Chinese Americans are by far the largest subgroup of Asian Americans. As a direct result of the liberalization of the U.S. immigration law in 1965, which abolished the national quotas system, they have become one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States. Over the past fifty years, their numbers have increased fifteen times. Between 1970 and 1990, in particular, the number of Chinese Americans more than tripled, from 435,062 to 1,645,472. Much of this growth has been attributed to immigration. According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1991), a total number of 682,755 immigrants were admitted to the United States from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as permanent residents between 1971 and 1990. The 1990 U.S. Census also attests to the big part played by immigration: foreign-born persons account for 69.8 percent of Chinese Americans nationwide and 78.7 percent in New York City.

Parallel to the rapid growth in sheer numbers is the extraordinarily high educational achievement of immigrant Chinese and their offspring. In recent years, Chinese American children have scored exceptionally high in standardized tests, have been overrepresented in the nation’s most prestigious high schools and universities, and have disproportionately made the top lists of many national or regional academic contests. They have, for example, appeared repeatedly in the top-ten award winners’ list of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search, one of the country’s most prestigious high school academic contests. In 1991, four of the top ten winners were Chinese Americans. Although fewer than a third of Chinese American school-aged children were born outside the United States, a majority of them grew up in immigrant households. Why are younger-generation Chinese Americans so well adapted to U.S. society? Into what specific social contexts are they adapting? How do
their community and families affect their adaptational experience? This chapter attempts to address these questions by focusing on the role of community-based organizations and families in New York City's Chinatown.\footnote{1}

**Chinatown: The Basis of Social Capital**

Adaptation to the U.S. society is a complex process depending not only upon individual motivation and abilities but also upon specific contexts of reception. Preexisting ethnic communities represent the most immediate dimension of the context of reception (Portes and Rumbaut 1990), serving as the basis of a unique form of social capital to facilitate immigrant adaptation. This social capital is defined as "expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere" (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993), or as closed systems of social networks in a community, which allow parents to "establish norms and reinforce each other's sanctioning of the children" (Coleman 1990). In fact, the social capital thesis touches on one of the oldest sociological theories, Durkheim's theory of social integration. Durkheim maintains that individual behavior should be seen as the product of the degree of integration of individuals in their society (Durkheim 1951). The greater the integration of individuals into a social group, the greater the control of the group over the individual. In the context of immigrant adaptation, children who are more highly integrated into their ethnic group are likely to follow the forms of behavior prescribed by the group, such as studying or working hard, and to avoid the forms of behavior proscribed by the group.

If ethnic communities are interpreted in terms of social capital, it becomes possible to suggest a mechanism by which the adherence to community-based support systems and positive cultural orientations can provide an adaptive advantage for immigrants and their offspring in their striving to achieve their goals in American society. However, this mechanism is never stagnant; it constantly accommodates changes in the process of immigration. Social capital should thus be treated as "a process," rather than as a concrete object, that facilitates access to benefits and resources (Fernandez-Kelly 1995), that best suit the goals of specific immigrant groups. Chinatown, with its networks of support and social control mechanisms, serves as a prime example for understanding the meaning of social capital.

New York City's Chinatown started as a bachelors' society at the turn of the century. By the 1940s, Chinatown, still a bachelors' shelter with a sex ratio of 603 men per 100 women, had grown into a ten-block enclave, accommodating almost all Chinese immigrants in the city. The old-timers were motivated by a sojourning goal of making a fortune in America and returning home with "gold." They left their families behind in China and were drawn to this community by extensive kinship networks. During the time when legal and institutional exclusion set barriers and American society made available few options of life to these Chinese sojourners, they had to isolate themselves socially in Chinatown and to work at odd jobs that few Americans wanted. Since they had no families with them and had no intention to stay a long time, they built Chinatown initially as a place of refuge that resembled home. In Old Chinatown, immigrant workers could speak their own language, eat their own food, play their own games, exchange news from home, and share common experiences with fellow countrymen day in and day out. The level of social interaction was fairly high through various tongs (merchants' associations) and kinship or family associations (Kuo 1977; Wong 1979).

After World War II, the bachelors' society began to dissolve when Chinese women were allowed into the United States to join their husbands and families. Resulting from the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and passage of the War Bride Act, immigrant Chinese women composed more than half of the postwar arrivals from China. However, the number of Chinese immigrants entering the United States each year was quite small because the annual quota was set at 105 (Sung 1987). After 1965, when Congress amended the immigration law abolishing the national origins quota system, the number of Chinese in New York City increased rapidly, from 33,000 in 1960 to 240,014 in 1990.

As Chinese immigrants and their families pour into New York City, Old Chinatown has undergone a series of dramatic transformations. These transformations have been physical, social, and economic. Once confined to a ten-block area in Lower East Manhattan, Chinatown has expanded in all directions beyond its traditional boundaries, taking over decaying neighborhoods and giving rise to "satellite" Chinatowns in Queens and Brooklyn (Zhou 1992). Unlike the old-timers who were predominantly from rural Canton, immigrant Chinese in recent years have come from other parts of mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere in Asia and Latin America. Upon arrival, they have tended to bypass Old Chinatown in Manhattan to settle in outer boroughs. Immigrants from mainland China have been fairly evenly distributed across Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn; those from Hong Kong have tended to reside in Queens or Brooklyn; and those from Taiwan have overwhelmingly concentrated in Queens. Cantonese is no longer the sole language spoken in Chinatowns. In such newly established Chinatowns such as
the one in Flushing, Queens, Mandarin is now the most commonly used language among immigrant Chinese.

Today's Chinese Americans in New York City have become more diverse in their socioeconomic backgrounds than the earlier arrivals, who were uniformly unskilled laborers. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, immigrant Chinese born in Taiwan displayed the highest proportion of college graduates (four times as high as the U.S. average), the highest proportion of workers in professional specialty occupations, and the highest median household income compared to those born in mainland China, Hong Kong, and other countries. Mainland-born Chinese were the most disadvantaged, except for their citizenship status. Fewer than half of them showed proficiency in English; fewer than half had completed high school; and only 13.8 percent held professional occupations. Their median household income was at least $7,000 less than that of their counterparts born elsewhere. In contrast, U.S.-born Chinese showed exceptionally high levels of educational and occupational achievements. However, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, over 80 percent of Chinese spoke a language other than English at home, indicating that not only immigrants but also the younger generation lived in a bilingual environment.

Recent immigrant Chinese are not only more diverse than earlier arrivals, they also come with goals that are vastly different from those of the old-timers, who were here to sojourn rather than to settle and assimilate. They are characterized by their strong desire to become integrated into the mainstream society and to make America their new home. Many of them have immigrated to the United States to secure their already well-established lives, and more importantly, to provide their children with a future without fear and uncertainty, in which the children can realize their full potential. The demands of immigrant Chinese for speeding up the process of assimilation have brought about important changes in the economic and social structures of Chinatown.

Since 1965, the stereotypical Chinatown has been withering away, and a full-fledged family community with a strong ethnic economy has gradually and steadily taken its place. During the 1930s and 1940s, Chinatown's ethnic economy was highly concentrated in restaurant and laundry businesses. By the 1970s, the laundry business had shrunk substantially and had been replaced by the garment industry, which has become one of the backbone industries in Chinatown. Today, the garment industry, estimated at over 500 factories run by Chinese entrepreneurs, provides jobs for more than 20,000 immigrant Chinese, mostly women. It is estimated that three out of five immigrant Chinese women in Chinatown work in the garment industry. The restaurant business, another backbone industry in Chinatown, has continued to grow and prosper. Listed restaurants run by Chinese grew from 304 in 1958 to 781 in 1988, employing at least 15,000 immigrant Chinese workers (Kwong 1987; Zhou and Logan 1989). In addition to garment and restaurant businesses, various industries, ranging from grocery stores, import/export companies, barber shops, and beauty salons to such professional services as banks, law firms, financial, insurance, and real estate agencies, and doctors' and herbalists' clinics also experienced tremendous growth. These ethnic economies have created ample job opportunities for immigrant Chinese and have provided convenient and easy alternatives to meet ethnically specific consumer demands.

Changes in Chinatown's economic structure have had a lasting impact on the adaptation of the younger generation. On the one hand, jobs made available in ethnic economies and goods and services provided by the community tend to tie immigrant Chinese and their offspring to Chinatown despite spatial dispersion. These ties have directly or indirectly broadened the base of ethnic interaction and thus increased the degree of ethnic cohesion, which in turn sustains a sense of identity, community, and ethnic solidarity. On the other hand, despite the low wages and long working hours typical of many jobs in Chinatown, immigrants take pride in being able to work and support their families. The work ethic and the capacity for delayed gratification in parents is explicitly or implicitly passed on to children, who are expected by their parents to appreciate the value of schooling as a means to move out of Chinatown. Moreover, the prosperity of ethnic economies in Chinatown offers material support for the establishment and operation of many community-based voluntary organizations. These community-based organizations, in turn, furnish a protective social environment, which shields off adversities, such as drugs, crime, teenage pregnancies, prevalent in inner-city poor neighborhoods where immigrants tend to concentrate, and provides them with access to resources that can help them move ahead in mainstream American society.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

The transformation of Chinatown from a bachelors' society into a family-oriented community has increased the number and broadened the role of community organizations. The rapid change in the nature of Chinese immigration has created pressing demands for services associated with resettlement and adjustment problems which have overwhelmed the ability of the existing traditional organizations (Sung 1987). To accommodate these changes, traditional organizations have been pressured to redefine their role, and various new organizations have been established in Chinatown. By glancing at one of the Chinese business directories, for example, one can easily come up
with a list of over 100 voluntary associations, 61 community service organizations, 41 community-based employment agencies, 16 daycare centers, 27 career training schools, 28 Chinese and English language schools, and 9 dancing and music schools (Chinatown Today Publishing 1993—not that the actual number of community organizations in Chinatown was approximately twice as many as this list because many were not listed in this particular directory). Most of these organizations are located in Manhattan’s Chinatown; some are located in new satellite Chinatowns in Flushing and Sunset Park.

In Old Chinatown, family or clan associations and merchants’ associations (tongs) were the major community-based organizations. These organizations functioned primarily to meet the basic needs of fellow countrymen, such as helping workers obtain employment and offering different levels of social support, and to organize economic activities. Powerful tongs controlled most of the economic resources in the community and were oriented toward shielding Chinatown from outsiders and preserving the status quo within the community (Kuo 1977). Some of the tongs capitalized on the demands of the sojourners, most of whom were eastern Chinese, and by running brothels, opium dens, and gambling parlors. Because of the illicit nature of some of the tongs’ operations, Chinatown was often stereotyped as an unruly den of vice and co-ethnic exploitation, and immigrant Chinese as inassimilable aliens with an imputed “filthy” and “immoral” second nature.

The single most important social organization was the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). The CCBA was established as an apex group representing some sixty organizations in Chinatown, including different family and district associations, the guilds, the tongs, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Nationalist Party, and it operated as an unofficial government in Chinatown (Sung 1987, 42–46). The CCBA was mainly controlled by tongs but cooperated with all voluntary association (Kuo 1977).

While traditional organizations functioned to secure the standing of Chinatown in the larger society and to provide a refuge for sojourning laborers, some of them formed underground societies to profit from such illicit activities as partitioning territories, extortion for business protection, gambling, prostitution, and drugs (Dillon 1962; Kuo 1977; Sung 1987). Tong wars were frequent; and youth gangs, consisting almost entirely of immigrants, arose as tongs needed lookouts for raids, guards, escorts, and debt collectors (Sung 1987). Although youth gangs come and go, they have formed a disruptive segment of the community to which new immigrant youth, mainly boys, are extremely vulnerable.

Since the 1960s, as the community has become more and more family-oriented, the concerns and needs of community members have broadened and diversified. Not only do the immigrants themselves have strong desires to integrate into American society, they overwhelmingly expect their children to become successful. Many immigrants have experienced considerable downward mobility, but they accept the sacrifices to win better futures for their children. The more diversified resettlement concerns and needs of newcomers have pressured Chinatown’s traditional social organizations to change and expand. To appeal to new immigrants and their families, the CCBA has established a Chinese language school, an adult English evening school, and a career training center, and has instituted a variety of social service programs, including employment referral and job training services.

The CCBA-operated New York Chinese School is perhaps the largest children- and youth-oriented organization in Chinatown. The school has annually (not including summer) enrolled about 4,000 Chinese children, from pre-school to 12th grade, in their 137 Chinese language classes and over 10 specialty classes (e.g., band, choir, piano, cello, violin, T’ai chi, ikebana, dancing, and Chinese painting). The Chinese language classes run from 3:00 to 6:30 p.m. daily after regular school hours. Students usually spend one hour on regular school homework and two hours on Chinese language or other selected specialties. The school also has English classes for immigrant youth and adult immigrant workers.

The Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) is another important organization that has been established since the late 1960s in Chinatown. Although not as influential and deeply rooted in Chinatown as the CCBA, the CPC has utilized a grass-root community effort and has managed to draw upon government funds to provide services to immigrant Chinese. The CPC’s mission is to provide “access to services, skills and resources toward the goal of economic self sufficiency and integration into the American mainstream” (CPC 1993).

During the 1970s, the CPC, then the Chinatown Planning Council, initiated a number of youth-targeted programs, such as drug-prevention, outreach, and various recreational programs to help immigrant children and youth to adapt to their new environment. These programs targeted high-risk youth not only by offering counseling and opportunities for young people to voice their concerns and problems, but also by providing recreational activities, such as renting places where they could read, party, and play pool, video or ballgames, and furnishing free field trips, shows, and museum visits (Kuo 1977). Most of these programs have continued, expanded, and diversified into the 1990s.
In 1995, the CPC has three branch offices in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and Flushing, Queens. It is operating over 40 programs, including 12 daycare services, 8 youth programs, and 17 multiservice programs associated with youth. Within each of the programs, there are various subprograms. For example, the Manhattan branch of the CPC-Youth Program offers five specific services to young people, especially those from low-income families, including the career educational program, after-school ESL classes, the theater workshop, and in-school counseling. The main purpose of the CPC's youth-oriented programs is to enhance new immigrant students' well-being, class attendance, and academic performance, and, in turn, to prevent students from dropping out of school and to help them become aware of future educational opportunities and career options.

In addition to large, well-established organizations such as the CCBA and the CPC, many smaller voluntary organizations have been established to address concerns and demands of new immigrants and their children. The Chinatown History Museum (CHM), a community-based, member-support organization, was established in 1980 primarily as a history project for reclaiming, preserving, and sharing Chinese American history and culture with a broad audience. The museum offers historical walking tours, lectures, readings, symposia, workshops, and family events year-round, not only to Chinese Americans but also to the general public. The museum also provides school programs for grades K to 12, guided and self-guided visits for college-level students, and a variety of videotapes, slide presentations, and exhibits.

Recently, the CHM has formed the Exhibition Planning Student Committee, depending mainly on voluntary efforts of Chinese American students, to create a permanent exhibition entitled "Who's Chinese American?" The purpose of the museum in mobilizing student volunteers is to stimulate input from the second generation and to incorporate the experiences of children of immigrants, in addition to the more widely recognized experiences of the old-timers, into Chinese American history. The Student Committee has attracted an increasing number of concerned Chinese American youth. For example, at their first meeting, organizers only expected a handful of students; but some forty students showed up despite a citywide social event, a dance party for high school students, happening the same evening.

Ethnic religious institutions have also played an important role in helping immigrants adjust to life in the United States. In the larger Chinese community in New York City, the number of churches or temples has doubled since 1965, including over 80 churches and 18 Buddhist and Taoist temples; about three-quarters of which are located in Manhattan's Chinatown. While Buddhist and Taoist temples tend to attract adults, including some college students and the elderly, Christian churches generally have well-established after-school youth programs, in addition to their regular Sunday Bible classes. The Youth Center of the Chinese Christian Herald Crusade, for example, has established an after-school program and an ongoing intensive program for high-risk youth. Located conveniently across from a public high school in Chinatown, the Youth Center annually provides services to about 200 high school students, most of whom are immigrant youth. The center's after-school program, which is preventive in orientation, offers tutoring, counseling, and language aid to students whose major adjustment problem is English.

Since 1992, the center has started a small, intensive, crisis-oriented program for high-risk youth, referred to or sent to the center either by parents or by social workers. This crisis-oriented program is aimed at youth who frequently play truant and "hang out" with other truants on streets or in video game shops. According to the center director, "these kids have serious adjustment problems besides language. Since they are not interested in school, we have to approach them differently. Our purpose is not to brainwash them but to influence them with compassion, sympathy, and understanding, and to help them find their own selves." The crisis-oriented program offers daily escorts to participants from home to school, organizes basketball games on Saturdays, and arranges weekend overnight trips.

The center also runs a summer camp in upstate New York, where "problem" youth are offered a free four-week camp in exchange for their help with maintenance, cleanup, and landscaping work in the camp. During their stay at the summer camp, youth are also given the opportunity to voice their concerns and feelings in voluntary study groups. "It is very important to allow youth to express themselves in their own terms without parental pressures. Chinese parents usually have very high expectations of their children. When children find it difficult to meet these expectations and do not have an outlet for their frustration and anxiety, they tend to become alienated and lost on streets." The center director estimated that over half of these participants had shown improvement in their school attendance and that at least half of them had become Christian after a two-year intensive involvement in the program.

Social organizations in Chinatown, whether they are formal or informal, government-funded or community-rooted, have played a vital role in meeting the social and economic needs of the Chinese community. Interviews with community leaders, organizers, and activists indicate that the functions of new community organizations specific to the younger generation are manyfold. Instrumentally, community organizations provide a safe, healthy, and
stimulating environment where youngsters, especially those whose parents are at work, can go after school. The after-school programs not only ensure the time spent on homework or on other constructive activities, but also help to keep children off the streets and to reduce the anxieties and worries of working parents.

These organizations also serve as bridges between a closed immigrant community and the mainstream society. Immigrant children and youth growing up in Chinatown are relatively isolated. Their daily exposure to the larger American society is limited; they generally come from low-income families, live in crowded housing, attend inner-city public schools, walk on streets surrounding primarily by small, family-based businesses, and are vulnerable to ghettos youth subcultures. Their parents, usually too busy working just to make ends meet, tend to expect their children to do well in school and to have successful careers in the future; but the parents are unable to give specific directions to their children's educational and career plans, leaving a gap between high expectations and realistically feasible means of meeting these expectations. Community-based organizations fill this gap to help young people to become more aware of their choices and potentials and to help them find realistic means of moving up socioeconomically into mainstream society instead of being stuck in Chinatown.

Culturally, these organizations function as ethnic centers, where Chinese traditional values and a sense of ethnic identity are nurtured. Students participating in the after-school programs, especially the U.S.-born and reared, often speak English to one another in their Chinese classes, and they actually learn a limited number of Chinese words each day. However, they are exposed to something which is quite different from what they learn in school and are able to relate to Chinese "stuff" without being teased about it. They also listen to stories and sing songs in Chinese, which reveal different aspects of Chinese history and culture. Children and youth learn to write in Chinese such phrases as "I am Chinese," "My home country is in China"; and to recite classical Chinese poems and Confucian sayings about family values, behavioral and moral guidelines, and the importance of schooling. A Chinese school principal made it clear that, "these kids are here because their parents sent them. They are usually not very motivated in learning Chinese per se, and we do not push them too hard. Language teaching is only part of our mission. An essential part of our mission is to enlighten these kids about their own cultural heritage, so that they show respect for their parents and feel proud of being Chinese."

A latent function of these community organizations is that they create a common bond between immigrants, their children and the community at large. Participation in after-school programs enables not only children but also their parents to directly interact with each other and with the community. The increasing contact among co-ethnic members and with the community can strengthen the social networks in a community. The involvement in the community-based organizations not only enables parents to establish norms and reinforce each other's sanctioning of the children, but also provides some space where children and youth can express themselves, easing intergenerational conflicts. In this sense, community organizations furnish resources of support and direction that promote value consensus and behavioral conformity among individual families and build bridges between immigrant, often non-English-speaking parents and their U.S.-born or reared children. Next, we discuss the role of the family in the adaptation of second-generation immigrants.

The Family: Values, Behavioral Standards, and Expectations

The 1965 amendment to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act, which emphasizes family reunification, has provided the end link to a system of chain migration. Because 80 percent of the quota is allocated to relatives, post-1965 Chinese immigrants are not only vertically (spouses, parents and children) but also horizontally (brothers and sisters and their immediate families) related to their sponsors within an extended family network. This family-chain migration suggests that, unlike the old-timers who intended to return to China, the newcomers are here to stay and to assimilate (although much of the assimilation may take place through the children) into U.S. society. As a result, the base of the kinship structure in Chinatown has been broadened (Sung 1987).

Chinese immigrants arriving after 1965 have mostly been family-sponsored immigrants, about 75 percent of whom were admitted as immediate family members (spouses, unmarried children, and parents) or as close relatives (married children, brothers, or sisters of U.S. citizens). Some 20 percent have been employment-based immigrants (whose admission was sponsored by a U.S. employer). Consequently, about 80 percent of the Chinese in New York City live in married-couple households and only 5 percent live in female-headed households. The family has stabilized the community and become the most important institution, furnishing an immediate source of social capital for facilitating the adaptation of immigrant children to American society in a unique way.
In New York City, as in other parts of the United States, the majority of Chinese American youngsters grow up in intact families. However, the socioeconomic status of Chinese families varies by length of stay since immigration. Based on the 1990 U.S. Census, only 15 percent of the children had parents who were U.S.-born or immigrated before 1965, about 40 percent of them had parents who immigrated between 1965 and 1979, and 46 percent of them had parents who immigrated after 1980. Among these three groups, children of post-1980 immigrant parents were more likely to reside in Brooklyn, children of immigrant parents arriving between 1965 and 1979 disproportionately resided in Queens, and children of U.S.-born or pre-1965 immigrant parents were geographically dispersed throughout the city. The proportion of female-headed households was generally low for all three groups. Children of post-1980 immigrant parents tended to live in the homes where Chinese was spoken and most lived in linguistically isolated neighborhoods. This residential pattern implied that children from post-1980 immigrant families were the most isolated group and had the least exposure of the larger society.

The economic gap between the three groups was fairly large. Close to two-thirds of the children of most recent immigrant parents lived in rental housing whereas almost two-thirds of the children of U.S.-born or pre-1965 immigrant parents lived in owner-occupied housing. Moreover, children of post-1980 immigrant parents were most economically disadvantaged with a poverty rate of 27 percent, more than four times as high as that among children of U.S.-born or pre-1965 immigrant parents. Furthermore, parents who immigrated after 1980 had much lower levels of education, were less likely to be in executive or professional occupations, and had much lower average earnings comparing to parents who immigrated earlier or who were U.S.-born. However, regardless of the length of stay since immigration, most of these parents were married and stayed married and were employed full time. Dependence on public assistance was uncommon among them.

Despite socioeconomic variations, Chinese American families, no matter how integrated they may be into the larger society, do not function in isolation. They are embedded in a long-standing cultural tradition and in the social structure of the larger Chinese American community. Comparing the Chinese American family to the traditional Chinese family, Betty Lee Sung (1987, chapter 7) has specified several distinctive characteristics of the Chinese American family. First, the Chinese family in the United States carries a long history of dismemberment, where immigrant men crossed the Pacific to seek fortunes, leaving their parents, wives, and children behind in China. After 1965, family reunification has been in relays, generally with the men arriving much earlier, and wives and children arriving at later times. Consequently, many immigrant families have suffered varied length of family separation, and once reunited, they have to adapt to the norm of the nuclear family. Second, women in Chinese American families have taken a more independent role than they did in the traditional family; working outside the home has become a norm and an economic necessity for women in Chinatown. The work role gives women some measures of power and makes them less exclusively dependent upon their husbands. Third, the size of a Chinese American family is generally much smaller with an age gap between children and with older children who are foreign-born. Fourth, kinship or clan ties become weakened in the process of migration, and face-to-face interaction among family members decreases as both men and women are out working for long hours.

However, the Chinese American family remains culturally distinct from the mainstream American family despite the alterations specified above. The Chinese American family has not simply retained its "Chineseness," but has also incorporated a set of characteristics associated with adaptational strategies for coping with uprooting and assimilation. While assimilation is the ultimate goal for the Chinese American family, parents are constantly caught in the conflict between maintenance of cultural identity in children and the adoption of desirable mainstream cultural ways.

In general, the Chinese American family has continued to be influenced by Confucianism. Confucianism emphasizes traditional values, such as ancestor worship, a respect for authority (e.g., the ruler, the elder, the parent, and the teacher), a belief in consensus, a willingness to put society's or the family's interests before the individual's interest, an emphasis on education as a means of mobility, clear rules of conduct, constant self-examination, and the importance of face-saving. These values have been carried over to America with few modifications and have been essential for the Chinese American family to socialize the younger generation.

For the younger generation, obedience, hard work, and success in school are matter-of-fact expectations. These values and family expectations are not only instilled in individual families, but also reinforced in the Chinese community. Illustrative are some of the most common adult-child greetings observed in the homes, streets, and restaurants in Chinatown. Parents frequently greet children with, "How was school?" "Did you behave in school in today?" "Have you got your grades yet? How good are they?" or "Have you done your homework?" Relatives or adult family friends often greet children with, "Have you been obeying your parents?" "Have you been good?" "Have you been working hard in school?" "Have you been making good grades?" These simple
everyday adult-childern greetings reflect the Chinese values of obedience, respect, hard work, and education; and children are expected to give positive answers. As a continuation of the long-standing Chinese tradition, Confucian values have been transplanted to America and become the normative behavioral standards in Chinese American families. Deviation from these standards is considered shameful or “face lost” and thus sanctioned by the family and the community.

Specifically, we can summarize the following distinctive characteristics of the Chinese American family. First, Chinese parents believe that discipline and hard work, rather than natural ability or innate intelligence, are the keys to educational success. Regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, they tend to think (also tend to make their children believe) that their children can all get A’s in their tests in school if they are disciplined and hard working. Many folk tales make the point that diligence can achieve any goal, such as the tale of a woman who ground a piece of iron by hand into a needle and that of an old man who removed a mountain with just a hoe. There is also a saying that dullness can be overcome by industriousness. Because of the cultural influence, Chinese children are pushed to work at least twice as hard as their American counterparts, which has indeed brought about remarkable results. A downside of this cultural emphasis, however, is that Chinese parents tend to be less sensitive than American parents to individual ability of their children, such as varied degrees in their ability to master English, to adjust to the new school and social environments, and to interact effectively with teachers and fellow students. Children fear their parents and are hesitant to discuss these problems with them. Even if they do, they may be misunderstood as “finding excuses for being lazy.”

Second, unlike the American family, which emphasizes individual responsibilities, the Chinese American family values collective responsibilities. The success of children in school is very much tied to face-saving for the family. Parents themselves are expected to bring up their children in ways that honor the family. In Chinatown, one frequently hears parents brag about their children’s success but seldom hears them talk about problems. Children are constantly reminded that if they fail, they will bring shame to the family. According to several school counselors, this collective orientation works both ways. On the one hand, children’s education is given priority with social and material support from their family and community and children are pushed to their full potential, which contribute to their success. On the other hand, however, children act like “little adults,” sacrificing the opportunities of being children, exploring and developing their own selves (Sung 1987, 91).

Third, the parent-child relationship in Chinese American families tends to be more formal and rigid and less emotionally expressive than the mainstream family. Chinese culture emphasizes submission to authority. The parent is the authority in the home, as is the teacher in the school. The parent, often the father, is not supposed to show too much affection, to play with children, or to treat children as equals. The stone-faced authoritative image of the parent often inhibits children from questioning, much less challenging, their parents. Moreover, there is a general lack of demonstrative affection in the Chinese American family, which applies not only to children but to the spouse and friends as well. Chinese parents are not expected to show emotions or express love in a direct way. Children rarely hear their parents say, “I love you.” They seldom receive kisses or hugs from their parents in public. In a culture where physical intimacy and affection are publicly displayed, children tend to feel deprived and to interpret the lack of demonstrative affection as, “My parents don’t love me” (Sung 1987, 116). Therefore, while parental authority effectively reinforces behavioral standards, which are constructive to the adaptation of children to school, it intensifies cultural conflicts and thus increases the level of anxiety in children.

Fourth, most of the Chinese American families have both parents working. Working parents, particularly those in immigrant families, tend to work long hours each day, six days a week. Although parents are very concerned about their children’s schooling, they have very little time to be physically involved, to help their children with their homework, much less to talk with them or play with them. Moreover, the contact between school and parents is minimal, not because parents do not want to get involved, but because they can’t find time and their English is not proficient enough for such contact. Some children do not even bother to pass teachers’ notes to their parents about conference arrangements or participation in school events. Or they simply pass the notes to their parents and then say, “Never mind. I know you can’t go.”

Many immigrant parents are struggling for survival in the hope that their children will appreciate their hard work and repay them by doing well in school. Many children do understand the pain and struggle their parents have had to endure. One teenager wrote in her essay at school.

[Our] ancestors came to this country hoping to make a better life for themselves and generations thereafter. Although they did not find much gold or money in the “Gold Mountain” at first, they succeeded in staying together and making their children’s lives and grand-children’s lives a much easier one to endure.?
values and behavioral standards, the gang subculture, and the problem of achieving. The question of "Who am I?" or "Who's Chinese American?" is sometimes ambiguous among children of Chinese immigrants. The following is an excerpt from a student paper that reflects the feelings of many Chinese American children:

His ten minute long speech [at family dinner table] was apparently comprehensible to all but my parents and me. I watched my cousins' attentive faces with interest as my great uncle spoke. I know that to them, what I spoke was the foreign language. I was amazed that I was in a room with twenty-five relatives and felt like such an outsider. When my uncle was finished and dared to release his grip of the table to fall quite gracefully back into his seat, everyone exchanged cheers in Chinese. I just smiled back at everyone as they all addressed me, and for the first time, I saw myself through their eyes. I saw an Americanized teenager who had cast off her Chinese identity in order to conform more to American ways. Suddenly, I became aware of overwhelming feelings of guilt, anger and confusion. . . . These conflicting emotions threw me into a state of confusion and wonder, a confusion and wonder I have yet to figure out.4

Apparently, growing up in America is a difficult process for children of immigrants, as they are constantly torn between conflicting cultural goals and demands at home and in the larger society. An immediate bicultural conflict in the Chinese American family is the difference in the perception of affection between parents and children. As discussed in the previous section, parent-child relationships in immigrant Chinese families are not as emotionally expressive as those in American families. In the countries of origin, Chinese children are socialized into this pattern of relationships and seldom feel deprived. Since immigrant children, even those who are isolated in the enclave, are increasingly exposed to the television, movies, magazines, books, and the popular culture, they become aware of the different ways of expressing affection in different families and tend to interpret their parents' way as insufficient (Sung 1987). A Chinatown teenager recalled, "My mom never kissed me 'good night' or said 'I love you.' When I told her what American moms did, she answered, 'We Chinese don't do it this way.' For a long time, I felt that I was not loved." While this particular pattern of parent-child interaction may help maintain parental authority, the cost is often an emotional detachment from parents and a reduction of communication with parents on the part of the children.

Another cultural dilemma in which immigrant Chinese children often find themselves is that of conflicting values and behavioral standards. First, immigrant Chinese families tend to rely on the value of thrift as an important means...
of achieving future goals. In immigrant Chinese families, where parents are struggling to make ends meet and to attempt to save as much money as possible for the future—buying a home, opening up a small business, and sending children to college—children are taught the values of thrift and the importance of saving. However, influenced by the mass media and the larger consumer market, immigrant children tend to pick up quickly what is “in” or what is “cool,” which is unquestionably at odds with the Chinese cultural value of thrift.

Parents bluntly reject material possessions and conspicuous consumption on the part of children and perceive spending money on name brand clothes, luxurious accessories, and fashionable hairstyles as a sign of corruption, which they often term as becoming “too American.” Commonly heard from parents are, “You shouldn’t have spent $35 on this stupid haircut when you can spend $5 on a much nicer cut”; “How can you spend like this when you don’t even know how to make money?” “What if you had a family to feed?” When they do work, immigrant Chinese children are expected to hand over the wages to their parents.

In an interview with a group of eighth and ninth graders who participated in one of the youth programs in Chinatown, the young people indicated that their major concerns were the lack of spending money and the lack of understanding from their parents. “My mother didn’t care what people think of me,” said a fourteen-year-old boy. “She used to force me to wear a jacket, which she bought two years ago from China and which had become too small for me, not to mention the outdated style and the kiddy patterns. She would say to me, ‘It still fits and you can wear it for another spring.’ I was so embarrassed that I took it off and packed it in my book sack the minute I got out of the house.” Another boy said, “My mother never bought me clothes from Gap or Levi’s. I had to save my meager allowance for months to buy what I want and then sold her that I bought it cheap from a street vendor.” An immigrant girl echoed, “My mother did not know what I have to go through in school everyday. I was made fun of or looked down on by my peers because I couldn’t speak English well, had a strange haircut, and wore weird and cheap clothes. I used to be called ‘nerdy’ and ‘boring.’ I was so ashamed.” When children complain, parents simply reply, “Just ignore them and concentrate on your study. When you make good grades, make it to an elite college, and eventually get a good job, you can afford whatever you want.”

While immigrant parents value thrift and denounce luxurious consumption, they never hesitate spending on whatever they consider good for their children, such as books, after-school programs, Chinese lessons, private tutors, private lessons on the violin or the piano, and other educational-oriented activities. At a family counseling session, a mother puzzled at why her daughter would insist on going to a party instead of going to a scheduled piano lesson. “I only make $5 an hour, but pay $20 an hour for my daughter’s piano lessons. I do this for her own good. Can’t she understand?” This is a common parent-child problem in immigrant Chinese families, where parents are too driven by the mentality of “turning sons into dragons” and do what they think is good for their children, but tend to ignore what their children think is good for themselves.

The American cultural values of individualism and personal freedom are also downplayed in immigrant Chinese families. Chinese culture values priority to the family as a whole rather than individual self-gratification. Parents fear that too much individualism would undermine their authority and the moral basis of their families. They consistently remind their children that achievement is a duty and an obligation to the family rather than to the individual. Moreover, they expect their children to respect authority, to be polite and modest, to refrain from aggression, and to stay away from trouble. Chinese children are generally stereotyped as hard-working, respectful, and well-disciplined. In terms of parent-child interaction, this stereotype works to ensure effective control and sanctioning of children. In terms of student-teacher interaction, the stereotype can also work as an advantage, for high teacher expectations generally result in high student performance (Sung 1987). The major drawbacks, however, are children’s reluctance to express their own views in class or at home, a lack of creative and independent thinking, and the “little adult” syndrome (accepting too much responsibility and acting like an adult).

A third major problem immigrant Chinese children are facing is the fear and the appeal of the gang subculture. Street gangs have been a common problem in many immigrant and minority neighborhoods since the nineteenth century. In Chinatown, gangs were formed for the same reasons as other gangs in Little Italy, Little Saigon, Mexican American barrios, or South Central Los Angeles (Kuo 1977; Sung 1987; Vigil 1990; Vigil and Yun 1990). Kuo (1977) points out some of the main reasons why immigrant youth join gangs: the lack of a sense of home because parents are too busy working or are unemployed, overcrowded housing, language deficiency, the lack of recreational facilities, the existence of gambling houses offering “easy money” and status, ghetto segregation, peer pressure for recognition, searching for identity and self-esteem, and the need for self-protection. Immigrant children, especially boys, are extremely vulnerable to the gang subculture in Chinatown.
On the one hand, many immigrant children fear being involved in gangs because of the stigma and the rule of conduct prescribed by the community. A Chinatown teenage boy said, “I am afraid of walking on certain streets by myself because people tend to identify boys hanging out there as gangsters and I don’t want to be so identified. On the other hand, the real gangsters would approach you, put their arms around you, check you out, and try to kick you in.” On the pressure of gang subculture, a community organizer commented,

Youngsters have to spend a lot of energy trying to interpret whom other people think they are. They have to constantly prove certain things and unprove certain things. A student volunteer was once asked to take some flyers to streets that were gang dominated. He had to go with some girls because he was afraid of being identified as gang or being approached by gangsters. The pressure of coming to Chinatown is certainly real. But young people still come to Chinatown to see families and friends, to eat at the restaurants, and to do other things.  

On the other hand, street gangs are appealing to some immigrant youth in that they correspond to the desire for affiliation and achievement (Vigil 1990). In Chinatown, new gang recruits are typically those immigrant youth having severe adjustment problems, especially problems due to English language deficiency, which makes adaptation to school extremely difficult, resulting in frequent truancy and high dropout. This community organizer also pointed out another dimension of the problem: “It is sometimes easier to be a gangster. These kids were generally considered ‘losers’ by their teachers, parents, and peers in school. In school or at home, they feel uncomfortable, isolated, and rejected, which fosters a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness and a yearning for recognition. In the streets, they feel free from all the normative pressures. It is out there that they feel free to be themselves and to do things wherever and whenever they want, giving them a sort of identity and a sense of power.”

While youth gang continue to be a major concern in Chinatown, there are conscious and grass-roots efforts to redirect them to more productive activities. Since the early 1970s, many community-based organizations, such as the CCBA, the CPC, and the Chinese Christian Herald Crusade, established various types of high-risk youth rehabilitation or prevention programs. Drawing on government and private funds and community resources, these programs have met with considerable success. Some gangs have agreed to make peace; some members of the gangs were provided with jobs or enrolled in English language and other job training classes by the CCBA; and still others reform.
would naturally think, "Why shouldn't my child go to that school?" It's the peer pressure of the parents."

Immigrant mothers, most of whom work in garment shops or other ethnic economies in Chinatown, are very aware which public high school is the best in the city. At work, if a mother hears that another's child is going to one of the best schools, she will go home and tell her children to prepare for that school. Many working mothers work all day and are isolated in Chinatown, and all they see is that many of the graduates at the public elementary school in Chinatown (with 90 percent of the students being Chinese) go to the Hunter College High School each year. This information is circulated among mothers, and going to Hunter becomes a standard. "My mother used to scold me and called me a dummy because I couldn't get into Hunter. She didn't have a clue how hard it was to get in these elite schools," said a college freshman who grew up in Chinatown.

Parental pressure is combined with accessible ethnic resources in Chinatown to push children to move ahead in school. Afterschool programs, tutor services, and test preparation programs are run by Chinese parents or entrepreneurs and are readily available in the community. School after school has become an accepted norm. An educator said, "when you think of how much time these Chinese kids put in their studies after regular school, you won't be surprised why they succeed in such a high rate."

From the children's perspective, they are motivated to learn and do well in school because they believe that education is their only way to get out of their parents' status. Also, many children do well in school hoping to make their parents happy and proud. "But that never happens. My mother is never satisfied no matter what you do and how well you do it," said a student, echoing a frustration felt by many other Chinese youth, who voiced how much they wish not to be compared with other children and how much they wish to rebel. Following success, however, many Chinese American youth return or go to Chinatown to find their paths and identities. Some of them have become actively involved in the community to help another generation of immigrant youth in their struggle to become "Chinese American." As one youngster from Brooklyn remarked, "I am certainly Chinese American, because I feel that, being exposed to Chinese and American cultures, I have the best of both worlds."

**CONCLUSION**

This chapter examines how the process of adaptation of young Chinese Americans is affected by tangible forms of social relations between the community, immigrant families, and the younger generation. We have shown that Chinatown serves as the basis of social capital that facilitates, rather than inhibits, the assimilation of immigrant children in the expected directions. Although today's immigrant Chinese overwhelmingly desire to ultimately assimilate into the mainstream society, the majority of them have only limited resources and face structural barriers, making assimilation an extremely difficult and lengthy process. In order to prevent immigrants and their children from assimilating into the margins of the American society, Chinatown has broadened its economic and social bases and has established various economic and social organizations to provide jobs, job referral services, career training, language learning facilities, childcare, after-school programs, family counseling, and various youth-oriented crisis-prevention and rehabilitation programs. Because many parents and children are involved, in one way or another, in these intense ethnic networks in Chinatown, it becomes possible for the community to reinforce norms and to promote a high level of communication among group members and a high level of consistency among standards. In this sense, the community, as an important source of social capital, not only makes resources available to parents and children, but serves to direct children's behavior. This type of social capital helps many of Chinatown's children to overcome intense adjustment difficulties and unfavorable conditions, such as linguistic and social isolation, bicultural conflicts, poverty, gang subculture, and close proximity to other underprivileged minority neighborhoods, and to ensure successful adaptation.

This case study provides useful insight into the role of community-based organizations and families in promoting adjustment and success of immigrant children and offers a point of departure for studying the process of adaptation for the second and later generations. The generalizability of our findings, however, may be limited since we have focused only on children in Chinatown. Because different social contexts and different dynamics may affect different sets of immigrants and their offspring, the theoretical issues of social capital and social integration will require more elaboration and refinement than we have been able to give in this case study of a specific social setting. It will be necessary, also, to delve in greater detail into how and under what circumstances our findings may be generalized to other situations. Therefore, additional research is needed to examine in greater detail the ways in which children and their families are connected to one another by ethnically concentrated communities, and how these connections between families and community-based organizations facilitate the adaptation of young people.
NOTES

1. The study relied on the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census data and fieldwork in New York City’s Chinatowns in Lower East Manhattan, Flushing, and Sunset Park. The field observations were conducted by the author sporadically in selected homes, streets, community-based organizations, restaurants, and garment factories during the months of September and October in 1994. Face-to-face or telephone interviews (lasting half an hour to an hour) were conducted by the author in English or in Chinese on a convenient sample of 4 community-based Chinese schools, 6 youth-oriented programs run by various organizations, 3 family associations, 2 Christian churches, and 2 Buddhist temples, in addition to Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese American Planning Council, and Chinatown History Museum. Pseudonyms are used when individuals’ names were mentioned. The author wish to thank all informants who provided generous help in this study. This chapter was written while the author was in residence at the Russell Sage Foundation, whose support is also gratefully acknowledged. The author is exclusively responsible for the contents of the chapter.

2. Excerpt from “Yellow Discrimination” written in 1994 by Eunyang Theresa Oh, a member of the Student Committee of the Chinatown History Museum, as part of the exhibition entitled “Who’s Chinese American?”

3. Recorded from one of the parent-counselor conferences and a conversation with the counselor at a public high school in Chinatown, October 1994.

4. Excerpt from “The Smell of the Wet Grass” written in 1994 by Carla Shen, a member of the Student Committee of the Chinatown History Museum, as part of the exhibition entitled “Who’s Chinese American?”


6. Telephone inquiries of the staff of the schools mentioned, October 1994.


9. Recorded from a discussion at one of the youth sessions, October 1994.

REFERENCES


