at birth" (p. 14). Empirical studies support the prevalence of this view. Shek and Tsang (1993) identified one of the strategies often applied by Chinese parents of preschool-aged children with mental handicaps in Hong Kong as "resign to what is inevitable," an idea closely resembling fate as something to be passively accepted. Anecdotal accounts also support this belief. Ching (1982), who was blind, wrote an autobiography of her life in China. She stated, "Mother blamed all this [the child’s blindness] on her fate and said that she and father were prepared to feed me as long as they lived; after they were gone it would be a matter of my fate and there was nothing they could do" (pp. 13–14).

This view that fate is to be passively accepted helps Chinese people minimise their psychological stress. Smith (1991) stated, "as Lu Xun [a Chinese scholar] plainly understood, the idea of inescapable destiny served as a convenient explanation for adversity and disappointment” (p. 267). Lin (1939) concurred when he stated that, for the Chinese, contrary to the general belief, fatalism is a great source of personal strength and contentment, and accounts for the placidity of Chinese souls. As no one has all the luck all the time, and as good luck cannot apparently come to all, one is willing to submit to this inequality as something perfectly natural. (p. 189)

Another view toward fate is that it could be averted. Smith (1991) stated:

Most Chinese, and virtually all representatives of the scholarly elite, maintained for at least two millennia that a person could not only ‘know fate’ (zhiming) but also ‘establish fate’ (liming); that through self-cultivation and self-assertion an individual could help shape the course of destiny. (p. 14)

Viewed in this light, “Chinese attitudes toward fate, then, seldom crippled initiative” (Smith, 1991, p. 267).

**Attitude toward disabilities.** Ching (1982) described negative attitudes toward people with disabilities in China in 1920s. There is an indication that Chinese people hold less positive attitudes toward people with disabilities than their American counterparts (Chan, Hedl, Parker, Lam, Chan, & Yu, 1988). Chinese Australians were also found to hold less positive attitude than their fellow Australians with Anglo and German backgrounds (Westbrook et al., 1993). Westbrook et al. (1993) interpreted their finding in the light that in “collectivistic groups [e.g., Chinese, Greek, and Arabic communities] the social stigma of having a disability is more likely to spread to other in-group members than is the case in more individualistic communities [e.g., Anglo and German]” (p. 621), and thus resulted feeling of shame and more supernatural explanations for the disability.
Westbrook et al. (1993) also noted that there was more social support from family and friends to an in-group member with a disability in collectivistic communities.

**Qualitative Research**

The present study applies a qualitative research approach to data gathering and interpretation. The following is a review of qualitative research.

Qualitative, interpretive approaches to research and theory in the social sciences and related professional fields have become increasingly common (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Many well-established methods (such as ethnography, critical theory, case studies) are in use (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Clarke and Olesen (1992) noted that there are many qualitative approaches to both data gathering and analysis and there can be considerable overlap in the approaches. The aim of qualitative research is understanding and meaning (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 1988). The various information embedded in chaos and puzzlement common in human affairs needs to be interpreted in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated: “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2).

Qualitative research is in search of meaning by putting pieces together to learn what the significant details of an event are and how they are connected, but this approach has its pitfalls (Agar, 1980). Agar (1980) points out a problem, the holistic fallacy, common in ethnography. The holistic fallacy is applicable to qualitative research in general. Agar (1980) states:

This formidable search for connections, this ethnographic belief that an isolated observation cannot be understood unless you understand its relationships to other aspects of the situation in which it occurred, is called a holistic perspective. This perspective, of course, has its own problems, such as the holistic fallacy, when an ethnographer constructs a connection because of his bias to find one without checking it out carefully. (pp. 75-76)

Biases are behind holistic fallacy. Researchers draw meaning from their own perceptions of the experiences of the people under study and researchers are not without biases (Merriam, 1988). Merriam (1988) stated: “These biases, inherent in all investigations, affect how data are seen, recorded, and interpreted” (p. 103). There are two major categories of biases, which Clifford (1986) terms inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion refers to selecting parts deemed relevant by the author/writer. As Fielding and Fielding (1986) note, there is “a tendency to select field data to fit an ideal conception of the phenomenon, and a tendency to select field data which are conspicuous because they are exotic, at the expense of less dramatic (but possibly indicative) data.” (p. 32). Exclusion refers to removing parts deemed irrelevant. The two types of biases often result in overly edited texts (Clifford, 1986).

Geertz (1973) notes that the ethnographer’s neat, systematic, formalistic analysis could be totally different from the native’s point of view and argues that representation and interpretation in and of itself should not claim authenticity. It is now widely asserted that the nature of representation is both problematic and contestable, as representation involves accounts first constructed by people who have a story to tell and then constructed by the researcher, i.e., the researcher’s reconstructions of others’ constructions of what happened (Clifford, 1986; Merriam, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988). Since social realities are socially constructed and negotiated, they are highly subjective and are open to multiple interpretations (Clifford, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988). There is often more than one cause for an event or action, more than one kind of outcome, and more than one way of looking at the relationship between behaviour and outcome. Van Maanen (1988) suggested that “the reality belongs to no one in particular” (p. 128), while Alcoff (1991) argued, no one does or can speak or write from a neutral position in a social space; all acts of “speaking for others,” including researchers’ representation of the researched, evoke doubts. Agar (1980) takes heart by suggesting that “an interpretive framework cuts into the world like a jigsaw, leaving much of the wood behind. On the other hand, maybe some frameworks slice more ‘naturally’ than others.” (p. 49).

Social research is characterised by its reflexivity, that is, “social researchers are part of the social world they study” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 16). Research is shaped by the personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity of the researcher and those of
the researched (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As social research is reflexive and researcher biases cannot be eliminated, it is thus the responsibility of the researcher to document them in writing for the reader’s scrutiny (Agar, 1980; Clifford, 1986; Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Clifford (1986) stated that a good ethnography should not be smoothed over, i.e., presented as coherent, consistent, and confident; instead, it should contain “self-conscious, serious partiality. . . . That is, the readers] learn about external and self-imposed limits to the research, about individual informants, and about the construction of the final written artifact” (p. 7). Clifford (1986) further remarked, “Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial [italic original]. . . . But once accepted and built into ethnographic art, a rigorous sense of partiality can be a source of representational tact” (p. 7). By being presented with all the sources, credits (who recounts, who experiences, who writes, who edits, etc.) and the process of data collection, the reader could “assess critically the synthesis” the researcher/writer make of the material (Clifford, 1986, p. 16). Although the above statements apply to doing ethnography, they can equally apply to any other strategies of qualitative research.

Many qualitative researchers have called for different conceptualisations of validity for qualitative work, whose assumptions are different from those of quantitative work (Merriam, 1988). Guba (1981), for example, proposed using the term credibility for internal validity, and transferability for external validity or generalisability. Wolcott (1994) deemed that validity may be a major strength of qualitative research, with its emphasis on recording accurately, reporting fully, being candid, etc. Merriam (1988) added that reality was viewed by qualitative researchers as “holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing” (p. 167) and as such “internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research” (p. 168).

Triangulation has been generally considered a main measure of verifying validity for qualitative work (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Triangulation refers to converging data gathered from different methods, different informants, different accounts made by the same persons to different audiences, findings from different researchers, etc. (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Fielding and Fielding (1986) stated that, by using different sources of evidence, threats to validity of findings can be counteracted, though triangulation did not guarantee validity. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) concurred by stating that triangulation “is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation” (p. 2). Triangulation is expected to bring data to a focal point; threats to validity are expected to be cancelled out by the application of different sources. However, Mathison (1988) stated that, rather than convergence, triangulation often produced inconsistency and contradictions. She suggested ways to utilise inconsistency and contradictions to advantage. Similarly, Agar stated that, if two things contradict each other, it is an opportunity to ask questions and seek further understanding. Agar (1980) stated that coherence did not mean it was free of contradictions; rather, it entails understanding. Similarly, Stake (1994) stated that triangulation serves “to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen.”

Regarding external validity or generalisability, Firestone (1993) noted that “Generalising from data is always problematic at best” (p. 16). Fielding and Fielding (1986) believed that generalisation was intrinsic to explanation in quantitative methods, but “posterior to explanation in qualitative methods” (p. 18). Firestone (1993) examined three broad arguments for generalising from data: sample-to-population extrapolation, analytic generalisation, and case-to-case transfer. Firestone (1993) noted that qualitative researchers often use case-to-case transfer. Some researchers believe that generalisation to population should not be a concern to qualitative studies, as what matters is the generalisation of principles, concepts, reasoning, and relationships between variables within a bounded case, not generalisation to people “out there” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Geertz, 1973; Yin, 1989). Although generalisability to the larger population is impossible because the research findings pertaining to each case is embedded in individual contexts, Guba (1981) argues that this does not preclude some transferability across the cases that share similar contexts.

A school of thought in qualitative research is that consumers of the research does the generalising (Firestone, 1993; Peshkin, 1993; Stake, 1994). Firestone (1993) wrote: “Case-to-case transfer is enhanced by thick description that allows assessment of the applicability of study conclusions to one’s own situation” (p. 18). Stake (1994) believed that the reader would find their own ways of relating to the knowledge constructed by the researcher and find something personally useful. Peshkin (1993) quoted Geoffrey Wolfe (1985) as saying that one hoped that a singular story or case will touch and connect others, not by the assumption that “I have discovered a
universal condition of consciousness,” but “in the magic way of some things apply, connect, resonate, and touch a magic chord.” Peshkin (1993) believed that such connections “reassure qualitative researchers of the broader applicability of their limited-case findings” (p. 25).
Chapter Three: Methodology

Several researchers support the use of qualitative methods to learn about the experience of parents of children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994; Featherstone, 1980). Qualitative research methods are suitable for studying little-understood phenomena in order to identify important variables for future research, or for studying issues located in the complex web of real-life situations (Yin, 1989). In light of a dearth of literature on Chinese Canadian parents of children with disabilities, the present study applies qualitative inquiry to explore the experiences and perspectives of immigrant Chinese Canadian parents. Three existing quantitative questionnaires are employed to supplement the qualitative data.

Method

There are many qualitative approaches to gathering and analysing data, and there can be considerable overlap in the approaches, each of which offers its particular emphasis, bringing some concerns and foci to the foreground while relegating others to the background (Clarke & Olesen, 1992). The method chosen for collecting data was focused, in-depth interviewing. In this approach, areas of inquiry are established prior to undertaking the research and the focus is on articulating the perspectives taken by respondents (Clarke & Olesen, 1992). Interviews have been viewed as a major data source in qualitative research (Agar, 1980; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 1988). An important function of interviews is to uncover hidden meanings, beliefs, and values (Agar, 1980; Wolcott, 1994). An in-depth examination of the perceptions, beliefs, and values could help develop a realistic understanding of the culture under study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Interviews could also reveal things not located in the present time and space (Agar, 1980). Despite the merits, Agar (1980) warned that one major shortcoming of interviewing was that it often involved a short-term, asymmetrical relationship. Existing quantitative questionnaires were employed to supplement the qualitative data and to be connected to previous research that utilises the questionnaires with Chinese people. Field notes were taken. Participant observation, where available, was also included in the data.

Figure 1 presents an overview of suggested relationships between the factors that could play a role in how Chinese parents of children with disabilities cope with parenting stress and get involved in their children’s education. Qualitative researchers need to select priorities in data gathering (Agar, 1980; Wolcott, 1994). As this is a qualitative, exploratory study, no hypotheses are intended.
Parenting children with disabilities

Figure 1. Overview of the factors that could play a role in parent involvement and parental coping.
Hammersley and Atkinson’s (1995) approach was followed to analyse the interview data. Their approach is to code the data in order to generate concepts that could help to make sense of what is going on. The goal is “to reach a position where one has a stable set of categories and has carried out a systematic coding of all the data in terms of those categories” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 213). The next step is to “work on those [analytic categories] which seem likely to be central to one’s analysis, with a view to clarifying their meaning and exploring their relations with other categories” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 213). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) cited one strategy as Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) constant comparative method. Constant comparative method as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is meant to be used with theoretical sampling in generating theories from qualitative data. The first step of the constant comparative method, “comparing incidents applicable to each category,” is applicable to generating themes. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) noted: “In this procedure, the analyst examines each item of data coded in terms of a particular category, and notes its similarities with and differences to other data that have been similarly categorised. This may lead to vaguely understood categories being differentiated into several more clearly defined ones, as well as to the specification of subcategories” (p. 213).

The “Ethnographic Understanding” approach proposed by Agar (1986) was also followed for its emphasis on guarding against holistic fallacy. Its components are breakdown, resolution, and coherence, as well as an “anti coherent attitude.” Agar (1986) summarised his approach thus: “Breakdown is the starting point and resolution is the process it initiates. . . . The end point is called coherence” (p. 22). Breakdown is “the differences that appear. Expectations are not met; something does not make sense; one’s assumption of perfect coherence is violated” (Agar, 1986, p. 25). The breakdown is then resolved into “coherence.” Agar (1986) clarified that coherence was not without contradictions; rather, it entailed understanding. “A coherent resolution will . . . clarify and enlighten, eliciting an ‘aha’ reaction” (Agar, 1986, p. 22). At the same time, Agar (1986) advises the researcher to keep “an anti coherent attitude.” That is, researchers “frequently try to force breakdowns to occur” (p. 50). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) concurred with the anti-coherence attitude when they discussed the postmodern ethnography: its purpose is to explore “the discontinuities, paradoxes, and inconsistencies of culture and action” (p. 256) and not to resolve or reconcile the differences.

Participants

Participants to the study were ten immigrant Chinese Canadian women residing in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia whose children were receiving special education in public schools. Six of them were recruited through their school districts’ participation in this research. All participants have been given pseudonyms which will be used throughout the thesis. Helen was recruited through her son’s teacher at a private school. Joan was informed of the research study by the district resource teacher who worked with her son. Lan was introduced by a Chinese multicultural liaison worker in her son’s school district. Wen was contacted by a social worker of a Chinese community association.

The mothers were in their 30’s and 40’s, all married. They are first-generation immigrants (who were born outside of Canada). With the exception of one, the participants lived in Canada for less than five years. They came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. All were full-time mothers except Sophie, who worked in a factory. Four of the women’s husbands were professionals. Four other mothers stated their husbands’ occupations as follows: Ellen’s husband a carpenter, Joan’s husband in real estate business, Sophie’s husband an electrician, and Xiang’s husband an estate manager. Lan and Ping did not disclose their husband’s occupations. The mothers’ education levels varied and some professed religious beliefs. The children, all male, had various disabilities. Five had intellectual disabilities and the other five sensory impairments. Both the mothers and the children spoke Chinese as their first language. Table 1 is a summary of the parents’ background information.
Table 1  
Parent Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>alias</th>
<th>residency</th>
<th>place of origin</th>
<th>education level</th>
<th>religion</th>
<th>child gender</th>
<th>school level</th>
<th>type of disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>undeclared</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>undeclared</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>hearing impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>hearing impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>hearing impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>primary school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>primary school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>visual impairment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative research instruments were employed to gather data. The interview schedule explored the participants’ experiences and perspectives, while three existing scales gathered additional data to be converged with the qualitative data and to be connected to previous research.

Interview Schedule

A semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview schedule was designed to explore how immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers coped with caring for their children and how they got involved in the children’s education, as well as their beliefs and values that affected the two behaviours above. The format of the interview questions followed that of Nixon (1991). The interview schedule was reviewed by a mainstream Canadian mother who worked in an agency that served families of children with disabilities and was well acquainted with parental concerns. Her suggestions were incorporated. For the interview schedule, see Appendix A.

Scales

Three scales that have been designed with Chinese people or Asians in mind were employed. In this qualitative-oriented research where understanding and meaning is important in uncovering the participants’ perspectives, I was reluctant to impose framework on the participants. In order to complement the qualitative data and to be connected to previous research, questionnaires that were developed as close to the participants’ world were chosen. These are Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA) (Suinn, Rilkard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987), Asian Identity Questionnaire and Cultural Preference Inventory (AIQ-CPI) (Ishiyama, 1997), and Chinese Coping Scale (Shek & Tsang, 1993). I explored LOC, but did not use an LOC scale, because most scales were developed in the West and would be of little use in exploring possible dimensions for Asians. Chinese culture was noted with a relatively external orientation, currently available methods for the study of causal beliefs appear inadequate for use in Chinese populations, and may not adequately assess important variation in a relevant causal belief system (Leiber, Yang, & Lin, 2000).

Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale. This scale is designed to measure the level of acculturation of Asian Americans and is modelled after the established Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans. The SL-ASIA scale consisted of 21 items assessing language, identity, friendships, behaviours, generational and geographic background, and attitudes. The questionnaire is in a multiple choice format. The score for an individual who responds to the questionnaire is obtained by adding up his or her ratings on all the items and then being divided by the number of items (21). A score ranges from 1 to 5, from low Western acculturation to high Western acculturation.
Ponterotto, Baluch, and Carielli (1998) noted the SL-ASIA scale had become a leading acculturation measure for research with Asian Americans, but its conceptual base and psychometric properties had not been evaluated. The researchers reviewed 16 empirical studies published on peer refereed journals and noted that the internal consistency of the SL-ASIA scale was quite acceptable. Since this scale is modelled after the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans, it received some initial support for its content validity (Ponterotto et al., 1998). Ponterotto et al. (1998) reported that strong and consistent convergent validity was reported by five studies. The SL-ASIA scores had been related to the respondents’ years of schooling in the U.S., years living in non-Asian neighbourhoods, self-rating of acculturation, generation level, English fluency, total years living in the U.S., and age upon entering the U.S. (Ponterotto et al., 1998). Ponterotto et al. (1998) did not find the values of these correlations surprising since the scale included items assessing some of these same variables.

Suinn (1994) stated that the Suinn-Lew scale had been expanded. Richard Suinn in his letter in 1994 to colleagues who used his scale advised that the revised scale “utilise[s] current theorising that acculturation is... multidimensional and orthogonal” (Suinn, 1994). Change in one dimension (e.g., behaviour) does not necessarily correspond to change in another dimension (e.g., values) (Berry, 1989; Gim, as cited in Suinn, Khoo, & Ahuna, 1995). Rogler (1994) has criticised the bipolar models of current acculturation scales, in which the items force respondents “to choose between more of one culture and less of the other; increments in the acquisition of host society cultural elements are taken to signify proportionate decrements of cultural elements brought from the society of origin, a zero-sum process” (p. 706).

The expanded scale now has three distinct dimensions: values, behavioural competencies, and self-identity. It includes one set of questions rating a respondent’s Asian commitments and another set of questions rating his or her Western commitments. Suinn (1994) offered suggestions that scoring on the SL-ASIA scores, composed of the original 21 items only, could be alternatively classified into the categories of Asian-identified and Western-identified by taking “the high and low scores as cutoffs.” For example, “1” and “2” scores are classified as Asian-identified while “4” and “5” scores are classified as Western-identified. Suinn (1994) suggested similar classification for the other two dimensions of acculturation, the SL-ASIA values score and the SL-ASIA behavioural competencies score. In terms of the self-identity question, Suinn (1994) advised that each answer is a category by itself.

Before the SL-ASIA scale was translated into Chinese, it was revised somewhat for the present study. The phrase, “Americans,” was substituted by the phrase, “Canadians.” Although Suinn et al. (1987) has pointed out that the wording of the SL-ASIA scale permits individual respondents from various Asian groups (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.) to reply in a meaningful way, the phrase, “Chinese,” instead of “Asians,” was employed throughout the questionnaire to simplify the matter. This change has caused some problem with items 3-5. For these three items, only three answers were provided. The answers were, Chinese, Chinese Canadian, and Canadian, which were given the values of 1, 3, and 5, respectively, in line with the conceptualisation of the self-identity item in the revised scale. Another change concerned item 12 on the scale as to where one was born. That item looks complicated at first reading. Participants were not asked to respond to this item; instead this answer was given, since it was known that they were all first-generation immigrants.

Asian Identity Questionnaire and Cultural Preference Inventory. This scale examines cultural identity of Canadians of Asian backgrounds and their preference for nine index of cultural elements. The questionnaire applies a nine-point Likert scale. On a sample of 296 students of Asian backgrounds attending the University of British Columbia, the AIQ-CPI scores correlated with the original 21-item SL-ASIA scores (over .60) (Ishiyama, 1997). This questionnaire is selected for the following reasons: (a) its inclusion of values, (b) the orthogonal nature of the cultural identity questions, and (c) tapping respondents’ subjective evaluation of their cultural orientation. Betancourt and Lopez (1993) have noted that most acculturation scales concentrate on language competence and touch little upon the acquisition of cultural elements such as norms and values. As to orthogonality, research has established that identification with one culture does not preclude identification with another (Suinn, 1994). The original ASIA scale also contained many factual questions, with limited subjective evaluation.
When administered to the participants, one item, preference for teachers, was added to the Cultural Preference Inventory, to tap the interest in parent involvement. Scores on this item were excluded when adding up the total CPI scores. The ASIA and AIQ-CPI scales on acculturation and cultural identity were combined when administered to the participating mothers. Following the back-translation technique commonly applied in cross-cultural research to ensure the wording of a questionnaire does not lose its original meaning when translated to a different language, the scale was translated from English to Chinese. I translated the English items into Chinese, with consultation with bilingual friends. A bilingual instructor at the University of British Columbia, who specialises in Canada-China cross-cultural communication, was hired to translate the Chinese back to English. Dr. Whittaker compared the two versions of the questionnaire in English and verified that the meanings of the items remained the same. For the two scales in English, see Appendix B. For the Chinese translation of the scales, see Appendix C.

**Chinese Coping Scale.** This scale was developed specifically for Chinese people by two Hong Kong researchers, Shek and Cheung, who based their work on Hwang's study (1977) on the coping responses of people in Taiwan dealing with general stress in life. Shek and Cheung (1990) focus on two main categories of coping strategies: (a) reliance on oneself, including mobilisation of personal resources, adoption of the philosophy of doing nothing, and avoidance; and (b) seeking help from others and appeal to supernatural power. Shek and Tsang (1993) reported the internal consistency for the scale as .63. For this scale in English, see Appendix D. The Chinese version is in Appendix E.

**Procedure**

Five school districts in the Lower Mainland participated in this research. Letters soliciting informed consent of parents were distributed to principals and teachers, who sent the letters to eligible parents or advertised the research in their school newsletters. Participants were also recruited through other contact.

Interviews with the ten parents who agreed to participate took place at a site of their choice. Six interviews were conducted in the parents' homes, three in public eateries, and the interview with one parent was spread out over two days at two different places (in my residence and at a restaurant). The interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the mothers. The interview with Fiona, who indicated she could speak English and did not speak the Chinese dialect understood by the present author, was conducted in English. All the other interviews were conducted in Chinese. Only Fiona objected to tape recordings and written notes were kept in that case. Participants were informed that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time. Some parents did not answer a few questions, but none chose to withdraw from the study. Privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed. Participants were given fictitious names to protect their identities. Those who signed their English names in the research consent form were given fictitious English names.

A doctoral student from Hong Kong, Lena, agreed to help conduct interviews with Cantonese-speaking parents without pay. She helped conduct the interviews with Ellen and Ping and part of the interview with Xiang, in my presence. She was prepared as to the scope and purpose of the research and participated in role playing to practice interview skills. I conducted the rest of the interviews. The interviews with the ten mothers lasted between one and a half to six hours, three hours per parent on average, and a total of sixteen ninety-minute audio-tapes were produced. The interview schedule was not strictly adhered to when the interviews were conducted. Rather, it was a search for how participating mothers perceived their experiences. As Fielding and Fielding (1986) stated, interview questions do not have the same meanings to every informant. Mishler (1986) also referred to "the possibility of variation among subgroups [of population along the lines of gender, age, social class, etc.] in their understandings of questions" (p. 6). Although I used an interview schedule, I encouraged the parents to talk freely on their own before we went over the schedule, because I wanted to make it more like conversation in natural settings, rather than questions and responses.

A friend who understands both Mandarin and Cantonese transcribed the interviews conducted in Cantonese into Mandarin. Then, the interview tapes were transcribed almost fully for analysis. Only parts that I deemed extremely irrelevant were left out. Agar (1980) estimated that each hour of interview tapes, if clear, would take a good typist six hours to transcribe. I estimated
that I spent 10 hours for each hour of tapes, because the recording was not ideal. I read carefully the
interview transcript of each parent, and coded the data. The coded data were circled, cut off from the
printed paper, and pasted onto pieces of blank paper. When there were more than two codes in a
pile, I tried to come up with a category that best described the common thread. Themes were formed
in this way. When breakdown occurred, such as something did not seem right or when an
expectation was not met, I tried to locate the factors that may contribute to the observed differences
and regrouped the themes as necessary. I then translated selected transcripts from Chinese into
English for the nine parents whose interviews were conducted in Chinese. Each theme was
compared with another to determine if there is any linkage. Patterns emerged when some themes
appear to have a connection.
Chapter Four: Individual Parents and Themes

This chapter will begin with a reflexive account of my role in data gathering and analysis. Overview of emerged themes is then presented, followed by the ten women’s stories.

Reflection of the Interview and Analysis Process

Self-reflexivity is an increasingly important feature in ethnographic research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). It requires documenting the role of the researcher in the research. The following is some of the reflections I made about the relationships I had with the parents, the interview process itself, and the analysis that followed.

There are certain shared elements in the backgrounds of the participating parents and myself that allowed me access to privileged information. The fact that Lena and I are Chinese helped. Although implicit, one major reason the parents participated in this research is due to the anticipation that Lena and I could relate to them better than researchers from other ethnic backgrounds could. The fact that Lena and I speak Mandarin and Cantonese helped recruit the majority of the parents who spoke little English. As well, all of us are women. Fontana and Frey (1994) has pointed out the influence of gender on interviews. Besides the differences due to gender, the traditional interview paradigm is viewed as male and hierarchical, with little attention to reciprocating between the interviewer and the interviewee (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Fontana and Frey (1994) noted that the “distanced” style of interviewing cuts the participants’ “involvement drastically and, thus, rather than giving us an ‘objective’ interview, gives us a one-sided and therefore inaccurate picture” (p. 37.). In light of this, I had reciprocated with the parents by talking about my life, my immigration experience, and my step-son with multiple disabilities.

Yet another shared background is being parents of children with disabilities. Making myself known to the parents as a step-parent to a child with disabilities at the beginning of the interviews shortened the distance between the parents and me. Many parents were interested and asked me questions about my step-son. At the same time, I could empathise and understand better what they told me than if I had had no similar experiences. On the other hand, the experience of being a step-parent who was not involved in the day-to-day care of the child does not equate to being a parent who was. Despite the benefits and advantages of having shared backgrounds, there are problems when a member of a group studies its own group. Agar (1980) stated, “the partial sharing of the surface forms of the language can create the illusion that you understand when in fact you don’t “ (p. 102).

I had made an effort to engage the parents in “real” conversation in order to get to the bottom of their worlds. I encouraged the parents to speak on their own first and then went over the interview schedule to see if I had missed anything. The interviews with the parents very often digressed at some point. On the other hand, there were reality restraints that prevented me from gathering more data than I had wished, which may have affected the quality of the data gathered. For one thing, the parents had busy lives. When the interviews got longer than six parents expected, they asked me how long it would take and expressed that they would rather finish it at one time than leaving it for another day. I had to hurry through the interviews. The interviews had to be completed when Fiona and Joan had to pick up their children from school, when Hong’s children were fidgeting, and when Helen’s children came back from school. I was also aware of the fact that, toward the end of the interviews, I was exhausting the parents with the interview questions which almost always required them to recall and reflect. Despite the restraints, there was a certain degree of data saturation, as described by Merriam (1988), when the women expressed many of their concerns in repeated and yet different ways.

I acknowledge that my presence had an influence on the data obtained. Although I believe the parents talked about their experiences freely and I posed myself as someone as non-threatening as possible (as a researcher interested in their experiences and as a fellow parent who could understand them), I also believe that my presence may have influenced their remarks in some way. For example, I expressed to some parents my respect for their devotion to their children, and thus I may have been too complimentary. They may thus have felt the need to put on the images I had of them. On the other hand, it is apparent that the parents were all devoted to their children naturally and they volunteered to participate in the research because they cared about their children and their education. Thus, I believe that the disclosure the parents put forward in the interviews was genuinely felt. In fact, four of the parents were frank enough to disclose to me some negative aspects of their
child rearing and four parents chose public eateries for the site of the interviews. My contact with
two of the four women also occurred through phone and other settings, and I did not detect any
difference of their manners, tones, voices, and usages, as a result of the different settings. I thought
that what Fiona told me may have been affected by the presence of some teachers at her son’s
school at lunch hours. We had talked for two or three hours before the teachers arrived and I failed
to detect any difference due to the teachers’ presence. In any way, if she was reserved about certain
issues, it would have less to do with the presence of the teachers at one point of the interview and
more to do with a generalised fear of offending teachers (she asked me not to write things that put
her son’s teachers in a negative light after I sent her a summary of what we talked about at the
interview). Despite my belief that the parents were straight forward, some parents withheld certain
information. For example, Ping did not reply to the question of her husband’s occupation and said
nothing to a few other questions.

Although I believe their accounts are genuine, these accounts are nonetheless filtered and
biased in some way. For example, as the parents were trying to make sense out of their stories for
themselves, as well as for me, there were moments of hesitations and doubts. The parents’ accounts
were then selected and edited by the present researcher/author. That is, my construction of the
parents’ constructions of their stories is “twice removed from truth.” There are plenty of quotes
besides my interpretation, and these words from the parents’ mouths could serve as a check to my
claims, although I did select and exclude, which was based on my views, preferences, and
backgrounds, which biases I hope that I also presented. I wish to reiterate that I don’t claim
authority of my interpretation of the parents and their circumstances.

On the other hand, I tried my best to focus on what they felt and perceived. Transcribing the
interview tapes myself helped me to understand what feelings lay underneath the words. When I
listened to the tapes, again and again, with a sympathetic ear to locate their experiences and
concerns, there were times I lamented for them, laughed with them, and disagreed with them. After
re-reading and reviewing the transcripts several times, I was able to examine their circumstances not
as someone who was directly involved in the parents’ lives, and to analyse the data from a distance.
I had little contact with most parents after the interviews (I did send them Christmas cards at the end
of the year the interviews were conducted), except sporadic contact with the three parents from
Taiwan with whom I could converse directly and to whom I relate very well because of the shared
experience of growing up in that country, and one mother from Hong Kong who is a Buddhist like
me. In any way, little involvement could work both as a deterrent and a facilitator to understanding.

Overview of Emerged Themes and Clarification of Themes

Twenty-one themes emerged from the interview data. Table 2 is an overview of the twenty-one themes. The themes are arranged in the order of frequency from the highest to the lowest. I would like to state here the reason why I included parent advocacy, which was shared only by two parents, as a theme. It appears to be an anomaly, among a group of parents who were mostly accommodating and hushed their own voices, that it should be included for examination. Parent advocacy is also documented in the literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Overview of Shared Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ellen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devotion to child</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of child</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of education</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at home</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ellen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in school</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and coping</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of education</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in fate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier for the mother</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred professional qualities</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier for the child</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of resources</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts and conflict resolution</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in personal control</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in home-school collaboration</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-control</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in family support</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal crisis</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent advocacy</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Hyphens (-) indicate that no themes emerged from the interviews with the parents corresponding to the cells.

An explanation of what each of the themes entails for this group of parents is offered as follows:

1. According to Berry (1989), acculturation refers to the process of cultural contact and change individuals experience in the face of adjusting to life in Canada. These changes could manifest themselves in the areas of behaviour, identity, values, and attitudes. Acculturation level could range from little to high.
2. Devotion to one's child refers to a mental state of constantly bearing in mind what is best for one's child.
3. Knowledge of the child refers to the conviction that parents held that they know their children well.

4. Value of education refers to the importance attached to education, demonstrated by the efforts to help one’s child learn.

5. Working with child at home occurs when the parents are either supervising their children’s homework, assigning them homework, or involved in direct teaching.

6. Self-reliance refers to mobilisation of personal resources to cope with stress or to accomplish one’s goals, as well as such a belief.

7. Participation in school refers to going to the school grounds to attend school functions, to attend meetings, to talk to teachers, or just to make observations in class.

8. Stress and coping refers to the disability-related stress the parents experienced from raising their children and how they managed the stress.

9. Comparison of education refers to the parents’ comparing the education system of home countries with that in B.C.

10. Belief in fate refers to a belief that what happens in one’s life is predetermined, especially by what one did in one’s former lives. In interpersonal relationships, the equivalent of fate is yuan, which Yang (undated) defined as “a kind of predetermined interpersonal affinity” (p. 1). The Chinese concept of fate or human destiny has two different meanings. One views fate as something to be accepted passively; the other views that it can be averted (Smith, 1991). However, fate as viewed by these parents is of the former belief.

11. Language barrier for the mother refers to the mother’s limited proficiency with the English language, as manifested by such evidence as having difficulty expressing oneself or communicating with English-speakers.

12. Preferred professional qualities refer to the preference for qualities the parents expressed they would like to see in professionals who worked with them and their children.

13. Language barrier for the child refers to the child’s limited proficiency with the English language, as subjectively evaluated by the mother’s concern about the child’s having difficulty with learning English.

14. Conflicts refer to disagreements that are more than mild between the mothers and professionals with whom they worked. The conflicts include those not articulated to the involved parties. Conflict resolution refers to the efforts made to resolve the conflicts.

15. Belief in personal control refers to the mother’s belief that she could effect what happen to her life.

16. Lack of knowledge of resources refers to the mother’s not knowing resources such as services and programs for children with disabilities or their families.

17. Belief in home-school collaboration refers to the belief in close cooperation between the family and the school for the sake of the child’s learning and development. Cooperation, the term used by some parents to refer to the collaboration, often implies compromise and accommodation in Chinese lexicon.

18. Self-control refers to suppression of negative emotions in order to deal with the reality or to get things done. It is similar to emotional restraint.

19. Belief in family support refers to a belief that the family has the obligation to provide support to its members, or a general value placed on one’s family.

20. Personal crisis refers to a situation of uncertainty and high anxiety, which renders parents feeling helpless or not knowing what to do in order to solve their problems.

21. Parent advocacy refers to parents’ participating actively in their children’s schools to get educational services for their children, or engaging themselves in collective action to lobby for other support services for children with disabilities. This term and its idea is borrowed from the findings of Darling (1988) and Wilgosh (1990). Darling (1988) delineated the three components of parent activism or advocacy: seeking information, seeking control, and challenging authority. Wilgosh (1990) offered a somewhat different but equally applicable notion of parent advocacy, what she termed “advocacy and parent initiative,” in which the parents “believe that their child’s educational and other opportunities have been determined through the parents’ initiative and have a sense of mission, direction, or purpose as a by-product of their efforts to raise their child” (p. 304).
Individual Parents and Emerged Themes

The parents’ stories are organised in themes, preceded by a biographical sketch and a paragraph of my impression, as well as interpretation, of them. Each theme is preceded by the parent’s initial as well as a number to indicate the number of themes that emerged from each interview.

Ellen

Ellen came from Hong Kong. Both she and her husband finished high school there. They have two sons. The six-year-old boy was identified as developmentally delayed in infancy. At the time of the interview, he was in an integrated classroom. She received information about the study from her son’s teacher and invited me to her house for the interview. Lena, who spoke Cantonese, the Chinese dialect Ellen spoke, helped conduct the interview, which lasted one and a half hours. Ellen, with an infant son in her arms, was very pleasant with Lena and me throughout the interview.

Ellen knew only a few English words, which posed a major barrier for her to adjust to life in B.C. She had a need to know how and what her elder son was doing at school, but she had no meaningful communication with her son’s teachers except at formal parent-teacher meetings where an interpreter was provided for her. She expressed the need to be connected to parent support groups and other parents of children with disabilities, but language barrier deterred her from being involved in such a group as she had wished. Ellen was quite active in seeking out support services for her son as well as for herself when she was in Hong Kong, and she was very much involved in a parent group there. She felt that the parent support group had helped her tremendously in terms of coping with her elder son’s disability. At the end of the interview, she asked me if I knew of any similar parent support group in B.C. and what services were available here. Knowing her limited proficiency in English, I promised her that I would connect her with another parent who spoke Cantonese and who had helped a new immigrant parent whose child had a disability to deal with schooling and support services. Despite the language barrier, her self-reliance, desire to help her son, and helpful teachers at her son’s schools were her assets.

E1. Acculturation. Ellen had been in Canada for less than two years and spoke little English. She expressed positive feelings about B.C. She remarked, “After I came here, I feel I like very much Canadian landscape, air quality, and its environment.” She experienced no stress related to relocation and said,

Some people feel cooped up after coming to Canada. . . . I gave birth to this baby after I came to Canada. Therefore, I have not felt cooped up since I arrived. I am not maladjusted, because I am very busy and so do not get home sick. I don’t have time for that at all.

In effect, she depicted a picture of isolation; yet, she appeared pretty content with her life in B.C.

E2. Knowledge of child. Ellen’s knowledge of her son was imbued with the negative consequences of his having a disability. She said,

People who don’t know him would not feel he lacks a lot, judging from his ordinary behaviour. Once getting to know him for a long time, they would feel, “How come he would do something a seven-year-old would not do?” Because his mental ability is like a three- or four-year-old.

The son had difficulty expressing himself in Chinese, the home language, but she was able to communicate with him. She said, “Because I have been the main care giver since he was born-- Of course, there are things he could not express. But I still know what he means.” Naturally, years of living with him produced intimate knowledge of the child.

Her emphasis on her son’s disability made her dwell on his limitations. She did not enrol her son in social or recreational activities, despite the suggestions from his teacher. Her thinking was influenced by her past experience of living in Hong Kong, where people with disabilities were largely segregated. She stated,

Actually the school encourages me to let him participate in more extra-curricular activities, because it is not healthy for him to stay home often. But I don’t know
what are suitable for him. For example, I would like him to learn, but he himself, compared to his normal peers-- For example, I am afraid he would disturb other students if he goes there, or whether the teacher there would accept--, accept his disability.

E3. Conflicts and conflict resolution. Ellen was concerned with her son's speech development and would like him to receive speech therapy, as he did while in Hong Kong. She explained, "He doesn't speak very well. His comprehension is not good either. Perhaps these are due to his delayed development. Therefore, his speech develops slowly. I would like to get him some speech therapy here, but they are scarce. Therefore, he doesn't have it. Therefore, he is still waiting in line." The conflict with the school, even though it was not articulated, arose out of different priorities between home and school. She very much wanted to see her son improve while the school did not set a priority in that area. She hoped something better would come in the future, which in a way resolved the conflict. According to her past experience in Hong Kong, resources for people with disabilities were limited and people often had to be patient and hopeful. She said,

When we discovered he was like this at a young age, someone told me where these schools were and how long it would take to get in after you signing on the waiting list. . . . Special education in Hong Kong is quite limited. At that time, one has to wait in line. For example, their name have to be put on the waiting list for special kindergartens very early on after they are diagnosed with handicaps. By the time they are the right age to go to kindergarten, they may not be able to get in. Perhaps they would have to wait for another six months before they can get in the special schools. Therefore, waiting in line is necessary.

When her son did not receive speech therapy, she thought he was waiting in line. Ellen did not know that eligibility counted here and that waiting would not bear any fruit. In this matter, she assumed a universality in how things worked and did not ask questions regarding how services were delivered in B.C. She would have had difficulty asking questions in English any way. Another conflict, similarly unarticulated, was that her son was put in a mixed-grade class. Ellen commented, "He is in the same class as grade two students. He cannot keep up," with a tone of disappointment. Yet, she did not mention during the interview what she said or did to the school in relation to the potential conflict.

E4-6. Participation in school, comparison of education, and language barrier. Ellen stopped working with her son at home after relocation and took a more relaxed stance toward his learning, due to their limited English. At the time of the interview, she was minimally involved in his school. She had volunteered in his kindergarten while in Hong Kong, but she did not volunteer here. She said she had a baby to care for and had little time to be a volunteer. However, she felt the biggest obstacle to her participation was her limited English proficiency as well as a newcomer's lack of knowledge of B.C. schools. She pointed out the lack of a common language between herself and her son's classroom teacher and the difficulty it brought in their interactions. There was willingness on both sides to communicate with each other, as she said, "Sometimes I want to ask more things-- She is a nice person. She also wants to tell me what my kid does at school." Yet, the language barrier was like a wide river between them. She said, "You often see her, but she speaks English and you can't communicate with her." Despite her limited involvement in her son's school, she would meet her son's teacher at formal meetings, which were regular, but non-continuous. Ellen said, "When I can get more information is when we have meetings, because at that time the classroom teacher would get an interpreter for us. At meetings, I know most about my son at school." The interpreter service was like a ferry service that connected the mother with the teacher. The language barrier was profound and caused her to develop a perception of difficulty. Ellen felt that it was impossible to establish easy, comfortable communication with the school staff. This difficulty was made pronounced by her desire to know what her son did at school. Ellen said,

I can't communicate well with them. I want to know more about what my son does at school, but-- If in Hong Kong, I could definitely ask the teacher, "How was he
today and how was he with his classmates?” I could chat with the teacher and get more details. But it is impossible here.

On the other hand, Ellen was very pleased with the integration practice, in which students with disabilities were educated in the regular classroom as much as possible. She said, “I am pretty happy with kids being mixed together in the regular class here.” While in Hong Kong, her son attended a special kindergarten class of six students with disabilities and it did not work to his benefit. She said,

The other five kids all had disabilities, perhaps some with autism, some with Down’s syndrome, and some with other disabilities. Therefore, he is already slow in learning and, mixing together with those kids, the progress he made was very slow.

She noted psychological gains for him from being integrated and the advantage of the “relaxed” instructional approach in B.C. She said,

His peers accept him. The education here is unlike Hong Kong’s “stuffing the duck” approach, pushing the kids to study. I know it too that my kid cannot be pushed to study. So, it benefits him to learn in this relaxed, natural learning atmosphere here. That’s why I feel, I feel it is good for him to learn here, whether it is due to his getting older, to the change of environment, or to his peers. He knows more than before.

Even though she said her son could not keep up in the regular classroom with mixed grades, she considered him to be making more progress than when he was in Hong Kong.

E7. Stress and coping. Ellen talked about the early stress in raising her son. She said, “At first, at first, I was very frightened, very scared, not knowing what to do with my son.” She told me more of how she had felt in the beginning when I asked her what suggestions or advice she would give to other parents when they found their children had disabilities; she said,

I think, if you just give them advice and suggestions, they would not hear you. . . . What they feel is likely feeling like crying. . . . It was very difficult to look after him when he was little. At that time he had many conditions and his development was very slow. I was very frightened, not knowing where to put my hands and feet.

Since his disability was discovered in his first year, he had received different therapy services in Hong Kong, including speech therapy. Ellen sought help from professionals who gave lectures on parenting children with disabilities and from other parents like her in Hong Kong. She said she had gained self-confidence ever since. She also cheered herself up by comparing herself to those in worse situations. In addition, she tried to see though the difficulties, which is a Chinese way of coping by examining the difficulties for what they really were and minimising them.

The way she coped was best seen in the advice she gave to other parents who newly discovered their children’s disabilities. She said, “I feel one should chat with them and give them more confidence in themselves to untie the knots in their minds. This would be better than any other things. Or, you could talk to them, ‘Try to see through it.’” Ellen concluded that parents who had children with disabilities needed support and she reiterated throughout the interview that she needed it. She used to feel helpless, but then participating in a Hong Kong parent support group had helped her cope. She received information there on parenting a child with a disability. She also would talk to other parents in the support group for emotional and informational support. She said her biggest need was to get to know other parents “of children with different levels of disability, and to talk to them, or to share our experiences, or to see what I can help you and what you can help me,” which she enjoyed in the parent support group in Hong Kong. She believed that parents in similar situations understood each other. She said, “When we talk, we would likely strike the same chord.” The level of support and connection was removed when she immigrated to Canada. Her son’s school provided her with some information about support groups here and informed her of a
series of lectures for parents. Her desire to participate was thwarted by her language barrier. She said, "Although I wanted to participate, there was no interpreters there. Then, I gave it up in the end."

E8-9. Self-reliance, and personal control. When asked what helped her most in raising her son, Ellen replied, "It is myself who helps me most." She praised those who had been of help to her, but she had been the main care giver and she actively sought help in order to boost her son's development. Asked what she thought determined her life, she pointed out both self-reliance and personal control. She said,

Well, it is very important to admit one has control. You are not to let others help you. There are many things of which, if you don't do them, if you don't participate in them, you won't get their benefits.

A sense of seeking control was developed a few years after she discovered her first-born was disabled. She said,

At that time, one's having control was not as real to me as it is now and I was not as aware. At that time, I was carefree. I did not know anything back then. But, with this, having my son has changed me greatly.

Despite her expressing a great deal of stress related to raising her elder son, she believed that she had reaped personal gains for her from raising him. It gave her more self-confidence and she was aware that she did have control.

E10. Lack of knowledge of resources. Ellen said she would like to know more about the services here because she really wanted to know how best to help her son. She attributed her lack of knowledge of the resources and services in B.C. to her limited English and a lack of cultural know-how. She said, "Perhaps I have been here only for a short time, I don't know much about what resources here can be offered to me. Perhaps I have communication barrier." She put the blame on herself for not being able to speak English.

Fiona

Fiona is from Hong Kong. She was a Catholic. She and her husband are both college graduates. They have a daughter and two sons. The sixteen-year-old boy was developmentally delayed. At the time of the interview, he attended a regular class with blocks where he received instruction from a resource room teacher.

Fiona learned about the study from her son's resource room teacher and contacted me. The teacher told her that she might learn from me more about the resources in B.C. At first, she hesitated to participate because one of her friends who had participated in a research study was reported to a child-protection agency for suspicion of child abuse. She asked many questions about the study; she had done research herself. She appeared interested, but wanted more information before she gave her final consent. She did not commit herself to participate in the study when we set a date to meet; she just said, "We'll see. We'll go from there."

She chose an eatery at a shopping mall for our meeting. Fiona had a good command of English, and the interview, which she quickly consented to, was conducted in English. Her reservation regarding research participation showed up when she refused to allow the interview to be taped, unlike the other participating parents. Despite her reservations, she did not mind talking in a public place. She appeared to enjoy our conversation as we were engaged for five hours in the interview. During lunch, she spotted a group of three or four teachers from her son's school and went to their table to greet them. I don't know if the presence of the teachers had any effect on the data that I gathered from her. There is a possibility that she did not want to talk about any negative aspects of the school. I would say that she appeared open with me throughout the interview, and the interview data showed that Fiona appeared to have a good relationship with her son's teachers. However, she was quite concerned with being identified in the dissertation. She acknowledged that the report of the interview that I sent her for review was accurate, but asked if I could take out one sentence where I quoted her as saying some teachers were inexperienced for fear of offending them. She said that, if teachers who knew her read the report, they could easily identify her. As
such, reporting her case theme by theme posed an ethical dilemma. My decision to recount the interview she had with me in the same way I did with other parents (i.e., theme by theme) was based on the fact that, by now, her son had graduated from high school and there would not be negative consequences related to the child's high school education.

Fiona appeared well adjusted to raising her son with a disability and to life in B.C. She was easy-going and reported good relationships with her son’s teachers, particularly the special education teacher, who referred her for participation in this research. Her fluency in English allowed her continuous communication with her son’s teachers and thus she knew well about her son at school, which was important to her. And she was able to be involved in several parent support groups to get information about services for her son, although as a new immigrant she felt that she knew little about the resources here. Besides seeking help, she relied on herself and support from family to help her son develop.

F1. Acculturation. Fiona had been in Canada for less than one year and commented on the friendliness of people in B.C. She referred to the slower pace of life in B.C. as the main reason her family immigrated to Canada. She did not like the materialism and hectic pace of life in Hong Kong. She got along well with her son’s teachers and was well-connected with parent support groups. On the other hand, her circle of friends in B.C. were Chinese, and, though bilingual, she preferred to talk in Chinese with her friends. She said everyone in the parent support group that she regularly attended was friendly, but she felt close to the Chinese parents who attended it and often met with them. She remarked that sometimes she did not feel she was living in Canada. She still considered herself to be Chinese. She said, “you can’t change it.” She did want her children to learn the Canadian way of living.

F2. Devotion to child. Fiona was devoted to her son, and thought about quitting her job in order to train him. A friend told her it was the quality of time rather than quantity of time that mattered, and she kept her job, with the help of a nanny and her mother-in-law. At the same time, she made time to train her son. She searched for social and recreational activities and involved her son in a variety of extra-curricular activities. At the time of the interview, she was still looking for opportunities for her son to make friends and for summer time activities.

Fiona had foreseen that her son would encounter language difficulties and hired an English lady to teach him English before they immigrated. She also wrote to the school board here while she was still in Hong Kong to find out about education services. She wanted her son to attend the same secondary school as Grace’s son, who had immigrated earlier, and arranged to live in the same neighbourhood. She said, in this way, “at least he’s got a friend.” Besides, the school would also have the experience of working with students with special needs and who spoke English as a second language.

F3-4. Participation in school, and language barrier for child. Because Fiona liked to plan ahead, she arranged meeting with her son’s teachers at the beginning of the school year, and had frequent contact with everyone who worked with him. She went to report card sessions to learn how he was doing. Although in secondary school there was little chance for parent involvement, she volunteered at her son’s school, to meet his schoolmates and see for herself how he was doing. She said, “He’s pretty happy at school.” She believed it was important to know what he was doing in school, which was what motivated her to get involved. Similarly, when they were in Hong Kong, she had close contact with his teachers.

Fiona’s son had difficulty learning English. She focused on practical learning as his goals. For example, she named learning to buy things as a goal. The school started to incorporate “buying” as one of the tasks he did at school and he learned to buy his lunch. Her son was taking math, and Fiona found out that he was doing too much calculus, a task separate from living skills. She suggested to the resource room teacher that she would like to see that his learning be more meaningful and practical. The teacher agreed. She also made suggestions on other occasions, and the school staff accepted them. She learned from other parents there was a placement for students like her son in a college and she would like to pursue that. She was also concerned with her son’s social development and noted that some of his classmates merely greeted him, but did not socialise with him. The thing Fiona could do was look for community services for her son after school hours so that he could have opportunities to make friends.

Fiona was pleased with the teachers and felt they made an effort to know her son. She and
the teachers shared the same opinions of her son’s strengths and limitations. This shared vision was likely reached before the formal meetings, because she had met with the teachers individually on an ongoing basis. The school was also receptive to her suggestions and she felt that the teachers really wanted to help. She liked the practice of integrating students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom. She saw positive changes in her son after immigration. He learned to tie his own shoe laces and became interested in baseball, hockey, and roller blading. She thought her son was happier because he felt accepted by normal peers. She believed integration changed public attitudes about people with disabilities. However, she also observed that integration did not permit the flexibility to offer programs in independent living skills. In Hong Kong, it was quite common that children in special schools were given instruction in basic life skills. Her view of integration was not overwhelmingly positive.

F5. Conflicts and conflict resolution. Fiona experienced a few incidents of disagreement with teachers. The “keyboarding” teacher wanted her son to do more work, but was not always there to supervise him. The teacher wrote that her son was not doing his work. Fiona appreciated the teacher’s holding high expectations for her son, but thought her son could not accomplish the task by himself. She spoke to the resource teacher, who agreed to supervise the child. At another time, one teacher told her that her son was too dependent on his aide. Fiona thought having an aide helped her son because he had trouble understanding the instruction of the teachers. When I asked directly how she felt, she replied, because she was not in the classroom, it was hard to say. She added it was out of her ability to control anyway. She tried to stay neutral and minimised her sense of control. The same attitude showed up when she learned that a teacher in the school made negative comments about students with special needs. Fiona did not try to resolve the conflict, but said, “Let it be. Even with normal individuals, you cannot expect everyone to like you.”

F6. Preferred professional qualities. Fiona regarded “acceptance” as an important teacher quality. She believed that, if a teacher cared about a child, he or she would accept the child. She appreciated a teacher who left a note to her, welcoming her to make a phone call to talk about her son’s learning at any time. She deemed teachers who themselves were parents of children with disabilities were an asset. One such teacher helped her son to take courses from teachers who accepted children with disabilities. She also appreciated the teachers’ efforts at getting to know her son.

As for teacher qualities for working with parents, Fiona preferred a close, informal relationship with teachers. Sometimes she would just pop in to have “friendly chats” with the resource room teacher and her son’s aide. She said the resource room teacher was concerned about her as well as her son. She described her as “The sort of person you can rely on.” Fiona’s preference for informality was demonstrated when she invited all the staff involved with her son to a luncheon to show her “appreciation of what they did.” She regarded her experience of attending the first formal IEP meeting as being “fun” and “like a tea party.” She brought dessert to the meeting and the resource room teacher prepared drinks. In this way, a formal meeting was turned into an informal one.

F7. Knowledge of child. Fiona suspected that there was something wrong when her son was six months old. She went to a paediatrician, who asked her to observe more. She came back later to express her worries again, but the doctor asked her to “keep on observing” He was not diagnosed until he was two or three years old. Fiona knew her son’s limitations and strengths. He had a good memory. His main problem for learning was his limited English proficiency. She also asked him questions to learn what he was thinking and what he did at school. She learned that, despite his difficulty in speaking English, he enjoyed school.

F8-10. Working at home with child, belief in family support, and self-reliance. Fiona took her son to different programs in Hong Kong soon after he was diagnosed. She observed how people worked with him and began to train her son at home. She checked his homework after he started school in Hong Kong. He was not given homework in B.C., and Fiona began to teach him English at home. She valued his education at home and was devoted to helping him. Fiona also relied on herself to teach him living skills. She wanted to train him to do washing and simple cooking. She said she believed in support given by the family. She stressed, “I’m believing in myself. Sometimes it is difficult to rely on others. I always believe in family support. Family support is very important.” She wanted to see that he learned to ride the bus. As there was no such
plan yet in his educational program, she said she would teach him this herself, even though she did not know how to take the bus in B.C. Fiona’s self-reliance was so strong that she was willing to try things that she did not know.

**F11. Parent advocacy.** Fiona believed that, as a parent, one needed to get involved, and then the teacher would pay attention. She recommended to other parents to reach out and be persistent. In Hong Kong, she was the vice chairperson of an association for people with disabilities and participated in advocacy activities. She said, “That’s the way you get something (i.e., services) . . . and that they (the government) know about the problem.”

**F12-13. Stress and coping, and belief in fate.** When Fiona learned that her son was disabled, she felt like it was the end of the world. She often asked, “Why me?” She took her son to early intervention programs and met with other parents of children with disabilities. Knowing she was “not alone” was of great help to her. She commented, “By the time you know more parents, through associations, group therapies, some are worse than you, and you know you’re lucky.” She added, “I don’t know if that is Ah Q spirit,” referring to a Chinese idiom coined after a comical fictional character that made himself feel better by constantly comparing himself to those inferior to him. She coped with the challenges of raising her son with positive thinking. She noted the rewards of raising her son. For example, she met more people. She said she used to be a perfectionist, and then she realised that everyone went through some ups and downs. She said that she was happy as long as her kid was happy and healthy. Her philosophy was that, if she could get what she wanted, that would be great; if she couldn’t, she said, “Let it be.” Helping her son to learn also relieved her stress. Work with her son at home kept her occupied and she took joy in knowing that “I’m helping my kid to improve.” Her religious faith also helped. Fiona was Catholic and felt her religion provided her with spiritual support. When she felt depressed, she would go to church.

Fiona readily acknowledged the driving force in her life was fate. She advised new parents who just learned that their children were disabled what she found helpful. She said, “This is the path that have been paved for you. Sometimes you can’t change it. Look at what is coming; do not look back. Try to do your best. Don’t demand too much. There will be a solution.” She mentioned a Chinese saying to illustrate her point: “After the boat comes to the end of a bridge it naturally comes straight through,” meaning things would be taken care of. Her idea of fate was not passive, as the word, fate, often suggests. She would still strive for whatever she could do before accepting her fate, which she believed that it would be all right.

Fiona exhibited some degree of tentative outlook on life, or taking things one at a time, an approach to coping with uncertainty common in the lives of families of children with disabilities. When I asked whether she was happy with her son’s education program in B.C., she replied, “So far so good.” Even though she had admitted throughout the interview that she was happy with her son’s teachers and program in B.C., her tentative comment reveals that she was aware that things may go downhill. On another occasion, she said the IEP meeting was a source of communication in her case. The resource room teacher had told her that she could object to any part of the proposed program. And she felt comfortable asking questions or raising issues at the meeting. However, asked if the IEP meeting was helpful to her and her son, she replied, since she only attended the IEP meeting once, it was hard to compare. Her conservative judgment or a lack of judgment revealed her proclivity toward reserving her judgments. In fact, she did not consent to participation in the study even when she agreed to meet with me; she just said, “We’ll see. We’ll go from there.”

It was equally important for Fiona to be connected with other people and she actively utilised a variety of resources, i.e., other parents, her husband, friends, doctors, teachers, and support groups. She turned to medical doctors for help in the beginning. Then she went to educational psychologists, and tried numerous therapies for her son. These helpful services shaped the way she sought help. Fiona assigned a special role to other parents of children with disabilities. She said that parents in similar situations understood each other, provided information, often comprehensive, and shared experiences, whereas social workers asked parents what they needed and did not tell them what social services were available. She said other parents told each other which service providers were helpful and which were not, an information she deemed valuable but seldom imparted by social workers or teachers.

**F14. Lack of knowledge of resources.** Fiona said, coming to B.C., she had to start all over again to search for services for her son. She said that she had since joined a couple of associations...
to get information. She didn’t feel she got enough resources and services and hoped that comprehensive information of what services were available could be translated into Chinese to help other Chinese parents who did not speak English. She learned from some parents that social services departments did not want parents to take advantage of all the services they were entitled to and so did not distribute information about services as widely as possible.

Grace

Grace, a Buddhist, came from Hong Kong. She and her husband, both college graduates, have a son and a daughter. The sixteen-year-old boy was diagnosed with autism. At the time of the interview, he was in a regular class with blocks when he received instruction from a resource room teacher. Grace received information about the research study from her son’s resource room teacher. She invited me to her house for the interview, which lasted three hours. We found out that we shared more than one commonality. She had studied in Taiwan and spoke fluent Mandarin. We learned that we were both Buddhists (she had since called me several times to invite me to Buddhist gatherings or lectures). She made room for the interview when it got longer than she had expected. After the interview, she gave me a ride home, seeing that my pregnancy was far advanced.

My impression of Grace was that she was positive, self-assured, and altruistic (she volunteered in several organisations). She was actively interested in learning about the larger society and the English language. A good command of English allowed her to be involved in her son’s school and in support groups to the extent that she wanted to be. She exhibited a strong belief in self-reliance and she practised what she believed in, although she also sought help as needed. On the other hand, she was upset with the way that the vocal parents at the local support group where she often went demanded social services and she advocated self-reliance. Her experience of working with her son’s school was not all positive. One major disagreement she had with the school was its emphasis on planning for the her son’s future when her time orientation was in the present, which translated to focusing on what needed to be done and how to do it well in the present. Despite the disagreement, she played along with the school’s suggestion. She did resolve during the interview that she would assert herself in this matter from then on.

Gl. Acculturation. Grace had been in Canada for three years at the time of the interview. Although she spoke English, she preferred to speak Chinese during the interview. After moving to Canada, she had been a volunteer in her neighbourhood and drove senior citizens to supermarkets or shopping malls. Through volunteering, she hoped to know the people and the culture. She said, “I feel being a volunteer in an agency run by the native could link me to what they are thinking, and help me communicate with the local people.” Grace was open to being integrated into Canadian society, but, when asked if living in Canada had changed her in any way, she replied, “I feel I have always been like this. I just get to know more about another place. There is no special change. I am still the same person.” She was content with who she was.

She did mention there was some small change. Her son did not communicate his basic needs, due to his disability. She thought that her parenting style did not help either. She remarked, “Sometimes he is afraid that he would be scolded if he speaks up.” Grace observed that her son was communicating better, after she had modified her authoritarian manner. She added:

I feel I now need to adjust my own attitude, that is to say, not to be-- Not to be too stern with him. I need to encourage him. I learn this here. I learn from the mentality that encourages children to say what is on their minds, or just to talk. He, he might not have anything on his mind. But when he senses that he might be scolded, he might clam up.

She also realised the power of parents to make educational decisions for their children and utilised this power to a degree. But she disagreed with being overly demanding, which she observed in many parents in the support group whose meetings she regularly attended. She herself believed in self-reliance and pointed out that parents had to rely on themselves as resources for their children. She attributed the contrast between a belief in self-reliance and demanding of services to the effect of culture or ecological conditions (i.e., she said that she saw many parents who were born in Canada demanded social services while Chinese immigrant parents mostly relied on themselves). In fact, she linked acculturation to the loss of a sense of self-reliance and the embrace of demanding
attitude. She talked about a demanding Chinese parent who immigrated many years ago and commented, “There is no difference between she and the Canadians.” She also joked that she might turn into a “typical” Canadian some day.

At the time of the interview, Grace did not have close contact with English-speaking Canadians, despite her efforts at getting to know them. She talked about the language and cultural barrier her husband encountered when he was in college in B.C. She said,

He feel it is very difficult [to make friends with the locals]. . . . He told me, “It is not that you don’t want to make friends with the locals. But everyone would have to accommodate each other all the time and it is not very comfortable.”

She quoted his words because it struck the same chord in her. She said, “Anyway, I make efforts, and if there is some chance, I would make friends with the locals here. . . . If it requires some accommodation, I don’t care for it.” In contrast, Grace maintained close ties with Hong Kong. She brought her children back to Hong Kong every summer, because her husband still worked there. She also kept in touch with her son’s teachers there and told them about the value of integration. She was glad that the government there spent money on educating the public about people with disabilities in recent years. She commented, “Every summer I go back, I see some improvement.” She still cared about the development back there. The data suggest that her outward cultural orientation may appear to be bi-cultural, as she made efforts to get to know Canada and its people, but she was more Chinese than Canadian.

G2. Knowledge of child. Grace’s son was diagnosed with autism when he was seven years old. However, she was aware of his “differentness” when he was a toddler and sought help from medical professionals. She recollected: “Before he was four, the doctors all said to me, ‘He is fine. You don’t have to worry. Some kids develop more slowly than others and talk later.’ They thought I was too worried.” Her suspicions that her son did not develop in a normal way were confirmed by the Children’s Hospital in Hong Kong. She then quit her job and worked closely with her son. She felt she knew him well and has a positive view of her son. For example, she said, “His biggest strength is his good memory,” and “His Chinese is pretty good.”

G3-4. Working at home with child, and home-school collaboration. Grace’s devotion to her son, her value of his education, and her belief in self-reliance sustained her to work closely with him. She told me she regularly took him to an early intervention program when he was a young child. She said, “I took him there once a week. It was very far from home. We were on the bus for one hour, more than one hour.” She reinforced at home what he learned at the program and sent her daughter to a neighbour so that she could devote more time to teach her son. She believed that every parent had the personal responsibility to teach their children. She advised other parents thus: “Others could help teach your child, but you still have to teach your child yourself.” She recounted what she advised a parent who sought her advice:

I told her, “Regardless of what diagnosis your child has, it is important that you use appropriate methods to teach your child. If one method does not work, change it immediately to another. Then, if it still does not work, change immediately to yet another. Then, if he still doesn’t respond to what you teach, you would need to give it up. Then, after a while, try teach him the same thing again. Perhaps one day he will learn.” I, for one, did not give up.

At the time of the interview, she was teaching her son English so that he could communicate better with his teachers, and helped him with whatever homework he had. She also gave him homework to do if he had none.

Grace wanted to collaborate with professionals to support her son’s learning. She said her son thrived when she worked with professionals closely on what she could do at home. A teacher in B.C. made her son work hard to improve his literacy skills in English and also enlisted her help to read with him at home. She said,

Like the first year when he first came over. . . . The teacher gave him a book and
taught him to read in school. She asked him to point at the words with his finger. “Point to one word and read it; point, and read.” She showed him how fast he should point at the words. . . . She said to me, “You need to use this method at home to cooperate with me. You could work with him on his reading at home.” Once he finished the assigned reading, his teacher would ask him a few very simple questions, such as “How many girls are there?” Then he would-- He would know. He would answer the simple questions. Then, the teacher gradually made the questions harder. That year, he made good progress. Therefore, I often made sure he read at home.

G5-6. Participation in school, and language barrier for child. Grace said she met often with the people who were involved in her son’s education because she wanted to help him along. Her experience with her son’s school was generally positive. During the first few days of high school, in which there were different classes every hour, her son sometimes cried when he got home from school. She talked with the resource room teacher and got favourable response. She said, I said to the teacher, “If, in every class, there is a student who can greet him. . . . It would be fine if he did not feel he was very much alone in the classroom.” Later on, all his teachers cooperated with me on this. Every teacher would ask his class if there was a student who would be willing to do this to help this student with special needs, to help him in the classroom, to greet him, or to tell him to copy down what was written on the blackboard.

The teachers were receptive to her suggestions and she concluded, “It is very useful to talk to the teacher what I have in mind.” Thus, her positive experience with the school reinforced her desire to be more actively involved in his schooling.

Grace’s son had difficulty learning English. Her expectations for her son were English, practical life skills, and social skills. She was most concerned with his social development. She said, Some people would greet him and chat with him for a little while; then he would feel very happy. Simple conversation like “Have you eaten yet? Where are you going? Who sent you to school?” are fine. If no one talks to him, it would be even worse, as if he turns mute.

She would thus remind him what to do on social occasions. She also searched for weekend activities. She remarked, “Kids this age like to go for a movie together or play hockey on the street. But he has no such activities.” Her concern was shared by his school. She said his classroom assistant sometimes took him out in the community, and “Sometimes, a student from a senior grade level would accompany him on those trips.”

G7. Conflicts and conflict resolution. Grace had a few conflicts with the school staff, due to some teachers’ negative attitude toward students with disabilities, and the difference of life philosophies between the teachers and herself. One way she resolves was curbing herself as to what she wanted for her son. She made suggestions to the school, but she was also conscious to make them feasible from the school’s perspective. She explained that her consideration for the school was related to her respect for teacher authority. She said, Because I think my opinions are not too far out. My requests are not overly demanding, and the teachers should be able to accommodate within their limits. If they can’t make it, then they can tell me and I would consider, huh, think for the school as to whether my requests can be accommodated. Because the parents who are from Hong Kong are mostly-- Because, because, where we came from, the teachers and the school seem to hold higher status than the parents. Therefore, when I talk to them, I am very polite or that I don’t ask for too much.

Grace put teachers one rung above parents and referred to a parent who challenged her child’s
teachers. Grace expressed her disapproval of that parent:

I feel it is as if she is the host while she is the guest. Then, she feels the need to direct the teacher, “You should teach him this way; you should treat him this way; and this is what he needs,” and things like that. The teachers are all afraid of her.

She believed that parents’ being demanding contributed to a sour relationship with the school.

In terms of teacher attitude, she disagreed with an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher’s refusal to modify her son’s program and did not sign him up for the program the following year. She enrolled him in another language course, because she believed that he could do it and because of the value she placed on learning. She said, “I just would like to give him an opportunity to see if he could learn. . . . I said he should have this opportunity, because I felt he might be able to do it.” The teacher also refused to modify the course. She said, “I felt I was very unhappy that year. I could not communicate with the teacher at all, because she did not accept my son in her heart.” She said she chose not to sending the teacher gifts to appease her, but did ask her son to please the teacher with good manners. She said,

I did not do anything, such as sending her presents, or things like that. I felt there was no way her attitude might change. But I did ask my son— I said to him, “Before the class starts, go to the teacher and greet her nicely. You need to be especially polite to her.”

She only revealed her disagreement during the interview when she questioned whether teachers had the right to refuse to modify programs. Grace did not complain this to the school principal or the school board, because she had a fear of authority, which she attributed to being a Chinese. She made a contrast between Chinese parents and local parents when she said,

Because teachers are professionals. . . Although parents. . . could speak up, our feeling is often that one should not get the parent-teacher relationship in hot water. Otherwise, it is not in the interest of the child. Therefore, oftentimes parents. . . would adopt a lower or softer posture or attitude. This is the difference we have with the locals. They would express intensely what they want. . . . Unlike us. Because in the few cases I know, they would. One parent asked to change the teacher or change the school. They dare to do whatever they want.

Conflicts also resulted from incongruent life philosophies between home and school. She recounted how the school asked her to plan while she focused on the moment:

At meetings, the school here often asked you, “What expectations do you have?” Hm. They would ask, for example, “What kind of job he might hold in the future and what kind of life you would like him to have?” I feel-- Not to mention special needs kids. Even with normal children, I would not look that far. My husband and I have the same view in this aspect. . . . After I put my foot down firmly on the ground for the first step, then I’ll look where to plant the second step. I won’t calculate more than 10 steps. . . . At best I know what I should do next year. I don’t want to plan what could happen ten years from now, or five years, or three. I could not calculate that far. I would need to see how my son improves before I could plan. . . . I feel too much speculation is meaningless. Perhaps, perhaps they feel that kind of planning is necessary. But I don’t think it is.

Grace did not plan for the future because of her belief in the unpredictability of life, not because she did not care about her son’s education. She elaborated why she did not want to dream:

My view is that it is useless to look that far. I would rather hold on to the present
and make good use of the time in the present and the resources in the present, that is, whatever is in the present. I strive to do well whatever I could do. . . . I don’t expect he should do what I plan for him. I feel, as long as he has a job and is able to take care of himself, it’s fine.

Despite her disagreement, she often passively complied with the school’s request to plan. She said, “I still have to play this game with them.” She did show some resistance when she said, “Whatever I say, my expectation is that he would be able to be on his own and take care of himself in the future. As to what he would do in the future, that I don’t know.” Another strategy she used to resolve the conflict was indirect communication. She had been sending indirect message to the teachers and she noted that “now the teacher has received this message of mine, that I don’t plan far ahead.” As she talked more about this conflict at the interview, she got more resolute. In the end, she declared, “Now I decide that I don’t want to talk about my expectations anymore.”

G8. Preferred professional qualities. Grace did not spell out all the professional qualities she preferred, but they can be deduced from the conflicts as well as from her positive experience with the school. For example, a good teacher would accept his or her students, disabled or not, and modify the program as needed, be well attuned to the parent’s preferences for communication style, and be receptive to parents’ suggestions. Grace appreciated the medical professionals in Hong Kong who did not give a diagnosis for her sons’ condition until he was seven years old. Their intention was well-meaning because they did not want to so diagnose in order to give him a chance to go to school. At that time, the special schools in Hong Kong, the only schools children with disabilities could attend, did not admit children with autism, out of the belief that they required intensive care. A desired professional quality can thus be deduced as the value of education and the focus on what’s best for the child and his education. Grace also preferred teachers who expected her son to do work.

Grace preferred informal, relaxed, and spontaneous home-school communication. She said, “I... often go to the school to chat with the teachers, as friends. I feel this is the way to communicate.” She had frequent informal contact with her son’s teachers in Hong Kong, where there was no structured parent-teacher meetings. She recalled,

Because I volunteered at the school, it turned out, from the janitors to the principal, I knew them all. There was no need for any meetings, because we knew each other well. If there was anything special that needed to be communicated, we just talked. Or we talked over the phone. The frequency of contact was much more than here. I was used to it. Here, because, if you want to see the teacher, you have to go through the meetings.

In contrast, she said the teachers in B.C. liked to hold meetings with parents and she did not think the medium “necessarily lead to communication.” Rather, she said, “I thought people talked too much and there were a whole bunch of plans.”

She appreciated teachers who expressed interest in her cultural background. She believed this interest could contribute to better understanding of her son as well as a friend-like relationship with her. She said,

I have met some good teachers. When I talk with them, they would inquire about our cultural background. So that they could understand us more. . . . Maybe this characteristic might not seem relevant to the child’s learning, but I feel, if the teacher has the desire to learn more about my cultural background, I feel it can help the teachers to understand my kid. It seems that we chat like friends. They might ask—They might ask, “Hm, is it true that there are many new immigrants who do not settle down here but instead are prepared to go back to where they came from?” They wanted to know what I thought of it. They would ask me questions like this, which bears no direct relationship to the child’s learning. But they wanted to understand what exactly the mentality of new immigrants were. If I told them a little
about it, I feel it could help them to understand more. I feel that these teachers inquired about this, as if we were like friends. Then we could communicate better.

G9. Comparison of education. Grace considered the educational system in Hong Kong to be very different from that in B.C. Children in Hong Kong needed to take tests in order to enter kindergarten and there were no opportunities for children of disabilities to be involved in extra-curricular activities. She said that her son thrived in B.C.:

Ever since we came to Canada, I saw him make noticeable progress. It is due to his self-confidence. This is what we did not notice in Hong Kong. This is because Chinese probably do not think of-- Even with adults, we probably don’t talk about confidence or not. . . . Especially with children like him. . . . We did not know the fact that he did not have that social life nor extra-curricular activities in Hong Kong would have a great impact on him. Because, after he came to Canada, he could learn skating and swimming. That he could learn drawing. Then, he was afraid of teachers at school in Hong Kong. Here, he plays with the teachers. Then you feel that it seems he was bound before, but now he is free. And he is willing, willing to communicate with others on his own initiative. . . . Because they do civil education. They educate the public to accept people like him. Then, it is possible that they go out and attend some activities in the community because others won’t refuse his participation.

Based on her own experiences and observations, she concluded that integration fostered positive public attitude toward people with disabilities. She said Canadians were exposed to their peers with disabilities at a young age and learned to treat them as equal. On the other hand, Chinese immigrants, either students or teachers, who did not go through the integration system look down upon students with disabilities. Referring to her daughter, she said,

Because she had a brother like him, she was ill-treated by some students. They told her, “Your brother is insane. He should not study here. He should go to a special school.” They said things like this to her, or they stopped playing with her. Kids like these are all from Hong Kong.

Naturally, Grace had a positive view of the integration practice. In an integrated setting, her son had become more normal. She remarked,

The biggest benefit for my son is that he is able to imitate the normal behaviour of other children. Because, when he was in the special school, the other students all had their own problem behaviours. Because the whole school contained children with disabilities, once he quit a problem behaviour, he picked up another. Therefore, it tired me out.

Although she was very happy with integration and its effect on the public attitude toward people with disabilities, she would like to see it being furthered in secondary school. She suggested that educating students about their peers with special needs can be integrated in multicultural education, as the inclusive spirit was the same.

G10-11. Stress and coping, and self-reliance. Grace did not stress the stress and difficulties of parenting her son. She said she was a positive and active person and thus did not dwell on what she had no control over. On the contrary, she often stressed the rewards. She said,

I did not have much patience. Because of him, I have to be very patient. . . . Our family becomes even more cohesive because of this child. . . . You learn to tolerate a lot of things. Then, gradually, you have more opportunities to communicate with each other. . . . Also, I get to know a lot of friends.
When she encountered difficulties in raising her son, she often relied on herself. Her belief in self-reliance was whetted in Hong Kong society in which there was negative public attitude toward people with disabilities and limited societal resources. Grace said her relatives did not accept her son’s disability, and she had no one to turn to for help when he was young. The early intervention program in Hong Kong her son was in required parent participation and its main purpose was “to teach the parents to teach their children.” She concluded, “In Hong Kong, we have never had any support. You have to rely on yourself. . . . As for other social support, it only told you how you could rely on yourself. After all, you had to rely on yourself.”

Since immigration, Grace utilised services sparingly. She said she signed up for the emergency service, which offered a child with a disability a place to stay in case of family emergency, as she was pretty much alone when she first moved to B.C. It was for a peace of mind. She said, “Even though I could get help from there if ever there arises such a need, I don’t wish to receive this service. . . . I hope I can rely on myself.” In her thinking, seeking help came secondary after self-reliance. She put it this way: “If the society can help me somewhat, it would be best. But I feel I still need to rely on myself.” On the contrary, she perceived that B.C. parents often demanded services. Her impression of the parent mentality was gathered from conversations with some local parents and from observation at the parent group meetings she regularly attended. She summarised her perception: “Their way of thinking is that you need to seek help from the society and you need to get others to identify with your needs.” She deemed parents who were demanding as being too dependent on others or the society. Because of the national debt and subsequent budget cuts in B.C., she “advocated” self-reliance.

Even though Grace valued self-reliance, she did not shy away from seeking help. She sought medical help when she suspected there was something wrong with her son. She and her husband provided moral support to each other. She sought help from parent groups to get information about services and from educators on how to teach her son. As well, she often turned to the school staff for such information. In B.C., she utilised a life skills program for her son, but discontinued the service after trying it out for three months. She stated mainly it was rigidity in formal support that turned her away. She said,

I feel the biggest problem is that they decided that this service must be once a week, and each time four hours long. I feel it is too long. I feel two hours is just enough. But it, it could not be done. You can’t have it less and you can’t have it more.

Besides, her need for support was probably lower after her son became a teenager with more independent skills. She could more easily rely on herself to work with her son without outside help.

G12-13. Personal control, and belief in fate. Despite her effort at helping her son to learn appropriate social skills, Grace did not have high expectation that he would make friends with his peers without disabilities. She attributed her relaxed attitude to yuan, fatalistic interpersonal affinity. She said, “In any way it is yuan. . . . I don’t insist he have friends.” She held the same attitude regarding her own efforts at making contact with Canadian society and people. She said, if she could make friends with “Canadians,” she would be happy; and if it required a lot of work on her part, she would not care for such friendship. To her, fate meant she did whatever she could and then accepted whatever came of it. Contrary to conventional idea of fate, her idea of fate was not something to be passively accepted. In fact, when asked what determined her life, she replied it was herself.

Helen

Helen, a Buddhist, came from Taiwan. She graduated from high school and her husband from college. They have two daughters and one son. The twelve-year-old boy was diagnosed with a profound hearing loss when he was a toddler. At the time of the interview, he attended an aural-oral program for students with hearing impairments in a secondary school. Helen received information about the study from her son’s teacher. She returned a slip indicating her willingness to participate in the research. I phoned her to thank her for her interest. She told me about her children and how much she missed the food in Taiwan. On the day of the interview, she welcomed me to her house and I stayed for five hours until her children came home from school. She showed me her son’s
room and his workbooks. I had lunch at her house. Other than her English classes in the morning, she felt quite lonely when her children were away at school. She had a much more active social life in Taiwan. She sort of reluctantly immigrated to Canada. Her husband wished for a change of living environment and applied for job transfer. She consented to immigration because she believed that her son would get a better education in Canada.

Helen had a pleasant personality and a lot of humour. She impressed me with the way she taught her son since she found out he was hearing impaired. She had been working with him all year round and she took to teaching as a profession. She constantly tried to learn from others in order to teach her son. She believed in herself and mainly relied on herself to teach him. Despite his profound hearing loss, he had learned to speak under his mother’s instruction. Besides his academic development, she also paid attention to his other developments. Moving to Canada, Helen was not able to be as involved as she had been in Taiwan, due to her limited English proficiency. Nevertheless, she learned English in order to teach her son whatever English she had learned from her class. She was open to change in the new cultural environment, but her ideas of teaching and learning were pretty much based on the same expectations she formed in Taiwan (although she respected educational knowledge and methods from the West). She often applied her internal resources to cope with the stress related to parenting a child with a disability. The only help she sought was from other parents in a similar situation as hers on how to parent and teach their children.

H1. Acculturation. Helen had been in Canada for three years, and, at the time of the interview, said she was feeling like a Chinese Canadian: “I now would feel that I am somewhat like a Canadian and somewhat like a Chinese.” She described her experience of being acculturated in terms of behaviour when she referred to a teacher who hugged her every time they met: “At first, I was not accustomed to it at all. I thought it strange. Later on, later on, I grew accustomed to it. I would quickly run to her and hug her first when we met. . . . I grew more open and hugged her myself.” She enjoyed seeing things in a different perspective. She said she had undergone a personal transformation during the transition in B.C. and stated, “There is more or less change in my way of thinking. My thoughts regarding certain issues are broader, in wider range. . . . the culture is different. . . . In Taiwan, I indeed held more traditionally Chinese thinking. . . . After coming here, I would think that I should not control them [her children] too tight.” She was adaptable to her new environment, and, in a relatively short time, she had adopted some Canadian customs.

She also became more aware of her “Chineseness” and stated, “Coming here, I feel I like the Chinese traditions more than ever. I love those customs very much, for example, Chinese New Year and other major holidays.” She sometimes went back there for visits. She pondered the split loyalty she felt toward both countries:

If I am to live here forever, I don’t know if I would get used to it or not. I still think that I want to go back to Taiwan in the future. . . . Sometimes I would think, if I ever go back to Taiwan, I might miss here also. . . . I also have affection for here, as I have been living here for some time. But I had lived in Taiwan for thirty, forty years, also-- If I am to give it up, indeed it would not be easy.

As for her children, she felt they should not forget where they came from and should know about Chinese traditions. She hoped her son would be integrated into Canadian society.

H2. Language barrier. Helen said that both her son and herself had difficulty speaking English. She said, “I felt it was not so easy to learn English. We learned with great difficulty.” Chinese was the language she spoke at home. Notices from school were written in English, and she needed to consult the dictionary. She illustrated her difficulty reading English: “If I am to read an English newspaper, I would have to look up words in the dictionary constantly. That would mean a lot of trouble.” Although she made efforts to talk to her son in English, she explained her difficulty expressing herself in English:

I worry that I might get it wrong. I need to consider whether I should use the present tense or the past tense. . . . [and whether I should use] the progressive tense. I find
Helen communicated well with her son’s teachers, given time to compose her thoughts in English. She said, “I spoke slowly, and the teachers would understand me. . . . I just slowly, slowly piecing words together.” When asked if she needed an interpreter at formal meetings discussing her son’s learning, she replied,

Oh, if my husband is with me, I am, hm, OK. . . . Actually, I don’t really need one, because I could understand what is said to me. . . . If I am to go there all by myself, I would prefer to have an interpreter.

She said she mostly understood what the teachers said and relied on her husband to talk to the teachers.

**H3. Devotion to child.** Helen was devoted to her son and had enrolled him in private speech lessons for preschoolers with hearing impairments. She also had been working with him at home ever since he was three years old. She had a high regard for Western education and thought her son would benefit more in Canada. She explained her decision to immigrate to Canada for his sake: “I did not want to come here. I was having a good time being a volunteer at his school. Mostly out of consideration for him, I rushed here.” She had focused almost all her attention on her son. She provided an illustration:

Anyway I have nothing else to do. I focus on him and I am with him whenever I could. For example, when my son went camping and was away for three days, hm, three nights, I did not know what to do. . . . It turns out that I don’t know how to pass my time if I don’t teach my son and supervise his learning every day.

**H4. Value of education.** Helen valued education and enjoyed learning. She learned from the professionals at an early intervention program while the family was in Hong Kong. After returning to Taiwan, she was able to teach her son, but felt she should learn more from professionals. She enrolled her son in a program and sat in the class to observe. While in Taiwan, she thought of sending her son to a segregated class for students with hearing impairments, but the class was located far away. She thought the three hours spent on the bus invaluable, as she could better utilise that time by teaching him at home, and sent her son to the neighbourhood school instead. When they moved here, she was advised to enrol her son in a sign language program because his hearing impairment was deemed too profound for him to learn to talk. She asked the teacher to give her son a chance. She told the teacher, “We have been teaching him Chinese and his Chinese is already very good. I think he could try the oral program. . . . Let him try for a year. If he is indeed cannot do it, then he would have to learn sign language.” During that year, she worked with her son continuously. In the end, her son was learning so well that the teacher urged Helen to let the child skip one grade.

**H5. Working at home with child.** Devotion, belief in self-reliance and personal responsibility, and the value of education prompted Helen to work with her son at home. She believed that all children could learn, with the right teaching methods. She worked with her son tirelessly and was constantly thinking of ways to teach him, just before he entered grade school. She said she had to rely on sleeping pills to sleep in those days. She described how she worked with her son in those early years:

I often carried with me a lot of flash cards. . . . I cut out material from the newspaper and the magazines. If there was a picture, I would cut it out and then paste it in a binder. I made a story book with the pictures. Then, when I took him out, I would carry those pictures with me. I would show him the pictures. For example, the teeter-totter. We would go to the park, and I would show him the picture of a teeter-totter and told him, “This is a teeter-totter.” Since there were also words printed beside the pictures, I also asked him to read the words.

After her son started school, there was more work waiting for her. She feared that he would not
succeed in a class for the hearing children and she constantly tutored him. She said,

That’s why I had taught him all the material for grade one before he entered the grade school. And then we worked on the material for grade two during the winter and summer vacations. That’s why we did not have any break during the vacations.

When the family arrived in Canada, her son knew no English. Helen worried that he would not understand what was said to him at school, and would lose his confidence in learning. She explained what she did: “I was picking out words for him at home. And then, I would calculate what kind of questions the teacher might ask him tomorrow.” Learning English was not easy, but Helen knew its importance. She explained the effect of a hearing loss on learning a language: “His opportunities are much less than others. Normal kids just keep on absorbing. But he could not.” Compared to learning Chinese, the progress he made in learning English was slower, because English was not the language used at home. She had been working with him on his English ever since. She said she taught her son English, even though she did not speak fluent English. She thought of hiring a tutor, but could not afford to pay the fee. In addition, her knowledge of her son derived from years of experience of working on his speech gave her an advantage at teaching him. She gave an example:

The first day I took him to school, the teacher said “tomorrow” to him. The teacher slowly pronounced “tomorrow” to teach him to say it and he could not do it. But when I came home and taught him myself, he pronounced the word. The next day, he said the word to the teacher, who quickly understood him.

She said her desire to teach her son motivated her to learn English. She said,

I started learning English when I came here. I would borrow books from my teacher and then look up the words in the dictionary. Then, I examined the sentence structure. Then, if there was still something I did not understand, I would ask my daughters. . . . I study hard. I want to understand everything my teacher has taught me, so that I could teach my son. . . . When I have any questions, I would ask for clarification and then I would dare to teach my son.

Her efforts were appreciated by her son’s teachers in B.C., who told her that, if she had not been helping him to such extent, “they would not know how to teach him.” However, she felt her limited English was holding her son back and recently asked her daughter to help.

H6. Self-reliance. A sense of parental obligation motivated Helen to work with her son. She said, “Your son is yours. If you don’t teach him, who will?” and added, “Besides, I stay at home and have nothing else to do. So, I teach him myself.” She also believed in self-reliance, which developed while she was in Taiwan and Hong Kong, where there were limited resources for people with disabilities. She said that the main purpose of the Hong Kong early intervention program “is to teach the mothers” to teach their children. In Taiwan, there was negative teacher attitude toward students with disabilities and no support provided to regular teachers who taught these students. Helen had to beg the grade one teacher in the school to accept her son. She said to the teacher, “You need not teach my son. I only ask that he could attend the classes with his peers. As for studying, I would teach him at home.” Negative teacher attitude also prompted her self-reliance.

In B.C., Helen was concerned with her son’s future and the job market. She thought it would be hard for him to get a job in B.C. due to his limited English, his disability, and being an ethnic minority in B.C. Her husband got a job in B.C. only after his company failed to recruit Canadians with the required qualifications. Helen was led to believe that companies in B.C. wanted to first hire people of European backgrounds. She applied self-reliance to relieve her stress. She said, “I am worried about his job market. It would be hard to find a job. Therefore, I might just start a company for him.” Helen was also concerned with her son’s social development and wanted her son to develop into a well-balanced, well-grounded person. Again, she relied on herself in this area. While the family was in Taiwan, she went to her son’s schools and helped facilitate interactions
between him and his classmates for the first few months of the school years.

H7. Knowledge of child. Because Helen worked with her son all the time, she knew him well. Knowing what her son was learning at school was important to her. After immigrating to B.C., due to her limited English, she often felt she knew less of what he learned and asked him what happened at school. The reason she appreciated parent-teacher meetings was that they kept her informed. She said, “I feel, having meetings once a month to communicate with the teachers is needed, so that we could understand what our children are doing in school.”

H8. Participation in school. Helen’s involvement in her son’s school was not as intense as her involvement at home. She went to school meetings and made suggestions to the school concerning her son’s education, but she did not volunteer in Canada because of her limited English. Back in Taiwan, her involvement was limited, because teachers in Taiwan did not encourage parent involvement. She said, “in Taiwan, as long as the teachers did not get uptight, I would be happy.” One reason why her school participation was not as active as her involvement at home was her belief that it was difficult to change existing structures. She commented on the hurried manner in which the parent-teacher meetings were conducted, as parents had to look for classrooms in the few minutes allowed. She said,

Actually we only got to talk to the teacher one or two sentences and had to get ready to run again. . . . My husband made a suggestion to the teacher to see if the meeting could be held in one place next time. I told my husband that it seemed impossible, because I felt this was the way it was done.

H9. Conflicts and conflict resolution. The ways Helen dealt with conflicts with educators were consistent with the ways she handled those with her mother-in-law, an authority figure in traditional Chinese societies. Her mother-in-law was over-protective of her grandson and interfered with her efforts to encourage her son’s independence. Helen said, “Whenever she came to visit, I got a lot of trouble to think about.” She appreciated her sister-in-law, who understood her concern and intervened on her behalf without being asked. When her mother-in-law wanted to live with her, Helen did not know how to refuse the request. Her brother-in-law intervened on her behalf, without being asked. Yet, when her mother-in-law probed what she preferred, Helen replied, “If you stay here, you would have the children to keep you company.” She did not dare to speak up. She explained, “I was in a difficult position to express this opinion or that. So, I said, ‘It’s up to you,’ But her mother-in-law understood and said, ‘OK. It’s better that I live somewhere else. It would bring much peace.’” Both parties applied indirect communication and they understood each other without further ado.

Helen considered teachers to have authority. She did not go on field trips with her son while in Taiwan, despite her wish to be involved, because the teacher did not encourage it. Helen commented,

It seems that teacher wanted to keep parents at bay. She may feel pressure exerted by the parents, or something else. . . . I saw that the teacher was resistant to accepting my son in the first place, and I dare not ask again. Seeing that she was hesitant when I made my request, I quickly added, “It’s OK. It’s OK. I don’t have to go.”

Helen’s approach to handling this conflict was being submissive. She did not want to offend the teacher. She felt that she had to tiptoe around her son’s teacher. One reason she was willing to immigrate to Canada was because she did not want to continue begging the reluctant teachers in Taiwan to accept her son. She said it was OK, albeit strenuous, to beg one classroom teacher at the primary grades, but she certainly did not want to beg seven or eight teachers of different subjects in high school.

After immigration, Helen underwent personal transformation and took on a more active role in terms of what her son needed. She made some suggestions to the school about correcting her son’s English pronunciation. She said,
Because he is learning English, I hope that the teachers would talk more to him and correct his pronunciation. . . . They all said, “OK, OK.” They agreed orally. . . . But it seems the teachers here do not want to go out of their way to correct you all the time. They seem to think that, if a child is corrected too much, he would not have self-confidence.

She talked to the teacher again on another occasion, as she believed that it was important to correct a hearing impaired child’s pronunciation in a second language, but gave it up when the teacher repeatedly ignored her request. Helen disagreed again with her son’s teacher when the teacher would not give her son more homework beyond whatever little amount was given. She said,

I suggested to the teacher to give him some homework. . . . The teacher also said she did not want to give them too much pressure. Then, he still got the same amount of homework, not much. . . . We do not dare to ask the teacher to be strict with him or teach more in class. The teachers here are not strict at all.

She equated strictness to giving more homework and teaching more content. Again, she gave up communicating with the teacher. The two conflicts she had with B.C. educators, mentioned above, all have to do with the different educational philosophies and practices in the two parts of the world.

Her ways of conflict resolution have to do with her deference to authority figures and respect for expert opinions. She said she met once with her son’s principal, who offered to photocopy for her; she quickly said to the principal, “I don’t dare to trouble you with this.” Helen considered educators to “know better than us [parents], because they were professionals.” At parent-teacher meetings in B.C., the school asked parents of their opinions as to what they thought of the proposed curriculum; she said,

No one spoke up. We are not professionals; what kind of opinions would we have? As for the teachers, anyway . . . they had already printed out what they would teach in this semester. After reading the schedule, what opinions would we give?

At the same time, she hinted that non-consultation of parents alienated parents.

H10. Comparison of education. Helen said teachers in Taiwan often pressured students to achieve well academically. In Taiwan, teachers were honoured or promoted according to their students’ achievement scores. She linked this system to teachers’ reluctance toward integrating students with hearing impairments in the regular classroom. A school system that focused too much on academics would not accommodate the needs of students with special needs. For example, her son had to take music, when he could not hear. Helen found more flexibility in the education system in B.C. She said her son did not have to take music and French; instead he had more blocks of English. Helen was also pleased with teaching materials and methods, compared to those used in Taiwan. She said, “in Taiwan, it seems what is right and what is wrong is absolute. Here, it allows you flexibility. Hmm, it leaves room for discussion, which is better.”

However, Helen thought that expectations for students were lower here and felt the material covered in a course her son took was too simple. She concluded that teachers “don’t push the students too much and they don’t want you to do that.” She felt her son’s teachers expected too little, hampering his learning. The expectations for the students were in contrast to the high pressure students in Taiwan faced. She said there was a lot of homework in high school there and “students in grade seven have to study until midnight or one o’clock in the early morning.” The incongruence of academic expectations between home and school prompted her to work with her son after school. She commented,

I needed to teach him a bit at home. Otherwise, it was a waste of time. My son said to me, “Oh, I have to study when I come home from school. I don’t need to do that at school.”

Another sharp contrast is the way parent-teacher meetings were conducted. Helen did not
mind the formality of the meetings, but she expressed her feeling of being intimidated at a formal meeting with nine professionals present. She described her experience at the meeting as thus:

> It seemed they were having a trial. . . . I almost fainted when I saw that there were that many people there. The nine people were all asking questions about our view of our son and how we taught him at home. They questioned us for an hour.

**H11. Preferred professional qualities.** Helen deemed a good teacher one who had high expectations for his or her students. Another quality Helen valued was acceptance and respect for the students. She gave me counter-examples in Taiwan. She learned from some parents in Taiwan that “the special educator in the resource room sometimes would not show respect for these students.” Even teachers who had experience working with them would sort of patronise these students.” In terms of teacher qualities for working with parents, Helen appreciated friendliness she experienced in the teachers in B.C.

**H12-14. Stress and coping, belief in fate, and lack of knowledge of resources.** Helen accepted the reality of her son’s disability, but sometimes she was discouraged when she tried her best and he was not learning, or felt helpless when the grade one teacher refused to accept her son. She said her Buddhist faith helped. She believed in karma and she had come to terms with her fate. She concluded, “I would look at it this way, that I owed him in my former life.” Sometimes she comforted herself by a belief in favourable or auspicious fate. She said,

> Sometimes when I comfort myself, I would say that fate arranges good teachers for my son and, hm, lets me think of ways to teach him. At that time, I would think it is fate and the god in heaven is indeed good to me.

A belief in herself and her capabilities also motivated her to counteract the difficulties she encountered. Her favourite motto was “There are no difficult things in the world, as long as one sets his heart on whatever he wants to achieve.” This belief in oneself and the efforts one makes is evident when she insisted that her son be given the opportunities to be enrolled in the oral program soon after their immigration to B.C. She said, “I thought, if he could learn sign language, he could also learn to talk.” She said her son had learned to speak in Chinese and she believed that he could also learn to speak English.

Often she focused on the positive side of things. For example, she listed a lot of personal growth she felt she gained from raising him, and she felt she was lucky that there were some people supportive of her. Occasionally she applied a comparative mind frame, by comparing herself favourably against other parents of children with disabilities. She appeared well-adjusted. However, during the interview, she was on the edge of crying several times, especially when she spoke of a hard time in the past, or the help she got from understanding people, but she quickly suppressed her emotions and went on to talk about something else. She did not quite get over the stress and difficulties from raising her son. She may have suppressed her feelings in times of adversity, but they surfaced when she was off guard talking about the past.

Another approach Helen applied to deal with stress is taking a tentative, and uncertain, attitude toward many things in her life. For example, she pondered whether it was wise for the family to immigrate to Canada. She said, “I hope coming here is a good choice for him. I don’t know. I really have to count one step after I make it.” In the same manner, when I praised her for the time and efforts she spent on teaching her son, she simply replied, “we’ll have to see what would become of him.” This tentative outlook on life has a hint of drive for excellence in her case.

Even though she mainly relied on herself to parent her son, she sought help from medical and educational professionals in the early years. She was more ready to seek help from informal sources, especially other parents of children with hearing impairments. She said, “I keep my ears open for whoever has a child with hearing impairment. . . . I would ask her questions and exchange opinions on how we teach our children.” She was once involved in a parent group in Taiwan; she did not join one in B.C. because she deemed her English was not good enough to communicate with other parents. Besides, lack of knowledge of resources and services in B.C. prevented her from seeking out, causing a vicious cycle. She said, “I don’t know what social services are offered here.
I don’t know where to ask about the social services here.”

Joan

Joan, a Buddhist, emigrated from Taiwan. Both she and her husband are college graduates. They have a daughter and a son. Her son, now nine, had been diagnosed with a mild hearing loss when he was seven years old after the family’s move to Canada. At the time of the interview, he attended a regular class in an elementary school, where he received support from the district resource teacher for the hearing impaired as well as from an English as a second language instructor. Joan learned about the research study from the district resource teacher. She chose to meet me at a public eatery in a shopping mall as the site for the interview, which was conducted in Chinese. The interview took three hours. On that day, she was upset over a personal problem and she talked about it for about ten minutes before she asked me what I would like to know. She appeared to me a person who disclosed herself easily. She spoke in a loud voice and spoke with me as if she was chatting to me as a friend. She was aware of her words being recorded though. While she was filling out the background questionnaire, she reminded me that recording was not necessary.

Joan valued the Canadian ways of living as well as education, and she felt negative towards the Chinese group as a whole. However, she gave me a rough sketch of what the education here was like and admitted that, due to her limited English, she did not know much about what her son was doing at school. She also said that she did not feel that she fit in with Canadians. Joan invested in her two children’s education by either direct teaching or enrolling them in private lessons. She said that she had difficulty parenting her son and indicated that she would like to meet a professional who could tell her what to do in this matter. Since her son’s hearing impairment was diagnosed in Canada, she had never met a professional who could speak Mandarin. When I mentioned that she may get the information she needed from support groups, she replied that she had not searched for them because of her limited English. She had not sought any information from his teachers either (her husband who spoke English often accompanied her to school meetings). One day, after the interview, I received a call from her; she asked me to go with her to a meeting that perhaps could provide her with the information she needed. I did not have time to go because it was on very short notice.

11. Acculturation. Joan had been in Canada for two years. She watched Chinese programs on TV and read Chinese newspaper. She took a course in English, but stated it was difficult to converse in English. She said, “Because you don’t speak with others, it is very easy to forget.” Joan stated that she enjoyed living in Canada, where she felt her children would benefit and avoid the political unrest and social disorder in Taiwan. She had much praise for B.C. She said, “There is a lot of freedom here. I feel this is good. . . . The whole living standards are very good.” On the other hand, she still regarded Canada as if it was a foreign country. For example, she said, “I like their [B.C., italics added] climate and air quality very much. These two are beyond criticism. Also, people here were very friendly.” In fact, she thought of herself as Chinese. She said, “I have never thought of myself as Canadian, never. Why? Because I was born and raised in Taiwan.” She believed that where one was brought up played an important part in one’s cultural identity. She would like her children to think of themselves as Chinese-Canadian because, “They are, after all, educated here.” Most of her friends were from Taiwan, and, due to her limited English, she was not connected to the mainstream through either her son’s school or parent support groups.

Joan experienced personal change after immigration and adapted to her new environment. She talked about the change in her own child rearing:

Children who grow up here would slowly adapt to the Western culture, or be brainwashed by it. They would make their own decisions, being independent-minded. As parents, you have to change accordingly. Unlike in Taiwan, that is, one consults with one’s mother on everything, “Mama, do you feel this is OK?” They let their mothers decide for them. When my own children grow up, they might not let me decide for them. They might want to do it themselves. Then, you would have to face the reality. As simple as that. You cannot say, “That is not right. I left everything up to my parents. You would have to do the same.” I think this is not fair to them, because the environment and background where they grow up is different.
Living in a new culture gave her the impetus to break away from the past tradition in which she had lived. She raised another example to illustrate her adaptability. She said, “Take learning English as an example. Here English is spoken, then you have to take some lessons. You have to face the issues. So, I feel... people’s nature is very flexible. . . . Once the environment changes, you have to change yourself.” She reiterated her belief that one’s environment and history made an indelible imprint on one’s psychological makeup. In the midst of adapting to a new environment, she experienced some anxiety. At the time of the interview, her focus on her children kept her away from the worry, but she made projection into the future when her children would leave the house. She said,

Someday the children will grow up and leave you. By that time, I would be all alone. It would seem I could not go back to Taiwan and not feel at home here. What should I do then? I would have such a sad feeling. That feeling would just arise.

She was contemplating learning a trade so that she would have a life of her own in the future.

J2. Knowledge of child. Joan worried about her son a lot. She described her son: “I find his observation is very poor. Even at home, where he lives, he does not know where things are. He would be totally at a loss. That is what he is.” She worried about his language development, she said, “He could not use other words except some simple ones. He could not break through.” Joan worked with her son on his speech, but she noted that “he still likes to use young children’s expressions. But when I teach him, I don’t use those expressions. . . . If you say more than fifteen words in one sentence, he could not repeat it back to you at one time.” Joan expressed that it was difficult to teach him. She felt that, because her son was not diagnosed until he was seven years old, he had lost important years of learning.

J3. Devotion to child. A major reason for immigration to Canada was for the sake of her children. She said, “Overall, we wanted to change the whole living environment for them.” Referring to her desire to learn a trade, she said she put her children first:

If I ever do learn it, I would probably do it during the children’s school time, so as not to affect my being with them, which is my priority, my premise. That is to say, when they are in school, OK, I also go to learn something I want to learn. Then, when they come back home, at least I am home for them. I think this is more satisfying.

Joan devoted more time to her son than to her daughter. However, her focus on him and a perception that he was difficult to teach resulted in disappointment. She said, “sometimes, I feel that I have devoted so much and yet it seems I have not received any harvest. I find it is very discouraging.” Some time before the interview, she had lowered her expectations for him.

J4. Value of education. Joan expressed a deep trust in professionals and scholarship. She wanted to learn from special educators how to best help her son. She also believed that psychological assessments would provide her with important information. Joan wanted her children to have a good education. She valued Western education above education in Taiwan, and brought her children to Canada partly for this reason. She talked about children as young plants or seeds that needed to be cultivated. She said, “What I can do to cultivate my children, I will do.” Joan regretted that she could not afford to hire a private tutor to help her children with English to boost their overall learning. She sent her daughter for math and writing lessons. She arranged for instruction in piano and Chinese for her son and worked with him herself on his academics.

J5-6. Working at home with child, and home-school collaboration. Joan worked with her children at home and followed an educational program from Japan, called “Education Since Birth.” She began when her children were infants. After coming to B.C., Joan mostly supervised her son’s homework, instead of teaching him directly, and prepared him for his spelling tests. Her own command of English limited what she could do and sometimes she had to ask her daughter to help teach her son.

Joan believed in home-school collaboration and stated, “Basically, I think family education
needs to cooperate with school education.” However, she assumed a major portion of responsibility for her son’s education. Because she believed that parents had the obligations to teach at home, she thought a teacher held the same view. She blamed herself for not being able to speak English well. She commented, “Sometimes I would feel pretty embarrassed. Why would I be embarrassed? I would think the teacher would think, ‘No wonder. This mother could not speak English. How can she teach her child at home?’ This is what embarrass me.” Her sense of shame intensified when a teacher suggested that she speak English with her son at home.

J7-8. Participation in school, and language barrier. Joan said she was involved in her son’s school in Taiwan where there was no communication barrier. She said she often asked his teachers there how he was and, as a result, she said, “I knew everything.” In Canada, she felt that she knew little about what he did in school. She regretted that “I can only know indirectly from his classmates visiting-- For example, the friends of his sister. would complain to me about what he did at school. Other than that, I have no way of finding out.” Because of the language barrier, Joan’s involvement in her son’s school in B.C. was minimal. She said, “I do not go to school to see how he is doing at school. . . . To be honest with you, it is difficult for me. Why? Because my English is not good enough to communicate well with the teachers.”

Joan appreciated the provision of interpreters, even though this service was offered by the school “only at parent-teacher meetings.” She did not hold the school responsible for providing interpreter service to help her maintain continuous communication with the teachers, but instead held herself responsible for not being able to speak English. Because she could not communicate well with his teachers in B.C. when no one interpreted for her, she lamented, “I find out it is a shame that I could not, could not help [her son] . . . . This is what I feel a handicap, of my own.” Joan made suggestions to facilitate the involvement of parents who had limited English. One suggestion was to translate information that was sent home from the school. She believed this would help Chinese parents to feel “more motivated to participate in school activities” and “less withdrawn.”

Joan often expressed at the same time a perception that things were difficult and the difficulty she had with the English language throughout the interview. One inference is that the language barrier had induced in her a perception of difficulty. She said,

Sometimes, to be honest with you, I want to chat with the teachers, to see how [her son] was doing. But I find out it is such a shame, such a difficulty. Because I could not speak English. Because your English is not good, then, perhaps if you talk in some simple English, he perhaps understands what you are trying to say. But perhaps when he replies, you could not understand. Then, you are withdrawn. You can not overcome this handicap.

On another occasion, Joan commented, “I am wondering if I could write to communicate with the teachers. . . . But it seems impossible to do it this way. You have to use English.” This perception of difficulty has led to a sense of frustration over her ability to help her son with his English, she said, “The problem is his dad is so busy. He has the ability to teach him, not I. So, I think it is pretty, pretty-- I don’t know what to do.”

J9. Comparison of education. Joan had a very positive view of the education in B.C. because of the high value she placed on Western education. Comparing education in Taiwan with Canada, Joan said, “I feel the Taiwan model is moderate and like a straight jacket, whereas the model here, the education here is very lively; it pays equal attention to all areas of development like moral, intellectual, physical, and social development.” She disliked Taiwan’s punitive approach of spanking and scolding the students. She said, “In Taiwan, he had one semester of Chinese. That teacher would twist his ear, because he would not listen.” She added,

When he was in Taiwan, he was regarded by the teachers as “a nail in the eye,” as a disobedient child; because education in Taiwan just wants to mould obedient children. Hm, if you do your homework, if you rank number one in the academics, if you have perfect scores, then you are regarded a good student.
There was only one common practice in B.C. that she slightly disagreed with. She said, “I feel the biggest difference, according to my observation, is probably that the teachers here like to... praise the children.” She had more to say about her criticism of the Taiwan system than the advantages of the B.C. system. Joan acknowledged that she did not know as much as she would have liked about education in B.C. She said, “my son is still young, just grade five, grade four. What will happen, to be honest with you, I don’t know. Besides, I feel, as I have just said, my English is not very good.”

**J10. Preferred professional qualities.** Professional qualities admired by Joan include patience, tolerance, and willingness to assist students in correcting problem behaviour. As for working with parents, she may prefer an informal style and commented; she said, “I want to chat with the teachers” to see how her son was doing at school. Her preference for an informal relationship with the teachers co-existed with deference to teacher authority and respect for expert opinions.

**J11. Stress and coping.** Joan suspected her son was born with a hearing impairment. A kindergarten teacher in Taiwan suspected her son was hearing impaired when he did not stand up when the teacher entered the classroom until he saw other children standing up. Because of the resistance from her husband who could not face the possibility of having a child with a hearing impairment, she did not have her son tested for his hearing. She herself was much more practically minded and level-headed. She reasoned,

> If, OK, he is not hearing impaired, then his mind is out somewhere. . . . Because it is true that he is often absent-minded. At least, you, you seek out answers to problems. If not this, then probably that, to, to sieve out the irrelevant and find the relevant.

She did not experience stress concerning her son’s impairment, because of her positive thinking. She said,

> Hm, sometimes, I would feel that I am pretty fortunate, because my two kids are very healthy, except [her son] has some mild hearing impairment. I feel the god in heaven is fair to me. . . . At least, I feel, compared to other kids, some kids, once they are born, they are sent to the ICU [intensive care unit], due to some special illness or whatever it is. I feel my children do not have all these. . . . I need to thank the god in heaven.

Besides a belief in luck or auspicious fate, she also adopted a comparative mind frame to help her cope with the challenges of raising a child with a disability.

Joan acknowledged that she mainly relied on herself to devise means to deal with the challenges of raising her son. She said, “Mostly I would use whatever way I know to solve the problems. I would do my best to face them.” Joan also sought help from others. She sometimes talked with her friends and sought help from her daughter with homework and care giving. She said that, when she was in Taiwan, she would talk to her son’s teachers on parenting issues. She had always wanted to meet a psychologist in the field of special education to get specific advice.

**J12. Lack of knowledge of resources.** Joan expressed a need to talk to professionals for help on parenting, but she said she did not know how to locate them. At the same time, Joan also did not know other Chinese parents of children with hearing impairments and did not participate in a parent support group in B.C. She said, “I am interested in them and I want to join them, but I do not know where to go, because I have no such information.” Not knowing how to locate resources and not being affiliated with support groups seem to have caused a vicious cycle when she commented, “How can we as parents get connected to things we don’t know? No way.” Her son’s district resource teacher regularly arranged meetings on parenting, but she had never participated. An interpreter was not provided.

**J13-14. Personal control, and belief in fate.** Joan believed that thirty per cent of her life was determined by fate while seventy per cent was determined by what she did. There is an indication that the belief in fate is related to her belief of personal control. Joan mentioned a Buddhist teaching, “your fate is... caused by what is turning in your mind.” In other word, fate is not haphazard or unpredictable; rather, it is governed by one’s past behaviour, or karma. She also
believed in luck or positive force of fate. As mentioned earlier, Joan believed that the god in heaven (Chinese concept of the supreme being) endowed her favourably.

Lan

Lan emigrated from China and had ties to Hong Kong (her mother lived there). She finished high school and her husband finished grade nine. They have two sons. The elder son, who was eight years old, was developmentally delayed. At the time of the interview, he attended an integrated class in his neighbourhood school. Initially, Lan was reluctant to participate in the study, but agreed after I interpreted for the family at a medical visit at her husband’s request. During that visit, the doctor lost his patience, saying to me that he did not understand why the parents kept coming to him when they did not opt to follow his recommendation for the child. My understanding is that the parents went to him because the physiotherapist (who was involved in the child’s education and who was present shortly before the medical appointment) asked them to go. Lan disclosed to me shortly after the visit that she did not follow the doctor’s recommendation because the surgery would be painful while she did not know how much it would help her son. The interview was conducted in Mandarin at a public eatery in a shopping mall and lasted three hours. Lan brought her children to the interview. She mentioned that she had not intended to bring her elder son along, but he insisted on coming.

Lan worked with her elder son at home every day on his academic learning. She was minimally involved in his school, due to her limited English proficiency. Differences over academic expectations for the child, which she felt strongly about, further increased the distance between her and the teachers. Another strong feeling she expressed during the interview was toward the diagnosis that her son was developmentally delayed. She did not believe the diagnostic process was valid. Lan did not express a need for any support services for her son or for herself. She was not connected to any support groups. Instead, she relied on herself to care for her children. In fact, her family was her world. She was isolated from the mainstream society and had little contact with the Chinese community.

L1. Acculturation. Lan had been in Canada for nine years, and had not returned to China. Despite the length of time in Canada, she spoke little English. Her observations of Canadians were that “People seem to be very friendly with each other.” She liked the positive public attitude toward people with disabilities in Canada. She said, “People here take better care of those with special needs, without distinguishing them as being inferior.” Lan instilled in her son the importance of learning English. On the other hand, she did not experience any personal change as a result of acculturation. She retained her Chinese self, but would like to see her son assimilated, at least at the language level.

L2. Devotion to child. Lan devoted her time and energy to her children, and led a busy life. She put her family first and did not have close friends. She stated,

All day long I am so busy with these two kids. I learn that there are many people who say they feel cooped up here and do not know where to go. I say I don’t even have time to feel cooped up. Indeed. Every day I take them to school. After that, I prepare lunch for them. At lunch hour, I take them back home to eat. After lunch, I take them to school again . . . At three o’clock, I need to pick them up from school. After that, I wash them up and supervise their homework. After they finish their homework, I need to make supper. After supper, I need to put them to bed. After they are asleep, I need to do their stuff, like washing their clothing, putting away their toys, and seeing their, huh, get their school bags ready for tomorrow. Then, I can rest. While I rest, I would like to read a newspaper, but I couldn’t help closing my eyes.

L3. Value of education. Lan observed that the Chinese immigrant parents that she knew often encouraged their children to study hard, in order to increase the chance of the children’s success in the future. She referred to her relatives in B.C.:

Their parents were from China, with little education. The children all study hard. Maybe it is because their parents say to them, “You need to study; if you don’t
study, then it's not good for your future. Look at Mommy and Daddy, how hard our lives are. It is likely so, with this kind of thinking. Therefore, the children study especially hard.

Lan encouraged her elder son to study hard. She told him, "Mama doesn't know English. You try to learn it well and come back home to teach me." Careful not to interrupt her children's education, she did not even visit her mother in Hong Kong, who requested that she visit.

L4-6. Working at home with the child, language barrier for child, and home-school collaboration. Lan believed that both the parent and the teacher had responsibilities for making a child's education effective. She said, "mainly the school and the parents need to cooperate with each other. You cannot blame the kid's poor performance all on the school. You cannot blame that the teacher is not good." This belief and the value placed on education motivated her to teach her son.

Lan worked regularly with her son and spent a great deal of time with him. She said, "In the beginning, I found out that his calculus was not good. Then, I taught him calculus... After his calculus turned out fine, I found out, 'Oh, no. I see another problem, that is, his English is not good.' He was lagging behind in his English partly because he spoke Chinese at home. She then also took on the job of teaching him English, even though her English was limited. She watched TV news broadcasts in English to improve her own English. She said, "Mainly I do so because he needs to learn English." Her son liked watching Chinese programs, but she set limits for him, telling him, "Now you need to learn English well, because you need to use English in school." Her son learned the importance of English. She took pride in the fact that, when she went to his school and spoke to him in Chinese, he said to her, "You need to speak English. This is school."

Lan described the work she did with her son:

I ask him to spell out words... Because, if he doesn't know the vocabulary, then he could not write short sentences... In the morning when he goes to school, he would say, "Good morning, teacher." He knew how to say those words, but he didn't know how to write the words... I taught him how to spell them. I said, "How do you spell the word, good?" He said, "G-O-O-D." He could recognise them now. He could write them too... Now, his teacher does not expect him much, teaching him very, very simple stuff.

She added, "I ask him to read to me every day. I say to him, 'You bring your books home every day, and read to me.' I ask him to read out loud. His teacher does not ask him to do so much." Lan was not happy with the teacher's expectation and worked with him often to improve his learning. Her English was limited and she often had to seek out different resources in order to teach him. She said,

I myself don't know English, and how to put the words together. I don't know how to write a sentence... But what I mean is I want to teach him vocabulary. I want to teach him every word. He learns and I learn... I also consult with a dictionary on how to spell... Sometimes, I would ask my husband words that I don't know... I can spell, so I teach him how to spell. He can pronounce English words, so he teach me how to say the words... This is the way I teach him. Now, he know many words. He can write them down all by himself. I know his school hasn't started teaching him this.

She worked to overcome the barriers and taught him what she could handle. Lan said she did not try to cover too much when she worked with her son and she made good use of his strengths when she worked with him. She said, "I feel he has very good memory... I won't give him much, just one to two words a day... My husband said, 'One a day, 360 a year!'", She and her husband both believed that learning accumulated out of small steps.

L7. Knowledge of child. Lan's knowledge of her son was positive. She said her work paid off as "he has learned it all." This was confirmed by his teacher. Lan said, "The teacher often tells
me that my son has no difficulty in learning the academics, that he has learned a lot.” At school report card meetings, the teacher often said to her, “See, he has made more progress.”

8. Participation in school. Lan’s involvement in her son’s school was limited by her proficiency in English, but she went to school activities and attended the parent-teacher meetings when an interpreter service was provided. Her experience with the school appeared to be positive. Her son’s teachers were receptive to her suggestions, but she was reluctant to make too many suggestions. She did not believe she was in the position to interfere with school teaching. She merely mentioned once what concerned her most. She wanted the teachers to teach her son more, but felt that her suggestion was brushed aside. Mostly it was the school who made decisions regarding his education program. The school did consult with her, but she was almost always agreeable to the proposals. She said,

    He [the classroom teacher] would talk about how he sees my son doing in school, how the school is going to work with him, in what areas he has made progress, and which areas he needs to keep up. Mostly I would do what they want me to do. I feel my son is indeed as the teacher describes to me. Therefore, mostly I don’t disagree.

Essentially, she did not participate in decision making concerning her son’s education program.

9. Conflicts and conflict resolution. When her son was placed in a segregated kindergarten class, Lan was not happy and she did not think the class provided adequate learning opportunities. She thought the other children were far more disabled than her son and said, “All day long they made all sorts of noises in the class. He could not learn anything there.” She talked to the teacher, who also felt that he should be able to learn more than the setting allowed. She said, “In the end, his teacher placed him in a regular classroom for half of the day.” Lan told me that her husband suggested that she rely on herself to teach him, and she countered his idea by saying, “We cannot keep him at home. They would report you that you don’t let him go to school.” She therefore changed from a possible route of outright defiance to polite resistance, due to a fear of the authority. She revealed,

    His health was not too good and therefore missed a lot of classes. Every winter, he gets sick a lot, such as catching a cold. Therefore, a year went by quickly. By grade one, he was transferred back to the neighbourhood school. Then, I was relieved.

In effect, he was kept at home on and off for almost a year and the school board must have sensed this as a strategy of passive resistance and took action to get him to the integrated setting.

There were other conflicts with the school around what she perceived as low expectations. At the time of the interview, her son was in grade two and was learning to add and subtract one-digit numbers for his math, while her younger son, who was in kindergarten, was learning calculation of two-digit numbers. Lan resolved the conflict with her self-reliance. She said, “I do not heed what he is taught at school. At home I teach him math, doing numbers under a hundred.” Then, she noticed that her son was doing better. She remarked,

    The expectation for him is too low. It is not that he can not learn. He can and you need to teach him. He is now at this stage where he needs to learn. At this age one needs to learn the basics. If you don’t teach him now, how will he be able to keep up? Foundation is built at the elementary school. . . . If your foundation is shaky, you could not learn at high school.

Lan did not communicate her disagreement to the school, although she tried to tell the teacher what he was capable of doing at home. She said, “The teacher said to me, ‘He is still too young. He would not be able to digest it.’ I, I said, ‘OK.’ I— I— Whatever he says, I would cooperate with him as I could. But, once I’m home, I have my own ways of teaching him.” She applied fake acceptance and polite resistance to dealt with the conflict.

Lan further expressed her disagreement that the school was more concerned with his behaviour than his academics. She recounted what she resolved this conflict:
Now, his school focuses on his behaviour. The teacher mainly teaches him how to behave. He asked me what I thought of it. I said to him, "It's OK. I don't have any opinion." Because I feel... I can manage to teach him at grade one and grade two. Therefore, I-- I don't have any, any opinion regarding the focus on his behaviour. I said to myself, "It's OK. I can teach him subjects at home. His school slackens and I will tighten up at home. That's OK."

Fake acceptance and self-reliance was again applied. She also said that she tried to understand the teachers' point of view and applied positive thinking to resolve conflicts. She said, "The teacher also acts for my son's own good... I feel learning proper social behaviour, like how to talk to others in social situations and manners, are important too. I-- I feel it is also good that the teacher wants to teach him these."

L10. Comparison of education. Different ideas about teaching and learning were a source of conflicts with her son's school. Lan formed her own conclusion of the merits and drawbacks of both the Chinese and Canadian systems of education and did not consider one better than the other, although she was used to the Chinese one. She believed in the importance of academic achievement, but acknowledged the merits of the Canadian system. She said, "Here, independence is encouraged... It lets the kids develop their own, their own natural gifts." She admitted the drawbacks of her own teaching when she said, "The way I teach does not require him to comprehend the content... My approach is the stuffing-the-duck approach." Her own approach is consistent with traditional Chinese instructional approaches. She said, "I teach him according to my own experience of being a student. By the time I was grade one or two, we had learned a lot of Chinese characters. We could make short sentences by then... I'm teaching him the way I was taught."

L11. Preferred professional qualities. Holding higher expectations for her child was a quality she looked for in teachers, together with getting to know the child and his strengths. Lan mentioned a grade one teacher her son used to have who made him work hard and "found out he had very good memory," which was utilised in working with him. As a result, "he had made a lot of progress." Another quality Lan valued was being understanding of parents. The teacher's aide understood Lan's concerns and her difficulty in communicating in English. Referring to her limited English, Lan said, "I can manage to say one or two simple English sentences. I try to say English and I also make gestures. I can't help it that I could not speak English." Referring to the empathetic aide, she said, "He is especially attuned to what I want to say." The aide also understood Lan's concerns for her son's safety. She assisted her son going up and down stairs despite the teacher asked her not to accompany him. She said of the aide,

He is well attuned to what I want. He would come down every morning... He would supervise him, asking him to hang on to the railing and take one step at a time. I would be at the main level and watch him. Then I feel much comfortable. Lan was disarmed when an understanding educator was able to put his foot in her shoe and understand what her main concerns were. The aide achieved what he wanted the mother to do and what he wanted the child to learn, the child's independence, albeit with verbal reminders.

L12-13. Stress and coping, belief in family support. Lan described the discovery of her son's disability. His neck was not strong enough to lift up his head at five months old, and she took him to the family doctor. She was greatly surprised when informed that there may be something wrong with the child. He was not diagnosed as being developmentally delayed until he was three years old. At first she denied that her son was different and could not accept the diagnosis. She was still reluctant to accept the diagnosis and she seldom mentioned it throughout the interview. Referring to the assessment, she explained, "The examination was six hours long... I followed him all day. I saw the examination was very wishy-washy... I don't quite trust that conclusion."

Lan talked about the difficulty of raising a child with a disability. This perception of difficulty was soon offset by her determination and self-reliance, when she said, "Once you have a child and the child has some problem, how will you handle it? Hm, if there is no problem, everything would be fine. If he has a problem, you have to face it and deal with it." The same
sentiment echoed in the advice she would give to other parents who just discovered their children had a disability. She said, “Oh, I don’t have any suggestion for them, except acceptance. It is impossible to accept in the beginning. But, what else can you do? You have to accept it, and face the reality.” She accepted her personal responsibility and said, “Since the child has arrived in your family, you have to, huh, fulfil your responsibility. There is no other way.” She relied on herself to care for her children and elicited support from her husband. She said that her family was most important to her and was isolated from the mainstream society and the Chinese community. Lan also adopted an approach of “taking one step at a time” to deal with the difficulties associated with raising her son. When she told me of her busy life with her children, I tried to make her feel better by telling her, “You will survive it.” She replied, “I know I will survive it. Now, I just take one day at a time.” Lan did not seek help from others for parenting tasks, but sought out different resources within the confines of her family to teach her son. She said that her family was her world.

L14. Self-reliance. Lan believed in self-reliance. Her husband also believed strongly in personal responsibility and self-reliance. He gave her strong moral support and encouragement. She said, “His dad would say, ‘Yes, the teacher teaches him at the school, but you should also teach him at home. Try not to put all the responsibility to the school. You have responsibility too.’” Referring to the incident of going up and down stairs, Lan’s husband expressed his belief in personal responsibility:

What if he falls off because he is careless? The school would not take any responsibility. Even if it would, what kind of responsibility could it take? What effect would it bring if our son falls down the stairs? You would have to take the responsibility yourself.

Lan had since had a second thought about trusting the aide to supervise her son.

L15-16. Personal control, and belief in fate. Asked what she thought determined her life, Lan said simply, “fate and myself.” She did provide glimpses into her idea of fate when she talked about her acceptance of her son’s disability, that reality was to be accepted. After acceptance, she actively worked with him to glean the best for him.

Ping

Ping, a Catholic, came from Hong Kong. She and her husband both finished grade nine. They have three sons. The youngest son, who was nineteen years old, was developmentally delayed. At the time of the interview, he attended a special class in a public school. Ping learned about the study from one of her son’s teachers. The interview was conducted in her home with the help of Lena, who spoke Cantonese, and lasted two hours. Although Ping willingly participated in the interview, she did not volunteer information but merely answered questions. The only exceptions were when she expressed her concern for her son’s educational and vocational needs and when she talked about the recent injury to his eyes. Ping felt it was unfair that her son had to suffer from this, in addition to his intellectual disabilities. She got emotional a couple of times during the interview when she talked about the injury. At the end of the interview, she talked to Lena about the difficulties of being immigrants in this country.

Because of her son’s disability and her focus on him in her daily living, Ping had little contact with people outside of her home. Since moving to Canada, her son had problems with school learning due to his limited English vocabulary. She collaborated with the school by teaching him at home in Chinese when the occasion arose. She was involved in his school in terms of going to school functions and attending formal meetings, but she did not think she could be involved in decision making for her son’s educational program. Because of her concern over her son’s English abilities and future employment, she experienced considerable stress and had a great need for support. She mainly relied on her family to provide for the child, because of her belief in family support, but at times utilisation of her eldest son as a go-between with teachers, medical professionals, and social workers induced further stress and tension in the family. At the time of the interview, Ping’s concern over her son’s future had evolved into a personal crisis. She planned to bring him back to Hong Kong so that he could communicate and work in a sheltered workshop, and, in this manner, she was able to relieve her anxiety.

P1. Acculturation. Ping had been in Canada for three years. She did not speak English. Her
circle of friends were Chinese. She considered herself and her son to be Chinese, but she did not think she was influenced by Chinese culture. She made no comments about Chinese cultural traditions.

P2-3. Belief in family support, and devotion to child. Family mattered most to Ping. She said, “We most value our family life.” Raising a child with a disability caused her to withdraw from the larger community and retreat into the comfortable confines of her immediate family. She said, “we seldom get in contact with others. . . . You’ve seen him. You know what he is like.” A feeling of shame appeared to contribute to her seclusion. She added, “I often say to my husband that we are different, because we have [her son]. Therefore, we do not have our own lives, because all we think about is for him.” Her focus on her son resulted in a life style of isolation, even from the Chinese community.

She relied on her family for support, and deemed that, because her son needed help, every other family member had the obligation and responsibility to help him. She often complained that her eldest son did not help enough. She depended on him as an interpreter and when he did not offer the help she expected, she resented it. Her son had his own work as a college student. Ping insisted that her eldest son attend meetings to interpret, even when he had an exam.

P4. Knowledge of child. Ping described her disabled son as easy-going and did what he needed to do without being reminded. Her knowledge of her son was often cast in a positive light. She said, “Because he is the type of person who would not fight back even if others take advantage of him. He either goes away or stand there folding his arms together on his chest.” She also observed, “Actually, although [her son] is mentally retarded-- But, to us, he has made lots of progress as he grows. He can soon take care of himself. Actually he is already better than what we think.”

P5-6. Language barrier for the mother and child. Ping and her son had limited English. Ping thought, because of his limited English, it would be difficult for him to learn in school and get a job in B.C. She thought the move to Canada was at the expense of her son. Ping did not discuss her own language barrier and seemed content with her eldest son’s acting as interpreter between home and school. Besides, the school used a “communication book” to inform the boy’s family of his behaviour and learning. She also wrote to tell the teachers what he did at home. As a result, there was ongoing communication.

P7-8. Working at home with child, and home-school collaboration. Ping taught her son at home, supervised his homework, and gave him work to do when he did not have any. She believed that the family should cooperate with the school and said, “The reason that we often have contact with the teacher is, if the teacher has difficulty teaching him, we can teach him at home. . . . Then, we can help him.” She was dismayed at the small amount of homework her son was given. She exclaimed, “Aiyo! There is no homework here. Not at all!” She considered homework to be an important part of his education. She said,

After all, people like him do not have good memory. Therefore, they need to keep working on it. He used to write his personal information very well. If we don’t give him a bit of homework to work on it, he would forget about it after a while.

P9. Participation in school. Ping was very much involved in her son’s school life. She had frequent contact with his school, speaking to the teachers and attending school activities. She was actively involved in his school in Hong Kong. Ping commented, “I think Hong Kong’s special education is pretty good, in my own opinion. He had been in school there for a long time, we had a close and good contact with the school.” Her experience with B.C. schools was less positive. Despite her eagerness to be involved, she did not feel that she could influence the school decisions. Referring to the meeting where she dragged her eldest son to go with her, she said, “We would like to go there early to see [italic added] the people there” and insisted that her eldest son listen to things concerning the boy with a disability. Ping also made few suggestions to the school, and as she said, she did not feel his educational and vocational needs could be met here because of her son’s lack of proficiency in English. In fact, she moved to an area with a high concentration of Chinese people in the hopes that there would be a Chinese-speaking teacher for her son, but there was none and she was greatly disappointed.
P10. Conflicts and conflict resolution. Ping did not express the feeling that she was in conflict with her son’s teachers. Some of her suggestions, such as keeping him in school for another year and how to administer his medication, were accepted. She did not complain when the school did not accept her suggestion to give him work to do at home, even though she thought that writing his address and signing his name could be done for homework. She also believed that the use of homework could help further home-school communication. She said, “We asked the teachers to give him some schoolwork or something else and he could bring it back home to let us know what he had learned after all.” When the school did not give him homework, she provided the extra work. In a way, her self-reliance resolved the potential conflict.

P11. Comparison of education. Ping had not much to say about this topic, except two simple points. Firstly, she deemed homework an essential component of education. Ping thought the special education in Hong Kong was good for her son. He attended a segregated school there and learned many recreational and life skills. She felt her son’s needs in these areas were not met in the integrated class in B.C.

P12-13. Stress and coping, and belief in fate. Ping briefly described fate as the major force in her life. She reflected on her feelings when she learned her son had a disability. She said, “when he was in kindergarten, his teacher said he was mentally retarded and he needed to receive special education. That was the first blow…. Just as if a knife cut through our hearts.” Coping with the stress came easy with habits. She said, “At the beginning, when I first knew about his condition, it was more difficult to accept it. But as time goes by, I feel there is no problem.” She may have come to terms with the reality of his disability, but she also refrained from going out to socialise with others. She deemed it difficult to raise her son. Asked what difficulties she had from raising her son, she replied, “Actually, I could not list all the difficulties. There are a lot of them. … Actually, everything is difficult.” In fact, Ping had a great deal of a perception of difficulty. Asked what she would suggest to improve his program, she replied, “it is hard because his communication is poor.” She did not want to “dream” because of her focus on his limitations. Asked what she thought of getting a bilingual teacher who could speak Chinese to teach her son, again she replied, “I feel it is impossible.”

Ping sought help from professionals in the educational, medical, and social services fields. Other than seeking help to meet practical needs, she seldom sought help from others. She said it was due to a lack of a common bond. She said, “If you talk to others about your situation, they would just listen and then forget about it. They could not help you much.” On the other hand, due to self-imposed isolation, she did not join a parent support group to be connected with other parents of children with disabilities who were able to understand what she had been through.

Prior to the interview, Ping’s son had a sudden onset of visual impairment and the late diagnosis caused further damage to his eyes. She did not think it was fair. She said,

It is very unfortunate that this happens to him. . . . He only knew to rub his eyes. But if this happens to any other person, he would know that something is wrong with his eyes. But this has to happen to him!

Ping was deeply upset by her son’s eye injury and was coping with the emotional stress. During the interview, she got emotional several times when she talked about her son’s eye condition.

P14. Personal crisis. Ping said that, in the face of her son’s limited English, he did not make as much progress as she hoped. She said, “I feel he can do better than that. But, but I don’t know where to start in order to help him.” She had done what she could, making suggestions to the school and moving to a new location for his sake. This state of helplessness soon was replaced by a resolve to help her son. Ping felt that it was impossible for her son to learn English and work in B.C. and thought about returning to Hong Kong. She said,

I often said that after we live up to three years I’m going to take him back to Hong Kong. Perhaps, in this way, he will have his own social circle and he can communicate. Although at the workshop he will not earn much money, but he can go to work during the day.
Sophie

Sophie, a Buddhist, came from Hong Kong. She finished grade six and her husband completed grade nine. Among the ten mothers, she was the only one who worked. Both she and her husband worked in factories. They have a daughter and a son. The twelve-year-old boy was diagnosed with visual impairment when he was little. At the time of the interview, he attended a regular school and was assisted by a teacher for the visually impaired. Sophie learned about the study from the district resource teacher for students with visual impairments. She mailed the return slip back to me indicating that she would like to participate. When Lena phoned her to acknowledge her willingness to participate, Sophie asked what questions would be asked of her and said that she felt she had nothing much to offer. She might have participated in the research because the invitation was handed to her through her son’s teacher, because of her high respect for teachers. The interview was conducted in Cantonese at her home and lasted three hours. She asked her son to sit beside her for the interview and asked him to provide answers to some of the questions regarding his schooling. Throughout the interview, she was frank, relaxed, and had a good sense of humour. One impression she gave me is that she did not want to say anything negative about the school and teachers. It was only after I probed that she revealed that she was not happy with teaching and learning in the Canadian school.

Sophie was concerned with her son’s English proficiency and its effect on his schooling. She had little involvement in his school due to her own difficulty with English and the lack of interpreter services. Thus, she had little knowledge about his schooling. She had not become acculturated to Canadian mores. As a result, she preferred the education system in Hong Kong to that in B.C. She often expressed her disagreement to certain Canadian school practices. At home, she would ask him to study English. She was not able to teach him academic subjects because she started a job after finishing grade six education. She asked her daughter to help in this regard, but noticed that the girl got impatient with the boy’s making slow progress. Sophie mostly relied on herself to parent her son and seldom sought outside help.

S1. Acculturation. Sophie had lived in Canada for four years and hadn’t visited Hong Kong since. She said she had difficulty with English and she could not carry on a conversation with English-speaking Canadians. She said, “I can understand the first two sentences of what is said to me. From the third sentence on, I could not understand at all.” Many of her views expressed throughout the interview revealed her orientation toward Chinese ways of life.

S2-3. Devotion to child, and value of education. Sophie devoted attention to her son and cared about his education. She wanted to provide him with a home environment that was conducive to learning. She bought a second-hand computer for her children partly to help her son with his writing. Handwriting was difficult for him. She tried to understand his learning difficulties at school. She said, “I often talk to him. I said, ‘Hm, what can we do? Your grades are not too good.’” One problem was his difficulty in taking notes. She said, “I figure he has no problem speaking some English. But when people talk and he writes, he may not keep up. . . . Perhaps he does not understand the words, or he could not keep up with writing them down. I don’t know.” Her son’s English was limited and this contributed to his difficulties. She asked him to study harder and gave him work at home to improve his English. Sophie hoped that her son would complete grade twelve and was concerned whether he would be able to do it. She said, “I figure he might have a hard time in high school. He might drop out of school because he could not keep up.” She was concerned with his future.

S4-5. Working at home with child, and language barrier for the child. Sophie’s limited English and full-time employment prevented her from being involved in her son’s learning as much as she wanted. She supervised his homework and worked with him on his writing in Hong Kong. Since the family moved to B.C., she had not been as involved in his school. She still continued to try to help him and described what she did:

I do not ask him to read anything special, just newspapers and books. I would like him to read more. . . . I just ask him, “Every day, you copy down some words from the books you read, read them out loud, and memorise them.”

She was thinking of hiring a private tutor for him, but could not afford it because her
husband was unemployed at the time due to an accident. She asked her daughter to help, but discontinued it after seeing that the girl often got impatient with her brother.

S6-7. Participation in school, and language barrier for the mother. Sophie attended Parent Night and observed her son in class, but she had no contact with teachers when there were no interpreters. A major barrier to her participation is her limited English. Besides the language barrier, there was also a cultural barrier. She remarked, “I don’t know what to say to them. . . . I could not utter English anyway.” She brought her sister to school to interpret and relied on her son to interpret when his English got better. Non-professional interpreters were not always helpful. She observed, “Hm. If his teacher says something nice about him, he might tell me. If his teacher says something bad about him, he would not translate for me.” An irony is that she had concern for his English, and yet she depended on him for interpretation.

Sophie was not active in the decision making process that affected her son. She said she “just go and listen to them.” She often complied with professionals’ recommendation without any questions. When she was in Hong Kong, an eye specialist recommended that her son attend a special school. She followed the recommendation and then regretted the decision, feeling her son’s capabilities were superior to those of his classmates with various intellectual disabilities. Sophie did not take her son out of the special school until his teacher recommended that he go to a regular school. Her involvement in his schools in Hong Kong was also limited, even when there was no language barrier.

Her limited school participation may be influenced by her perception that it was difficult to change things. She was aware of the difficulty she experienced in Hong Kong in transferring her son back to a regular school after the special school, due to the stigma attached to people with disabilities. She was not offered interpreter services when she went to school to meet with her son’s teachers, despite her limited English. She believed it would be difficult for B.C. schools to provide interpreters for parents who did not speak English. Asked if there was anything the school could do to improve her son’s education, she replied, “Improve? I feel it is very difficult to improve. . . . Very, very difficult, because the teachers there are all different and everything is different.” When I asked her to talk about an ideal scenario, she replied, “How can I say? The reality— Very difficult.” She stuck to reality and did not want to dream.

S8. Conflicts and conflict resolution. When asked if she disagreed with her son’s teachers on anything, Sophie said, “As I have told you, I could hardly communicate with them.” Her limited English prevented her from forming opinions. However, Sophie did disagree with the school’s expectations for students in B.C. She noticed that her son did not learn as much as when he was in Hong Kong and that his teachers did not give him homework to do. She talked about her going to his school for the schoolwork display twice a year:

I saw his work was very simple and very sloppy. On the thick. . . . notebook, there was just a few math problems per page, and written very sloppily. . . . I feel, “How come he has studied for six months and only produced just a few sloppy pages.”

She was unhappy about his having accomplished little. Aware that she might not know better, she said her son if the teachers had asked him to write more and neatly. He replied that the teachers had done so in his report card.

S9. Comparison of education. Sophie acknowledged the differences between the educational systems in B.C. and Hong Kong, and remarked, “Everyone knows that education in Hong Kong is ’stuffing the duck’ approach. . . . Every day they do their homework over and over again. Whereas, here, once the kids are home from school, they are free, having nothing much to do.” She preferred the Hong Kong system because she believed that it helped children form good study habits. She said, “I feel when he is young he does not know what should be done and what shouldn’t be done. When he is older, having formed a good habit, he would study on his own.” She also preferred the strict discipline in Hong Kong schools. For example, she commented that students in an Hong Kong classroom were not as free to go to the washroom as in B.C.

Sophie noted that teachers liked to praise students here, even when they wanted to correct student behaviour or encourage students to study. She said, “His ESL teacher would say much about him every time, mostly praising him. I don’t feel he is worthy of it. They all like to praise.”
She wanted her son to improve certain behaviour and applied a system of negative reinforcement. She explained, “Now, I give him twenty dollars a month. If he does something wrong, I will withhold one dollar from him. Perhaps after one month, he not only would not get any money, he would owe me money instead.” When Lena commented, “It would be better to use encouragement, rather than punishment,” she replied, “The teachers at the school also say that, to praise more than to punish.” She also commented on the way Canadian teachers communicated with parents. Sophie thought it was good that the school held parent-teacher meetings, but she did not believe the formal meetings accomplished anything. She said, “It is fruitless to have a meeting with the school. All they do is talk... without results.”

**S10. Self-reliance.** Sophie believed in self-reliance and she had a sense of personal responsibility. She was quick to ask if she was to blame. She realised that it was difficult for her to know if the teachers at her son's school were approachable or not, but then added, “Mainly because it is difficult for me to communicate with them.” She relied on herself to assign her son homework to learn English. Asked if she ever talked to the teachers at meetings what to do about her son’s problem with note taking, she said, “I feel I should think of a way to solve this problem on my own,” even though she did not know how to go about it. She was upset that his handwriting was not neat and thus bought a second-hand computer for her son to type up his homework. When I commented that I learned of a student who got a computer for use at home, with funding from the school board, she was not interested, even though her economical means were limited. There is a hint that living in a new environment prompted her to be self-reliant. She said, “One has to rely on oneself here [B.C.]”

**S11. Preferred professional qualities.** Sophie expressed appreciation for a teacher in a special school in Hong Kong who thought her son should go to a regular school, instead of staying in the class that impeded his learning. She said, “He said, ‘It’s not that I don’t want him to study with me. It’s because many of the students here could not learn. . . He would not learn much.’” This teacher was sensitive enough to suggest that he would not write in a report card that ranked her son number one out of a class of four or five students, because a regular school might not want to accept a child from a special school. The teacher kept in mind the child’s best interests.

Due to the language barrier, she did not feel able to pass judgment on Canadian teachers. She said, “I could hardly communicate with them. I don’t know if they are good or not.” When asked about her feelings about her son’s teachers, she mentioned that the ESL teacher “is very friendly; he often tells me a lot, yet I can only understand roughly what he says.” Sophie appreciated the friendly attitude of the teachers and their willingness to talk with the parents. One teacher was interested enough to ask how the family called the child at home and asked what it meant. This teacher showed an interest in Chinese culture and in the child himself.

**S12-13. Stress and coping, and lack of knowledge of resources.** There was a certain degree of stress in Sophie’s experience of raising her son, from his often getting sick when he was little to her worry over his future job opportunities. She sought medical help soon after she first found out there was something wrong with her son’s vision. She was comforted by the fact the doctor said, “it was fortunate that he still could see.” She remembered this remark, which is to adopt a comparative mind set to make oneself feel better. She felt that her relatives had not provided much help. Her husband’s mother, in particular, often remarked, “You often take him out to check out his problem. It is so embarrassing.” Her mother-in-law considered it a shame to take a child with a disability outside of the home. She had been applying self-reliance and acceptance of the reality to relieve her stress. When asked what she would advise other parents. She said, "If there is anything that can be done, they need to think of ways to help and mend the problem. Sometimes, if it cannot be mended, you can't help it even if you are over-worried. . . Whatever I can do, I will do it."

Her outlook on life was realistic and practical. Her lack of knowledge of community resources and services also forced her to rely on herself. Self-reliance and lack of knowledge reinforced each other and could form a vicious cycle. On the other hand, she appeared uninterested in societal resources and services and had never heard of support groups. The idea of seeking help from others seemed to be foreign to her.
S14-15. Personal control, and belief in fate. Sophie believed that the two forces that determined her life were herself and fate, but she believed more in the effect of fate. She used an example to illustrate the whimsical hand of fate. Her husband accidentally set off an explosion in his factory the day before his wage was to be increased. She said,

Sometimes, I work very hard, very hard, but in the end fail. Isn’t it fate? Because we are both in our forty’s and have gone through many things. . . . For example, last year, it was 1993. He said the factory was starting its business and everything went well. . . . October first, his boss had told him that he would raise his wage. On the thirtieth of September, he had an accident.

Sophie also believed that the success of an outcome depended on luck. She said, “Sometimes, after you do your best, after that, you have to rely on a bit of luck.” But she was quick to point out her own responsibility when negative events happened in raising her son and said, “I also feel this has something to do with one’s cautions, not necessarily fate. Sometimes I may not take good care of him because I do not understand certain things.” Yet, when asked if she felt confident for her son to go out on his own, with his low vision, she looked to fate again. She replied,

Even if I am worried, I have to relax. He often goes out by himself. He goes everywhere on his bicycle. I let him go. I feel sometimes it is one’s destiny. Sometimes, if you don’t let him go, it may be even worse.

Wen

Wen came from Taiwan. She and her husband are college graduates and have a daughter and a son. The fifteen-year-old boy was born with a hearing impairment. At the time of the interview, he attended an aural-oral program for students with hearing impairments. Wen was informed of this study by a Chinese association for immigrants and indicated her willingness to participate. When I phoned her to thank her for her interest, we talked for over an hour. She was excited that someone was interested in her ideas and opinions. In fact, she told me that she wanted to phone me right after she got the recruitment letter, but restrained herself for fear of interrupting me at an hour when I was studying. We met on several occasions when she asked me to interpret for her. The interviews took place on two different days, the first at my home and the second in a restaurant. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin and took six hours. Wen had served as chairperson for an association for the hearing impaired in Taiwan; as a result, she often talked from her personal experience and the collective experience of the parents there.

Wen valued knowledge and education. She worked with her son at home tirelessly and was very much involved in his school in Taiwan. Her drive for excellence had pushed her to learn from various models in order to teach her son. She particularly valued knowledge from the West, which was a major factor in her decision to immigrate to Canada. After coming to B.C., she was not able to be as involved as she was in Taiwan because of the language barrier. However, she was brave enough to go to school to communicate with the teachers, often without an interpreter, and managed to teach her son what she could while striving to learn English herself. She taught him whatever she had learned from her English class. She had lessened her expectation for her son’s academic learning ever since she was informed by the teacher that there seemed to be a disturbing mother-son relationship. She then realised that she had been putting too much pressure on him, especially after moving to Canada (she had wished that he could master the English language as soon as he could).

Wen said that she focused on what she could do for her son, instead of dwelling on what could not be changed, when she learned that he was hearing impaired. In Taiwan, where resources and services for children with disabilities were few, she mainly relied on herself to provide for her son. At the same time, Wen had a strong sense of advocacy and was active in lobbying for services for people with disabilities. After moving to Canada, despite her adaptability, she was getting frustrated that she had no access to information about the resources and services in B.C. in order to further help her son and his education. The language difficulty and the lack of information resulted in her a deep-seated sense of loss. She questioned herself as to whether she had made the right
decision to immigrate to Canada. Before the writeup of this dissertation, she told me that her son had made it; he was now attending a university.

W1. Acculturation. At the time of the interview, Wen had been in Canada for one year. She came alone with her children to Canada, while her husband was working in Taiwan. She immigrated to “chase a dream” that her son’s educational needs would be better met in Canada, as she had high regard for Western knowledge. She considered herself to be adaptable, and prided herself for her ability to, in her own words, “see through things,” that is, to examine issues at hand more closely, make nothing of them, and adapt according to circumstances. She noticed positive change in herself after immigration. Wen said she was learning to adopt the gentle manners of Canadian teachers and firmly believed that children with hearing impairments had more opportunities in Canada. Still concerned with improving services in Taiwan, Wen planned to send information about education and social services in B.C. to the Taiwan association for which she had worked. Wen was full of dreams and hopes for her son when she first arrived, but uncertainty and frustration quickly arose. She had not realised how difficult it would be for her son to learn English, and she expressed some regret about her decision to immigrate. She sighed, “I don’t really know whether I gain or lose by coming here.”

W2. Devotion to child. Wen wanted her son to talk and enrolled him in different private programs for preschoolers with hearing impairments to learn oral speech. The educators preferred that parents were involved. One teacher made it clear that, unless she quit her job to work with her son, he would not accept the child. Wen reluctantly sacrificed a budding career and sent her daughter to a relative during the day so that she could work with her son at home. For a while, her son was enrolled in three different aural-oral programs, which ran from morning to evening, and Wen accompanied him to observe the teaching. They were both exhausted by the end of the day. After coming to B.C., she did not lessen her devotion to her son and to his education. Wen enrolled him in an aural-oral class for students with hearing impairments. His deafness made it difficult for him to learn and speak English. She described his difficulty in attending to lessons in English: “While he is thinking what it [a new word] means, he has missed out the whole sentence, and then from then on he would miss out more and more.” She searched for speech services for him to learn English, and taught him what she learned in her own English class.

W3. Value of education. Education was very important to Wen, who believed that all students could learn, given the opportunities to do so. She was disappointed to discover that her son received only limited speech and language therapy, which was discontinued shortly after the speech pathologist went on maternal leave. She felt he should be given the opportunities to learn to speak English. Wen enjoyed learning. In Taiwan, she attended lectures given by professors and experts about hearing impairments and searched for information. She felt she had more access to information in Taiwan than in B.C. She went to the lectures sponsored by a Chinese association in B.C. when they were related to education. When she was invited to attend two lectures at her son’s school, she went. She said, “At least, I pumped myself up... even though I knew so little of English.”

She deemed foundations are built upon small progress over time and consistently encouraged her son to learn. She said,

I told my son last night, “I am sick today. I have pain all over my body since this morning.” He asked, “Why are you telling me this?” I said, “I want to tell you that, even though I am sick, even though I am tired, I want to teach you very much. I hope that you could learn as much as you can. Because, if you postpone learning for one day, you are a sentence behind. One sentence a day; there would be three hundred and sixty-five sentences a year!”

She approved when a teacher in B.C. encouraged her son to take responsibility and bring his hearing aids to class. She did not approve when the teacher made him go home to get his aids. She felt the teacher chased him away out of the classroom. She preferred the discipline in Taiwan where the student was made to stand up in the class or outside of the classroom. Wen deemed that, in this way, “The student could still attend to the classes and the opportunity for learning would not be compromised.”
As a result of the value she placed on education, Wen had respect for educators and felt that parents had much to learn from experts. She valued professional knowledge more than parental knowledge. She commented, "If you want to know how to educate your child, what can you do? Go locate the experts." She believed that teacher educators in Taiwan "learned from abroad and had newer knowledge." In effect, she structured a hierarchy of knowledge holders: parents, local professionals, and professionals in the West. Her belief in Western knowledge was part of the reason that led her to immigrate to Canada.

W4-5. Self-reliance, and working at home with child. Wen believed in the value of self-reliance, which incorporated her notion that parents should teach their children. She said, in Taiwan, there had once been a common practice in early childhood education in the field of hearing impairment to encourage mothers to help train their children to talk. She agreed with this idea and said, "Its purpose is to promote parents to care for their children, not throwing the responsibility to the teacher. After all, learning to talk is a very difficult process and involves repetitive work. Who could you rely on? Family, not teachers."

Wen often worked with her son till mid-night in Taiwan. She described what she did at home:

I have been teaching my son myself. Whenever I see him, I am thinking how I should teach him. . . . A child's facial expressions could show if he really understands what is being taught. Right? If he shows that he does not understand, right away we need to change to another method to teach him, so that correct methods are used.

She used an analogy to illustrate the need to work with him. Referring to her teaching him whatever she learned in her English class, she said, "We, like our children's ears, help them to hear and then teach them ourselves." In this way, she tried to compensate for his hearing loss. After coming to B.C., she had lessened her expectations for her son and realised she was pressuring him too much. She said that she realised that it generally took five years to master English.

W6-8. Participation in school, home-school collaboration, and language barrier for the mother. Wen believed that teachers and parents needed to work together as a team. She said teachers in Taiwan realised their time and energy were limited and invited parents to observe how they taught in class, so that the parents could teach their children at home. She also knew her child and this was a basis for her to contribute to his education. She said,

I . . . needed to see if my son was paying attention in class or which elements of the content he did not understand, because I could tell. Then, I would cooperate with the teachers by telling them how to teach my son so that it would be effective.

Wen valued close collaboration between home and school. She said, "It is like both parents in the family, if one of the parents is not willing to teach the child, I can say for sure that, in the end, the child would only acquire half of the capabilities of other children." She felt frustrated when her request that her son's language and speech pathologist allow her to observe in class was turned down, and deemed that education in B.C. "acts as if it has nothing to do with the parent."

Wen was less involved in her son's school than she was in Taiwan. Nevertheless, she often went to her son's school. Because of her limited English, she knew little about what her son was doing in school. She said, "it seems that I, as a parent, know nothing. I might not see clearly what level my son is and the progress he is making, and so on." Eager to make suggestions to the school, she felt inhibited by her limited English. She said to me, who had helped her interpret on several occasions, "Had I known you earlier, I would have invited you to go with me [to school meetings]. Then, I could express all what I wanted to say." When she did make requests, the teachers were receptive, but she felt the school was not as open as she would have liked.

W9-10. Conflicts and conflict resolution, and language barrier for child. Wen stated that she "escaped" to Canada partly because a teacher in Taiwan "gave up" on her son. She revealed that, although she was not happy with this teacher, she had not confronted the teacher but instead thought to herself, "OK. That's fine." The thought of reporting the teacher to higher authority did
occur to her, but she did not pursue that. There were other conflicts with her son’s school in Taiwan. One teacher hit the students as a disciplinary measure. In response, she bought a copy of a booklet called “Education of Love” and sent to this teacher to persuade her to use more humane disciplinary methods. At the same time, Wen sent a copy to another teacher as well. She thought it was too blunt and too direct to give a copy of the booklet to that teacher alone. She said, “I could not buy one just for her, because it would reveal that this act aimed at her.” Subtle and indirect communication was used, as she did not believe in direct confrontation. She said, “I thought hard to solve the problem. One had to express and expose problems, using very good ways, instead of attacking or protesting.”

The idea of direct confrontation was not alien to Wen though. Referring to her son’s not receiving speech therapy in B.C., she admitted that she would have demanded intervention had she been in Taiwan, having connections and no language barrier. Instead, she used her own means to provide for her son. She hired a tutor to work with her son on his conversational skills and she herself also worked with her son on sign language. She explained,

My consideration is that, if the speech pathologist still would not return to teach my son, I have to be prepared. What I mean is that I would always position myself so that I could see far ahead into the future. If this pathologist would not come back and my son continues to lack confidence in speaking, I could not see that his learning be impeded.

Wen planned carefully for her son’s future and was making preparation for possible transition to the sign language program for her son so that he could learn an alternative mean of communication. In B.C., Wen had various difficulties with one teacher. She confronted the teacher who gave her son low marks. She thought her son did not understand what the teacher expected of him. The teacher disagreed, saying, “He knows” what he needed to do. In the end, the teacher kept the low marks. It was a low-key confrontation. Wen did not believe that her son understood the teacher’s instructions. She said,

My son often tells me that he could not understand what the teacher says. To be honest with you, he has only learned a few English sentences after he came here. . . . I know from my heart how much my son weighs. Right? Therefore, the teacher always says, “He knows. He knows.” I don’t believe that.

She also disagreed with the punishment her son was given by the same teacher. For forgetting to bring his hearing aids to school, the boy was asked to go home to get the aids. Wen disagreed because it took time away from his learning in the classroom. The teacher also asked the child not to take the taxi to school, which service was provided by the school district to get the child to his school, which was far from his home. The teacher told her this was a waste of public money. She said she was often nagged by the teacher about this and sought mediation from the school board. Wen said she sensed a racist attitude from the teacher.

I introduced Wen to Lily, a classmate of mine who happened to work in her son’s school. Wen talked about her conflicts with the main teacher to Lily, who later talked to the teacher in an effort to help solve the problems. Wen was not quite comfortable with an intermediary who used an active approach of conflict resolution. She said, “this would turn out that people talk behind each other and would cause some unfortunate results.” Wen would have preferred to talk to the teacher directly, but she had difficulty expressing herself. There had never been an interpreter for Wen. In a way, the language barrier deepened conflicts.

WII. Comparison of education. Wen considered that there were good educational practices in both Taiwan and Canada. She believed that immigrant parents like herself could provide teachers with new insights. Wen promoted what was good about Taiwan in terms of classroom instruction and disciplinary practices. She believed that two common instructional practices in Taiwan benefited students with limited English: 1) listing vocabulary on the blackboard before class started and 2) following the sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In terms of discipline, Wen said that her son’s main teacher made the child go home to get his hearing aids. She disagreed with the
choice of discipline. She said that the teacher could have asked the child to stand up throughout the class, a common punishment in Taiwan, so that he would not miss the lessons. Her focus on whether her son was able to learn in class outweighed any social and emotional ramifications of being punished in class. Despite her eagerness to suggest what was good in Taiwan, she sensed a certain degree of arrogance on the part of educators in B.C., as they were not interested in what was practised in Taiwan. She lamented, “people just say, ‘Oh, our ways are different from yours.’ And that’s it. They don’t really investigate these matters.”

W12. Preferred professional qualities. The following are a list of teacher qualities Wen admired. These qualities all focused on the needs of the child.

1) Acceptance: Wen thought the teachers at the school for the deaf in Taiwan treated their students with respect. She felt that, in Taiwan, regular classroom teachers sometimes were resistant to teaching these students. She said, “They often told the parents, some were despondent, ‘I could not look after your child. There is no way I could do that, because I have to look after so many kids.’”

2) Dedication: Wen liked teachers who “would use all the methods they could come up with to face and teach the students.” She praised her son’s private tutor, saying,

He knows that he could not communicate well with my son, so he types on the computer. He tells my son how he should pronounce is correct. So much heart he set on teaching! He is not in the field of special education, but he is dedicated, as what I as a mother would do.

3) Valuing learning and education: Wen had high regard for teachers who continued to learn new knowledge and skills.

4) Knowing the child: Wen thought it important that teachers knew their students well. This included knowing students’ abilities. She felt that the teacher with whom she disagreed with ignored the fact that there was language barrier between him and her son. Without knowing their students, she said, teachers took teaching merely “as a job for earning a living.”

5) Individualising teaching: Once a teacher gets to know a student, the teacher can plan an individualised program to utilise the student’s strengths and work on the weaknesses. A good teacher had to “teach according to the abilities of each individual... Just as Confucius had said, every one of us had different capabilities and a teacher should teach accordingly.”

6) Holding reasonable expectations of the child: Wen was grateful that her son’s main teacher insisted that her son wear his aids to school, even though she objected to the teacher’s measure of ensuring the aids were there. She thought the teacher strict. She said, “Teachers being strict are also very good. How strict is good? The degree of strictness should not affect the psychological development of a child.” Good teachers obviously have to know how to balance between holding reasonable expectations and meeting the child’s needs.

When talking about the qualities possessed by teachers to work with parents, Wen valued two qualities. The first is empathy. Wen deemed good teachers put themselves in the shoes of parents and are receptive to parent suggestions. The second is close, informal parent-teacher relations. She hoped to be friends with teachers. In Taiwan, she had close contact with teachers there. She described the contact:

Parents could... go to the teachers’ office.... and talk to the teachers.... I went every day. I talked with them about educational issues whenever I met them.... I could talk with all those teachers. I would chat with them for a long time.

She said that, when there was a need to talk to teachers, she could do so at any time. In B.C., Wen said, “I have to make an appointment to talk.... Of course, we should act as Romans while in Rome.... [Yet,] The communication is not two-way.” She implied that, in B.C., arranging parent-teacher meetings was controlled by teachers or the school; parents could request a meeting with the teacher, but granting such requests was up to the teachers. She also preferred close relationships between teachers and students, which relationships she believed would enable the teachers to know their students better. She said some teachers in Taiwan would take the students for an outing. One
teacher sometimes invited girls to stay overnight at her home. She likened the closeness between teachers and students to that in a family.

In summary, perhaps the sketch of a good teacher that Wen admired could illustrate all her points. She described the teacher:

From what I knew, there was a junior high school among the four that had resource rooms for the hearing impaired, and all the parents fought to send their kids there. . . . Because the teacher there was very responsible. In addition to high self-expectation, he also designed the curriculum according to the students' needs. For example, these children—From a very young age, they spent a lot of time on speech therapy and probably did not go to kindergarten, and therefore, they did not learn eye-hand coordination and occupational abilities which were normally taught in kindergarten. . . . Therefore, this teacher would utilise the . . . equipments . . . to help these children at that age to do the exercises. . . . He felt that these students probably had developed better visual sense and would do well in fine arts. Therefore, he would ask, 'If you are willing to come to learn fine arts, I would help you to find a teacher to come here after school on Saturday afternoon. . . . If one did poorly in math, he would provide. . . . one-on-one instruction. . . . He also received a master's degree in the U.S. and went back to Taiwan to teach. Last year, he got his Ph.D. and went back. . . . He set his whole heart on studying how he could further help these students. He had reached an agreement with the principal that he would like his students to attend classes offered by certain teachers. He chose teachers for his students.

This teacher also held meetings at the school once a week for the parents of his students.

W13. Stress and coping. Wen talked about her stress when her son was young: "My son is hearing impaired. He has been so since he was a little kid. This type of assault is huge. It is his parents who suffers the assault. It is his parents who could not accept, not he." She described the process of learning to accept her son's disability:

Before I had this child, I put my nose up in the sky. Ay! After he was born into this family, I began to know the tortures and struggles in life. I had to learn to be patient. Before that, I did not have patience. . . . I had gone through a transformative process. . . . To shape a personality, probably it needs this natural process. Whatever I encounter, I have to accept. After I accept it, I have to take it. I would have to take whatever comes with it. After taking it, I have changed my life philosophy.

Wen mainly relied on herself to cope with the different challenges in raising her son. For instance, she focused on what she could do for her son. She said,

When my son was little and I found out that he was hearing impaired, I did not cry at all. I only thought, "There must be something that I can do." In my mind, I always think that nothing is difficult in the world, and that there is nothing so difficult that I could not do. If I am willing to think of ways to solve the problems, I could. Therefore, with that strand of courage, I only thought of what I should do and did not have spare time to dwell on sorrow. Nor did I have time to shed one tear.

The focus on the practical matters as to what needed to be done must have helped her through those painful moments. In addition, with limited resources for people with disabilities (one of the main objectives of the association for which she served as chairperson was to lobby for services), she would have to rely on herself to provide for her son. Wen believed that one should rely on oneself first before seeking help, saying, "God help those who help themselves."

Despite Wen's belief that nothing was impossible and a belief in advocacy, she also perceived that things are difficult. This perception was often related to the language barrier, her son's disability, and a lack of knowledge of resources and how to locate them. Wen thought it was
“impossible” for hearing children to make friends with children with hearing impairments because of communication difficulties. Language was also a stumbling block to friendships between immigrant children and English-speaking children. She said, “It is also pretty difficult for those immigrant children who are normal to make friends with the local kids. Very difficult! Because their English is not very good and so they could not communicate with each other.” Because she was a positive person who believed in herself after all, the perception of difficulty was often replaced by self-reliance. For example, in the above case, she quickly added, “If I could speak English-- That’s why I want to learn English well.”

Wen was also active in seeking help. When her son was diagnosed with a hearing impairment, she tried to locate services to help her son. She said,

I really did not know where to go. My basic instinct was to start from looking up the phone book. Because I used to be a secretary, working on international trade. . . . I had to look up all the phone books published overseas. These were basic sources of information. I started looking up hospitals and associations for the hearing impaired. In any way, I looked for every possible piece of information. I had been asking all the time.

In B.C., her limited English did not keep her from seeking help. She asked me to accompany her to a one-day conference for parents of hearing impaired children to translate for her. At the conference, she talked to people to get information on resources and services. Wen believed that seeking help could help her to be self-reliant.

W14. Parent advocacy. Wen believed that there was nothing difficult in this world as long as one set one’s mind on whatever tasks one wanted to achieve. This belief in herself motivated her to pursue her goals. She said, “There are many things one needs to create. Even if the timing for an opportunity has gone, you might still be able to get it back. . . . If you wait there forever, you would forever get nothing done.” She was active and persistent. Wen believed in advocacy and stressed the power of groups over individuals. She said, “I have always been seeking resources. In the process of seeking, I learn where certain resources are. If there are no such resources, then we need to make suggestions and to lobby.” She founded an organisation in Taiwan for parents of hearing impaired children because she believed in the need for parents to be together. The parent group was formed based on her lingering question, “Why did every one of us have to struggle and fight for our children on our own? Why shouldn’t we unite together?”

W15. Lack of knowledge of resources. Wen did not know where the resources and services in B.C. were located. She felt there was an inadequate system of providing information to counteract immigrants’ lack of knowledge of resources for people with disabilities. She was frustrated by her lack of knowledge of how to locate the services and resources. She said, “I don’t know where the channels are. I learn of some information here and some there; but there is no overall design at all.” In particular, she had an urgent need for services to help her son learn English and the difficulty of accessing the services had caused her much stress. She said,

I don’t know where to look for speech therapy services. . . . And the teachers at his school would not provide us with this piece of information. . . . Even if I am resourceful, I could not think of good ways to solve this problem.

She likened this difficulty to the time when her son was learning to talk as a preschooler. She said, “Coming here, my son is like learning to talk as an infant. It is like my returning to the time when my son was very young. Do I have to live like that again?” She thought a good contact for passing information was teachers. In Taiwan, she relied on the teachers for information, but in B.C. she had difficulty talking to teachers as there was no interpreter provided for her.

W16-17. Personal control, and belief in fate. Wen believed that she people (herself and others) and fate all played a role in determining the course of her life. Wen knew that being at the right place at the right time was important. She noted that opportunities were created by “Good timing, other people cooperating with you, and at the right place.” This is a Chinese saying, suggesting making good use of a mix of personal intelligence, efforts, other people’s help, fate, and
chance. However, since Wen believed that there was nothing difficult in this world, she placed more value on people than on fate. She explained,

If the person, the teacher has good concepts and the social worker has enough manpower to assist, and the parent is also willing to learn. . . . the ideas in the field of hearing impairment. . . . If one could not communicate with the teacher, then she needs to go for English lessons right away.

At other times, she also stressed the effect of fate. At a shop that sold hearing aids, Wen asked about workshops provided by the shop. The first clerk we approached said she did not know anything while the second clerk we approached gave us the requested information. Referring to the clerk with more knowledge and experience, Wen said, "If we meet the right person, then it's fine. If not-- This is caused by chance and opportunity."

W18. Personal crisis. Wen’s limited English and her lack of knowledge of resources contributed to her sense of frustration and helplessness. She expressed her frustration with the school: "The school has not provided me with that much assistance. It just asks me to be stand on my feet. . . . No matter from which angle I deliberate, I have not gained anything." Regret was building up when she said,

Coming here, all I see is a cloud of dust. There is even a lot of trouble. I have to demand my son to do this and that every day. My son is faced with great pressure. I am also faced with great pressure. I also give him pressure. It turns out my son would go crazy, and I would go crazy too. . . . Did we make a wrong choice? Coming here, it is like a big drop-off for me. It seems that I am faced with a new beginning, a beginning of a new language. Isn’t it a very, almost very difficult thing!!?

Xiang

Xiang, a Buddhist, came from Hong Kong. Both she and her husband graduated from high school. Their daughter has multiple disabilities and their fifteen-year-old son is visually impaired. At the time of the interview, the boy was in an integrated class, with support from a district resource teacher for students with visual impairments. She learned about the study from her son’s school. The two-and-a-half-hour interview took place at her home. She indicated that she preferred that the interview was conducted in Cantonese. The interview was conducted both in Cantonese (whenever she talked to Lena) and English (whenever she talked to me). Throughout the interview, she often switched to Chinese from English in order to express herself better.

Xiang coped with the stress of raising two children with disabilities mainly by controlling her negative emotions and focusing on what was best for her children. She made many efforts to help her son with his education, by hiring tutors for him and worked with him herself. Yet, after moving to Canada, due to his disabilities and difficulty in learning English, he was giving up on his school learning. As a result, Xiang had great concern over his future. Despite her claim that she needed help from people other than her family and relatives, she did not act to get information. I asked her if she knew about a local support group; she replied that she did but did not attend its meetings because it was held in the evenings when she was most busy with her family. Great concern and a lack of information on support services contributed to a state of personal crisis. She said that she felt helpless. Recently, I talked to her over the phone and learned that her son was attending a program for students with visual impairments at Vancouver Community College in which he studied English, math, and computer on a part time basis.

X1-2. Acculturation, and language barrier for the mother. Xiang had been in Canada for two years. Her daughter remained in Hong Kong at an institution and Xiang visited her every year. Xiang was concerned about her son’s future, but she did not think of moving back to Hong Kong. She did not think there was a language barrier for her and expressed no need for an interpreter service at parent-teacher meetings. Besides, the school staff paid attention to what she wanted to say and helped her express it if need be. She said, “because they know I am a Chinese. Especially the ESL teacher, with who I often communicated with. Therefore, he would help me out.” Her English
was not as good as her Chinese and she sometimes had to search for the words such as “urgently” and “counsellor.” She even misunderstood a simple, factual question as to when her son was diagnosed with visual impairment. She only talked about the language barrier when she said that she did not know how to get information about resources and services. She said, “Here, I don’t know what I could do, because I am still new. Besides, it is not my own language after all.”

X3. Language barrier for the child. Xiang’s son had low vision and had borderline IQ. He was having difficulty learning English and learning in school. She talked about his difficulty in learning English: “When he was grade 5, we immigrated here. Except English, he is doing OK. I even get a tutor for him to help him with his English, but still his English is poor.” Xiang noticed that her son was discouraged and was giving up on his studies. Xiang provided a description:

The last time I met with his teacher, he told me that sometimes my son would not hand in his assignments. . . . He doesn’t ask for help for things he doesn’t know. . . . His math was pretty good while in Hong Kong. But now everything is written in English, then he doesn’t understand because the words are beyond him. . . . He doesn’t even look up the dictionary for words he doesn’t know. His computerised dictionary was operated by lithium batteries. After they ran out, he has been using the regular batteries. Every once in a while the batteries need to be replaced. In the end, he gets lazy and won’t look up his dictionary because of the frequency of changing the batteries. Then, whatever he doesn’t know, he writes down anything. He is like this now.

She was very concerned with his learning English and said, “Now, he is forced to study in English, and he could not take in the whole thing. He is still wandering. It is a pressure for him and a pressure for me.” She was also gravely concerned with his future, due to the language barrier and his disability.

X4. Devotion to child. Xiang wanted to help her son with his education and had hired tutors since he was in grade one. In Hong Kong, he attended a segregated school for students with mental retardation for the first three grades. She hired a tutor to work with him. He made progress and Xiang requested that her son be reassessed. He was then transferred to the school for the blind, which she regarded as a regular school, because the curriculum was the same as that of the regular school. She was very pleased with her decision to hire a tutor, as she wanted to give him the best education possible. She said,

The most wise decision I made is that I got a tutor to help him. . . . If I didn’t help him, then he wouldn’t have gone on to study in that regular school to receive the education normal kids receive. Even though he was a slow learner, he still got the chance to learn the normal curriculum. If he had stayed in that special school, he would have forever learned things as simple as I want to go to school’ or things like that.

After her son moved on to the school for the blind, she continued to hire people to tutor him and to help him with his homework. In preparation for immigration to Canada, she hired a tutor to teach him English, but he had difficulty with it. At the time of the interview, two tutors were working with her son. As she could not afford to pay $25 an hour for a tutor, she found one of his classmates, who also needed a tutor, to share the cost. She said, “Of course I would help him get private tutors as far as I could. If I could afford it, of course, I would help him.”

X5. Working at home with child. Xiang mainly relied on the tutors to help her son and seldom taught him herself. However, she helped him with his homework. She described what she did before that time: “I often helped him with his homework. I explained to him. I taught him with the help of a dictionary.” Prior to the time of the interview, her son began to resist Xiang’s help. She realised that as a teenager he wanted independence and, at the same time, he was giving up on his studies.

X6. Participation in school. Xiang talked often with her son’s teacher and classroom assistant when she picked him up from school. She had made some suggestions to those who
worked with her son. For example, she talked to the district resource teacher about her son’s love of computers, and the teacher immediately responded and requested a computer equipped with adaptive programs for students with visual impairments for the boy to use at home. However, she was not active in making educational decisions for her son. She thought she attended school meetings mainly to listen to the teachers.

X7-8. Conflicts and conflict resolution. Xiang did not openly oppose the teachers when she disagreed with them. She developed a perception that things were difficult and, at times, exhibited helplessness amid the conflicts. Soon after their arrival in B.C., she took her son to a hospital and was told by a physiotherapist there that he did not need the therapy and that he could just do some suggested exercises at home. Xiang thought he still needed physiotherapy. The therapy was not in his school program either. She said, “I suggest to the school many, many times. I told them [her son] took PT [physiotherapy] weekly in Hong Kong. . . , but they cannot provide this service to me. . . . I don’t know how to deal with it.” Her son did not take physical education either, because there was no one at the school to assist him in the PT (physiotherapy) class. He had a back problem and the school did not think he was fit enough to take the course. She thought PT (physiotherapy) would be good for him and suggested it to the school, but her request was refused. She said,

Because, you know, he cannot see and I, I told them his backbone had some problem. And then, you know, school doesn’t allow him to, to take PT (physiotherapy). . . . But, the school said that, you know, lack of people, so maybe next year. And then next year, nobody knows. . . . Actually some, some PT (physiotherapy) is better for him. Even though in Hong Kong . . . he also took PT (physiotherapy), something, you know, just kick, his balance, kick ball, something like that. . . . Here, I also suggest it to school, but, you know, unfortunately, they lack of people to help __.

She told of her response in an exasperated voice: “I cannot, I cannot say anything, you know. Also, I cannot do anything.” She felt discouraged and helpless.

X9. Comparison of education. Xiang was pleased with her son’s being in a regular class. She especially appreciated the individual instruction he received from the district resource teacher and the prompt provision of a computer for home use. In Hong Kong, her son attended only segregated schools. However, she noticed that her son was not taught life skills, as he was in Hong Kong.

X10. Preferred professional qualities. Xiang did not spell out any specific qualities an ideal professional would have, but she did talk about some educators who were helpful and with whom she felt comfortable. Her son’s ESL teacher made efforts to understand her and helped her to communicate. The resource teacher was helpful in arranging for practical matters. Xiang often talked to the counsellor and trusted her opinions. Back in Hong Kong, she once received helpful advice from an educator at a school for the blind. The educator had her son’s interests in mind, when he suggested a good school for people with mental handicaps. She appreciated the suggestions and said, “I didn’t know that there were differences between special schools.” She also appreciated the help she received from a social worker, who had the family in mind when she helped the boy to receive some monetary assistance, so that Xiang could hire tutors for him and arranged for Xiang’s adult daughter to live in an institution with a good reputation.

X11-12. Stress and coping, and lack of knowledge of resources. Xiang discussed the stress of raising two children with disabilities. She said that sometimes when she was tired or when she was asked why she had two children with disabilities, she felt hurt and asked questions of herself: “Oh, why? In, in so many families, they have the normal children. . . . I have two. Why?” She admitted that sometimes she felt sorry for herself. Xiang said she had accepted the fact that her two children were disabled. Her devotion to her children and a focus on the reality helped her cope. She said:

People in Hong Kong often said to me that they admired me, that I was so optimistic even with two handicapped children. Actually, I should be very pessimistic and very unhappy. But, I feel what happens happens. I want to find some resources to help
them.

Xiang valued control of one’s negative emotions and advised other parents who just found out their children had disabilities about the value of self-control. She said, “I think if you have a special child, you, you should control yourself not to be down, you know, is very important.”

Besides relying on herself, Xiang sought help from doctors, social workers, and educators. She realised her needs went beyond the practical help she got from her extended family. She was not as active in seeking support in Canada. She had just learned to drive and did not know how to get to the service agencies. She did not attend parent support meetings, because the meetings were held in the evenings when she needed to make supper and to attend to other matters. Recently, I talked to her over the phone. She indicated that she had little information regarding support services she needed, now that her son was nineteen years old. She said that nobody gave her much information, and that his social worker kept changing. Asked if she asked any of his social workers about what she needed, she simply replied that she learned that one of the workers was coming back after leaving the position.

X13. Personal crisis. Moving to Canada, her son was giving up on his study. He had problem with learning resulted from his disabilities and the difficulty in learning English. Xiang worried about her son’s future and developed a deep sense of helplessness and was in a state of personal crisis. She expressed her worries, “What can he do? What can we do, as I need to take care of him? . . . I am at a loss. I don’t know where I can get help.”

X14. Belief in fate. Before she was a mother, Xiang did not think fate was very important or even believe it. She struggled with the concept of fate in the early years after her children were born. Then she acknowledged that fate is a driving force in her life. She said, “Because you are such, you have to accept.” She had accepted the reality that her son was disabled and moved on to help him in whatever way she could.
Chapter Five: Shared Themes

Before venturing into common themes, I would like to state that the parents were also very different in many respects. For example, Xiang regarded advocacy as a foreign concept while Fern said it was the only way to get things done; Wen's drive for excellence remained strong ever since she learned her son was hearing impaired, while Fern's drive for excellence was replaced by a belief in fate. Nevertheless, shared themes do emerge from the interview and the questionnaire data. These include

- acculturation
- language barrier for the child
- language barrier for the mother
- devotion to the child
- knowledge of the child
- value of education
- belief in home-school collaboration
- working at home with the child
- participation in school
- conflicts and conflict resolution
- comparison of education
- preferred professional qualities
- stress and coping
- lack of knowledge of resources
- self-reliance
- self-control
- parent advocacy
- belief in family support
- belief in fate
- belief in personal control
- personal crisis

These themes, along with questionnaire data on acculturation and coping, are discussed as follows.

Acculturation

The mothers in this study sacrificed a great deal by moving to Canada. They gave up their familiar life styles and established social networks. They were seeking a better life and some believed their children's educational needs would be better met in Canada. However, living in a new country requires a considerable amount of adjustment. The mothers experienced varying amounts of stress related to relocation and adaptation to Canada. Eight parents had limited English, which prevented them from being fully integrated in Canadian society. Two of them (Fiona and Grace) communicated with the teachers often and were active in reaching out to the mainstream society, having a good command of English. All the children were in the process of learning English and this was a source of parental stress. Ping, Wen, and Xiang, in particular, were deeply troubled because they felt that their children's needs were not being met. Two mothers (Helen and Wen) mentioned during the interviews racial discrimination and feeling of racism, which induced some anxiety for them.

Six parents (Fiona, Grace, Helen, Joan, Wen, and Xiang) expressed a desire to adapt to their new environment. Helen, Grace, and Wen said they experienced personal change after moving to Canada as a result of being influenced by a different culture. For example, Grace said that she realised she had power as a parent. The other four (Ellen, Lan, Ping, and Sophie) did not discuss efforts to adapt or the experience of personal change. All the mothers wanted their children to learn English, and only three parents did not make efforts to learn English themselves. The evidence points to the parents' desire to be assimilated, at least in terms of communication.

The two questionnaires on acculturation and cultural identity indicated that the women generally identified with the Chinese culture and had low levels of Canadian acculturation. All the mothers kept close ties with other Chinese people. Fiona, Joan, Wen, and Xiang were most acculturated while Ellen, Lan, Ping, and Sophie were least acculturated of all the mothers (for the parents' scores on the two scales, see Appendix F and G.) In terms of cultural identity, data from
the two scales were converged and the result is that eight of them (except Joan and Xiang) had a higher Chinese identity than Canadian. Xiang had the most dramatic shift. I brought the result to her, and she could not explain the incompatibility of being most acculturated of all the parents on one scale and the least on the other scale. For an explanation of the convergence of the two cultural identity indexes, see Appendix H.

In sum, none of the parents were fully acculturated, but they did not identify with Chinese culture on every dimension of acculturation. This indicates that the parents were being acculturated to Canadian mores, albeit at a low level.

Language Barrier for the Child

Learning to speak English is “like starting all over to talk,” as Wen put it. English was the medium of instruction for all the children. Eight parents (except Ellen and Joan) were concerned with their children’s ability to acquire English and its effect on their school learning. The parents also saw three other problems arising from their children’s struggles to learn English: psychological, social, and job-related. Wen and Xiang noted that their sons were under tremendous pressure to learn English. Sophie and Wen were concerned that inability to speak English prevented their children from interacting with their English-speaking peers. Helen, Ping, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang worried that their children would have difficulty securing jobs because of their limited English proficiency. Despite the problems, all the parents believed that their children needed to learn English in order to function in school and in the larger society.

The degree of the parents’ concern for their children’s English abilities varied. In general, parents of high school students were the most anxious. The types of disabilities of their children also had a role in determining parental concerns. Fiona, Grace, and Ping were less concerned than the others; as these children with intellectual disabilities approached adulthood, their ability to learn English was not as important as vocational preparation to their mothers. Five mothers (Helen, Lan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang) were more concerned with their children’s English because they believed their children (four of them had sensory disabilities) had the ability to learn English well. Lan, whose son was diagnosed as mildly intellectually disabled and who was in grade two, believed in the importance of building a foundation at an early age.

Language Barrier for the Mother

Eight of the mothers encountered language barrier. Although Xiang deemed she had no communication difficulty with the teachers, she totally misunderstood a factual question I posed to her in English. She also switched to Chinese whenever she wanted to elaborate more fully on a topic during our interview. As a result, I put her in the group of mothers who had difficulty with the English language.

Length of time in Canada did not seem to determine parents’ proficiency of English. Lan, who had been in Canada for nine years, had difficulty with English, while Fiona and Grace, with less than five years of residency, had enough English to function fairly easy in the larger society. Generally, though, new immigrants had difficulty with English, as seven out of the ten parents expressed this difficulty. Although four mothers were attending English classes, they found it difficult to learn. They felt they did not have enough opportunity to practice. The perception of the problem with English varied. Helen, Ping, and Xiang did not dwell on the difficulties of learning English. Although she could not speak English at all, Ping relied on her eldest son to be her spokesperson and interpreter. Helen was able to talk to the teachers because she was given the time to think and piece words together. Besides, her husband, who had good English, always accompanied her to school meetings. Xiang appreciated school staff who understood her difficulty, listened attentively, and helped her out when she needed it. As such, she was able to downplay her difficulty with the English language.

Problems with the English language were paramount for Ellen, Joan, Lan, Sophie, and Wen. Interpreter services were provided at formal meetings for three mothers (Ellen, Joan, and Lan). Sophie and Wen (had to) rely on their own means of finding interpreters. There were problems without professional interpreter services. Ping’s reliance on her eldest son as interpreter led to family tensions, and Sophie believed her son’s translation was selective and sometimes inaccurate. Inability to speak fluent English led to little school participation. As a result, these five parents were not fully informed of what their sons were doing at school. The same five mothers as well as Helen also found that they were not able to supervise their children’s homework as much as they wanted.
Lack of English proficiency further prevented the mothers from getting information about services. Only three mothers (Fiona, Grace, and Wen) joined mainstream parent groups to get information.

Devotion to the Child

All the parents in the study were devoted to their children. They often put their children’s needs above their own. Grace and Wen quit their jobs in order to devote more time to their sons, while Fiona thought about quitting her job. Seven mothers (except Ellen, Fiona, and Lan) said they gave more attention to their children with disabilities than their other children. Five parents (Fiona, Grace, Helen, Joan, and Wen) moved their homes in order to better meet their children’s needs. Seven parents (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, Helen, Lan, Wen, and Xiang) brought their children to early intervention programs or arranged for private lessons. Helen, Joan, and Wen explicitly said they immigrated to Canada for their children’s sake.

Knowledge of the Child

All ten parents felt they knew and understood their children’s needs. Knowing what their children did at school was very important to six of the parents (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Joan, Ping, and Wen). However, most parents’ knowledge of their children decreased since immigration, because they were not able to be as involved due to their limited English proficiency.

Value of Education

Education was important to all of the parents. The mothers did what they could to help their children learn. Wen and Xiang hired tutors. Helen, Joan, and Sophie were thinking of hiring tutors, but did not pursue it for economical reasons. All the parents had worked, or were working, with their children at home. Helen, Joan, and Wen regarded Western education highly and came to Canada partly for their children’s benefit.

Belief in Home-School Collaboration

Five parents (Grace, Joan, Lan, Ping, and Wen) expressed their support for home-school collaboration. For example, Wen believed that parents and teachers could complement each other to contribute to the children’s learning, while Ping pointed out she could contribute by teaching her son in Chinese so that he could better understand the teaching. In their view, parents are one rung under teachers in the collaborative relationship. For example, Grace categorised the teacher as the host and the parent as the guest in the working relationship, and Wen assigned the parent to the learner role and placed teacher knowledge above that of the parent.

Working at Home with the Child

Home teaching was considered part of the responsibility of being a parent. All the mothers were very much involved at home in the children’s learning. The parents supervised or gave their children homework, and sometimes taught them. The desire to teach their children motivated five mothers (Fiona, Helen, Lan, Sophie, and Wen) to venture into areas they had little knowledge of. Helen, Lan, and Wen worked with their children on English, even though their own English was not fluent. Fiona wanted to teach her son to ride a bus, in spite of the fact that she did not know how to take city buses. Sophie wanted to help her son take notes, although she did not know how to go about it.

Limited English proficiency adversely affected the mothers’ involvement. Homework supervision decreased since they immigrated. Ellen stopped supervising her son’s homework, while six other mothers (Helen, Joan, Lan, Ping, Sophie, and Wen) did as much as they could manage. Helen and Wen set their goal on studying English in order to teach their children. Four parents (Helen, Joan, Ping, and Sophie) enlisted help from their other children. In general, parents whose children had intellectual disabilities (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, and Ping), with the exception of Lan, were not as involved as parents of children with sensory disabilities (Helen, Joan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang). The former group took a more relaxed attitude toward their children’s academic learning. For example, Ellen believed that her son could not be forced to learn and that a more relaxed approach was beneficial to his learning. In contrast, Helen and Wen worked very hard, because they were concerned over their children’s future and they felt their children had the ability to learn.

Participation in School

All the parents participated in their children’s schools, to varying degrees. Participation included attending school activities, contacting teachers, attending meetings, and making suggestions to teachers. A major barrier to school participation was the parents’ English proficiency. Four mothers (Ellen, Joan, Lan, and Sophie) could only participate at the report card
sessions when interpreters were present. The other six parents utilised personal resources in order to be involved in their children’s schools. Ping took her eldest son with her to be the interpreter, while Helen, Wen, and Xiang made strenuous efforts to communicate directly with their sons’ teachers.

Different educational practices and different cultural expectations also affected the level of parent involvement. Some parents commented that classroom observation was not allowed, nor were there formal parent-teacher meetings, in their home countries. Six parents (Ellen, Helen, Joan, Lan, Ping, and Sophie) expressed the opinion that they did not feel they were in the position to influence school decisions or that they did not want to meddle the teacher’s domain. They went to parent-teacher meetings to “listen” to what teachers told them.

All the parents were concerned either with their children’s socialisation, or their children’s future, particularly in terms of future employment, or both. Eight of the children (except Helen’s son and Joan’s son) had difficulty making friends. Wen noted the difficulty faced by children who spoke little English in making friends with English-speaking children, as well as the difficulty faced by students with disabilities to mingle with their non-disabled peers. As for their children’s future, the seven parents of high school students were most concerned. Two parents (Fiona and Grace) had less concern than the other five mothers, because they did not expect their children, with moderate intellectual disabilities, to be totally independent.

Conflicts and Conflict Resolution

Seven parents (except Ellen, Joan, and Ping) reported having conflicts with their children’s teachers as well as other service providers. Different priorities, the perception that their children’s needs were not being met, and different expectations as to what teaching and learning should be were at the root of the conflicts. The parents were restrained in the ways they expressed their disagreements. The parents attempted to resolve conflicts by doing nothing, giving up, avoiding dealing with the conflict, accommodating themselves, applying self-reliance, employing passive resistance, using appeasement, applying subtle or indirect communication, seeking intermediaries, and, in some instances, speaking up. The majority of the strategies were close to what Grace termed a “low and soft attitude.” Even Fiona and Wen, who were keen on advocacy, mostly adopted accommodation and minimisation. Only three mothers (Fiona, Lan, and Wen) applied more active strategies of speaking up on occasion. The mothers’ respect for professionals, fear of retaliation, and consideration for the teachers shaped the “low and soft attitude.” Two parents (Helen and Sophie) thought that it was difficult to change things. A belief in self-reliance also contributed to the use of coping strategies. Six mothers (Grace, Helen, Lan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang) often relied on themselves to compensate for what they thought their children lacked at school. In addition, four parents (Ellen, Joan, Ping, and Sophie) blamed their limited English for their inaction.

Ellen, Joan, and Ping mentioned some minor disagreements. Two strategies, hoping for a better future and self-reliance, helped minimise potential conflicts for the three parents. Ellen was disappointed that her son did not receive speech therapy, which he was given in Hong Kong, but she thought services would be given in time, not realising how children became eligible for speech services in B.C. Joan was worried about the slow speed with which her son learned English. When the teachers told her that on average it took five years for immigrant children to master English, she relaxed. When the school did not comply with Ping’s suggestion to give her son homework, she gave him work to do at home herself.

Comparison of Education

The parents were adults when they immigrated to Canada. Nine mothers compared education in B.C. with that of their home countries. The mothers were tentative in their comparisons, because they felt they did not fully understand the Canadian system. Fiona, who only lived in B.C. for five months at the time of the interview, said that she knew too little of Canadian education to compare. Four parents preferred one system over the other. Ellen and Joan preferred the system in B.C. while Sophie and Ping preferred that of Hong Kong. Five other parents (Grace, Helen, Lan, Wen, and Xiang) expressed the opinion that both systems had advantages and disadvantages. While they respected the Canadian system, they missed some aspects of the systems in their home countries. Wen would like to see that the best of each be combined and regretted that the teachers she met did not seem to be interested in Asian practices and philosophies.

The parents compared the status of teachers, classroom management, disciplinary practices,
and what constituted teaching and learning. All the parents commented on the level of educational competition in Asia. Both Ellen and Lan described the traditional Chinese approach as “stuffing-the-duck.” Joan likened the high-pressured education in Taiwan to a “straight jacket.” In contrast, three parents (Helen, Lan, and Sophie) believed that there was more content taught in Asian schools and were dissatisfied with what they considered too low expectations of students and too little focus on academics in B.C. The parents also believed in the role of homework in reinforcing what their children had learned in school. Fiona, Grace, Ping, and Sophie often assigned their children homework when no homework was assigned by teachers.

Another difference between B.C. and Asia is the practice of integration. At the time of the interview, all the children were integrated for at least part of the school day in regular classrooms. In contrast, segregated classes were still the norm in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, according to the parents. The children of five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, Ping, and Xiang) were in segregated settings before moving to Canada. Except for Ping, they all liked the idea of integration. Fiona and Grace noted that integration brought benefits to the children. Grace believed that integration created positive changes in public attitudes toward people with disabilities. Xiang appreciated the individualised services offered by the district resource teacher for students with visual impairments. However, some reservations were expressed. Ping and Xiang noted the lack of life skills training in integrated settings, which were provided by special schools in their home countries.

Preferred Professional Qualities

Eight parents (except Ellen and Ping) named qualities they deemed good teachers possessed. What the parents deemed as good teacher qualities may be described as “heart on the sleeve.” They valued caring and loving teachers who were concerned with the interests of the children. Five parents (Fiona, Grace, Helen, Joan, and Wen) valued teacher acceptance of their children. Teachers’ having a good understanding of their children was important to Fiona, Lan, and Wen. Grace, Lan, and Wen appreciated teachers who utilised children’s strengths to help them learn. Five parents (Grace, Helen, Lan, Sophie, and Wen) believed that good teachers had high academic expectations for their students. Too low expectations was a cause of conflict and concern. Empathy, receptiveness to suggestions, and friendliness were mentioned as valuable qualities in working with parents. Many parents appreciated friendly teachers. Grace, Ping, and Wen were grateful to teachers who were receptive to their suggestions. Helen, Lan, Wen, and Xiang preferred teachers who empathised the parental role and were able to understand parental concerns. Helen, Lan, and Xiang preferred the teachers who listened attentively in order to understand what they were trying to say in English. Grace and Sophie appreciated teachers who showed an interest in Chinese culture. Three parents (Fiona, Grace, and Wen) preferred informal communication between parents and teachers. Wen commented that, in Taiwan, she could talk to her son’s teachers any time, unlike the formal arrangements of parent-teacher meetings in B.C. Grace had much informal contact with her son’s teachers in Hong Kong and believed that it helped parents and teachers to understand each other. Fiona, on the other hand, enjoyed meetings. She described an IEP meeting as fun, “like a tea party.” In this way, she transformed a formal occasion into an informal one.

Stress and Coping

Five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Ping, and Wen) stated that the experience of raising children with disabilities had changed them. Fiona spoke of “letting go” of wanting to be “perfect.” Ellen felt she gained self-confidence and a belief that she was in control from the experience. Helen mentioned numerous rewards she gained from raising her son. Wen noted that she had become humble and patient. Not all parents were so positive. On the other hand, Ping stopped socialising with other people after she learned that her son was disabled.

All the parents experienced stress and anxiety when they first learned of their children’s disabilities. The parents found that parenting children with disabilities was difficult. One source of the stress they felt came from other people’s attitudes toward people with disabilities. This was expressed by six parents (Grace, Helen, Ping, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang). Five parents (Ellen, Joan, Lan, Sophie, and Wen) noted that meeting their children’s needs on a daily basis was a source of stress. A good portion of the mothers’ stress is related to the children’s schooling. Grace, Helen, and Wen reported the stress of having to deal with teachers who did not meet their sons’ special needs. Helen had begged teachers in Taiwan to accept her son in the regular classrooms. All except
Ellen and Joan were concerned with their children’s English proficiency and its effect on school learning. Worries about their children’s futures were a source of stress for five parents whose children were in secondary school (Helen, Ping, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang). Not knowing how to access special services in B.C. was also a source of concern; this was expressed by seven parents (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Joan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang).

Overall, the parents mainly relied on their own resources to cope with the challenges of parenting their sons. The interview data corroborate the data gathered from the Chinese Coping Scale, in which strategies often used by the mothers included: “Face the problem and devise solution,” “see through things” or “resign to what is inevitable,” “maintain optimism and self-confidence,” and “forebear and remain calm.” The majority of the parents rarely sought help from external sources (see Appendixes I).

The interview data revealed that the mothers coped by devoting themselves to their children. For example, Xiang put her children’s needs and interests before her own, and turned her sorrow into strength by focusing on what she could do for her children. On the other hand, Joan felt that her focus on her son created more stress for her and began to decrease the time she gave him. Positive, comparative thinking emerged as a coping strategy. Five mothers (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Joan, and Sophie) thought they were fortunate, because their sons were not as disabled as other children. Fiona referred this mentality to “Ah Q spirit,” a Chinese idiom derived from a comical fictional character who made himself feel better by comparing himself to those he thought were worse off. Of the seven mothers who professed religious beliefs, four (Fiona, Grace, Helen, and Joan) felt their religious beliefs helped them to cope.

Five parents (Fiona, Grace, Helen, Lan, and Wen) held a tentative outlook on life to ease the anxiety over uncertainty about their children’s future. They focused on what they could do at the present and were disinclined to plan long-term goals. For example, Grace, Helen, and Wen refused to spell out their expectations for their children, when asked, because they did not know what their children would be able to do or what their interests would be. Fiona and Grace put this incident of uncertainty into perspective by acknowledging the uncertainties of life. Grace expressed the view that too much planning was meaningless and that things did not usually work out the way they were planned. A similar or derivative strategy to a tentative outlook on life is “taking one step at a time.” For example, Helen was making tentative plans for her son’s future employment and was prepared to revise them.

Despite self-reliance, five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Joan, Wen, and Xiang) indicated that they needed more information and/or services for their children as well as for themselves. Emotional support from others was less of a concern in these parents’ mind. The mothers sought both formal and informal support. All the parents sought help from medical professionals. Five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, Helen, and Wen) also sought help from educators. Seven parents (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, Helen, Joan, Wen, and Xiang) had sought help from other parents for parenting advice and information. Helen, Lan, Ping, and Sophie occasionally sought help from family members. However, Xiang felt that help from family can be limited. As well, too much reliance on family members can create family tensions, as it was the case with Ping and her eldest son.

Lack of Knowledge of Resources

Seven parents (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Joan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang) said that they knew little about the services and resources for people with disabilities and their families. The other three parents (Grace, Lan, and Ping), along with Sophie, felt no need for information. Three out of the seven mothers (Ellen, Fiona, and Wen) expressed the need to obtain services for their children and to be connected to parent support groups. They were actively seeking information, while the other three (Helen, Joan, and Xiang) were not. Being newcomers in a different cultural environment was fraught with difficulty about how to access information. They did not know how or where to find information. Limited English proficiency was also a factor in inducing the lack of knowledge.

Self-reliance

All the parents demonstrated self-reliance in their day-to-day care of their children. Fiona, who utilised a variety of resources, mainly relied on herself. Five parents (Fiona, Helen, Lan, Sophie, and Wen) believed so strongly in being self-reliant that they tried to work with their children on subjects about which they knew little. Five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Grace, Helen, and Wen) attributed their self-reliance to the limited resources and services in Asia. Fiona, Grace, and
Helen said that, in Hong Kong, parents were encouraged to help train their children at home to boost the lack of resources. Helen and Wen noted that parents in Taiwan had to travel great distances for private preschool classes and that many teachers asked parents to stay at home to train their children. Ping and Sophie mentioned relatives who did not accept their children as a reason for their self-reliance. Teachers' low academic expectations also prompted Helen and Lan to work with their children at home.

On the Chinese Coping Scale, five parents (Helen, Joan, Sophie, Wen, and Xiang) reported often only used their own resources to cope with difficulties. The other five parents used both internal and external coping strategies, but four of them utilised more internal resources than external resources. The exception is Ping, whose internal scores and the number of internal strategies utilised were less than her external scores and the number of external strategies, but the difference was minimal. Summing up coping strategies that the ten parents indicated they used often, thirty-six out of the forty-six were internal strategies. This is equivalent to self-reliance, corroborating the interview data.

Self-control

Five parents (Ellen, Fiona, Helen, Wen, and Xiang) applied the strategy of “forebear and remain calm” in dealing with the stress associated with raising their children with disabilities. Xiang in particular stressed the importance of this to her coping in her interview data. Helen also suppressed her pain when dealing with unaccepting teachers or others who did not understand her role as a parent to a child with a hearing impairment.

Parent Advocacy

Two parents (Fiona and Wen) advocated for their children’s education. These two mothers also served as chairpersons to parent organisations and lobbied for support services for children with disabilities in their home countries. Fiona believed that advocacy was the way to get things done. Wen started a parent association, because she believed that it was important to act collectively in asking for services. Since moving to Canada, these two parents were not political advocates. Both parents devoted themselves full time to their own children.

Belief in Family Support

Three parents (Fiona, Lan, and Ping) believed in the support provided within the family. This belief is related to the belief in self-reliance. Fiona deemed it difficult to rely on others. Lan and Ping had little contact with both the larger society and the Chinese community and saw the family as a self-contained unit.

Belief in Fate

With the exception of Ellen, all the parents stated that fate played a role in their lives. Ellen believed that she determined the cause of her life. Although she often applied the attitude of “to see through things,” or “to resign to what is inevitable,” as indicated in the Chinese Coping Scale, in dealing with stress, this coping strategy may not equate to a belief fate for her. Throughout the interview, unlike the other parents, she never mentioned fate as having any impact in her life. In contrast, Ping and Xiang believed that fate controlled one’s life. The other seven mothers mentioned a belief in fate along with a belief in personal control. Joan and Wen placed more emphasis on their own efforts than fate. Grace, Helen, and Lan believed that both fate and themselves shaped their lives. Fiona and Sophie had a strong belief in fate determining their lives.

Grace commented that many Chinese parents in Hong Kong felt that they were being punished for past sins by their children’s disabilities. Yet only Xiang and her husband thought they had committed wrong doings in this life or a past life. Despite their belief in fate, these parents were active in helping their children. Lan said that, after accepting her fate, she tried to make the best of it. This corroborates Grace’s observation that many Chinese parents in Hong Kong, after somewhat passively accepting their fate of parenting children with disabilities, were able to face whatever they had to do for their children.

A belief in fate may vary in different domains of life and at different times. Sophie’s belief in fate did not affect her efforts to help her son. In contrast, Xiang began to believe in the role of fate in many parts of her life after she had two children with disabilities. Grace believed in fate only when it came to interpersonal relationships. To her, fate meant that she did whatever she could to be on good terms with others before she accepted whatever came of her efforts. Attitudes toward fate differed. Three parents (Fiona, Helen, and Joan) did not view fate as whimsical or even hostile.
Helen and Joan believed that fate had arranged the good things in their lives. Fiona believed that, if she did her best and left the rest to fate, things would be taken care of. On the other hand, Sophie expressed a negative view of fate and blamed fate when her hard work did not pay off or when her husband was injured in a freak accident. She also believed in luck or chance, the whimsical side of fate.

**Belief in Personal Control**

Six parents (Ellen, Grace, Joan, Lan, Sophie, and Wen) acknowledged that they controlled their lives. There is an indication that Joan’s belief in fate was influenced by her belief in personal control. She is a Buddhist who believed that what she did had a say in how her fate would turn out.

**Personal Crisis**

Three parents (Ping, Wen, and Xiang) experienced personal crises, accompanied by a sense of uncertainty, anxiety, and helplessness. These crises were aggravated by the fact that both they and their children had difficulty with the English language. Ping felt her son improved just a bit after immigration. Although she felt he could do better, she did not know how to help him. Her biggest worry remained with his future job prospects. Ping felt that her son was sacrificed by the family’s move to Canada. Xiang worried about her son’s difficulty in learning English and his future. Wen had many difficulties seeking resources and services, felt frustrated and helpless, and began to regret immigrating to Canada. Ping lessened her anxiety and helplessness by determining to take her son back to Hong Kong so that he could communicate better and work in a sheltered workshop. Wen and Xiang intended to stay, which sustained or heightened their anxiety.

**Summary**

There is a great deal of complexity and competing forces in the parents’ situations. It should be noted here that it is difficult to integrate the findings into a unifying whole, due to the complexity of qualitative data. Coherence in qualitative inquiry is not without contradictions; rather, it entails understanding (Agar, 1986).

The parents’ experiences and perspectives on education and how they coped with parenting stress were embedded in the context of their lives. Challenges associated with raising their children, adjusting to a new environment, and learning a new language were themes that all participants shared. The difficulties of speaking English were paramount for the majority of the parents and their children. The parents’ devotion to their children and the value they placed on education motivated them to work with their children at home, participate in the schools, and collaborate with educators. Conflicts with their children’s teachers were mostly resolved by accommodation. Lack of English proficiency, their children’s approaching adulthood, and a lack of knowledge of resources and services in B.C. created personal crises for some parents.

There was variation among the parents. Differences of beliefs and behaviour in relation to the parents’ experience of raising the children were related to English proficiency, types of disabilities, and ages of the children. Parents whose children were in secondary school felt more urgency regarding their children’s learning English. Type of disabilities influenced parental expectations; parents of children with sensory disabilities had higher expectations for their children than those whose children had intellectual disabilities. The two parents who had a good command of English were able to communicate with their children’s teachers more easily on an ongoing basis, participate in parent support groups, and get information on related resources and services. Parents with limited English proficiency had limited contact with schools and support groups. The effects of levels of education, religion, and which Chinese society they came from on educational involvement and coping are unclear, based on the data gathered.

Figure 2 depicts suggested relationships between the themes. The tentative relationships emerged, when, for example, a unit of analysis cannot be split in two but it does have two themes. Since the ideology is entwined, the two themes are possibly related. I felt more certain about some relationships, such as that between language barrier and school participation, than others. Since I did not test the relationships by applying segments of the transcript to the relationships, I did not feel I was in the position to talk about the relationships other than presenting them briefly as a suggestion for future research.
Figure 2. Overview of shared themes and suggested patterns. The number below each theme represents the number of parents who shared the themes.
Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions and other relevant research. Generalisability of the findings, limitations of the study, implications for policy and practice, implications for future studies, and the conclusion follow.

Discussion of Findings

The themes generated from the interview data and data gathered from the questionnaires point to three main topics. Discussion of immigrant experiences, parent involvement, and coping is presented below. Some themes are apparently related to the experience of being parents, some are unique to immigrants, and some are culturally based.

Issues Related to Being Immigrants: Language and Culture

The mothers in this study generally had a low rate of acculturation to Canadian mores and identified themselves as Chinese. This finding was confirmed by their responses to the two questionnaires on acculturation and cultural identity. This is not surprising, given the fact that all except one had been in Canada as adults for less than five years and the majority of them spoke little English. Ponterotto et al. (1995) reported that scores obtained from the SL-ASIA, which has been utilised in research concerning Asian Americans, were related to years of schooling in the U.S., years living in non-Asian neighbourhoods, self-rating of acculturation, generation level, English fluency, total years living in the U.S., and age upon entering the U.S. Data from the SL-ASIA questionnaire indicate that the parents’ value scores and behaviour competency scores did not correspond one-to-one with other dimensions of acculturation. This pattern supports the multi-dimensionality of acculturation.

The Chinese Canadian immigrant mothers in the present study generally chose to immigrate to Canada (albeit some were less willing than the others). Whittaker (1988) noted that the choice to immigrate implies hopes for a better life, and concluded, “Any account of a decision to immigrate has built into it an imperative to depict the distasteful aspects of the place left and the appealing aspects of the place sought” (p. 37). The subject of Whittaker’s study were Mexican immigrants who were well-educated and generally had a good life in Mexico, but they wanted to improve their “quality of life” (p. 38). The Chinese Canadian immigrant mothers in the present study were also seeking a better quality of life. The mothers talked about many aspects of an improved life styles in Canada and the problems they had encountered in the countries from which they came. Specifically, they mentioned the clean air, the friendly people, the physical environment, the more accepting public attitudes towards people with disabilities, as well as the educational practice of integration. More than half of the parents felt that their children would have a better future in Canada. One parent from Taiwan cited political unrest in that country as a reason for immigration. Political unrest in Hong Kong may be linked to immigration to Canada (six of the parents came from Hong Kong).

Adaptation to a new environment is a complex process. Two parents mentioned they had encountered racial discrimination or racism. Berry and Kim (1988, as cited in Zheng and Berry, 1991) noted that English proficiency, comfort with and knowledge of Canadian mainstream culture, and whether or not they perceived that their needs were being met were crucial factors in ease of acculturation or adaptation to Canadian culture. This observation was true of the immigrant mothers in this study. The limited English proficiency of most of the mothers in this study limited their participation in their children’s schools and their access to information regarding services. Knowing that their children’s problems learning English could affect their future and restrict their employment opportunities, they wanted their children to learn English. Language learning difficulties were a major concern to mothers of children who were teenagers when they immigrated to Canada. The value placed on learning English expressed the parents’ desire to adapt to life in Canada.

Parent Involvement and the Role of Beliefs and Values

The mothers in the present study placed a high value on education and were involved in their children’s education. This finding is in agreement with that of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), that is, parents’ definition of and beliefs about their role in relation to their children’s education was an important factor in the parents’ decision to be involved. The mothers’ participation in school was more limited than their degree of involvement at home. Most of the mothers had limited proficiency in English, which adversely affected their involvement at school and, to some extent, at home. The relationship between English proficiency and school participation
has long been noted in the literature on minority parents (Darling, 1988; Huang & Gibbs, 1992; Lauer, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993). Another explanation for limited involvement with the schools is the mothers' experience with the formal structure of Chinese schools. It is noted that minority parents may not be used to the concept of parental participation (Chan, 1986; Harry, 1992; Pacific Coast Public Television Association, 1993). Half of the parents expressed the view that participation in school was like meddling into the “teacher’s domain.” This is similar to the finding that many parents of minority backgrounds tend to have high regard for expert knowledge and did not expect to collaborate with teachers in making decisions affecting their children (Harry, 1992; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Lynch & Stein, 1987).

Most of the mothers expressed ideas of teaching and learning that differed from those of the teachers. Anderson and Gunderson (1997) reported a similar result based on their study of Chinese, Iranian, and East-Indian parents in Canada. Different expectations and perceptions of schools can affect parents’ school participation. The mothers in the present study expressed a preference for informality the teachers and believed that good teachers acted like parents to their students, caring for them and having their best interests in mind. Several mothers also expressed their appreciation of friendly teachers. A preference for informality is also noted among mainstream parents in North America (Nixon, 1991; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Two of the mothers in the present study stated that they felt overwhelmed by formal meetings in which plans for their children’s education were being discussed. One mother strongly objected to the over-emphasis on planning that seemed to be taking place. Wall (1982) noted that it is important to respond to parents’ personal styles and preferences and warned: “the use of overly sophisticated ways of advising and decision making with families who are not ready or even interested in this kind of participation” (p. 18) can alienate parents.

While most of the mothers reported that their children’s teachers were helpful, they also experienced conflicts or disagreements with teachers. Most of the mothers did not openly voice their disagreements; rather, they tended to resolve conflicts by accommodating or minimising them. Consistent with the high value placed on “interpersonal harmony” by Chinese people, they avoided open conflict and disagreement. This finding has also been reported in the research concerning Chinese people (Bond, 1991; Chan, 1986; Lin, 1939; Hsu, 198; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987; Smith, 1991). Chinese people tend to use indirect modes of communication and adopt a “non-confrontational” attitude in conflict situations (Bond, 1991; Chan, 1986; Leung, 1987; Ma, 1992; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). Darling’s (1988) finding that parental activism arises from repeated negative experiences with service providers was not found in this study. Nor did the parents in the study complain about professional dominance that is observed among mainstream parents of children with disabilities (Nixon, 1991). Immigrant parents of Puerto Rican backgrounds in the States also complained about professional dominance and “English-only” instruction (Harry, 1992). None of the mothers in the present study objected to “English-only” for their children. Rather, they expressed feelings of urgency regarding their children’s learning English.

Degree of acculturation related to degree of school participation more than the mothers’ cultural identity. In addition, the more acculturated mothers tended to prefer Canadian teachers to teachers in Chinese societies while those who were less acculturated tended to prefer Chinese teachers to teachers in their home countries, while those who were less acculturated tended to prefer Chinese teachers. The preference for Canadian education tended to correspond to the parents’ levels of acculturation. The degree of their English proficiency seemed to be the most important factor in determining level of participation in school. Two of the mothers were able to be more involved than the rest because they spoke English well.

Coping and the Role of Beliefs and Values

The mothers reported concerns and anxieties they felt when they first learned that their children had disabilities. They also noted the daily stress of caring for children with disabilities. The parents of older children were deeply concerned about their children’s transition to adulthood. The finding about stress is consistent with studies of mainstream parents of children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994; Bubolz & Whiren, 1984; Dyson, 1997; Ingstad, 1990; Scorgie et al., 1998). The mothers reported high level of stress and worry related to their children’s educational needs. Involvement with their children’s education helped to alleviate their anxiety. In addition, the majority of the parents appreciated those educators who understood their concerns. The connection between
parental involvement and parental coping is also supported by other research (Beresford, 1994; Gallagher et al., 1983; Nixon, 1991; Wilgosh, 1990).

Most of the parents in the present study reported that they relied on their own internal resources and seldom sought social support. The sources of social support utilised by the mothers in this study included spouses, friends, other parents, and professional workers, which finding corroborates the findings of studies on mainstream parents of children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994; Nixon, 1991). Self-reliance as a way of coping has been found in other studies of Chinese people, both with or without children with disabilities (Bond, 1991; Chan, 1986; Cheung & Kan, 1987; Christensen 1987; Lin & Lin, 1978; Pearson & Chan, 1993; Shek & Cheung, 1990; Shek & Tsang, 1993; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1987; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989). These parents learned to rely on themselves in Asia, as a response to the lack of societal resources. Self-reliance as well as its extension, reliance on one's family for support, has its historical root. Lin (1939) noted that Chinese people lack social spirit, while Hsu (1983) noted that there were few non-kinship groups throughout Chinese history (until more recently). Chinese family structure provides and supports interdependence; protection and security are provided by the family in return for individual members' subordination and duties performed (Baker, 1979; Bond, 1991). In response to lack of societal resources for children with disabilities, the Chinese Canadian immigrants in the present study relied on themselves, while mainstream parents of children with disabilities in the United States campaigned for public services (Darling, 1988).

The beliefs and values that proved most helpful to parental coping include: devotion to their children, self-reliance, self-control, belief in fate, family support, and personal control. Comparing one's situations to those of other people, taking the approach of "one step at a time," and religious faith were also helpful. These findings are very similar to those of Yalung (1992), who found that cultural values affecting the counselling of the Filipino parents of children with special needs included the value of children, self-pride, shame, familism, fatalism, smooth interpersonal relationship, and value of education.

The Chinese Canadian parents in this study were devoted to their children and put their children's needs above their own. Reliance on support from family members helped some parents, but caused tensions in one family. As indicated in the responses on the Chinese Coping Scale, half of the parents reported they often employed the strategy to "forebear and remain calm," a way of dealing with stress that is similar to self-control. Self-control has often been noted among Chinese people with or without children with disabilities (Bond, 1991; Cheung & Kan, 1987; Christensen, 1987; Dion & Yee, 1987; Lin, 1939; Shen Ryan & Smith, 1989; Shek & Cheung, 1990; Shek & Tsang, 1993).

On the Chinese Coping Scale, most parents applied the strategy to "see through things" or "resign to what is inevitable," similar to the notion of fate. A belief in fate has often been noted in the literature on Chinese people (Hsu, 1953; Lin, 1939; Smith, 1991). Only one mother in the present study did not express during the interview a belief in fate, which has been documented in anecdotal accounts on Chinese parents of children with disabilities (Cheung & Kan, 1987; Ching, 1982). This belief in fate is supported by Smith's (1991) observation that "the idea of inescapable destiny served as a convenient explanation for adversity and disappointment" (p. 267) for many Chinese people. Smith (1991) also noted that "Chinese attitudes toward fate... seldom crippled initiative" (p. 267). Most of the mothers in the present study were engaged in various activities to help their children, despite a belief in fate. At the same time, a belief in personal control may be responsible for action taking, as supported by the literature on locus of control.

Making comparisons with other people has also been proven to be a helpful strategy for parents of children with disabilities (Beresford, 1994; Frey et al., 1989). The mothers in present study often compared themselves favourably with other parents of children with disabilities. They also focused on the present and avoided thinking about the future. This tentative outlook on life is similar to the notion of taking one step at a time, which is a useful coping strategy, as noted by Beresford (1994). Not all mothers who professed religious beliefs found that their faith helped them to cope with stress. Having little information or understanding about the system of services to people with disabilities in B.C. also contributed to parental stress and may reinforce their self-reliance. Overall, the parents' beliefs and values contributed to the way they coped, that is, relying on their own resources. For some parents, it is due to these beliefs and values that they did not seek
help. This is consistent with the finding that Chinese people in Asia utilised little formal services (Cheung, 1987).

The results of the Chinese Coping Scale show that reliance on internal coping strategies, which is consistent with the findings of Shek and Tsang (1993), who studied the mothers of preschoolers with mental handicaps in Hong Kong. The strategies the two groups of mothers often used are essentially the same. The only difference is that the mean score of the internal coping (referring to coping by oneself) was found to be higher in present study, while the mean score of the external coping (referring to seeking help from others) was lower. The mothers in the present study appear to be more self-reliant. The difference may be explained by the fact that parents of young children with disabilities may require more outside help. The new immigrant status, language difficulties, and not knowing about the resources and services in B.C. may also contribute to greater utilisation of internal coping by the Chinese Canadians. The finding of little knowledge about services adds to the literature that many parents of children with disabilities, especially minority parents, generally did not know about available services (Beresford, 1994; Lavelle & Keogh, 1980; Nixon, 1991; Sontag & Schacht, 1994).

Proficiency in English and lack of familiarity with public resources determined parental coping mechanisms more than the general level of acculturation and cultural identity. English proficiency and unfamiliarity with resources did not correspond to each other; for example, the two parents with a good command of English also indicated they had little knowledge of resources, although they had more information than the others.

**Generalisability of the Findings**

The premise of generalisability lies in the validity or credibility of the findings. Qualitative and positivistic research methods are often viewed as two different paradigms (Agar, 1980). Thomas Kuhn stated that the validity of scientific claims is always relative to the paradigm within which they are judged (cited in Agar, 1980). Qualitative research addresses credibility by acknowledging biases in the report and not assuming absolute authority about the researcher’s interpretation (Agar, 1980; Clifford, 1986). In this dissertation, I documented my roles and biases that I was aware of. Extensive quotes are included together with my interpretation of the parents. The words coming from the parents’ mouths could serve as a check to my claims, although I did select and exclude, which would have been based on my views, preferences, and backgrounds, which biases are acknowledged.

Some researchers believe that generalisation should not be a concern for qualitative studies where research findings are embedded in individual contexts (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Geertz, 1973; Yin, 1989). Although generalisation to the larger population may not be possible, this fact does not preclude some transferability to the cases that share similar contexts (Firestone, 1993; Guba, 1981). As a result, the findings of this study may be generalisable to immigrant Chinese Canadian women with middle-to-upper-class backgrounds who have adapted to raising their children with disabilities, care about their children’s education, and are mainly identified with Chinese culture.

On positivistic terms, the representativeness of the participants determines whether or not the findings can be generalised to a larger population. Agar (1980) notes that there are no random samples in qualitative research; sampling in qualitative research is often opportunistic or snowballing. Generalisation in a statistical sense is not possible for this group of Chinese Canadian parents of children with disabilities, whose population is basically unknown. On the other hand, the mothers were recruited through community organisations such as schools and formal agencies. Community samples are usually more representative than clinical sample. However, the way the sample was recruited pointed to the effect of gatekeeping. It is possible that parents who were perceived to have positive relationships with educators received the invitation to participate in the research. On the other hand, most parents reported conflicts with their children’s teachers that were expressed and resolved in moderation. In addition, three mothers initially were reluctant to participate. As such, the participants do not appear to be an overtly biased sample.

Another limitation of the generalisability of the findings is the fact that all the mothers volunteered to participate in the study. Volunteers could constitute a biased sample. However, nowadays research participants who are not willing or uninformed are almost non-existent. On the other hand, people who are willing to commit the amount of time required by qualitative research
may be more biased in some ways than participants in survey research. Yet again, such a biased sample may be desirable in qualitative research, which examines insights and perspectives.

Finally, the circumstances of the parents present the occasion for generalisation to population because of the varied backgrounds. Reasonable amount of variation in the sample may enable the findings to be representative of the target population (Agar, 1980; Firestone, 1993). Despite the different backgrounds and circumstances among the parents in this study (particularly, the differential effect of English proficiency, the age of the child, and the type of disability), there are many common themes, which reflect the significance of the themes to immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities.

Limitations of the Study

First of all, interviews with nine parents were conducted only once, which provided little time for the interviewers to establish rapport with the parents when conducting the interviews, which may have affected the quality and depth of the interviews. As Agar (1980) noted, one major shortcoming of interviewing was that it often involved a short-term, asymmetrical relationship. Secondly, this study largely relied on the interview data for interpretation and discussion. There was little observation of parents interacting with their children or teachers. Thirdly, the description and interpretation of the parents' views was not reviewed by the parents themselves for verification. The time restraint did not permit this. Other limitations were discussed in the previous section on the generalisability of the findings as well as in the reflection of the interview and analysis process in chapter four.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Presented below is a list of the implications for policy and practice based on the findings. Canada is a nation of immigrants. Addressing the needs of immigrant parents is consistent with an aim of the Canadian Multicultural Act of July 1988 to “promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation” (cited in McLeod, 1992, p. 219). As Van Maanen (1988) noted, we need “precise, complex, concrete images of one another” (p. 126). This is especially true in a multicultural society. It is also hoped that the specific and complex presentation of the research findings could aide the reader (which may include policy makers, educators, helping professionals, social workers, and other service providers who work with Chinese Canadian children with disabilities and their families) to find something personally useful, a feature of qualitative work argued by Firestone (1993) and Stake (1994).

1) Immigrant parents who do not speak English face a major barrier to participation in their children’s schools. They also have problems in finding out about services and programs. The language barrier is often the first barrier, which could mask or intensify other problems (Harry, 1992). Readily available interpretation services and material printed in minority languages would be a great help. They could also send out messages of invitation for the parents to participate in their children’s schools. Interpreter services, accessible to both parents and professionals, can be made available from a central office shared by several agencies. Some school districts in the Lower Mainland has already provided multicultural liaison workers, one of whose responsibilities is to interpret.

2) Professional interpreters who ask for clarification of technical jargons and then translate the lay language were appreciated by the immigrant parents in Harry’s (1992) study. Shenkar and Ronen (1987) went further to suggest that interpreters translate nonverbal behaviour: “Interpreters familiar with both cultures may fill a new role by translating not only verbal statements, but also nonverbal responses” (p. 268), such as reporting hesitation and polite disagreement, verifying with the speaker and translating the underlying beliefs or values. In light of the fact that the Chinese Canadian women tended to utilise indirect communication modes, translation of subtle or implicit messages could enhance two-way communication.

3) Where professional interpreter services are impossible or too costly to provide, the use of a communication book in which both professionals and parents exchange information would be useful in that it allows the parents to understand what is happening in the school and provides an opportunity for parents to express their own views, with translation from family or friends if necessary.

4) Besides the language barrier and some demographic backgrounds (the age of the child
and the type of disability), the patterns in parent involvement and coping is mainly affected by the immigrant Chinese Canadian women’s beliefs and values that are culturally based. Professionals who work with immigrant minority people would benefit from pre- and in-service training that informs them of the communication styles, normative behaviour, and cultural values of minority groups. Learning about minority cultures may be needed even when clients appear to be totally acculturated to the mainstream culture, but privately hold culturally different values (Suinn, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1999). Professionals could further enhance their knowledge of minority cultures by participating in minority communities and reading relevant literature. Cultural knowledge could help professionals to develop culturally relevant strategies and better relate to their clients (Cummins, 1989; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1999; Wong & Piran, 1995; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987).

5) Educators working with immigrant parents from diverse cultural backgrounds may need to be aware of their own cultural assumptions and the values that underlie their professional practices and preferences (Cummins, 1989; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987). One useful component of field training for pre-service teachers is to keep a journal to record their thoughts on working with minority parents and engage in class discussion (Harry, 1992).

6) While cultural context is important in working with minority parents, professionals may need to examine individual preferences and circumstances and to avoid stereotyping. It is important to see an individual as an individual first (Rogow, 1985).

7) The Chinese Canadian mothers set their hearts on helping their children in whatever they could. Parents as resources could be further utilised by educators. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that educators can help facilitate parent involvement by providing “invitations, demands, and opportunities.” Schools can encourage parent visits by providing welcoming signs in the ethnic languages or by displaying pictures and objects of the cultures of the community (Cummins, 1989). Constantino, Cui, and Faltis (1999) reported that Chinese immigrant parents went to school more often when there were school signs in Chinese and their children’s teachers could speak some Chinese. Signs of invitation, whose gestures include the provision of interpreter services and translation of printed material, appear to be pivotal in involving minority parents on school grounds.

8) Collaborative parent-teacher relationships, according to Power and Bartholomew (1987), are marked by two-way communication and the ability to express concerns freely. In this study, most parents often did not openly voice their concern and disagreements to the teachers. The perceptions of the immigrant parents are often based on their own experiences with the educational system in their home countries and as a result are hesitant in challenging authority or being assertive about seeking information. This could be a hidden problem in a working relationship. Harry (1992) noted that minority parents’ withdrawal and resignation from school affairs was not due to a lack of interest, but rather a lack of parent-teacher communication that was compounded by different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, in this study, most of the parents resigned or withdrew from being involved at school at one point or another due to different expectations, beliefs, and values. Parents should be encouraged to voice their concerns.

9) Several mothers in the present study expressed a preference for close and harmonious interpersonal relationships. This preference has been noted among Chinese people (Chiu & Kosinski, 1994; Leung, 1987; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987), parents of Puerto Rican American backgrounds (Harry, 1992), and mainstream parents (Nixon, 1991; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Informal, personalised contact, rather than formal meetings, may need to be arranged. Professionals are advised to be willing to listen to “tangential” issues when working with minority parents of children with disabilities (Chan, 1986; Harry, 1992). Informal relationships, once established, may also help parents to voice their concerns.

10) The Chinese Canadian parents offered their perspectives on education that both appreciated and challenged Western conventional educational wisdom. One mother expressed a desire that there be dialog between minority parents and Canadian teachers. Educators may want to pay attention to parents’ preferences for teaching and learning, and to scrutinise how educational practices different from their own are applicable to their profession. This information on immigrant students’ previous school experiences could also help educators properly assess the child’s progress in the transition from one set of criteria to another. Conversely, newly arrived immigrants can be given information about the school systems in Canada. Explanations about the educational
system would assist new immigrants to have realistic expectations and will alleviate conflicts arising from misperceptions. If both parties are willing to engage in dialogs about their differences and to learn from each other, it would ultimately benefit the immigrant minority students (Anderson & Gunderson, 1997).

11) In this study, most students with disabilities who spoke English as a second language had considerable difficulty learning English. This was especially true for those who came to Canada as teenagers. More collaboration between special and language educators would be helpful (Baca & Chinn, 1982; Cummins, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1994). Such effort could also help reduce parent anxiety.

12) Educators who understand parental roles and helping professionals who take into account the children's education will be both appreciated by parents of children with disabilities, in light of the fact that parental coping and involvement are often related. Educators and helping professionals may exchange information and collaborate to better help parents of children with disabilities. Teachers who accrued information on services and pass it on to parents were also appreciated by some parents in this study. Conversely, Yalung (1992) noted the value of children and the value of education had an impact on counselling Filipino parents of children with special needs.

13) Self-reliance and reliance on other family members deterred some parents in this study from seeking out formal support services. The ten mothers had perhaps adjusted to life with their children and thus felt little need to change established routines. However, they also experienced a considerable amount of stress, aggravated by living in a new country. Three of the mothers in the present study appreciated referrals from their children's teachers to resources and services. Professionals who collect information about services and resources would be helpful.

14) Referrals to helping professionals or formal services would likely be acted on when the services or resources are practically-oriented and geared toward problem solving. In this study the parents' devotion to their children was largely responsible for parental coping and involvement in education. Services or information sessions that emphasise tangible benefits for their children would likely be utilised by the parents. The Chinese Canadian mothers preferred practical approach also because their outlook on life was realistic and practical, and thus had little need for emotional support. Most of the mothers sought information on practical services for their children and on how to parent their children; only one expressed her need for moral support. This is consistent with Chinese people's preference for practical-oriented, directed, problem-solving type of help (Chan, 1986; Chan, Lam, Wong, Leung, & Fang, 1988; Christensen, 1987; Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, Tata, & Jolly, 1994; Yalung, 1992).

15) Detailed information about the social systems in Canada, and, more specifically, resources and services for children with disabilities and their families, would be welcome. One mother in the present study felt there were little results when she followed up on a teacher's referrals to formal services. Orientation meetings to explain public resources and services can be arranged. Chinese-speaking parents can also be encouraged to form their own support groups.

Implication for Future Studies

1) Canada is a nation of immigrants. Replication of the study with newly arrived immigrant minority groups other than Chinese people holds the potential to identify specific needs of immigrant parents of children with disabilities.

2) Each emerged theme or any clusters of themes could be explored further or tested in future research.

3) Future studies could focus on certain types of disability and certain ages of the children. In light of the fact that the participants in this study had generally adapted to raising children with disabilities, further research is needed on Chinese Canadian parents who have just discovered their children's disabilities. Parents of children with multiple disabilities may also be studied.

4) More research is needed to investigate the impact of ethnicity on home-school relations. Studies focusing on parent-teacher interactions to examine the behaviours of teachers and parents may be conducted in order to build effective intergroup relations and to enhance home-school relationships.

5) Future studies that employ interviewing and participant observation may provide more in-depth information about immigrant Chinese parents of children with disabilities. Alternatively, life
histories that focus on one or a few individuals may be worthy. Case studies that focus on a site, like a school or a parent support group, can be a subject for research. Conducting focus groups of immigrant parents of children with disabilities is also of value.

6) Future studies may investigate ESL children with disabilities and their classroom learning from the perspectives of parents, students, and teachers.

7) The research findings provide information that certain cultural values and beliefs contributed to the fact that the parents sought little help. Little is known about the role of shame or attitudinal block. Studies can be conducted to explore further the underlying reasons behind the way immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities seek help.

8) Although the present research did not intend to come up with a theory, there emerged theoretical properties of some categories (e.g., Chinese coping, conflict resolution, the concept of fate, and locus of control), such as the dimensions, the conditions under which each category is pronounced or minimised, and its major consequence. Future studies could apply grounded theory to the above mentioned categories.

9) Locus of control scales as developed in the West could benefit from revision to be more universally applicable. It could apply a multi-dimensional approach, instead of the internal-external polarity. For example, the three dimensions of personal control, control by powerful others, and fate can be treated as independent; certain dimensions, such as that fate is not viewed as random or whimsical, can also be added.

Conclusion

This study identified twenty-one themes that are of relevance to newly immigrated Chinese-Canadian mothers of children with disabilities. The behaviour, beliefs, values, concerns, and problems specific to this group of parents who are rarely the subject of research have been uncovered. Knowledge of cultural and parental perspectives could be helpful to professionals in order to deliver appropriate services to children with disabilities and their families. It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to a greater understanding of Chinese immigrant parents of children with disabilities.
Bibliography


Hancock, K., Wilgos, L., & McDonald, L. (1990). Parenting a visually impaired child: The


Shapiro, J. (1983). Family reactions and coping strategies in response to the physically ill or handicapped child: A review. Social Science and Medicine, 17(14), 913-931.


Yang, K. S. (undated). *Yuan and mental health*. Unpublished manuscript.


Appendix A
Interview Schedule

May I know how you came to know about this research?

the child
1. Tell me a little about your child.
   • diagnosis of the child
   • how well he/she communicates with you?
   • etc.

educational history
2. Could you tell me of your child’s educational programs?
   2A. How was it found out that he/she needs special education?
   2B. Integrated or segregated?
   2C. What do you think of, or how do you feel about, his/her programs?
   2D. What kind of a program do you think your child’s school could plan that would best meet the needs of you and your child?
   2E. What kind of programs do you think other immigrant children and their parents in similar situations need?

child development
3. How has your child been doing in school?
   3A. Have you been involved in helping or supervising his/her schoolwork?
   3B. In your opinion, is your child making progress in school?
   3C. How do you feel about the progress or lack of progress?
   3D. What have the teachers told you regarding your child’s learning?

communication with school
4. Tell me about your experience of working with the people who are involved in your child’s education.
   4A. Can you communicate well with the people who have worked with your child?
   4B. Who are the people you find most comfortable talking to?
      • What do they say or do that make you feel comfortable?
   4C. Who are the people you find uncomfortable?
      • What do they say or do that make you feel uncomfortable?)
   4D. In your opinion, what causes the communication barriers? (language? culture? etc.)
   4E. Have you ever recommended anything you want for your child to the teacher or the school?
      • If yes, Could you tell me any specific incidents?
      • Have the recommendations been considered?
   4F. How much input you have in the decisions that affect your child’s placement, etc.
   4G. Have you ever disagreed with the practices of the teacher or the school?
   4H. (If not,) Have you been very happy about his/her programs?
   4I. (If yes,) How did you handle it?
      • What are the reasons you choose to do what you did?
      • Could you tell me any specific incidents?
parent's goals
5. What are the most important things you want your child to learn in school?
   5A. What do you see your child doing in the future?
   5B. How much has the educational program for your child included these expectations or plans?

IEP experience
6. Could you tell me about your experience of attending the Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, if any?
   6A. How many IEP meetings have been scheduled for your child this year?
   6B. Who regularly attend the meetings?
   6C. How many times have you attended your child's IEP meetings this school year?
      • If not attending every time, what are the reasons?
   6D. Did anyone prepare you for the IEP meeting?
   6E. Do you feel comfortable asking questions or raising issues at the meetings?
   6F. Have the goals of your child's IEP included your expectations for your child?
   6G. Have your consent been always sought before decisions about your child are made?
   6H. Is what the teachers say easy to understand?
   6I. (If there is room for improvement,) How would you like the meetings to be arranged?

comparison of education
7. Compared with the school system in the country you came from, how do you feel about the school here?
   • How do you feel about these different aspects?

discovery of disability and coping
8. How did you come to know about your child's condition or special needs?
   8A. When was that?
   8B. Who did you first turn to for help, for information, or for talking over feelings?
   8C. Some people say that raising a child have both rewards and challenges. Is this so for you in raising your child with special needs?
      • (If admitting rewards) What are the rewards?
   8D. How do you handle the challenges for you in raising your child?
   8E. (If services have been used,) You mentioned that you used or are using such and such services. Are they helpful?
      • How do they help you?
      • How did you know about the services?
   8F. (If no services have been used,) Are services available?
      • Why did you choose not to use the services?
   8G. (If belonging to a support group,) Do you find it helpful?
      • What help does it provide you with?
   8H. (If not belong to a group,) What do you think of the support groups?
   8I. Are you involved in any advocacy initiatives organised by a support group?
      • What do you think of advocacy?
   8J. Do you have any suggestion regarding the social services to better meet the needs of you and your child, or to assist other parents in similar situations?
locus of control
9. Some people say that what happen in their lives, or whether one gets what one wants, is mostly due to their own effort and/or their own abilities; some people say that it is mostly due to luck or chance; while some people say it depends on other people. What do you think is the force that has a major influence on your life? Yourself, others, fate, God, chance, luck, etc.?

9A. Would you tell me more about the driving force?
• Was it the same as before you become a mother?
9B. Does the driving force(s) influence how you cope with the challenges?
9C. Does it influence your involvement in your child’s education?

• cultural influence
10A. Does living in Canada change you or your views in any way?
10B. What are the things you appreciate about the “Canadian way” as you experience it?
10C. Is there anything from your own culture that you miss or you think is valuable, and would like to see it being developed in this society?

reflection
11A. What advice or suggestion you would give to new parents?
11B. What advice or suggestion you would give to immigrant parents?
11C. Do you know any other Chinese parents of children with special needs?
• What concerns do they have?
Appendix B
Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale
and
Asian Identity Questionnaire: Cultural Preference Inventory

Instruction: Choose the one answer which best describes you. Please answer each question carefully. There is no right or wrong answers. Thank you.

1. What languages can you speak?
   1. Chinese only
   2. Mostly Chinese, some English
   3. Chinese and English about equally well (bilingual)
   4. Mostly English, some Chinese
   5. Only English

2. What languages do you prefer?
   1. Chinese only
   2. Mostly Chinese, some English
   3. Chinese and English about equally well (bilingual)
   4. Mostly English, some Chinese
   5. Only English

3. How do you identify yourself?
   1. Chinese
   2. Chinese-Canadian
   3. Canadian

4. What identification does (did) your mother use?
   1. Chinese
   2. Chinese-Canadian
   3. Canadian

5. What identification does (did) your father use?
   1. Chinese
   2. Chinese-Canadian
   3. Canadian

6. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child up to the age of 6?
   1. Almost exclusively Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   2. Mostly Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups
   4. Mostly non-Chinese ethnic groups
   5. Almost exclusively non-Chinese ethnic groups

7. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child from 6-18?
   1. Almost exclusively Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   2. Mostly Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups
   4. Mostly non-Chinese ethnic groups
   5. Almost exclusively non-Chinese ethnic groups
8. Whom do you now associate with in the community?
   1. Almost exclusively Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   2. Mostly Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups
   4. Mostly non-Chinese ethnic groups
   5. Almost exclusively non-Chinese ethnic groups

9. If you could pick, whom would you prefer to associate with in the community?
   1. Almost exclusively Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   2. Mostly Chinese and Chinese-Canadians
   3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups
   4. Mostly non-Chinese ethnic groups
   5. Almost exclusively non-Chinese ethnic groups

10. What is your music preference?
    1. Only Chinese music
    2. Mostly Chinese
    3. Equally Chinese and English
    4. Mostly English
    5. English only

11. What is your movie preference?
    1. Chinese-language movies only
    2. Chinese-language movies mostly
    3. Equally Chinese and English
    4. English-language movies mostly
    5. English-language movies only

12. Where were you born?
    1. I was born in Asia.

13. Where were you raised?
    1. In Asia only
    2. Mostly in Asia, some in Canada
    3. Equally in Asia and Canada
    4. Mostly in Canada
    5. In Canada only

14. What contact have you had with Asia?
    1. Raised one year or more in Asia.
    2. Lived for less than one year in Asia.
    3. Occasional visits to Asia.
    4. Occasional communications (letters, phone calls, etc.) to people in Asia.
    5. No exposure or communications with people in Asia.

15. What is your food preference at home?
    1. Exclusively Chinese food
    2. Mostly Chinese food, some non-Chinese food
    3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese
    4. Mostly non-Chinese food
    5. Exclusively non-Chinese food
16. What is your food preference in restaurants?
   1. Exclusively Chinese food
   2. Mostly Chinese food, some non-Chinese food
   3. About equally Chinese and non-Chinese
   4. Mostly non-Chinese food
   5. Exclusively non-Chinese food

17. Do you
   1. read only Chinese
   2. read Chinese better than English
   3. read both Chinese and English equally well
   4. read English better than Chinese
   5. read only English

18. Do you
   1. write only Chinese
   2. write Chinese better than English
   3. write both Chinese and English equally well
   4. write English better than Chinese
   5. write only English

19. If you consider yourself a member of the Chinese group, how much pride do you have in this group?
   1. Extremely proud
   2. Moderately proud
   3. Little proud
   4. No pride but do not feel negative towards the group
   5. No pride but do feel negative towards the group

20. How would you rate yourself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 very Chinese</th>
<th>2 Mostly Chinese</th>
<th>3 Bi-cultural</th>
<th>4 Mostly Canadian</th>
<th>5 very Canadian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. Do you participate in Chinese cultural occasions, holidays, traditions, etc.?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 nearly all of them</th>
<th>2 most of them</th>
<th>3 some of them</th>
<th>4 a few of them</th>
<th>5 none at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. Rate yourself on how much you believe in Chinese values (e.g., about marriage, families, education, work):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 (do not believe)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (strongly believe in Chinese values)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. Rate yourself on how much you believe in Canadian values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 (do not believe)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (strongly believe in Canadian values)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
24. Rate yourself on how well you fit when with other Chinese:

1  2  3  4  5
(do not fit) (fit very well)

25. Rate yourself on how well you fit when with other Canadians who are non-Chinese:

1  2  3  4  5
(do not fit) (fit very well)

26. There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following most closely describes how you view yourself? I consider myself

1. basically a Chinese person. Even though I live and work in Canada, I still view myself basically as a Chinese person.

2. basically a Canadian. Even though I have a Chinese background, I still view myself basically as a Canadian.

3. as a Chinese-Canadian, although deep down, I always know I am a Chinese.

4. as a Chinese-Canadian, although deep down, I view myself as a Canadian first.

5. as a Chinese-Canadian. I have both Chinese and Canadian characteristics, and I view myself as a blend of both.

27. How strong is your cultural identity as Chinese?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
not at all moderately extremely
Chinese strong

28. How strong is your cultural identity as Canadian or North American (NA)?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
not at all moderately extremely
Canadian/NA strong

29. How Chinese was the social environment in which you grew up for the most part of your childhood? (during your childhood)

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
not at all moderately completely
Chinese strong
30. What would be your preference like, if you were to choose between Chinese and Canadian (or North American)? Please use the scale of 1 to 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mostly Canadian or N. American</th>
<th>about 50-50</th>
<th>Mostly Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I prefer...&quot;</td>
<td>Canadian------------------------</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) arts and music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) traditional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events and celebration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) local</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community to belong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to manners and</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) counsellor/1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canadian------------------------Chinese
Appendix C
Chinese Translation of
Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale and
Asian Identity Questionnaire: Cultural Preference Inventory

請詳細回答每項問題。答案沒有對錯，請選擇最合適的一項答案。謝謝您的合作。

1. 你會講什麼語言？
   1. 只會中文
   2. 多半中文，一些英文
   3. 中英文差不多一樣好（雙語）
   4. 多半英文，一些中文
   5. 只會英文

2. 你比較喜歡講什麼語言？
   1. 只喜歡中文
   2. 多半中文，一些英文
   3. 中英文差不多一樣（雙語）
   4. 多半英文，一些中文
   5. 只喜歡英文

3. 基本上，你認為你是什麼人？
   1. 中國人
   3. 華裔加拿大人
   5. 加拿大人

4. 基本上，你母親認為她是什麼人？
   1. 中國人
   3. 華裔加拿大人
   5. 加拿大人

5. 基本上，你父親認為他是什麼人？
   1. 中國人
   3. 華裔加拿大人
   5. 加拿大人

6. 從你出生到六歲前，你的朋友和同輩
   1. 幾乎全是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   2. 多半是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   3. 中國人和非中國人差不多一樣多
   4. 多半不是中國人
   5. 幾乎全不是中國人

7. 在你六歲到十八歲之間，你的朋友和同輩
   1. 幾乎全是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   2. 多半是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   3. 中國人和非中國人差不多一樣多
   4. 多半不是中國人
   5. 幾乎全不是中國人

8. 你目前和誰來往？
   1. 幾乎全是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   2. 多半是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   3. 中國人和非中國人差不多一樣多
   4. 多半不是中國人
   5. 幾乎全不是中國人
9. 如果你能選擇，你比較喜歡和誰來往？
   1. 幾乎全是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   2. 多半是中國人和華裔加拿大人
   3. 中國人和非中國人差不多一樣
   4. 多半不是中國人
   5. 幾乎全不是中國人

10. 你比較喜歡聽什麼音樂？
   1. 只喜歡中國音樂
   2. 多半是中國音樂
   3. 中西音樂一般喜歡
   4. 多半是西方音樂
   5. 只喜歡西方音樂

11. 你比較喜歡看什麼電影？
   1. 只喜歡中國電影
   2. 多半是中國電影
   3. 中英文電影一般喜歡
   4. 多半是英文電影
   5. 只喜歡英文電影

12. 你在哪裡出生的？
   1. 在亞洲（第一代移民）

13. 你在哪裡長大的？
   1. 只在亞洲
   2. 多半在亞洲，有一陣子在加拿大
   3. 在亞洲和在加拿大一樣久
   4. 多半在加拿大
   5. 只在加拿大

14. 你和亞洲有什麼樣的接觸？
   1. 在亞洲住過一年以上
   2. 在亞洲住不到一年
   3. 有時到亞洲探訪
   4. 有時和住在亞洲的人連絡（通訊、打電話、等等）
   5. 和住在亞洲的人沒有接觸或連絡

15. 在家裡，你比較喜歡吃
   1. 只吃中國菜
   2. 多半是中國菜，一些非中國菜
   3. 中國菜和非中國菜一樣吃
   4. 多半不是中國菜
   5. 完全不吃中國菜
16. 上海 (出街食飯)，你比較喜歡吃
   1. 只吃中國菜
   2. 多半是中國菜，一些非中國菜
   3. 中國菜和非中國菜一樣吃
   4. 多半不是中國菜
   5. 完全不吃中國菜

17. 你
   1. 只會閱讀中文
   2. 閱讀中文比閱讀英文要好
   3. 中英文一樣好
   4. 閱讀英文比閱讀中文要好
   5. 只會閱讀英文

18. 你
   1. 只會寫中文
   2. 寫中文比寫英文要好
   3. 中英文一樣好
   4. 寫英文比寫中文要好
   5. 只會寫英文

19. 如果你認為自己是中國人，你對你的 中國背景感到多少驕傲？
   1. 非常驕傲
   2. 相當驕傲
   3. 一點點驕傲
   4. 不感到驕傲，但不反感
   5. 不感到驕傲，而且覺得反感

20. 你對你自己的評估
   1. 非常中國化
   2. 多半中國化
   3. 雙文化
   4. 多半加拿大化
   5. 非常加拿大化

21. 你參加中國文化活動、節日、傳統等等活動嗎？
   1. 幾乎每次參加
   2. 多半參加
   3. 有時候參加
   4. 偶爾參加（偶然參加）
   5. 完全不參加
22. 評估你相信中國價值觀（譬如，對婚姻、家庭、教育、工作）的程度？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>非常相信</td>
<td>不相信</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. 評估你相信加拿大價值觀的程度？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>非常相信</td>
<td>不相信</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. 評估你和中國人交往融洽的程度？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>非常合得來</td>
<td>合不來</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. 評估你和加拿大人交往融洽的程度？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>非常合得來</td>
<td>合不來</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. 人們對自己的看法有很多種。下列哪一項最能表達你的看法？

我認為我自己
1. 基本上是中國人。雖然我住在加拿大、工作在加拿大，我仍然基本上視我自己是中國人。
2. 基本上是加拿大人。雖然我有中國人背景，基本上我仍然視我自己是加拿大人。
3. 是華裔加拿大人。雖然在我內心深處，我一向明白我是中國人。
4. 是華裔加拿大人，雖然在我內心深處，我首先視我自己是加拿大人。
5. 是華裔加拿大人。我有中國人特質，也有加拿大人特質，我視我自己是兩者的綜合。

27. 你對中國文化有多深的認同感？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一點也沒有</td>
<td>適中</td>
<td>極深</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. 你對加拿大（或北美）文化有多深的認同感？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一點也沒有</td>
<td>適中</td>
<td>極深</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. 你童年的社會環境有多中國化？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一點也不中國化</td>
<td>適中</td>
<td>極中國化</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. 如果你必須在中國的和加拿大的（或是北美的）兩者選一，你較喜歡何者？請以一到九的度量來表示。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>度量</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>多半加拿大的 (或北美的)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一半一半</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>多半中國的</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

我較喜歡.... 加拿大的..................................................中國的

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>藝術和音樂</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>語言</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>食物</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>傳統節慶</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>屬於的社區</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>社交禮節和風俗習慣</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>價值觀</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>朋友</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>輔導員/顧問</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>教師</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Chinese Coping Scale in English

I would like to know what you do when dealing with the difficulties and stress arising from parenting a child with special needs. Please note that there is no right or wrong answers. Please circle the response that best describe what you actually do and how you actually feel. If a source of help has not been available to you during this period of time, circle the NA (Not Available) response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Available</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Face the problem and devise the solution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Forbear and remain calm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maintain optimism and self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seek help from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) superiors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) relatives (excluding parents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) my own parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) professional workers (social workers, counsellors, teachers, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) fortune-tellers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) in-laws (spouse’s parents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Adopt an attitude of &quot;to see through a thing&quot; (i.e., to be resigned to what is inevitable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adopt an attitude of a &quot;sailboat going with the current will automatically pass through the arches of a bridge&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Adopt an attitude of &quot;coping with the shifting events by sticking to one unchangeable way&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Employ means to make one feel more comfortable (such as drinking, entertainment, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Appeal to supernatural power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E
Chinese Coping Scale in Chinese

以下我們想知道當你遇到壓力時會作何反應。請你按著你的感受和日常如何處理壓力的方法作答。請你注意這些答案無所謂對或錯。請你只要按著你的實況作答就可以了。（出示選擇喔）（如「不適用」訪問員請在答案旁填上N）

例子：面對生活上的壓力時，我會向同事請求幫助
請圈 1 如果你面對生活上的壓力時，差不多從未向同事請求幫助
2 如果你面對生活上的壓力時，你偶爾向同事請求幫助
3 如果你面對生活上的壓力時，你時常向同事請求幫助
4 如果你面對生活上的壓力時，你差不多總是向同事請求幫助

面對與照顧“”有關／或由他引起的壓力和煩惱時，你多唔多會：

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>差不多</th>
<th>很時常</th>
<th>差不多</th>
<th>很時常</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>從未</td>
<td>中</td>
<td>常</td>
<td>總是</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 面對問題想辦法
2. 忍耐冷靜
3. 樂觀自信
4. 向配偶請求幫助
5. 向朋友請求幫助
6. 向上司請求幫助
7. 向親戚（不包括父母）請求幫助
8. 向父母請求幫助
9. 向專業人士（如輔導員…等）請求幫助
10. 向相好／算命先生請求幫助
11. 向配偶的父母請求幫助
12. 自己看開一點
13. 有“船到橋頭自然直”嘅想法
14. 有“以不變應萬變”嘅想法
15. 用方法化解自己（如娛樂，飲酒）
16. 祈求神明幫助
Appendix F
Summary of Individual Scores on the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL-ASIA scores</th>
<th>SL-ASIA values</th>
<th>SL-ASIA behaviour competency score</th>
<th>SL-ASIA self-identity score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>not identified&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>not identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Canadian-identified</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>bicultural</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>not identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>Note</sup>. The higher the score, the greater the acculturation level.

<sup>aM=1.82, SD=.34.</sup>

<sup>b</sup>The category, not identified, could mean marginalisation in Berry's (1989) model of acculturation, which means alienation from both home and host cultures.
Appendix G
Summary of Individual Scores on the Asian Identity Questionnaire
and Cultural Preference Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPI scores</th>
<th>values preference</th>
<th>social environment</th>
<th>cultural-identity Chinese and Canadian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Canadian-identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Canadian-identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>moderately Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>moderately Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Canadian-identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>not identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>moderately Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Chinese-identified</td>
<td>strongly Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Maximum score = 81. The higher the score, the less acculturation to Canadian mores and the stronger identification with Chinese culture.

\( M=52, \ SD=10.85 \).
Appendix H
Converging the SL-ASIA Scale and the AIQ-CPI on cultural identity

The five-category SL-ASIA scale was converted onto the AIQ nine-point scale, in which three levels of Canadian identity and three levels of Chinese identity resulted in nine categories of cultural identity (i.e., scores 1-3 are termed low, 4-6 medium, and 7-9 high).

- **AIQ on a nine-cell grid:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in Canadian</th>
<th>Joan</th>
<th>Grace, Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>Ellen, Lan, Ping, Sophie, Wen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  Low    Medium    High in Chinese

- **Converting SL-ASIA to a nine-cell grid--->**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in Canadian</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3 Xiang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joan, Sophie, Wen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Ellen, Fiona, Grace Helen, Lan, Ping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  Low    Medium    High in Chinese

- Eight of the mothers (except Joan and Xiang) had higher Chinese identity than Canadian one. The change based on the two tables is fairly small. Fiona remained in the same cell. Half of the parents (Ellen, Grace, Helen, Lan, and Ping) moved only one cell. Joan, Sophie, and Wen moved two cells. While Xiang had a dramatic shift.
## Appendix I

### Summary of Individual Scores on the CCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall score</th>
<th>Internal coping score</th>
<th>External coping score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17 (2)(^a)</td>
<td>16 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23 (6)</td>
<td>17 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17 (2)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21 (5)</td>
<td>10 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23 (4)</td>
<td>10 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17 (2)</td>
<td>9 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
<td>14 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19 (4)</td>
<td>13 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22 (5)</td>
<td>9 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20 (5)</td>
<td>11 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The value in parenthesis represents number of strategies often used.

**Note.** For overall score, M= 31.40, SD= 3.80. For internal coping score, M= 19.20, SD= 3.22. For external coping score, M= 12.20, SD= 2.86.
Appendix J
Frequency of Utilisation of Strategies on the Chinese Coping Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Frequency of Utilisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face the problem and devise solution</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbear and remain calm</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain optimism and self-confidence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from spouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from friends</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from superiors</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from relatives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from parents</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from professional workers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from fortune-tellers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from in-laws</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resign to what is inevitable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that the problem will be solved</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping by sticking to an unchangeable way</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make one feeling not so stressful</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek help from supernatural power</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>