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# Experiences of Immigration among Women from Taiwan

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EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRATION AMONG WOMEN FROM TAIWAN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Robert A. Johnston

May 2014

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRATION AMONG WOMEN FROM TAIWAN

by

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May 2014

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## ABSTRACT

### EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRATION AMONG WOMEN FROM TAIWAN

by Robert A. Johnston

This thesis explores the transformative effects of immigration from the 1960s through the 2010s among women from Taiwan living in the County of Santa Clara. The study focused on three substantive areas: (1) early life experiences and factors leading to immigration; (2) shifts in social identities after leaving Taiwan (e.g., political, national, and ethnic self-concepts in various contexts); and (3) practices of child-rearing. Several methodological tools were employed during the data collection phase of the research process, including interviews, surveys, and participant observations. The findings of this study suggested a dynamic process of change in which informants adapted to, were affected by, and influenced their new milieus to varying degrees. Although a number of patterns were evident in the broader experiences of participants, the actual decisions (e.g., how to raise children) and individual changes (e.g., the choice of ethnic identification) were often unique. These findings add to the body of scholarly knowledge concerning the lived experiences of Taiwanese Americans and their distinct challenges, but they also suggest the need to extend theoretical discussions related to transnationalism, ethnogenesis, and parallel dual frame of reference for a clearer understanding of immigrant experiences in a rapidly changing American suburbia.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

A young woman arrives in New York alone but enthusiastic to experience something beyond what she has always known. She imagines engaging with the local culture and people. She makes great efforts to immerse herself, but the days are more often dreary than inspiring with frustrations ranging from language learning to culture shock. This is not what she had envisioned, yet one possibility leads to another and her eventual decision to remain.

This account was just the beginning of an incredibly diverse set of experiences for a woman who now lives in Santa Clara County (SCC). Her initial challenges in the United States were just one period within a grander experience of contemplation, evaluation, and transformation within her life. It is a unique story but one linked by its themes to other women from Taiwan who have also immigrated to SCC in the latter half of the 20th century. This is a study of those journeys.

### **Origins of the Research**

The concept, motivations, and focus of this research stem from scholarly sources, the popular media, and personal experiences. The scholarly literature provides certain theoretical foundations for understanding the current trends in immigration and identity construction. It suggests an unbelievably complex dynamic between actors (i.e., participants) and their environments, which often extend not just beyond local borders but also across oceans and politics to encompass multiple physical and social worlds simultaneously. This literature also provides more specific empirical findings for closer

examination and comparison with the participants' experiences and milieus described in this study.

The motivation for this examination largely originates from the ongoing dialogue in the popular media concerning the perceptions and experiences of Asian Americans. Earlier discussions of “model minorities” and more recently “Tiger Moms” suggest individuals of Asian descent share a homogenous experience in the United States, a belief that has been perpetuated by Asians and non-Asians in various ways, despite the efforts of scholars to suggest otherwise (e.g., Lee 1994). The motivation of this thesis is in part tied to understanding where the truth or fallacies lie in this dialogue and its related consequences.

Finally, the researcher's experiences led to focus of this examination. The first ethnographic undertaking of the author took place in a comparatively rural area on the east coast of Taiwan almost ten years ago. It was an introduction to both the country and an inspiring family who had resided in Taiwan for many generations. It was also shortly after beginning a journey to develop competency in Mandarin Chinese and to establish a broader cultural understanding of Taiwan and China. This path culminated with two years studying in Xiamen, a city on the opposite side of the Taiwan Strait and the point of origin for many who comprise the Chinese diaspora today. Through both of these experiences, the author became personally aware of the ties but also differences between people from Taiwan versus China, particularly in relation to their political and ethnic views. Following this initial course of study, the opportunity to pursue graduate

education in SCC presented an additional opportunity for a related but unique cultural examination from the vantage point of Taiwanese Americans.

But why study experiences of immigration in SCC among women from Taiwan? Why not focus on men or families in another state or county? These choices were primarily based on the demographic composition of SCC and earlier scholarly investigations.

SCC is home to more than 1.8 million people of which approximately 33.7 percent identify as Asian alone (U.S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts 2014). Of this total, more than 11,400 identify as Taiwanese, while more than 146,000 identify as Chinese (U.S. Census Bureau: 2010-2012 American Community Survey 2014). It is also home to a major segment of America's technology industry, which has attracted men and women from around the world. It is a place where people of different backgrounds are able to interact both in and outside of the workplace. It is representative of a changing American suburbia and thus an ideal location for an ethnographic investigation with pragmatic concerns that may be applicable to other regions of the United States in the not too distant future.

Scholars have examined SCC and its residents' journeys but never from the angle or depth proposed in this thesis. The technology industry, innovation, and business in relation to the county's ethnic composition and even individuals' everyday lives have been documented (e.g., English-Lueck 2002; Saxenian 2006; Wong 2006), yet few studies have emphasized Taiwanese American experiences. The one comparable study

focusing entirely on Taiwanese American families in SCC (i.e., Chang 2005) largely limits itself to one segment of the population, the exceptionally affluent. It is not representative of the majority and is unlikely to be in the future. Ultimately, it was the combination of these considerations that led to the the concept, motivation, and focus of this investigation.

### **Objectives and Organization**

The objectives of this thesis are twofold. Its primary purpose is to address several empirical and theoretical questions regarding the processes of immigration and identity construction. The second aim is to provide an overarching sense of the complexity of immigration and its consequences for identity among women from Taiwan in SCC by way of describing, analyzing, and discussing their lived experiences.

The thesis is organized to maximize the reader's understanding of the presented material. After a brief introduction to Taiwan and the project's research questions, the literature and methodology are reviewed. Results on the experiences among women from Taiwan in major phases of their adulthood are presented, along with a discussion of the implications of these findings.

The literature review examines theoretical and empirical findings pertinent to the framework of this study. It takes particular notice of the anthropological arguments related to ethnic identity formation, the immigration process and its effects on identity, and child-rearing in relation to education. It is intended not only to serve as a foundation to the inquiry but to assist the reader in understanding the development of these themes of

study over time.

The methodology chapter concerns the techniques, tools, and procedures used to for this investigation. Topics ranging from the sampling procedures to the challenges of the investigative process are considered. It serves to prime the reader for the presentation of results that proceed from it.

The results chapters are arranged to follow participants as they move through different stages in their lives while also conceptually building upon one another. The first of these chapters concerns the early lives of interlocutors prior to their departure from Taiwan. Household organization and educational life paths are the primary focus as well as the decision making process in relation to emigration. The first chapter serves to familiarize the reader with several key participants while also providing an understanding of the areas most important to the participants' early lives.

The second results chapter describes the experiences of informants after arriving in the United States. An analysis of activity involvement ranging from employment to politics is included in addition to descriptions of participants' choices of ethnic identification. This chapter functions to assist the reader in recognizing shifts in participants' identities that are a result of both their engagements with the local environment as well as memories of the past.

The third results chapter continues to build on both of the previous sections while analyzing the conceptions and experiences of motherhood. This effort goes beyond simply retelling individual stories and instead focuses on the patterns of parenting. It

serves to provide a more detailed knowledge of one area in which immigration has the potential to influence the individual approaches, behavior, and identities of participants.

The final chapter explores the significance of these findings to the discipline but also on a more pragmatic level for SCC and beyond. The process of immigration may have a clear beginning but no obvious end. As lives move forward, new concerns manifest themselves ranging from individual questions of one's place in the world to the more pragmatic realities of child-rearing. Nonetheless, similar experiences of immigration are evident and suggest patterns that may be relevant to furthering the greater discourse on the challenges and future of immigration in the United States.

## **Background**

The Republic of China (ROC), more commonly referred to as Taiwan, is situated at the intersection of East and Southeast Asia. More precisely, Taiwan is the main island of the country with several smaller islands surrounding it. The nation is the home to an immense level of social and linguistic diversity with a complex past relevant to understanding the experiences and perceptions of the participants in this study.

In Taiwan, people are most often identified in one of three ways: aboriginal, Taiwanese, or *Waishengren* (outside province person) (Copper 2000; Corcuff 2002). The latter two groups are the focus of this investigation. The aborigines are a marginalized minority population, although some interest in preserving their cultural and linguistic conventions has grown in recent years (Copper 2000:37-38). The segment of the population most often referred to as Taiwanese are considered descendants of individuals

who emigrated from mainland China to Taiwan, typically from Fujian or Guangdong province prior to 1945 (Copper 2000:186). The category of Taiwanese may be further divided between two groups: Taiwanese and Hakkanese. The most prominent difference between these groups as they exist today is their use of different dialects. Both Taiwanese and Hakkanese individuals are most often referred to as *Taiwanren* (Taiwanese people) or *Benshengren* (inside province people).

The kin of men and women who departed mainland China following the end of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan in 1945 are commonly referred to as Waishengren (Roy 2003:6). Those belonging to this group brought with them dialects and social norms from various areas throughout China.

Today, many individuals speak more than one dialect and have families consisting of kin identifying themselves with more than one of these groups. The specified boundaries are certainly permeable and less obvious when looking at modern day life and social practices rather than historical immigration patterns. A precise definition of what it means to be a member of a particular group can be further complicated at times due to varying political and social points of view, particularly between those identifying as Taiwanese or Waishengren (e.g., Corcuff 2002).

Relations between those identifying as Taiwanese and Waishengren have been tense over the last 60 years (Roy 2000:94-96). Their interactions were particularly strained due to political suppression of Taiwanese individuals by the Nationalist government prior to the reforms of the 1980s and later (2000:90, 176). The question of



Taiwan's relationship with China has more recently become a point of contention between these groups.

### **The Struggle for Taiwan**

Taiwan has been a major consideration in the international activities of the Chinese, Europeans, Americans, and Japanese at different points in time. The end of the 1800s is a useful starting point for understanding Taiwan's present day challenges but also for recognizing the multifaceted views of informants regarding their homeland and related social-political identities. In 1895, the Qing Dynasty was forced to cede Taiwan and other nearby islands to the Japanese following the loss of the first Sino-Japanese War (Roberts 1999:192). Japan remained in control of the island for 50 years. Although resistance, most notably among aboriginal populations, to this occupation is well documented, it was not until the end of the World War II that the Japanese were forced to withdraw.

The control of Taiwan was returned to the government of mainland China following the surrender of Japan at the end of World War II. The Qing Dynasty, which had originally relinquished Taiwan, no longer existed, and as a result, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) took control of the island. Simultaneously, the Chinese Civil War between the KMT's and Chinese Communist Party's militaries was resuming. The KMT was losing and, by the end of 1949, had retreated to Taiwan along with many of its supporters with the intent of someday retaking the mainland.

Authoritarian rule on Taiwan was established via martial law and lasted through the late 1980s. Political dissent was severely hampered throughout this period. Mandarin Chinese was also established as the national language and local dialects were for a time prohibited in formal settings (e.g., educational and governmental engagements).

Despite these social and political challenges, Taiwan's economic position grew rapidly in the post-war period. The economic development of South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong paralleled Taiwan's; they are commonly referred to as the Four Asian Tigers (Kim 1998:xiii). It was not until 1987 that martial law was lifted in Taiwan, which led to a more open political and social environment regarding political dissent.

### **Taiwan's relations with the United States and China**

The political relationship between the ROC and the United States has been in constant flux since the end of World War II, largely due to the goals of the United States in relation to the wider globe. Participants in this study were not directly involved with these activities, but they are nonetheless relevant to comprehending the mindset and decisions of some participants in contemplating the possibility of emigration.

Prior to the 1970s, the ROC was viewed as the representative of the mainland in the United Nations and retained official diplomatic relations with the United States. This arrangement was in the line with Cold War political boundaries. However, during the 1970s, the ROC lost its position in the United Nations, and the United States normalized relations with the mainland Chinese government. This situation led to the United States

abandoning its former diplomatic recognition of the ROC; nevertheless, exchanges in numerous fields continued through other legal but unofficial means. Due to the ongoing engagements between the United States and the ROC, as well as the ROC's variable position on its autonomy in relation to China, U.S.-Sino as well as Cross-Strait relations have often been tenuous.

### **Patterns of Immigration**

The movement and experiences of people from Taiwan to the United States in the last half century may also be better understood through a review of the extensive history of Chinese Americans. Increased emigration from southern China to the United States dates to the mid-1800s; these new Americans often engaged in labor-intensive positions upon arriving stateside. Perceptions of Chinese immigrants deteriorated through the 1800s, though, resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which, “laid the foundation for future barriers against other ethnic groups” (Tong 2000:41). The broader resistance to Chinese Americans and Chinese immigration in general would largely continue until World War II.

Not until the post-war period did a significant number of individuals from Taiwan and again China immigrate to the United States. The pertinent increases again coincided with changing immigration laws. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act established new immigration quotas by country and initiated a new wave of migration (Tong 2000:95-97). The H-1B visa, an additional component of the act, allowed for further opportunities for initial immigration to the United States in specialty occupations (e.g.,

software engineering) (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2014). After the normalization of relations between Washington and Beijing, additional reforms were made to the Immigration and Nationality Act. Beginning in the early 1980s, China was given an independent immigration quota from Taiwan (Tong 2000:101).

Within these changing patterns of immigration, it is useful to understand why many immigrants chose SCC for their new home. California, and particularly the Bay Area, already had a fairly high number of individuals of Asian descent by the time of the 1960 census (U.S. Census Bureau 1960:6-448). San Francisco and its Chinatown may be the most recognized Chinese population center in the Bay Area, but San José was also home to five Chinatowns at different points in time between the middle 1800s and the early 1930s (Chinese Historical & Cultural Preservation Society 2014). Still, SCC's recorded Chinese population remained comparatively small up until the 1980 census (Bay Area Census 2014). This development coincides with the changing focus of the county from agricultural to technological. The region has become a suburban technology hub where professionals from abroad and domestically have been courted by companies and relocated to the area. This growth in population, first from Taiwan and then China, has resulted in not only changes to its demographics but also infrastructure geared to these new residents ranging from shops to cultural centers.

### **Key Terms and Usage**

Throughout this paper, participants have multifaceted identities and self-ascribed labels for describing their political, ethnic, and national selves. Due to the

complexities of these individual descriptions, the author limits the use of these terms when not in direct quotations for the purpose of clarity. Therefore, individuals with ancestry on Taiwan reaching back to and before the period of the Japanese occupation are referred to as Taiwanese and those with families arriving after 1945 are referred to as Chinese Taiwanese. An individual may of course have ancestry that falls into both groups. The description Taiwanese American is also applied at times to simply refer to all participants in the sense that they grew up in Taiwan and then immigrated to the United States. These terms are merely used as starting points for understanding the participants' experiences but in no way are considered the only or necessarily most significant defining characteristic in their lives.

### **Research Questions**

The historical happenings just discussed provide critical context to the more immediate questions concerning the lives of the informants (Table 1.1). Although the participants were not necessarily directly involved with all of these social, political, and economic occurrences, these are the broader backdrops of their lives and are useful for gaining a more complete understanding of their individual experiences.

**Table 1.1** Key Areas of Inquiry

| Research Questions  |
|---|
| 1. How were the lives of the participants organized and directed in Taiwan?   |
| 2. How and why did the participants choose to leave Taiwan and remain in SCC?   |
| 3. How and why did the participants' identities shift after immigrating?  |
| 4. How did the participants with children approach the responsibilities of child-rearing after immigrating?   |
| 5. How did the participants influence their new social milieus?   |
| 6. How did the experiences of the participants vary depending on their perceived ethnicities and time frames to the United States in regard to the above questions? |

SCC provides a unique opportunity for exploring these questions due to its demographic composition. It is a suburbia unlike any other but one that is likely to be mirrored in many ways in other locations in the not too distant future. Therefore, this environment not only lends itself to addressing these empirical questions but also creates a platform for a broader dialogue regarding the possible theoretical and pragmatic implications concerning immigrant experiences and women's identity negotiations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

To more broadly contextualize the research questions of this project, earlier anthropological and historical dialogues about Taiwanese and Chinese immigration, women's lives and motherhood, and ethnic identity must first be considered. Each of these thematic areas is representative of an evolving set of ideas and interpretations of life that are at once tied to a grander and intertwining theoretical dialogue yet also continuously playing out in new and unique ways on a more immediate level.

### **Ethnic Origins**

At the beginning of the 20th century, Franz Boas and his students challenged the 19th century evolutionary interpretations of cultural and societal differences through meticulous ethnographic investigations (e.g., Benedict 1922; Kroeber 1908; Mead 2001). Boas suggested that identical characteristics could come into existence in different ways in different societies, and in order to explain a people's customs it was necessary to analyze "the environmental conditions under which they developed, psychological factors, and historical connections" (McGee and Warms 2012:113-114).

Other frameworks built on and coexisted with the Boasian approach and similarly expanded the knowledge and explanation of human experiences, but according to Roosens (1989), it was not until the 1960s that the concept of ethnicity drew greater attention among anthropologists. Eriksen (2010) and Roosens (1989) describe ethnicity and ethnic identity as relational terms: they are formed with reference to someone or something else. In this sense, there would be no ethnic identities if everyone was

perceived as sufficiently similar.

Beyond the relational consideration in the formation of ethnicity, Roosens aptly introduces a more complex picture of the process of ethnogenesis. Roosens (1989:149) argues, “there is no single, uniform process of ethnogenesis. Consequently, ethnic belonging and interethnic relations come in different shapes.” He further explains that even the term ethnic identity is often applied fluidly to include overlapping cultural, social, and psychological characteristics and is used to address concerns ranging from the political to economic (1989:19). Despite this fluid position, his research and conclusions still suggest a relational, contextual, dynamic, and power based process with an increasingly materialistic cant. For example, he compares the experiences of first and second generation individuals of Italian descent in Belgium and depicts how their construction, sense, and use of their ethnic identification differs. A first generation Italian immigrant might hold greater ties with memories of Italy, while his or her children may identify as ethnically Italian (as it exists in their home) but feel or act more in line with the host country's mainstream cultural forms elsewhere. It is a dynamic process. The differences in identification not only stem from personal experiences but the environment and dialogues taking place with and around them.

Roosens' theoretical findings have in large part been indirectly confirmed by other anthropologists, particularly those interested in the experiences of immigrant and minority children in the United States and beyond (e.g., Chhuon and Hudley 2010; Flores-Gonzalez 1999; Lucko 2011). Eriksen (2010) extends this scholarship but also



questions components of it. He broadens the discussion by examining the use of and relationships between ethnicity, “race,” and nationalism. He notes that all three are again relationally constructed terms, but each emphasizes something slightly different (2010:7-9). Race, is used to describe characteristics assumed to be innate among a people of a given phenotype. It can also be used in part to define an ethnicity but is not essential. In the case of nationalism, it is characterized by its relationship with the state. A nationalist believes the edges of the political and cultural should be synonymous, although ethnicity may not in fact need to exist for nationalism to come into existence (2010:10).

Beyond simply extending the understanding of ethnicity in relation to nationalism and race, Eriksen counters Roosen's (1989:158) position that shared material consumption patterns results in greater homogeneity between people. Eriksen (2010:200) instead proposes that one of the primary outcomes of globalization has been both a recognition of the shrinking and expanding of the world: societal connections are greater than in the past but awareness of differences and the emergence of new distinctions have also arisen. Multiple generations of Italian immigrants in Belgium, for example, might intentionally distinguish themselves ethnically from Italian immigrants residing in other parts of Europe due to differing social or political objectives, despite living in a potentially homogenous environment of commodities.

The discussion of ethnic construction still tiptoes around one potentially explosive issue: categorization. Despite the attempts of its contributors to describe the variability in the construction of ethnicity, the current dialogue still suggests people can always be

effectively grouped and does not to a great extent take into consideration internal variation. This is of particular concern for scholars focusing on “Chinese” experiences. Ong (1999) argues that academicians have long perpetuated a homogenous concept of Chinese people and society, a concern Voss (2005) has similarly mentioned but within archaeology. However, the majority of Chinese specialists, particularly outside of anthropology, appear to have ignored these critiques and continue to emphasize the dichotomy of east and west and social practices assumed to be “traditional” (e.g., Chen and Stevenson 1995; Jang 2002; Lieber et al. 2004).

Despite these ongoing challenges in recognizing the complexities of ethnic identity and its construction, anthropologists have made great headway in furthering this knowledge through evolving approaches and theories. Rather than simply seeing societies and cultures as bounded entities, they now more than ever, “depict flux and process, ambiguity and complexity in their analysis of social worlds” (Roosens 2010:13).

### **Immigration and Identity**

Theories of immigration have changed dramatically over the last century and continue to evolve similarly to the discussions on ethnicity. Early views of immigration were largely based on a model of assimilation, suggesting an individual would ultimately be absorbed into the receiving society, while losing his or her former social distinctions (Gu 2006:16). This model is now largely dismissed as overly simplistic. But the possibility of assimilation still exists, at least in theory, within the “acculturation continuum” (Fitzgerald 2010:29). Modern acculturation theory argues that individuals

may maintain characteristics from the sending society but also adopt or reject characteristics of the receiving society with the possibilities and patterns of change being nearly endless (2010:29). Medical anthropologists have been especially keen to display the effects of acculturation on matters ranging from eating disorders to menopause (e.g., Kawawa-Singer et al. 2002; Lester 2007; Szathmary and Ferrell 1990).

The initial popularity of the assimilationist framework for analyzing immigration is somewhat surprising considering that Boas (1920:316) wrote, “The activities of the individual are determined to a great extent by his social environment, but in turn his own activities influence the society in which he lives, and may bring about modifications in its form.” Astonishingly, immigrants were not seen as sources of societal change in the receiving society. It was only decades later that researchers finally began to acknowledge that immigration was a much more complex process than an individual simply leaving behind one social system for another (e.g., Bolger 1985).

Indisputably, immigrants influence the receiving society, new forms of identity may be formed, and mental and physical ties with the sending country may persist or grow to suggest a few of the possibilities. Schiller et al. (1992:1) adapted the term transnationalism to describe this complex experience of immigration as it exists today, which she defined, “as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement.” Numerous social scientists and others have since adapted and extended its framework for their purposes.

Ong's (1999) ethnography of Chinese and Southeast Asians furthers the discussion of transnationalism and its complexities in relation to questions of capitalism and globalization. A number of questions are investigated but of particular relevance are her accounts of participants in various regions of the world while tying this to a broader discourse on the role of national and global structures and their evolving positions in relation to the meaning of citizenship and cultural norms. She proposes the term flexible citizenship to refer, “to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions,” in describing this reality (1999:6). For instance, Chinese professionals simultaneously engage multiple parts of the globe to take advantage of or bypass nation-state regimes for political, economic, and social benefits (1999:112-113).

Despite some mixed reviews of Ong's position concerning the historical past and the broader applicability of her findings (e.g., McKeown 2000; Stafford 2001), Ong provides a useful extension and application of transnational theory: she recognizes the continual interchange between micro, meso, and macro levels of the globe and the far from static positions of her participants.

While Ong explores transnationalism in a political-economic sense, Gu (2006), a sociologist, investigates the effects of “migration backgrounds and social relations” on mental health in the greater Chicago area (2006:3). One of the more prominent theoretical concepts Gu (2006:47) employs is emotional transnationalism which she defines as, “the ambivalent emotion experienced when immigrants and their children

attempt to accommodate conflicting values in their search for behavioral guidance and a foundation for moral judgments, from cultural norms of both their sending and receiving societies.” Gu applies this concept to interpret the conflicts among kin and the resulting emotional distress; for example, she introduces a participant who struggles to address her frustration with relatives visiting from Taiwan for extended periods of time due to Chinese social expectations, despite being characterized as holding a “strong sense of individual rights and privacy in the family” (2006:213-215). Gu's many other findings also suggest a gender and ethnically defined experience of migration leading to different struggles for participants in their various environments.

Although Gu highlights the potential distress caused by migration, there are no real insights as to how immigrants overcome these challenges. It appears as if immigration is an experience from which it is impossible to fully recover. Chen (2008), also a sociologist, considers these questions as she investigates the role of religion in the lives of Taiwanese Americans in southern California. She pursues both the broader question of what it means to become American but also the role of religion in the process of acculturation, the forming of communities, and the construction of new identities among both Christians and Buddhists. She describes the immigration experience as “morally disordering,” meaning a set of moral beliefs are often lost or weakened with immigration as the communities which formerly reinforced them are left behind (2008:147-48). Buddhism and Christianity thus offer self-focused moral alternatives to replace the “governing structures of Confucian tradition” (2008:192-93). Each of these

religions is suggested as initially providing distinct pragmatic functions for its new practitioners, but these engagements can also eventually lead to life-changing experiences (2008:191). Ultimately, Chen's results support her thesis "that religion helps transform Taiwanese immigrants into Americans" and counters more conservative literature that suggest religion primarily reinforces links with the social system of origin among a group of immigrants (2008:187).

The ways in which scholars understand immigration today parallel developments in the study of ethnicity. A simplistic model was once used for understanding these processes but has now evolved into something much more complex. The field continues to build on its past in order to offer better analysis of the present and for understanding the future.

### **Child-rearing and Education**

How does child-rearing differ in various parts of the world? How do early life experiences influence who we become as adults? How are mothers involved with or influenced by these processes? Anthropologists have been interested in these questions and more since Margaret Mead first traveled to Samoa in the 1920s to investigate experiences of female adolescents. Mead (2001:161) compares Samoan and American experiences and concludes among other things "that adolescence is not necessarily a time of stress and strain, but that cultural conditions make it so," countering what common knowledge in the United States suggested at the time. Her study was not only seminal to American anthropology as a whole but also offered one of the first in-depth views of the

different approaches societies take to early life from the theoretical framework of culture and personality.

Other anthropologists similarly applied the culture and personality model to their studies on experiences of child-rearing and among adolescents throughout the world in the decades that followed. Whiting (1963), for example, contributed to an expansive and well-known six-sited cross-cultural study on child rearing practices during the 1960s, providing insights to the similarities and differences of these experiences. The study's breadth was immense, but Mead (1964:659-60) was nonetheless critical of it due to a number of methodological and theoretical concerns.

Interestingly, Mead and many of the United States' best known anthropologists up to that point adhered to some variant of the culture and personality framework, yet its popularity waned with time. Critiques on the validity of earlier studies applying the approach mounted as the decades passed (McGee and Warms 2012:200). The overarching criticism of the framework was based on a perceived “essentializing [of] both culture and personality development, and for placing them in casual relation to each other” (Barlow and Chapin 2010:327).

Notwithstanding these critiques, early ethnographies remain significant to anthropological knowledge. At a minimum, they provide descriptions which support an understanding of cross-cultural differences in mothering and child-rearing, which anthropologists continue to build upon (Barlow and Chapin 2010:328). Presently, anthropologists use numerous frameworks (e.g., transnational, political-economy, and

feminist), often in combination, to continue pursuing the questions on child-rearing and child development that were first initiated by the culture and personality school almost a century ago.

The anthropology of education similarly broadens this discussion and offers keen insights for further analyzing child development as well as child-rearing. Education in and outside of the classroom can be seen as significant factors influencing enculturation (e.g., Wolcott 1983). Barlow and Chapin (2010:324) on a parallel line of thought comment, “Anthropologists have long recognized mothering as crucial to the transmission of culture, the development of enculturated persons, the constitution of kinship, family, and household, and the reproduction of society.” In this sense, mothers can be seen as educators, although it may be predicted that conflicts will arise between child and parent when the objectives of enculturation differ between the parent and the other forces influencing the child (e.g., public education).

Qin (2006) provides a summary of two concepts useful for analyzing the conflict that may arise in these situations. In her study of two immigrant families from China, she applies the anthropological frameworks of dissonant acculturation and dual frame of reference for her analysis:

After migration, children often learn English and the U.S. culture at a faster speed than their parents, resulting in an acculturation gap or “dissonant acculturation” at home. Anthropologists have used the concept of “dual frame of reference” to refer to immigrants’ uniquely double lens, comparing their experiences in the United States with those in their native countries. [Qin 2006:163]



Beyond simply applying these concepts, the author argues for a “parallel dual frame of reference” in which not only the parents but also the child develops a dual lens after arriving in the United States (Qin 2006:175). The parents consequently compare their children to the standards they know or remember from the sending country, while the children evaluate their parents in comparison to their peers' parents or popular media portrayals. This in in turn may lead to alienation and emotional disengagement between the child and parents (2006:163, 175).

The spheres of child-rearing, child development, and education are more intertwined than independent, despite frequent efforts to isolate these areas of study from one another. It is only through a melding of these domains that a more complete comprehension of the complexity of childhood and how it influences our development and experiences in later life may be acquired.

### **The Way Forward**

The frameworks of anthropology have changed significantly over the past two centuries. They have continuously explored and analyzed questions similar to those presented in this project; however, opportunities to extend anthropological knowledge still exist.

Therefore, this investigation attempts to build on and contribute to these earlier studies and theoretical models from two angles. It first aims to harness the strengths of the ethnographic approach in order to depict the everyday lived experience of informants and their complex web of connections in the past and rapidly changing present.

Accordingly, it serves as a record of lives in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and allows the data to speak for themselves but also serves as a platform for a more critical analysis of those experiences. Second, it applies many of the theoretical frameworks just presented to ascertain whether theoretical gaps exist when using these models to interpret experiences inside of a milieu of rich social diversity and rapid change (i.e., Silicon Valley). It is an eclectic approach that builds on the best of anthropology to better understand the participants' experiences but also to uncover the theoretical possibilities and challenges of studying immigration today.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The choice of investigative methods is a critical consideration to any research project. It is what ultimately determines the variety and quantity of information available for analysis. This chapter introduces the approaches and procedures selected for the ethnographic exploration of the experiences of immigration among female immigrants from Taiwan in SCC. It includes a discussion of the overarching design, research site, instruments and procedures, sampling techniques, sample demographics, data analysis activities, and data security operations. A critical reflection of the chosen methodology and the approach to integrating the results of the various instruments conclude the chapter.

#### **Design**

This exploratory investigation adopted multiple instruments to investigate the research questions under examination. Interpretations are based on analysis of participant observation, interview, and survey data collected between May and November 2012. San José State University's Institutional Review Board approved the methods and focus of this research prior the start of data collection.

#### **Research Site**

The field site encompassed SCC but also extended to the wider Bay Area at times for purposes of data collection. Specific research sites and activities attended included Taiwanese American organizational events, Chinese supermarkets, weddings of second generation couples from Taiwan, small participant social gatherings, and other

celebratory events and sites among the wider Bay Area Chinese community. Interviews were held in the researcher's home, the participants' residences, and other public spaces, and surveys were completed at locations most convenient to the participants and often independent of the researcher.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The data collection phase of this research emphasized three instruments: semi-structured interviews, ethnographic surveys, and participant observation. Each of these instruments was selected due to its links with anthropological traditions and their malleability for the purposes of this exploratory endeavor. Anthropology graduate seminars in research methodology and statistics also provided a fundamental basis for recognizing the available research methods and the nuances of the data collection process prior to designing and entering the field.

Semi-structured interviews were completed between May and November 2012. The domains and themes discussed were chosen based upon theories prevalent within immigrant studies and particular cases involving Taiwanese Americans on parallel topics (e.g., Chang 2006; Chen 2008; Gu 2006). The initial interview protocol was reviewed with a contact originally from Taiwan, not included in the interview or survey samples, in order to ensure understandability of the questions among second language learners with a similar level of education as the prospective participants. Questions within the interview were ordered from general to specific, and a whiteboard was used to aid the researcher and interviewee in working through more complex questions. Notes were taken during

each interview and more complete summaries were compiled following these conversations. The interviews lasted from an hour and a half to three hours, but due to the highly active schedules of most participants, opportunities for follow-up interviews were limited. All participants were provided a consent form in English for their review prior to the interview. A copy of the consent form and interview protocol are located in Appendices A and B.

The ethnographic survey was formulated based upon the themes identified in the interview protocol. Following its inception, it was tested with several interviewees and further modified to better reflect the overarching concerns of the investigation prior to being distributed to the wider survey sample. Questions types included: multiple choice, categorical, Likert-scale, ordinal scale, and numerical scale. These questions were organized from simplest to most complex and were limited in length with the aim of maintaining the interest and confidence of informants as the survey progressed. As with the interviewees, all participants were provided a consent form in English for their review prior to filling out the survey. A copy of the consent form and survey protocol are located in Appendices C and D.

Participant observation was the final instrument used for purposes of data collection. Each event attended and site visited offered distinct opportunities for observing and engaging with segments of the greater community from Taiwan. Handwritten notes describing settings and interactions were taken while attending these activities. Following each engagement, more complete descriptions were recorded.

In addition to the sites visited specifically for the purpose of participant observation, the researcher lived with his mother-in-law, originally from Taiwan, and his spouse throughout the data collection period. This environment provided additional access and opportunities to interact with greater numbers of men and women from Taiwan. These supplemental exchanges ranged from brief meetings with acquaintances to more organized events. Although these interactions were not an essential source of information for this thesis, each offered occasions to foster greater understanding of the community from Taiwan.

### **Sampling Procedures and Participant Recruitment**

The interview and survey samples were created through network sampling. Probabilistic sampling was not possible, because the total population from Taiwan in SCC was not known. The American Community Survey (ACS) provides estimates for individuals identifying as Taiwanese in SCC, but it does not specify the number of individuals who were raised in Taiwan, the focus of this study. Secondly, the ACS does not identify the number of individuals identifying as Chinese Taiwanese, a segment of the population originally from Taiwan, which may identify as solely or partially Chinese for survey purposes. Due to these limitations, network samples based on an understanding of the divide between the two largest and most commonly recognized ethnic-political categories within the community from Taiwan were used.

This sampling technique involved a reputational selection process. In this process the researcher selected key individuals from the community to help identify relevant

participants from their personal networks and beyond. These participants can also be referred to as “network gatekeepers” as each made it possible for the investigator to access communities for participant observation and identify numerous prospective interviewees and survey respondents. Two participants served in this role throughout the research process.

The first of these gatekeepers, Shao-Feng Wang, provided opportunities to meet with a number of interviewees ethnically identifying as Chinese Taiwanese and Taiwanese. On several occasions Mrs. Wang accompanied the researcher to observe activities and locate prospective participants; these activities ranged from a Mandarin language school to a political event celebrating the founding of the ROC. Mrs. Wang was a member of the researcher's spouse's family and in contact with him prior to the beginning the data collection process.

The second gatekeeper, Ying-Lien Chung, provided several contacts identifying as Taiwanese. Mrs. Chung provided opportunities for the researcher to attend events including a senior citizens group and a Taiwanese American organization's leadership inauguration ceremony. Mrs. Chung and the researcher became acquainted through the assistance of a faculty member at San José State University only after data collection had begun.

Survey respondents were similarly selected through network sampling via Mrs. Wang and Chung. In some cases, the interview and survey participants were selected through a process of chain referrals. The network gatekeepers introduced an informant,

and these participants in turn introduced the author to additional interviewees or survey respondents from their personal networks.

### **Sample Demographics**

The interview sample consisted of 20 participants, while the survey sample was composed of 38 respondents. Only females were included in each sample. The time frame in which participants arrived to the United States, their familial ethnicity in Taiwan, marital status, whether they had children, level of education, employment status, religious affiliation, and residence are described below.

The time period in which interviewees and survey respondents arrived to the United States was arranged almost proportionally between three time frames (Table 3.1). These time frames were chosen over other possible temporal divisions, because they reflected the distinct social-economic-political milieus present in Taiwan and SCC described in chapter one.

**Table 3.1** Time Frame to the United States

| Date of Arrival | Interview | Survey |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978    | 8         | 12     |
| 1979 to 1986    | 6         | 12     |
| 1987 onward     | 6         | 12     |
| No response     | 0         | 2      |
| Total           | 20        | 38     |

Besides time frames, participants were identified as falling into one of three possible familial ethnic categories while living in Taiwan: Taiwanese, Chinese (Taiwanese), or both (Table 3.2). As reflected in the table, there was greater



representation of Chinese Taiwanese than Taiwanese among the interviewees, while individuals identified as Taiwanese were better represented among the survey respondents. The differences in representation between ethnic identities reflects the personal networks of Mrs. Wang and Chung. Mrs. Wang provided the majority of contacts for the interviews and had closer ties with the Chinese Taiwanese ethnic community, but Mrs. Chung arranged for the majority of survey respondents and was more closely connected with the Taiwanese ethnic community.

**Tables 3.2** Familial Ethnicity in Taiwan

| Ethnic Identity of Family                  | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Taiwanese or Benshengren (includes Hakka)  | 9         | 22     |
| Chinese or Waishengren (Chinese Taiwanese) | 10        | 7      |
| Both                                       | 1         | 5      |
| No response                                | 0         | 4      |
| Total                                      | 20        | 38     |

Although the present marital status of both the interview and survey participants varied, almost all respondents were married at some point (Table 3.3). Only one respondent identified as never having been married.

**Table 3.3** Marital Status

| Relationship Status    | Interview | Survey |
|------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Single                 | 0         | 1      |
| Married                | 17        | 29     |
| Divorced               | 1         | 2      |
| Divorced and remarried | 0         | 1      |
| Widow                  | 2         | 2      |
| No response            | 0         | 3      |
| Total                  | 20        | 38     |

The majority of participants also identified as having at least one child (Table 3.4), but only a minority specified still having children living at home.

**Table 3.4** Children

| Child | Interview | Survey |
|-------|-----------|--------|
| Yes   | 19        | 35     |
| No    | 1         | 3      |
| Total | 20        | 38     |

Participants were also well educated (Table 3.5). All interviewees and a majority of survey respondents noted having a bachelor's degree or higher.

**Table 3.5** Highest Degree Attained\*

| Degree Earned | Interview | Survey |
|---------------|-----------|--------|
| HS Diploma    | 0         | 1      |
| AA            | 0         | 2      |
| BA, BS        | 3         | 17     |
| MA, MS, MBA   | 15        | 16     |
| PhD           | 2         | 1      |
| No response   | 0         | 1      |
| Total         | 20        | 38     |

\*Table does not distinguish between degrees attained in Taiwan versus the U.S.

The employment status among participants varied (Table 3.6). While the majority of interviewees and survey respondents were employed at some point while living the United States, only the majority of interviewees currently worked. Less than half of the survey respondents were presently employed, possibly reflecting Mrs. Chung's personal network and distribution of the survey among an older group of peers.

**Table 3.6** Employment History

| Employment Status       | Interview | Survey |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Ever Employed in the US |           |        |
| Yes                     | 17        | 30     |
| No                      | 3         | 4      |
| No response             | 0         | 4      |
| Total                   | 20        | 38     |
| Currently Employed      |           |        |
| Yes                     | 13        | 15     |
| No                      | 7         | 21     |
| No response             | 0         | 2      |
| Total                   | 20        | 38     |

The current religious affiliation of participants was divided (Table 3.7). The majority specified being Buddhist, Christian, or having no religious preference. Interestingly, many of the surveys were distributed in an activity center connected to a church serving the Taiwanese American community, yet more respondents identified as Buddhist or as having no religious affiliation than as Christian.

**Table 3.7** Current Religious or Spiritual Affiliation

| Religious Preference     | Interview | Survey |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Buddhist                 | 6         | 12     |
| Christian                | 4         | 9      |
| Other                    | 1         | 1      |
| No religious affiliation | 9         | 13     |
| No response              | 0         | 3      |
| Total                    | 20        | 38     |

All participants resided within SCC (Table 3.8). The distribution of informants throughout the county varied by research instrument but with the highest combined

number of informants coming from central and east SCC.

**Table 3.8** Current Residence in SCC

| Present Residence                                 | Interview | Survey |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Northwest: Los Altos, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale        | 3         | 6      |
| West: Cupertino, Saratoga                         | 10        | 13     |
| Central and East: Milpitas, San José, Santa Clara | 7         | 19     |
| Total   | 20        | 38     |

### **Transcription and Analysis**

In addition to a digital recording, notes were taken throughout the interviews. Memos on key points related to participants, the interview process, and photos of whiteboard notes were made following each interaction. Interview recordings were transcribed as appropriate, using the transcription software Express Scribe. Transcriptions and notes were later transferred to the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti for further analysis. Survey results were organized within the quantitative data analysis program IBM SPSS Statistics 19. This software was used to organize and obtain a general understanding of the quantitative data for purposes of comparison with the qualitative materials.

### **Participant and Data Security**

All digital data collected were maintained on the researcher's password-protected computer. Paper-based notes and surveys were maintained in a locked cabinet. Pseudonyms were created for all participants for publication purposes. Survey respondents were provided further anonymity as names were not a necessary component of the information collected. Following the publication of the thesis, all original data tied

to participants will be physically shredded or digitally purged.

### **Critical Reflection**

The approach taken for this research reflects certain challenges often linked to social science based investigations. The primary concerns relate to the sampling procedures, choice of language for interviews and surveys, researcher ties with the community from Taiwan, and the general validity and reliability of results.

Interview and survey participants were primarily identified through network sampling, which limited the range of the sample and potentially the reliability of results. Despite the disadvantages of this sampling procedure, the two networks provided opportunities to reach respondents of varied experiences and identities for both the interviews and surveys as reflected in the sample demographics. Younger prospective participants (e.g., current college students from Taiwan) were not included in the sample due to their limited time spent in the United States and lack of experiences related to the thematic areas under investigation.

English was the primary language used for interviews and surveys, which may have affected the overall sample size and quality of responses obtained from some participants. English was chosen as the primary language for data collection due to the the researcher's preference and to increase the reliability of results. Although the researcher was able to converse on general topics in Mandarin, it would have required additional time and patience on the part of informants to ensure his full understanding of explanations on more complex issues. Most participants did not have trouble conveying

their experiences or opinions on the themes under discussion in English, but some did indicate, at least initially, a lack of confidence in being able to express fully their opinions. However, this concern typically dissipated as the participants became more familiar with the researcher during their interviews. The choice of English for the survey helped ensure that the participants would likely have a similar level of education to those interviewed (i.e., typically an undergraduate degree or above), thus increasing the reliability of results.

Due to the researcher's ties with the community from Taiwan, the objectiveness of certain results may also be questioned. Despite this concern, the researcher only had minimal interaction with any of the participants prior to the investigation and attempted to interview, survey, and observe various segments of the population who he would not typically have opportunities to interact with. Overall, despite the challenges to the validity and reliability of the research, every attempt was made to remain vigilant and responsive to these challenges and biases from the start of the research process to provide the most accurate results possible.

### **Moving Forward**

Interview, survey, and participant observation results are weaved together in order to provide the reader a more comprehensive picture of the lives of informants. The interview and survey results are compared to give a sense of the similarities and differences between them but also to contemplate the applicability of results to the wider population. In some cases, the time frame of arrival to the United States or familial

ethnicity are examined for the purpose of comparison but ignored elsewhere. This is an intentional decision intended to reflect that these categories are of varying relevance at different periods of time and in relation to the many aspects of the informants' lives. In this process, participant observation provides an additional source for confirming and denying the results found through the other research instruments. While each methodological choice surely leads the research in a particular direction, the use of these tools concurrently supports a more reliable and replicable set of results.

## **Chapter 4: Girls Leaving Home**

Early life is often an unusually memorable period of life. It leaves us with a set of thoughts and feelings that we hold on to more tightly and clearly than most others gathered over a lifetime. It is not always an easy or pleasant experience to fumble through social situations for the first time, but few of us ever forget them completely. Early life is our initial opportunity for exporting our world. Before a group of women immigrated to and established themselves in SCC, they too had these experiences as they matured in Taiwan and then contemplated the possibilities of a life beyond their native borders.

### **Early Life and Education**

Among the interviewees and survey respondents, there was tremendous variability concerning their household organization, upbringing, and education. The earliest years of the participants' lives were often particularly distinct; and although these experiences were in the distant past, the informants often communicated their memories in vivid detail. These were times of newness as their families guided them toward a life path favoring education.

Ming-Shao Tang, a Chinese Taiwanese interviewee, who immigrated to the United States in 1970, described her parents' initial migration to Taiwan from southern China in the 1940s and life at home. Her father moved to Taiwan in 1945 to assist with the handover of Taiwan from the Japanese government, while her mother and brother followed a year later. Mrs. Tang was born the following year. Her parents later



established careers in education, and she grew up with two siblings and a locally hired woman to assist with domestic responsibilities.

Mrs. Tang's youth was similar to most Chinese Taiwanese respondents in terms of her family's experience of leaving their ancestral home and then rebuilding their lives in Taiwan. Chinese Taiwanese households were at times composed of multiple generations as were Taiwanese homes (Table 4.1). However, the level of connection with extended kin was typically more obvious when speaking with Taiwanese interviewees.

**Table 4.1** Household Composition and Parental Ethnicity

| Household Composition                      | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Only Parent(s) and Siblings                |           |        |
| Taiwanese or Benshengren (includes Hakka)  | 2         | 15     |
| Chinese or Waishengren (Chinese Taiwanese) | 5         | 6      |
| Both                                       | 1         | 5      |
| Unknown                                    | 0         | 1      |
| Extended Kin                               |           |        |
| Taiwanese or Benshengren (includes Hakka)  | 7         | 3      |
| Chinese or Waishengren (Chinese Taiwanese) | 5         | 0      |
| Both                                       | 0         | 0      |
| Unknown                                    | 0         | 1      |
| No response                                | 0         | 7      |
| Total                                      | 20        | 38     |

In contrast to Ming-Shao Tang, Su-Fen Chu described a life exceptionally tied to extended kin throughout Taiwan. In fact, her father's lineage could reportedly be traced back 17 generations or more. While at home, Mrs. Chu's mother managed the domestic activities and her father taught but eventually transitioned to working for a family owned

business. Mrs. Chu exemplified links with extended kin in her descriptions of early childhood:

So I was born in '51 . . . in a small town. I was the fourth kid and the third girl. And people always say the third daughter always has the best life, it's just a tradition, so I would like to believe that [chuckling] . . . One of my aunts, my father's sister in law, she doesn't have any grandkids. So when I was little, because my father was the youngest one [of his siblings], . . . [my] uncle was actually much older than my father . . . So to them, I was like their granddaughter. They really liked me, so they asked my father [if they could] have me. So I moved to live with them in a different city in the middle of [Taiwan].

I lived with my auntie and uncle until I was seven years old. My father kept on asking them, "oh, you need to let her go to school" [laughing]. So I was a little bit late for school, almost one year, because they wanted to keep me. And then I moved back [to live with my parents].

As with Mrs. Chu, households and connections with extended kin were often clearer when a participant described herself or her familial ethnicity as Taiwanese; nevertheless, the level of connection varied and often changed over time, regardless of the specified ethnicity. Yan Bai, a Taiwanese participant who emigrated in the mid-1990s, provided a key example of the diverse and changing relations between immediate and extended kin. Mrs. Bai grew up in a city that is now a major technology hub in Taiwan. Her parents and siblings had initially lived in her uncle's home with their grandmother, though, her mother and siblings moved out and became increasingly self-reliant after their grandmother passed away. Mrs. Bai went on to describe her early life:

I have four siblings, so we have five kids in my family, and I'm the youngest . . . My dad passed away when [we] were young, so pretty much my mom raised five children. So she did the house cleaning work or babysitter work to raise five children . . . [and] in Taiwan if you join the military you get some benefits from it . . . so actually my biggest brother joined [the] military.

Despite differences in early experiences of participants, their lives appeared to follow similar veins as they matured. It was a path that often lead to higher levels of education, employment, and eventually the decision to go abroad.

Education often came through as the dominant element in the participants' lives. One respondent summed up her thoughts of growing up, “In Taiwan people are boring, just study and study [chuckling], going to school and study, that's all, because of the tests.” Even though this observation was shared in jest, the values and expectations of kin in relation to education were frequently conveyed. In fact, several individuals indicated moving in order to attend the best possible schools. Mrs. Tang moved from her parents’ hometown to attend a prestigious Taipei high school following exemplary performances on examinations, an experience she observed among many of her peers:

Yeah, you know . . . that's the best high school in Taiwan . . . So actually, my classmate[s], quite a few [were] people from different province[s], different places in Taiwan . . . Actually, [in] high school, half of . . . my classmates [were] from different places, not from Taipei . . . mainly [because] that's a very good school.

Other interviewees mentioned similar experiences of leaving home for education. For instance, Mrs. Chu moved to Taipei to attend the same school as Mrs. Tang but was accompanied by her parents and siblings:

After I graduated from elementary school [as an] 11- or 12- year-old, we moved to Taipei. We had to pass an examination in the old times, so we passed the exam and went to Taipei and went to almost the best middle school. Then another three years and passed another exam to go to the best . . . high school.

Mrs. Tang went on to characterize this experience as life changing. The emphasis on education and its potential to alter one's life path was similarly evident among

participants of all time frames, but the degree and source of pressure to succeed varied. Mrs. Bai, for instance, passed the examinations needed to enter an excellent high school but explained that her mother did not place pressure on her to succeed. The expectations came from the school she attended. Mrs. Bai theorized that this lack of pressure at home likely stemmed from the fact that her mother was dealing with the personal stresses of being the primary caretaker for the family.

Despite Mrs. Bai's experience, having only one guardian did not necessarily correlate to fewer expectations to succeed in school. Jing-Jane Sun, a Taiwanese interviewee who immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s, had a childhood that in many ways paralleled that of Mrs. Bai. Mrs. Sun's father had passed away when she was a small child. She had grown up with extended kin, but their family, as with Mrs. Bai's, grew more autonomous early on. Mrs. Sun described herself as quite independent and having attended a vocational school rather than a conventional Taiwanese high school, but she still felt her mother was vocal about her support and expectations in relation to education:

Oh, yeah, . . . She wants both my brother and myself [to] be educated, because I think that's something she always wanted to do. You know how parents are, what they can't fulfill in their life before, they want the kids to be able to fulfill. So because she likes to study a lot and she did very well at school, but unfortunately the economy wasn't that good and the family doesn't have money; [and] she happened to be the oldest one, so she has to actually go out and earn money when she was 13 . . . and then support [the] family, . . . so when I say I want to go to university or college, she's very supportive. So that's one of the expectations from her. I would say the major one.

Regardless of household organization, most participants continued pursuing higher levels of education and often earned an undergraduate degree. The disciplines pursued varied greatly and ranged from education to animal science. Some informants also engaged in part-time tutoring while enrolled in classes. During this period, the majority of women began considering the possibility of going abroad; however, most worked before emigrating. The fields of employment they engaged were wide-ranging but most often included the educational, financial, and trade sectors (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2** Fields of Employment in Taiwan

| Fields of Employment                        | Interview | Survey |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Education                                   | 7         | 10     |
| Trade                                       | 2         | 7      |
| Stock exchange                              | 1         | 0      |
| Clerical                                    | 1         | 3      |
| Banking                                     | 0         | 2      |
| Other accounting/finance                    | 0         | 2      |
| Government                                  | 1         | 1      |
| Healthcare                                  | 3         | 1      |
| Editor                                      | 0         | 1      |
| Business                                    | 1         | 1      |
| Electronics (includes computer engineering) | 3         | 0      |
| Never employed                              | 4         | 6      |
| No response                                 | 0         | 4      |

A majority of the interviewees also worked for less than four years before leaving Taiwan with survey respondents displaying a similar employment pattern (Table 4.3). The survey results diverged from the interview results in the greater representation of individuals who were employed for more than four years before immigrating.

**Table 4.3** Years Employed in Taiwan

| Years of Employment | Interview | Survey |
|---------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1 year              | 5         | 3      |
| 2 years             | 4         | 3      |
| 3 years             | 3         | 2      |
| 4 years             | 2         | 6      |
| More than 4 years   | 2         | 13     |
| More than 20 years  | 0         | 2      |
| Never employed      | 4         | 6      |
| No response         | 0         | 3      |
| Total               | 20        | 38     |

These employment experiences affected many participants as they approached the decision to immigrate and will be explored in conjunction with the specific immigration factors discussed below.

### **Catalysts of Immigration**

As participants contemplated their future, several factors, typically in combination with one another, pushed them from Taiwan and pulled them to the United States. These motivations included education, family, economics, political and social concerns, the opportunity to explore a different society, and children's education (Table 4.4). Each of these catalysts will be explored in turn.

**Table 4.4** Factors Leading to Immigration

| Catalysts for Immigration     | Interview | Survey |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Education                     | 16        | 19     |
| Family                        | 9         | 13     |
| Economics                     | 7         | 3      |
| Political and social concerns | 5         | 4      |
| Exploration                   | 4         | 1      |
| Child's education             | 0         | 4      |
| Other                         | 0         | 1      |
| No response                   | 0         | 1      |

### **Education**

Education was by far the most common determinant indicated as motivating the decision to emigrate across all three time frames and both ethnicities (Table 4.5).

Participants typically prepared for the required examinations, applied to school, and then departed Taiwan shortly after graduating from college or while employed.

**Table 4.5** Immigration based on Education

| Education                         | Interview | Survey |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978                      | 7         | 7      |
| 1979 to 1986                      | 5         | 6      |
| 1987 onward                       | 4         | 4      |
| Unknown year to the United States | 0         | 2      |
| Total                             | 16        | 19     |

Mrs. Tang, for example, began contemplating the possibility of studying in the United States while in college but taught for a time after graduating before immigrating.

She explicated on her eventual decision to pursue a foreign education:

Yes, go to graduate school, get a better life. Because at that time, if you major in [a] scientific [field], the chance to go to graduate school in the United States is

easier, because you [can] get [a] scholarship. And at the time, Taiwan starts [to] have graduate school, [but is] just starting to have it. So the level [of quality] is not that good.

Going abroad for education, as in Mrs. Tang's case, was almost always linked to other migration objectives. Respondents often desired “a better life” whether related to economics, family, politics, or simply a new set of experiences. Pursuing higher levels of education provided an avenue for attaining these goals. Many interviewees from time frames one and two also noted that going abroad for graduate education was common among their peers and therefore an additional yet subtle source of motivation to pursue this path.

### **Family Networks and Immediate Family**

Familial ties, including both kin networks in the United States and immediate family in Taiwan, often played an important role in deciding to migrate for both interviewees and survey respondents (Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6** Immigration based on Family

| Family       | Interview | Survey |
|--------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978 | 2         | 5      |
| 1979 to 1986 | 4         | 5      |
| 1987 onward  | 3         | 3      |
| Total        | 9         | 13     |

Kin networks based in the United States were typically composed of family members who had immigrated earlier for education or employment. These networks were not typically identified as the primary motivating force behind the decision to go abroad, but they often appeared to initiate the process of contemplating opportunities



beyond Taiwan. For instance, Su-Ming Yang, a respondent who came to the United States in the late 1980s, indicated that she had two uncles residing stateside while she lived in Taiwan. These maternal uncles had originally gone abroad to study and later chosen to remain overseas. Yet in Mrs. Yang's case, this personal network was insufficient motivation on its own, and she did not in fact immigrate until she had worked for several years. The particulars leading to Mrs. Yang's decision to immigrate were uncommon in some respects, yet the role and connection with personal networks in the United States before departing were similarly clear among other Taiwanese and Chinese Taiwanese respondents as well as across all time frames.

The influence of kin in Taiwan was a key fixture for many participants as they contemplated whether to emigrate; this included both biological kin and new spouses. The participants depicted influence from parents or other family members as tacit, but at times their kin were also motivated by their hopes or concerns for the informant whether in education, employment, politics, family, or their individual development. Spouses and boyfriends also played a critical role in the decision-making process for some. Several of participants' significant others had already been accepted to study in the United States, as was the case for Mrs. Bai. Although no one indicated that kin were ever completely opposed to their decision to go abroad, family members did express concerns, particularly if their daughters were already employed in Taiwan or planning to accompany a boyfriend. In the latter case, this often resulted in the couple being married shortly before or after leaving Taiwan.

Despite the frequent involvement of family members in the decision-making process, only two interviewees were chiefly motivated to immigrate because of family. In fact, a combination of kin in Taiwan and personal networks in the United States made these cases of migration possible. These women, Mei-Li Ma and Mei-Mei Lin, immigrated during the middle 1970s and late 1980s respectively, and both identified themselves as Taiwanese.

When Mrs. Ma contemplated immigrating in the 1970s, she was employed, married and raising her son, but her husband was becoming problematic with excessive drinking, smoking, and gambling. Due to these growing concerns, Mrs. Ma's father-in-law suggested they move to another country, thus altering their social environment and potentially improving her spouse's behavior. Ultimately, Mrs. Ma agreed and moved to the United States with the help of a sister, who was already a U.S. citizen. Mrs. Ma's husband was unable to accompany her immediately, and his behavior and health continued to deteriorate, which resulted in Mrs. Ma returning to Taiwan at the request of her father-in-law. Her husband passed away from lung cancer a year later, and she chose to return and permanently reside with her son in the United States.

Mrs. Lin followed a similar path, albeit under differing circumstances from Mrs. Ma, when she was a teenager. Her family chose to immigrate due to business difficulties in Taiwan and employment opportunities with an uncle stateside. In both cases, it was a combination of challenges faced by the family in Taiwan and networks in the United States made this particular pattern of migration possible.

## Economics

Economic sources influencing immigration related to challenges in Taiwan and perceived opportunities in the United States at a given time. These economic motivations maintained steady, albeit minimal, representation in both the interview and survey results within each time frame (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7** Immigration based on Economics

| Economics    | Interview | Survey |
|--------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978 | 2         | 1      |
| 1979 to 1986 | 3         | 1      |
| 1987 onward  | 2         | 1      |
| Total        | 7         | 3      |

Kai-Wen Wu, a Chinese Taiwanese participant who migrated in the early 1960s, suggested that a combination of economic, educational, and familial considerations were constituent elements of her decision. Mrs. Wu grew up in a home made up of nine siblings with parents who had migrated from China in the 1940s. After completing her undergraduate degree in the sciences, she worked for a short time and decided it would be in her favor to go abroad. Mrs. Wu observed this educational trend among her peers and acknowledged that it in part influenced her decision, but she also noted an economic component. Mrs. Wu suggested that opportunities for employment with a degree in her field were in fact positive in Taiwan at the time; however, she still felt that a chance for a higher salary probably existed in the United States and that remaining stateside, at least temporarily, was a common consideration among her peers.

The Taiwanese interviewees from the latter two time frames differed in their economic motivations from Mrs. Wu in that they reflected on a link between economic challenges and family. In both cases, the business environment was depicted as the source of problems for their kin. This was seen in the case of Su-Hwa Lim, who came from a family involved with international trade but faced growing difficulties as the position of Taiwan was changing in the world:

Taiwan at that time, the economy is actually kind of booming, but unfortunately, I think, we left Lianheguo (the United Nations) so people were worried about the investment in Taiwan. That is one of the reasons my father's business had a problem and also the oil prices, and [because] my father's business involve[s] the import-export [market]. So somehow the inside of Taiwan, the business is OK; but the government relationship with the other countries [changed], so people do worry about the safety of Taiwan and the future of Taiwan because of China.

Mrs. Lim went on to convey that her family's bleak prospects on the island and growing economic burdens pushed her to migrate with the intention of providing a positive and new beginning for her family. Although she maintained a stable wage working as a teacher, she felt it was insufficient when compared to her father's earlier business income, which further prompted her decision. Mrs. Lim eventually left Taiwan to study in the early 1980s with the support of her parents.

In sum, the economic impetus for going abroad evolved over time with some distinctions between Taiwanese and Chinese Taiwanese experiences in terms of the emphasis on family and business needs versus individual economic ambitions.

## Social and political concerns

The interviewees and survey respondents did not often identify social and political concerns as a source of motivation for going abroad (Table 4.8). The specific social or political factors involved appeared to evolve over time and were more often identified by Chinese Taiwanese interviewees. In contrast, only Taiwanese survey respondents indicated political or social concerns as primary causes of their immigration.

**Table 4.8** Immigration based on Political or Social Concerns

| Political and Social Concerns | Interview | Survey |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978                  | 1         | 4      |
| 1979 to 1986                  | 2         | 0      |
| 1987 onward                   | 2         | 0      |
| Total                         | 5         | 4      |

Shu-Mei Yeh, a Chinese Taiwanese participant who came to the United States in the middle of the 1970s, pointed out her family's political motivations for supporting her decision to go abroad. Educational opportunities and familial networks also played a role in her decision, but Mrs. Yeh offered an especially clear explanation of the political context and concerns of many Chinese Taiwanese at the time:

Yeah, I think back then, keep in mind, in 1970 [it began], [the] UN kicked [Taiwan out] . . . so I think for, back then, the mentality has been, it's like refugee mentality, because my parents went to Taiwan and they stayed there. But they [weren't] . . . sure what would happen, you know, so they kind of feel . . . coming to the United States, it probably provides a better opportunity, although things have changed a lot [since then].

Political or social strife were primarily a peripheral consideration for Chinese Taiwanese individuals in deciding to immigrate, but these concerns were represented to

some degree within all three time frames. The changing political and social climate in Taiwan during the 1980s also caused angst for some informants. For Mrs. Yang, the participant with two uncles residing in the United States, it was the changing political, economic, social, and linguistic environment in Taiwan that pushed her to leave. She stated:

Secondly, after I graduated from Taiwan, at that time, the political situation [was] getting more, what should I say, it's kind of a more, sharpened [situation], like between the *Guomindang* (KMT) and *Minjindang* (DPP) [political parties], right, so [the] Taiwanese definitely has more influence after I graduated from college. . . My father has always been encourag[ing] me during my later part of college, maybe [as a] junior, senior . . . to come to the States, get a master's degree . . . He says, no matter whether I stay in the United States or went back to Taiwan, after I get my master's degree, he said definitely that it will help me to land at a better job . . . So after I graduated from college, I wasn't really sure I wanted to follow the path like my uncle, so I've been working and trying to see if I can land a better job in Taiwan with a bachelor's degree; but after I've been working for three years I know my father was really right, so I took his advice and then I came to the States to study for my master's degree.

Mrs. Yang went on to clarify the more specific expectations of the work environment at the time:

Right, so at that time, most of the business or successful business in Taiwan, [were] really owned by Taiwanese, so it's really hard for me, a person without knowing or speaking Taiwanese to land a better job . . . Pretty much at that time, one of the job requirements is the person can speak Taiwanese.

Mrs. Yang's experience with language and society as a whole reflected a changing social and linguistic hegemony from that previously known throughout Taiwan. For instance, both Taiwanese and Chinese Taiwanese participants mentioned only being allowed to speak Mandarin while at school during their youth. Similarly, most individuals also recognized the political and social narratives of Taiwan concerning the

political suppression of Taiwanese perspectives by the KMT political party beginning in the 1940s through the late 1980s, but few Taiwanese interviewees specifically identified these concerns as prompting their immigration decision. As a partial explanation, many informants, both Taiwanese and Chinese Taiwanese, revealed that their early lives focused on the more immediate future or that they did not become fully aware of the depths of these conflicts in Taiwan until after leaving.

### **Social Exploration**

The opportunity to explore a different society and travel spurred participants of all three time periods to immigrate (Table 4.9). All of these individuals, with one exception, identified as Taiwanese. In each case, educational opportunities overlapped with the aspiration to experience something unfamiliar.

**Table 4.9** Immigration based on Social Exploration Opportunities

| Social Exploration | Interview | Survey |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978       | 1         | 1      |
| 1979 to 1986       | 1         | 0      |
| 1987 onward        | 2         | 0      |
| Total              | 4         | 1      |

Mrs. Sun, the interviewee introduced earlier as living with only her mother and brother as a child, exemplified the more ambitious of these participants. After working for a short time, Mrs. Sun made the decision to go abroad following personal research and interactions with several Americans in Taipei. Her goal of going to the United States was described as stemming from a growing sense of “island fever” and a general curiosity of the outside world rather than educational concerns. She depicted her mother

and brother as supportive. Mrs. Sun's motivations and path to migration were certainly distinct but still depicted the shared desire of these participants to experience something novel. Kuei-Ying Kao, a Chinese Taiwanese participant, similarly expressed this common inclination:

Many people may focus on [the] academic [in choosing to go abroad], but I myself, not only [care about the] academic, but also I want to learn what independence means, because I always live with my family and I always live in one city. So I always have a sense of security, you know, if I'm out of money or something I can always make a phone call, just one call away, I can get support. So I just want to throw myself in a place where I know nobody, so I can just learn how to survive by my own [wits].

Seeing something beyond Taiwan was the common thread for these participants from all time frames. Exploration was not an especially strong motivating force in leading them to immigration, yet it was something everyone be forced to engage in following their arrival in the United States.

### **Child's Education**

Participants motivated by opportunities for a child's education were not represented in the interview sample. Nonetheless, several survey respondents indicated this as a motivating factor (Table 4.10). All four of these respondents identified as Taiwanese.

**Table 4.10** Immigration based on a Child's Education

| Child's Education | Interview | Survey |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1949 to 1978      | 0         | 0      |
| 1979 to 1986      | 0         | 2      |
| 1987 onward       | 0         | 2      |
| Total             | 0         | 4      |



## **Summary**

Early life is clearly a period of time in which we learn a great deal about society and how to interact with it as well as how to define ourselves. Our homes, education, and wider society influence those first frameworks we develop for interpreting the world and trying to resolve what to do next. The early lives of the women in this study were unique, yet they went down a path similarly emphasizing education and eventually the possibility of immigration. Most were employed before leaving Taiwan, but all ultimately chose to emigrate and were most often compelled by factors relating to education, family, or both.

## **Chapter 5: Young Women in America**

The movement of people across the globe is an incredible activity that often allows us to learn something new about others and ourselves. It can be a daunting undertaking to enter an unfamiliar place, but there is perhaps no faster way to learn who we think we are, who it is we want to be, or what we believe is most important. As this group of young women from Taiwan set off on their personal journeys through America, each quickly faced a new reality of people, places, and ideas. At times, new communities of support were formed, families born, and professional careers initiated. All of this was more than a mere physical assemblage of experiences but a truly introspective and life altering exploration.

### **Initial Experiences**

Participants arrived at their destinations expectantly after the long process of preparation for and application to relocate to the United States. The majority were initially drawn to areas beyond SCC because of the educational and economic opportunities and personal networks described in chapter four. Nonetheless, most interlocutors migrated to the county within 15 years of their arrival stateside (Table 5.1). Interestingly, the later respondents came to the United States, the sooner they typically moved to SCC, suggesting growing economic opportunities, personal networks, and a thriving community from Taiwan.

**Table 5.1** Number of Years in the United States before Moving to SCC

| Years of Residence Outside of SCC | Interview | Survey |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Immediately to SCC                | 5         | 10     |
| 0 to 5 years                      | 7         | 10     |
| 6 to 10 years                     | 4         | 2      |
| 11 to 15 years                    | 2         | 5      |
| 16 to 20 years                    | 1         | 0      |
| 21 to 25 years                    | 0         | 0      |
| 26 to 30 years                    | 0         | 0      |
| 31 to 35 years                    | 0         | 1      |
| 36 to 40 year                     | 1         | 2      |
| Unknown                           | 0         | 8      |
| Total                             | 20        | 38     |

The participants often described their initial experiences and interactions with feelings of excitement, surprise, and determination. They commonly related these descriptions to learning something new about their social surroundings, the extent of the population from Taiwan, or their goals to succeed in whatever they were pursuing.

Mrs. Chu, for example, chose to attend a southern university due to a scholarship opportunity and extended family in the area. Despite some initial feelings of homesickness, Mrs. Chu portrayed the local population as friendly, but it was the extent of the community from Taiwan that genuinely astonished her. Not only were there professors from Taiwan and a Taiwanese student association but also many former graduates working in the area. The size of the community from Taiwan initially surprised Mrs. Chu, but she regarded it positively in helping her adjust to her new home. During this two year period, Mrs. Chu traveled with friends, overcame the challenges of attending courses in English, and ultimately graduated with her degree.

After these initial years of education or work, interactions with others within the community from Taiwan, and new or ongoing relationships with a significant other, all but one participant chose to remain stateside. The reasons for remaining in the United States varied, but many respondents depicted economic opportunities and familial considerations as constituent causes (Table 5.2). As with their initial migration the United States, many were drawn to areas beyond SCC.

**Table 5.2** Rationale for Remaining in the United States

| Reasons for Remaining                  | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Employment                             | 15        | 10     |
| Family (including spouse's employment) | 13        | 4      |
| Child's Education                      | 0         | 12     |
| Business or financial opportunities    | 0         | 10     |
| Education                              | 0         | 6      |
| Politics                               | 0         | 5      |
| Other                                  | 1         | 2      |
| No response                            | 0         | 7      |

Mrs. Chu's experience again typified the decision to remain stateside and move to SCC found among many participants. During her studies, she met her future husband, who was already employed nearby. Following graduation, Mrs. Chu found employment in San José but soon left and elected to marry her boyfriend due to both personal and pragmatic reasons. A little less than two years later and following the birth of their son, her new family moved to reside permanently in San José. While other participants' experiences were distinct upon first arriving in the United States, it was most often this combination of employment and family that led them to remain stateside and eventually to live in SCC.

## New Communities and Evolving Identities

Once the participants established a more permanent location of residence, they began to engage more intensely with the people and places around them. The multi-ethnic composition of SCC made a particularly striking range of activities available. The actual ethnic composition and types of events attended varied considerably (Table 5.3), and they often changed in their accessibility over time.

**Table 5.3** Ethnic Composition and Types of Community Events Attended

| Ethnic Composition and Variety of Events Attended | Interview | Survey |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Chinese (American)                                | 10        | 7      |
| Taiwanese (American)                              | 4         | 10     |
| Non-Taiwanese or -Chinese                         | 10        | 15     |
| Children's activities*                            | 4         | 0      |
| No activities                                     | 1         | 0      |
| No response                                       | 0         | 7      |

\*not a listed survey option

Participants who arrived to SCC prior to the 2000s often made comments about the changing dynamic and community around them. For example, Yun-Mei Hu, a Taiwanese respondent, had lived in SCC for more than 45 years and provided a sense of the non-existent community from Taiwan early on:

And when I come here in 1966, there were not many Chinese. And when I walk in the street, [if] I see somebody looks like [they're] Chinese, maybe Waishengren, [or] maybe Taiwanese, I'd get so excited, I'd jump up, "Hey! Are you, are you Chinese?" [If] I hear a yes, I will speak Chinese. If he says Taiwanese, oh, I will almost faint. 1966 not many Chinese in here . . . So lonely here.

As time passed, the size of the community from Taiwan grew and the sense of isolation noted by Mrs. Hu was not depicted by those who arrived later. According to one

participant, despite this growing population, certain comforts (e.g., specialty supermarkets) were not fully available through the middle 1980s. Although these amenities slowly became more common, several informants reported that the growth of the population from Taiwan appeared to slow as immigrants arrived from new places in the 1990s and 2000s.

Most respondents still reflected stronger ties with others from Taiwan or, at a minimum, China in their everyday interactions, despite the demographic changes the women sensed around them. For example, Mrs. Kao attended a gathering celebrating the 86th birthday of her calligraphy instructor. Mr. Hu was originally from China but now lived with his daughter's family and taught calligraphy on the western side of the county. On this particular evening, many of Mrs. Kao's peers were also present, who were also in their 50s and 60s and of Chinese Taiwanese backgrounds.

Nonetheless, the participants' identities and what they felt was important often evolved in new ways or shifted due to their interactions and experiences with those around them. The kinds of activities attended and the areas of identity shift were highly variable; however, religious involvement, connections with Taiwan, careers, and the ethnic composition of SCC were areas of significant influence in how many of these women contemplated what was most important to them and their shifting sense of self over time. While exploring the communities and identities of interlocutors, it is pertinent to acknowledge that several of these women lived in other parts of the United States for many years before moving to SCC. The results that follow are thus not always limited to

experiences after arriving in the county but are explored from this vantage point whenever possible.

**Spirituality, Community, and Religion**

The profound importance of spirituality was something close to the hearts of many of these women as they endured difficulties in their lives. No matter their faith, these beliefs helped them face trials at home, employment frustrations, personal illness, and even the loss of a child. Religious conversion or the strengthening of beliefs took place at different times in each woman's life, but these changes frequently stemmed from interactions with family and others from Taiwan. Most often, spiritual explorations led to the strengthening of Buddhist beliefs or conversion to Christianity, while others remained non-religious or -spiritual. Despite the importance of religious engagement for many individuals, the survey results suggested a highly variable level of significance of spirituality among all participants (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4** Significance of Spiritual Beliefs

| Importance of Spiritual Beliefs         | Survey |
|---|--------|
| 1 - very important                      | 9      |
| 2                                       | 2      |
| 3                                       | 8      |
| 4                                       | 8      |
| 5 - not important at all                | 6      |
| No religious preference and no response | 4      |
| No response                             | 1      |
| Total                                   | 38     |

The interviewees' conversion to or strengthening of a belief system stemmed from several sources. The origins of these paths included interaction with community and

family members of these faiths but also observed and experienced hardships. Mrs. Yeh, introduced earlier via her family's political concerns prior to her departure from Taiwan, displayed the often complex route to a new or stronger set of spiritual convictions. Mrs. Yeh did not grow up in a family with strong religious feelings but noted participating in some Buddhist practices due to her grandmother. It was not until her early 40s, though, that her more didactic exploration of Buddhism began by way of attending talks on the subject. Her son was also attending a comparative religious course at the time, which would later lead him to pursue a life as a Buddhist monk. Her eventual conversion was described as originating from both her exploration but also in part tied to her son. Mrs. Yeh further depicted the importance of these new beliefs in both her perspectives and practices when facing challenges; for example, she noted that engaging in structured self-reflection allowed her to feel less often upset when faced with various challenges or irritations in her life.

Mrs. Yeh's personal and formal engagement with Buddhism grew with time, yet it was not something that came into existence in a homogenous Buddhist religious environment. She explained that even while growing up her parents supported her siblings exploring different traditions. This openness appeared to lead to several of her siblings adopting Christianity to varying degrees in Taiwan and the United States. Despite their different faiths, Mrs. Yeh did not represent these dissimilarities as a point of contention between them. In fact, the mutual respect for their creeds was portrayed with the passing of her mother. The siblings and grandchildren arranged ways to incorporate



elements of both belief systems into the funeral:

The two girls of my eldest sister, who are very much devoted Christians, . . . I think they read . . . I'm not too familiar with the Bible, but it talked about the diligent woman, . . . [This] really was the key for the household, and the wording I think was really a great description about my mom. And then we sang Amazing Grace. Then my son took . . . led us for a recital for the Heart Sutra . . . It talks about, everything's empty, . . . at the end, we sang a song, Dedication of Merit, which was written by one of the Western disciples of the late founder, and it was very beautiful. So I thought the very fact we were all together and we honor each other's beliefs and [that] we can, I think that's the way it's supposed to be, that's what I [would] like to see the whole world turn into.

As with Mrs. Yeh, the link between family and community engagement to a participant's new or growing sense of spirituality was similarly noted among several Christian respondents. For example, Mrs. Yan-Chuan Chen, a Chinese Taiwanese participant who immigrated due to social concerns and educational opportunities in the early 1990s, was baptized after living in the United States for several years. Mrs. Chen began this spiritual exploration and then converted independently, but her spouse followed her lead a few years later. In Mrs. Chen's case, the Christian community and its precepts came to influence much of her life in terms of the activities and people she engaged with. Along these lines, she often spent time assisting a children's ministry, leading a women's activity club, and sharing her convictions with her daughter.

Although new and growing spiritual beliefs were commonly represented among participants, specifying “no religious preference” remained the most common response among interviewees and survey respondents. Despite what these numbers might suggest, five of the nine interviewees who identified themselves as having no religious preference later indicated engaging in religious ceremonies when visiting Taiwan, viewing their

spirituality as philosophical rather than religious, specifying the possible unconscious role of spirituality in their lives, or the existence of a god although they were not practitioners of a particular religion. Unsurprisingly, survey respondents who identified as having no religious affiliation consistently provided a low rating of spirituality's importance (i.e., a four or five) or did not respond.

The interviewees also offered insights to the complexity of these spiritual milieus among those identifying as having no religious preference. Despite the range of positions among individuals within this diverse group, all appeared to have engaged with community or family members of different faiths in Taiwan or the United States or both. They were equally confident in their responses concerning their beliefs as compared to those with religious convictions. Ultimately, the primary difference between those with and without religious involvement seemed to be the composition of the community surrounding them, that is, those who followed a particular religion tended to have an additional sub-network of contacts and support with a shared set of beliefs and practices.

### **Continued and Lost Connections with Taiwan**

Despite having lived in the United States for years, many of these women continued to foster connections with friends, family, and professionals in Taiwan. In earlier decades, many could only afford to write letters or make an occasional phone call home. As the decades passed though, the cost of communication decreased and new technologies became available, allowing the physical distance to be traversed virtually. Participants also visited Taiwan when manageable but with inconsistent frequency

(Table 5.5). Generally, those participants who identified as Taiwanese and who were over 50 or retired visited more frequently than Chinese Taiwanese informants or those still raising children.

**Table 5.5** Frequency of Return Trips to Taiwan

| Regularity of Visits to Taiwan  | Interview | Survey |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| One or more times a year        | 5         | 17     |
| Every other year                | 3         | 10     |
| Once every five years           | 4         | 5      |
| Less than once every five years | 3         | 5      |
| Does not visit                  | 1         | 0      |
| Unknown                         | 4         | 1      |
| Total                           | 20        | 38     |

Mrs. Chu, for example, typically visited Taiwan every two years to meet with family but sometimes more frequently if her circumstances permitted. As with several others, trips to Taiwan were often composed of both obligatory and recreational components. For Mrs. Chu, her recent travels coincided with family members becoming ill or passing away, but these visits still included gatherings with old friends which she arranged ahead of time via e-mail. These friends would also visit Mrs. Chu in California, if occasion for it arose.

The Chinese Taiwanese participants also visited Taiwan for similar reasons to Mrs. Chu, but they more frequently remarked that Taiwan no longer held concrete familial connections or close acquaintances for them. At other times the diminishing desire to return to Taiwan among Chinese Taiwanese participants was linked to the changing social and linguistic environment. Mrs. Tang, for instance, explained her

perception of Taipei today compared to when she was growing up there:

But now these days, people [are] different; if you go back to Taiwan [and] you don't speak Taiwanese, some people, really reject you . . . Sometimes you will, in Taipei, get in the taxi, [if] they find out you're [a] Chinese [who] doesn't speak Taiwanese, they kick you out [laughing]. That happened before. Yeah, just the political environment is totally different.

Mrs. Tang went on to describe another experience in which a man refused to speak with her in anything but Taiwanese while she was visiting, even though she was not fluent in the dialect. For Mrs. Tang, Taiwan had transformed from a social environment that she perceived as unproblematic in terms of language and ethnic interaction to one in which political differences had led to a more intense social schism and an unwelcoming atmosphere. In many ways, this frustrating return home for Mrs. Tang in relation to language appeared to mirror Mrs. Yang's earlier comments about the limited business opportunities without fluency in Taiwanese during the 1980s.

Overall, the relative importance of maintaining connections with Taiwan was different for each participant. Many of these women led rich lives in SCC involving careers, families, friends, and hobbies, but many still found reasons to maintain ties with Taiwan. Still, others had lost their sentiment for and interest in the island as they observed with frustration its changing social and political orientation.

### **Employment and Its Functions**

Employment was often a new and exciting aspect in the lives of the participants. Although many of the informants had been employed in Taiwan, working in the United States was not just a source of income but a significant portion of their daily routine. As

can be seen in the survey results, the importance of employment to personal fulfillment varied but was frequently high (Table 5.6). Interestingly, the road to a given profession was typically circuitous, while the actual benefits of working were often interpreted in different ways.

**Table 5.6** Significance of Employment to Personal Fulfillment

| Importance of Employment | Survey |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 1 - very important       | 15     |
| 2                        | 3      |
| 3                        | 8      |
| 4                        | 1      |
| 5 - not important at all | 1      |
| Unknown                  | 6      |
| Never employed in U.S.   | 4      |
| Total                    | 38     |

The respondents were engaged in or retired from a number of fields ranging from consulting to healthcare. Careers related to computer engineering and accounting were the most common professions represented. Often, informants' initial studies and occupations in Taiwan diverged from their career fields in the United States. Yu-Fen Chou, for example, a Taiwanese participant, could not help but chuckle when describing her career path after arriving in Silicon Valley. Mrs. Chou was a home economics teacher in Taiwan but left the field to reunite with her husband in California at the beginning of the 1980s. After arriving, she felt the need to find a well-paying job, which led her to a career as a programmer for more than a decade.

As with Mrs. Chou, employment in the United States, especially in SCC, often led respondents to interact with new people, perspectives, and experiences. Several

participants enjoyed this new work environment and often noted the diversity found in the workplace, as Mrs. Sun reminisced:

This company's interesting because it's very very diverse, I met a lot of very good people out there. I think in my entire company [working experience,] this [is] probably the company I really have a good memory from, because from that company [I made] a lot of good friends, not just American people. We have American people, we have Turkish, we have European, my boss is Canadian, so it's pretty much very very diverse. It's very different right now, from this company I met a lot of good friends, and we['re] still [in contact], . . . and the reason I say that, I think it's good too, [because] I want to be international.

In a diverging trend, others noted slight frustration in looking back on their careers in the United States when compared to peers who chose to remain in or return to Taiwan. The range of issues mentioned were highly variable but the most commonly shared frustration was related to the general economic development in Taiwan after their departure and the more relaxed lives their friends were now living. This was a recurrent comment among respondents from time frames one and two, suggesting the most common reasons for originally immigrating to and then remaining in the United States (i.e., education and employment) were no longer relevant as the economy and educational systems of Taiwan grew. In fact, many participants would soon qualify as senior citizens but had no concrete plans of retiring or slowing down, while their former peers in Taiwan had at times already been retired for more than a decade.

Surprisingly, few individuals emphasized an economic impetus for their decision to remain working but instead expressed a general interest in their field or pride in their sustained work ethic. Tai-Lin Kuo, for instance, was still on the job 64 hours a week after nearly two decades while attending to her father in her free time. As Mrs. Kuo

explained, work continued to offer structure to her life and the opportunity to make use of her education in a field she was passionate about. Finally, along similar lines, work often provided a sense of independence for participants monetarily or socially or both from their homes. This sentiment was expressed across the years, as with Mrs. Chou after receiving her first paycheck:

Yeah, I still remember. I had my first paycheck . . . I still remember my hourly pay was \$9.70 an hour, that was a lot, because I know my classmates they work in restaurants; . . . [and] the hourly pay at that time was around \$3. I got my first pay check, it was a lot of money to me. I felt so good, [and] I can be independent [chuckling]. I [had] made the U.S. dollar now, I don't have to count on my husband completely. So that was really a keystone [moment] in my life.

In the end, work appealed to different people for different reasons: it was a place for interactions with a more diverse group, a way to apply one's skills, or a source of independence. Although some participants felt discontented with their situation compared to their former peers in Taiwan, most chose to continue working for more than financial needs alone.

### **Intertwining Ethnic, National, and Political Identities**

While discussing their initial experiences, community engagement, ties with Taiwan, and careers, many of the women touched on how they perceived their ethnic identities. However, these explanations often did not depict impermeable boundaries between ethnic categories and were often further entangled with complex national and political feelings. Most respondents noted a clear sense of who they were when they first departed Taiwan, but many reevaluated their ethnic identity and its related components after living in the United States. The preliminary tabulations concerning ethnic

identification after living in the United States offer a basic summary of the complexity of identity when compared to the actual accounts of the interviewees (Table 5.7).

**Table 5.7** Ethnic Identification after Living in the United States

| Self-identification after Living in the United States | Interview | Survey |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Taiwanese   | 2         | 1      |
| Taiwanese American                                    | 2         | 18     |
| Taiwanese Chinese                                     | 1         | 0      |
| Taiwanese Chinese American                            | 1         | 1      |
| Taiwanese and American                                | 0         | 1      |
| Chinese   | 7         | 5      |
| Chinese American                                      | 4         | 8      |
| Chinese and Chinese American                          | 0         | 1      |
| American  | 1         | 0      |
| Unclear   | 1         | 0      |
| Unknown   | 1         | 3      |
| Total   | 20        | 38     |

No consistent pattern emerged in terms of changing ethnic self-identification among all participants across the various time frames or based on perceived ethnicity before departing Taiwan; however, the importance of context to these changes was apparent throughout.

Li-Li Lee's feelings on this matter provide a key example of the complexity of ethnic identification. Mrs. Lee grew up in a Hakka family and moved to the United States in the middle 1990s. When Mrs. Lee first arrived, she identified as Taiwanese but explained the strength of these feelings ebbed due to her interactions with new friends from mainland China and having temporarily returned to Taiwan in the late 2000s. Mrs. Lee explained the importance of her return to Taiwan to evaluating her ethnicity:



Now, yes, I probably changed. You know, . . . I'm a Chinese American, American Chinese . . . [until I'm] 20 years old I grow up in Taiwan; and this year [the late 2000s] I go back to my country . . . and I feel I don't really fit in there. Everything I know well, you know, the culture, the language, everything I know so well before. I was raised there, but the time I go back there, I feel I'm kind of more comfortable to stay in America.

Although Mrs. Lee identified as Chinese American due to the time elapsed since first arriving in the United States and her experience upon returning to Taiwan, she also explicated that her responses concerning her identity often varied depending on the context and person asking. For example, she might indicate being Taiwanese on questions of politics with others from Taiwan, Taiwanese among Chinese friends while acknowledging they share some similarities, and Chinese American elsewhere. Mrs. Lee's experience of grappling with an evolving interpretation of her ethnicity was shared among a range of participants with context as the key in determining how to identify. Mrs. Tang, for instance, explained the social and political nature of her choice in identifying herself when abroad:

OK, when I visit Taiwan, I think I'm Chinese, I don't think I'm Taiwanese. I always think I'm Chinese, even when I visit mainland Chinese I think I'm Chinese, but just Chinese from Taiwan. Yes, it's complicated [laughing] . . . Although I was born in Taiwan, theoretically I am Taiwanese, but now the Taiwanese . . . want to be independent, yeah, very very green, we're considered [the] blue side, not the green side [in politics].

Mrs. Tang's comments highlighted the additional complexities that Chinese Taiwanese participants faced in reflecting on their ethnicity when viewed through the composite of their early life in Taiwan, more recent ancestral ties with China, political concerns, nationality, and experiences in the United States. Participants identifying as

Taiwanese or Taiwanese American also reflected on the complex nature of their feelings in relation to their ethnicity or nationality, but they less frequently described the political considerations and instead bound these feelings to familial and cultural connections with Taiwan and their experiences in the United States. For instance, Mrs. Sun, who originally immigrated primarily to explore a different society in the early 1990s and decided to remain for work, still felt she was Taiwanese because her family resided in Taiwan.

Still, other participants identified as American. However, the degree of these feelings was highly variable within all three time frames. Many depicted a host of reasons limiting their ability to identify as “fully American,” including the composition of the Bay Area, a perceived lack of understanding of “traditional” American society, or language and race.

The large Bay Area Asian population, specifically those from Taiwan and China, was mentioned by participants from all three time frames when asked about their unwillingness to view themselves as fully American. Only one individual specified identifying as wholly American. When asked whether living elsewhere would have resulted in different outcomes, several respondents said that by comparison, their friends or family members who resided on the east coast or in small towns were more “Americanized” due to the smaller populations from Taiwan in those places. Participants who had resided in areas outside of SCC, and in particular those residing outside California for extended periods of time, similarly noted the distinct demographic composition of the Bay Area and how this made it possible to limit one's interactions to

people and places of shared backgrounds. Living in SCC also led some participants to feel they did not fully understand “traditional” American society due to limited engagements with others beyond fellow immigrants from Taiwan or China. A clear picture of what traditional American society meant was not typically offered, yet several participants explained that they hoped to have an opportunity to explore it in more depth at some point in the future.

The ability of Bay Area residents to insulate themselves from individuals of dissimilar backgrounds was partially confirmed during observations at supermarkets, restaurants, and political events. None of these locations or events depicted a racial or ethnic prerequisite for entry, but each was clearly marketed or organized with individuals from Taiwan in mind. Marina Food, a specialty grocery store, for instance, emerged during the early 1980s due to the growing Asian population in Silicon Valley (Marina Food 2014). Visiting their store in Cupertino both confirmed the focus of the business and its patrons' backgrounds. The storefront was flanked by shops with advertisements in Chinese. The entrance itself showcased large cardboard containers possessing various fruits. Large and small red Chinese lanterns adorned the interior of the grocery, while the smaller of these lanterns advertised the Chinese beer Tsingtao. The makeshift aisles were filled with people, almost bumping into one another while attempting to navigate between the meat and seafood sections adjacent to the produce. Vegetables and fruit were advertised with names in both English and Chinese, and red and yellow arrows pointed to product prices. Many of the vegetables were individually packed in polystyrene foam

and cellophane. The meat selection was well organized and almost twice the size as one might expect to observe at a Safeway or Lucky, while the seafood perpendicular to the butcher's counter contained tanks overcrowded with cat fish, large shrimp, squids, and so forth. Although people of different genders and phenotypes were present, the majority of patrons appeared to be middle-aged women of Asian descent.

These observations at Marina and other locations in part corroborated the informants' comments on being able to limit themselves to people, places, and things of shared backgrounds. Moreover, the observations from the supermarket suggested marketing, beyond the produce itself, designed to entice patrons from Taiwan. For example, red and yellow hold special social significance in Han Chinese society. The haphazard aisles emulate the lively atmosphere of outdoor markets in Taiwan and supermarkets in China.

Beyond the possibility of insulating oneself from non-Asians, the ability to limit interactions between groups from Taiwan itself was also noted. On many occasions, interlocutors commented on their involvement with various activities and organizations by prefacing organizational names with the label Chinese or Taiwanese. These descriptors most often aligned with either political feelings concerning the status of Taiwan or their more personal identification as Taiwanese or Chinese Taiwanese. The accessibility to these events in Silicon Valley and individuals' related political affinities were seen during two events held in the early fall of 2012.

The first of these activities was a celebration commemorating the founding of the ROC in 1911 and included performances and speeches north of downtown San José. Beyond families with ties to Taiwan or the history of the ROC, local government representatives and a Taiwanese government official were present. After the ceremony concluded, men and women spoke in Mandarin as they boarded buses for San Francisco's Chinatown to take part in a celebratory parade. The parade route traced the main street of Chinatown and was organized into sections based on the university attended while living in Taiwan. Marchers carried banners with the names of their schools and sang the songs of their universities. One group of alumni was smaller than the rest and asked the researcher to help carry their banner during the march. The paraders moved down the road as tourists took photos and looked on quizzically as the researcher passed by carrying his newly adopted school's banner. This portion of the day appeared wholly attended by individuals who likely identified as Chinese Taiwanese.

A week later, a Taiwanese American organization convened and inaugurated Mrs. Ma as their new vice president. The event was held in a Taiwanese American church in the East Bay and included speeches, a children's performance, and a communal meal. Most of the attendees conversed in Taiwanese as they ate together. Organizational members and others with a wide range of backgrounds were present, ranging from the church's pastor to a wealthy philanthropist. Each attendee the author met had distinct experiences and opinions to share relating to Taiwan, but almost all made clear that they saw themselves as Taiwanese or Taiwanese American.

Finally, some participants considered the challenges to perceiving themselves as American from the platform of language and race. For example, Mei-Yu Huang felt she would always be seen as a foreigner in America due to her accent and because she was not white. Similarly, Mrs. Tang's feeling on race in relation to being American became clearer when discussing this question in regard to her children:

Although we're American citizens, we still think we're Chinese. And we think they [our children] are Chinese . . . your skin color doesn't change. You think you're American, but America doesn't recognize you're American, they'll still think you're Chinese or Asian. So, you have your identity, so we keep telling [them] they are Chinese.

As with Mrs. Tang and many others, one's ethnic identity was defined by personal experiences, environment, and activities but also those surrounding them and their perceptions. Unsurprisingly, the meaning of ethnicity did not always share a convenient definition for participants but was entwined with a great many other considerations.

### **Summary**

Living in the United States was an ongoing journey for these women from Taiwan. Many engaged new communities, fostered connections with their careers, and evaluated their sense of self. Informants clearly carried influences from their youth with them during these new experiences and ruminations, but each formed a truly new understanding of herself which often coincided with shifts in identities. Ultimately, these women developed in new ways as their lives moved forward.

## **Chapter 6: Motherhood**

Motherhood is an unmatched social experience. There are unique opportunities for personal contemplation, growth, and interaction attached to it. These were in fact what many of the women from Taiwan discovered and experienced as they raised their children. Each of them continued to grow and change individually, but they were now responsible for new lives beyond their own. More than simply feeling accountable for the survival of their children, they wanted to see them succeed. Being a parent was not easy. It demanded constant physical and mental energies as the lives of their children progressed, but most made great efforts in order to teach and assist them whenever possible.

### **Transitioning to Parenthood**

The passage into parenthood was an adventure in and of itself for many of these women. It was often unplanned yet an expected and pleasant step in their lives. In many cases, they were just settling into new careers and homes. Children were an additional, albeit appreciated, responsibility (Table 6.1). While only five of the interviewees were currently raising children, all except one had children and saw parenting as a primary responsibility at some point in their life. All but three survey respondents had children. It was also not possible to decipher which informants continued to hold parenting responsibilities based upon their responses alone.

**Table 6.1** Current Domestic Responsibilities

| Domestic Roles | Interview | Survey |
|----------------|-----------|--------|
| Finances       | 11        | 20     |
| Cleaning       | 10        | 28     |
| Cooking        | 11        | 28     |
| Parenting      | 5         | 30     |
| Other          | 1         | 2      |
| No response    | 0         | 1      |

Most participants described the transition from academia or the work force to marriage and familial responsibilities as a natural progression in their lives. Mrs. Chu, for instance, typified the responses of her fellow participants when discussing her life up to that point and how she perceived and prepared for life as a parent:

Actually, no. I didn't even think about that. I guess when I was young, OK, first I wanted to come to the U.S., and then said hum, I want to find a boyfriend, and then got married. And of course I thought about having kids, right. Kind of like, I did not think about [it] too much, but it's gradually, year after year.

Other participants similarly depicted this transition in their lives. Many also shared the expectations and excitement for children within their families, as Mrs. Chen noted:

Actually, I love kids a lot. Um, my own family, we have four siblings and me . . . And from my husband's side, they have five, so we all come from kind of big big families. So I think at that time, both families, [my] parents and . . . my in-laws' side, they expect to have grandchildren because we are the elder children, so they are kind of excited about the grandchildren.

In Mrs. Chen's case, her mother stayed for more than six months to assist after her first child was born. Despite her mother's efforts to convince her to begin searching for employment, Mrs. Chen chose to stay at home with her children. This decision in part



stemmed from remembering how busy her mother had been with work and home life when she was a child. It was not something she wanted to emulate. Mrs. Chen did eventually return to the workforce after moving from the Midwest to San José a few years later.

Although many participants received familial assistance after having children, it was inconsistently available and often did not last beyond a few months, unless the new grandparents chose to immigrate. Unlike Mrs. Chen, many of the other respondents returned to their careers soon after having a child. These women were now not only taking on their former responsibilities but also life as a new parent. As a result of these new complexities, many opted to find additional support, whether to help temporarily or more permanently (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2** Temporary or Long Term Assistance with Childcare

| Childcare Assistance                           | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Yes (Family, nannies, babysitters, or daycare) | 16        | 16     |
| No   | 3         | 14     |
| Not applicable                                 | 1         | 3      |
| No response                                    | 0         | 5      |
| Total  | 20        | 38     |

For example, Mrs. Huang indicated that family and friends provided assistance at times when her children were first born and as they grew older. Nonetheless, Mrs. Huang wanted to continue working and decided to employ outside help for a time:

When they were really young . . . I joined a start-up, . . . so I was very busy. So for the first two or three years, I spent very little time on them, . . . In the beginning they go to like daycare. They have a babysitter pick them up, because I cannot make the six o'clock pick up time . . . [A] Couple years later I had a nanny,

and so that was better. And then my mother-in-law came to the United States around, let me see, maybe '86 or '87. But I still always have a nanny, she never needs to [take care of the kids] . . . but she helped with cooking and things. Because my father-in-law passed away, she stayed with us for like seven years and then moved to live with her daughter . . . So my mother-in-law, you know, after my kids [were] getting older, she helped out.

Despite this external support, Mrs. Huang still felt she made more decisions regarding her children than her husband. As with Mrs. Huang, the majority of participants identified contributing equally or more to raising their children in comparison to their spouses (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3** Contributions to a Child's Upbringing

| Participant Contributions to Child Rearing                     | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Expended significantly more effort than spouse                 | 2         | 7      |
| Expended a little more effort than spouse                      | 0         | 7      |
| Participant contributed equally or more than spouse            | 15        | 0      |
| Couple equally contributed to raising children                 | 2         | 15     |
| Spouse expended a little more effort than the participant      | 0         | 0      |
| Spouse expended significantly more effort than the participant | 0         | 0      |
| Not applicable   | 1         | 3      |
| No response  | 0         | 6      |
| Total  | 20        | 38     |

For the participants who felt their spouse had contributed equally, various responsibilities were divided between them. One parent might manage the academics, while the other would handle the cooking. In Mei-Lan Shi's case, her children had already left home, but she identified how these standards were formerly divided:

I think we are a little bit different because my husband is quite special right, because he is a . . . CEO, Chief Entertainment Officer [chuckling], so he took [the] kids to travel a lot, to baseball games, to do a lot of activities with the kids. I know a lot of Chinese parents, the father, they don't do much, compared to him. I think he's pretty good at that. So I think in our family we're pretty balanced, so

we give the kids a very good environment for them to grow up [in].

The lives of couples, especially among those who were currently parents, suggested a life invariably arranged around their children. Schedules overflowed to keep children active while parents took on the task of managing them. Weekends were especially hectic, as Mrs. Yang explained:

So when they were young, of course, I went through that, the normal routine with piano lessons, with various extracurriculms, through the weekend . . . that was the busiest time. Pretty much my husband and me, we would just like . . . say hello on the driveway because we're just driving two kids in and out a lot. That was the busiest, busiest time, when they were young, that was . . . [when they were] elementary school age.

Observations on two separate evenings at a local Mandarin language school run by men and women from Taiwan to some degree confirmed Mrs. Yang's experience, particularly among mothers with primary school age children. Classes were organized by and included elementary through high school age students. Individuals of any background could in theory attend or send children to these classes. However, only one parent not originally from Taiwan was noted during these observations.

On the first of these evenings, multiple activities simultaneously took place around the school in which the language program was run, including swim practice and dance lessons. The administrators of the language program busily arranged for classes to begin, while parents hurriedly accompanied children to their appropriate homerooms. Mrs. Bai and Lee were both present. After the formal instruction began, small groups of parents started conversing with one another. A few men were seen walking around with their significant others or assisting with the administration of the classes, but it was only

on the second evening, which happened to coincide with the final day of the spring term, that more men were present and volunteering.

These observations and others suggested the women took on more responsibilities than their spouses, but many still stated they felt their significant others contributed equally. In either case, parenthood was a new direction in the lives of these women. Some ultimately opted to stay at home with their children, while others searched for ways to continue pursuing careers. Even when help was available, all were forced to adjust their lives to some degree to meet the needs of their children.

### **Approaches to Parenting**

If becoming a parent was a blessing and an anticipated step in life, deciding how to raise a child was a labyrinth. Beyond the commonplace needs of children, the more detailed oriented requirements of parenting quickly became apparent. What was important and who knew best were questions these new mothers faced. Perhaps more than anything, an endless assortment of sources were available to answer these questions, ranging from philosophers to pediatricians and psychologists to grandparents. Nonetheless, all maneuvered through these murky waters at their own pace.

From their earliest experiences as mothers, informants made efforts to understand and teach their children. Mrs. Wu reflected with some humor on what the early experiences of parenting taught her:

Now I feel the kids really need to be disciplined. Because . . . when they are young . . . they do not know the right and wrong . . . In Chinese . . . philosophy, there's a Mengzi. [He] always believe[s] everyone [is] born with good nature. Then there's a Xunzi, who always believe[s] people . . . [are] born with bad

nature. Before I have children, I always believe in Mengzi . . . [But] after I have children . . . then I think he is not right. Because you know when they are very little, if you don't teach them, it's true, when they see things they want they will grab it from other people.

The decision as to what and how to instruct children still posed a persistent challenge. Respondents needed to make decisions while living in an environment that sent a less than consistent set of messages on values, education, and parenting approaches. Despite this complex environment, most interlocutors highlighted a mixture of pragmatic and value-oriented concerns in relation to their children.

Health and education were the two most commonly conveyed areas of general importance when reflecting on both themselves and their children. These areas of concern in regard to themselves could and did change over time. For example, formal education was often viewed as personally paramount when first arriving in the United States but of gradually decreasing relevance after finding employment. These personal concerns could at times also be tied to what participants focused on with their children. Health was thus depicted as a basal level requirement for survival and therefore necessary for the long term success of their children. Many participants suggested health was not something that worried them personally when they were younger, but it was a concern that grew as they aged or observed ailments among others. Mrs. Shi, for example, explained health developed into an increasingly significant concern when her sister passed away before the age of 40. As a result, Mrs. Shi not only came to feel health was personally essential but something she needed to emphasize with her children.

Beyond health, education was by far the most frequently mentioned consideration in relation to raising children. Many were proud to share the successes of their children but also willing to discuss the challenges of educating them. Expectations were often placed on children to succeed in the classroom and to engage in extracurricular activities. Even among those who suggested their children were given autonomy in their decisions, it was assumed they would adopt certain hobbies. Mrs. Chu, for instance, initially suggested that her children were allowed to choose their after school programs but then corrected herself by adding that they could take part in whichever activities they wanted but had to attend piano lessons and Chinese classes. Mrs. Shi offered a similar explanation that her children could choose whichever major they wanted in college, did not check up on them or their grades, but did expect or at least hope they would study a science based major. As with other parents, Mrs. Chu and Shi felt these were useful skills that served specific functions whether in finding a job or appreciating the fine arts.

The importance placed on education was further evident based on the residential patterns described among some participants who arrived in the SCC in the 1980s and beyond. These parents explained that they had chosen to live in certain neighborhoods in order to allow their children to fall within specific school districts. Mrs. Bai, for instance, characterized herself as a laid-back mother, yet she still changed residences because of school district lines, as she explained:

We moved to the high performance school district, like two years ago, after my son finished his elementary school. We know he's very happy in the previous school district, but as you know, [we have] many friends, . . . actually our kids grow up [together and are] about the same age, and we can see the differences

when there's low pressure, [the] kids' academic performance is not as good as we expect. So two years back, my husband and I decided to move.

As with Mrs. Bai, the informants' observations of and experiences with the people and places around them often influenced their choices in child-rearing related to health and education. Nonetheless, each continued to move forward as she worked through her pragmatic and soon more immaterial concerns as a mother.

### **Children and Values**

Even after decisions had been made about what was important in the overall life of their children, more nuanced concerns materialized. For example, education provided instruction, but did it teach what mattered most? The mothers recognized the many sources (e.g., school and friends) influencing their children but still made efforts to mold their characters and sensibilities. This was most clearly evident in the discourse on deciding which values were of greatest import and how to teach them. Unsurprisingly, when asked whether they placed any particular emphasis on “Chinese, Taiwanese, or American” values, their responses varied (Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4** Social Values Emphasized with Children

| Social Value Emphasis                        | Interview | Survey |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Only Chinese or Taiwanese values             | 0         | 1      |
| Both, but mainly Chinese or Taiwanese values | 8         | 7      |
| Both and equally                             | 7         | 21     |
| Both, but mainly American values             | 1         | 2      |
| Only American values                         | 0         | 0      |
| Other  | 3         | 0      |
| Not applicable                               | 1         | 3      |
| No response                                  | 0         | 4      |
| Total  | 20        | 38     |

When Mrs. Chu was asked whether she had taught her children about certain philosophers or values often known in Taiwan, she replied in the negative and started laughing as if it were too serious a consideration. Mrs. Chu explained that she had grown up learning about these historical figures and values, but she was unprepared to provide formal instruction on them. Nevertheless, she felt that the values she knew in Taiwan carried over when educating her children on a more pragmatic level, “so [I] teach them how to become a good person, a humble person, how to treat your friends, how to deal with difficulties, situations, you know, the social life, it's not easy, right.” Within her family, Mrs. Chu also spoke about the challenges she faced at home with regard to her expectations. For example, her children were sometimes impatient when she did not immediately understand something they said, despite her efforts to teach them otherwise. From Mrs. Chu's position, this was not only personally discourteous but also diverged from what her education and experiences in Taiwan suggested were appropriate behavior.

Mrs. Bai shared similar difficulties in passing on certain social values she had grown up with. Although the language classes at the Mandarin language school attempted to incorporate some of these concepts into their lessons, she felt the children did not gain much from these once a week sessions, which was something other informants similarly noted of their children. Personal efforts to introduce directly certain values were also made, but again the nuances of these concepts (e.g., filial piety) were difficult for her children to grasp. Mrs. Bai acknowledged that Confucianism and its related concepts were heavily emphasized when she was growing up in Taiwan in both



education and society as a whole, alluding to the fact that the larger environment likely fostered the development of these values in herself, something difficult to replicate in Silicon Valley.

Due to these initial difficulties, Mrs. Bai chose to adjust her focus to fit the environment of her children. Rather than emphasizing the Confucian concept of filial piety, for instance, she taught them to respect differences between all people. For Mrs. Bai, the relevance of respecting differences emerged out of both living and working in California. While employed Mrs. Bai observed conflicts arise between employees of various backgrounds or with antithetical approaches at work because of their failure to simply respect their differences. Beyond merely telling her children that respect was important, Mrs. Bai attempted to find others avenues to engage them on the subject. For example, on one occasion she asked them to read and discuss an article on transgender and gay marriage with the hope of instilling the importance of respecting diversity in their current environment.

Despite Mrs. Bai's and others' proactive approach to parenting, some participants noted feeling frustrated due to a perceived inability to influence their children as they grew older. As a number of respondents reported, children sometimes simply did not meet their expectations or heed their advice. Some parents tried to avert or resolve these problems by making greater efforts to engage with their children or to ensure their environment was ideal or both, but the outcomes still seemed mixed. These frustrations were most often evident among informants from time frames one and two when

discussing their past and sometimes present experiences.

Mrs. Huang, for instance, explored the frustrations which arose when her younger daughter decided not to return to work after having her first child. Mrs. Huang's own mother had worked when she was growing up and had emphasized the essentiality of employment outside of the home. Mrs. Huang believed she had successfully imparted the importance of family and higher education with Jessica, yet she felt her daughter's decision to stay at home was indicative of a personal failure to stress to Jessica the value in a career. She was initially agreeable to Jessica's decision to take a year off after having her first child but was upset that she had turned down two part-time job offers more than a year later. Her concern for Jessica not only arose from financial considerations but because she perceived maintaining a professional network and some level of employment as critical, if she planned to rejoin the workforce more fully in the future. Despite her personal qualms with Jessica's decision, Mrs. Huang stated she knew it was ultimately Jessica's choice. Her daughter did eventually return to part-time work, but Mrs. Huang was not confident whether this would last as Jessica was now preparing for her second child.

Attending several weddings during this investigation also offered insights to the relationships between interlocutors and their children and their ability to transfer certain values and practices. Of this pool of couples, all three brides were originally from SCC, although only one was the daughter of a research participant. One of these functions took place in east SCC while the remaining two were held in Monterey and Oakland

respectively. These gatherings displayed similarities in the mixture of languages, values, and beliefs observed, but the presence of each component varied greatly. The wedding of Yu-Ru Chao's daughter offered particular insights to each of these considerations.

Jan was married on a warm summer evening in Monterey. The majority of the guests and wedding party wore western-style attire. The ceremony included a reading from First Corinthians, although no other religious rites were observed during the evening. Between the ceremony and reception, 1950s jazz played while younger guests were heard switching between English and Mandarin depending on the age of the guests they were conversing with. The reception room was divided by a dance floor with older and younger invitees on opposite ends of the banquet hall. The reception consisted of speeches, dinner, and dancing. The fathers of the bride and groom provided words of advice to their children, while one of them slipped in that he had hoped to include a tea ceremony during the evening but the couple had declined. Jazz and country music played during the ceremonial first dances of the evening. Jan later switched from her wedding gown into a red-sleeved garment, a *qipao* (cheongsam), before the evening concluded with cake cutting and dancing.

As with Jan's wedding, each of these celebrations similarly displayed manifestations of the successes and challenges of parents in transferring language, values, and social etiquette onto their children. For example, in two of these weddings, bilingual guests switched languages depending upon the conversation partner and in some cases presented entire speeches in Mandarin. Older guests switched between English and

Mandarin, but the switch from English to Mandarin by younger guests when speaking with their elders, whether out of respect or habit, was the more common to observe.

The merging of distinct practices and the potential confrontations that could emerge as a result were also seen in these ceremonies. On each occasion ties to media portrayed perceptions of weddings were obvious in the choice of attire, food, and music but links with the parents' backgrounds were also clear. Jan's decision to wear both a wedding gown and a cheongsam for segments of the wedding displayed one such merger. At the same time, her father-in-law's subtle critique of the bride and groom for choosing not to include a tea ceremony in the day's events displayed the frustration of parents when their children ignored their appeals.

Despite these various frustrations with their children at times, almost all participants found ways of successfully passing on at least some of their beliefs and values. Many times the curiosity of children regarding their parent's heritage was depicted as diminishing as they grew older but often returning as adults. For example, several mothers noted their children began attending Mandarin language classes when they were in college, but they seemed to have lost interest while in high school.

Throughout these conversations the importance of setting the example and finding positive role models for children was sometimes noted, no matter the focus of their teachings. In one case, this search for a role model exemplified the goals of parents with school age children but also the resurgence of certain values among the adolescents who had reached adulthood. Mrs. Bai described one young man filling this role for her

children. Jim seemed liked any other American teenager when Mrs. Bai first met him, but as he grew older, she noticed his attitude and behavior changed. He had started speaking Chinese more, exhibiting greater appreciation for his parents, and politely greeting and interacting with Mrs. Bai's family at social gatherings. Although she was surprised to see this change in Jim, she did not fail to appreciate it and began identifying him as a role model for her children. This most often manifested itself when Mrs. Bai called Jim by the Mandarin term for older brother and referred to him as an example when trying to teach her children how one should behave.

While a few searched for role models, many more tried to set a personal example for their children whether in basic social behaviors or when confronted by the difficulties and annoyances of life. Mrs. Yeh offered a notable example in which she was pulled over for speeding. In the past, she had not been ticketed when stopped for similar infractions but approached the situation differently on this occasion:

But that day, I think the police should give me a ticket, because there were two kids in the back . . . so he gave me a ticket. And after he left, I said to my boys . . . “this is good I'm getting getting a ticket, because, you know, this is a good reminder, it serves as a good reminder and could have been much worse.”

Mrs. Yeh went on to explain that her approach to this incident was an example of a broader strategy she attempted to employ whenever difficulties arose and her children were present. She tried to help them realize their fortunate circumstances when compared to the potential negative outcomes. As with Mrs. Yeh, other mothers sought to share with their children what mattered most to them. This was never an easy undertaking and often riddled with challenges that required action, patience, and resilience. Nevertheless, it was

a task each faced earnestly.

### **Summary**

Being responsible for a child's life was a serious, frustrating, and taxing endeavor at times but also a source of contentment when successful. Each learned to adapt, overcome obstacles, and grow with their child. In many ways, these experiences and interpretations of motherhood reflected the interplay between the influence of the environment and their individual composite of experiences, ideologies, and feelings.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusions**

Mrs. Wan-Hwa Kong, now in her mid-fifties, has been living in the United States for more than 30 years with much of that time spent in SCC. She left Taiwan with the goal of simply furthering her education in the United States but ultimately did so much more. Her path was full of unexpected turns involving great joys but also loss. It is an unending journey that continues to play out, not only for Mrs. Kong but for all of the informants in this study.

This investigation was undertaken to better understand the complex experiences of 20th century immigration among women from Taiwan in SCC. To explore the participants' lives and experiences before and after leaving Taiwan, this project gathered life histories on Taiwanese American women from a range of experiences and backgrounds. The available anthropological and sociological literature supplied the initial frameworks for the investigation but also left opportunities to extend these models. Although social scientists had studied Taiwanese Americans lives in the past, none had explored these experiences from quite the angle adopted in this project. Rather than simply observing the informants' lives from the domains of before or after immigration, the project embraced the idea that these experiences must be understood by reflecting on the degree to which past as well as present day interactions and experiences overlap and influence our current thoughts, behaviors, and engagements. Moreover, SCC provided an ideal location to apply this framework to investigate the applicability of theoretical concerns related to the production of ethnicity, immigration processes, and motherhood in

a modern and diverse suburbia.

### **Empirical Findings**

The lives of informants were at times similar in their overarching patterns but nevertheless unique in their details. Each moved through a distinct early life leading them to the United States and ultimately new experiences and contemplations. While living in Taiwan, the families of the participants were organized in various ways. However, the Taiwanese participants displayed a greater level of connection with extended kin compared to their Chinese Taiwanese counterparts. But no matter the familial composition, the vast majority of participants described a life oriented toward academic achievement. Most participants were also employed before departing Taiwan, yet almost all left their career after just a few years in order to emigrate.

As these women contemplated leaving Taiwan, numerous factors motivated their journey. Most often, educational opportunities, familial considerations, or both led to their decisions. Beyond the more apparent causes of emigration, some informants also reported observing peers leaving for the United States and thus an additional, yet subtle, source of motivation to go abroad. Other factors were sometimes taken into consideration in the decision to emigrate, but education and family made these departures possible. Those individuals who specified the desire to leave Taiwan because of economics, politics, or simply to explore another society were able to do so because they were accepted by a US university or had familial networks of support stateside. And informants most often decided to remain in the United States due to employment



opportunities and family.

Living in Silicon Valley and other locales throughout the United States ensured the possibility for new experiences and engagements with people of different backgrounds from those they had been exposed to in Taiwan. These new experiences and interactions coupled with the change in context caused most interlocutors to re-evaluate how they perceived themselves. While some reworked or reinforced their choice of ethnic identity, other formed new or more complex religious identities or developed career-oriented selves. In a sense, their identities shifted as their lives made major transitions, which in part allowed them to adapt to their new circumstances.

The participants who chose to become mothers faced a unique set of additional experiences and challenges. Each mother developed distinct strategies for raising her children based on her conceptions of motherhood; for example, some sought additional help in caring for their children while others generally avoided it. Participants also frequently suggested that their spouses equally contributed to the raising of their children; however, this was not often observed during the data collection process. Finally, informants attempted to teach their children a combination of values and behaviors that they perceived as both important and relevant to their children's futures.

While the informants adapted to their new environment, they also influenced it on several levels. They caused the local economy to cater to their presence as seen through the establishment of new supermarkets, restaurants, and other businesses. Politicians, as noted earlier, attended Taiwanese American events, suggesting they recognized the value

of these new citizens and voters. On a more immediate level, some informants engaged their environment beyond others from Taiwan (e.g., in the workplace or through their children's activities) thus initiating a dialogue for dismantling stereotypes and for possibly incorporating their thoughts and beliefs on topics ranging from careers to styles of parenting more broadly.

In each of the just described areas, one's specified ethnicity and time of arrival to the United States did on occasion appear to have a small degree of influence on individual experiences. Early life connections with extended kin were the most notable differences between Taiwanese and Chinese Taiwanese informants before immigrating to the United States. After arriving, the participants also appeared to be more closely involved with organizations catering to patrons who identified in ethnically similar ways.

Surprisingly, the era in which informants lived in Taiwan and their time of arrival to the United States and later Silicon Valley appeared to have only a marginal impact on their choices of ethnicity or in motherhood. The minor differences among individuals' responses in these areas could be lightly correlated with upbringing and education before departing Taiwan, early acculturative experiences in the United States, and the extent of the communities from Taiwan upon arriving stateside; but it was not to the degree anticipated. For example, the distribution of responses across time frames concerning whether to emphasize Chinese, Taiwanese, or American values with their children seemed to shift only subtly over time; the majority of participants in all time frames noted teaching Chinese or Taiwanese values in combination with American values. However, it

should be noted that the decision whether to place greater emphasis on one set of values or to teach them equally did appear to change over time, at least among the interviewees.

### **Anthropological Implications**

Ethnicity, immigration, and motherhood have all been important domains of anthropological investigations for at least a half century, yet looking at the lives of these women suggests the need to reassess aspects of some of our theoretical thoughts in these areas. As informants traversed questions of identity, built networks across the globe, and took on the responsibilities of motherhood, it became clear that they simply did not fit squarely into any one framework and instead necessarily existed on their conceptual peripheries.

### **Environments of Ethnic Reflexivity**

The complexities of ethnic identity and the process of “ethnogenesis” as discussed by Eriksen (2010) and Roosens (1989) were largely confirmed through this study. The participants embraced ethnic, national, and racial concepts along with gendered and class-based identities to position themselves within various milieus. At the same time, the positions chosen reinforced the point that these are relational categories and may be applied to one's advantage in a given context. This was no clearer than in the case of Mrs. Lee and her fluid self-categorization based on her experiences but also depending upon whom she was interacting with at given point in time.

Simultaneously, the unique environment of SCC provided a setting for evaluating perceptions of ethnic, national, and racial categories. This observation extends the

discourses of Eriksen (2010) and Roosens (1989) by suggesting that some contexts may more effectively stimulate a cross-cultural dialogue and eventually lend themselves to the evaluation of one's self-definition in new ways. Many of the interlocutors in this study spent more of their time interacting with people of similar backgrounds, yet they were still able to reflect on the reasons for their position in an informed manner and go beyond the stereotypes of those with views diverging from their own. In a sense, SCC offered the latitude for a civil and relaxed exchange in which varying points of view existed and were tolerated, particularly in the workplace, as aptly described by Mrs. Bai in proposing the importance of respecting differences for success in a professional environment.

This project also highlights the importance of the social and political environment of SCC to the experiences of women. Despite globalization, social differences continue to exist and have in some instances grown, as argued by Eriksen (2010). Although it might have been initially predicted that Silicon Valley's technological focus would lead to an increasingly socially homogenous group of individuals, this study suggests even when people originate from the same place, they make efforts to distinguish themselves from one another.

Undoubtedly, a person's social position and self-definition are likely to shift as a result of immigrating to a new location. But a significant evaluation of one's perceptions and identity may demand more than simply a physical journey to new surroundings. The social dynamic of the environment in which one eventually arrives may be of greater consequence in the long term to evaluating oneself and the potential for an evolving sense

of identity.

### **Immigration, Struggles, and Identities**

The process of transnationalism that Schiller et al. (1992) introduces could be observed as participants established themselves in SCC while they concurrently maintained or built connections with Taiwan, whether through physical or virtual means. Even so, the concept of transnationalism could not be equally applied to those participants less inclined to foster connections with the sending country. This observation suggests that transnationalism is not necessarily an inevitability of our times, as it is often depicted, but rather a choice of degrees which may be driven by a range of variables.

Ong's (1999) concept of flexible citizenship was similarly difficult to employ without exception. Interlocutors certainly chose to go abroad and later made decisions to their benefit, whether because of economic, political, or other societal concerns; however, it was less obvious whether these decisions were based upon on any significant contemplation of political-economic factors or merely the most readily accessible path. The majority of participants also assuredly belonged to networks extending across the Pacific, but their lives were not continually staged around moves between the United States and Taiwan on a frequent basis for some grand political-economic pay off.

Still, maintaining some level of connection with their homes from early life was clearly important to numerous participants and suggests the likely emergence of a “transnational identity” for many contemporary immigrants. Informants' experiences also support the idea that immigration may also be “morally disordering,” as defined by

Chen (2008) or be referred to as “emotional transnationalism,” as suggested by Gu (2006). This reality was no more obvious than when participants reflected on how to raise children. Each favored a particular style of child rearing, but many constructed and challenged themselves to form new beliefs, values, and approaches based upon a combination of their memories, interactions, current social environment, and continued engagements with Taiwan. These participants thus formed transnational identities as mothers who psychologically straddled multiple localities.

Although redefining oneself and facing new challenges in the United States clearly led to frustrations for participants, the consequences of these experiences were not as severe as both Chen and Gu reported in their investigations. In fact, many participants thrived in their new environments while also finding new ways to define themselves. Some found resolution to their challenges through a spiritual engagement as similarly described by Chen, although others found alternatives with equal success. The difference between this study's outcomes and these earlier examinations may again in part be attributed to the unique environment of SCC. Chen's study took place in an area with a similarly high population from Taiwan and China, yet it does not necessarily account for the potential influence of the work and general social atmosphere particular to the county.

Despite the success of the participants in overcoming various tribulations and living in the United States for up to multiple decades, many remained hesitant about identifying themselves as “fully American,” an outcome similar to Gu's (2006:256) findings. Again the composition of SCC, at least in part, may have led to this outcome as

the women noted their ability to limit interactions to those of similar backgrounds. While it was just suggested that theoretically the destination's social dynamic may be essential to the reevaluation of one's social position and identity, preconceived notions held prior to immigrating may nevertheless persist. This appears to be further exacerbated when individuals are interacting with a limited segment of the population, thus making it difficult to remove these preconceived notions of the acceptable appearance, thoughts, and feelings of an "American." Questions of race and language only compound these problems. This is stated not to argue that defining oneself as an American would be easier outside of SCC but that immigrants face unique challenges because of the county's distinct social composition.

### **Mothers and Milieus**

The experiences of the women in this study show that motherhood clearly has the potential to change over time. The women grew up observing and experiencing similar yet distinct patterns of motherhood (i.e., a kind of informal education). Nonetheless, they eventually diverged from these starting points and adapted to their new environments. The experiences of mothering due to the immigration process resulted in more than merely adjustments to methods in parenting but also changes in the participants themselves. What less could be expected when a parent is placed in a new social environment, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to transmit all of what one perceives as most important?

The conflicts and frustrations participants spoke about in this regard supported Qin's concept of parallel frames of reference. Children were enculturated by both their mothers and environment thus resulting in parallel frames of evaluation and conflict. This study suggests extending the understanding of parallel dual frame of reference to argue that despite the challenges of raising children, parents may adapt and move beyond these frames for the sake of their child. It is not always simple, easy, or necessarily desired, but alienation and emotional distance are not necessarily an inevitability even when differing social beliefs exist within one environment.

### **Practical Implications**

Several areas of practical relevance may be drawn from the results of this study. Two intertwining areas are exceptionally relevant: the challenges of the popular media's discussion of mothering and anthropology's public engagement.

Enter a bookstore or search the Web and an innumerable number of articles, podcasts, and books on both the social and biological aspects of parenthood are available. Nonetheless, certain concepts and approaches are clearly more widely recognized than others. Among the participants in this study, numerous sources ranging from the religious to scientific were mentioned in relation to their thoughts on parenting; yet when discussing their personal experiences, the younger participants more often noted Amy Chua's (2011) *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom* as a point of reference, whether they agreed with her opinions or not. Although the media, scholars, and the public have responded to Chua in different ways, her work has prompted a popular discussion of what being a



mother means, especially for women of Chinese or Taiwanese descent.

The discourse started by Chua has been widespread, yet it oversimplifies the complexities of mothering as well as the variability of individual experiences and identity. As this study's findings suggest, patterns of motherhood may exist but there are no fixed lines or rules as to what a “Taiwanese” or “Chinese” mother must do on a daily basis. As already presented, philosophies and values related to Confucianism, spirituality, the environment, and other experiences as youths and adults influenced perceptions and decisions made in relation to their children and themselves, but one lone experience or belief did not inevitably lead to an entire worldview or approach to life. Chua's commentary, on the other hand, extends the “model minority” stereotype without adequately acknowledging that this is far from the reality for many. It simply fails to address the social and psychological challenges mothers may face as a consequence of the perpetuation of this categorization.

Anthropologists and other social scientists have responded to Chua's book on both the Web and in academic journals (e.g., BlogTalkRadio 2012; Lim 2012), but their responses seem too late to be of great consequence, as is the case of this thesis. Chua and various media outlets set the parameters for the discussion on motherhood, thus leaving little room for anthropologists. When the discussion is built on the idea of impermeable social boundaries (e.g., East versus West), the anthropologist is participating in a discussion with a skewed framework in which the topical focus cannot be fully addressed without major adjustments to its foundation.

These concerns may in part be rectified via anthropologists or similarly informed persons initiating the discourse (e.g., Besteman and Gusterson 2005; González 2004). However, anthropologists must also attract sufficient popular attention to their arguments. None of this means that the opinions or outcomes of the engagement will necessarily change, but it at least provides a basis for a better informed dialogue and public.

The difficulties of adopting a proactive rather than reactive position to social concerns in anthropology appear no more obvious than with the American Anthropological Association's public statements on issues ranging from marriage and family to the content of the MCAT. These letters and statements are informative but often arrive too late. A great number of issues cannot or will not be anticipated, but many of the concerns presently addressed by the American Anthropological Association have already been in the public mind for years. None of this is intended to suggest that responding or waiting for an advantageous moment to share particular knowledge is always inadequate but instead that taking the initiative, at least in some cases, would allow for anthropologists to both set the parameters of the dialogue and perhaps result in more a worthwhile civic engagement.

All of this seems surprising considering that American anthropologists have been quite adept at observing patterns and challenges in foreign places. Whether contributing to our society in a more tangible way should be a primary mission of anthropologists is not entirely clear; yet based on the many challenges our society faces, it would seem somewhat inhuman to do otherwise. This is a genuine opportunity to go beyond

ourselves in order to assist our greater society as we struggle through the beginning of the 21st century.

### **Limitations and Concerns**

Aside from the basic methodological obstacles outlined in chapter three, additional and more nuanced issues relating to the design of this study became apparent after its completion and should be noted. Numerous concerns existed but the most prominent were the sample composition, the complexities of memory, the limited number of participant observation opportunities, and the gender and perceived ethnicity of the researcher. Attempts were made to address these issues, but each brings about additional questions concerning the validity and reliability of results.

As the experiences of immigration among women from Taiwan was the topical focus of this study, women were naturally the premier participants. Spouses, children, and others linked to informants were only seen or spoken with in passing, which limited the ability of the researcher to confirm or deny certain statements made by interlocutors concerning their experiences and relationships. It is conceivable, for instance, that a more in-depth conversation with the spouse of an informant would suggest alternative gendered concerns and perceptions of responsibilities relating to the raising of children that were simply overlooked or ignored by the participant in question. This does not necessarily signal that the narratives presented by the women are invalid but perhaps merely one telling of the truth.

Coupled with the difficulties of relying on only a single participant to describe their experiences are questions concerning the dependability of memory. The participants were at different points in their lives with many having to reflect back on experiences from decades earlier. Again, this does not mean their memories were necessarily faulty but perhaps incomplete or adjusted in places to be more in line with a personal narrative they have built over time.

Participant observation was a partial answer to the concerns relating to the gender bias in the sample composition and for confirming statements of the participants, but this methodology presented its own difficulties. The number of observations possible, the types of activities attended, and the status of the researcher at these events were primary among these challenges. As with any anthropological study, there were time constraints and only a limited number of opportunities to employ participant observation. The most obvious failure on the part of the researcher in this respect was the void of observations collected on the interactions between participants and their children, which would have likely provided a better grasp of the responsibilities and relations of participants with those around them.

Attending events with a particular focus (e.g., political activities) also suggested the limitations of participant observation. As these events typically attracted individuals interested in them, they did not lend themselves to fully recognizing the experiences of informants who refrained from a more public engagement in their daily lives.

Compounding on this problem was the position of the author at the activities attended. At

several of these events, he was one of the few males present and at some the only male or the only male not from Taiwan or China. All of these factors in combination could of course impact the dynamic of interactions and consequently the results.

The final hurdle to this study relates to the researcher's identity as a white man, not just in participant observation but in all phases of the research process. On multiple occasions peers questioned how the researcher would find participants or why he was focusing on the experiences of women opposed to men or their families. These concerns may have been brought up due to the reflexive nature of contemporary anthropology, but these questions also seemed to hint that it was unlikely a male researcher could completely connect with or comprehend the experiences of female participants.

Although many contemporary anthropological studies consider both emic and etic perspectives, the question of whether a researcher's gender and ethnicity inhibits his or her ability to build sufficient rapport and to provide meaningful results remains valid. A researcher's gender and ethnicity certainly pose challenges and hold varying degrees of importance in creating an initial connection; yet there are other roads to establishing trust with interlocutors in the research process. When a conversation is composed of only emic perspectives, might not certain concerns be assumed, overlooked, or avoided? All of this seems to suggest that both emic and etic perspectives carry certain challenges and biases but that both are essential to obtaining a more complete picture for any anthropological investigation.

## **Future Studies**

The results of this study may stand alone for their theoretical relevance and as a record of the experiences of its participants, yet there is potential to use its findings as a foundation for future examinations. Three areas of consideration have particular practical and theoretical relevance for further investigation: one, the role of language heritage schools; two, the construction of political identity for Taiwanese and recent Chinese immigrants in SCC; and three, what it means to be American.

As seen in this study, many participants enrolled their children in language heritage schools with the initial aim of sculpting them into competent Mandarin speakers and savvy to certain social practices and values. Although the participants often felt the schools were not particularly successful in reaching these ends, it is difficult to comprehend fully the absolute results of these programs without further inquiry. Teachers, administrators, and students of the past and present would need to be met with to understand the situation more completely.

It is easy to observe that these programs are more than simply institutions of language and social etiquette, but what additional contributions these programs offer are somewhat more abstruse. It might be surmised that these schools simply provide parents and children with a way to connect with others of similar experiences and to establish new networks of support after arriving in SCC. This line of argument suggests that these institutions take on a similar role to the churches and temples mentioned earlier, particularly for those without a religious community. But what are the consequences for

the relationships of parents and children who choose not to attend these programs or instead enroll in language classes at public schools in which only the student is a participant? Are there different outcomes for the relationships between parents and children or the degree of language and cultural competency ultimately obtained? These questions among many others have pragmatic relevance and potential for furthering earlier studies of this domain.

Another significant area of possible investigation from which to build upon from this study involves comparing political identity construction and its outcomes among Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants in SCC. Many of the participants in this study held intertwining political, national, and ethnic positions while noting how those surrounding them affected their choices. But what role do the various Chinese cultural and language programs, which have carried varying levels of support from either the ROC or China, play in this process? What are the effects of greater access to popular media from both Taiwan and China on these experiences? And to what degree do individual changes have the potential to influence the perceptions of the United States in Taiwan or China among the general population through present day transnational ties (e.g., return visits and electronic exchanges)?

Many instances of social and economic support from “Overseas Chinese” to China for various purposes occurred throughout the 20th century, but whether this in fact influenced local social opinions of foreign nations is less obvious. This subject has particular relevance today with respect to international relations and the varied support

and application of “soft power” as a means to achieving political objectives by nations throughout the globe. The potential of this study goes beyond the United States and suggests an opportunity to recognize how the transnational relations of today may influence the political dynamic of tomorrow.

Finally, perhaps the most important question for future consideration: what does it take to be American, to be seen as American, or simply to define oneself as American? After living in the United States for the majority of their lives, most of these women still did not embrace the idea of being fully American because of racial, linguistic, or cultural factors, despite having attended its best schools, contributed to its economy and wider society, taken part in its democratic process, and raised children within it. On the other hand, there is much to be celebrated in their stories. These women have had the capacity, opportunity, and space to define themselves as Americans in ways that would have been impossible for immigrants from China less than a century ago. This project provides a starting point for investigating the practical implications as to what being an American will mean in the 21st century and what it will mean to the rest of the world. It is a question Americans, including anthropologists contributing to our national story, must consider carefully as we move into the future.



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## **Appendix A: Interview Consent Form**

Title of Study: Experiences of Immigration Among Women Originating From Taiwan

1. You have been asked to participate in a study about the experiences of women from Taiwan in Santa Clara County. The goal of this study is to understand how the experiences, expectations, and roles of women have been different for three groups of women from Taiwan. A number of women and their significant others that arrived between 1949-1978, 1979-1986, and after 1986 will be interviewed and given surveys. Your participation will help me complete my thesis research requirement and several presentations. Your answers will also benefit the field of immigrant studies and anthropology as a whole.
2. You will be asked to discuss your own life experiences, for example, how you decided to come to Santa Clara County, your family, and other important events in your life. The interviews may be recorded by hand and with an audio recorder in order to help me create better notes on our talks. Quotes from your interview may be used to highlight specific ideas in my thesis, but your name or other identifying information will not be used in publications or presentations. I may also bring photos and maps of places in Santa Clara County or Taiwan to our interview to help our talk develop.
3. Taking part in this project should only pose minimal risks to you; the risks should not be more than you experience in your everyday life. The questions may challenge you to consider your experiences and relationships in new ways. A loss of privacy is often a risk with interviews but to protect your privacy all digital information will be kept on a password protected computer and all other documents will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only false names will be used for publication and presentation purposes. After the research is complete and the thesis is approved by the university, all of the the information relating to you will be deleted and shredded.
4. Your participation primarily benefits my MA thesis research requirement and the wider discipline of immigrant studies. The interview may offer an opportunity for you to think about the value of your experiences. After the interview I will give you a copy of the interview recording for your personal records.
5. The results of this study may be published, but no information that could identify you will be included. False names will be created and used for you and all of the people you mention. Information about you will be made as general as possible to protect your privacy in all publications and presentations.
6. There is no compensation for your participation. However, in appreciation of your assistance I will provide refreshments during interviews.

7. Questions about this research may be addressed to Robert Johnston. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Charles Darrah, Chair, Anthropology Department. Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research.

8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study. This means that if you do not want to be interviewed, it will not be held against you in any way.

9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right not to answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University.

10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.

The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Investigator's Signature

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Date

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

### Introduction to Interview

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. I am currently doing research for my MA thesis in the Applied Anthropology Department at SJSU. I am interested in understanding your experiences as a Taiwanese-American in Santa Clara County and how these experiences compare with others from Taiwan. The focus of my research is on the experiences of women, but both male and female views are important. Any comments you make in this interview will be confidential and anonymous. I am going to record the interview by hand and with a recording device to help me create better notes on our talks. I would like to have permission to record the interview during our discussion. I would also like you to read and consider signing the consent form. If you decide to sign it, you would be allowing me to use the results from our talks, including quotes, for publications and presentations; all people and places will be given false names. I am hoping the study will help scholars better understand immigrant experiences among women from Taiwan. The interview should take 1-2 hours depending upon the length of your answers; we can also meet again in the future to follow-up on responses depending on your interest and availability. Thank you again for your time.

|  |
|--|
| <b>Background</b>  |
| Could you tell me when and where you were born and raised? Where have you lived? [utilizing a map of Taiwan and Santa Clara County]        |
| Could you describe your living circumstances in Taiwan? Siblings? Guardians? Household environment and organization?                       |
| How would you describe your ethnicity? Chinese, Taiwanese, Taiwanese-American, Chinese-American? Hakka? Other?                             |
| What were your experiences and perceptions of family when growing up in Taiwan? Do you feel this was mostly similar between men and women? |
| What were the expectations of you felt during your early years and as a young adult?   |
| What occupations did you hold while in Taiwan?   |
| What language(s) did you primarily utilize in your life – at home, with friends, school, and work?   |
| <b>Decision to come to the US</b>  |
| How did you or your family decide to come to the US? Please tell me more about this decision.  |
| Did you consider any alternative countries? Why were these dismissed?  |



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| What was your life like at the time of this decision? Employment, family, friends?   |
| What were your perceptions of American society and values before coming the US, especially in respect to family life and responsibilities? How were these perceptions similar to or different after arriving in the US? How different were these perceptions from those you held personally in Taiwan? |
| <b>Initial Arrival in the US</b>   |
| What did you feel like when you lived in the US? How was your life initially in comparison to being in Taiwan? Could you describe this?  |
| What did you consider most important to pursue when you arrived in the US? Work, school, family, etc?  |
| What were your most memorable experiences when you first arrived in the US?  |
| Did your relations with family in Taiwan change in any way? Please describe. How did you communicate? Letters, e-mail, telephone, travel, etc?   |
| Who were your contacts or friends during your first year in the US? Did this change as your time in the US lengthened?   |
| What did you do on a day-to-day basis when you arrived in the US in the first year, five years, ten years plus? How and why was your life changing?  |
| <b>Child Rearing, Family, and Values</b>   |
| When preparing to have your first child, how did your expectations of parenting come about? Did you do anything in particular? Did you talk with anyone – friends from Taiwan, the US, elsewhere? Did this change in any way when you had other children?  |
| Could you describe the upbringing of your children? Did you emphasize anything in particular? How do you think this compares to other mothers in the US or Taiwan? How have you made decisions about child rearing?  |
| Did you talk with friends about child rearing and family life? What were especially common topics? Could you describe such conversations?  |
| What areas do you feel you value the most in respect to your family? And where did these values originate?   |
| What would you describe as a good versus poor mother, wife, and woman? How do these conceptualizations compare to when you were in Taiwan? Have they changed at all? How do you think they compare with your fellow Americans?   |
| Of these eight things, what order would you place them in terms of importance: education, individual freedom, family, money, work, education, human obligation, health. Would you add anything to this list? Could we talk about each of these in greater depth and your experiences with them?        |

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| How do you spend time with your children?  |
| <b>Individual Beliefs and Activities</b>   |
| Could you review your current day to day and weekly activities with me? How do you connect with people in your community? - Local events, schools, religious events?<br>[utilize map of Santa Clara to identify locations]   |
| Do you have a religious preference? How did you come to these beliefs? How are these beliefs similar or different to those you held in Taiwan? How are these important to you?   |
| Do you attend Taiwanese or Chinese specific activities locally? If so, please tell me more about these activities and experiences. Why do you attend these activities? Who do you communicate with there and on what topics? |
| What types of non-Taiwan or Chinese specific community events do you attend?   |
| Who are your closest friends? How do these people compare to your friends in Taiwan?   |
| What do you talk about with your friends in the US?  |
| What do you talk about with your friends in Taiwan?  |
| <b>Network Elicitation and Discussion</b>  |
| I am going to ask you to think about the people in your life. Who are most important in your daily life? Please write their first names and last initial on this sheet.  |
| Who are the people in your family? Please write their first names on this sheet.   |
| Who do you feel most connected with outside of your immediate household?   |

## **Appendix C: Survey Informed Consent Form**

1. You have been asked to participate in a study about the experiences of women from Taiwan in Santa Clara County. The goal of this study is to understand how the experiences, expectations, and roles of women have been different for three groups of women from Taiwan. A number of women and their significant others that arrived between 1949-1978, 1979-1986, and after 1986 will be interviewed and given surveys. Your participation will help me complete my thesis research requirement and several presentations. Your answers will also benefit the field of immigrant studies and anthropology as a whole.
2. You will be asked to fill out the attached survey with questions about your decision to come to Santa Clara County, your family life, and other experiences. The results from your survey may be used in publications and presentations, but all information collected through the survey will remain anonymous.
3. Taking part in this project should only pose minimal risks to you; the risks should not be more than you experience in your everyday life. The results from the survey will be kept on a password protected computer, and the paper survey will be kept in a locked cabinet. After the research is complete and the thesis is approved by the university, all of the the survey results will be deleted and the survey forms will be shredded.
4. Your participation primarily benefits my MA thesis research requirement and the wider discipline of immigrant studies. The survey may also offer an opportunity for you to reflect on the value of your experiences.
5. The results of this study may be used in publications or presentations, but no information that could identify you will be included as the survey is anonymous.
6. There is no compensation for your participation.
7. Questions about this research may be addressed to Robert Johnston. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Charles Darrah, Chair, Anthropology Department. Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research.
8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study. This means that if you do not want to take the survey, it will not be held against you in any way.
9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right not to answer questions you do not

wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University.

10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.

The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Investigator's Signature

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Date

## Appendix D: Survey Protocol

### Introduction to the Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. I am currently doing research for my MA thesis in the Applied Anthropology Department at SJSU. I am interested in understanding your experiences as a Taiwanese-American in Santa Clara County and how these experiences compare with others from Taiwan. The focus of my research is on the experiences of women, but both male and female views are important. All of your answers in this survey are confidential and anonymous. Please read and keep the attached consent form for your records. If you agree to the consent form, you would be allowing me to use the results from the survey for publications and presentations. I am hoping the study will help scholars better understand immigrant experiences among women from Taiwan. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Thank you again for the time.

### Directions

Please circle all relevant choices or write in your response to each question. If you have additional comments, please write them on the final page of this survey.

| <b>Background</b>                                 |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Question</i>                                   | <i>Response</i>   |
| What is your age?                                 |   |
| What is your sex?                                 | Male, female  |
| What is your highest level of education attained? | Elementary, middle, high school, Bachelor's, MA, PhD, MD    |
| What is your current marital status?              | Single, married, divorced, divorced and re-married, widowed |
| What is your religious affiliation?               | Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, None, Other _____      |
| Do you have any children?                         | Yes/no  |
| If yes, how many?                                 |   |
| Where do you live in California?                  | County: _____<br>City: _____                                |
| <b>Living in Taiwan</b>                           |   |
| Where in Taiwan did you predominately             | City: _____   |

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| live before coming to the US?  | County: _____  |
| What was your occupation while in Taiwan?  | Student, business, clerical, homemaker, other: _____   |
| Were you married prior to coming to the United States?                             | Yes, no  |
| What year did you move to the United States?                                       |  |
| Did you come to the US with someone else?  | Yes, no  |
| If yes, with who?  | Parents, spouse, other family member, friend, Other: _____   |
| What was the primary factor in your decision to come to the United States?         | Personal education, business opportunities, work, to support other family members, child's education, other: _____ |
| What level of education did you complete before coming to the US?                  | None, elementary, middle, high school, college, graduate MA, graduate PhD, MD                                      |
| <b>In the United States</b>  |  |
| What was your occupation when you first came to the US?                            | Student, business, homemaker, other: _____   |
| Did your relatives arrive in Taiwan as part of the 1949 group from Mainland China? | Yes, no  |
| If yes, where in Mainland China  | Province: _____<br>City: _____   |
| What language or dialects were spoken in your home in Taiwan?                      | Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, other: _____   |
| What languages or dialects were spoken in your home in the US?                     | Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, English, other: _____  |
| Do you attend Chinese or Taiwanese specific activities in the area?                | Never, occasionally, frequently  |
| How many times do you typically go back to Taiwan in a one year period?            | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or more times   |
| Do you still have friends or relatives you maintain contact with in Taiwan?        | Yes, no  |
| If given a US national census which  | Chinese, Taiwanese, Asian, Asian,  |

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| racial/ethnic category would you select?   | other _____   |
| How do you typically connect with relatives or friends in Taiwan?  | Mail, e-mail, webcam services, no contact, other form of contact: _____   |
| <b>Child Rearing (only if you have children)</b>   |   |
| When raising your children did you discuss your child rearing experiences with other adults? If so, with who?                  | Yes, no; Family or friends in Taiwan, family or friends in the US, Non-Chinese American friends, others: _____  |
| How did you spend time with your children when they were still living at home?   | Outdoor activities, television, vacations, other: _____   |
| If your children are adults, do you still spend time with them?  | Yes, no   |
| <b>Responsibilities within the Family</b>  |   |
| Outside of work, what major responsibilities do you have within your home?   | Finances, cleaning, parenting, other: _____   |
| How would you rate your responsibilities and relationship expectations at home when considering Chinese and US cultural norms? | 1- not at all Chinese or Taiwanese, entirely American<br>2- a little Chinese or Taiwanese, but mainly American<br>3- an equal balance between Chinese and American cultural norms<br>4- a little American, but mainly Chinese or Taiwanese<br>5- not at all American, but entirely Chinese or Taiwanese |
| Do you have familial responsibilities in Taiwan?   | Yes, no   |