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Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

Fan Jiang
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CHINESE IMMIGRANT PARENTS' COMMUNICATION WITH THEIR
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL TEACHERS: EXPERIENCES, EXPECTATIONS, AND
CHALLENGES

by

Fan Jiang

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
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the Degree of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2011

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APPROVAL PAGE

Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers:
Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

by

Fan Jiang

APPROVED BY

Dr. Diana Kao, External Reader

Dr. Clinton Beckford, Faculty Reader

Dr. George Zhou, Advisor

Dr. Zuochen Zhang, Chair of Defense

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ABSTRACT

Using mixed methods research design, this study aimed to explore and examine Chinese immigrant parents' communication experiences with their children's school teachers. First, quantitative data was collected through 167 survey questionnaires in order to identify Chinese immigrant parents' experiences, satisfaction, challenges, and expectations of communicating with school teachers. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with eight Chinese immigrant parents to get qualitative data for an in-depth understanding of the issues discovered through the survey. Results showed that Chinese parents felt highly responsible for communicating with teachers and were very willing to maintain timely, effective and regular communications with teachers. They sought detailed information of children's development and progress in different aspects and hope to get assistance in becoming effective co-educator at home. Their attitudes toward previous experiences varied significantly depending on how these expectations were matched with teachers' feedbacks and responses.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement has been an increasingly important topic in the field of education given its great influence on students' academic performance and positive school behaviors (Fan, 2001). A growing body of evidence has emerged suggesting that greater parental involvement can result in beneficial outcomes such as higher grade point averages, better performances in reading and mathematics, reduced grade retentions, and lower student dropout rates (Li, 2007; McKenna & Willms, 1998). This positive influence of parent involvement is believed to be applicable to all students in spite of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and grade levels (Kim, 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Yan & Lin, 2005). Thus, promoting parent involvement has been recognized widely by the North American urban school systems as a useful way to improve students' academic performance and narrow the achievement gaps between different racial and socio-economic groups (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). In most provinces in Canada, legislation has been passed that requires schools to have parent-school councils (McKenna & Willms, 1998). It is expected that parental involvement can be promoted by providing parents with opportunities and training to participate in school decisions through home and school associations, advisory councils, advocacy groups and administrative information networks. The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 in the U.S. is also an example of how educational policies require schools to offer involvement options for parents (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005).

Understanding the role parental involvement plays in immigrant children's education is crucial, since cultural and linguistic diversity are now among the characteristic features defining Canadian society and have transformed the landscapes of public school classrooms (Chan, 2006). Teachers are seeing increased differences in race,

ethnicity, culture and special needs in children (Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008). Children who are from immigrant families and whose native languages do not include English are believed to rely more on parental involvement in their education experience (Lahaie, 2008). These children are unfamiliar with the language used in school and the education system in general, and need more support from home.

Parents' home involvement, however, is limited in supporting school expectations without proper guidance from schools. This is because, due to their lack of familiarity with school instructions, some parents may adopt teaching practices that diverge from school practices. For example, many immigrant parents hold different beliefs about teaching and learning and have little knowledge about the teaching philosophy adopted by Canadian schools (Fuligni, 1997). As a result, there are often discontinuities of learning environment between mainstream classrooms and immigrant families. Building connections between home and school, then, becomes a more and more important part of creating a cohesive learning environment for children. Although it is well-accepted that communication between home and school plays a vital role in building parent and school partnerships, researchers (Schmidt, 1994; Voltz, 1994) find that effective communication between school and immigrant parents is difficult to achieve. Facing parents from diverse cultural backgrounds, many teachers experienced misunderstanding and confusion due to inadequate preparation for communicating with them (Schmidt, 1994). In addition, the lack of communication also affects immigrant parents' participation in school-based activities. Studies on Chinese immigrant families find that Chinese parents are passive in initiating communication with school and teachers (Wang, 2008), are less satisfied with the effectiveness of programs designed to bridge home-school communication (Guo & Mohan, 2008), and are not as involved with school-based activities (Pearce & Lin, 2007).

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase of immigrants from mainland China in both Canada and the U.S. (Dyson, 2001). It is reported that Chinese Americans are the largest group of Asian Americans in the United States and that China is among one of the three countries that contribute most to the country's immigrants (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Since 1991, the largest number of immigrants in the Windsor area from an individual region is from China (Statistics Canada, 2006). This number even surpasses those from the U.S. and India. Unlike Asian immigrants prior to the 1980s who settled in urban enclaves such as Chinatown and had little financial and human capital, recent Chinese immigrants often come with resources. The emergence of a growing number of middle-class Chinese immigrants with financial capital, professional skills, and educational credentials suggests a need for more studies on this ethnic group. Since many Chinese immigrants came to Canada in order to provide their children a better educational opportunity (Qin, 2009), it is imperative to investigate these parents' needs and expectations in terms of their children's education. As newcomers to Canadian society, Chinese immigrant parents face many challenges in this area. Factors such as the lack of English proficiency, working for time-demanding jobs and being unfamiliar with the Canadian education system are causing difficulties in their communication with educational professionals. Without effective and sufficient communication with schools, parents often miss important information concerning school events and programs.

Although a number of studies have already been conducted in recent years on Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, most of them only focus on examining home-based activities (Li, 2007). Parental involvement, however, has multidimensional aspects (Epstein, 2001). As Eberly, Joshi, and Konzal (2007) state in their work, children are raised within the overlapping of micro (families and schools),

meso (the relationship between families and schools), and macro systems (cultural notions of development). Open communication between the mesolinks must be secured if children are to grow and learn (Epstein, 2001). As an integral part of parental involvement, Chinese parents' communication experience with school is worth examining if we want to create a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese parents' involvement in their children's education.

Culture plays a significant role in communication. In order to effectively interact with Chinese parents, teachers should acquire necessary knowledge about their culture, including their communication styles. Unfortunately, nowadays most classroom teachers have insufficient understanding of immigrant parents' language and cultural practices at home. They also lack the professional knowledge and skills to conduct intercultural communication with immigrant parents. This is partly caused by the insufficient training around intercultural communication provided by teacher education programs. But the deeper reason lies in the fact that teachers rarely have knowledge about the difficulties and expectations Chinese parents have regarding home and school communication. This study will fill in this knowledge gap.

Another need for conducting this study lies in the fact that little quantitative data concerning Chinese immigrant parents' communication experience is available to researchers interested in this topic. Most past studies on Chinese immigrants' parental involvement were conducted using a qualitative approach. Using mixed-method research methodology, this study aims to discover a general trend of Chinese immigrant parents' communication patterns.

Findings of this study will be valuable for the improvement of communication between school and Chinese immigrant parents. With a better understanding of Chinese

immigrants' expectations of home-school communication, teachers who need to reach out and better engage Chinese parents are more likely to communicate with them successfully. Additionally, promoting immigrant parents' full and equitable participation in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of society is an important aim of the *Canadian Multicultural Act* of July 1998 (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). Thus, research conducted on Chinese immigrant families can enrich policy-makers' knowledge and enable them to serve this community better in the future.

This study will also be beneficial for Chinese immigrant parents. Previous research on this community's involvement has shown that parents have significant insights and suggestions about educational practices used in Canadian schools. However, their contribution to school curriculum is very limited. This phenomenon suggests that an enhanced understanding of communication with schools will increase Chinese parents' engagement with school events, and facilitate their contribution to school curricula and activities. During the study, these parents will be given the opportunity to share their concerns, needs, and personal perspectives. Their voices will subsequently be heard by educators and researchers who are interested in this field.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Psychological Constructs of Parental Involvement

Although many studies have been done investigating the relationship between parental involvement and student outcomes such as academic achievement, little research has been conducted to find out why parents get involved in their children's education in the first place. The theoretical model of parental involvement proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) offers the framework to investigate this question from a psychological perspective. Grounded in a substantive amount of research in the education and psychology fields, this model is claimed as "presenting the 'best guesses' for why parents get involved, what forms their involvement takes, and how their involvement influences students" (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005, p.86). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, parents' involvement behaviors and the forms of their involvement are influenced by several psychological and contextual contributors including parent's role construction, parent's sense of efficacy for helping the child, and general invitations for involvement from school and child. Walker et al.'s (2005) work revised the model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler and further divided these contributors into three categories, namely parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context.

Parents' motivational beliefs. It is hypothesized that parents' basic involvement decisions are primarily influenced by their beliefs about what they should and can do in for their children's education. Walker et al. (2005) identified two constructs to these

beliefs: parents' role construction and parents' self-efficacy. In reality, role construction functions as a motivator for parents by helping them imagine and anticipate how they might behave. Parents need to recognize and understand their responsibilities in order to carry out the relevant activities. In other words, if parents view their participation as a requirement for parenting, they will be more likely to be involved. Although parental involvement has been highly valued in North-American education settings, research (Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007) found that ethnic minority parents seem to hold the school fully responsible for their children's education, especially when they come from traditional cultures where role divisions are quite clear. Rooted in Bandura's self-efficacy theory, parent self-efficacy suggests that parents' involvement is partly influenced "by the outcomes they expect will follow their actions and their appraisal of their personal abilities" (Walker et al., 2005, p.93). In other words, it would be expected that parents who believe communication is contributing to the academic progress of their children would be more inclined to get contact with teachers. Guided by the concept of self-efficacy, it will be interesting to assess the links between Chinese parents' communication behaviors and their attitudes toward the effectiveness of such communication. Factors influencing their self-perceived ability to conduct such communication will also be worth examining due to the change of Chinese parents' life context in the current study.

Parents' perceptions of invitations from others. Parents' perceptions of invitation for involvement from others are also indicators of parents' decisions. In other words, parents are motivated to be involved if they feel they are welcomed and valued by their children and teachers. Studies found out that parents respond to both children's implicit and explicit needs (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). For example, parents may decide to

take action when their children constantly ask them to help with homework. They also become more involved when they notice children are experiencing difficulties in their studies. Thus, perceived invitation from children can be both general and specific. General invitation from a child may come in the form of the child's expressing of willingness to accept parental help and affective response to involvement. Children send specific invitations to parents by explicitly asking them to get involved with their learning activities. Researchers find that specific invitations are not only easier to discern, they can also shape parents' choice of involvement forms (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). It is also believed that teachers' demands for involvement, coupled with an inviting school climate, are related significantly to levels of parent involvement. Examples of such invitation include teacher's creating a welcome atmosphere by decorating the classroom, as well as inviting parents to visit schools and to contact with the teacher regularly. Perceptions of invitation from teachers and children may also play an important role in Chinese parents' communication experience with schools. It is possible that parents may stop communicating with teachers when their children don't appreciate such help or even express disaffection toward this form of involvement. Some researchers suggest that children may view parental involvement as intrusive and controlling rather than helpful (Ames, Khoju, & Watkins, 1993; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). Parents may tend to initiate communication more if they feel the teachers are welcoming and are interested in talking about their children. Their future involvement may also be influenced by past communication experiences with teachers. These possibilities should be assessed in future studies.

Parents' perceived life context. In addition to parents' motivational beliefs and perceived invitation from others, their perceived time, energy, and their knowledge and

skills for involvement may also mediate forms of involvement. The time and energy parents have to put into children's education are influenced by a number of factors such as parents' occupation, employment status and family size. It is reported that time and energy variables are common barriers to parents' involvement (Gettinger & Waters, 1998). And, compared to parents from non-immigrant families, immigrant parents often experience more constraints on their time and energy due to economic pressures. A number of studies (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li, Holloway, Bempechat, & Loh, 2008) conducted on Chinese immigrant parents from lower socioeconomic class have identified limited available time as the main barrier to their involvement. In order to effectively support children in their learning, parents also need to possess the necessary knowledge and skills. For immigrant parents, this requirement not only includes basic education competence such as the ability to read and mathematical skills, but also includes familiarity with Canadian school system. It is reasonable to hypothesize that due to their unfamiliarity with Canadian education settings, Chinese parents will perceive more difficulties in terms of communication with schools.

It is necessary to mention that although the theoretical model of parental involvement proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler can be used as an instrumental scale to assess the links between parents' psychological motivation and involvement behaviors; this model was originally designed to examine parents' general involvement in children's education. The current study, however, is focused on one aspect of these activities- the communication between home and school. As a result, the original scale will be modified to suit the current research topic.

Intercultural Communication

“Intercultural communication occurs when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently” (Guo & Mohan, 2008, p.19). Many studies into cross-cultural relocations of sojourners, refugees, or immigrants are focused on intercultural competence, which highlights the ability “to develop and maintain relationships,” “to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion,” and “to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others” (Fantini, 2000, p.27). Chinese immigrant parents’ communication with school teachers is a rich topic to examine since “intercultural communication consists of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral ability of participants in the communication process” (Spinthourakis, Karatzia-Stalioti, & Roussakis, 2009; p.268). According to Spinthourakis et al., the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication refers to the concept of intercultural awareness; and the affective aspect is represented by the concept of intercultural sensitivity. People who developed intercultural sensitivity should actively desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate and accept differences from other cultures. The behavioral aspect of intercultural competence is represented by the concept of a multifaceted intercultural readiness; being prepared to act accordingly. Along those lines, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) argued that there were three necessary and interdependent ingredients of communication competence: (a) knowledge, (b) motivation, and (c) behavior. Building on the above three elements, Neuliep (2006) added situational features as a fourth component in his “model of intercultural competence.”

The knowledge component. The cognitive/knowledge component of intercultural competence consists of “how much one knows about the culture of the person with whom one is interacting” (Neuliep, 2006; p.445). In order to be perceived as culturally

knowledgeable, one should at least have some comprehension of the other person's dominant cultural values and beliefs. Thus, in order to communicate with school and teachers, parents should have a knowledge foundation of school cultures. Growing up in China, many Chinese immigrants are not familiar with North American school cultures. This unfamiliarity has an impact on Chinese parents' choice of communication methods with schools. For example, Klein's (2008) study revealed that Chinese parents identified themselves as "strangers" of the American education system and put a great importance on the notes, class rules, and newsletters sent home by their children's teachers.

Remedies are proposed to deal with this situation. Some scholars propose that it is the school's responsibility to inform them of the school policies and pedagogical philosophies. For example, McKenna and Willms's (1998) review of co-operation between families and schools across Canada shows that in order to achieve effective home and school cooperation, schools must ensure that parents have information on the teaching objectives and skill requirements for each curricular subject. A description of the school's homework and a schedule of major assignments are all useful information for parents who do not know how Canadian schools work. It is also suggested that in order to build school-home partnerships, there should be a "bi-directional" learning process in parent and teacher interactions (Theilheimer, 2001). Instead of just talking to the parents, teachers should listen to and learn from them. There are many options for teachers to learn from immigrant families. Some suggested starting from getting to know their family structures and backgrounds, including knowing these families' experiences prior to arrival in a new country (Lin et al., 2008; Theilheimer, 2001). Others encourage teachers to engage in a specific cultural study to demonstrate a sincere interest in the home.

The affective component. The affective component of intercultural communication is represented by one's motivation to interact with others from different cultures.

Intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) is used by communication scholars as an indicator of one's affective competence in intercultural communication. ICA is defined as the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with persons from other cultures. Persons with high ICA tend to avoid interacting with others from different cultures. They see people from different cultures as strangers and the perceived difference between themselves and the strangers can cause tension and anxiety, which, in turn, can lead to avoidance of communications. In order to reduce the level of ICA and develop the willingness to communicate, one has to tolerate ambiguity to a certain degree.

Working with parents from a different background means teachers will constantly find divergent perspectives from these parents. Thus, helping teachers deal with the difference would help them communicate better with immigrant parents. Eberly et al.'s (2007) study investigated teachers' perceptions of and practices in communication with families across cultures. They interviewed 21 public school teachers through focus groups and found that it was very hard for these teachers to get beyond their own biases and have an open mind about practices that conflicted with their own values. The participating teachers found it especially difficult to deal with differences based in race and culture. With these findings in mind, the researchers argued that teachers have to hold an accepting attitude toward the cultural framework of families that are different from their own in order to "establish open, frank, and ongoing communication with them" (p.10). Thus far, the focus has been on teachers. However, a comprehensive picture requires that we examine this issue from the parents' perspectives as well.

The psychomotor component. The behaviour or psychomotor aspect of intercultural communication is the actual enactment of the knowledge and affective components (Neuliep, 2006). In order to function properly in intercultural communication, knowledge about both verbal and nonverbal performance should be acquired. Chinese immigrant parents may have a very different communication style from public school teachers who are most likely from the mainstream cultural background. Unrecognized cultural difference in communication styles may affect both teacher and parent's effective communication with each other. For example, Moosa, Karabenic, and Adams (2001) examined teachers' perceptions of Arab parent involvement; they argued that if teachers didn't understand the mismatched hidden dimension in the message and in the style of communication, it is most likely that they will misinterpret Arabs' verbal and nonverbal expressions. Thus, a growing knowledge of cross-cultural communication skills would be invaluable for both parties.

Situational features. Neuliep (2006) completes his model of intercultural communication with the fourth component-situational features. The rationale for adding this aspect is that perceived competence varies with the situation. A person may be perceived as competent in one situation and not in another. These situational features include environmental context, previous contact, status differentials, and etc. Given the diverse cultural backgrounds of immigrant parents, situational features become an interesting topic to examine in their communication experience with schools. First, a number of studies have found that immigrant parents from China, Mexico and Middle East countries (Dyson, 2001; Lai & Ishiyama, 2004; Moosa et al., 2001) prefer more personal communication to formal communication. Some report that they feel more nervous and cannot sufficiently express their ideas in public. As a result, parenting

workshops and formal parent-teacher meeting may not be as productive as educators who organized these events would expect. Second, there are disparities in power distance between people with different status across cultures. For instance, communication may be influenced by Chinese parents' traditional view of teachers as authorities and their deferential attitude toward teachers.

Neuliep's model is an appropriate guide for the current study since Chinese immigrant parents' communication with school teachers is intercultural in nature. Interactions between immigrant parents and teachers are complicated by disparities in language and culture.

Background of Chinese Immigrants

Parents' perceptions of school life, parenting practices, and their own positions to the school are confined by their own educational experience. Given that "our own personal worldviews are shaped by our interpretations, which we arrive at after reflecting upon our daily interactions" (Klein, 2008; p.94), several researchers (Klein, 2008; Wang, 2008) have proposed the necessity to examine Chinese parents' own schooling experiences and parental involvement in Chinese schools in order to better understand their behavior changes in the new culture. Since the majority of Chinese immigrants in the current study come from mainland China, it would be useful to firstly examine the schooling system and educational philosophies in China in this paper.

Schooling in China. Education in China is a state-managed system of public education run by the Education Ministry of the central government. Universal curricula are applied to all schools throughout the nation except for several experimental provinces

(Wang, 2008). The provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities have their Department of Education and the cities, districts, counties, and townships have their Education Commission. All of these various unities are directed and coordinated by the Ministry of Education headquarters in Beijing (Gu, 2008). Universal curricula are designed by the Ministry of Education and applied to schools throughout the country, from primary to high schools, except for a few experimental provinces (Wang, 2008). College entrance qualifications are based on the scores students achieved on the national college entrance examinations. Although the total enrolment of students in bachelor degree programs and associate programs has increased dramatically in recent years, students still face fierce competitions in getting into top-ranking institutions. Thus, the Chinese academic culture is highly competitive. And, both schools and parents put a great emphasis on the academic achievements of students.

Parental involvement in China's public schools. Parents' involvement in China's public schools is rarely studied and very little literature exist about this. A possible reason contributing to this fact might be that Asian parents in general are unfamiliar with the concept of parental participation as practiced in North American Schools (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). A recent study (Gu, 2008) revealed that two modes of parent involvement were used in China. They are: no parent involvement and home-based involvement models. Gu believes that to some extent, these two involvement models demonstrate that in Chinese parents' mind, the functions of school and family are completely separate from each other. The only place for education is school and as parents, they only need to provide food, clothes, and other living and schooling necessities to their children. He further argued that five reasons could be traced back as the historical and contemporary roots of both types of parent involvement: (a) Traditional

Confucian doctrines place high value on teaching careers and teachers. Chinese parents highly respect teachers and believe teachers know the best way of educating children. Active involvement is not realized as parents' responsibility; (b) The education in China is highly-centralized. Parents have little freedom to contribute to the structured education system and curricula; (c) Chinese parents are unfamiliar with school operations. Chinese schools in general are much bigger, more bureaucratic, and less inviting to parents than North American schools; (d) Chinese parents try to maintain a harmonious relationship with teachers and avoid any conflicts. Thus, they are not likely to raise their disagreement and concerns with schools; (e) When Chinese parents get involved with their children's education at home, they tend to focus much more on child's academic progress than the development in other fields. Thus, although Chinese parents highly value students' education, they are not active in parental involvement when judged by the Western conventions.

Chinese parenting style. Traditional Chinese culture has a great influence on Chinese parents' parenting styles and practices. Studies on Chinese learning model discovered that Confucian teaching has a great impact on Chinese parents' beliefs about education (Li et al., 2008). For example, the concept of "ren" is identified to have a long-lasting influence on Chinese's mindset about learning process. The concept of "ren" proposes the idea that any human being, through lifelong striving, can become the most genuine, sincere, and humane person possible. Beyond the value itself, Chinese students are also expected to exhibit the following learning virtues such as diligence, endurance of hardship, concentration, etc. Inadequate achievement at school is usually attributed to a lack of such virtues in students. When compared with their American Caucasian counterparts, Chinese parents tend to believe more in effort and less in innate ability as a

factor in school success (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004). Consistent with this statement, Chao's (1996) comparative study on Chinese and European American mothers' beliefs about the role of parenting shows that Chinese immigrant mothers conveyed greater emphasis on their children's academic achievement at school, feel they need to offer high investment and sacrifice to their children, adopted more direct intervention approach to their children's learning and schooling, and had strong beliefs that they can influence their children's school success. The European American mothers, on the other hand, emphasized less on children's academic success, adopted less direct intervention approach to their children's learning, and were more concerned with building children's self-esteem.

Researchers also find that Chinese parents prefer more traditional teaching methods. Huntsinger and Jose's (2009) longitudinal study comparing Chinese and European American parents' involvement found that Chinese American parents focused more on the systematic teaching of their children at home, used teaching methods that were more drill and practice-orientated when it comes to their children's mathematics education. They also argued that the differences in teaching practices reflected the discrepancies of parents' beliefs about the appropriate teaching philosophy and different cultural values held by these two groups. In terms of literacy learning, Chinese parents were also reported to favor traditional, skill-based approaches over holistic principles of leaning. Li (2006) found that Chinese parents were more concerned with basic literacy skills, monitoring, and correcting performance.

Compared to Western parenting styles, Chinese parenting style is also conceived to be more authoritative. Filial piety (Gu, 2008), an important aspect of traditional Chinese culture, is said to have placed parents' supreme authority at home. In Confucian doctrine

of filial piety, parent-child relationship is clearly defined. The child must pledge absolute obedience and reverence to parents and any disagreement or argument with parents will be considered as serious disrespect to parents and family. Thus, Chinese parents believe “it is necessary to keep their supreme authority at home so that the child will understand how to respect and demonstrate filial behaviors” (p.574).

Consistent with this idea, the concept of “training,” which means a stricter or more rigorous teaching, has also deeply influenced Chinese parents’ parenting practices. According to Li (2006), the concept of training involves two aspects of parental involvement: *guan* and *jiaoxun* (Chao, 1994; Klein, 2008; Li, 2006). *Guan* is an expectation that the parents will conscientiously govern, teach, and discipline their children. *Jiaoxun* accords parents with the authority to stress a set of standard of conduct or appropriate behaviors. In a word, the above two concepts have endorsed Chinese parents with both authorities at home and great responsibilities in their children’s accomplishments and failures. Klein (2008) found in his study with American immigrant fathers that Chinese fathers adopted traditional parenting roles in Chinese culture, and they had strong feelings of responsibilities toward their children’s future, including education and future careers. According to Li et al. (2008), the most important features of childrearing model in Confucianism are parents’ total commitments to children’s welfare and children’s total obedience to parents’ words. This reciprocal relationship and dual obligatory principle are understood by both parents and children as unquestionable and nonnegotiable moral codes.

Factors Contributing to Home Environment and Parents’ Involvement

Among different minorities, Chinese students have always been pictured as high-achievers in media reports. “When first Japanese Americans and later Chinese American were heralded as resounding successes in the 1960s, Asian Americans as a group were identified as model minority” (Pearce & Lin, 2007, p.20). However, it is dangerous to portray Asian immigrant as a homogeneous cultural group without paying attention to the characteristic of individual families. Li’s (2007) study of Chinese immigrants’ home environment demonstrates that each family has a distinct second-language learning environment including different financial investment in learning materials, levels of parental involvements and access to familial and community resources. The fact that children’s literacy skills are greatly influenced by these variables demonstrates that children’s learning is shaped by their socio-cultural context of learning at home and community. Based on previous research findings, some researchers (Su & Costigan, 2009) conclude that students’ educational achievements are influenced by different resources provided by their families. Parents’ choices of involvement in their children’s education may also be influenced by their home environment.

Current studies (Fuligni, 1997; Li, 2007; Pearce & Lin, 2007) on Chinese immigrant students revealed that two types of factors were shaping students’ home environments: structural factors and socio-cultural factors. Structural factors are determined by family’s social economic status (SES) and these factors are further collapsed as gender, family income, family locations and family composition. In some studies (Li, 2007; Peterson & Heywood, 2007), structural factors are depicted as a family’s physical or financial capital, which refers to the material resources that can be measured by family income and wealth. Previous research (Davies, 1999) on nonimmigrant families suggests that “SES is the strongest and most enduring social

determinant of educational attainment” (p.174). First, SES shapes the quality of education a student could get. Students from upper- or middle-class families have more material and economic resources and thus benefit a lot from optional school trips, learning materials and private tutors. Their affluent parents also pay for their outside school lessons and make investments on nurturing their hobbies. Students from low SES families, however, are often limited by economic constraints which impede their educational progress. Second, SES shapes students’ educational opportunities. For example, the increasing costs of college tuitions are not equally affordable for everyone. Research shows that class background affects students’ decisions about attending universities. For students from lower SES families, their chances to attend universities can be reduced by their family situations. Third, SES also influences the time and energy parents have to get involved in their children’s education. The economic status of new immigrant families always restrains the time parents have to spend with children, participate in PTO/PTA (Parent-Teacher Organization/Association) meetings, and volunteer in school activities (Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004).

Family composition is also an important structural factor shaping individual’s educational experience. The number of caregivers in a family is related to parents’ involvement. A study conducted on children in Early Head Start programs found that children whose fathers continue to be married to their child's mothers or at least have a romantic relationship with the child's mother were more likely to be accessible, show responsibility, and be engaged with their 2-year-old children (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005). Epstein (2001) found that without taking teacher’s involvement practices into consideration, single parents were rated by teachers as less cooperative and less-reliable than married parents in assisting their children to complete homework.

The above research findings point out that individual education experience can be greatly impacted by structural variables. At the same time, researchers (Li, 2007; Pearce & Lin, 2007; Peterson & Heywood, 2007) contend that the structural factors alone are far sufficient in from shaping students' learning environment. After all, structural factors are "those elements that inhibit or enhance academic achievement and attainment but are largely beyond the individual control of the subject" (Pearce & Lin, 2007, p.20). Many scholars (Pearce & Lin, 2007; Peterson & Heywood, 2007) try to study families' contribution to students' education from a socio-cultural perspective. Studies conducted from this approach are greatly influenced by Coleman's social theory of family capital and Bourdieu's theory of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988). According to Coleman's theory, home environments consist of three forms of capitals, namely financial capital, human capital and social capital (Li, 2007). Since I have discussed the role of financial capital earlier, I will now focus on explaining how families' human capital and social capital shape individual's learning experience.

Human capital is "the individual's level of educational attainment that is embodied in a person's knowledge, skills and capabilities to act in certain social structures" (Li, 2007, p.286). Research shows that a family's human capital has great influence on immigrants' successful academic outcomes. Abada and Tenkorang's (2009) study with American immigrants shows that "young immigrants with the lowest level of academic achievements are the ones with low-skilled parents at the time of arrival" (p.190). In their study with lower SES Chinese immigrant families, Pearce and Lin (2007) further divided family cultural variables into four categories: parent education attainment, parent's highest educational expectation, parental involvement and parenting style. Their research showed that there was a positive relationship between parent's level of educational

attainment and children's academic results. Although many Chinese immigrant parents come to Canada with high educational credentials, language barrier always hampers them in getting involved. In Ji & Koblinsky's (2009) study, 76% of the Chinese parents described limited English skills as a major barrier in almost every aspect of parent involvement. Despite their high aspiration to meet education professionals, linguistic challenges often makes this process harder than it is for English-speaking parents. Lai and Ishiyama (2004) investigated the involvement of immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities. Among the ten women they interviewed, only two mothers "were able to be involved at school as much as they wished because they speak English well" (p.103). Cross-cultural comparative studies (Wong & Hughes, 2006) also proved that language played a significant role in parent involvement. Not only parents with requisite language and instructional skills have more efficacies for assisting their children's homework, but also they reported more shared responsibility with school teachers than those who don't have the requisite language skills.

In addition to language deficiencies, the lack of knowledge base about North American education systems has also been consistently identified by researchers (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Wang, 2008) as a barrier to Chinese immigrant parents. For example, Klein (2008) argued that being an immigrant growing up in a different culture means that information about American education that would come naturally to native-born parents has to be "consciously acquired by immigrants" (p.102) . The Chinese fathers in his study, who are all highly educated, adopted different methods to gained necessary knowledge about American schools in order to make informed decisions. Consistent with this finding, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) reported that Chinese American parents were more critical of typical primary school report cards without letter grades than their European American

counterparts. They felt that the school marking and reporting system failed to provide a ranking of their children and hence was not presenting enough information about their children's strengths and weaknesses. The way American schools report students' academic achievement is sharply different from the method used in these parents' home country, where students' grades were publicly posted. The concerns of these Chinese parents should be addressed, in that as Ji and Koblinsky (2009) stated "parents' lack of knowledge about their children's academic knowledge may prevent them from working with teachers/schools to nurture their children's strengths and address learning and behaviour problems" (p.701).

Social capital includes "people the family know and information, assistance, protection, advice, and support such networks provide to the family" (Li et al., 2008, p.10). It is expected that parents of successful Chinese immigrant students would make the best use of their social resources in supporting their children's future development.

First, Chinese parents who are good at cultivating their social capitals establish close connections with members in their extended families. Family bonds and family obligation are believed to be the key factors contributing to Chinese students' academic successes. Within the larger ethnic context of the family, "children are constantly reminded of their duty to respect elders, to take care of younger siblings, to work hard and make decisions only within the approval of their parents" (Zhou & Bankson, 1998, P.151). Similar arguments are cited in Su and Costigan's (2009) study on children's ethnic identity developments in Chinese immigrant families. "Family obligations are rooted in Confucian teaching of filial piety and refer to children's roles and duties in the family, such as respecting the advice and wishes of parents and helping in the house hold" (p.641). According to Su and Costigan, reinforcing of these values by different members

in the family can nurture children's sense of belonging to Chinese ethnic groups and help them develop cultural identities. Strong sense of belonging and clear identity awareness can make students apply themselves academically and will eventually contribute to their good academic performances at school. Parents can also activate their social capital by establishing positive relationships within their ethnic communities. A dominant theme in current research shows that "preserving parental language and ties to the ethnic community can facilitate upward social mobility in children of immigrants" (Qin, 2009, p.468)

Second, parent and teacher relationship can also be viewed as an important form of social capital for Chinese immigrant parents. However, being unfamiliar with the norms and practices in the new education system also influenced Chinese parents' relationship with school teachers. In her study which examined the family-school relationships of Chinese immigrant families in the U.S., Wang (2008) found that compared to parents in China, who usually establish personal relationships with teachers, immigrant parents in the U.S. feel it hard to build close relationships with teachers. The interactions they have with teachers strictly exist on a "business to business" level.

Multidimensional Aspects of Parental Involvement

Given the complexity parental involvement activities have taken, the multidimensional conceptualizations of parent involvement have been proposed by several researchers to achieve the consistency in the measurement of parent involvement studies (Manz et al., 2004). Epstein's model of parent involvement with six levels was widely-adopted to conceptualize recent studies (Epstein, 2001; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Manz et al., 2004; Mckenna & Willms, 1998). The first level in Epstein's model is

parenting, which means parents address children's basic needs and establish home conditions to support children as students. In the second level, communicating, parents have contact with school and teachers and communicate about programs and their children's progress. The third level in this model is volunteering. Parents are expected to assist teachers in classrooms and other school events. The fourth level, learning at home, refers to parents' working with their children under the guidance from school. At the fifth level, decision making, parents begin to get involved with schools' decision-making by participating in PTO/PTA meetings. The last level of this model -collaborating with community involves parents working with community to access services that strengthen school programs and student learning. Manz et al. (2004) further conceptualized the above six dimensions into three types of involvement, namely home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school communication.

The importance of forming partnerships between home and school has been widely recognized by scholars in the education field. In the education process, the relationship between home and school are interdependent (Voltz, 1994). First, there is a joint-responsibility between home and school in educating our children. Although the major responsibility of educating children lie with public school systems, parents play a critical role in laying the foundation for school learning and in maintaining a nurturing home environment. In other words, parents are the primary educators. As a result, when school failed to work with parents, the effectiveness of education programs cannot be achieved. Second, recent literature suggests that parents' home-based involvement activities can be shaped and influenced by how schools relate and connect to parents (Ames et al., 1993). For example, Li's (2006) study which investigated Chinese parents' perspective on children's literacy learning explains how school-home partnerships work to support

children's learning process. Her research findings showed that there seemed to be a correlation between school-home alignments and parents' familiarity with school instructions. For parents who reported more knowledge of school reading instructions, their involvement in children's reading practices were more closely aligned with school practices. These parents' home involvement reinforced and supported school literacy activities. On the other hand, however, parents also reported less familiarity with school's writing and math instructions. Thus, their involvement demonstrated more discontinuities from school practices. These findings demonstrate that without proper home-school communication and more guidance from schools, parents' home involvement is limited in supporting school expectations.

Home-School Communication

The current study focuses on one form of parental involvement: home-school communication. Home and school communication is critical in creating shared goals, avoiding misunderstanding, and guiding parents' involvement activities at home (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005). Parents' involvement processes are greatly influenced by teacher's communication practices with them. When well-structured, such communication "can impart information to help parents become more knowledgeable about children's learning activities, aware of their positive qualities and progress, and informed about how they, as parents, might help their child learn"(Ames et al., 1993, p.3). Healthy home and school communication should also be frequent, bidirectional and on-going. It should serve the purpose of establishing meaningful connections between school teachers and parents (Epstein, 1986; Epstein, 1991). For the purpose of this study, I have operationalized home-school communication as parent-teacher meetings, casual

conversations happened on the hallway, written notes, phone calls or emails between home and school, and school events such as “family fun nights” and “parent nights.” Such communication can be initiated by either parent or teacher, and can be both brief and detailed in nature. However, the communication should be “child-centered” (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005, p.289), meaning its content should be relevant to a specific child. As a result, communication which is aimed to inform parents about general school events such as newsletters will not fit into the criteria.

Current research suggests that not only does home-school communication happens infrequently in today’s education settings, its quality is not satisfactory. For example, many parents have reported dissatisfactions with the contents of home and school communication due to the lack of classroom-related instructional information and the lack of information about a child’s academic progress/weaknesses (Epstein, 2001; Guo & Mohan, 2008; Klein, 2008; Wang, 2008). Chinese immigrant parents’ communication experience is more complicated than those from non-immigrant families due to their linguistic and cultural background and the change of life context. Literature examining this topic unveils the following communication patterns of Chinese immigrants.

First, Chinese communicate with school teachers infrequently. Studies suggest that many Chinese immigrant parents’ contacts with schools are limited to yearly conferences (Klein, 2008). In a study conducted with urban Chinese immigrant families, it was found that less than a half of the parents (35%) had attended a parent-teacher conference where they can discuss children’s school progress (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). This is a considerably low rate comparing to the rate in a nationally representative sample in the U.S. Second, Chinese immigrant parents are passive in initiating communication with schools. Wang’s (2008) study examines Chinese parents’ use of family-school relations as social capital.

Her findings suggest that compared to parents in China who vigorously seek the opportunity to communicate and interact with teachers, Chinese immigrant parents adopted a passive role in initiating contacts with school and teachers. The author argued that structural factors contributing to this phenomenon included time constraints, language, and cultural barriers, while the deeper reason lay in Chinese parents' misperception of the American education system. They view American schools as egalitarian and competition free, and thus attribute less value to parent-teacher relationships in their children's success. The author also argued that American educators "would be surprised by these parents' naivety and idealization of American schools" (p.119). Third, in terms of the method of communication, Chinese immigrant parents used in-person communication most often, and they expressed a preference for this kind of communication. Dyson's (2001) study finds that one third of her participating Chinese parents choose in-person contact alone as the most preferred method to communicate with schools. Some others use in-person contact combined with other means such as written notes and telephone calls. Although another third of these parents didn't indicate any preferences, the findings show that none desired newsletters as the only way of home-school communication. Lai and Ishiyama (2004) find that despite that Chinese parents view teachers as authority figures, they still want to develop close and harmonious interpersonal relationships with them. Findings suggest Chinese parents prefer to communicate in informal settings, where teachers conversed in a friendly manner and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming.

Previous studies also suggest that Chinese parents' communication style is different from that of Caucasian parents. Unlike North Americans who favor eloquent speech, Chinese tend to use succinct language (Dyson, 2001). It has also been noted that Chinese people tend to avoid open conflict in conversations as a result of placing high values on

interpersonal harmony. Thus, Chinese parents tend to use indirect modes of communication. In dealing with conflicts in opinions, Chinese are more likely to adopt a nonconfrontational attitude. The above-mentioned communication styles influence Chinese parents' communication experiences. Studies (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004) find that in most situations, Chinese parents adopt a "listening to" and "accepting" attitude instead of actively engaging in discussion with teachers.

Are Chinese immigrant parents satisfied with their communication with schools? Although little research has been conducted, findings generate controversial answers. Some parents are happy with and value school-home communications which readily responded to their concerns and informed them about school policy and programs (Dyson, 2001). However, other studies suggest Chinese parents are not very satisfied with their communication experiences (Guo & Mohan, 2008; Lo, 2008).

First, the content of communication is usually the focal point of disagreement between parents and teachers. Parents may lose their confidence in home-school communication when their concerns can't be addressed. Guo and Mohan's (2008) study examined a "parents' night" organized to increase ESL parents' understanding of a high-school ESL program. By presenting works accomplished by their students, teachers hope to enhance Chinese parents' general understanding about Canadian education system, process of students' language acquisition, and demonstrate students' strength in their language proficiencies. However, parents were not satisfied with this event because they are not interested in these topics. Instead, Chinese parents expressed a strong desire to hear about individual student's progress in the program and more importantly, the length of time a student was in the ESL program. Parents were concerned that the time their children stayed in ESL class might delay their transition to mainstream classrooms, which

will consequently delay their graduation from high school. Since their questions were not answered, many parents expressed strong regret of coming to this event. Due to high expectations of children's educational success, Chinese parents are very concerned with their children's academic performance. At the same time, they hope to have a genuine grasp of children's academic progress at school. Studies find that Chinese parents are not happy with the ambiguous and superficial school reports of their children. Many parents feel reports given by teachers are unrealistically positive and failed to identify children's weaknesses (Dyson, 2001; Wang, 2008).

Second, some Chinese parents' dissatisfaction with communication is a result of their perceived lack of respect from teachers and educational professionals. Lo's (2008) study examined the interactions between Chinese parents and special education professionals in IEP (Individualized Education Programs) meetings. Findings suggest that parent-reported attendance of professionals in meetings was poor. One Chinese immigrant parent was even openly criticized as being overprotective when she requested one-on-one paraprofessional to look after her son at school. These incidents make participating parents feel disrespected.

Despite the fact that Chinese parents prefer to communicate in informal settings, formal communication is adopted by schools as the primary method to connect with parents. Some parents feel they couldn't go deep enough in their conversations with teachers and hence regard official meetings as unproductive. Factors contributing to parents' dissatisfaction also include the short length of communication. Parents feel they could not occupy teachers for too long because teachers usually have appointments with other parents (Wang, 2008).

Several undermining factors can be traced back as causes of difficulties and dissatisfactions experienced by Chinese parents. Language barrier influences every aspect of Chinese parents' involvement. Studies on home and school communication identify that the lack of English skills is usually the most significant barrier for immigrant parents (Schmidt, 1994; Lo, 2008). Whereas real language barriers impact their understanding of information given by teachers, perceived language barriers and the lack of confidence in English skills may hinder them from initiating communication. Research (Guo & Mohan, 2008) also finds that some Chinese parents refuse to participate in events that are organized to promote communication between home and school simply because they don't know what these events are about. Because activities such as "parent night" are new concepts to immigrant parents, they may not recognize their functions and importance. Besides language and acculturation barriers, the deeper reason causing Chinese parents' dissatisfaction and passive participation in communication is the lack of joint-discussion on parents' concerns. Difference in education philosophy and learning practices usually result in parent and teachers having different concerns in their discussions.

Research Questions

Home and school communication is a rich topic to study if we want to create a more comprehensive picture of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education. The review of literature suggests that in order to promote home and school communication of Chinese immigrant parents, there is a need to investigate the deeper reasons undermining this problem. To fill in the knowledge gap in today's literature, this study is aimed to find out patterns of Chinese immigrant parents' communication experience, factors contributing to their communication experience, and their attitudes

and expectations toward such communication. As a result, the following research questions will be investigated throughout the study:

1. What is Chinese immigrant parents' communication experience with school teachers?
2. Are psychological factors such as self-efficacy and perceptions of parental roles (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995) mediating the patterns of their communication?
3. How do they perceive such communication?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Given the nature and scope of the study, a mixed methods research design was adopted. According to Creswell (2005), “a mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem” (p.552). Rather than restricting or constraining researchers’ choices, mixed methods research opens up the researchers’ choices of strategies, approaches, and methods in answering research questions. As an inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary form of research, the mixed methods research has been adopted by more and more researchers in their studies.

The mixed methods research design can be further classified into different forms and the following four types are commonly used in educational research. These designs are: the triangulation design, the embedded design, the explanatory design, and the exploratory design. Each type of design possesses its own characteristics, follows its unique procedures, and can be adopted accordingly for different research purpose. Researchers using the triangulation mixed methods design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyze both datasets separately, and compare the results from the two datasets in the final step of their study. In this process, researchers put emphasis on both forms of the data and make interpretation as to whether the two databases yield similar or dissimilar results. In an embedded mixed methods design, researchers also collect both forms of data simultaneously. However, they usually only focus on one form of data, and have the other form of data play a secondary role. The

secondary form of data, which usually addresses a different question than asked for by the primary form of data, augments additional information to the primary data. Instead of simultaneously collecting both forms of data, the explanatory design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. Researchers using this design start by getting a general picture of the research problem. They then use qualitative results to explain or extend their findings from the prior study.

Rather than collecting quantitative data first, researchers can also conduct their study by collecting qualitative data first and then collect quantitative information. This sequence is a characteristic of the exploratory design. Researchers usually use this design when no available existing instruments can be used for the population under study. In this case, the researchers conduct qualitative study with a small number of participants to explore the phenomenon, and identify themes from the qualitative data. They then develop their own measurement to collect quantitative data from a larger population to explain the relationships found in the qualitative data.

After consideration, an explanatory mixed methods design was used in this study since (a) Collecting quantitative data first is instrumental to discover Chinese immigrant parent's communication patterns and their general experiences. (b) The qualitative data can help to further explore the factors and perspectives which mediated these parents' communication with teachers. Thus, this research project was conducted in two steps. First, quantitative data was collected in order to identify Chinese immigrant parents' experience, satisfaction, challenges, and expectations of communicating with school teachers. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Chinese immigrant parents to get qualitative data for an in-depth understanding of the issues discovered

through the survey. The reason of choosing a mixed methods research design is based on the assumption that quantitative and qualitative data together can provide the researcher a better understanding of the research problem by using either kind of data itself (Creswell, 2005; p.552). The use of survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews complement each other in that by adding a component which surveys a randomly selected sample from the population of interest, the researcher improves the generalizability of the research findings. Moreover, adding qualitative interviews offers the opportunity to discuss directly the issues under investigation and tap into participants' perspectives.

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

This study targets Chinese immigrant parents in Windsor, who have children attending local schools. The process of participant recruitment was induced after I received the *Approval Letter from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Windsor*.

The participants of the survey were recruited through different events organized by the Chinese Association of Greater Windsor (CAGW). First, a number of surveys were collected during one of the association's gathering events. Around 150 people attended this event, during which a potluck dinner was served. With the approval of the event organizer, I briefly introduced myself, my study and the recruitment criteria during the party. I also informed the parents that the survey would take 15 minutes to complete and participants could skip any questions they were uncomfortable with. I then distributed surveys, along with a signed information letter, to all parents who indicated their willingness to participate. Chinese parents at the gathering party showed great interest in this study. A few of them also asked me questions about my research. I responded to their

questions and further explained the purpose of my study. Surveys were collected at the end of the party and a total of 103 surveys were completed.

The rest of the survey participants were recruited outside of Chinese language classes when Chinese parents came to drop off and pick up their children. These classes, which are also organized by Chinese Association of Greater Windsor (CAGW), were held every weekend and attended mostly by children from Chinese immigrant families. The following procedure was used on the day of my survey collection. First, I waited outside of the classroom building and approached my potential participants when they came to drop off the students for class. I briefly introduced my study and myself, and invited them to participate in my study by filling out the survey. Second, the majority of the parents I approached met the selection criteria. After I got parents' verbal agreement to participate, I gave them a survey to fill out, along with a signed information letter of this study. I told my participants that the survey would take about 15 minutes to complete and that they had the choice to fill out either on site or at home. I told the participants that the survey would be collected when they came back to pick up their children from class. The Chinese class lasted for 2 hours. The majority of parents who agreed to participate returned their survey. Finally, 80 surveys were collected when parents came to pick up their children. During both of the two survey recruitment events, participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and that they shouldn't write their names anywhere on the survey.

Participants of the interviews were recruited through multiple avenues. First of all, at the end of each survey distributed, I included a short invitation to the interviews I was going to conduct. I provided information about the interview and my contact information in this invitation, so that parents can call me to set up an interview time if they are interested in this study. In addition, a snow-ball approach was used to recruit more

interviewees. That is, I asked each interviewee to pass on the invitation to their friends who might also be interested in this study.

The response to the invitation was encouraging. Four parents indicated their interest to participate in the interviews on site when they returned the survey. Five more parents called me and indicated their willingness to participate through telephone within one week the surveys were distributed. At this point, I briefly asked some questions about themselves and their children, including their years being in Canada, the grade and gender of their child, and etc. These details, along with the name and contact information of each parent, were written down and kept by myself. These demographic information were used later in selecting the interview participants.

A selection process to determine participants was used throughout the interview study. Consideration was given to both parents' gender, years living in the North America, as well as their children's grade and gender. Efforts were also made to ensure that these parents came from diversified social backgrounds. After careful consideration, two fathers and six mothers were selected as interview participants, since there were disproportionately more mothers than fathers indicated their interests to participate in the interview study.

Setting up the interview time was the last procedure in participant recruitment. When calling the participants to set up an interview, I told my participants that the interviews would be audio-taped and that they would need to consent to participate in this study by signing consent forms before any interviews would be conducted. I also responded to the questions some of my participants asked. All of the participants agreed to be interviewed after being informed about the above information. Then, an interview

time and place was set up after discussing individually with each of my participant. All of the arrangements were made according to my participants' convenience.

Instruments

An anonymous survey which had been translated to Chinese was used to collect quantitative data regarding Chinese immigrant parents' communication experiences with school teachers. Three aspects of information were examined through this survey. These aspects were: parents' communication experience with school teachers, psychological factors which influence such communications and demographic information. Parents' experience with school teachers is examined by finding out the ways in which parents get contact with teachers, the frequency they communicate with teachers, the role they played in initiating the communication (active and passive), the major content of their communication, and parents' satisfaction and expectation toward these communications. The five constructs that were used in the survey to measure psychological factors impacting parents' communication behaviors with school teachers were adapted from the instrument Walker et al. used (Walker et al.,2005), plus some extra questions designed by myself that addressed the characteristics of study participants. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process, the psychological factors are defined as parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context. More specifically, parents' motivational beliefs will be measured by parental role construction and parental self-efficacy. Perceptions of invitation from others are consisted of two constructs: perceptions of child invitation and teacher invitation. Since parents' perceived life context is defined as self-perceived time and energy and self-perceived skills and

knowledge, two items were included to measure these two aspects respectively. This survey also collected participants' demographic information including gender, family incomes, years being in Canada/USA, etc.

Before the final version of the survey was administered, two professors from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor were asked to examine the English survey questionnaire and its Chinese translations. Both of these professors are bilingual and have intensive experience in researching educational issues related to sojourn experiences in Canada. Their critical comments and suggestions were incorporated in the final version of the survey.

In addition to the use of the survey, I conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with 8 Chinese parents to get qualitative data for an in-depth understanding of issues covered and not covered by the survey, particularly exploring the factors and perspectives that mediate their communication with teachers. Two parts of questions were examined in the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, parents were asked causal questions about the professional and educational backgrounds of themselves. Getting to know about participants' background information not only helped me to modify my following questions better, but also set a more intimate atmosphere for the interviewees to talk about more serious issues. Other questions were focused on exploring Chinese parents' interpretations, attitudes and expectations toward their own experiences.

All the interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions. Using semi-structured interviews allows researchers the opportunity to “probe beyond the protocol” (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006, p.124) and allows the participant to create the options for responding. Additionally, participants will not be constrained by the perspectives of the researcher in responding to open-ended questions.

Since Chinese is the native language of both the researcher and the participants, all the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The locations of interview varied from participant's home, office, and the graduate lounge at the Faculty of Education. With the participants' permission, all the interviews were audio-taped for data analysis. Participants were promised that the information they provided would be confidential; no names of participants, their children, or schools would be reported. Before conducting the interviews, each participant received a *Letter of Information for Consent to Participant in Research* (Appendix D) which explains the purpose of the study, the procedures, the duties the participants would be expected to fulfill, their rights to withdraw from the study at any time, the access to research results, and so on. All interviewees signed *the Consent to Participate in Study* (Appendix C) and *Consent for Audio/Video Taping* (Appendix F) before the interviews. I also verbally explained to all participants the importance of signing these forms and verbally informed them their rights as participants (such as the rights to refuse to answer any questions and the rights to withdraw from the study).

After participants signed the forms, interviews were conducted using the *Parent Interview Guide* (Appendix B). This guide was comprised of 21 questions. These questions were modified and asked in different orders during each interviews according to the different responses of each participant. The average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes, with the longest being 52 minutes and the shortest being 24 minutes. Although a guide of questions was used in all the interviews, the topics of our conversations went beyond the boundary of communication issues. Participating parents provided abundant and in-depth information involving different aspects of their children's education in Canadian as well as Chinese schools.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey was analyzed by IBM SPSS. After all the surveys had been collected, an initial screening process was adopted to take out inadequately filled out 16 surveys. Data were then entered into the IBM SPSS database. In the process of entering the data, a numerical code for each close-ended answer was assigned. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted to interpret the data using this software. Thus, frequency tables for each question item were generated. The mean, mode, median and standard deviation were calculated for each interval scale. Inferential statistics were also generated through one-way ANOVA and independent sample T-tests to analyze the correlation between various factors and parents' different communication experience and attitudes toward communication.

Interview data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed following the thematic analysis strategy proposed by Ezzy (2002). Thematic analysis is an inductive analysis strategy, which "aims to identify themes within the data" (p.88). That is to say, although the general issues that are of interest are determined prior to the analysis, the specific nature of the data and the themes are not predetermined. No sorted themes or categories will be decided prior to coding the data. Following the inductive analysis strategy (Lodico et al, 2006), I started with reviewing and exploring the data by reading through it for several times in order to get a general understanding of the scope of the data after the transcription of audio-taped interviews. After this initial review, the interview data were then coded and categorized while I attempted to identify emerging patterns and themes. The process of qualitative data collection and analysis is iterative and recursive. Thus, the above mentioned steps were repeated several times until sufficient meaning had been extracted from the data. This inductive data analysis was

initiated after the third interview was completed. The process was also on-going throughout the data collection period.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that due to time and resources constraints, it was hard to recruit randomly samples to fill out the survey. Instead, convenience sampling was employed in the survey distribution process. Thus, the generalizability of the study results is limited. Another limitation of this study is that participating parents might tend to inflate their reports of communication experience with school teachers because they recognized such activities as desirable. The lack of resource to triangulate parents' self-reported scores might also influence the validity of findings. However, interview data would to some extent offset this limitation.

CHAPTER 4: SURVEY RESULTS

A total number of 183 surveys were collected throughout this study. Six participants didn't fill out the gender and grade information of their children. Another 10 participants didn't respond to the part "psychological factors which influence parents' communications." As a result, the total number of survey analyzed is 167.

Demographics

Gender and years of residence in North America. Approximately 69.5% survey participants were female and 25.1% of participants were male. In addition, 3.0% participants chose "prefer not to answer" as their response to this question and 2.4% participants didn't response to this question.

With regard to their years residing in Canada/the U.S., around 42.5% participants had been living in North America for more than 10 years. A slightly less participants (35.3%) had been living here for 5 to 10 years. Around 18.6% participants responded their years of residence as of between 2 to 5 years. Only 3.6% of the participants had been living in North America for less than 2 years.

Family income and employment status. Among those who responded to the question "the total family annual income before tax," about 21.7% had a total family annual income that was above \$100,000. Around 50.3% of the respondents' total family annual income fell in the range between \$40,000 and \$100,000. The other 28.0% families had annual income that was less than \$40,000.

The total response rate for the question "employment status" was 98.2%. More than half of the participants who responded to this particular question (55.6%) had long term

full-time jobs. However, the second largest portion of the participants (32.3%) was made up of those who were not employed. In addition, about 7.3% of respondents had temporary part-time jobs, around 5.5% had long term part-time jobs and 4.3% of the respondents worked for temporary full-time jobs. In sum, around 59.9% of the respondents worked for full-time jobs and 12.8% had part-time jobs, either the employment was long-term or temporary.

The total response rate for the question “spouse’s employment status” was 90.4%. Among those who responded to this question, more than half (55.6%) indicated that their spouses held long term full-time jobs. Approximately 23.2% indicated that their spouses were not employed. The rates for “spouse’s employment status” for temporary full-time jobs, long-term part-time jobs, and temporary part-time jobs were 9.9%, 7.3%, and 4.0% respectively.

Communication Experience

Meeting attendance. Approximately 47.3% participating parents indicated that they attended all of the parent-teacher interviews which were scheduled by schools, with or without the accompanying of their spouse. Around 14.4% participants reported that they attended these meetings with their spouse all the time. About 39.5% of the participations responded that they sometimes attended these meetings, with or without their spouses. The percentage of parents who responded that they had never attended a parent-teacher meeting that were scheduled by school was 13.2%. Among them, half indicated that their spouses were taking care of this matter, and the other half indicated that their spouse did not attend these meetings either. That is to say, in 6.6% of the surveyed families, neither parent had ever attended a parent-teacher meeting.

To find out the relationship between parents' meeting attendance frequency and his/her employment status, Chi-square test was computed between the variables *grouped meeting attendance* and *employment status* (full-time or part-time). The variable *grouped meeting attendance* was generated by congregating parents' meeting attendance frequencies into three categories, namely "never attend meetings," "sometimes attend meetings," and "always attend meetings." No significant statistic was found [χ^2 (2, $N=167$)=0.63, $p>0.05$] in the test, indicating that there was no significant connection between parents' meeting attendance frequency and their employment status. At the same time, no significant results were generated between the variables *grouped meeting attendance* and *years of residence in North America* [χ^2 (4, $N=167$)=2.88, $p>0.05$]. That is, there was no significant connection between parents' meeting attendance frequency and their years living in North America.

Concerns of the meeting. The biggest concern held by participants who attended parent-teacher meetings scheduled by school ($n=145$) was to get teacher's comments on their child. Around 72.4% parents indicated that they wanted to listen to teachers' comments on their child in these meetings. About 58.6% participants wanted to use this opportunity to get their questions answered, and less than half of the participants (44.8%) cared about making sense of the report card during these meetings. A small part of the participants (6.2%) responded that they had concerns other than the above three options. These concerns were "the development of child's social skills," "how their children get along with other children at school," "in what aspects their children need to and could be improved," "in what aspects they can help their children to make improvement." Some participating parents reported that they were also interested in talking about and making sense of the curriculum, textbook, and teaching methods used by schools.

The frequency of communication with teachers (excluding the school-scheduled parent-teacher meetings). In response to the question “How often did you communicate with your children’s teachers for each semester excluding the school-scheduled parent-teacher meeting?” more than half of the participants (58.7%) reported that they communicated with teachers a couple of times each semester. This number is followed by those who reported that they never communicated with teachers other than parent-teacher meetings (27.5%). The rest of participating parents communicated with school teachers more regularly. About 7.8% participants indicated that they communicated with teacher once a month. The percentage of participants who communicated with teachers a few times a month is 3.6%. Only about 2.4% participants indicated that they contacted children’s teachers at least once a week. In sum, 72.5% participating parents contacted with their children’s teachers other than parent-teacher meetings.

Parents’ roles in initiating communication. This question was designed to find out whether Chinese parents were active or passive in communicating with children’s teachers. Responses showed that among those parents who had contacts with teachers other than parent-teacher meetings (n=123), approximately 65.8% had initiated a meeting. After taking parents who responded that they had never communicated with teachers other than school-scheduled meetings into account, the total rate of having initiated a meeting with teachers dropped to 49.7%.

Crosstab and Chi-square tests for independence were conducted between the variables *grouped communication frequency with teachers* (dependent variable) and *initiate a meeting with teachers* (independent variable). The variable *grouped communication frequency* was generated by congregating parents’ communication

frequencies into three categories. These categories were (a) “never communicate with teachers,” (b) “communicate a couple of times each semester,” and (c) “communicate once a month and more.” (Include: “Once a month;” “A few times a month;” “Every week and more.”) The test result [$\chi^2(2,N=161)=40.24, p<0.05, \text{Cramer's } V=0.50$] showed that there was enough evidence to state that these two variables are related. It appears that parents who played activate roles in initiating communications tend to have more frequent communications with teachers.

Table1

Chi-square Analysis of Communication Frequency by Initiating Communication

Communication Frequency & Initiating Communication Crosstabulation					
			Initiate Communication		
			Yes	No	Total
Communication Frequency	Never	Count	4	37	41
		Expected	21.1	19.9	41.0
		Count			
	A couple of times	Residual	-17.7	17.7	
		Count	61	36	97
		Expected	50.0	47.0	97.0
	Once a Month and More	Count			
		Residual	11.0	-11.0	
		Count	18	5	23
		Expected	11.9	11.1	23.0

		Count			
		Residual	6.1	-6.1	
Total		Count	83	78	161
		Expected Count	83.0	78.0	161.0
Chi-square Test Statistics					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Sig.(2-tailed)		
Pearson chi-square	40.236 ^a	2	.000		
Likelihood ratio	44.785	2	.000		
Liner-by-liner	34.787	1	.000		
N of valid cases	161				
Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Approx. Sig.		
Nominal by	Phi	.500	.000		
Nominal	Cramer's V	.500	.000		
N of Valid Cases		161	.000		

The content of communication (excluding parent-teacher meeting). About 94.2% parents who communicated with teachers other than school-scheduled meeting responded to the question investigating the contents of their communication. The responses showed that academic-related issues were a concern for 74.5% parents.

Children's behavioral issues were identified by 67.5% parents. In addition, half of the respondents (50%) talked about children's relationships with other students in these communications. Other topics addressed in these communications include "children's social activities," "parenting responsibilities," and "educational plans for students with special needs."

In addition, crosstabs and Chi-square tests were computed between the variables *grouped communication frequency* and each of the three variables measuring the content of communication (Include "content of communication: academic- related issues," "content of communication: behavior issues," and "content of communication: relationship with other students."). The variable *grouped communication frequency* was generated by congregating parents' communication frequencies into three categories. These categories are (a) "never communicate with teachers," (b) "communicate a couple of times each semester," and (c) "communicate once a month and more." (Include: "Once a month," "A few times a month," "Every week and more.") The tests showed no significant results between the variable *grouped communication frequency* and the variable *content of communication: academic- related issues*. No significant result was found either between the variables *grouped communication frequency* and *content of communication: relationship with other students*. However, statistic [$\chi^2(2, N=150)=10.80$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.27$] showed that there was a significant relationship between the variables *grouped communication frequency* and *content of communication: behavior issues*. It appeared that those who talked about children's behavior problems tended to have more frequent communications with teachers.

Table 2

Chi-square Analysis of Communication Frequency by Content of Communication:

Behavior Issues

Communication Frequency & Content of Communication: Behavior Issues					
Crosstabulation					
			Talk about Behavior Issues		
			Yes	No	Total
Communication Frequency	Never	Count	22	14	36
		Expected Count	14.2	21.8	36.0
		Residual	7.8	-7.8	
	A couple of times	Count	32	59	91
		Expected Count	35.8	55.2	91.0
		Residual	-3.8	3.8	
	Once a Month and More	Count	5	18	23
		Expected Count	9.0	14.0	23.0
		Residual	-4.0	4.0	
	Total	Count	59	91	150
		Expected Count	59.0	91.0	150.0

Chi-square Test Statistics			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Sig.(2-tailed)
Pearson chi-square	10.802 ^a	2	.005
Likelihood ratio	10.846	2	.004
Liner-by-liner	10.163	1	.001
N of valid cases	150		
Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.268	.005
Nominal	Cramer's V	.268	.005
N of Valid Cases		150	

Methods used in communicating with teachers. The response rate for the question “In which method(s) do you communicate with the teachers?” was 95.2%. The data indicated that meeting teachers in person was adopted by 74.8% of the respondents. The second most popular way to communicate with teachers among participating Chinese parents was writing. About 40.3% respondents of this question communicated with teachers by writing letters, notes, messages and etc. Approximately 25.2% participants reported that they used telephone to communicate with teachers, and only around 2.5% participants reported that they used emails.

Communication Satisfaction and Expectations

Two constructs were included in the survey questionnaire to measure Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes and expectations toward their communications with children's school teachers. These two constructs consist of 4 (communication satisfaction) and 3 items (communication expectation) respectively. Responses to the items in these two constructs were measured using a six-point Likert-type scale for extent of agreement (rating scale include strongly disagree, disagree, disagree just a little, agree just a little, agree, and strongly agree).

Satisfaction toward communication. The mean score value for this scale was 4.21. The highest mean value ($M=4.72$, $SD=0.89$) was calculated for the statement "I felt comfortable to communicate with my child's teacher," with 67.5% parents agreeing and 1.9% disagreeing with the saying. The lowest mean value ($M=3.13$, $SD=1.27$) was calculated for the statement "My child's teacher has knowledge of my culture," with 13.9% holding agreeing attitude toward the statement. Around 59.9% participants agreed with the statement "I was satisfied with the overall communication with my child's teacher." ($M=4.59$, $SD=0.84$) Half of the participants (51.3%) agreed that "My child's teacher understands my concerns about my child."

Communication expectations with school teacher. The mean score value for this scale was 4.86. Participating parents had the most positive attitude ($M=5.05$, $SD=0.29$) toward the statement "I hope that my child's teacher understands my concerns better." A high percentage of 76% agreed with that statement. Around 70.6% of participants agreed with the statement "I hope that my child's teacher has better knowledge of my culture." ($M=4.88$). Approximately 62.8% agreed that "I hope that I can have better influence on school activities through communication with my child's teacher," while 5.8% disagreed.

Results from paired-sample T-test indicated that parents' expectation toward "teacher understands my concerns better" ($M=5.05$, $SD=0.92$) was significantly stronger than their expectation toward "have better influences on school activities through communication." ($M=4.67$, $SD=1.12$, $t(152)=4.49$, $p < .05$, one-tailed) The mean and standard deviations of parents' attitudes toward each statement are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Paired-sample T-test results for Parents' Expectations toward Teacher and School Activity

Descriptive Statistics				
Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE of Mean	
teacher understands my concerns better	5.05	.920	.074	
have better influences on school activities through communication	4.67	1.118	.090	
Inferential Statistics				
t-value	df	2-Tail Significance	Standard Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval
4.487	152	.000	.084	Lower: .212 Upper: .546

Psychological Constructs of Chinese Immigrant Parents

Five scales were included in the survey to measure the psychological constructs that were mediating parent's communication behaviors. These scales were: Role construction in communicating with school teacher; Communication self-efficacy with school teachers; Perceptions of teacher invitations; Perceptions of child invitation and perceived life context. In each of these scales, participating parents were asked to rate on a six point Likert-type scale to indicate their extent of agreement with the statements included in that scale (rating scale include strongly disagree, disagree, disagree just a little, agree just a little, agree, and strongly agree). Each scale included 2 to 5 items.

Role construction in communicating with school teacher. The mean score value for this construct was 4.79. The highest mean value ($M=5.10, SD=0.96$) was calculated for the statement "I believe it is my responsibility to stay on top of things at school" and the lowest mean value ($M=4.54, SD=1.02$) was calculated for the statement "I believe it is my responsibility to support decisions made by the teacher." Results showed that the percentage of parents who agreed with these sayings were 77.5% and 56.3% respectively. The mean score values for the statement "I believe parent-teacher communication can make school better" and "I believe it is my responsibility to communicate with my child's teacher regularly" were also high, at 4.95 and 4.94 respectively. Around 74.5% and 74.6% of parents agreed with these statements.

Communication self-efficacy with school teacher. The mean score for this construct was 4.30. The highest score was calculated for the statement "My communication with teacher can make a difference in my child's school performance." ($M=4.89, SD=1.07$) A high of 90.4% participating parents agreed with this statement. Statistical results also showed that participating Chinese parents held positive attitudes

toward their ability to communicate with teachers. More than half of (57.8%) parents agreed with the statement “My English is good enough to communicate with the teacher clearly,” and around 19% participants agreed with the statement “The lack of knowledge about Canadian culture often made me feel intimidated to communicate with the teacher clearly.”

Perceptions of teacher invitation. The mean score for this construct was 4.01. The highest mean value ($M=4.45$, $SD=1.14$) was calculated for the statement “My child’s teacher is interested and cooperative when we discuss my child together,” with 55% participants agreeing. The lowest mean value ($M=3.44$, $SD=1.35$) was calculated for the statement “My child’s teacher is interested in my culture,” with only 22.9% parents holding agreeing attitudes. The mean scores for the statement “I felt my child’s teacher welcomes me to communicate with him or her about my child” and “My child’s teacher encourages me to communicate with him or her” were 4.30 and 4.23. Around 52.3% and 48.6% parents agreed with these statements respectively. Fewer parents (30.8%) responded that teachers invited them to help out at school. Approximately 23.1% parents disagreed with the saying “My child’s teacher invited me to help out at the school.”

Perceptions of child invitation. The mean score ($M=3.64$) calculated from this scale was much lower than those calculated from other scales. The mean score for the statement “My child asked me to help out at the school” was 3.86, with 37.5% agreeing and 16.4% disagreeing with the saying. The rest participants held neutral attitude. Fewer parents (24.1%) agreed with the statement “My child asked me to talk with his or her teacher.”

Perceived life context. The mean score for this construct was 3.91. The mean score ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.09$) for the statement “I know about Canadian school system” was

slightly higher than the mean score ($M=3.86$, $SD=1.18$) for the statement “I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher.” Around 33.5% and 30.8% participants agreed with these statements while much more parents (57% and 59.6% respectively) held neutral attitudes.

Table 4

Mean Value of Scales of Psychological Constructs

Psychological Construct	Mean Value
Role construction in communicating with school teacher	4.79
Communication self-efficacy with school teacher	4.30
Perceptions of teacher invitation	4.01
Perceptions of child invitation	3.64
Perceived life context	3.91

One way ANOVA tests were firstly conducted to compare the ratings on the five psychological constructs among participants grouped by their frequency of attending parent-teacher meetings. The variable measuring participants’ frequency of attending meetings was cluster from the original seven categories into three categories, namely (a) “never attend meetings,” (include: “Never. My spouse did not attend either;” “Never, but my spouse did attend some of these meeting;” and “Never, but my spouse looked after all these meetings”) (b) “sometimes attend meetings,” and (c) “always attend meetings.”

(Include: “All the time, but my spouse did not go any of the meetings;” “All the time. My spouse did attend some of the meetings with me;” and “All the time. My spouse with me every time.”) For each psychological construct, a new variable was generated by summing up a participant’s ratings on all the items measured in that construct. The results, $F(2,148)=6.73, p<0.05$, and follow-up group comparisons using Tukey’s HSD test showed that statistically significant differences of means on the construct *role construction* existed between the following groups: parents who have never attended a meeting ($M=21.63, SD=5.28$) and parents who sometimes attended such meetings ($M=24.32, SD=3.86$); parents who have never attended a meeting ($M=21.63, SD=5.28$) and parents who always attended such meetings ($M=25.30, SD=3.44$).

Table 5

One-way ANOVA Analysis of Role Construction by Meeting Attendance

Descriptive Statistics					
Meeting Attendance		Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	
Never Attend Meetings		21.6316	5.28321	1.21205	
Sometimes Attend Meetings		24.3226	3.86143	0.49040	
Always Attend meetings		25.3000	3.43617	0.41070	
Inferential Statistics					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	202.483	2	101.241	6.729	.002

Within Groups	2226.669	148	15.045		
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Significant results were also found between the groups who had never attended a parent-teacher meeting ($M=20.25$, $SD=4.20$) and those who always attended such meetings ($M=23.32$, $SD=3.57$) on the construct *self-efficacy*, $F(2,144)=5.56$, $p<0.05$ and the construct *life context*, $F(2,152)=4.14$, $p<0.05$. Parents who always attended such meetings scored significantly higher on the scale than those who had never attended such meetings. No significant results were found between any groups on the constructs *teacher invitation* and *child invitation*.

Table 6

One-way ANOVA Analysis of Self-efficacy by Meeting Attendance

Descriptive Statistics					
Meeting Attendance	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error		
Never Attend Meetings	20.2500	4.20370	0.93997		
Sometimes Attend Meetings	22.4000	3.59320	0.48451		
Always Attend meetings	23.3194	3.56756	0.42044		
Inferential Statistics					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	149.656	2	74.828	5.564	.005

Within Groups	1936.603	144	13.449		
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Table 7

One-way ANOVA Analysis of Life Context by Meeting Attendance

Descriptive Statistics					
Meeting Attendance	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error		
Never Attend Meetings	7.0000	2.97610	0.63451		
Sometimes Attend Meetings	7.5424	1.54610	0.20128		
Always Attend meetings	8.1892	1.69347	0.19686		
Inferential Statistics					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.101	2	14.551	4.142	.018
Within Groups	533.995	152	3.513		

One way ANOVA tests were then conducted to compare ratings on the five psychological constructs among participants grouped by their frequency of communication with teachers other than school-scheduled parent-teacher meetings. The variable measuring the frequency of communication with teachers other than school-scheduled parent-teacher meetings was clustered from the original five categories to three

categories. These categories were (a) “never communicate with teachers,” (b) “communicate a couple of times each semester,” and (c) “communicate once a month and more.” (Include: “Once a month;” “A few times a month;” and “Every week and more.”)

For each psychological construct, a new variable was generated by summing up a participant’s ratings on all the items measured in that construct. Test results and follow-up group comparisons using Tukey’s HSD tests showed that statistically significant differences of mean scores existed on all of the five scales between the parents who had never communicated with teachers and parents who reported that they communicated with teachers several times per semester. Parents who had never communicated with teachers ($M=22.29$, $SD=4.86$) scored significantly lower on role construction than parents who communicated with teachers several times a semester ($M=25.51$, $SD=2.81$), $F(2,148)=10.14$, $p<0.01$. Parents who had never communicated with teachers ($M=20.81$, $SD=4.47$) scored significantly lower on self-efficacy than parents who communicated with teachers several times a semester ($M=23.43$, $SD=3.15$), $F(2,144)=7.30$, $p<0.01$. Parents who had never communicated with teachers ($M=17.39$, $SD=4.99$) scored significantly lower on perceptions of teacher invitation than parents who communicated with teachers several times a semester ($M=21.00$, $SD=4.45$), $F(2,132)=7.06$, $p<0.01$. Parents who had never communicated with teachers ($M=6.30$, $SD=2.56$) scored significantly lower on perceptions of child invitation than parents who communicated with teachers several times a semester ($M=7.70$, $SD=2.46$), $F(2,148)=4.43$, $p<0.01$. Parents who had never communicated with teachers ($M=7.05$, $SD=1.86$) scored significantly lower on perceptions of life context than parents who communicated with teachers several times a semester ($M=8.04$, $SD=1.90$), $F(2,152)=4.51$, $p<0.01$. No significant results were found on any constructs between any other groups.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to find out whether parents who had initiated a communication and those who didn't have the same scores on the five psychological constructs including *Role construction in communicating with school teacher*; *Communication self-efficacy with school teachers*; *Perceptions of teacher invitations*; as well as their *Perceptions of child invitation* and *perceived life context*. Because this independent sample t-test compared 5 variables, a Bonnferoni adjustment was applied to reduce the possibility of committing a Type 1 error. Thus, a more conservative *p* value of 0.01 was used to compare each variable's significant level.

The results indicated that those who had initiated a communication with teachers ($M=23.83, SD=3.33$) scored significantly higher on the scale *Communication self-efficacy with school teachers* than those who had not ($M=22.00, SD=2.80, t(103)=2.79, p<0.01$, two-tailed.) No significant results were found on other scales.

Table 8

Results of Independent Sample T-test Comparing the Attitudes toward Communication Self-efficacy between Those Who Have Initiated Communication with Teachers and Those Who Haven't

Descriptive Statistics			
Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE of Mean
Initiate Communication	23.8286	3.32741	.39901
Not Initiate Communication	22.0000	2.79706	.47279
Inferential Statistics			

Mean Difference=1.82857					
Leverne's Test for Equality of Variance: F=.961,Significance=.329					
Variiances	t-value	df	2-Tail Significance	SE of Difference	95% Confidence Interval
Equal	2.793	103	.006	.65464	Lower: .53026 Upper: 3.12689

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the correlation between the construct *self-efficacy* and the constructs *teacher-invitation*; *child-invitation* and *life context*. The test results, as shown in Table 9, indicated that strong correlation relationships existed between the item "I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher" in the construct *self-efficacy* and each of the three items in the construct *teacher invitation*. These items are: "My child's teacher encouraged me to communicate with him or her," ($r=0.53, p<0.01$) "I felt my child's teacher welcomes me to communicate with him or her about my child," ($r= 0.56, p<0.01$) and "My child's teacher is interested and cooperative when we discuss my child together." ($r=0.58, p<0.01$) No other strong correlation relationships were found between items in other constructs.

Table 9

Correlation Coefficients of the Constructs Self-efficacy and Teacher Invitation

		I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher	My child's teacher encouraged me to communicate with him or	I felt my child's teacher welcomes me to communicate	My child's teacher is interested and cooperative when we
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			her	with him or her about my child	discuss my child together
I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher	Pearson Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	154			
My child's teacher encouraged me to communicate with him or her	Pearson Correlation	.533**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	147	150		
I felt my child's teacher welcomes me to communicate with him or her about my child	Pearson Correlation	.558**	.770**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	149	148	151	
My child's teacher is interested and cooperative when we discuss my child together	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.704**	.799**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	146	146	147	149
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW RESULTS

Background Information

Gender and years being in North America. A total number of eight Chinese immigrant parents participated in one-on-one interviews of this study. The interview duration ranged from 24 to 52 minutes. Of the eight participants, two were fathers and six are mothers. Seven families were dual-parent families. The longest years of being in North America that was reported was 10 years. This number was followed by 8 years and 5 years subsequently. Two participants reported that they had been in North America for less than one year, with the shortest period reported being 5 months. The other three participants had been living in Canada for 1.5, 2 and 2.5 years respectively.

Educational and professional background in China. Seven out of eight interview participants came from highly educated background or had received post-secondary education in China. Three reported having a post-graduate education (masters or Ph.D.), four reported having Bachelor’s degree, and one had high school diploma. In addition, 5 out of 8 participants reported that their spouse had received post-graduate education.

All of the participants worked full-time, white-collar professional jobs in China before they immigrated to Canada. These parents held a variety of occupations, which were listed in the table below.

Table 10

Education and Professional Background of Participating Families

Participant ID	Gender	Years being in North America	Educational Background	Occupation in China	Received Education in North	Working Status in Canada	Spouse Working Status	Spouse Educational Background

					America (yes or no)			
1	Female	5months	Bachelor's Degree	Interior designer	No	Not working	Student	Master's Degree
2	Female	5years	Bachelor's Degree	Accountant	No	Not working	Student	Master's Degree
3	Female	2.5years	Master's Degree	University instructor	Yes	Not working	Student	Master's Degree
4	Female	2years	High School Diploma	Self- employed	No	Not working	Not working	Not Available
5	Male	10years	Ph.D	University instructor	Yes	Full-time University Professor		
6	Male	10months	Ph.D	Researcher	Yes	Full-time Researcher	Not working	Bachelor's Degree
7	Female	1.5years	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist	No	Not working	Part-time working ,designer	Ph.D
8	Female	8years	Bachelor's Degree	University instructor	No	Not working	Full-time working, university professor	Ph.D

Education in Canada. Among interview participants, three had received post-secondary education in North America, one attended college and the other two obtained Ph.D. degree in either the U.S. or Canada. Three female participants reported that although they hadn't received any formal education in Canada, they also spent their time regularly on English language improvement classes, which are provided by new

immigrant settlement organizations. In addition, 5 reported that their spouse had finished or were receiving post-secondary educations in Canada at the time of the interview.

Working status in Canada. All of the female participants in this study were unemployed. The two participants who were working at the time of the interviews were the only males in this sample. All the female participants reported themselves as housewives, who spent most of their time taking care of household matters and looking after children at home. At the same time, two participants reported that their spouse was currently working. Another three reported that their spouse was student studying at Canadian colleges or universities.

During interviews, four female participants expressed their willingness to seek professional jobs. However, the following major difficulties were reported in finding a professional job in Canada: 1. Their educational credentials earned in China were not recognized by local employers; 2. A lack of working experience in their fields in Canadian companies; 3. A lack of social network to access job opportunities. Consistent with previous research findings, structural factors such as the need to spend most of their time on looking after children and the lack of English proficiency were also indicated as major barriers for them to work. In addition, the recession of local economy was also mentioned as an indirect contributing factor.

Instead of looking for jobs right away, many parents decided to receive some form of education in Canada despite having already received higher education in China. In responding to the question “Why did you decide to go back to school shortly after you landed in Canada?” participant 4, who moved to Canada about 2 years ago, said:

This is based on my own situation. By looking at my friends’ experiences and by looking at the information from Internet, I noticed that it was very difficult to seek

for professional development without local educational credentials. I have this feeling (that I have to go back to school). But, I am not sure about it.

Similarly, although participant 1 had more than 10 years of work experiences as interior designer in a construction company in China, she said that it was difficult for her to find a similar position in Canada. “I have no work experience here. Also, social network is very important to find the opportunities.” As a newcomer who came to Canada 5 months ago, she had already made a plan to attend a local community college and take some courses in her interested field. She hoped that this education could increase her chance to find a job.

Table 11

Number, Gender and Grade of Children in Each Family

Participant ID	Number of Children	Rank of Child in Family	Gender of Child	Grade of Child
1	1	1st	Female	Grade 1
2	2	1st	Male	Grade 4
		2nd	Female	SK
3	1	1st	Male	Grade 1
4	3	1st	Female	Grade 9
		2nd	Male	Grade 5
		3rd	Female	Grade 4
5	1	1st	Male	Grade 11
6	3	1st	Female	Grade 10
		2nd	Female	Grade 8
		3rd	Female	Grade 6
7	4	1st	Male	Grade 10
		2nd	Female	Grade 8
		3rd	Female	Grade 4
		4th	Female	Grade 1

8	2	1st	Female	Grade 11
		2nd	Male	Grade 2

Note. As it was shown in the table above, three families had single child. There were all together 6 boys and 11 girls in the participating families. The grades of these children ranged from SK to Grade 11. One child was in kindergarten, 9 children were enrolled in elementary schools, 2 children were from middle schools and 4 were high school students.

Reasons to immigrate to Canada. Most of the interview participants came to Canada with financial resources or good professional and educational backgrounds. All of them had a stable white-collar career or owned their private business in China. They had prestigious lives in Chinese society. Sine Chinese economy is growing rapidly in recent years, it would be reasonable to assume that these participating parents had promising working opportunities in China. When asked “Why do you decide to come to Canada?” A variety reasons were given by participants, including: being unsatisfied with the climate and environment in China; being interested in living in another country; pursuing higher level education themselves or accompanying their spouse who was pursuing education in Canada. However, speaking of the most important reason, half of these parents responded as “providing better opportunities for children’s education.” Interviews showed that participating parents were not content with the education their children received in China. And the following factors contributed to their dissatisfactions.

First of all, parents reported that there was too much pressure for their children to take exams and compete with other students from elementary schools all the way up to high schools. In order to fight for the limited spaces in top universities, students have to

begin their competitions at very young ages. Speaking of her son, a middle school student who was struggling to get into the top three high schools, participant 7 said:

You have better chances to get into a good university when you are enrolled in the top high schools, because the quality of the students are better and the teachers have higher teaching standard. Exams were used to select students for high schools and then universities. At every stage, there is fierce competition.

Secondly, all of the participating parents complained about the abnormal excessive work load their children had to take at Chinese schools. Many parents were worried that the physical health of their children would be harmed. For example, participant 1 reported:

The current education in China doesn't allow children to perform physical exercises. There is no time to play, to relax. The children are loaded with homework after school, for which they usually need to work until 10 or 11 o'clock at night. They can barely get enough sleep and let alone the physical exercises.

Similar with her experiences, participant 2 said that the workload was terrible, even for grade one student: "My son came back from school at 6 o'clock, and then studied until almost 10. I had to sit next to him when he was doing his homework, because he was tired, sleepy and needed my encouragement to stay focused."

Finally, parents regarded the Chinese education system as focusing too much on academic attainment. Not enough attention was given to children's development in other areas such as critical thinking and social skills. For example, participant 1 responded: "Even parents are competing with each other. During weekends, they send children to take different courses here and there. Children have no free time on weekends. They are

pushed to learn and succeed in different subjects.” Participant 6 also reported a similar story:

The education focuses too much on exams. Children spend most of their time on doing homework, taking exams, and preparing for the exams. There isn’t much space for them to develop skills of critical thinking...Based on my own work experiences, communicating is the most important skill one should have. Working is totally different from schooling. At work, the skill to communicate with other persons effectively is much more crucial than your ability to achieve highly academically...however, schools are not teaching these essential skills.

Canadian education, on the other hand, attracts these parents in that it promotes a more balanced curriculum where children can get all-around development in different aspects and it is less competitive. One parent said:

My son couldn’t achieve as expected at his school... I thought he might not be able to get into prestigious high schools. So, I was thinking maybe we could give it a try of a different system. I know that in North America, as long as you are willing to continue your studies, you would have plenty of opportunities...here, it seems that your efforts can lead to academic achievement more easily.

Communication Experiences

Parent-teacher meeting attendance and the reasons behind their decisions. In responding to the question “Do you attend parent-teacher meetings scheduled by schools?” 7 out of 8 parents answered “yes,” and 6 of them indicated that they attended these meetings “every time.” One indicated that she attended these meetings but only “sometimes.” One participant replied that he had never attended any of these meetings.

A variety of answers were given as explanations to the question “Why do you attend or not attend these meetings?” Those who indicated their frequent attendances reported positive attitudes toward the formats of these meetings, indicating that they cherished the opportunity to see teachers face to face and have the discussion privately. In regard to the reasons for their participation, the most frequent answer given by parents was that by meeting teachers in person, they could get a general idea and impression of the teacher’s personality. The second most frequent answer given by parents was that they could use this opportunity to work on individual plans which will help to improve student’s academic results. For example, participant 6 liked the fact that the meetings were private and he could talk to teachers exclusively about his child. While in China, parent and teacher meetings were held publicly with all parents attending at the same time. As a result, there was no opportunity for parents to talk individually with teachers. Some parents also used this opportunity to get to know better about Canadian schools. When asked why she decided to attend these meetings, participant 3 replied that she needed more knowledge about Canadian education system:

I am puzzled by how school works here. For example, I don’t know why children change their teachers each year? And why all subjects, including math, English and science are taught by the only one teacher? How do they deal with subjects such as art and physical education?

Apparently, her different school experience in China influenced her concerns. In China, children usually have the same leading teachers throughout their early elementary school years and each school subject was taught by an individual teacher specializing in that subject.

Other parents reported that despite the fact they didn't believe in its effectiveness, they still attended the meeting because it was expected and requested by their child. For example, one mother answered that by attending these meetings, she could show support and concerns for her children and make them feel more comfortable at school.

Parents who didn't attend these meetings or attended just sometimes also shared their opinions, although their reasons differed significantly from one another. Participant 5 was the one and only participant who indicated that he had never attended such meetings. His son was studying at a high school with high reputation. He gave several explanations when asked about why he did not meet the teacher. First, unlike those parents who hoped to work with teachers to improve students' academic results, he believed that academic achievement of students was decided by his innate learning ability and there was little that parents and teachers could do about it. Second, he indicated that he didn't want to push his son further on academics because he was satisfied with his son's current GPA:

Some students don't like to participate in classes. I think it is very hard to change this reality. His personality and characters decide this. And, teachers may want them to speak up more often. However, it is hard to make them talkative when they are shy in nature.

More importantly, this father reported that unlike in China, where attending meetings was a request from teachers, parent and teacher meetings were not mandatory to be attended by parents in Canada:

I don't think I can do the same thing (never going to parent-teacher meetings) in China. In the first place, the teachers won't allow this to happen. Here in Canada, I have the choice and can decide to attend or not. Teachers here won't judge you

as a bad parent and judge your child as a bad student [if you do not attend the meeting].

Although participant 5 was very assertive in his opinions, he also made a point that parents needed to meet and work with teachers under circumstances where such interventions were necessary and effective. For example, when students refuse to go to school or have other serious behavior and moral problems such as bullying and stealing.

Other parents' not going to meetings is a result of their disappointment with previous experiences, instead of not believing the meeting's effectiveness. For example, participant 2 reported that she had lost interest in these meetings and only attended occasionally. Similarly, participant 5 believed it was necessary and important to communicate with teachers when children were experiencing behavioral issues at school. Her son, a first grader who achieved adequately in his study but always got into fights with other boys on playgrounds, had caught her attention to talk about his peer-relationships with the teacher. The intention of going to this meeting was asking the teacher to help her son get along with classmates better. However, participant 2 didn't find these meetings helpful in solving her problems in that the teacher didn't recognize the problem as she did. "The teacher told me that my son was doing fine. I think it is because all the fighting happened on playgrounds where the teacher doesn't have an eye on all the time. She didn't see them." The teacher's response left her a negative impression of parent-teacher meeting.

It was also found that parents dealt with teacher-parent meetings differently according to the age of their child. For example, participant 8 responded that she attended more meetings arranged by her son's elementary school teacher than the meetings

arranged by the teacher of her daughter, who was a high-school student. When asked about the reason, she replied:

My daughter is now a grown-up. She told me that I didn't need to attend meetings to meet her teacher and that she had no problems at school. She asked me not to go. So, I respect her decision. Ever since she entered high school, I seldom went to her school. However I attended her meetings very often when she was in elementary school. . .I can also tell from her report card that she is doing okay at school. She got many positive comments.

Children at younger ages, on the other hand, seemed to be more accepting of their parents' visiting their schools. Participant 2 responded that her son actually requested her to go to parent-teacher meetings verbally when teachers send out such invitations.

Communication outside of parent-teacher meetings. The majority of the interview participants (n=7) indicated that they communicated with teachers other than parent-teacher meetings. Five parents indicated that they had been to schools and met teachers in person in the past semester. And four parents said that they also got to talk to teachers when they did volunteer works at schools. The interview data also showed that communication book was commonly used by school teachers to achieve daily communication with parents, although parents held different opinions toward the effectiveness of this method. After coding and analyzing the data, the following patterns were found regarding Chinese immigrant parents' communication with teachers (excluding parent-teacher meetings).

Regular and on-going communication was emphasized and valued more by Chinese parents than occasional communication. When being asked if they communicate with teachers other than parent-teacher meetings, seven parents indicated

that they did. However, for most of them, the communication was limited with exchanging information with teachers by writing on notes, communication books or class agenda. Parents indicated that they used these forms of communication to stay in touch with teachers on a daily basis. Regular communication can help them get an idea of what was happening daily at children's school, and keep track of children's academic progress by looking at teacher's comments about their children. For example, participant 3 was satisfied with the convenience of using communication book to stay in touch with teachers:

I can write on it whenever I need to. For example, I will tell her ahead of time when my child cannot make it on time to school due to an appointment, or to remind the teacher that his birthday is coming up and ask her permission to bring food to school. The teacher will sign her name after she reads my notes and asks my child to bring it back to me.

The function of a communication book wasn't only limited to daily communication between teacher and parent. For example, participant 8 also used the information the teacher provided in it as a guide to set up her child's learning activities at home. She said: "Teachers' comments are focused on academic-related matters. For example, there is information on what is being taught for each subjects and what will be tested in the coming exams. I will then help my son to get prepared for it." When being asked whether they go to school and talk to teachers regularly other than parent and teacher meetings, most participants said no and that they didn't see that there was a necessity to do so. In fact, all of the participants indicated that they wouldn't make an appointment to meet teachers in person unless there was an emergency or their children got into big trouble at school.

As far as the content of communication is concerned, more communication was involved with students' behavioral issues than academic-related issues. This finding was consistent with the results generated from the survey data, where the variables *content of communication: behavioral problems* and *group communication frequency* were found to be connected with one another. Interviews showed that when Chinese parents went to school and talked to teachers in person, it was most likely that their children were having behavioral problems. For example, one parent said that the only time she was invited by a teacher to meet at school was because her son got into fight with other students on playground. Similarly, another mother reported that the only time she was approached by the teacher to talk about her child was because her child was constantly late for classes at school.

New immigrants tend to have more communications with teachers than those who have been in Canada for a longer time. Although statistical analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between parents' communication frequency and their years residing in North America, interview data showed that parents who had just moved to Canada had more frequent communication with their children's school teacher. Being unfamiliar with the English language and new learning environment, new immigrant children tend to experience more difficulties and problems at school. Participant 1, who just immigrated to Canada five months ago, shared her recent experience of communicating with Canadian teachers. She responded that her daughter couldn't understand teachers' instructions and had caught her teacher's attention. She said:

One day, my daughter was late for the school bus. I took her to school by myself and met her teacher for the first time. We had a short conversation in the classroom, where the teacher asked me to translate some basic rules in the

classroom for my daughter and ask her to pay attention during lectures. I can understand why my daughter couldn't stay focused in class. She couldn't understand a word the teacher was saying.

Participant 3, who had immigrated to Canada for about two years and a half, also recalled her memories when she just moved to Windsor. She responded that she once booked several appointments with her son's teacher to get to know how her son was dealing with his new life at school. She said: "My child just moved to Windsor. I was worried that he was unfamiliar with the new environment and that he felt lonely at school. So, I just wanted to know if he was having a good time."

The above statement shows that parents are aware of the difficulties faced by children when the whole family is adjusting to a new environment. As a result, they tend to pay special and extra attention to their children. This explains why new immigrant parents tend to communicate more with teachers.

Parents of younger children tend to communicate more with teachers than parents of older children. The interview results indicated that Chinese parents attended parent-teacher meetings more regularly and had more frequent communications with teachers when their children were younger in age. Compared to the time when their children were in elementary schools, the frequency of their communications was significantly reduced after their children entered middle school or high schools. Several interview participants reported that they had more opportunities to talk to teachers when their children were enrolled in kindergarten and lower grade levels. The main reason was that teachers were more accessible for frequent and casual communication. For example, several parents responded that they enjoyed the casual conversations with teachers when they picked up children from schools. Recalling her memories, participant 3 said:

“Sometimes I talked to his teacher when I pick him up from classes...we just say hello to each other or talk for a few minutes.” Similarly, participant 8 recalled: “I talked to the teacher much less often this semester. When my son was in kindergarten, I had face-to-face communication with his teacher quite often. The teacher walked the students out everyday, and she would always talk to me about how my son was doing at school.”

Many parents also indicated that they would like to volunteer at schools and talk to teachers if they were given the opportunity. However, they reported that there were fewer and fewer opportunities for them to help out at schools with their children entering into higher grade levels. This had led to reduced chances for them to meet and talk to teachers in person.

In-person communication was adopted in favor of other communication methods when there was a need to talk to teachers on important matters. The survey finding indicated that meeting teachers in person was the most popular method used by Chinese parents. Consistent with this finding, interview participants reported that meeting teacher in person was their preferred method to communicate with teachers, especially when there was a need to talk to teacher on important matters. When asked about the reason why they preferred to have in person communication with teachers, parents gave the following explanations. First, communication is more effective when parents meet teachers in person. Although most interview participants reported that their English level was good enough to conduct communication with teachers, they indicated that they felt the most comfortable when they talked to teachers face-to-face because they could express themselves more clearly in this way. Second, participating Chinese parents reported that talking to teachers in person is instrumental in building more personal relationships with the teacher. They believed that it was important to enhance the mutual

understanding between the teacher and themselves, and that they would get to know the teacher better themselves better by meeting teachers at schools. Third, some parents also indicated that meeting someone in person was the most polite way of communication. By meeting teachers in person, they could show teachers that they sincerely cared about their children's education. For example, participant 7 responded:

We Chinese believe that meeting each other in person can bring the distance closer. When we have a closer relationship with teachers, it becomes easier to understand each other. More importantly, I hope to show the teacher that I am a responsible parent. I hope the teacher understands that education is highly valued in my family.

Communication Expectation, Attitudes and Satisfaction

During interviews, questions such as “What questions do you usually ask teachers?” and “What were the major topics you talked about with teachers?” were asked to find out expectations parents had toward their communication with teachers, while questions such as “Are you satisfied with the answers given by the teacher?” or “What is your impression of the previous meetings you had with teachers?” were asked to find out parents' attitudes and satisfaction. Results regarding these questions will be reported in the next section. In addition, factors mediating their attitudes will be explained.

Expectations. Qualitative data analysis showed that Chinese parents' shared the following expectations toward their communications: (a) To talk about their concerns with teachers; (b) To get teacher's comments of their children; (c) To get information on how to help children at home.

To talk about concerns. When being asked the purpose and major contents of their communication with teachers, many participants responded that they would like to use the time to talk about their concerns with teachers. Participants believed that it was important for teachers to understand their concerns and work together with them to enhance children's learning experiences. In conversations, the following issues were mentioned constantly. They were summarized and presented in order according to the frequency they were mentioned by participants in the interviews.

Development of language proficiency. All the participants who communicated with teachers shared the concern of children's English language development. As immigrants, participating parents highly valued the important role language skill played in children's study and social life. As a result, they were very concerned with children's English learning, paying special attention to questions such as whether a student's language proficiency had achieved native-speaker level.

Social relations with other students. Another issue constantly addressed by participating parents was the social integrations of their children with local students. Speaking of her daughter who just entered elementary school several months ago, participant 1 was very pleased to hear that she was getting along with other students and was making friends with some of them:

The teacher told me that my daughter was very active. She wasn't shy at all and liked talking with other students. She can get along very well with her new friends...I felt very relieved after hearing the comment.

Although most parents reported that their children were getting along with their classmates, they were concerned with the fact that their children always stayed in their

culturally homogenous circles and seldom established friendships with classmates from other cultures. Participant Four's comment is somewhat representative. She said:

My children (aged at 9 and 10 respectively) never made friends with white kids. I notice that all of their friends are Chinese. I am not saying that this is a bad thing. However, I wonder why they can't be friends with white children. I am very worried about this.

Classroom performance. Instead of just focusing on children's academic results, participating Chinese parents expressed their concerns of children's classroom performance. A number of them reported that they asked teachers about how children behaved in classrooms. They paid special attention to questions such as whether their children stayed focused during lectures and whether they actively participated in classroom discussions.

Questions and concerns about the curriculum. Some participants also expressed their concerns with the curriculum implemented in Canadian schools. For example, compared to her own math learning experience in China, participant 3 believed that the math materials taught in her son's class were too easy for his age, and that the teacher should teach deeper levels of math knowledge. When being asked how she reached her conclusion, she responded: "Comparing to the courses taught in Chinese elementary schools, children aren't learning enough here... Also, I think children at my son's age have the ability to understand more complicated math concepts." She hoped that by voicing her concerns with the teacher, changes could be made to the current math curriculum.

The above findings showed that the most frequently addressed concerns, which were the development of language proficiency and social relations with other children,

were both critical issues experienced by school new comers. Both teachers and immigrant parents should work together to make sure that sufficient effort has been made to help immigrant children make a smooth transition to Canadian school life.

To get comments about children. Another expectation held by Chinese immigrant parents when they communicated with teachers was to get teacher's comments about children. Most participating parents reported that they were satisfied with the positive comments teachers provided. However, they would like to hear the teacher talk more about their children's problems or weaknesses. Like most parents being interviewed, participant 3 was not satisfied with the comments teachers usually give. She said:

I hope to hear more details about...for example, in what aspects my child needs to be improved. Teachers here don't talk about negative aspects of your child. I believe teachers should be able to point out his weak points and aspects to be improved if they care about my child enough.

Consistent with Participant three's opinion, participant 4 replied: "I notice that Canadian teachers always talk positively about everything. In fact, as parents, we all wish for the best of our children. And I am glad to hear that they are doing well. However, I wish to hear more about what can be done to make it better."

Get information on how to help children at home. During interviews, the majority of participants expressed that it was their responsibility to facilitate children's learning at home and they were willing to devote time and energy to children's learning activities. For example, participant 4 said: "My opinion is that, the responsibility of educating children is not merely on schools, or on parents, we should work together." Apparently, parents need teacher's guidance on how to educate children at home. I noticed that participants were particularly thankful to teachers and talked positively about their

communication experiences when they received specific advice or suggestions from teachers. For example, participant 1 spoke highly of the teacher of her daughter: “The teacher mentioned that my daughter had limited knowledge about French and recommended us several exercises to teach her basic French expressions at home. So, we began to play some videos to her and do word memorizing exercises together. Now, my daughter has made significant improvement.” Similarly, participant 7 reported that the teacher managed to provide her useful suggestions when she voiced her concern about her daughter’s difficulty in English learning. She said:

The teacher told me that I should buy more English magazine or papers, so that my daughter could read the advertisements on them. He also mentioned that I should encourage her to read materials with more versatile contents. For example, I should let her read more often about science and technology.

Attitudes and Satisfaction. Interviews with Chinese immigrant parents found that they were not very satisfied with their communication experiences. When asked how they feel about their previous communications with teachers, only two parents reported that they were satisfied. By comparing these two parents’ comments, I noticed that their experiences shared two common features. First, both participants reported that the teachers were able to give objective and detailed comments of their children, addressing both strengths and weaknesses. Second, both parents reported that they got enough information and guidance from teachers to facilitate children’s learning at home. With teacher’s support, both parents reported that they were able to conduct effective learning activities at home.

Half of interview participants reported that they were not very satisfied because previous communication failed to meet their expectations. Thematic analysis was then

conducted and identified three major causes of their dissatisfactions. First, the information given by teachers was not adequate to address parents concerns. Second, participants felt that the teachers didn't share their concerns. Third, parents complained that teachers weren't accessible for communications.

Inadequate information. The most frequently mentioned dissatisfaction by participating parents was that teachers didn't give detailed-enough information in answering parents' questions and commenting on students' performances. Parents reported that they felt the information teachers gave was too abstract and general. It was hard to get their concerns addressed with the limited information teachers provided.

For example, participant 3 reported that she asked many detailed questions about her son's performances at school when she talked to the teacher. However, the teacher responded to all her questions with pretty similar comment: everything is very good. She was frustrated about this answer and became even more worried about her concerns. She said:

The teacher always says that everything is very good. Her keeping saying that makes me feel clueless about my son. If my son is doing excellent in every aspect, what should I do to help him? I hope that the teachers can at least show me how my son is doing well by using concrete examples. I feel their answers are too abstract.

Similar with her experience, participant 2 replied: "His teacher didn't give us any suggestions about where we can find learning materials and didn't ask us to do anything to help him. I have asked (his teacher) what can be done at home before. But, the teachers just tell me that my son is doing fine and there is no problem with him."

In addition to in-person communication, the same problem existed with other forms of communication parents had with teachers. For example, participant 7 expressed her dissatisfaction with the new report cards, which were recently implemented in Ontario schools. Unlike the old report cards where students' academic results were indicated in letter grades, the new report card solely contains teacher's comments. As a result, parents won't be able to tell their children's actual scores on each subject and their ranks in class from the report card. Both of these information were highly valued by Chinese immigrant parents. Speaking of her impressions of the new report card, participant 7 said: "The comments written on the report card are too ambivalent. It is hard to tell how my children are doing at schools."

Comparing to his communication experiences with teachers in China, participant 6 felt that his daily communication with teachers in Canada was not as effective and informative. He told me:

In China, teachers comment on communication books quite often. For example, everyday they take a record of home assignments for the students, and comment on student's previous assignments. In their comments, they pointed out the aspects in which my daughter needed improvements.

When being asked how a communication book was used as a medium to exchange information, he responded that he read teacher's comments every day, and also wrote to respond to teachers' questions. Although a communication book is also used in his daughter's school in Canada, participant 6 responded that there was little communication based on it between parent and teacher. He said: "The teachers never wrote any informative notes, for which I can comment on or give my feedbacks. Occasionally they asked us to sign names. But that was it. It was not communication."

Speaking of her impression with parent-teacher meetings, which were held twice every semester at her son's school, participant 2 replied:

Every time I went to these meetings, his teacher would show me some of his school works or handworks. Then, she would talk to me very briefly about my son, mainly saying that he was doing great at school... You can imagine what the teacher would say, because the contents would be pretty much the same with previous meetings. So, it actually makes no differences whether you attend (these meetings) or not.

In sum, when the information given by teachers was too general and not detailed enough, participants felt that conducting communications had lost its meaning. Without effectively addressing parents' concerns, regular communication aimed to form partnerships between school and parents became nothing but part of the "daily grind" of school life.

Don't understand concerns. Participating parents also reported that due to differences in beliefs, attitudes and expectations toward education, Canadian teachers couldn't understand why they held certain concerns. After talking with participants, I found that Chinese parents had very low confidence in teachers' understanding of their cultural values and practices. For example, one parent reported that she didn't think Canadian teachers understood the reason why Chinese parents highly emphasized the weaknesses of their children. She said:

We can't help them (children) become better students without knowing the problems they have. But I feel teachers always try to avoid talking about the problems. In fact, I don't even know how to get the teacher to talk about the negative aspects of my child. I want to ask these types of questions, but I don't

want the teacher see me as a mother who can't recognize the positive aspects of her son. I know my son is a good child.

Other parents reported that it seemed that Canadian teachers couldn't recognize and understand the Chinese tradition of valuing pure academic attainment. When she first found out that her daughter was not doing very well academically by reading the report card, participant 8 went to the school and tried to make sense of her daughter's difficulties in learning. However, she reported that the teacher was very surprised by her questions and told her that there was nothing to worry about. She said:

The teacher asked me why I expected high scores from my daughter. She told me that my daughter was very happy at school and that was enough. I was very surprised by her answers and I had nothing to say to respond. I think Canadian teachers just don't see there is a problem with students' poor academic results.

This parent then told me that schools in China usually had very strict standard on students' academic results. Excellent academic performances were highly valued and anticipated by both parents and teachers. As a result, how to improve students' academic results was naturally the focal point of teacher and parents' discussions. Another participant provided similar explanation: "We have high expectations for children's academic performances. Only a full score on exam means that you have managed everything taught in class. And that is an ideal goal for every student."

Participating parents also felt that teachers couldn't understand the sense of crisis they experienced for being new immigrants. For example, participant 7 reported that she felt that there was an urgent need for her son to improve English proficiency at school. However, when she talked about her concerns with teacher, the teacher didn't agree that there was any problem. She said: "I felt my child's English skills needed to be

enhanced...But the teacher told me that he was doing well given the short time he had been in Canada.” Unlike the teacher, participant 7 didn’t think being able to understand most of the lectures and talk to classmates was enough for her son. She hoped that her son could catch up with classmates in English proficiency as soon as possible. However, the teacher felt her son should take his time and there was no rush.

Parents also reported that they hoped teachers could use the same standard in assessing immigrant children’s progresses at school. Participant 6 said: “Teachers know that we are new immigrants. And they are familiar with the common weakness immigrant children have. However, this may influence teacher’s evaluation of students. The teachers always think as new immigrant, you have achieved enough given the obvious weaknesses you have. What I am worried about is that Chinese students are usually excellent in subjects such as math and science. However, they are weak in communication and other social skills. It is hard to compete with local students in looking for jobs considering such aspects.”

Lack of access to teachers. The third commonly mentioned cause of parents’ dissatisfaction was that teachers weren’t available for communication. When being asked about her attitudes toward parent-teacher meetings, participant 4 indicated that the meetings weren’t very effective because the meeting time was too limited. Since her English was not good enough to carry out fluent conversations with teachers, all of her communications with teachers needed to be facilitated by a translator. She responded:

The meeting only lasted about ten minutes. The translation takes a lot of time, so I didn’t have enough time to talk or even get to know the teacher better. Ten minutes passed by really fast. In addition, there were always other parents waiting at the same time. You can’t take up other parent’s appointment time.

Participant 6, who graduated with a doctoral degree from an American university, reported that this English wasn't a problem for him. However, he also considered the length of meeting to be too short. In her daughter's high school, parent-teacher meetings were held in school stadium where teachers of each subject would show up at the same time. Parents usually need to wait in lines and take turns to talk to the teacher. As a result, the time each parent could spend with the teacher is quite limited. He said: "You can barely talk about anything in five minutes. And, other parents are waiting right behind you. How can you take a long time to talk a teacher?"

While only two participating parents experienced actual time constrains of communicating with teachers, more parents held the perceptions that teachers might not have enough time to talk to parents. For example, one parent reported that she felt it very inconvenient to contact teachers in Canada. "In China, teachers gave parents their home phone number. They welcome parents to call during destined time. Here, teachers are more protective of their private time." Although this parent reported that she never called the teacher's home when she was in China, she was satisfied and felt good, knowing that the teacher was open to timely communications.

Parents reported that Canadian teachers usually asked parents to make an official appointment by calling the school first. This administrative procedure was perceived by Chinese parents as an obstacle to communicate with teachers. Being unsatisfied with the availability of teachers, participant 4 said: "You can't talk to the teacher right away. There are so many procedures to go through before you can meet the teacher in person."

When communication was not welcomed from teachers, it could be easily noticed. According to participant 3, some teachers "always seemed to be too busy to talk with even for a few words." Similar as her experiences, participant 2 said: "You can feel it

when a teacher has a cold attitude...he pretends not seeing you when you try to say hi to them."

Some parents also expressed their concerns with the limited methods available to contact teachers, suggesting that schools should give immigrant parents more options to communicate with teachers. For instance, participant 4 was satisfied with the fact that a variety of methods were used by her son's teachers to communicate with her. She said: "Now, I don't have to meet their teachers at school. They send me emails regularly and keep me updated with different school activities."

Participant 7 also recommend using online method to communicate with teachers. She believed that implementing more approaches of communication was extremely helpful for parents who had difficulty with using the language. She said:

I think emails are very convenient to use for immigrant parents. Especially for those with limited language skills...you can take your time to write the teacher a message. Besides, unlike using a telephone, you don't have to worry about that the time is inconvenient. Unfortunately, you can't write teachers emails here.

In conclusion, parents' responses revealed that more efforts should be made to ensure the communication between teachers and parents are informative and effective. Teachers and parents should try to get to know more about each other in order to reach shared goals in educating children. More approaches of communication should also be promoted in Canadian schools to make sure that all parents have easy access to teachers when they need to communicate with them.

Challenges in Communication

Due to linguistic and cultural differences, communicating with school teachers can be a very challenging task in immigrant parents' sojourn life. During interviews, a number of factors were raised by participants as the major difficulties they experienced in previous communications with Canadian teachers. The challenges commonly reported by participants include language barrier, cultural differences and their unfamiliarity with Canadian school systems.

Language barriers. Language was regarded as playing the most significant role in conducting effective communication with Canadian teachers by interview participants. Despite the fact that the majority of them were well-educated and had received college-level English Education in China, many reported that language barrier was still a huge challenge. Since the English proficiency levels reported by participants varied greatly, language problem influenced their experiences in different aspects and on various levels.

Among eight interview participants, only one parent reported that she didn't speak any English at all and that this fact had made communication extremely inconvenient for her. This parent reported that since all of her communication needed to be facilitated by translator, she had to ask help from her friends who spoke English every time she met with the teacher. As a result, she had to reduce the frequency to talk with teachers and only chose to book an appointment when she was able to find a translator. Other participating parents reported that their English skills were good enough to carry out easy and daily communication with teachers. However, problems caused by using a second language still influenced their experiences from time to time.

First, a common difficulty reported by Chinese parents was that they couldn't use the language fluently. Participant 3 was the only participating mother who had obtained a Master's degree in China. She had also finished a college program in Canada, where

English was the language of instruction. She acknowledged that her English was still not perfect. When the teachers spoke too fast, she had to ask them to slow down so that she could fully grasp and understand all the information.

Another parent said that language problem had made her communication with teacher a real challenge in life. To avoid misunderstanding and clearly express her intentions, she always spent extra time to prepare her questions before she met the teacher. “If I have questions to ask, I would firstly ask my husband or my daughter about the appropriate way of saying them...For me, the biggest problem is that I couldn’t use the language with high proficiency.”

Second, misunderstanding of the language was another problem commonly experienced by participants. Compared to talking with teacher fluently, to grasp the genuine meaning of teachers’ comments about their children is much more difficult for Chinese parents. For example, participant 3 reported that sometimes she couldn’t quite understand what the teacher was trying to tell her because she had very vague and ambiguous understanding of teachers’ comments. When being asked to give an example of her ambiguous understanding, she said: “The teacher told me that my child is talkative. What did she mean by talkative? Did my son talk too much in class? Or was she suggesting that my son is active and it is a good thing? I can’t tell!”

Due to insufficiency in mastering the language, this parent is unable to tell whether the teacher’s comments are positive or negative. Consistent with this response, participant 7 reported that it was very hard for her to get the meaning between the lines when she read the report cards of her daughter. To further explain her opinion, she said that her apprehensions of the words could be totally divergent from the teachers’ real intention:

One comment I read on my daughter's new report card was that "You should take more responsibilities in class." When I saw the comment, I thought my daughter failed to fulfill all the tasks as a student at school. However, after I consulted with my English teacher at the language school, I realized that the teacher was not criticizing her. Instead, she was encouraging my daughter to get actively involved with more campus activities.

After consulting with her English teacher, participant 7 realized that her initial reaction to teacher's comments was totally inaccurate and that her understanding of the language was rather limited with the words' surface meaning. Reflecting on her experience, participant 7 then expressed her concerns with the new form of student report card Ontario adopted, indicating that the languages used by teachers are too formal, elegant, and polite. She thought that it was not considerate enough of parents with limited language skills if teachers continue to use this kind of expressions in their communication. She said:

My English is quite good comparing to many of my (Chinese) friends. And I was only able to understand the literal meaning of teachers' comments. It would be even a bigger challenge for parents with limited English proficiencies to read and fully understand the reports.

Cultural barrier. In addition to language barrier, being unfamiliar with Canadian culture is another critical challenge for Chinese immigrant parents. In fact, a number of participating parents reported that their biggest problem with communication was that they had many worries, questions and uncertainties when interact with teachers outside of their own culture. As new immigrants, the feeling of being a newcomer and stranger itself had psychological pressures on these parents. These pressures made them overly cautious

about their behaviors in communication. Perceived anxieties that their cultural norms and values won't be recognized, understood and accepted further force them to avoid communications with teachers. After comparing parents' responses, I noticed that the following four concerns held by Chinese parents greatly hampered their communication with teachers, making them reluctant in initiating communication and asking questions. These concerns were: the uneasiness to talk to teachers outside of Chinese culture; the anxiety that teachers won't accept their cultural heritage including food and language; and the difficulties to establish friendships with teachers from Canadian cultures.

The uneasiness to talk to teachers outside of Chinese culture. The fear or anxiety to interact with people outside one's own culture is called intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). People with high ICA often feel more pressures and uneasiness when talk with people outside of their own culture. Perceived differences between themselves and Canadian teachers can make Chinese immigrant parents feel nervous about their communication. Participant 4, who immigrated two years ago, told me that being a new immigrant, the perceived difficulty to integrate with people from mainstream society often make her feel nervous in talking with Canadian people. Speaking of the differences she experienced in talking with teachers in China and Canada, she reported that she was much more confident and felt comfortable in talking with teachers in China. However, language barrier was not the only cause of the differences. She said: "It is more about other people would see you as coming from another country. This gives me a lot of pressures...I have this inexplicable nervous feeling when I talk to Canadian people."

The anxiety that teachers won't accept their cultural heritage. The second commonly held concern of participating Chinese parents was that their cultural norms would not be accepted. During interviews, a number of parents reported that they were

very cautious in interacting with teachers because they were not certain whether their cultural tradition is liked and accepted by teachers.

When being asked the challenges she experienced in communicating with teachers, participant 1, a parent who had expressed great satisfaction with her previous communication experience said: “There is a feeling of estrangement. I am always afraid that my words would offend the teacher or that the teacher doesn’t like what I do.” Due to her concerns, participant 1 said she was very cautious in dealing with culturally sensitive issues in her daily life. This includes preparing the lunch box for her daughter, who just entered elementary school two months ago. She told me:

Sometimes I brought dumplings with her to school. But she didn’t eat, and took the food back without even opening the lunch box ... I asked why she didn’t eat and she told me that eating dumplings were not allowed. Maybe they (teachers) don’t like the smell of the food.

Although she didn’t believe that her daughter was telling the truth, she reached the conclusion that certain Chinese food was not welcomed at her daughter’s school. With her daughter’s suggestions, she started to make sandwiches, hamburgers, and other western food for her lunch. She said that she didn’t want her daughter to be laughed at in her class. When being asked why she didn’t talk to the teacher about her concerns, she said that this topic was too sensitive to confront with the teacher and it would be too rude to ask the teacher about her opinions on Chinese food.

The difficulties to establish friendships with teachers from Canadian cultures.

Dealing with teacher and parent relationships is another challenge experienced by participating parents. As reported by a number of parents in this study, it was very common for parents to establish more personal relationships with school teachers in

China. Some of the parents reported that it was also quite normal for parents to talk with teachers about issues other than the students' education and even give gifts to teachers during holidays. When being asked why they wanted to develop friendships with teachers, many parents admitted that one important reason was that they hoped their children could get extra attention and help from the teacher at school. While other parents also believed that teachers were expected to develop closer relationships with their students in Chinese culture. Giving gifts to teachers was considered a tradition, a common practice to show someone's respect and gratitude to the teacher.

Participants found that teacher and parent relationship was very estranged in Canada, a society that is not influenced by Chinese traditional cultural values. Unlike Chinese teachers, Canadian teachers were very private about their personal life. Parents reported that based on their observation, it was very rare for teachers to develop close relationships with their students outside of classrooms. For example, a participating parent said:

Teachers here don't want to be too close to you (parents). This made you feel very estranged from them. To the opposite, it was very easy to make friends with teacher in China. When you go to schools, the teacher would talk to you warmly as you are an old friend. Naturally you will feel more welcomed to talk to these teachers,

At the same time, whether it is appropriate to keep the tradition of giving teacher gifts is another question held by Chinese immigrant parents. They reported that they were not sure if giving gifts was an expected behavior. Less did they know what kind of gift was appropriate to give as a simple statement of their friendliness to the teacher. Feeling embarrassed, one parent responded:

At the beginning, we didn't think it was necessary to give gifts to teachers. So we only gave some chocolate as gifts to teachers for Christmas. However, some Chinese parents told us that giving gifts was also expected and highly valued by Canadian teachers. Then, I began to worry a lot about how to deal with it.

Unfamiliar with Canadian schools. Another difficulty influencing their communication with teacher reported by Chinese parents was the unfamiliarity with Canadian schools. Among eight parents, only three reported that they had received some form of post-secondary education in Canada. None of the parents had ever received any Canadian school education (elementary and secondary education). Parents reported that due to a lack of knowledge about Canadian schools, they found themselves constantly learning new things about their children's schooling experiences. Two parents, for example, reported that at first they didn't even know about the different methods Canadian teachers used to communicate with parents. Participant 4 reported that her son was struggling at school with his study when they just moved to Canada. However, she had no clue that her son was having problems with his study until she got his report card at the end of the semester, showing poor scores on most of the subjects. She told me that she was very disappointed with the fact that the teacher didn't contact her earlier about this problem. But, later she said it was also part of her fault. She said: "For a long time, I didn't even know about the agenda his teacher used to communicate with us. The teacher wrote several times on it and I didn't respond. She must think that I don't care about my son."

In the same view, participant 1 reported that she had no idea that teachers would communicate with her by writing notes and memos. As a result, she missed several

messages written on the communication book left by the teacher at the beginning of the semester. At the end, the teacher called her and informed her of her daughter's behavioral problems at school. It was after this incident that she started to conduct regular communication with her daughter's teacher by writing to each other. Reflecting on her experiences, she commented that there were certain rules at the school to be learned by immigrant parents. For instance, teachers use communication book and notes to retain daily communication with parents.

The fact that Canadian schools work significantly different from Chinese schools is also challenging for Chinese parents to bring up children in Canadian education systems. Parents reported that they found the differences exist in many aspects of schooling, which include teaching and testing. Chinese parents usually use test results, which were regarded as the most important indicator of student's academic attainment, to track students' progress at school. However, they found exams and tests were rarely held in Canadian schools. In addition, teachers are reluctant in revealing students' ranks in their class. This is another fact that Chinese parents weren't used to at all.

In addition, one parent reported that he found it extremely inconvenient for children not having their own text books. He pointed out that for one thing, students couldn't study the materials at home. For another, it was hard for parents to monitor and facilitate children's learning at home without knowing what contents are being taught at school. Both of these difficulties mentioned by parents had influence on their communication with teachers. Without being closely involved with children's learning progress and activities, parents felt clueless when talked to teachers about their children's education.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion and Discussion

Most of the results generated from the statistical analysis were supported by qualitative findings from the interviews. However, disconformities do exist as regard to certain questions. In this section, quantitative and qualitative findings will be summarized, compared, and discussed to address the major research questions: (a) What is Chinese immigrant parents' communication experience with school teachers? (b) Are psychological factors such as self-efficacy and perceptions of parental roles (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995) mediating the patterns of their communication? (c) How do Chinese parents perceive such communication? I will also discuss the conformities and disconformities existing between this study and previous research findings.

What is Chinese immigrant parents' communication experience with school teachers? Speaking of Chinese parent's communication patterns, this study found that in-person communication was a preferred communication method of exchanging information with teachers. Results from the survey showed that this method was used by 74.8% of the participants. The second preferred popular method of communication was writing, which was adopted by 40.3% survey respondents. Few parents used other tools to communicate, such as telephone and email. During interviews, parents reported that using notes, communication books, and agendas were the most popular methods adopted by Canadian teachers. They were also happy with the frequent, regular, and on-going communication facilitated by these methods. However, meeting teachers in person was still their first choice when it came to discussing important issues. Influenced by language

barrier and traditional cultural values, parents believed meeting teachers in person was the most effective, convenient, and respectful choice. These findings indicated that challenges Chinese parents had such as language barrier still existed. Another inference was that Canadian schools adopted monotonous communication methods, since many parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited communication methods that were available to them. These findings were consistent with Dyson's study (2001) where it was found that in-person communication was the preferred method of participating Chinese parents to communicate with schools.

Discrepancies with previous studies were found on other aspects of Chinese parents' communication experiences. As far as the frequency of communication was concerned, findings from both surveys and interviews demonstrated that a significant portion of participating Chinese parents had frequent communication with school teachers. First of all, around 72.4 % of the survey participants and a high of 87.5% interview participants reported that they attended parents and teachers meetings which were held regularly in each semester. Moreover, findings suggested that Chinese parents also communicated with teachers in addition to these scheduled meetings. Around 58.7% survey participants communicated with teachers several times a semester, while another 13.8% communicated with teachers on monthly basis. These findings are significantly different from those recorded in previous literature. For example, a study conducted with Chinese parents living in urban American areas found a low rate of 35% as parents who had ever attended a parent-teacher meeting (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Another study conducted in Canada found that half of the participants, who were recent immigrants, only communicated with teachers once or twice a year (Klein, 2008). A possible explanation to these conflicting findings was the variations in family factors. Unlike

participants of previous studies who settled in urban ethnic enclaves such as China town and preoccupied with economic survival, recent Chinese immigrants often came with financial capital and had extra time and energy to get involved with their children's education.

Speaking of the content of communications, Chinese parents talked about a wider range of topics instead of solely focusing on children's academic progress. Survey results indicated that academic related issues were indeed mentioned by the most participants (74.5%). However, contents of parents' communications cover other aspects of their children's education as well. For example, about 67.5% and 50% of participating parents also talked about children's behavioral issues and social relationships respectively. It was also found that parents only tended to communicate more when there was a need to talk about children's behavioral issues, as opposed to academic issues.

These findings are divergent from the results of some previous research studies which indicated that the contents of communication were largely limited to academic related issues. For instance, Dyson's study (2001) found that 17 out of 21 participating Chinese parents in her study only talked about academic activities, which include children's study work, progress, and report card in their communication with teachers.

The shift of concentration from academic progress to broader topics in parents' communication indicated a change of mindset of recent Chinese immigrant parents. These parents not only care about academic results, but also care about all around development of their children. An explanation of this change is that more and more Chinese parents started to recognize the values of essential skills other than academic records in their children's success in Canadian society.

Moreover, Chinese immigrant parents adopted more active roles in communicating with teachers than it was recorded in previous studies (Wang, 2008). Although survey results indicated the overall rate of initiating a communication with teacher was still low (less than half of all survey participants) among participating parents, crosstab analysis showed that those who communicated with teachers more frequently did play active roles in initiating communications. It means Chinese parents did actively seek opportunities to communicate with teachers to talk about their concerns or questions. Data collected from interviews supported this finding. Parents responded that teachers didn't usually initiate communications with them other than school-scheduled meetings. Teachers were also reported as being reluctant in talking about students' problems and negative aspects. As a result, parents need to take active roles in communicating with teachers about their concerns about potential problems. In addition, during interviews parents reported that they also took opportunities to meet teachers during school-based activities. For example, many took advantage of talking to teachers when volunteered at schools and in classrooms.

These findings were contrary to those from Wang's study (2008), where Chinese parents were found to be passive in initiating communication with teachers. Wang explained the reason as Chinese parents in her study viewing American schools as egalitarian and competition free, and thus attributing less value to parent-teacher relationships in their children's success. Participants from the current study seemed to have more comprehensive understanding about Canadian education. A number of parents believed that language and cultural barriers faced by immigrant children kept them in inferior situations in competing with local students.

The fact that Chinese parents became more active in their communication with teachers also suggests a change of their attitudes toward teacher and parent relationships. During interviews, parents reported that unlike in China, they didn't feel the pressures to treat teachers as authority figures when they talk with teachers in Canada. They felt most Canadian teachers were polite and easy to talk with. Previous studies (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004), however, showed that Chinese parents' communication was influenced by their traditional view of teachers as authorities and their deferential attitude toward teachers.

Are psychological factors such as self-efficacy and perceptions of parental roles (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995) mediating the patterns of their communication?

The second research question addressed in this study was whether Chinese parents' communication patterns were influenced by the five psychological factors including beliefs in role-construction, sense of self-efficacy in helping children, perceptions of teacher invitation, perceptions of child invitation as well as perceived life context. Originally proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, these psychological factors were claimed to be the best predictors for parents' general involvement behaviors. In this current study, these five factors were measured as five psychological constructs in determining Chinese parents' communication behaviors. Results from quantitative data showed that all of these psychological factors were significantly related with parents' communication patterns. In the next section, findings about parents' beliefs and perceptions in each of the five constructs will be discussed.

Role construction. First, inferential statistics indicated that Chinese parents' ratings on the scale of *role construction* were significantly related to the frequency they attended parent-teacher meetings and the frequency they communicated with teachers other than school-scheduled meetings. Those who attended meetings more regularly and

communicated with teachers several times a semester rated significantly higher on this scale than parents who reported as having never attended meetings nor communicated with teachers through any methods. In addition, the average rating on this scale was the highest among all of the five psychological constructs measured in the study, indicating Chinese parents had a strong sense of responsibility in staying on top of things at school and in communicating with teachers. Interview results aligned with these findings. For example, many parents reported that they checked communication books regularly, responded to teachers' comments or signed their names. The majority of interview parents attended all the parent-teacher meetings and actively volunteered in school activities whenever it was possible. They also saw it as a responsibility to notify teachers about the changes and difficulties their children were going through.

This finding has disconformities with previous research findings suggesting Chinese parents tend to believe there is a clear separation between teachers and parents. For example, Gu's (2008) review of parent involvement model in China's public schools suggested that two models of parent involvement were currently used in China. They were: "no involvement model" and "home-based involvement model." And the reason why parents adopted "no involvement model" was that they believed school was the only place for education and the teachers were the only people who can educate. Unlike those parents, one participant explicitly reported in this study that she believed the responsibility should be shared between home and school. Chinese parents' strong willingness to get comments about children's performances at school and to facilitate children's learning at home also suggested that they were highly responsible parents who had deep concerns about children's education.

Self-efficacy. Inferential statistical analysis showed that parents' perception of self-efficacy was the most determinant of patterns of their communications. Similar to ratings on role construction, parents who attended parent-teacher meetings regularly and communicated with teachers several times a semester tended to have higher ratings on this scale. In addition, statistics also showed that parents who had initiated communication had stronger beliefs in self-efficacy than parents who had never initiated communication. During interviews, only one parent reported that he had never communicated with teachers. And the main reason was that he didn't believe parent and teacher communication could make a difference in students' academic performances at school.

Do Chinese parents have strong sense of self-efficacy in communicating with teachers? Descriptive statistics showed that the mean of scores on this construct was 4.30, indicating that rather positive attitudes were held by participating Chinese parents. What need to be mentioned here is that parents also had strong beliefs in their ability to conduct communication with teachers. For example, around 57.8% parents agreed with the statement "My English is good enough to communicate with the teacher clearly," and a smaller portion of (19%) participants agreed with the statement "The lack of knowledge about Canadian culture often made me feel intimidated to communicate with the teacher clearly." These findings are divergent from those recorded in previous literature (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004; Lo, 2008), which stated that Chinese parents lacked English proficiency and cultural knowledge to conduct communication with teachers.

Results from the interviews provided some possible explanations to these discrepancies. First, Chinese parents came from a variety of educational backgrounds and their language proficiencies varied significantly. Some of the interview participants

completed their doctoral studies in North American institutions, while a few others could barely speak this language. Despite the general trend that recent Chinese immigrants had better languages skills, there are still many who had no knowledge about English. Language barrier was obviously the biggest challenge for these parents. Second, interview data also suggested that even for those who had no problems with conducting daily communication with teachers, it was still challenging for them to fully understand teachers' intentions, and misunderstanding still happened. In conclusion, having proficiency in the language doesn't mean there was no language problem.

Was cultural difference a challenge for parents' communication with teachers? Interview with parents showed that it was. The majority of interviewees reported that they had anxieties that their culture won't be accepted and understood by Canadian teachers, which indicating cultural barrier was still a significant challenge for parents. However, very few parents (in the case of the interview study, there was only one parent) reported that they felt uneasy to interact with teachers. This explained the statistic showing that most parents didn't think the lack of knowledge about Canadian culture made them intimidated to communicate with teachers. For the majority of participating parents, the problem lay with dealing with the unavoidable differences embedded in two cultures.

Perceptions of teacher invitation. Unlike parents' beliefs in role construction and self-efficacy, scores on this construct didn't differ based on parents' meeting attendance and their roles in initiating communication. However, one-way ANOVA results showed that parent's perception of teacher's invitation was related to the frequency they communicated with teachers other than school-scheduled meetings. In addition, correlation analysis showed that perceptions of teacher's invitation were significantly related to ratings on the scale of *self-efficacy*. The result indicated that parents who

received more encouragement and invitation from teachers to communicate with them tended to have higher ratings on the statement “I know effective ways to contact my child’s teacher.” Qualitative data also showed that parents’ sense of a teachers’ availability varied greatly depending on whether the teachers showed welcoming and interested attitudes during their communication. Thus, it can be concluded that parents’ perceptions of teacher invitation had both direct and indirect influences on their patterns of communication.

Perceptions of child invitation. Disconformities were found on parent’s perceptions of child invitation from results of the survey and interview. To begin with, descriptive analysis showed that parents’ rating on this construct was the lowest among the five constructs. A mean score of 3.41 was calculated for the item “My child asked me to talk with his or her teacher,” meaning parents held disagreeing attitudes with the statement. During interviews, however, several parents reported that they were asked by their children to attend parent-teacher meetings, make more comments in communication books. Some reported that their children expressed welcoming attitudes when they visited schools. Children’s age might be an explanation to the discontinuities of finding, as all of the above-mentioned interview participants have children enrolled between grade 1 to grade 3.

Both quantitative and qualitative data showed that parents’ perceptions of child invitation influenced their communication patterns. One-way ANOVA results showed that parent’s perception of child invitation was related to the frequency they communicated with teachers other than school-scheduled meetings. Parents reported in the interviews that one of the reasons to communicate with teachers was because their children asked them to do so.

Perceptions of life context. This study found that parents tended to communicate more when they were free from time and energy constraints. Survey results showed that perceptions of life context were related with parents' communication frequencies and that most participating parents believed that they had enough time and energy to communicate with teachers. Unlike early Chinese immigrants, for whom time and energy constraints were the common barriers to involvement (Gettinger & Waters, 1998), recent Chinese immigrants like the participants in this study usually came with financial capital, professional background and educational credentials. These parents live in suburban area and have no needs to work for long hours to meet the financial need of their families.

How do Chinese parents perceive such communication? Understanding Chinese immigrant parents' expectations toward communication with teachers and whether they are satisfied with previous communication experiences are crucial in enhancing the quality of future communications and establishing more solid teacher-parent partnerships. Knowing what kind of information parents are seeking and what their major concerns are in meeting teachers can help us understand what parents expect out of their communications. The last research question of this study is how Chinese immigrant parents perceive their communication with teachers. More specifically, what attitudes and expectations Chinese parents have with regard to their communication with teachers? The findings of this study showed that parent's attitudes varied significantly depending on their previous communication experiences. Moreover, dissatisfaction was largely caused by the mismatch between their expectations and actual experiences. Identifying these mismatches will help us improve and better facilitate Chinese parents' communication in the future.

The most common expectation mentioned by parents was to get their concerns recognized and valued by teachers. As new immigrants, parents were highly sensitive about the difficulties their children were experiencing in a new learning environment. However, some parents felt their concerns were not recognized by teachers due to differences in beliefs, attitudes, and expectations they had toward children's education and academic performances. Statistics showed that parents had an urgent need to have teachers' understand why they held their concerns better. In addition, they had low confidence in teachers' understanding of their culture and wanted teachers to have better knowledge of their cultures, including their traditional beliefs and educational values.

The second mismatch found from the result was that inadequate information and supports were provided for parents to perform their roles as educators at home. Chinese parents in this study held strong beliefs in the importance of getting involved with children's education. As a result, an important purpose of their communication is to get detailed and genuine comments about their children's progress at school and get advices on how to help children at home. However, many of them reported that the comments provided by teachers were too general and abstract. Teachers were reluctant in talking about negative aspects and weakness of their children. Parents believed teachers weren't paying enough attention to their children and didn't expect parents to do anything to help children's learning.

Parents also complained about their lack of access to teachers. Some of the commonly experienced issues mentioned by participants include (a) Parent-teacher meetings were too short; (b) It was too difficult to book appointments with teachers; (c) Schools used limited communication methods. Actual and perceived difficulties made parents felt that the teachers didn't make themselves adequately available for timely

communication. They hoped teachers can set up a fixed time when they can talk to them conveniently without going through administrative procedures.

Implications

Findings of this study have implications for education practitioners, policy-makers, and teacher educators.

Results of this study indicated that Chinese parents' communication was challenged by language barrier, cultural differences as well as lack of knowledge about Canadian education system. To help immigrant parents overcome these difficulties, school educators should take parents' difficulties into consideration and provide adequate services to meet parents' needs. For example, providing translation services and hiring bilingual staff would facilitate communication between parents and teachers. To avoid misunderstanding, teachers should try to use more simple and clear languages both in writing the report cards and in conversations with immigrant parents. Schools were also advised to adopt more flexible communication methods to meet different needs of parents. To increase the quality of parent-teacher meetings, school can also ask parents provide a list of their interested topics to discuss during meetings ahead of time. This will give teachers sufficient time to get prepared for meetings, such as providing detailed information and more constructive suggestions.

To better engage immigrant parents' involvement in children's education, schools can also create more welcoming environments for parents. This will make parents feel that they are valued as partners in their children's education, and their cultural heritage and contribution to curriculum are recognized and cherished. Results from this study also suggest that there is an urgent need to promote mutual understandings between teachers

and parents. As a result, it is also crucial to establish long-term, systematic school policies. Teachers also need to get the required training and financial support from schools in order to successfully undertake the task of reaching out to immigrant parents, helping them understand the new education system, and more importantly, developing an open, trusting partnership with them. For example, more school-based activities can be initiated to produce a platform where parents and teachers exchange ideas, opinions and adopt bidirectional learning. Given that immigrant parents usually experience the same problems and have similar concerns about their children's education, it is also advisable to produce workshops where immigrant parents could sit down and talk about concerns, share experiences and get advice from one another. In sum, supporting and facilitating the involvement of immigrant parents should become an endeavor of the joint effort of teachers, school principals and education policy-makers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parent Survey

This survey is designed to collect information regarding Chinese immigrant parents' communication experiences with school teachers. The survey is anonymous. Please do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire. Participation is voluntary; however your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Demographics

1. Your gender: _____
2. What is your approximate **total** family annual income **before** tax?
 - a. <\$20,000
 - b. \$20,000-\$39,999
 - c. \$40,000-\$59,999
 - d. \$60,000-\$79,999
 - e. \$80,000-\$99,999
 - f. \$100,000-\$150,000
 - g. >\$150,000
 - h. Prefer not to answer
3. Your years being in Canada/USA
 - a. 2 years or less
 - b. Longer than 2 years but less than or equal to 5 years
 - c. Longer than 5 year but less than or equal to 10 years
 - d. Longer than 10 years
4. Your current employment status in Canada/USA:
 - a. Long term, full time
 - b. Long term, part time
 - c. Temporary, full time
 - d. Temporary, part time
 - e. Not employed
5. Your spouse's current employment status in Canada/USA:
 - a. Long term, full time
 - b. Long term, part time
 - c. Temporary, full time
 - d. Temporary, part time
 - e. Not employed
6. Please indicate the school grade(s) of your children.

	gender	grade
Child1		
Child2		
Child3		

Communication Experience with Teachers

8. Did you attend the teacher-parent meeting scheduled by the school?
 - a. Never. My spouse did not attend neither
 - b. Never, but my spouse did attend some of these meetings
 - c. Never, but my spouse looked after all these meetings
 - d. Sometimes, with or without my spouse
 - e. All the time, but my spouse did not go any of the meetings
 - f. All the time. My spouse did attend some of the meetings with me
 - g. All the time. My spouse with me every time

9. During the parent-teacher meeting, what is your concern about your child? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Make sense of the report card
 - b. To get some of your questions answered
 - c. To listen to teachers' comments on your child
 - d. Other, specify please _____

10. How often did you communicate with your child's teacher for each semester regarding his or her schooling (excluding the school-scheduled parent-teacher meeting)?
 - a. Never
 - b. A couple of times
 - c. Once a month
 - d. A few times a month
 - e. Every week

11. Among these communications, was there any one initiated by you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

12. In which method(s) did you communicate with the teachers? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. In person
 - b. In writing (letter/notes)
 - c. Telephone
 - d. Email
 - e. Others, specify please _____

13. What regards were the communication about between you and the teacher? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Academic activities (e.g. study, work, progress, report card)
 - b. Behaviour problems
 - c. Relationship with other students
 - d. Other, specify please _____

(Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree the following statements by choosing one value on a Likert scale: 1=Disagree strongly; 2=Disagree; 3=Disagree just a little; 4=Agree just a little; 5=Agree; 6=Agree strongly)

Communication satisfaction with school teacher

14. I was satisfied with the overall quality of the communication with my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
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15. I felt comfortable to communicate with my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My child's teacher has knowledge of my culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. My child's teacher understands my concerns about my child	1	2	3	4	5	6

Role construction in communicating with school teacher

18. I believe it is my responsibility to communicate with my child's teacher regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I believe it is my responsibility to support decisions made by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I believe parent-teacher communication can make the school better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I believe it is my responsibility to stay on top of things at school	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. I believe it is my responsibility to make the school better	1	2	3	4	5	6

Communication self-efficacy with school teacher

23. My communication with teacher can make a difference in my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I know how to communicate effectively with my child's teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. The lack of knowledge about Canadian culture often makes me feel intimidated to communicate with the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. My English is good enough to communicate with the teacher clearly	1	2	3	4	5	6

Perceptions of teacher invitations

28. My child's teacher is interested in my culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. My child's teacher encouraged me to communicate with him or her	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I felt my child's teacher welcomes me to communicate with him or her about my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. My child's teacher is interested and cooperative when we discuss my child together	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. My child's teacher invited me to help out at the school						

Perception of child invitation

33. My child asked me to talk with his or her teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. My child asked me to help out at the school	1	2	3	4	5	6

Perceived life context

35. I know about Canadian school system	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6

Communication expectations with school teacher

37. I hope that I can have better influence on school activities through communication with my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I hope that my child's teacher has better knowledge of my culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I hope that my child's teacher understands my concerns better	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please provide any further comments regarding your experiences and expectation about parent-teacher communication (use the other side of the paper if you need more space).

Thank you for your cooperation!

家长调查问卷

(Parent Survey: Chinese Translation)

此项调查问卷的主要目的在于了解中国移民家长与学校老师交流及沟通的经验。此项调查全部为匿名性质，请不要在问卷的任何地方留下您的姓名。参与调查属自愿行为，非常感谢您的参与！

人口统计信息

7. 您的性别：_____
8. 您的税前家庭总收入大概为
 - i. a.<\$20,000
 - j. \$20,000-\$39,999
 - k. \$40,000-\$59,999
 - l. \$60,000-\$79,999
 - m. \$80,000-\$99,999
 - n. \$100,000-\$150,000
 - o. >\$150,000
 - p. 倾向于不回答
9. 您在加拿大/美国呆了多长时间？
 - a. 少于 2 年
 - b. 2 年以上至 5 年
 - c. 5 年以上至 10 年
 - d. 10 年以上
10. 您在加拿大/美国的工作类型是
 - a. 长期全职
 - b. 长期兼职
 - c. 短期全职
 - d. 短期兼职
 - e. 没有工作
11. 您的配偶在加拿大/美国的工作类型是
 - a. 长期全职
 - b. 长期兼职
 - c. 短期全职
 - d. 短期兼职
 - e. 没有工作
12. 请标明您正在上学的孩子的年级

	性别	年级
第一个孩子		
第二个孩子		
第三个孩子		

与老师的沟通经验

13. 您是否参加由学校组织的老师家长见面会？
 - a. 我没有参加，我的配偶也没有参加
 - b. 我没有参加，但是我的配偶参加了一些
 - c. 我没有参加，但是我的配偶负责这些事务
 - d. 有时参加
 - e. 我全部参加，我的配偶从来不参加

- f. 我全部参加，我的配偶有时和我一同参加
 - g. 我全部参加，我的配偶也全部参加
14. 参加老师家长见面会的时候，您主要关心的是什么事情？（可多选）
- a. 了解成绩报告单
 - b. 询问我所关心的问题
 - c. 获取老师对孩子的评价
 - d. 其它，请列明：_____
15. 除了参加老师家长见面会外，您一个学期大概与老师就孩子在学校的联系几次？
- a. 从不
 - b. 几次
 - c. 一个月一次
 - d. 一个月几次
 - e. 每周
16. 以上的沟通联络，有您主动发起的吗？
- a. 有 b. 没有
17. 您采取哪些方式与老师联络？(可多选)
- a. 直接会面
 - b. 通过书信（信函，便条等）
 - c. 通过电话
 - d. 通过电子邮件
 - e. 其它方式，请列明：_____
18. 您与老师进行交流与沟通的时候主要谈论哪方面的内容？
- a. 学习情况（例如孩子的学习，进步，以及成绩卡等）
 - b. 行为问题
 - c. 与其他同学的关系
 - d. 其它，请列明：_____

(请通过选择以下数字中的一项表明您是否赞同以下各说法。1=强烈反对，2=反对，3=有些反对，4=有些赞同，5=赞同，6=强烈赞同)

与老师交流与沟通的满意程度

19. 对于与老师沟通和交流的总体质量，我感到满意	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. 与孩子的老师进行沟通与交流的时候，我觉得很自在	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. 孩子的老师对我的文化有所了解	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. 孩子的老师理解我所担心的，关于孩子的事情	1	2	3	4	5	6

与老师交流与沟通的角色认定

23. 我相信经常与孩子的老师取得联络和沟通是我的责任	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. 我相信我有责任支持老师做出的决定	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. 我相信老师与家长之间的沟通会使学校变得更好	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. 我相信了解学校所有的事情是我的责任	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. 我相信使学校变得更好是（有）我的责任	1	2	3	4	5	6

与老师交流与沟通的自我效能感

28. 我与老师的交流和沟通对孩子的表现可以起到作用	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. 我知道与老师取得联络的有效途径	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. 我知道如何与孩子的老师进行有效的交流和沟通	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. 对于加拿大文化的生疏常常使得我在与老师的交流和沟通中感到胆怯	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. 我具有良好的英语水平，并且可以清楚地和老师进行交流	1	2	3	4	5	6

对于老师的邀请的认识

33. 孩子的老师对我的文化很感兴趣	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. 孩子的老师鼓励我与他联络	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. 我感觉孩子的老师欢迎我与他就孩子的事情进行联络和交流	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. 在我与他谈论孩子的事情的时候，孩子的老师表现出了有兴趣以及配合的态度	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. 孩子的老师邀请我到学校去帮忙	1	2	3	4	5	6

对于孩子的邀请的认识

38. 我的孩子要求我与他的老师进行联络	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. 我的孩子要求我到他的学校帮忙	1	2	3	4	5	6

对于生活状况的认识

40. 我了解加拿大的学校	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. 我有足够的时间和经历与孩子的老师进行有效的交流和沟通	1	2	3	4	5	6

对于和老师交流与沟通的期待

42. 通过与老师进行交流沟通，我希望自己可以更多得影响到学校组织的活动	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. 我希望孩子的老师对我的文化背景有更多的了解	1	2	3	4	5	6

44. 我希望孩子的老师可以更好得了解我的顾虑和担忧	1	2	3	4	5	6
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如果您就家长和老师的交流沟通现状还有什么评价和期望，或者您想分享其它关于您与学校老师交流的经验，欢迎评论。（可以写在纸的背面）

非常感谢您的配合参与！

Appendix B

Parent Interview Guide

1. How long have you been in Canada/ U.S.?
2. Why do you come to Canada?
3. Please briefly introduce your educational and working background in China.
4. Have you been educated in Canada? What program did you study?
5. Do you currently work?
 - a. Type of work? (Part-time or full-time; long-term or short-term)
 - b. How about your spouse?
6. How many children do you have attending school?
 - a. What grade(s)?
7. Do you attend the parent-teacher meeting?

Why do/don't you attend?
8. What are your major concerns during these meetings?
9. Are you satisfied with these meetings?
10. What were the challenges you experienced during these meetings?
11. How do you think the quality of parent-teacher meetings can be improved?
12. Have you communicated with the teacher besides the parent-teacher meeting?
13. Who initiated these meetings? For what purposes? How did they go?
14. In which way/ways (e.g. in person, make phone call) do you communicate with your children's teachers?
15. Do you think the teacher encourages you to communicate with them? Please explain.
16. Do you think the teacher is interested in the topics you talk with them? Please elaborate.
17. Are you satisfied with the quality of the communication with the school teachers?

Please explain.
18. What types of challenges have you experienced in communicating with school teacher? Please explain.
19. How could your communication with teacher be improved?
20. Comparing your experiences of communicating with teachers in China and in Canada, what are the differences?
21. Any further comments?

Parent Interview Guide (Chinese Translation)

家长面谈问题

1. 你来加拿大(北美)多久啦?
2. 你为什么来加拿大?
3. 请简述你在中国的教育和工作情况.
4. 你在加拿大读过书吗? 读的什么 (program 或学位)?
5. 你现在工作吗 (如果目前不工作, 那工作过吗)?
 - a. 工作性质 (长期或短期? 全职或非全职? 自雇?)
 - b. 你的配偶哪?
6. 你有几个在中小学读书的孩子?
 - a. 几年级?
7. 你参加教师-家长会吗?
 - a. 为什么参加家长会/ 为什么不参加?
8. 在家长会上, 你主要关心的事情是什么?
9. 你对家长会满意吗?
 - a. 满意在什么地方?
 - b. 不满意什么?请具体来说.
10. 在家长会上, 你与教师的交流遇到过什么挑战 (困难) 吗?
11. 你认为如何才能提高家长会的质量?
12. 除家长会以外, 你与教师有联系吗?
 - a. 如果没有, 为什么? 是没必要还是没可能?请具体阐述你的观点.
13. 如果有家长会以外的联系, 联系的目的是什么?谁发起的, 你还是教师?
14. 你如何和教师联系, 见面, 电话, 或便条?
15. 你认为教师欢迎你与他 (她) 联系吗?
16. 你认为教师对你要谈的话题感兴趣吗?
17. 你对与教师的这些交流满意吗?
18. 在与教师的交流中, 你遇到什么困难?
 - a. 困难的原因在那里?
 - b. 如何克服这些困难?
19. 你认为如何提高与教师交流的质量?
20. 在中国和加拿大, 你与教师交流有什么样的区别?
21. 其他评论?

Appendix C
Consent to Participant in Research



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(Interview)

Title of Study: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

You are asked to participate in a Master's thesis study conducted by Fan Jiang, a M.Ed student from the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor. This thesis study is supervised by Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Fan Jiang at XXXX, or Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, at (519) 2533000 ext.3813.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how Chinese immigrants communicate with their children's teachers, how satisfied they are with the parent-teacher communication, and what their challenges and expectations are regarding home-school communication.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will ask questions regarding your communication experiences with teachers. It will last about 40 minutes and be audio recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be no potential risks to any participants. You can skip any questions you feel not comfortable to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study does not have any direct benefit to participants. However, it will provide participants an opportunity to reflect upon their communication experiences with teachers. The findings from this study will be informative to all Chinese parents since they can learn from this study about how other parents communicate with teachers.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You participation to this study is voluntary. There will be no payment to your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Data will be kept secured in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed once the project is complete.

On the transcripts of the interview data, your identification information will be removed. There will be no connection between the interview data and your true identity. At the end of transcription, audiotapes will be destroyed. Interview data will be reported in an aggregate format. No identification information will be used in the report.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without consequences of any kind. Or you can refuse to answer questions you don't want to answer and still remain in this study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The feedback to you will be in October 2011. A summary of study findings will be posted on the University of Windsor REB website.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

Date when results are available: Oct. 2011

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study of **Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D
Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research (Interview)



**LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(Interview)**

Title of Study: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

You are asked to participate in a Master's thesis study conducted by Fan Jiang, a M.Ed student from the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor. This thesis study is supervised by Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Fan Jiang at XXXX, or Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, at (519) 2533000 ext.3813.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how Chinese immigrants communicate with their children's teachers, how satisfied they are with the parent-teacher communication, and what their challenges and expectations are regarding home-school communication.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will ask questions regarding your communication experiences with teachers. It will last about 40 minutes and be audio recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be no potential risks to any participants. You can skip any questions you feel not comfortable to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study does not have any direct benefit to participants. However, it will provide participants an opportunity to reflect upon their communication experiences with teachers. The findings from this study will be informative to all Chinese parents since they can learn from this study about how other parents communicate with teachers.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation to this study is voluntary. There will be no payment to your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Data will be kept secured in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed once the project is complete.

On the transcripts of the interview data, your identification information will be removed. There will be no connection between the interview data and your true identity. At the end of transcription, audiotapes will be destroyed. Interview data will be reported in an aggregate format. No identification information will be used in the report.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without consequences of any kind. Or you can refuse to answer questions you don't want to answer and still remain in this study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The feedback to you will be in October 2011. A summary of study findings will be posted on the University of Windsor REB website.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

Date when results are available: Oct. 2011

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E
Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research (Survey)



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(Survey)

Title of Study: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

You are asked to participate in a Master's thesis study conducted by Fan Jiang, a M.Ed student from the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor. This thesis study is supervised by Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Fan Jiang at XXXX, or Dr. George Zhou, Faculty of Education, at (519) 2533000 ext.3813.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how Chinese immigrants communicate with their children's teachers, how satisfied they are with the parent-teacher communication, and what their challenges and expectations are regarding home-school communication.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey which will ask questions regarding your communication experiences with school teachers. The survey will take you about 15 minutes to complete.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be no potential risks to any participants. You can skip any questions you feel not comfortable to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study does not have any direct benefit to participants. However, it will provide participants an opportunity to reflect upon their communication experiences with teachers. The findings from this study will be informative to all Chinese parents since they can learn from this study about how other parents communicate with teachers.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation to this study is voluntary. There will be no payment to your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. The survey is anonymous. Please do not write your name anywhere on the survey. The survey data will be analyzed and reported in an aggregated format. Any identification will be removed from the report.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The completion of survey is voluntary. You can skip any questions you do not like to answer. However, once you return your survey, it is not possible to withdraw your responses since the survey is anonymous. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The feedback to you will be in October 2011. A summary of study findings will be posted on the University of Windsor REB website.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

Date when results are available: Oct. 2011

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

CONSENT OF PARTICIPATION

Submission of your survey implies your consent to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F
Consent for Audio Taping



CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Research Subject Name:

Title of the Project: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Communication with Their
Children's School Teachers: Experiences, Expectations and Challenges

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and store in a locked cabinet.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio tape will be for professional use only.

(Research Subject)

(Date)

VITA AUCTORIS

Fan Jiang was born in 1984 in Hebei province, the People's Republic of China. She received her undergraduate education at Xi'an International Studies University. From there she was selected to an international student exchange program and spent her senior year studying at Rowan University, New Jersey, USA. Upon return to China, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English language and literature in 2008. She is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in Education at the University of Windsor.