The Psychosocial Effects of Growing Up in an Immigrant Entrepreneurial Family on Second-Generation Chinese American Daughters:

A Phenomenological Study

A dissertation presented by
Kathy Ping Wu

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For my family—then, now, and to come.
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Abstract

This literature review explores the quiet contributions made by the children of primarily Chinese immigrant entrepreneurial families. A background on the prevailing theories around immigrant entrepreneurship is first provided, followed by an exploration of changes in child labor practices in the United States, as well as evidence of these changes within the Chinese family business structure. Questions of what specifically makes the children’s immersion in the immigrant family economy unique, including the potential effects of this experience on the child’s psychosocial development are considered. Lastly, a discussion of the gaps in the literature and recommendations for the future direction of research are included here.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

Although reasons to immigrate to the United States are complex (e.g., political asylum, reunification with family, religious freedom, educational and employment opportunities, etc.), most adults who knowingly embark on a psychologically, socially, and economically treacherous journey do so in hopes of achieving some measurable gains or upward mobility in the long run (Borjas, 1992; Lee, 2014). Along with mobility for themselves, there are intergenerational expectations when it comes to the anticipated value of their move. Intergenerational upward mobility may very well be the grand sum of the immigrant’s formula for success, as conceptualized by Portes (1995):

People migrate to places where the expected net returns over a given time period are greatest. Net returns are calculated by multiplying the productivity of human capital in the destination country times the probability of finding employment there and subtracting the material, social, and psychological costs of the journey. (p. 20).

The social and psychological costs that Portes account for in his calculations in part refer to the experience of acculturative stress, which scholars have defined as the constellation of pressures to change, along with the presence of unfamiliar external social and physical environmental variables that contribute to unpleasant conditions for the immigrant (Padilla, 1980). Despite the high costs inherent in the process of immigration, intergenerational improvements on measurable factors of success (i.e., the poverty rates, educational and occupational attainment) have been achieved for almost every origin group in U.S. immigration history (Luthra & Waldinger, 2013). What this means is that the group of over 40.4 million foreign born people (13 percent of total
U.S. population) counted by the most recent 2011 American Community Survey [U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey (ACS)] living in the U.S., and their children, who make up over 25% of America’s youth, are on this hopeful journey of survival and achievement (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Thus, one cannot help but wonder: How and what are immigrant families doing to increase their chances of ascending the socioeconomic ladder?

Despite the supposed vastness of economic opportunities in America, many immigrants throughout the history of the United States have for many reasons come to elect entrepreneurship as a vehicle in their pursuit of the American Dream (Sharma, Chrisman, & Gersick, 2012). In fact, self-employment has been an obvious vocational strategy for many Americans. The idea of “the small businessman has always been identified with all of the homely virtues of Main Street America and thus is something of a charmed if not sacred category along with motherhood and the American Flag” (Bunzel, 1962, as quoted in Blackford, 2003, p. 132). The American entrepreneur has also been thought of as the small-town hero and “a kind of modern-day American underdog” (quoted in Blackford, 2003, p. 132). The internationally popular, early-20th century stories of Horatio Alger, the American author who wrote fictional tales of a poor, yet honest and hardworking boy’s meteoric rise up the success ladder may have added credibility to the small businessman lore for the immigrant (Alger, 1945; Tabbel, 1963). Representing a new symbol of Americanism, the entrepreneur can be a poor, uneducated immigrant who has nothing but his or her determination and “family values,” who can succeed in an open society that lacks rigid class or race-based structures. Jewish, German, and Japanese immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are believed to be prime examples of how upward

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mobility can be aided by family-operated businesses (Bonachich & Modell, 1980; Sowell, 1981). Like their predecessors, many of the latest wave of immigrants who arrived after the passage of the landmark *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* (Hart-Celler Act, INS, Act of 1965, P.L. 89–236), which radically altered immigrant admissions quotas, have also turned to self-employment as their preferred path toward acculturation and upward mobility.

The most recent economic report commissioned by the United States Small Business Administration (SMA Office of Advocacy) found that 10.5 percent of the immigrant work force owns a business, compared with 9.3 percent of the U.S.-born work force (Fairlie, 2012, p. 1). Rates of business creation are much higher for immigrants than for non-immigrants. Among immigrants, the monthly formation rate is 0.62 percent, compared to 0.28 percent for non-immigrants (Fairlie, 2012). Speaking to the general levels of success of these immigrant businesses, the report stated that immigrant-owned businesses represent approximately 70 percent of the level of non-immigrant owned companies (Fairlie, 2012). Also, immigrant-owned businesses are creating jobs, as they are more likely to hire employees than non-immigrant owned businesses. In terms of contributing to U.S. economic growth, immigrant-run firms are more likely to export goods and services than are non-immigrant firms (Fairlie, 2012). “The 2012 United States Report,” published by the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, found that first-generation immigrants expressed more positive attitudes about entrepreneurship than the second-generation. More than 16% of first-generation immigrants started and ran new businesses, while only 9% of the second-generation and 13% of non-immigrants did so (Fiscal Policy Institute’s Immigration Research Initiative, 2012). First-generation immigrant entrepreneurs were characterized as highly opportunity-driven, educated and wealthy (Kelly, Ali, Brush, Corbett, Majbouri, & Rogoff, 2012). Thus, the evidence is astounding that the spirit of risk, hard work,
and grit is alive and well among newly arrived immigrants today.

The rich literature on the connection between self-employment and wealth generation presents a unanimous conclusion that self-employment is positively associated with upward mobility. For instance, taking the risk to start a business and to work hard to sustain and grow that business is the story of millions of Asian American families dating back to the very beginning of this group’s migration to the U.S. (Lee, 2014). Asian Americans operating restaurants, take-outs, convenience stores, motels, gas stations, nail salons, and other essential outfits are ubiquitous sights in neighborhoods nationally. As of the most recent census data, there were approximately 17 million adults and children (5.6% of the U.S. population) who identified as Asian Americans living in the U.S. in 2010. Asian American entrepreneurs as a sub-group are responsible for generating over $300 billion in sales and providing jobs for more than 2 million workers (Fairlie, 2012). Additionally, 2010 Census data indicated that Asian Americans on average reported a median income of $66,000, versus $49,800 for the U.S. population, even when the average Asian American household (3.1 people) is larger than the U.S. average (2.6 people). Is it a coincidence that among the millions of foreign-born people living in the U.S., Asian Americans are considered the most financially successful ethnic group and one of the most heavily represented in the American small family business economy?

One potential reason for the high level of economic achievement among Asian Americans and family business start-ups may have to do with the Confucian heritage that

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2 The vast majority (83%) of these individuals could trace their roots to six Asian countries, including China (23.2%), the Philippines (19.7%), India (18.4%), Vietnam (10%), Korea (9.9%), and Japan (7.5%), and about 74% of these same individuals identified as foreign-born (i.e., had either legal or unauthorized status, or arriving with work, student or other temporary status) (U.S. Census, 2010).

3 Confucianism is an ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the 551-478 BC Chinese philosopher Confucius. His teachings consist of a complex system of moral,
emphasize familial piety and collectivism. While there have been multiple definitions of ‘family business’ to come into vogue over the years, the most comprehensive is one by Chua, Chrisman, and Sharma (1999), who defined family business as:

Governed and/or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by a dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families in a manner that is potentially sustainable across generations of the family or families. (p. 25).

This definition encapsulates well the influences of the cultural inheritance of many Asian American families, particularly those who have newly immigrated. The strong presence of immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States can thus generally be understood as a result of the “productive” use of social and human capital, which often comes in the form of spouses and their offspring. Park (2005) held that entrepreneurial families represent the intersection of “how macro-level political and economic forces are brought to bear on micro-level relationships” (p. 3).

The measureable benefits of self-employment for the family are debatable. Given the continued currency of the rags-to-riches narrative—which deeply imbues the immigrant family business with sentimental notions of family values, upward mobility, and the model minority myth—the uncertainty, vulnerability, and the everyday challenges of growing up in an immigrant entrepreneurial family have largely gone unexamined. Children of Asian American immigrants have a large stake in the success of their family’s small business ventures, as their outcomes often represent their immigrant parents’ hopes and dreams for a bright future. The second

social, political, philosophical, and quasi-religious thought that influenced the culture and history of East Asia. Cultures and countries strongly influenced by Confucianism include mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Vietnam, as well as various territories settled predominantly by Chinese people, such as Singapore (Lee, 2014).
generation is expected to inherit their immigrant parents’ strong work ethic, a disciplined pursuit of education, and an unshakeable faith and optimism about their family’s place in the mainstream cultural milieu. For many of these immigrant families, the process of upward mobility is what defines them socially and psychologically. Thus, we cannot talk about the phenomenon of family businesses among Asian immigrants without also accounting for the social and human capital afforded by the second generation. Yoon (1997) captured the Asian entrepreneurial experience in this way: “On balance, it is a bittersweet livelihood, entailing enormous physical, psychological, familial, and social costs to generate a moderate income” (p. 6). When it comes to business owning Asian immigrant families, only half of businesses formed survive past the first year, and only half of those survive past three years (Fairlie, 2012). Those businesses that do make enough profit to support the proprietors’ families rely heavily on their family members’ labor and emotional support. What is known about the experiences of children who strive for material and symbolic successes alongside their entrepreneurial parents?

This literature review explores the quiet contributions made by the children of Asian immigrant entrepreneurial families. The term ‘children’ will henceforth be used to refer to those who have at least one parent who was born in an East Asian “Confucian country.” Where appropriate, Chinese American children’s involvement in their family’s small businesses will serve as a referent group as there are many intra-group differences among East Asian Americans. Also, using the Chinese, who are the oldest Asian subpopulation to come to the United States, and their tradition of starting family businesses, may yield more reliable group behavior data. Background information for how immigrants have historically used entrepreneurship as a means to upward intergenerational mobility will first be provided. The cultural and social mechanisms underlying the functioning of the Confucian Asian American family business will be explored.
Additionally, a deconstruction of the roles and responsibilities children of immigrant family businesses may be expected to take on will be completed. An exploration of how these roles might be experienced psychologically and socially by the children will be assessed. Ultimately, this paper will (1) provide a background on prevailing theories around immigrant entrepreneurship, analyze historical changes in child labor practices, and discuss evidence of these constructs within the Chinese family business structure; (2) explore what specifically makes the children’s immersion in the immigrant family economy unique; (3) consider possible benefits and disadvantages to the child of immigrant entrepreneurs from the perspective of psychosocial development; and (4) discuss gaps in the literature and present recommendations for future direction of research.

**Background**

**Theories of Ethnic Entrepreneurship**

A recent literature review on international immigrant entrepreneurship yielded important empirical as well as non-empirical studies completed by mainly American sociologists, anthropologists, and labor economists (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). The amount of scholarly interest concentrated within these disciplines seems to speak to the visibility and wide-reaching influence of immigrant entrepreneurship in contemporary society. The forty-five articles reviewed by Aliaga-Isla and Rialp studied how certain demographic variables (e.g., education, social capital, age, gender, home-ownership, etc.) influence self-employment, owner perseverance in entrepreneurship, and financial performance variables. Each of the articles employed specific theoretical frameworks to explain why and how newly arrived immigrants came to rely on entrepreneurship as a means for survival and advancement up the socioeconomic ladder. Among some of the most popular explanations include the middleman minorities theory
(Bonacich, 1973), blocked mobility (Light, 1979), protected markets and ethnic enclaves (Aldrich, Carter, Jones, McEvoy, & Velleman, 1985; Portes & Bach, 1985), mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001), ethnic strategies and interaction theory (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Light & Rosenstein, 1995), stepladders (Raijman & Tienda, 1990), and social networks (Flap, Kumcu & Bulder, 2000; Renzulli, Aldrich, & Moody, 2000). Some of the theories have developed out of earlier ones, or have combined premises to explain more nuanced findings around immigrants’ penchant towards self-employment. However, what is clear is that both external and internal factors contribute to the prevalence of entrepreneurship as an occupational choice for minority immigrant groups (Wood, Davidson, & Fielden, 2012). Some of the better-accepted theories will be described below.

The influx of immigrants to the United States post-1965 and their significant impact on the economy gave rise to a vigorous set of literature on economic activities of what Portes and Zhou (1993) called “The New Second Generation.” The concept of an ‘ethnic business’ was coined to describe the start of a business that services the needs of other members of the ethnic community. The term only came into use after 1965, when the new wave of immigrants from non-Northern European countries began to change race and class structures in the United States (Barrett, Jones, & McEvoy, 1996). This process of ethnic economies quickly emerged as ethnic groups came to close geographic proximity to other ethnic groups in urban settings. Consisting of self-employment and employment that is decisively shaped and maintained by employees and businesses of the same ethnicity, and their unique cultural resources, ethnic economies have become an indispensible part the global economic system (Light & Gold, 2000). As such, many theories have been posed about the true origins of the ethnic economy.

One of the most prominent theories around the development of the ethnic economy is that
of blocked opportunities. This theory poses that immigrants who lack the skills or credential to enter the primary labor market (e.g., large corporations, unionized industries, skilled trades, government agencies, high technology industry, and the professions) in their host country had to go into the secondary labor force, which meant taking up temporary employment or doing jobs that natives did not wish to do. Eventually these individuals in the secondary economy began to develop networks among other co-ethnics and were able to branch out and work within other minority, secondary labor markets. The “middleman minorities,” which was a term coined by Blalock (1967) and expanded on by Bonacich (1973), further explains the blocked opportunities economic trajectory. The middleman minority theory refers to minority entrepreneurs who mediate between dominant, mainstream society and that of racial or ethnic groups who have been historically marginalized (Blackford, 2003; Bonacich, 1973). Starting off as sojourners (i.e., traveling, temporary workers), middleman minorities would eventually settle into a new environment and subsequently strive to become integrated into the mainstream culture of the host society. However, given their perpetual “outsider” identities, despite their successes, they could only conduct business with other marginalized groups in their host country. The increased presence of middleman minorities eventually led to the development of ethnic enclaves. Ethnic enclaves are geographic locations in which ethnic groups who share economic, social, cultural, and language traits are concentrated (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Within these ethnic enclaves, immigrants are believed to have developed a strong economy built on the entrepreneurial instincts of their middleman minority traditions, which has allowed for the expansion of businesses outside of ethnic enclaves. In the United States, with every introduction of a minority group, there has subsequently been a heavy presence of entrepreneurship (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Examples of high-entrepreneurship minority groups include Arabs, Armenians, Chinese,

Cobas (1986) investigated factors that make the middleman minority phenomenon unique, using survey data from a sample of 220 Cuban exiles in Puerto Rico. He found that the experience of labor market disadvantages in the receiving country, having a business background in the country of origin, and membership in the ethnic subculture predicted the self-employment of the Cubans interviewed. Interestingly, the author found that the sojourner criterion proposed by Bonacich (1973) as a defining attribute of middleman minority groups did not apply to the Cuban sample. Most immigrants in the sample did not behave as “solo fortune seekers” who intended to return to their birth country after a pre-determined period of time (Cobas, 1986, p. 115). Suddenly, this finding proved the middleman minority theory insufficient to explain the conditions that foster self-employment among immigrants who do not migrate for purely economic reasons.

Moving away from the middleman theory, other explanations exist for the large number of immigrants in self-employment. One common belief among social scientists is that immigrant entrepreneurship should also be referred to as “necessity entrepreneurship” (Poschke, 2013). The term is used to describe the formation of businesses as means to avoid unemployment during periods when the labor market sees an increase in layoffs, or when options for open market employment are scarce or unfeasible. For instance, while there is generally a “countercyclical pattern” nationally, the level of business formation was noticeably higher among immigrants than non-immigrants during the Great Recession years between 2007 and 2009 (Fairlie, 2012, p. 32). Poschke (2013) looked into the characteristics of “entrepreneurs out of necessity” in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) survey data from 2005 that asked the question: “Are
you involved in this start-up/firm to take advantage of a business opportunity or because you have no better choice in work” (p. 658)? It was found that necessity entrepreneurs tended to have lower educational attainment, ran smaller businesses, and were expected to remain in the market even given lower expectations for growth (Poscheke, 2013). This finding corroborated with a study by Bates (1999) who found that Asian Indian and Filipino immigrants, who are more highly educated than other groups of Asians, are more likely to exit self-employment during times of high economic vitality. These results thus suggest that self-employment is often a form of underemployment among immigrants. Immigrants are more likely to turn to self-employment ventures during periods of high unemployment. The reason for this is that as a group they are frequently perceived to be less competitive in the open job market due to limitations in language and vocational skills, as well as fewer opportunities to network with potential employers. Another reason for self-employment is that immigrants face more discrimination in the open job market because of differences in racial and cultural characteristics (Abelmann & Lie, 1995; Fairlie, 2012).

van Tubergen (2005) examined the more specific macro-level contextual factors that contribute to an individual immigrant’s decision to go into self-employment. Using cross-national data on self-employment among male immigrants in 17 Western countries, including the United States, Australia and Canada, and 14 countries in the European Union, the study drew four general conclusions. First, countries that have stronger opportunity structures in place tended to have higher self-employment rates among both natives and immigrants. It seems that when receiving economies are experiencing higher unemployment rates, there is a higher likelihood of immigrants going into self-employment due to stronger discrimination of immigrants in the competitive labor market. When considering the exact opposite finding by
Poscheke (2013), one can assume that the market condition is usually unfavorable to immigrants who for various reasons are deemed less competitive in the primary labor market. Second, van Tubergen found that self-employment is not predetermined by the reason behind one’s migration. Instead, those who are unfavorably endowed in human capital or have experienced political suppression in their native countries are as likely to start their own businesses as those who migrated for economic reasons. However, those who move from developing nations to more economically prosperous societies are less likely to be self-employed than those from developed countries. These results suggest that starting off with less human capital has its reverberating effects on the ability not only to start a business, but maintain it over time. Third, with regards to conditions found in receiving countries, it was determined that the amount of discrimination experienced by a community pushes immigrants of that community toward self-employment. More specifically, immigrants from predominately non-Christian countries of origin tended to go into self-employment more often than those with Christian backgrounds. It thus seems that those who are more culturally distant from natives in the receiving countries experience more labor market discrimination, pushing them into self-employment as a form of self-defense. Adding further complexity is that consumer discrimination also seems to limit ethnic minorities who end up in countries that are majority White. This finding supports the final conclusion about the importance of social capital within immigrant entrepreneurship. Given the high levels of labor discrimination experienced by non-White immigrants, there is again a high reliance on ethnic enclaves and the middleman economy to begin their own businesses. However, the success of these businesses depends on the overall level of financial and human capital found in these communities. In other words, if co-ethnics are overall not doing well financially or do not have the resources necessary to provide support to their co-ethnics, there is a lower likelihood of going
into self-employment for those community members. This argument seems to explain the success of Chinatowns across the United States.

Given the many obstacles faced by “necessity immigrant entrepreneurs,” researchers in management and economics have sought to understand the factors that can foster the survival and success of immigrant-owned businesses. Chrysostome and Arcand (2009), for instance, tested the importance of five survival factors in a multiple case study of immigrant entrepreneurs of Latin American origin living in Montreal, Canada. The survival criteria tested included ethnocultural, financial, managerial, psycho-behavioral and institutional factors. The survival rates of Latin-origin participants did not rely on a large ethnic market, a high degree of access to start up capital or emergency loans, extensive previous experience, or high institutional support. The success of the participants’ business was, however, partially attributed to the size of their ethnic social networks, as they provide a labor pool and emotional support. Finally, the only factor unanimously confirmed by the participants as important to their success was the level of educational attainment; the higher their formal educational attainment, the higher likelihood of maintaining their business over three years.

Alas, starting a business is not the antidote to economic disadvantages for all immigrants, as not all immigrants are able to establish a business with ease. Irastorza and Pena (2013) applied the economic phenomenon of *liability of foreignness* to examine barriers to launching new businesses for immigrant and native entrepreneurs. Liability of foreignness has to do with the ability to acquire resources for one’s business in a foreign land. The authors found in their examination of the most recent GEM data that, while immigrants were more likely to have plans for self-employment than native-born individuals, they were less likely to become self-employed. The authors, like many theorists before them, attributed the gap in business start-up to
challenges that immigrants face, including poor language skills, lack of labor experience in the receiving country, lack of human and social capital in the new country, and institutional discrimination (Irastorza & Pena, 2013). Despite these disadvantages, self-employment remains one of the most attractive options for immigrants. Thus, when an immigrant is able to start a business venture, they commit wholeheartedly to engaging in hard work, believing that persistence will be reciprocated, in time, in the form of financial and social success.

Along with having the necessary external structures in place to begin a business, immigrants who possess certain personality traits and intrinsic motivation are said to be more likely to engage in self-employment (Thai & Turkina, 2013). Generally speaking, Rauch and Frese (2007) found significant correlations between business creation and business success and need for achievement, generalized self-efficacy, innovativeness, stress tolerance, need for autonomy, and proactive personality, all traits that many immigrants are universally believed to embody. More recently, Owens, Kirwan, Lounsbury, Levy, and Gibson (2013) identified the importance of goal-setting, social networking, emotional resilience, and work drive to the success of self-employment. Optimism, work-based locus of control, and work drive contributed to overall job satisfaction of entrepreneurs. More specific to immigrants, some scholars have questioned whether immigrant entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs because they are immigrants or immigrant entrepreneurs are immigrants because they are entrepreneurs (Ensign & Robinson, 2011). Admittedly, many studies show that immigrants are forced into self-employment (Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Dana, 2007; Li, 2000), but, at the same time, many others suggest that people leaving their homeland must have a certain level of entrepreneurial drive and spirit (Deaux, 2006; Fisher & Koch, 2008). The immigrant personality debate suggests that any person who chooses to immigrate consciously possesses the personality traits that transfer well to the
entrepreneurial world. Are there specific culturally based values that facilitate the creation and growth of immigrant entrepreneurial ventures? Morris and Scindebutte (2005) explored the core values believed to be evident in six Asian subcultures in Hawaii, and found that while values such as family and clan, hard work, loyalty, and relationships can be traceable to the entrepreneur’s native countries, the participants share salient entrepreneurial values regardless of their cultures of origin. Values historically associated with entrepreneurship such as independence, success, achievement, and ambition were also exhibited amongst the subcultural groups in spite of apparent contradictions to their culturally specific values. Morris and Scindebutte’s findings support the notion that cultural values can evolve over time and that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors inherent in certain cultural groups may shift with the demands of an environment, or that immigrants who leave their countries of origin and enter entrepreneurial ventures are at heart more entrepreneurially savvy. The decision to abandon one’s known environment, culture, social relations, and possibly the ability to be understood in his or her mother tongue in exchange for no assurances, but only possibilities, distinguishes the immigrant from the non-immigrant. The immigrant is thus believed to be more likely to have high tolerance of ambiguity, a propensity for risk taking, and perseverance, which all directly connect to successful business skills (Baum & Locke, 2004; Lee & Tsang, 2001).

Finally, many theories have suggested that social capital, or resources available through interpersonal relationships, is one of the most important components to the maintenance of immigrant businesses. Using data collected through ethnographic depth interviews of Asian immigrants in Los Angeles, Sanders, Nee, and Sernau (2002) examined the relationship between immigrants’ reliance on social ties and their employment. They found immigrants are able to gain employment through reliance on co-ethnics within and beyond the confines of ethnic
enclaves. Those who are able to achieve the greatest economic mobility were more likely to have used their social ties to gain employment through the multiethnic metropolitan labor market. In many ways, the social ties accessible within co-ethnic communities facilitate the bridging of social worlds. However, Light and Dana (2013) in a recent study focused on the pros and cons of social capital in the context of ethnic entrepreneurship, argued that resources made available through social capital enable or enhance the commercial activities of the culturally homogenous group. The authors wondered whether “cultural capital,” or the norms or mores of a population that can facilitate a shared goal, in fact plays a more important role than researchers have previously claimed. To test this hypothesis, they used a research location in which cultural capital is believed not to support commercial entrepreneurship, and where its denizens have abundant social capital, but do not eventuate in commercial entrepreneurship. They interviewed the Alutiiq people who are native to Alaska and have survived its harsh terrains for over seven thousand years. While the authors found that the Alutiiq people used social capital to hunt and fish, they never transitioned this cultural activity to a process of economic exchange. Thus, the authors conclude that social capital’s apparent efficacy in promoting entrepreneurship actually depends on the extent that social capital is aligned with supportive cultural capital, which, in turn, directs the social capital toward the vocational goal of entrepreneurship. The premise is that if a culture does not value entrepreneurship, then its social capital will not transpose into entrepreneurship, as it will not be valued. The authors caution that when research is conducted in cultural contexts that support entrepreneurship, the supporting role of cultural capital becomes invisible. Researchers seem to have wrongly concluded that social capital universally facilitates entrepreneurship. Thus, one must consider the importance of cultural capital alongside the social and human capital accessed by immigrant families in their start-up and maintenance of their
family businesses. In this vein, it follows that in order to understand the contributions made by
the children—who themselves embody social and human capital—in entrepreneurial families, it
is also important to hold constant the resources inherent in their cultural background.

**The Chinese Small Family Business**

Ethnic enterprises have been crucial for Chinese immigrants in their quest for economic
independence and success. The most salient theory of ethnic entrepreneurship is Piore’s (1986),
which suggested that low-skilled and poorly educated immigrants move to the secondary sectors
of the economy where employment tends to be temporary and unstable, wages are low, working
conditions are poor and there are few opportunities for promotion. Piore suggested that jobs that
are abandoned by native workers in the primary sector become available to immigrant
populations. Notably, Chinese immigrants who often become absorbed into the Chinese ethnic
economy become the primary workforce in the secondary sector. The Chinese ethnic economy,
which has expanded enormously in recent years, offers secondary sector jobs to co-ethnics in
Chinese owned firms. Ethnic economies, as many scholars observe, have their own dynamic,
separate yet parallel processes to the core economy of the larger society (Portes, 1980; Wilson &
Portes 1980; Wong, 1998; Zhou, 1992). In the small-scale enterprises that comprise the ethnic
sector, common destiny, common language and cultural similarities are particularly important.

For the Chinese, the traditional ethnic economy in place for more than 100 years in
America has been composed of Chinese restaurants, laundries, grocery stores, and gift shops.
While these ethnic enterprises are still thriving today, changing demographics among the
Chinese and a changing United States and global economy have also led to changes in the ethnic
economy (Poon, Tran, & Ong, 2009). The economic behavior of members of an encapsulated
ethnic group needs to be viewed in the context of its relationship to the larger society. It is within
the macro-economic environment—the opportunity structure of the larger society—that the economic adaptations of an ethnic group are made. The macro-economic structures affecting the Chinese include environmental/market demand (Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990; Wong, 1998) as well as government and immigration policies.

The Chinese did not come from a nation of laundrymen or restaurateurs. Nor did they start these businesses immediately after they first arrived in the 1850s. Occupational specialties are the result of their adaptation to the economic and social conditions they encountered in the United States. For instance, the Chinese who came to America in the nineteenth century were principally laborers engaged in railroad building, exploitation of mines, and clearance of farmlands in the western frontier (Chang, 2003). Along the transcontinental railroad and the western frontier, some Chinese restaurants were established, not as gourmet, luxurious enterprises, but as simple eateries to serve the Chinese laborers. Hand laundry shops were also established because there were no housewives or women to do this chore; since laundry was considered to be women’s work, very few white men entered this trade (Jung, 2008; Lee, 2014).

From these frontier days, the Chinese learned that laundry was a low capital business with no competition from white people. With a little soap, some scrubbing boards, irons and ironing boards, a person could start his own business. The hand laundry business captured the attention of other Chinese who were discriminated against in the job market after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in the 1870s (Jung, 2008). Restaurants and laundry businesses have been important ethnic enterprises for the Chinese ever since. The economic niche carved out for the Chinese has continued to develop throughout the 140 years of their existence in America. In addition to restaurants and laundries, Chinese immigrants have opened garment factories, novelty and handicraft shops, and grocery stores in a number of urban areas (Fong,
Chen, & Luk, 2012). Until recently, the Chinese had limited opportunities available in other fields. Many states had discriminatory legislation against the employment of Chinese. In New York State alone, there were a total of 26 occupations that the Chinese were prohibited from entering. Occupations included attorneys, physicians, bank directors, chauffeurs, dentists, embalmers, veterinarians, guides, liquor storeowners, pawnbrokers, pilots, plumbers, horse track employees, watchmen, architects, accounting, engineers, realtors, registered nurses, and teachers, among others. This legislation was not changed until as recently as 1940 (Wong, 1998). There is also a long history of more subtle discrimination in employment and promotion. Moreover, many jobs need special skills, higher education and a good command of the English language, traits which disqualify many new immigrants and refugees without formal education from an American institution. It is through ethnic businesses that the Chinese have historically been able to avoid economic conflicts with the larger society (Chang, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, economic competition precipitated much of the anti-Chinese legislation in American history. Going into an ethnic business as a self-employed laundryman or working in a Chinese restaurant were noncompetitive or non-confrontational adaptive strategies to avoid legal persecution. Thus the continuation of the ethnic niche is a historical vestige and, in a sense, is a monument to racial discrimination in America. The 1965 Immigration Law, which permitted the influx of Chinese immigrants, affected the development of the Chinese ethnic niche in terms of: (1) the availability of manpower; (2) the establishment of family firms; (3) the availability of capital resources; and (4) the infusion of urban entrepreneurs from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China (Kaplan & Li, 2006).

Many new immigrants, especially those from Hong Kong and Taiwan, arrived with skills and financial capital (Wong, 1998). Family members also provided important labor resources as
well as sources of financing. These entrepreneurial assets have been instrumental in creating many changes in the Chinese business establishments. Because family members became readily available, many firms were now organized and run by family members. The majority of new immigrant entrepreneurs still prefer to run family firms that provide them with flexibility, independence, and control of workers. Decisions can be made quickly without lengthy consultation and the head of the family is also the head of the family firm. Family members can be trained in business operations; they are trustworthy and able to keep trade secrets; and they are willing to work long hours. Kinsmen of the family also constitute an inexpensive labor pool. And family members are an important source of financing; many firms have been established through the pooling of family members’ savings. Yang, Colarelli, Han, and Page’s (2011) survey of a sample of 202 Korean immigrant business owners in America on their initial business set-ups and hiring practices found that close kin were more likely to be involved in the start-up of businesses due to behaviors that can be explained by the evolutionary perspective on altruism. These results suggest that the collectivism culture, where giving and receiving help is common practice, is heavily relied upon in the context of family business development.

In Chinatowns across America, almost everyone dreams of owning a family firm (Wong, 1998). It is not uncommon for firms that were started by a group of partners to split up eventually, with each individual moving on to try to establish his or her own business. Originally, the majority of Chinese ethnic businesses in the United States catered to non-ethnic consumers. Ethnic businesses still rely heavily on non-ethnic customers and would not be able to survive without this clientele. However, since 1965 the Chinese community has grown so much that there is now a substantial ethnic consumer market. In order to accommodate the recent influx of Chinese immigrants, many of whom have more economic resources than those in the
earlier waves, the ethnic economy has expanded in the service industry in areas such as real estate, banking, and utilities (Chang, 2003; Wong, 1998).

Immigrants from Confucian Asian countries such as China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam have been identified as an ideal group to study because of their likelihood of self-employment and the cultural emphases placed on social and cultural capital (Light & Gold, 2000). Specifically for the Chinese, business has always been connected to social capital found in the family. The family structures seem to serve as the prototype for all macro-level organizations, including educational institutions and government parties in China (Chen, 2001). As an extension of historical and cultural traditions in which people lived in a largely agrarian state, working within the family unit made it possible to amass resources and safeguard against the perils of subsistence living. Living within the Confucian model of family means that there is no such thing as an individual; everyone is interconnected and interdependent on others for survival. Outside of China, immigrants are still observed to operate within the framework that the family unit cannot be separated from business processes. Although the conventional phrase is “family business,” the Chinese, in actuality, operate “business families” in which the primary focus is on the family, not the business (Chen, 2001). This distinction puts the emphasis on how family concerns drive business decisions, not the other way around.

In terms of decision-making within Chinese American family businesses, a hybrid set of business family values has emerged as a result of assuming minority immigrant status. Kao (1993) listed a set of culturally informed “life-raft values” that historically characterize the survival of Chinese-owned businesses in the United States or abroad. Thrift is believed to ensure survival, which then translates to careful budgeting of purchases and delay of material gratification. Also relating to frugality is a priority to save money, even if there is an immediate
need to spend. At another far extreme is the belief that hard work to the point of exhaustion is necessary to ward off many financial hazards perceived in an unpredictable market economy. Working to the point of exhaustion is often related to not being able to trust others outside of the immediate family with handling essential business transactions. The only people to be trusted are family members. Given the fact that a business enterprise is usually created as a familial life raft, there is often a tacit understanding among family members that everyone must behave honorably to reap benefits personally. Related to trust and respect is the notion that the judgment of an incompetent relative is perceived to have more credence than that of competent strangers. With respect to social interactions within the family unit, obedience to patriarchal authority is believed to be essential to maintaining coherence and direction for the business. And finally, any financial investments must be based on rules of kinship or clan affiliations. When it comes to wealth accumulation, tangible goods such as real estate, natural resources, and gold are preferable to intangibles like non-liquid securities or intellectual property. All of these characteristics of the Chinese family business make the experience of the family a unique one.

Children as Human Capital

Historically speaking, children's work has been examined in relation to children being a source of human capital and economic advancement of families (Miles, 1994). Before children’s functional roles within society were decried in the 1930s by child labor reformers, who claimed that working children were robbed of their youth and education, American culture insisted that children must work for their keep (Horan & Hargis, 1991). Since then, our values and beliefs around the daily routines of children have changed alongside significant social and economic developments in the United States. As recently as the 1990s, it was a well-upheld norm for families to depend on children to contribute to the family economy (Horan & Hargis, 1991). All
capable children worked alongside their parents on farms and sweatshops. The help that children could provide to their parents was not only expected and needed, but was believed to come second to receiving a formal education (Elder & Conger, 2000; Walters & O'Connell, 1988). In fact, prior to the decades before the Civil War, public schools in rural regions were divided into summer and winter terms so that children could assist with spring planting and fall harvest seasons. The start and dismissal times allowed the children to assist on the farm before and after school (Gold, 2002). According to the 1900 U.S. Census, one in every six children between the ages of ten and fifteen was gainfully employed.

By the 1930s, a booming economy created a drastic decrease in farming and an increase in the middle class. Progressive reformers began to push for compulsory schooling for children because the growing economy required a new generation of skilled laborers. Reformers pushed to increase children's school hours and decrease work participation (Macleod, 1998). These economic and historical factors led to a shift in the perception of what childhood should entail and what children should do. Children went from having a utility to being “precious” assets that the family should treasure and carefully support through education (Zelizer, 1985). These sociohistorical trends led to changes in the Western belief about children's occupations. Modern thinking suggests that children should not work (in fact, child labor laws determine at what ages children may work in paid labor); instead, the U.S. cultural view is that play is the work of the child (Parham & Fazio, 1997; Zelizer, 1985). This idea has become deeply embedded in the rhetoric of psychological wellbeing of children, in which play is recognized as central to children's healthy social and cognitive development. Some have argued that play in childhood is equivalent to work in adult life, in its ability to foster personal growth and create meaningful
experiences (Lifter, Mason, & Barton, 2011). It is within this context that one must consider the roles of children within immigrant family businesses.

Although most children, in middle- and above- social economic class families in developed, urban societies may no longer be required to labor to sustain family economies, the family business enterprise remains an exception to the rule. According to part §570.126 of the Fair Labor Standards Act, parental exemption applies to child labor regulations:

By the parenthetical phrase included in section 3(l)(1) of the Act, a parent or a person standing in place of a parent may employ his own child or a child in his custody under the age of 16 years in any occupation other than the following: (a) manufacturing; (b) mining; (c) an occupation found by the Secretary to be particularly hazardous or detrimental to health or well-being for children between the ages of 16 and 18 years. This exemption may apply only in those cases where the child is exclusively employed by his parent or a person standing in his parents' place. (Fair Labor Standard Act, 29 CFR §570.126)

In many ways, the importance of work is still enculturated into the social system that values work and the “character byproducts” it affords. Within this light, it is especially important to learn how it is that children growing up in immigrant family businesses make sense of their experiences as “useful” human capital in their family business, when their peers are likely free to behave as “useless children” (Zelizer, 1985). In other words, is it possible that children of immigrants are conforming to their family’s economic needs, serving as necessary resources to their parents’ involvement in necessity entrepreneurship? If so, from their own perspective, what roles and at what capacity do the children in the family business play within this socioeconomic
scheme and what might be some of the potential effects of this upbringing on their psychosocial development?

Children of Immigrant Entrepreneurs

The Second Generation

Chinese Confucian thought prescribes moral social roles to every person and shapes the individual as a link to every person in a social network, cemented and stabilized by the principle of filial piety, along with other rules of conduct (Chen, 2001). Through the assignment of roles, this social code is internalized, creating, ideally, a society that is self-regulating. Scaling down to the family business system, it can be extrapolated that the children of immigrant-run family businesses play very important roles in the survival of the business family. From disparate immigrant research and family business literature, one can begin to explore the important roles that children of Chinese immigrant family businesses might hold. What is known is that children play a large part in the assimilation of immigrant families because they increase their families’ social capital (Portes, 2000). Children of new Chinese immigrants often serve as conduits between the home system and other people and organizations necessary for the family’s adaptation to an unfamiliar cultural landscape. Often more advanced in English language capabilities and more sophisticated in navigating American cultural mores, newcomer parents often look to their children as cultural ambassadors (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Additionally, second generation children are expected to be stellar students who attend Ivy League universities and eventually become high earning professionals (Louie, 2004). In addition, Asian Americans have markedly higher rates of educational attainment than that of the general U.S. population, with 49% of adults 25 years or older holding at least a college degree compared to 28% of the U.S. population, and 25% of the total research doctorates (48,069) awarded in U.S.
universities in 2010 (Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey). This high rate of educational attainment was reflected in the percentage of Asian Americans employed in management, professional and related occupations (50% compared to 40% of employed Americans overall) (Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey). Within the realm of the family business, children of immigrants also serve as a source of cheap or free labor in family owned businesses. Based on Sanders and Nee’s (1996) argument, the “family is often the main social organization supporting the establishment and operation of small businesses” for immigrants (p. 235). For instance, extended family members are usually expected to contribute funds to develop a business. It seems that when confronted with a shoestring budget, relying on affordable family labor is often the only way to keep the business going. Thus, parents might perceive children to be more reliable than outside hires because of their children’s personal stake in the family’s collective goals of financial survival and interpersonal attachment to family members. It was found that intact families, with two adult heads, predicted self-employment (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Likewise, families with teenagers present are also positively associated with formation of family-owned businesses. It is suggested that teenagers in a household significantly contribute to family social capital in tangible forms, such as family labor, that facilitate parental self-employment. For the Asian American child of immigrant entrepreneurs, they are expected to simultaneously be employees, superior students, successful professionals, and cultural ambassadors; above all, they are the family’s hope for a brighter future.

The Elite Student. An active push in recent decades has been made to learn more about the academic outcomes of second-generation immigrants, with particularly high interest in Asian American “model minorities” (Hirschman & Wong, 1986; Kao, 1995, 2010; Glick & White,
2003). Some theories even proposed that there is something markedly special about the cognitive abilities of Asian Americans. In their investigation of why Asian Americans have been able to attain educational mobility, Sue and Okazaki (1990) were the first theorists to view education from a relative functionalism perspective. Their conceptual paper espoused the belief that behavioral patterns exhibited within minority groups are influenced primarily by cultural values and status in society, and that hereditary or strictly cultural explanations are insufficient to explain the phenomenon of high educational achievement among Asian Americans. The authors suggested that educational attainment of Asian Americans is a result of limited opportunities in non-educational arenas such as leadership, entertainment, sports and politics. Given that there are few options for upward mobility for the Asian American, all attention and energy is placed on educational pursuits. The theory of relative functionalism, thus, suggests that education has become a time-honored approach to upward mobility for Asian Americans, with later generations trying to emulate the successes of previous generations. Chen and Fouad (2013) recently confirmed that racial barriers to the non-educationally relevant occupations identified by Sue and Okazaki do influence Asian American youths’ utility of education in their pursuit of upward mobility. Unsurprisingly, this functionalism argument for high educational attainment among Asian American children seems to parallel Bonacich’s (1973) middleman theory with respect to immigrant entrepreneurs in which minority immigrants are left with no choice but to seek out self-employment to have any chance of upward mobility. Thus, children of immigrant self-employed parents may doubly value academic achievement, feeling compelled to excel in the academic realm more so than the average non-entrepreneurial-origin student.

Vartanian, Karen, Buck, and Cadge (2007) explored possible reasons why Asian Americans are more likely to attain a college degree than their non-Asian counterparts. They
hypothesized that four factors contribute to the difference in college attainment between these groups: (1) having at least one immigrant parent would positively affect educational outcome; (2) parental rules, involvement, and expectations will affect educational outcome; (3) growing up in a two-parent family will have positive effects on college completion; and (4) having socioeconomic status (SES) will counterbalance the negative effects of being Asian. Using data from the 2000 wave of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), a nationally representative sample of 640 Asians broken down into seven subgroups representing various backgrounds (i.e., Chinese, Koreans, Southeast Asians, Japanese, Filipinos, and Other Asians), and 8,854 non-Asians. The results indicated that growing up in an immigrant household strongly predicted higher educational attainment among Asian America children. SES, parental expectations, and eighth-grade grade point average did not have a strong effect on educational attainment, however. These results confirmed Kao and Tienda (1995) and Kao’s (2010) immigrant optimism hypothesis, which suggested that immigrant parents’ optimism about their children’s socioeconomic prospects could decisively influence their children’s educational outcomes. The second generation, thus, is best positioned to internalize the parents’ optimism or sense of hope, and also have the advantage of cultural and language skills to achieve higher educational attainment (Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006; Vartanian, et al., 2007).

Speaking more directly to the influence of family businesses on the role of entrepreneurial children as students, Sanchirico (1991) looked at the transmittance of high educational aspirations from parents of Chinese small-business owners to their offspring. He found that proprietors of small businesses do influence their children’s level of educational attainment. Since family businesses seem to provide a “channel of intergenerational educational mobility among Chinese Americans” (Sanchirico, 1991, p. 293), the entrepreneurial child may
experience a higher expectation to excel academically (Tao & Hong, 2013). The likelihood of
success may be greater, as entrepreneurial children seem to also benefit from the immigrant
parents’ tendency to be more optimistic about their children’s educational trajectory than are
native-born parents (Kao, 2010). However, in reality, it seems that the academic outcomes of
entrepreneurial children are variable. Kim (2006) expanded on Sanchirico’s study and found
similar results. Kim had examined more in-depth the possible correlations between the
educational and career success of second-generation Korean Americans and their families’
involvedment in small business ownership. He questioned whether immigrant proprietorship
served to facilitate, maintain, or deter intergenerational mobility. The mixed-methods study also
sought out any differences in long-term outcomes for the children of immigrant proprietors and
those whose parents worked in the professional sector. Results revealed that children of business
owners attained comparable educational and occupational achievements as children of non-
business owners. These data suggest that rapid financial independence and security can be
achieved intergenerationally. However, the comparison did reveal that children of professionals
tended to go to more selective schools and enter into the professional sector, and earned more
competitive salaries. The author posed that while children of small business owners can rapidly
reap the benefits of their parents’ successes, involvement in a family business can serve as a
“mobility trap” (Kim, 2006, p. 927). It seems that a child’s sense of obligation to help out at the
family business can lead to great personal sacrifice, which may have long-term consequences on
their educational and occupational choice, often leading them toward downward mobility. Other
cultural variables such as honoring one’s parents seem to also predict effort-related activities that
lead to higher educational attainment (Chen & Fouad, 2013). Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown
(1992) threw another shade of light on the complex interplay between the superior school
permanence of Asian Americans relative to their African and Hispanic American adolescent peers by viewing the phenomenon from an ecological model. The analysis concluded that although the authoritarian parent, who emphasizes obedience and conformity, influences Asian American students’ long-term academic goals, they are more positively influenced by their academically minded peers. The research seems to imply that if Asian American students do not have the social support from their peer group, their academic performance would be at the level of their Hispanic American peers. This inference is obviously too simplistic and cannot account for the full scope of why being an honor student is such a salient part of the entrepreneurial child’s identity. Also, are children from entrepreneurial families able to spend enough time with academically minded peers, if any friends at all, given their work schedules?

The White-Collar Professional. Related to educational attainment, there is an understanding that entrepreneurship for the immigrant does not equal the prestige of being a white-collar worker in America (Abelmann & Lie, 1995; Fairlie, 2012; Park, 2005; Song, 1999). Given that the types of businesses immigrants own are usually labor-intensive and require long hours, going into a similar line of work is usually discouraged by parents. The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.’s Public Education Institute conducted one of the first in-depth studies of immigrant entrepreneurship from the perspective of children who grew up in a household where the parents supported the family through a small business (Wong, Watanabe, & Liu, 2011). The focus of the qualitative research was on how the children’s academic and career goals were influenced by their earlier immersion in a family business. The participants were 1.5 (i.e., immigrated before age 12) or second-generation children of Asian American (N=26) and Latina/o (N=10) graduate and professional students between the ages of 21 and 32. The focus groups were conducted in a northeastern U.S. city, but the participants originated from across the
country. Some important patterns with regards to the participants’ experiences growing up alongside their parents at their small family business were established. Firstly, education was identified as a highly valued commodity among the families. The views and experiences of the parents seemed to have inspired and catalyzed the participants’ pursuit of advanced higher education. Secondly, growing up in a business environment that typically involved direct and constant contact with the public allowed the adult children of immigrant entrepreneurs to learn not only good business survival skills but also appropriate social skills. However, despite having acquired strong business acumen that could transfer well to self-employment, only one of the twenty-six Asian American participants in the study was enrolled in a graduate/professional program for business. One of the participants spoke to the messages he received from his parents growing up: “My parents wanted me to get an education and be a ‘respectable professional’ and not have to do ‘hard labor’ (Wong, Watanabe, & Liu, 2011, p. 21). Still, the family business environment deeply ingrained in the participants a strong sense of work ethic, coupled with the assertion that success will result from sacrifices. As such, adult children of immigrant entrepreneurs reported feeling a deep-seated desire to “make something” of themselves. However, the professional aspirations for them delineated from the usual “Asian professions” such as business and technology. Instead, the participants expressed a longing to give back to their communities through their choice of profession, in their research field (e.g., urban planning), choice of degrees (public health, education), extra-curricular activities (foreign languages) and choice of work (e.g., education, law, science, and helping professions). Overall, there appears to be an inherent appreciation among the participants for the perceived sacrifices their parents made to ensure that they have successful professional careers and lead fulfilling careers in their adopted homeland.
The Cultural Ambassador. Matsudaira (2006) examined conceptual and methodological issues in the measurement of psychological acculturation, a core health research topic involving minority ethnic groups. There is a consensus among researchers that it is more appropriate to consider psychological acculturation as a bidimensional construct. The bidimensional model contends that individuals can maintain their cultures of origin even when they acculturate to new cultures. A certain level of selectivity is involved when the individual makes a conscious effort to preserve certain aspects of their culture of origin and adopt aspects of the new culture. It is believed that there are four different references or strategies in the bidimensional model of acculturation. Assimilated individuals have high contact with the new culture and low maintenance of culture of origin; integrated are those with high contact with both cultures; separated are individuals with low contact with the new culture and high contact with their culture of origin; and marginalized are those who have low contact with both cultures (Matsudaira, 2006, p. 471). When considering the Asian American small family businesses, one can argue that the family business structure likely predisposes the members to use the integrated acculturation strategy.

Existing literature on children of immigrants and overall family functioning have invariably involved the role of children as cultural brokers to parents who strive to integrate into their adoptive culture (Fuligni, 2001). Cultural brokering involves activities in which children and adolescents serve as mediators between family members and functions of the new adopted culture. For instance, children of immigrants are looked to as translators of documents from school or other public agencies, interface between doctors and other specialty service providers, and generally act as an adjunct to adults who are limited in their ability to productively engage in the activities themselves. Research on the effects of cultural brokering on children has reported
mixed results. One popular opinion suggests that cultural brokering is analogous to
“adultification” or “role reversal,” involving interruption to the natural hierarchy of power
between a parent and child. The child in this case is burdened by adult responsibilities, and the
parent in effect forfeits his/her parental control (Chase, 1999). This pathologizing view of
cultural brokering is countered with a more normalizing theoretical position indicating that
cultural brokers are taking on a household function that is essentially a positive experience for
the family as a whole. The argument is that the fundamental family dynamic does not become
altered or interrupted since the parent is in control of when cultural brokering occurs (Weisner,
2001).

Trickett and Jones (2007) attempted to test both theoretical positions by assessing the
effects of parental education, time in the country, gender, and the generational status of cultural
brokers. The sample included 147 Vietnamese adolescent (48% females; age range 12 to 20) and
parent (88% female; age range 34 to 61) dyads. One hundred nine (74%) of the adolescents were
first generation and the rest were second generation. Across both generations, 97% of the
participants reported engaging in cultural brokering in at least one of the following activities:
answering the telephone, translating for parents, answering the door, and scheduling or going to
appointments with parents. For the entrepreneurial child, it is not uncommon for children to man
the register, manage bank accounts, interface with suppliers, and generally serve as the mouth-
piece for parents who might not have adequate command of the dominant written or spoke
language (Light & Gold, 2000; Park, 1997; Song, 1999). Dealing with customer disputes,
complicated legal matters, and issues with landlords all fall within the purview of cultural
brokers within the business setting (Jung, 2007). Regarding the effects of cultural brokering on
family functioning, the amount of cultural brokering, as reported by adolescents, contributed to
family disagreements. Adolescents and parents who were second-generation immigrants reported greater family adaptability. Also, both adolescents’ age and time in the United States emerged as significant contributors to amount of cultural brokering, with older adolescents and parents who have been in the United States for less time reporting more cultural brokering. Finally, parents who endorsed higher enculturation behavior (i.e., the maintenance of culture of origin) relied on their children more heavily for cultural brokering. Particularly for entrepreneurs who started businesses within their ethnic enclaves in which the demand on developing language ability is not as urgent, their children might be relied upon more heavily to step in as cultural brokers.

**Bearer of Familial Hope.** Despite their engagement in the perpetuation of upward mobility, the classic American story of the poor immigrant who through hard work and intrinsic motivation is able to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility within just one generation of arriving to the “golden shores” of America have long been denigrated to the realm of myth. The economic phenomenon known as “stickiness at the ends” has challenged the notion that every American has an equal opportunity to experience a “rags to riches” trajectory within their lifetime (The Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). Granted that a majority of Americans, regardless of immigration background, are still ending up with relatively higher incomes than their parents’ generation, forty-three percent of Americans raised in the bottom quintile remain immobile in the bottom as adults, and seventy percent remain below the middle (The Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). Starkly contradictory to popular expectation is that a mere four percent of individuals raised in the bottom quintile are ascending to the top quintile (The Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). The stagnation of intergenerational transference of wealth appears to be having reverberating effects on America’s youth. According to the “2012 State of Our Nation’s Youth” report, only 54% of the 500 high school graduates who participated in the survey expressed hope and
optimism in the future of the country. This figure was only one percent up from 2008 (Wolniak, Neishi, Rude, & Gebhardt, 2012). While the opinions of this small sample obviously cannot be generalized to the nation’s children, the fact that nearly half of the participants are not feeling confident about the future of the United States should not be ignored. Countless research on the theory of hope has confirmed its inverse relationship with overall wellbeing and quality of life, which impacts their socioeconomic futures (Savhl, Isaac, Adams, Carels, & September, 2013; Synder, 2002; Ungar & Perry, 2012). Defined as the cognitive process used in establishing and achieving goals and ascertaining individuals’ sense of future by Snyder (2002), hope is considered a key component of resilience, or the ability to maintain normal functioning after experiencing a traumatic event (Ungar & Perry, 2012). Additionally, having hope may assist in reducing many risks by acting as a protective factor for individuals against myriad life challenges (e.g., mental illness, physical illness, etc.) (Milne, Moyle, & Cooke, 2009; Snyder, 2002; Werner, 2012). In their study involving 566 adolescents aged 14–17 years, from both high violence and low violence areas in Cape Town, South Africa, Savahl, Isaacs, Adams, Carels, and September (2013) found that children’s perception of hope is a significantly stronger predictor of their wellbeing than actual exposure to community violence. These results suggest that instilling hope in youth is equally important as protecting them from physical harm. It appears that entrepreneurial children may be in possession of more hope than the average non-immigrant generation of youth. Entrepreneurial children seem to have been bestowed the function of traveling as far up the socioeconomic ladder as possible. Moreover, there is strong evidence to suggest that our bruised confidence in America’s promise of meritocracy is being held together quietly by a few small, but strong hands that knot the present to the future for immigrant small business families.
**Children and the Family Business**

In addition to being a second-generation Asian American, children of immigrant entrepreneurs find themselves as sources of free or cheap labor for the family business and household. According to a study based on the 2003-2010 American Time Use Survey (ATUS) data collected by the Census Bureau, how youth between ages 15-17 spend their time differs a great deal depending on their families’ immigrant background (i.e., first generation immigrant and/or has at least one immigrant parent) or native-born status (Kofman & Bianchi, 2012). The authors focused on the average time spent per day involved in the following major categories: (1) paid work, (2) housework and caregiving, (3) personal care, (4) leisure activities, and (5) educational activities. The findings appear to suggest that youth who live with at least one immigrant parent are more likely to have a daily routine of “all work and no play.” While adolescents with native-born parents reportedly spent about twenty-five minutes more on paid work, children with immigrant parents spent about eight more minutes on unpaid household work, almost half an hour more a day on academic related activities, and twenty fewer minutes on leisure activities. The authors did not supply a comprehensive explanation for the significant difference in time spent at paid vs. unpaid work for the youth. However, these results corroborate the common theme found in immigration literature around academic achievement being one of the most viable investments toward immigrant families’ future economic mobility. It can thus be inferred that parents might push for their children to forego paid work in order to focus more time on school, as an academic degree is expected to yield greater socioeconomic gains in the long run. The other side of this explanation may address an even more immediate concern. The fact is that if immigrant parents are working long hours at their respective jobs, it might simply be more cost-effective to have their adolescent child remain at home to take care of household
responsibilities rather than hire someone else to do the same work. Another possibility for why youth in immigrant households may not be as involved in paid employment is that they have fewer opportunities to get hired as a result of having fewer social connections that may yield employment. Regardless, children from immigrant households are putting in more hours to contribute to the household. Notable is that youth from households that are self-employed tended to do more paid work, reporting on average twenty-one more minutes of work compared to youths whose families do not own a business. The results suggest, then, that youth who are from immigrant households whose parents are also business owners may have more external demands on their time than non-business owning and native-born families.

Similarly, Webbink, Smits, and De Jong (2012) investigated two forms of “hidden child labor” in sixteen developing Asian and African countries. They specifically looked at factors that influence children’s involvement in household and family business work. The authors define household activities as chores or housekeeping work that do not directly contribute economically to the household, and family businesses as activities that involve unpaid work that do influence the family economically. Both forms of labor are thought to take place outside of census data in the developing countries and often involve a parent or guardian deciding the child’s responsibilities. The study looked at the rate of hidden childhood labor based on socio-economic, demographic, and cultural factors at the household, district, and national level. Not surprisingly, wealthier households, who had more educated mothers, and access to modern amenities like electricity and water tended to rely less on childhood labor. Specifically with regards to child labor in the context of family businesses, it was suggested by the authors that parents might elect to have more children so that they can contribute to the family business as “cheap laborers”
(Webbink, Smits, & De Jong, 2012, p. 641). The functional role of employee is born out of both necessity and obligation to family.

**Psychosocial Factors of Entrepreneurship**

Similar to the process of conceptualizing expectant roles of entrepreneurial children, a heavy reliance on existing research in the fields of economics, sociology, and immigration history was required to initiate an exploration into the psychological and social factors implicated in the experience of children in ethnic economies. Inferences had to be made because no stand-alone research on the lived experiences of children of immigrant entrepreneurs was found currently within the field of psychology (Keywords: children, youth, second generation, immigration, small business, entrepreneurship, self-employment; Databases: PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO). As such, not much is known about the internal dialogue or psychological processes inherent in the potential roles and responsibilities that Asian American entrepreneurial children take on throughout their early development. In an attempt to broaden the theoretical scope of family business research, Pieper (2010) argued that the permeability of boundaries between family and business systems is inherently relational and emotionally loaded and thus requires theories that “provide insight into the emotions, motives (other than self-interest), and cognitions that underlie most social interactions, and familial relationships in particular” (p. 27). Thus, identifying possible psychological factors at play may reveal potential conflicts or protective factors inherent in the unique experiences of Asian American children growing up in immigrant entrepreneurial families. Knowing about the psychosocial impact of immigrant social businesses on the second generation of immigrants will lend well to the development of appropriate clinical, political, economical, and social changes.
Given that intergenerational mobility is so heavily dependent on the ability of entrepreneurial children to adeptly hold onto multiple functional roles, knowing how the individuals interpret and assume these roles is supremely important. Song (1999) conducted in-depth interviews with Chinese children of take-out restaurants in England and found that children of these businesses operated within the tacit guidelines of a “family work contract” (FWC). Their roles were guided by the “the belief that they should, in principle, help their parents” in whatever way possible toward the success of their family economic endeavors (Song, 1999, p. 73). In other words, there were no explicit referendums about the tasks performed or the number of hours one must contribute towards a set wage or monetary compensation. Instead, the FWC is a set of values or culturally incurred system of beliefs that one must contribute to the family’s economic survival strategy (i.e., family business), whereby helping out is not the same as formal employment. Thus, one would be failing to uphold certain expectations when breaking the FWC or reneging on one’s family obligations. With respect to these guidelines, one may expect some level of friction between the children and their role within their family’s business. Song did find among her participants a sense of ambivalence with regards to how they made sense of their experience. On the one hand, they reportedly acknowledged positive feelings of loyalty, autonomy, and ethnic identification; on the other hand, they expressed feelings of resentment over work demands, lack of freedom, and being forced to deal with racial discrimination from customers while at the shop (also cited in Wainwright, 2000). Among the participants, few children received monetary compensation, but many received support from their parents with their educational expenses. However, the theme of feeling “guilt-tripped” into contributing to their family business was common, speaking to Confucian codes of filial piety in which economic negotiation across generations is deemed disrespectful. The close-quarters of
the home-business setting, the high prevalence of having to serve as the linguistic and cultural interpreter, and the need to save labor costs are all clearly vital to the maintenance of the ethnic economy. Yet, the complex interactions between these factors seem to elude our current Western understanding of the psychosocial development of these children.

Park’s (2005) critical examination of the entrepreneurial family’s influence on the identity development of second-generation child of Asian American immigrants furthers the conversation. She helped to shed some light on the potential long-term outcomes of growing up embedded within an ethnic enterprise, or “a social institution that epitomizes the quintessential American ideology of success and upward mobility” (Park, 2005, p. 2). Like Song, Park looked at Confucian-origin Asian subcultures, and saw that Korean and Chinese American children of immigrant entrepreneurs were likewise caught in the riptides of their personal and family business goals. The participants (51 female; 37 males) ranged in age from 15 to 26: eight were adolescents, and 80 were young adults ranging from ages 18-26. Eighty-eight of these interviews were with the children and thirty-four were with family members, which included extended family, and community leaders. Seventy-one of the eighty-eight young adults and adolescents grew up as part of a household that owned a family business. The majority of the businesses represented in the study were of the “typical ethnic variety,” consisting of restaurants, dry cleaners, and other service sector businesses that require intense family labor and did not employ more than five non-family workers. The businesses also operated on low economies of scale and were located in urban communities with affordable overhead costs. Park found that participants reported feeling consistent pressure to showcase their family’s hard-earned success as adults through their consumption of luxury goods and status symbols. In other words, after working long hours alongside their parents, they also felt they “should” achieve all the markers of success
as part of not only a family work contract, but also a greater “social citizenship” agreement. Overall, it seems that Park’s analysis of the children’s narratives around the need to simultaneously play the role of the family member and the worker was largely characterized by continual delayed gratification experienced within a limbo state of not fully being a child and not fully being an adult. Overall, these participants in Park’s study described their experiences as abnormal when considering their “process of growing up” (Park, 2005, p. 63).

In their study on the advantages and disadvantages of working in a family business, Beehr, Drexler, and Faulkner (1997) employed the concept of interrole conflict to appropriately describe Park’s finding. Interrole conflict is defined as the conflict between demands and expectations from those with whom the employee interacts on the basis of at least two different roles (p. 298). For instance, at times in which rewards need to be allocated, family values may suggest that everyone needs to be treated equally, even though typical business values might preclude those who do not merit the reward. The person responsible for administering the reward is thus thrust into two very different roles. The conflict is expected to intensify when those involved tend to lack the opportunity to avoid the repercussions of the conflict given their physical confinement to the family and to the business relationships. In the Beehr, Drexler, and Faulkner (1997) study, questionnaire items derived from a focus group and consisting of existing psychometric scales were completed by 137 respondents from family businesses and 98 respondents from non-family businesses. Of those from family businesses, 51 were members of the owning family and 73 were not family members. The empirical findings suggested that there are more benefits than disadvantages from the dual relationships inherent in family businesses. The authors attribute the positive organization behavior to the possibility that members have worked out ways to solve, get around, or completely ignore problematic situations. Additionally,
members of family businesses were more satisfied with their careers, more committed to the organization, and were perhaps less likely to quit their positions when compared to their counterparts from non-family business. Overall, the results of this study seem to explain why family businesses have persisted and continue to form throughout the course of U.S. history.

Telzer and Fuligni (2009) looked at the psychological impact of daily family assistance on adolescents (n=752, 14-15 years old) with Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds. They found that adolescents who spent more days and time during a day in family-related work reported being happier and feeling a greater sense of role fulfillment. While the Asian American participants spent less time in family assistance work than their Latin American counterparts, they worked more than their European-background peers. Interestingly, there were differences in level of reported happiness in relation to the type of family assistance performed. Participants, regardless of ethnicity and gender, reported more distress when assisting parents with their work when compared to work that is associated with household responsibilities such as assisting siblings. Assisting parents with their work was associated with an increased perception of demands. In other words, when the participants felt that they were being demanded to contribute to family work, they were more likely to report being less happy and more distressed. These results seem to suggest that children of business owners in general might still feel a sense of role fulfillment and a sense of happiness as contributors to their family work, but their psychological wellbeing may be more likely to be impacted negatively.

In addition to the potential emotional toll placed on entrepreneurial children, Zierold, Appana, and Anderson (2012) in their study of the perils of labor found that adolescents who were employed in family-businesses were more likely to report serious injuries (e.g., broken bones or crushed body parts) than their peers who were employed in other conditions. The
authors suggest that the higher prevalence of reported family-business related injuries might be the result of doing work that is normally prohibited by the Hazardous Occupation Orders (HOO; Department of Labor, 29 CFR §§570.50 through 570.68). They explained that the family dynamics found in family businesses might make it socially inappropriate or financially impossible for these teenagers to opt out of risky, dangerous responsibilities. These are serious matters to consider when evaluating the effects of involvement in the family entrepreneurial enterprise among Asian immigrant families.

There are other ways in which the pursuit of stereotypical success expectations affects children of Asian American immigrant entrepreneurs. Zhang (2010) investigated how portrayals of Asian Americans in mass media are widely accepted by the general public. The study involved 169 undergraduate students (127 females, 41 males, and 1 unidentified) from a private northeast university. The participants were given four scenarios illustrating various Asian American stereotypes, including “the poor communicator or nerd” and “the foreigner.” Participants were then asked to rank their likelihood of initiating friendship with these stereotypical characters. The results indicated that when compared to other racial-ethnic groups (i.e., Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics) Asian Americans conformed to media representations. Asian Americans were perceived as more likely to achieve academic success, were highly rated to lack communication and social skills, and were perceived to be more likely to be left out by peers. As an ultimate mark of how common Asian American stereotypes influence people’s behavior, Asian Americans were ranked as least likely to be asked to be peoples’ friends.

Gupta, Szymanski, and Leong (2011) applied the “status-based rejection sensitivity” theory to examine the relationship between internalized racialism, including endorsement and/or internalization of positive Asian stereotypes, and psychological distress and attitudes toward
help-seeking behavior among Asian Americans. The empirical study consisted of 291 self-identified Asian Americans between the ages 18 to 79. The participants were mostly first generation Asian Americans, with 35% belonging to the second generation, and the remainder were third generation and older or belonged to other variations of generation status. The results of the study indicated that higher endorsement of positive stereotypes or the model minority myth was associated with more somatic complaints and higher levels of psychological distress. The authors suggested that the endorsement of positive stereotypes could have the same effects as when endorsing negative stereotypes. Moreover, endorsing positive stereotypes is predictive of poorer psychological health and lower help-seeking behavior. Asian Americans who do not feel that they are measuring up to the model minority myth may feel extra pressure, added shame, and embarrassment. Seeking help is then perceived by the individual to be the ultimate admittance of inferiority, which would further stigmatize the individual.

Developmental Implications of Child Labor

Considering the prominent place of work in the lives of children of immigrant entrepreneurs, it is important to explore the developmental opportunities and liabilities associated with this subpopulation’s labor activities. Unfortunately, this analysis cannot be accomplished without also recognizing the general ambiguity around what is currently known about the effects of child labor on personal development. What is unanimously recognized is that the exploitation of children for their labor is definitively detrimental to the physical, psychological, cognitive, and moral development of children. International children’s rights advocates have agreed upon this definition of child labor:

Any mental or physical effort exerted by a child for or without pay, whether permanently, incidentally, temporarily or seasonally, and is considered harmful to him, and is done at
the mental, physical, social or moral level, and which conflicts with his studies and
deprives him from the opportunities to commit to learning and studying through
compelling him to leave school prematurely, or requires him to attempt to combine
school attendance and long, concentrated work for hours (International Labour
Organization).

However, when one looks at more socially acceptable contexts in which youth is employed in
either paid or unpaid work, and when their best interests are supposedly upheld and monitored by
responsible adults, the results are more nuanced.

Given that most of the recent research on the subject of child labor is taking place in
developing countries since the prevalence of child labor is now considered a passé issue in the
United States, the use of older texts was inevitable for this review. On the whole, the existing
U.S.-based literature presents a mixed picture of the developmental consequences of child and
adolescent employment. First, most studies concur in finding no independent effects of work
hours on self-esteem and general measures of mental health, and little or no effect on school
grades (Marsh, 1991; Mihalic & Elliot, 1997; Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, Shanahan, & Call, 1996;
Steinberg, Fegley, & Dornbusch, 1993). Additionally, teenagers’ employment above 20 hours a
week has been found to hurt school performance (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). Greater hours
of work in high school is related to lower rates of postsecondary school completion (Carr,
Wright, & Brody, 1996; Marsh, 1991), although this relationship may be reversed for youth
employed under 20 hours per week (Mortimer et al., 1997).

The benefits from youth employment are however evident in the consistent finding of a
positive linear relationship between hours worked in high school and post-high school
employment to being employed, wages received, and job prestige, as much as 12 years later
(Carr et al., 1996; Marsh, 1991; Mortimer et al., 1997; Ruhm, 1995). This robust finding suggests that adolescents learn important job-related skills or habits from their work experiences. The costs of work, however, are suggested by findings that working at a job, particularly over 20 hours per week, has a predictive relationship to increased delinquency, school misconduct, and substance use (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997; Mortimer et al., 1996; Steinberg et al., 1993). One study found that the higher rate of alcohol use was temporary—it disappeared in the post-high school years (Mortimer & Johnson, 1997, cited in Mortimer et al., 1997)—although another study found higher substance use was still evident in these individuals at ages 27 and 28 (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997). A huge cross-sectional study of 70,000 adolescents corroborated relationships between hours of work and substance use, aggression, and delinquency and also found hours of work to be associated with getting less sleep, skipping breakfast, and getting less exercise (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993). In sum, these studies suggest that time spent in high school employment clearly enhances subsequent employment for U.S. youth, but has some costs in the form of greater risk behaviors and lesser school attainment, particularly when it exceeds 20 hours per week.

Only a few studies provided data on the important question of how these costs and benefits vary as a function of the quality of youths’ experience at their jobs. Mortimer and colleagues (1996) found that adolescents in jobs with opportunities for advancement showed longitudinal increases in mastery orientation, heightened work values, and reduced depression. Level of job stress, however, was related to depressive affect (Mortimer et al., 1997), and jobs that youth described as extrinsically rather than intrinsically rewarding appeared to detract from school achievement and to contribute to school problems (Mortimer, Harley, & Johnson, 1998). In a cross-sectional study conducted by Weller, Kelder, Cooper Basen-Engquist, and Tortolero
(2003) that looked at the effects of school-year employment among poor, mostly Hispanic high school students (n=3,083) in a rural Southwestern U.S. region found unsurprising negative associations between work intensity and school performance and engagement, health risk behaviors, physical/mental health concerns, and social life. The authors indicated that high-intensity workers (working more than 21 hours per week) made worse grades, had more unexcused absences per week, slept in class, and were tardy to school more frequently, and were less confident about graduating from college than non-workers and low-intensity workers (working 1-10 hours per week). High and moderate-intensity (working 11-20 hours per week) workers reported more frequent substance use (cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, inhalant and steroids) than non-workers and low-intensity workers. Moreover, all workers, regardless of work intensity level, reported decreased hours of sleep and increased feelings of stress throughout the week. With regards to social life, moderate and high-intensity workers reported feeling less satisfied with their amount of leisure time than non-workers and low-intensity workers. These findings indicated that working longer hours may have untoward effects on student’s overall functioning. However, instances of cigarette and marijuana were reported to be lower among low-intensity workers than their non-working counterparts. These results suggest that there may be some redeeming qualities to students working fewer hours during the week4, but the study does not talk about the potential effects of working alongside parents and siblings and the

4 The relationship between number of hours worked and the consequences of employment on the child can be explained by a “threshold model” in which an inverted-U-shaped function (for positive outcomes) with increasing positive consequences up to the threshold number of hours (the inflection point) and increasing negative consequences beyond that point. One trouble with this model is that there is no consensus about where precisely this threshold lies (e.g., between 2 and 20 hours per week) or whether the threshold is the same for different outcomes (Payne, 2003).
different levels of work intensity. In other words, can the presence of family members at the work place moderate the effects of working a greater number of hours for the student?

The results of the above earlier research are seemingly similar to more recent studies in developing countries. For instance, a study in Brazil that focused on children who were between 6 and 14 years old found that the time a child dedicates to work leads to harmful consequences on subsequent educational achievements, even after controlling for previous human capital accumulation and other factors (Zabaleta, 2011). In particular, working over three hours a day is associated with school failure. A distinction by type of work shows that time spent in market production has larger negative effects on school outcomes than time spent performing household chores.

Emerson & Souza (2011) asked the question that has plagued generations of child labor researchers: “Is child labor harmful?” They investigated this question by analyzing data collected between 1988 and 1996 from close to 100,000 households in Brazil, including information on current working-age adults’ attributes and incomes, as well as retrospective information about their earlier life experiences working in various capacities. The investigators found that child labor is associated with lower adult earnings, but that the age at which a child begins working is an important determinate of adult earnings. There appears to be negative effects of working before ages 12-14 and more positive effects after ages 12-14 on the schooling of the participants. These results suggest that there is a partial trade-off effect between working and schooling for children who are engaged in work at a young age, but the processes might be complementarily positive for a teenager. Given that these results were based on the Brazilian economy and population growing up in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, they may not be directly applicable to more contemporary Asian American children of entrepreneurial families in America.
Nonetheless, it might be revealing to see at what ages children within entrepreneurial families begin to work and what might be the effects of their labor activities on their futures.

In addition to adult income, a 2010 study by Lee and Orazem considered the health consequences of child labor on their incidences of illness or physical disability as adults in Brazil. When looking at child labor and schooling while controlling for unobserved abilities or health endowments, child labor appeared to have small adverse effects on a wide variety of health measures, including heart disease or hypertension. The authors suggested that delaying entry into child labor and also increasing the time spent in school can significantly lower the probability of early onset of physical ailments such as back problems, arthritis, or reduced strength or stamina. Even though the study’s methods do not distinguish between the health impacts of child labor and the impact of reduced time in school, what can be inferred from its analysis is that the less time spent in either can reduce the opportunity for sustaining physical injuries.

In one of the few studies that sought to understand the first-person perspective of child labor, Liborio and Ungar (2010) attempted to reconcile the risk factors and positive outcomes associated with children’s labor. Specifically, the authors drew the link between the development of resilience and children’s work, noting that when resources are scare, child labor may not be as evil to alternative possibilities. Based on their thorough literature review, the authors found that children’s work is instrumental in helping children develop a positive identity, secure relationships, access to money and shelter, social cohesion to their families and communities, power and control in the form of the ability to effect change in their social and physical environments, social justice by way of future work and present security, and cultural adherence to societal norms that value social contributions. These themes seem to offer that there may be
positive effects of children’s work, but the immediate and long-term costs remain uncertain.

In one of the most comprehensive studies based on the U.S. Department of Education’s 1988 National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data (n=4,757), Marsh and Kleitman (2005) tested several broad theoretical models (e.g., commitment/identification, zero-sum, development/socialization, and threshold models) designed to explain the impact of working during high school. They data collected on the same students at the same school in grades 8, 10, and 12, and then two years after they had completed high school. After controlling for background variables (e.g., social economic status, ethnicity, gender, prior education experiences) and preceding grade’s academic outcomes, the study did not support the threshold model, which suggests that working a small number of hours (less than a defined threshold) has benefits, whereas working a larger number of hours has increasingly negative effects. Examining the effects of working in grades 8, 10, and 12 on grade 12 and postsecondary outcomes, it was found that, with the exception of unemployment during two years after high school, working even a small number of hours relative to not working at all had negative linear consequences on standardized achievement tests, school grades, coursework selection, self-esteem, locus of control, attendance, staying out of trouble, educational and occupational aspirations; and on postsecondary educational attainment, and educational and occupational aspirations. With regards to employment two years after high school, one might suspect that having prior work experience might qualify the student for work after graduation. However, the higher number of post-secondary school employment might have to do with the student who did not pursue high education, did not get into college, or decided to pursue an alternative educational training route. The positive effect of working during high school on subsequent short-term employment was not mediated by other high school outcomes as spending earnings on drugs, alcohol, cars and going
out on dates. Further research would be required to assess the reason for high employment two years after high school for these participants, and to assess for more long-term outcomes of high school employment.

Similarly, Marsh and Kleitman tested the developmental/socialization model (Holland & Andre, 1987), which predicts that increased adolescent part-time employment/extracurricular activities will lead to increased transmission of knowledge, practical and organizational skills, self-regulation, a greater sense of responsibility, and adult perspective-taking. This idea is more or less related to the Horatio-Algerian credo that early, hard work will promote young people morally and socially. In other words, working from a young age contributes to character building, which will have positive effects on school performance. The results of this study did not support the developmental/socialization model, but instead supported the premise that investment in school is necessary for positive effects on academic outcomes. The only instance in which schoolwork is positively associated with part-time employment is when the student’s intention is to save their earnings for college. Earning money to gratify immediate needs such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs use, going out on dates (entertainment), owning a car, and even living expenses such as food and rent were negatively associated with the wide range of psychosocial constructs mentioned above. The type of work that the students did, with the exception of a few types of jobs, did not seem to have a significant effect on the student’s secondary and postsecondary outcome variables. Employment at a family business was individually measured, but the types of work included work in a house, fast food, babysitting, mechanical work (including working on a farm and doing construction work), grocery clerk, work at a hospital, salesperson, office work, and other. Mechanical work had the most negative effect on the student’s educational and occupational aspirations in grade 12 and 2 years after
graduation. Students who worked in fast food or did babysitting reported lower educational expectations from their parents. Having an office job had the most positive effect on grade 12 students’ self-esteem than any other type of work performed. While there was largely little evidence that any particular type of work can offset the negative effects of the number of hours worked, it seems that having a job that is less labor-intensive and perhaps more prestigious has a higher likelihood of boosting adolescent self-esteem.

Additionally, given how the spirit of modern capitalism was believed by Max Weber (2001) to be built on his theory of the Protestant work ethic, which suggests that the pursuit of profit is virtuous, one cannot talk about the labor of children in family businesses without also talking about this subgroup’s process of religious and spiritual development. Some scholars have defined spiritual development as the process of growing one’s intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the individual is “embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred,” leading to the development of a motivation to search for “connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution” (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003, p. 207). In a systematic review on the correlation between spirituality and adolescent health outcomes conducted by Cotton, Sebracki, Rosenthal, Tsevat, and Drotar (2006), we understand spiritual connectedness, spiritual coping, and meaning-making, may have positive outcomes related to overall wellbeing. Does this definition of spirituality suggest that children of immigrant entrepreneurs might have a greater awareness/appreciation of their religious and spiritual identity since their labor contributions inherently connect them to a greater sense of purpose? Thus, can there be a causal relationship between involvement in a family’s economic ventures and behavioral, physical and mental health outcomes, with spirituality serving as a mediating variable? In future studies, it would be important to explore if working for one’s parents or
guardians in a family business may serve as a conduit by which youth can experience spiritual
growth.

Overall, the weight of evidence suggests that spending large amounts of time in
household and paid labor is generally associated with mixed developmental outcomes in which
there are known risks and rewards to youths’ behavioral, physical, spiritual, mental, and
emotional wellbeing. However, these conclusions are based on a dated body of research from
Western nations, and an emerging research literature from developing countries. The ambiguous
findings also do not speak much to the outcomes of youth who are working in an ethnic family
business, or who may be engaged in training and constructive supervision from their parents.
Given the overall diminishing time spent on labor, the transition of a population to literate,
industrial conditions opens time for activities that may be more developmentally beneficial,
children who contribute to the maintenance of their family’s immigrant entrepreneurial
enterprises in the United States are largely absent from the literature.

**Conclusion**

Regarded by contemporary adults as dependent, needy, and helpless until they come of
legal age (i.e., eighteen years old) in the United States, it has become easy to forget that children
are not only our best hopes for the future, but have proven to be remarkable contributors to past
successes as well as current achievements of families. Before the passage of the Fair Labor
Standards Act in 1938, which instituted free, compulsory education for children, and set federal
standards for child labor, children worked in large numbers whenever and wherever adults
worked, which included farms, mines, factories, and home industries (Hindman, 2002). Often
times, they filled the jobs that adults could not accomplish. Children’s nimble hands and small
stature allowed them to nestle between machine parts, often proving to be quicker than any adult
in keeping up with the brisk pace of production. Not unlike every story of abuse and misuse of majority power in American history, children’s innocence and emphatic regard for others were exploited. Since then, the post-industrial aged American adult’s sense of obligation to children’s welfare seems to mimic dynamics of white man’s guilt, in which the adult decries any hint that a child’s behavior may be considered as child labor. As a result, adults either quickly swoop in to rescue the child from the grips of labor activity, or pretend to have never seen the work performed by a minor. Nonetheless, the work of children in small family businesses can provide a glimpse into an aspect of American culture that is as relevant to the success of families today, as they were less than seventy-five years ago.

Federal labor laws do not protect these children, as parents are exempt from regulations when employing the help of their offspring to assist in family businesses (The United Stated Department of Labor, 29 CFR §570.70). Family businesses are also complex systems to understand. They merge the interpersonal, familial roles of parents and children, with that of economic dynamics of employer and employee. As Asian Americans with cultural ties to their parents’ country of origin and members of mainstream American culture, how do children make sense of their roles within their family economy? Little is known about the psychological as well as the social development of children who belong to this subculture. The review of literature on the phenomena of immigrant entrepreneurship has yielded studies in every social science discipline but psychology. The studies have been focused on the economic effects of self-employment on the economy, but the human condition that incorporates the perspectives of the children in these families appears limited. The two most comprehensive examinations provided by Song and Park only allude to important psychological constructs such as identity development conflicts, role confusion, interpersonal boundary blurring between parent and child, and
management of stress and anxiety. None of the inquiries present a concise view of the potential pros and cons of inheriting the responsibility to uphold the immigrant entrepreneurial dream of upward socioeconomic mobility. Moreover, the methodology of existing studies has been largely quantitative, which limits our understanding of sociocultural contextual factors affecting the whole person.
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Abstract
Little is currently known about the ways in which family businesses, as a consistent backdrop in individuals’ upbringings, impact the psychological and social development of Chinese American children of immigrant entrepreneurs. The aim of this exploratory, qualitative study was to examine the intra- and inter-personal outcomes of this earlier life experience. The results of the data analyses illustrated unique roles and responsibilities, processes and procedures, pushes and pulls that seem to be inherent in a family business system. These dynamics existing within the different levels of the ecological systems affected the psychosocial developmental outcomes of this subpopulation of second generation Chinese American youth. Details of the participants’ sense of self and multicultural identity, academic and career aspirations and achievements, factors of emotional intelligence, and overall worldviews are presented here. Clinical, research, and policy implications are also discussed.

**Chapter 2: The Psychosocial Effects of Growing Up in a Chinese Immigrant Small Family**
Business: A Phenomenological Study

The phenomenon of Chinese immigrant families looking to self-employment as a vehicle for upward socioeconomic mobility has persisted throughout the history of this group’s migration to the United States (Berrett, Jones, & McEvoy, 1996; Fairlie & Meyer, 1996; Georgarakos & Tatsiramos, 2009; Lee, 2014; Light & Gold, 2000). A wide range of literature describes how ethnic families make use of their collective resources and cultural traditions to operate small businesses (Aronson, 1991; Min, 2008; Park, 2004; Song, 1999). For the Chinese and many other ethnic minority immigrant groups, the family enterprise provides ways to help offset many inherent disadvantages experienced in the immigrant acculturation process (Kesler & Hout, 2010; Robb, 2002; Yoo, 1998). With unemployment or underemployment as likely alternative fates for many immigrants who lack necessary social and economic capital (e.g., English language ability, transferable academic and professional credentials, American industry experience, sources of employment referral, etc.), proprietors of ethnic family businesses are still able to enjoy certain advantages (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). For example, family firms provide access to a reliable labor pool of kin who can be trained in business operations with ease, can limit the flow of trade secrets, and provide financing opportunities that banks cannot (Light & Gold, 2000; Stewart, 2003). In addition, family members can provide the flexibility required for business survival in competitive, seasonal, and changing markets (Steier, Chua, & Chrisman, 2009). "Self" -employment, thus, is clearly a misnomer when considering the collective efforts of the family members in an immigrant-owned business. Financial survival requires an intricate interplay between the many unpredictable forces of the open market and all members of the family unit. However, focusing only on the end product of any group dynamic takes the attention off the individual agents of change, leaving replication of successes and reparation of failures...
difficult to achieve. Within the existing research on ethnic family entrepreneurship, little is known about the experiences of its contributors, particularly that of the children who play a paramount role in strengthening their family’s socioeconomic livelihood, and thereby that of local and national economies.

The children of first-generation immigrants are often tasked with mediating between the ever-changing worlds outside of the home simply because they possess the cultural repertoire and linguistic skills of both their parents’ adoptive and native countries (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trickett & Jones, 2007). However, in the context of the immigrant business family, the boundaries between production and consumption, the employer and employee, exploitation and altruism, and the public and the private that underlie contemporary models of economic life, become inextricably blurry (Beehr, Drexler, & Faulkner, 1997; Berent-Braun & Uhlaner, 2012; Brannon, Wiklund, & Haynie, 2013; Pieper, 2010; Stanly, 2010; Steier, Chua, & Chrisman, 2009; Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). What becomes of the second-generation child within the system of an ethnic family business? Sociologists, Song (1999) and Park (2005), in their respective in-depth studies of children of Asian immigrant-entrepreneurs—despite the publication of the studies being separated by the Atlantic Ocean and several years—found that the children who had to “help out” in their respective family businesses reported distinctly different experiences from their peers who did not have ties to a family business. Their findings complement the ever-growing work done in the fields of economics and immigration studies, but the field of psychology has yet to have its say about the experiences of Chinese American individuals growing up in an immigrant family business.

Although arguments have been made about both the advantages and disadvantages of child labor and children’s parental assistance (Light & Bonacich, 1988), the degree to which
children are affected in the current globalized urban economy is largely unknown. This deficit in the knowledge base is disappointing because the issue of contemporary child labor has largely been hidden from plain sight in developed countries since the passage of labor report laws and the rise of the middle class starting in the 1930s (Zelizer, 1985). The prevalence of child labor has since largely been consigned in the minds’ of contemporary Americans as only a harsh reality of developing countries, as characterized by their high levels of poverty, lack of access to free education, and lack of labor regulations and policies (Webbink, Smits, & De Jong, 2011). However, the truth is that issues of poverty, gaps in academic achievement, and protection of child welfare still impact those living in the United States (Qian, Lichter, & Crowley, 2010). For instance, significant number of young immigrants and U.S.-born children of immigrants are living below or near poverty levels. According to the Center for Immigrant Studies analysis of the March 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS), the poverty rate for immigrants and their U.S.-born children was 23 percent compared to 13.5 percent for natives and their young children. Finding those with incomes under 200 percent of poverty or near poverty is much more common among immigrants than natives. There were 43.6 percent of immigrants, compared to 31.1 percent of natives, living in or near poverty in 2010 (Center for Immigration Studies). As the gap between the haves and have-nots in America continues to grow, the children of immigrant small businesses who are caught between the need to contribute to the upward mobility of their families, or fall into imminent poverty, are virtually absent in public discourse. This denial of their existence is reflected in today’s federal child labor laws:

The Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) minimum age requirements do not apply to minors employed by their parents, or by a person acting as their guardian. An exception to this occurs in mining, manufacturing and occupations where the minimum age
requirement of 18 years old applies. (The United Stated Department of Labor, 29 CFR §570.70)

Furthermore, the children of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs seem to conveniently live outside of the ongoing political rhetoric around immigration reform, as they quietly blend into the “model minority” group (Daniel, 2013), in which gaining membership is as elusive as entry into the “Rags to Riches” club\(^5\).

Since so little is known currently about the lived experiences of growing up in an immigrant family business environment, the ultimate purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the potential ways in which the family business, as a consistent backdrop in one’s upbringing, has an impact on the psychological and social development of Chinese American children of immigrant entrepreneurs. As an exploratory study, the scope of the research is intended to provide a cross-sectional view of the lived experiences of children who have grown up in a Chinese immigrant small family business. An examination of the intra- and inter-personal outcomes of these earlier life experiences is expected to provide details of how roles and responsibilities, processes and procedures, pushes and pulls inherent in a family business system are integrated into the developmental outcomes of the child. More importantly, this study will focus on the participants’ psychosocial development, including their sense of self and multicultural identity, academic and career aspirations and achievements, emotional wellbeing, and overall worldviews as related to their pasts, presents, and futures. In other words, what can be said about the experiences of individuals who are positioned in this crossfire of high personal, family, and societal expectations? Do children who grow up in a Chinese immigrant household consciously integrate themselves into the process of achieving upward mobility when subjected

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\(^5\) The term ‘rags to riches’ refers to the popular American folklore about how any poor person can achieve economic riches by virtue of working diligently and following rules in America.
to daily reminders and practices of hard work; and if so, how do they feel about their roles and responsibilities? Additionally, what lessons can be learned from their experiences that can be applied to other groups? Knowing more about this population’s narrative would help to bring these children out from behind the counters and workspaces of ubiquitous immigrant-owned take-out restaurants, convenience stores, groceries, laundromats, dry-cleaners, and other contemporary “mom-and-pop” retail establishments. Above all, this study is intended to give the children a chance to share their stories and celebrate their invaluable contributions to their families, communities, and nation, while also highlighting their sense of “agency” in the complex, socio-cultural-economic-psychological contexts of the immigrant family business phenomenon.

Henceforth, the term “entrepreneur” and “small business owner” will be used interchangeably to refer to a self-employed immigrant family. The actual participants of the study will be referred to as “children” in certain contexts to differentiate them from their Chinese immigrant parents. To investigate the effects of individual involvement with the business, participants were screened for having spent the majority of their childhood and adolescent years “helping out” as workers and/or social mediators in the family business. The act of ‘helping out’ was left to the participants’ interpretation, as imposing a definition may inadvertently exclude important variances in the experiences of the participants. The majority of the businesses represented were expected to be typical Chinese immigrant, small family businesses requiring intense family labor and long hours. A small family business constituted

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6 The use of the term ‘children’ shall not be regarded as a sociopolitical mechanism where one’s legal rights and privileges are defined by the function of one’s numerical age, nor shall this ordinal description suggest that the emerging adult participants of this study should be equated to the developmental status of non-adults.
firms in which the proprietor is the head of a household, and immediate family members behave as employees or workers. The following functional characteristics of a small business applied:

The chief operation officer (CEO) runs the business personally; there is no elaborate hierarchy of specialized positions within the organization; the business runs out of a single location; and the workforce is recruited from the community. (Blackford, 2003, p. 131).

**Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks**

Given limited empirical data on the lived experiences of Chinese American children of immigrant entrepreneurs in the field of psychology, a qualitative research paradigm was crucial in the exploration of the potential psychosocial effects of this unique upbringing. Particularly in the research of ethno-cultural populations where existing foundational knowledge is limited, qualitative research methods can provide voice to the distinctive personal stories and experiences of individuals within a population that typical quantitative methods may be unable to capture (Nagata, Suzuki, & Kohn-Wood, 2014). Qualitative methods also acknowledge the existence of multiple truths and allow researchers to examine the scope of human experience more thoroughly. As a whole, qualitative research emphasizes exploration of issues and theory development; situates analyses of constructs in real-world contexts; prioritizes a holistic analysis of multifaceted, dynamic, and distinctive phenomena; and attends to relational processes including reflexive awareness of the researchers’ worldviews in the process of inquiry (Nagata, Suzuki, & Kohn-Wood, 2014).

In the spirit of maximizing the rigor of qualitative inquiry into the effects of the participants’ unique lived experiences, it was appropriate to ground the research in the researcher’s ecological systems and constructivist worldviews (Hays & Wood, 2011). The
ecological systems model posits that in order to fully understand the mechanisms behind individuals’ psychosocial adaption and development, one first needs to analyze the different contexts by which one’s experiences are lived (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1994). Developmental contexts provide restrictions and opportunities for the acquisition of major developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence, and changing dynamics between the individual and their sociocultural environments constitute the basics of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1994). As a complement to ecological systems theory, constructivism posits that multiple realities can be reflected within the different levels of external influence, but the meaning-making process involves others who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This dynamic, multi-tiered approach allows for an exploration of the processes (what) and the psychological and social impacts (how) that the experience of growing up as an entrepreneurial child may have had on the individual.

A constructivist ecological systems theoretical paradigm, thus, connects directly to the phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Phenomenology investigates a person’s ways of being in the world by going directly to those who have had primary experience with a phenomenon. The phenomenological investigator is able to deconstruct the structures of the individual, of the individual’s “I”, “ego” or the “self” while also exploring the impact of myriad personal realities (Werts, 2011). Overall, the phenomenological method aims to collect data through in-depth, individual interviews with participants who have a shared experience of the phenomenon, analyze the data for thematic meanings, and then write a composite description that presents the essence of the common participant experiences (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach seeks to understand the individual and collective internal experience, and how participants intentionally and/or consciously think about their experience,
with an emphasis on valuing subjective experience and the connection between self and the world (Hays & Wood, 2011). To explore the rich experiences of children of entrepreneurs, individual narratives have to be solicited and analyzed for common emergent themes (Hays & Wood, 2011). This methodology was selected while keeping in mind two possible challenges with phenomenology. First, it is advised that the researcher carefully select participants who have had direct experience with the phenomenon rather than simply those who have perspective on the experience. Second, the researcher must consider the challenge of bracketing experiences and deciding how and to what extent these assumptions are introduced to the study (Creswell, 2007). How the researcher’s personal biases are accounted for is described in further detail when discussing research process and procedures below.

Framing the phenomenological themes within the ecological systems theory allows one to organize and make sense of how the five levels of contextual elements mediate developmental processes for our ethnocultural population of interest. The microsystem involves the interaction of the individual with the immediate social and physical environment; examples include the home, family, school, and immediate community settings. All of the levels of the contextual influence are filtered through microsystems, where actual experiences of individuals take place. The mesosystem refers to the social networks, or exchanges between various microsystems in a person’s life. The exosystem entails more distal influences where the individual is not directly involved. The macrosystem comprises the societal institutions, such as government, economy, media, and so forth, which form the larger social and historical context for development. Finally,
the *chronosystem* accounts for the systemic changes experienced in the context of natural progression of time, which integrates the gestalt\(^7\) or epoch of a person’s world.

Understanding how multisystems work in conjunction to impact the psychosocial development of the child is important in our study for various reasons. For instance, globalization and economic trends in recent years have greatly influenced microsystems by way of changing the composition of families, shifting how individuals spend their time, and redefining individuals’ responsibilities and privileges (Tomasik, Pavlova, Lechner, Blumenthal, & Körner, 2012). Furthermore, from an individual psychological development perspective, one’s individual and social resources, coping processes, perceived demands and benefits, and psychosocial adaptation are altered by social changes that occur outside of the individuals’ personal control (Silbereisen, Pinquart, & Tomasik, 2010). Therefore, examining how children growing up in the unique context of an immigrant family business is expected to shed light on how their long-term psychosocial outcomes were or were not impacted by their day-to-day experiences, as their daily routines were simultaneously influenced by larger forces outside of their control.

Thus, it is expected that the children’s physical domains, including, but not limited to, their family business, their corresponding work-related activities, roles, and relationships (microsystem), are influenced by their social networks (mesosystem); by their social systems, such as immigration policies, economics, labor laws, educational organizations (exosystem); by their belief systems, ideologies, cultural structures, gender roles, etc. (macrosystem); and finally by changes that occur in the systems with respect to time, which includes domestic or global scaled sociohistorical events such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, or the 2007-\(^7\) 

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\(^7\) Used in psychology, the terms refers to an organized whole that is viewed as the sum of its disparate parts.
2009 economic recession caused by the collapse of the housing market, as well as developmental maturation resulting from puberty (chronosystem). Teasing apart the myriad ways in which individuals’ lives have been impacted by the dynamics that exist between different bio-psycho-socio-cultural-geopolitical-economic systems increases our potential to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of family businesses on their psychological and social development. Additionally, the process-person-context model is an especially pertinent framework for this present research on the psychosocial developmental outcomes of Asian American youth, as one is also able to account for their racial, ethnic, and cultural differences and contribute responsibly to much-need minority mental health research (Sue, Cheng, Saad, Carmel, & Chu, 2012).

Lastly, Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee’s (2002) Asian American perspective on Chickering & Reisser’s (1969) psychosocial development of students was used as a reference to the developmental milestones important to an individual’s adaptive transition into young adulthood. This theory provides an appropriate guide to the present research because it casts a wide net around ways in which Asian American individuals are influenced by their experiences. While children of immigrant entrepreneurs may not be “students” in the traditional sense meant by the original theorists, a counter argument can be made. Since parents and government officials have taken the position that children’s work in a family enterprise (e.g., farm) or other business serves as an extension to their school curriculum, as parents do end up teaching their offspring the secrets of their vocation, our study’s children in immigrant family businesses can be considered students (Elder & Conger, 2000). The practice of “Take Your Son/Daughter to Work Day,” in which children can learn about the world of work from their parents, along with apprenticeships, internships, externships, practica, and other formalized vocational training methods are still being used today for this very reason. Therefore, one may expect that the
psychosocial development of children within the family business setting will be applicable to the overarching domains proposed by the authors. Implicated in Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee’s (2002) model is the idea that the Asian Americans’ psychosocial development is positioned within separate domains formed by Western (e.g., individualism, independence, self-exploration) and Eastern (e.g., collectivism, interdependence, deference to authority) cultural norms. These opposing external constructs are said to influence the ways in which the Asian American individual comes to develop her/his genuine identity, life’s purpose, specific competencies, emotional intelligence, interdependence or independence, relationships, and sense of integrity. Assessments of the experiences of children of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs from within all these domains were intended to increase our understanding of the influences of the family business, which in itself is an amalgam of how Western and Eastern norms come together. It was hoped that by viewing the experiences from commonly identified cultural norms of Asian American youth, one would subsequently be able to see if and how an entrepreneurial child’s experiences are different from their non-entrepreneurial counterparts, and to what extent the family business plays a role in changing the trajectory of their psychosocial development.

In summary, an orientation in constructivism and the ecological systems model combined with the framework of the Asian American perspective on the theory of psychosocial development and the method of phenomenological study has led to these guiding research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of Chinese American children engaged in the tasks of helping to maintain their family’s small business? (2) How did their gender, age, class, birth order, religion and spirituality, family size and other demographic variables influence their roles and responsibilities within the family enterprise? (3) What meaningful psychosocial or intrapsychic effects did growing up in an immigrant-owned small family business have on the
child? (4) How does the child of a small family business make sense of their experiences in the context of their current emergence into adulthood?

**Methodology**

**Participants and Sampling**

The data were derived from virtual or in-person, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with 1.5, 1.75 and second-generation, English-speaking Chinese American emerging adults (ages 18 – 29 years old) who grew up in the United States within a variety of types of small, labor-intensive family businesses (Rumbaut, 2004). It was believed to be important to include the so-called “decimal-generation” of immigrants who arrived to the United States as children younger than twelve years old because their developmental trajectories are more similar than different to that of second-generation children of immigrant parents (Rumbaut, 2004).

The emerging adulthood stage of human development is an important demographic phenomenon that provided us with insights into the cumulative effects of one’s earlier experiences growing up in a small family business. According to Arnett (2004), the almost decade straddling one’s childhood and adulthood is an important period in which individuals are solidifying their personal identities, are experiencing contextual instability, are focusing on self-development, and feeling ambivalence about their place in the world, while at the same time are optimistic about different possibilities for their future. Thus, this period was thought to present an opportune time to learn how individuals are making sense of their unique upbringings (Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne, 2010). Additionally, their memories of earlier involvement in their family businesses at this stage were vivid enough to present an observer perspective, as opposed to only

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8 The 1.75 generation comprises foreign-born individuals who immigrated before the age of five; the 1.5 generation are foreign-born individuals who immigrated before the age of twelve (Rumbaut, 2004). For the reason of expediency, the decimal generations will henceforth be referred to as “second-generation.”
a field perspective. The *field perspective* is the type of “pre-reflective” autobiographical memory that focuses more on the situation and not on one’s self within the situation. The *observer perspective* is when memory is recalled from an outsider’s vantage point in which the person sees him or herself as a player within the situation (Prebble, Addis, & Tippett, 2013). In this respect, some passage of time, or increase in memory age, provides an important determinant of whether one will recall field or observer perspectives of their past experiences. Recent memories are often experienced in the field perspective, whereas observer memories increase with memory age. The emerging adults’ narrative will thus provide a combination of both perspectives, as their late childhood and early adolescence would not have passed too recently or too long ago. Having had enough time to develop observer memories is important in order to capture the emotionality of the experience (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), which is key in the understanding of their overall psychosocial development. The emotional state of the individual at the time that the memory was encoded is thought to be more salient in observer perspective than in field perspective autobiographical memory (Prebble, Addis, & Tippett, 2013). This pattern suggests a process of pruning in which less personally relevant memories are discarded and only strong emotionally connected memories are retained. Moreover, the observer perspective memories entail a greater self-awareness, as the individual is also able to see her or himself within the context of emotionally rich memories. Conversely, waiting too long after a memory has been encoded will increase the likelihood of memories being biased, such as *rosy retrospection*, in which childhood memories are painted as overly positive or benign (Ochsner, Ray, Cooper, Robertson, Chopra, Gabrieli, & Gross, 2004). Biographical memories also tend to experience an episodic to a semantic shift in which temporal details blend into an amorphous theme over time (Prebble, Addis, & Tippett, 2013). Given the natural gravitation towards reflection during the emerging
adulthood stage of human development and its optimal proximity to one’s lived experiences of growing up in a Chinese immigrant business family, it was expected that partaking in this study would be a mutually beneficial learning experience for the participants and researcher.

**Data Collection Methods**

A total of 15 individual, face-to-face interviews were completed in the winter of 2014, and they lasted between 47 minutes and 129 minutes (Mean=72 minutes). All of the interviews were done in English, and all but two interviews were conducted electronically, using interfaces such as Skype or Google Chat. The two face-to-face interviews were held at a public, mutually accessible location (e.g., university, public cafe). All the participants were offered a $15 gift card to a national coffee shop as a token of appreciation for their time commitments.

In order to identify participants, the researcher met with relevant ethnic community and business leaders (e.g., churches and bureaus of Chinese American business development), attended a pan-Asian Pacific American social event at a large university, and used social media (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) to reach out to potential participants and disseminate information about the research. A webpage was launched to include information about the study and provide a simple method to sign up to participate. Flyers that listed the criteria for inclusion in the study, along with tear-aways printed with the web address were used to advertise the study off-line. The flyers were posted at pre-identified businesses in Chinatowns and private and public college campuses in cities in the northeastern region of the United States. While inter-group differences exist among different cities in the northeastern U.S., the common thread of this region is that it is home to large quantities of recent immigrant entrepreneurs from China, as well as developed small business districts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Purposeful sampling was subsequently used
to generate the maximum recommended sample size of fifteen participants, and/or until saturation of relevant themes was achieved (Polkinghorne, 1989).

A checklist of demographic variables, including year of birth, gender, age range in which the participant was exposed to a family business, educational status, academic major, current marital status, current occupation, country of origin of self and parents, year of immigration of self and parents, type of business(es) family operated, number of employees (co-ethnic community member or external member), family size and birth order, and approximate number of hours worked per week, was maintained by the interviewer throughout the course of each interview. Not having a segment of the interview parsed out for the exclusive use of filling out a demographic survey allowed more time for the interview and helped facilitate a more natural flow in the participant narrative. The interviewer used a few minutes at the end of the interview to double-check that each of the demographic variables was collected, and to clarify and gather any extraneous information. A semi-structured retrospective interview was administered after introductions and informed consent was received. This question was used to start each conversation, as it gave room for the participants to share their most salient thoughts about their experiences in a family business: I am interested in the lived experiences of Chinese American children engaged in the tasks of helping to maintain their family’s small business. Could you tell me about your experiences helping out in your family business? The interviewer probed the participants after their initial responses for other details they wished to share (i.e., “What else comes to mind about your experiences growing up?”). Following this initial portion, the participant was asked to respond to the following, more structured questions, which were embedded with demographic survey items where appropriate. The questions were asked in an order that the researcher felt was most relevant to the participants’ earlier statements, in an effort
to create a natural-flowing conversation. Throughout the conversation, the interviewer prompted the participant to elaborate, clarify, and make connections based on earlier stated comments in almost a narrative therapy style\(^9\) where cognitive and emotional details in the narrative were fleshed out to create a robust story with a beginning, middle, and end (Ingemark, 2013). The interview was structured through these questions:

1. How was your time spent throughout the week while the business was in operation? Were there any activities that you wished you did more of at the time?
2. Did you and your parents have any disagreements about your role(s) within the family business? How were the disagreements, if any, reconciled?
3. Did being a male/female in your family affect your appointed roles within the family business?
4. How did your peers make sense of your involvement at the family shop?
5. How did your teachers/guidance counselors/school officials treat you at the time?
6. How have your experiences helping out in your family business shaped the person you are today (i.e., your behavioral, physical, mental, social, and religious/spiritual wellbeing)?
7. How has your racial/ethnic identity been influenced by your involvement in your family business? (Experiences of racism or prejudice based on stereotypes?)
8. How was your choice of occupation/major influenced by your earlier experiences in the family business?
9. Did your gender/non-gender conforming roles within the business influence your choice of occupation/major? If so, how?

\(^9\) The researcher tapped into her psychology training as a clinician to facilitate a warm and open environment for storytelling and meaning-making.
10. What expectations did your parents have of you when you were growing up? Did those expectations ever change over time? If so, how?

11. How did/does your family measure success/failure? How do you define success/failure?

12. How did you benefit from your involvement in your family business?

13. How did you not benefit from your involvement in your family business?

14. If you had a business like your parents’, would you want your own child(ren) to participate in it the same ways you did? How come?

15. Thinking back to your earlier days in the business, what are some memories that will stay with you forever?

Finally, participants were asked if there were any questions that they would ask if they were the researcher, while speaking to what they feel the general public should know about their experiences overall?

Field Notes

Throughout the study, the researcher kept detailed field notes about contacts with potential participants and information from the interviews in order to create an audit trail. At each interview, the investigator recorded observational field notes on a self-created protocol consisting of significant experiences, hunches, and impressions of the individual and his/her reported lived experienced (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the researcher recorded in the field notes details such as non-verbals and significant contextual information as they occurred in the interviews so that transcriptions do not lead to important omissions. A reflexive journal was also kept to record personal reflections regarding the interviews. The observational field notes and reflexive journal were intended to allow the investigator to keep in check personal biases in an
attempt to bracket her views and experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

It is important to note that as the researcher, I acknowledged that my personal experiences as a 1.5-generation Chinese American who spent most of my late childhood and adolescence unofficially employed by my family’s food service and laundromat businesses posed as both an opportunity and liability in the process of doing this research. Providing an overview of my family business experience and why I was drawn to study the experiences of the children helped facilitate rapport building with the participants, as it provided a strong sense of camaraderie and common understanding between virtual strangers. I relayed to the participants that my personal stake in the research was to learn if my experiences were similar or different from others who shared a similar background in which they spent the majority of their earlier youth helping out at family businesses run by first-generation immigrant parents. My personal hope was to feel more connected to a wider network of individuals who experience this phenomenon first-hand, so that I am not left questioning whether my worldviews and the person I have become would be wholly different had I not had my distinct upbringing.

To account for my inherent biased views on the phenomenon of growing up in a family business, I relied on the tool of reflexive journaling in qualitative research to help assure that my own opinions and feelings did not color the participant narratives. The biases I accounted for included my personal theory that immigrant family businesses are “necessary evils”, as I am consistently reminded of the physical hardships I underwent when my lower back aches on humid days, and when seeing how my family’s businesses have privileged me to come this far in my education to be writing my doctoral dissertation. Having immigrated in the first half of the 1990s, my parents could not make a living wage for a large family due to their limited formal educational and vocational training. They were encouraged to go into self-employment by
relatives who were reportedly doing well despite similar predicaments. Our first business would not have been sustainable for as long as it was without help from every set of capable hands in my family. I was thus instilled with the belief that children born to poor and large families with under-educated parents must work hard if they want access to better opportunities in the future. Furthermore, I believe that the success of immigrant families cannot be achieved unless each member of the family is willing to make personal sacrifices. As the youngest girl in a Chinese family, I resonated with the fairytale of Cinderella at times because I felt I had to work harder and longer than my older siblings, who phased out of the family labor force sooner due to starting college or getting married. Also, it seems to me that having parents who do not speak English and who are less acculturated to American cultural norms means the children have to be their parents’ “keepers”, serving as their guardians and carrying their responsibilities regardless of desire or ability. However, my view is ultimately favorable towards children and families of immigrant small businesses, and if others contributed and sacrificed in the same ways that my family did in pursuit of socioeconomic stability, then it would not be hyperbolic or self-promoting to recommend that our stories be shared more publicly.

With these personal biases in mind, and written down to reference before and following each interview, I was able to be more objective when analyzing interview transcripts for emerging themes, making sure that the participants’ voices are always at the forefront of the analyses, and not because I personally agree or disagree with the participants’ views. There were many instances while observing and analyzing the research data that I expressed variances of surprise, delight, and/or disappointment when finding that my experiences paralleled, intersected, or were completely absent from the collective experiences of the research participants. I speak more to the procedures and processes of maintaining objectivity below.
Procedure

Ethical Considerations

Professional and ethical codes of research as approved by the university ethics committee were prioritized throughout the course of the research. Participants were given verbal and written information about the aim and the procedures of the study, the right to withdraw at any time, the usage of audio-recording and the preservation of confidentiality by the researcher. Verbal consent was obtained, and a copy of the consent verbiage was electronically mailed to the participants for their records. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying markers in all data and quotations used. Nonessential text such as verbal filler and hesitancy pauses were either removed or replaced by ellipses in the quotes. Brackets were used to indicate the addition or alteration of text to provide context or to de-identify data.

Data Analysis

The data analyses comprised of preparing and organizing the data (the transcripts from the interviews), reducing the data through coding, and presenting the data in a coherent format (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative data analysis was conducted using NVivo 10, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The investigator bracketed her personal focus through discussion with her research advisor so that she could direct her focus to the participants’ unique lived experiences. As mentioned previously under the “Field Notes” subheading above, the field and reflexive journal notes assisted in this process. The investigator continuously reflected on her worldview as an individual who grew up in a family business located in an urban Chinese enclave. Again, while these factors were expected to lead to quick rapport with her participants, the researcher was mindful of the potential for interpretative bias.
As such, the transcriptions of the interviews were read multiple times and each of the experiences depicted were granted equal worth (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the process of horizontilization produced a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements that were then used to create meaning units independent of the investigator’s presumptions. These meaning units were collected to create composite descriptions of how the participants experienced their upbringings.

More specifically, Giorgi's (1985; 2001; 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) qualitative content analysis techniques were used as a guideline. The analysis aimed to identify central themes from the content rather than to count the phrases or words that appear frequently. This inductive process involved several steps to ensure the reliability of the analysis. First, audio-recorded interviews were transcribed shortly after each interview. Second, after repeatedly reading through the entire transcripts, descriptions that were relevant to the experience of growing up within a family business underwent a unit analysis. What this means is the words, sentences or paragraphs that contained information relevant to the study questions were treated as a unit. Due to the casual and conversational tempo of the interviews, a few of the participants included side commentary about current celebrity news or their thoughts on city traffic. While these comments may essentially shed light on their worldviews and self-hood, it would have relied too heavily on researcher interpretation to be regarded as meaningful and relevant data. Third, the unit of analysis was transformed into a code word, which represented the cumulative meaning of the unit. In addition, each code was assigned a number label, a definition and corresponding examples from the transcripts. Next, by comparing, inducting, and classifying different units of content, coding of all the units was completed and then categorized. Fifth, the categories were then integrated to extracted themes as guided by Giorgi's idea of identifying common structures.
of the phenomenon to describe a general and essential aspect of the phenomenon. Finally, after a coding scheme was established, all data was re-analyzed, and elimination, combination and subdivision of coding categories took place to ensure that textural descriptions and variations between participant experiences were identified. Eliminations occurred when earlier identified categorical themes did not correlate with subsequent interview data; no categories were actually omitted in perpetuity, they were often subsumed under other categories over the course of developing a comprehensive coding scheme. When there were any changes or revisions, all interview data were reanalyzed to make sure that consistency existed during coding and analysis. Finally, each of the individual categories or themes was appropriated to one of the ecological systems levels in an effort to simplify the presentation, as well as highlight the relationships among the emergent themes. The ways in which the themes best related to each other were dictated by the contextual descriptions available, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of the ecological systems framework. This final step was repeated and reevaluated several times until the coding system was finalized.

**Trustworthiness**

The data were assessed to ensure that the quality of analysis met the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability characteristics of validity and reliability (Fischer, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All of the interview transcripts were checked by the primary investigator to confirm the accuracy of interpretation. Likewise, the accuracy of interview content was checked when the interviewer summarized her comprehension after each participant response. To recover a faithful description of the phenomenon, the researcher used the bracketing process that involved reflecting on pre-understandings and assumptions derived from previous studies, self-experiences and related theories. In the process of bracketing,
keeping reflexive journals was a method to clarify personal subjective values and attempt to eliminate researcher's pre-assumptions from participants’ real-life experiences during the data analysis process. Furthermore, the coding system and detailed coding clues were established and discussed, and analyses were shared, discussed, and checked for consistency with this writer’s research advisor, who has extensive experience in performing qualitative research. The same coder coded the same content in the same way multiple times to achieve stability.

More specifically, the following steps were taken to establish credibility: (1) saturation (adequate amount of data has been examined to support that no additional data would yield different findings); (2) reflexivity (the use of field journals to capture ideas, connections, methodological notes, etc., related to the understanding of the phenomenon); and (3) expert review of data and findings (Fischer, 2006). Transferability was established using rich, thick description derived from the data, and participant selection that includes sufficient variation/“typicalness.” Dependability was established using audit trails composed of research journals and memos, peer reviews, and reflexivity. Finally, confirmability was established from reflexivity (the use of field journals to capture ideas, connections, methodological notes, etc., related to the understanding of the phenomenon); audit trail (a thorough description of research design and data collection and analysis methods); and triangulation of data toward a common finding. By gathering and cross-checking the data from the three sources (e.g., interviews, observational notes during the interviews, and the researcher’s reflexive journal entries immediately following the interviews, this study tried to limit possible bias within any one data source and any inconsistencies across sources. When inconsistencies were observed, they were brought to the participants for clarification at the end of the interview, or via email correspondences at a later time.
Results and Discussion

Participant Demographics

Of the total fifteen candidates who initially met research inclusion criteria and participated in interviews, only one was male. However, after preliminary data analyses and accounting for the premises of a phenomenological study on children who grew up actively contributing their labor (in addition to emotional support), it was determined that the lived experiences of the sole male participant represented an outlier in the data, as his family owned a professional sector company that developed computer software, which did not require his help in daily business operations\(^{10}\). The majority of participants represented service sector family businesses that necessitated heavy physical labor, or “helping out”, to function. The fact that this participant was the only male, albeit an anomalous variable within an otherwise homogenous participant sample, was coincidental and his gender was not factored into the decision to leave his narrative out of the results here. According to Clark (2010), who investigated why people engage in qualitative research, research subjects are motivated at both individual and collective levels. It was reported that individual motivations of subjective interest, enjoyment, curiosity, introspective interest, social comparison, therapeutic interest, material interest and economic interest; and collective motivations, including representation and giving voice, political empowerment, and informing ‘change’ are why people choose to engage in qualitative research (Clark, 2010). Taking into account these primarily intellectually and socially oriented motivators to participate in qualitative studies, Sharp, Coastworth, Darling, Cumsille, and Ranieri’s (2006) study on gender differences in the self-defining activity may provide a feasible explanation for the disproportionate female sample. With regards to identity development of adolescents and

\(^{10}\) Perhaps future research can include a comparison study between the experience of children of professional sector small family businesses and service sector small family businesses.
emerging adults (this study’s participant age group), Sharp et al. (2006) found that females are more likely than males to rate socializing, literary, religious/altruistic, and performing/fine arts/music to be personally expressive self-defining activities. In other words, the act of sitting down with a stranger to recount past experiences may not be perceived as appealing or interesting for males. This is only one explanation of possibly many to account for the participant gender variation in this study; unfortunately a deeper examination of the phenomenon is beyond the scope of this present study and future research is recommended to explore factors influencing participation in qualitative research and gender.

Excluding data from the only male participant, the mean age of the entirely female sample was 21.71 years old, ranging from 18 to 29 years old (SD=3.83) (See Table 1 “Participant Demographics” below). All the participants were single and had never been married. Eleven of the participants were born in the United States, while the remainder immigrated before the age of 12 years old (they arrived at either 6 months, 9 months, or 12 years old). One of the U.S.-born participants was raised in China from infancy until the age of five years old. The majority of the participants had more than one sibling; with respect to birth order, seven were first-born, two were middle children, and two were youngest. The largest family had four children, including the participant. Three of the participants were only children.

All of the participants were formally educated in the United States. Save for one participant who had recently graduated from college and was working full-time, all of the other participants were enrolled in an academic program at the time of their interviews. Two were seniors in high school; five were full-time undergraduate students; one was enrolled part-time in a continuing education capacity; and the remaining five were enrolled full-time in graduate/professional or doctorate-level programs. Concurrent with attending school, some of the
participants worked part-time at their family businesses, or held outside part-time jobs. The participants’ occupational and academic majors/minors presented a diverse and wide range of specializations, including accounting, biology, chemistry, Chinese, criminal justice and homeland security, dermatology, English, forensic chemistry, information technology, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, psychology, public health, rhetoric, sociology, social work, statistics, surgical nursing, and women’s studies.

While two participants reported that their biological parents (see Table 2 “Parent Demographics” below) had legally divorced during their late adolescence, all the participants reported having grown up in two-parent households during their childhoods. All of the participants’ parents were born in an East Asian country (i.e., Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam), with either one or both parents having primary ethnic lineage in China. The parents’ ages ranged from mid-thirties to late-fifties, and they had immigrated to the U.S. in the late-1970s to early 2000s (Because many of the participants were uncertain of the exact age and/or year of their parents’ immigration, they were asked to provide an approximate age and time of immigration in the unit of years by the decade, as we are mostly interested in general historical trends with respect to how the contexts of their parents’ experiences may have influenced the participants’ upbringings). The educational attainment of the parents ranged from some elementary education to vocational training and/or completion of four-year college degrees, with the majority having been educated in their countries of origin. Parents who earned four-year college or two-year associate’s degrees from the United States held full-time corporate careers and were not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the family business.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part. Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth Country (Age of Immigration)</th>
<th>Birth Order (No. of Siblings)</th>
<th>Business Type</th>
<th>Age (Years) Range Helped Out</th>
<th>Current Employment/Educational Status</th>
<th>Profession/Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
<td>Chinese Restaurant</td>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>Employed Full-Time</td>
<td>Information Technology &amp; Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Eldest (1 Brother; 1 Sister)</td>
<td>Chinese Restaurant</td>
<td>10 - Present</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Psychology/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Eldest (1 Sister; 2 Brothers)</td>
<td>Liquor Store</td>
<td>12 - 18</td>
<td>Graduate (MS)</td>
<td>Professional Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dori</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Youngest (1 Sister; 1 Brother)</td>
<td>Chinese Take-Out</td>
<td>10 - Present</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Dermatology or Chinese Language/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Eldest (1 Sister)</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>10 - Present</td>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>Nursing or Medical School/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Eldest (1 Brother)</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>10 - Present</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Sociology &amp; Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geri</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>China (9yo)</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
<td>Facial Salon</td>
<td>12 - Present</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Surgical Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Middle (2 Brothers)</td>
<td>Transportation Services</td>
<td>10 - Present</td>
<td>Graduate (MS)</td>
<td>Criminal Justice, Certification in Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
<td>Chinese Take-Out</td>
<td>11 - 21</td>
<td>Graduate (PhD)</td>
<td>Forensic Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Middle (2 Sisters)</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>10 - 18</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Physical Therapy/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>US*</td>
<td>Youngest (1 Brother)</td>
<td>Chinese Restaurant</td>
<td>10 - 16</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Psychology Major &amp; Business Minor/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Eldest (2 Sisters)</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>8 - Present</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Pharmacy/Undeclared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>China (12yo)</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
<td>Piano Store (PS) &amp; Accounting Firm (AF)</td>
<td>22 - Present (PS) 15 - Present (AF)</td>
<td>Graduate (MS)</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Taiwan (6mo)</td>
<td>Eldest (2 Sisters)</td>
<td>Vegetarian Chinese Take-Out/Deli</td>
<td>8 - 15</td>
<td>Graduate (PhD)</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lived in China from infancy until 5 years old.*
## Table 2: Parent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part.</th>
<th>Business-Starting Parent</th>
<th>Age (Yrs. in Decade)</th>
<th>Birth Country</th>
<th>Highest Education (Country)</th>
<th>Immigration (Decade)</th>
<th>Age (Yrs. in Decade)</th>
<th>Birth Country</th>
<th>Highest Education (Country)</th>
<th>Immigration (Decade)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Early-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Early-50s</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>H.S. (Taiwan)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Vocational Training (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>A.S. Degree (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dori</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Early-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Some College (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Early-50s</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Vocational Training (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>H.S. (Taiwan)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mid-30s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Some Elem. School (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Early-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Some H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geri</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mid-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Medical School (China)</td>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Early-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>College (China)</td>
<td>2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Early-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Vocational Training (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Early-50s</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>B.S. Degree (US)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>H.S. (China)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>H.S. (Vietnam)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Vocational Training (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Middle School (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Middle School (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Some College (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-40s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Some College (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Late-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>College (China)</td>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Late-50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>College (China)</td>
<td>2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Some College (US)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Late-50s</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>High School (China)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family Business Backgrounds**

The types (See Table 3 “Business Characteristics” below) of businesses that the participants’ families owned and operated were mainly service-oriented, labor-intensive, small-scale enterprises that relied on family labor, and hired few non-family employees (anywhere from 1-14 employees, depending on season). The businesses profiled in this study included three Chinese restaurants, two Chinese take-outs, a Chinese Vegetarian food deli, four hair salons, a
facial salon, a liquor store, a transportation services business; one family owned both a piano
store and an accounting firm, although the accounting firm was headed by the participant’s
paternal aunt. The participant reported that she believed her aunt’s accounting business fit the
operational definition of a small family business because she considered her aunt a member of
her nuclear family and the business helped sustain her family financially. The majority of the
businesses were located in Chinatowns or East Asian ethnic enclaves in the northeast region of
the United States. One business had been located in an ethnic enclave in California, while
another had been located in Louisiana. All of the Chinese restaurants or take-outs were located in
towns farther away from co-ethnic enclaves and serviced culturally diverse clientele, although
the businesses still mostly hired from within the family’s ethnic communities. The length of
continuous operation for the businesses ranged from 3 to 30 years (Mean=13.4 years), operating
year-round from 12 to 18 hours per day, six to seven days per week. At the time of the
interviews, seven of the businesses were still fully operational, one was semi-operational, and six
had completely ended operations in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part.</th>
<th>Biz Type</th>
<th>Location of Business (State)</th>
<th>Typical Daily Hours of Operation</th>
<th>No. of Outside Employees</th>
<th>No. of Years Opened</th>
<th>Current Operation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Chinese Restaurant</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>10am-11pm</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>Chinese Restaurant</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>10am-10pm</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>Liquor Store</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>7am-10pm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dori</td>
<td>Chinese Take-out</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Semi-open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>8am-9pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geri</td>
<td>Facial Salon</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>8am-9:30pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Transportation Services</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>7am-9pm</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Chinese Take-out</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>9am-10pm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Hair Salon</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>9am-8pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants reported a combination of different reasons why they believe their families began their respective businesses that mirror Poschke’s (2013) conceptualization of “necessity entrepreneurship.” For many, the primary motivation to go into self-employment was that parents needed a job because they had gotten fired or could not find profitable work due to limited English language capabilities and limited transferable occupational skills, and lack of professional credentials from the United States. A few of the participants reported that their parents had been in the same line of work or had previously established interests in self-employment prior to leaving their native countries. Other participants stated that their extended relatives were also self-employed, and so going into self-employment was a natural transition for their families. Finally, a few of the participants reported that their parents possessed the personality traits to be self-employed, stating that their parents are either natural leaders or dislike following orders from others, which speaks to the idiosyncratic entrepreneurial temperament proposed by Thai & Turkina (2013) and other authors (Deaux, 2006; Fisher & Koch, 2008; Owens, Kirwan, Lounsbury, Levy, & Gibson, 2013; Rauch & Frese, 2007). With regards to the dominant force behind going into self-employment (See Table 2 above), mothers¹¹

¹¹ According to most recent Bureau of Labor Statistic’s December 2014 report on women in the work force, 5.2 percent of working women in nonagricultural industries were self-employed, compared with 6.7 percent for their male counterparts in 2014 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).
spearheaded six of the businesses, fathers were heads of six, and only two were believed to have been initiated in equal measure by both parents.

The participants reported to have begun helping out at their family businesses from as early as eight years old, with the most active and regular work occurring throughout their pre- and late adolescent years (10-19 years old; See Table 1 above). Several of the businesses had opened before the birth of the participants, so these participants reported spending leisure time at the businesses as infants, toddlers and young children. For the eight businesses that were still open at the time of the interviews, all of the participants reported that their labor contributions were ongoing, although they helped out less frequently if they were away for college or graduate school.

**Phenomenological Themes**

All of the participants presented unique and nuanced storylines of their upbringing in immigrant family businesses. Nonetheless, common narrative threads or themes did emerge when the data were viewed from a holistic, phenomenological perspective. The emergent themes were then organized within Brofenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theoretical framework in order to highlight the relationship between certain contextual elements and the possible psychosocial effects of growing up in an immigrant family business. Culturally-bound matters that are similar or distinct from Kodama, McEwan, Liang, and Lee’s (2002) conceptualization of Asian Pacific American psychosocial development of students are underscored. Participant quotations, which include citations of their pseudonym, age, and type of family business, are included to illuminate thematic descriptions. The phenomenological themes of growing up in a family business are presented in this order: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.
Microsystem

The microsystem includes immediate interactions with people and contextual structures in the domains of family, school, religious affiliations, workplaces and neighborhoods that are said to have the strongest influence on the individual’s roles and responsibilities, and psychosocial development (Brofenbrenner, 1994). For the Asian American child of immigrant parents who own small family businesses, it appears that their most prominent connections are insulated within three life-domains: the home, business, and school. Outside of these domains, interactions with religious institutions and other community contexts were not described to be salient experiences for the participants. Even though there is empirical evidence suggesting a strong correlation between religious affiliations and entry into self-employment (Choi, 2010; Galbraith & Galbraith, 2007), the lack of availability of time to be actively involved in religious and/or other community institutions may be the most valid explanation for the participants of this study. Cadge’s (2006) study on religious service attendance among immigrants concluded that employment status predicted religious service attendance in that those who work outside of the home are less likely to be available to actively practice religion. Additionally, even though some of the participants reported practicing Eastern religions such as Buddhism or Taoism as a family, they did not attend temple regularly, which also corresponded with Cadge’s finding that those who are not Christian, specifically Buddhists and Hindus, are less likely to attend religious services regularly. However, a few of the participants reported being exposed to religious practices and rituals in the work environment, particularly during Chinese New Year, the most holy day of the year for them. These observances were not reported to have had long-term implications in the participants’ lives.
**Home.** With regards to the home, children’s interactions were often condensed to members of their immediate family, which included parents and siblings. Parents’ physical presence within the home environment was seldom or limited, and they were repeatedly described as “absent” given their characteristically lengthy workdays. This lifestyle corresponded with the national increase in the percentage of American children and adolescents between the ages of birth and age 14 with working mothers (employed in professional or non-professional level jobs) who spend 22 to 40 hours a week in out-of-home child care, that can range from high quality to unstimulating and mediocre care due to parental income bracket (Smolensky & Gootman, 2003, p. 1). The overall sentiment of the participants who spent time away from their parents and were mostly home alone as children was described as sad, challenging, or hard: “It's kind of hard because she [mother] works all day and so I only get to see her a couple of hours when she comes home and I have to go to sleep for school…so it's difficult” (Judy, 18, Hair Salon). The children did not report feeling abandonment or rejection by parents, however. The children understood that their parents were also limited in their choice to make time for home life due to their work obligations:

> The store opened from 7am to 10pm, 7 days a week. And even on holidays, he [father] was working. Sometimes he’d open the door a little earlier on like Christmas eve, but it’d still be open. So he’d get up really early and come home really late, and that was his life for many years. (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

The participants who had siblings, depending on their birth-order and gender, usually had to step into either a caregiver or care-receiver role, in lieu of parental involvement in the home. The children were able to develop closeness to their siblings, and felt that their relationship with their parents was negatively impacted by their parents’ absenteeism at home.
We [participant and sibling] had a close relationship because we were the only kids at home and I had to take care of him [brother] and I would pick him up from school and I’d do his homework with him. So I took on a lot of those roles, but they [parents] were usually at work for the most part…So I feel like a lot of the times, I was really distant with my parents because they had to work and they couldn't really stay at home all the time. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

The lack of interaction with parents in the household appeared to have had some undesirable psychosocial consequences. When the participants identified as an only-child in their households, they reported spending a lot of time in isolation after school and on weekends, which was believed to have negatively affected their emotional wellbeing:

Always alone… and I just felt lonely I guess, and I kind of developed, like even though I was pretty social in high school, the first year I was a little bit antisocial, I was always alone and yes, maybe the loneliness was what caused my depression. (Geri, 18, Facial Salon).

While children with siblings reported less isolation, a few of them reported negligence in maintaining acceptable standards of daily care.

When I was in elementary school, we weren’t very sanitary. We didn’t know about taking a bath every day. […] For us, because my parents weren’t home or were at work all the time, and my brother, my sister and I, we’re always home by ourselves, we never really took care of our whole body. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

Several participants reported similar narratives of parental absenteeism and its correlation with undesirable personal outcomes over time: “I'm not as close to my parents as I could've been just
because they were never really around when I was growing up, and that also made me be a really shy person when I was in school” (Kris, 21, Chinese Restaurant).

However, despite the reported negative socioemotional consequences of frequently staying at home alone and taking care of themselves, several participants believed they gained strong independence and advanced life skills as a result of this particular upbringing:

I would have to say it [being home alone] was actually beneficial now, because I grew up doing chores and basically taking care of myself. Moving off to college was not a big deal. I wasn't scared of having to take care of myself or even moving off campus, and moving into an apartment. Basically taking care of myself was just another... it wasn't that big of a deal, because I’d been doing it for so many years, so it definitely helped with that. (Hope, 21, Transportation Services).

It appears that while being home alone had its discomforts for the participants, knowing why they had to spend so much time alone, paired with age-appropriate responsibilities for siblings and housework, resulted in some positive long-term psychosocial effects for the participants. Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, and Liu-Constant’s (2000) study on immigrant-Chinese and Euro-American parents’ physical closeness with young children, suggests that the participants’ perceptions of not feeling emotionally close to their parents may be rooted in cultural differences in the expression and meaning of physical closeness. Findings from the study indicate that immigrant-Chinese parents, when compared with Euro-American parents, tend to sleep in closer proximity with their young children, however their physical proximity is not in the aim of establishing emotional or psychological exchanges between parent and child, but to ensure physical safety or wellbeing. It appears, thus, that the second-generation children in this current study may likely subscribe to a Euro-American perception of the meaning of physical closeness,
which suggests that emotional closeness is achieved through physical contact. However, despite the difference of perception between the children and their immigrant parents, it seems that the participants did not internalize their loneliness at home to result in detrimental effects over time. The effects of feeling emotionally distant seem to have been mitigated by their strong sense of interdependence with their family members, which Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, and Liu-Constant (2000) identified as a family systems norm that is often established by immigrant-Chinese parents. In other words, the children’s tolerance of emotional disconnectedness to their parents is an expression of a greater understanding that every member of the family is reliant on each other in order for the family unit to exist in the first place.

Business. The business domain or places of work provided the children with more frequent interactions with family members, customers, and other employees. When the children were younger and babysitters or older siblings were unavailable, they were brought to the business to be looked after by their parents: “[The salon] had become a second home, basically. I've been there a lot. I spent a lot of days there as a child too, because when they [parents] couldn't find anyone to watch me, they would leave me at the store” (Faye, 18, Hair Salon). The participants described eating their meals and completing their homework at the businesses. They were able to receive help with homework from their parents in between their work tasks. Some of the participants reported that they had to go to the site of the family business, or otherwise they would not have had anytime to see to their parents. As such, they sometimes preferred being at the store or shop to having to be home alone:

There were some days when my parents let me go home; honestly when I went back home, I was really lonely because my brother and sister were at college and basically I
had this huge house to myself and it made me want to go back to work more. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

In addition to their parents, the participants reported interactions with other people who came in constant contact with the business. Even though the quality of these interactions was described as usually professional and based on brief service transactions, the interactions provided chances to hone their social skills. These interactions were often a part of the children’s prescribed roles and responsibilities at the business.

Depending on the nature of the business, participants also completed straightforward tasks such as cleaning and organizing, to more complex responsibilities, such as dealing with customer service, managing the cashier, and balancing the finances. When parents had limited English capabilities, the children were responsible for interpreting and translating also. Due to the gradual exposure to the business processes, many of the participants reported that they adopted certain roles and responsibilities in an organic fashion. They either learned to do the tasks by observing their parents or older siblings, or they were given smaller tasks that eventually led to more complex ones in an informal, step-wise fashion. None of the participants recalled engaging in official conversations that signaled their induction into the family business workforce. They reported a training style that included trials and errors, and skills mastery through repetition and doing.

**School.** The school environment was where the participants reportedly had some of the most pleasing relationships. They interacted with classmates, teachers, and other school officials for a predictable amount of time each school day. Faye’s sentiments about the school environment were echoed by most of the participants:
I remember at a young age, I had a really good relationship with all my teachers. I was really happy at school and it's really strange because every child, well, usually children hate going to school, and I adored it. I feel like I liked it because there was always an adult figure around, and at home there was usually a lack of my parents, but I remember I would write poems about how I really like school, and I would compare school to home. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

While many reported being involved in extracurricular activities outside of school hours, the activities were usually academically related and tended to serve the function of building one’s resume for college. Still, most of the participants reported enjoying school for the academics, as they appeared to provide the most distance from home and work, where they associated with strictly non-fun roles and responsibilities. The school was usually where socializing, playing, and more interesting activities took place: “I like being at the school. I don't know if it's because if I'm not at school, I would be at the restaurant or not, but I remember usually liking school and just being around the clubs” (Iris, 23, Chinese Take Out).

With regards to proximal influences of home, work, and school on the participants’ psychosocial development, many described a structured and often inflexible set of roles and responsibilities confined to the domains of home, work, and school. They maintained daily schedules that worked around the needs of the business. When at home, they completed prescribed household chores and did homework; while at work, they completed another regular set of responsibilities. When their parents got home from a long day of work, their parents mostly only expensed their limited energy to quality control, such as whether homework was completed or meals were eaten. While each of the life-domains functioned together effectively, participants unanimously expressed regrets about their upbringing, as they consequently felt less
like a “kid” and more like an adult with respect to their peers: “I still have my regret over it [family business lifestyle], that I wasn’t maybe living a life that maybe other kids got to have, but it just brought out more of a maturity in me eventually” (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

The participants especially disliked their roles and responsibilities in the workplace when they got old enough to contribute actively to the daily business operations. One reason for this sentiment was because time spent at the business took time away from their opportunities to build and maintain social lives. While they were able to achieve some semblance of social bonds at school, they felt they were “missing out” on a lot of what their peers were able to experience. For the most part, the participants felt at times resentful of having to help out either at home or in the business, as working curtailed their involvement in what they perceived to be more age-appropriate roles as children or adolescents.

The child’s prescribed roles and responsibilities in the context of the home and business almost always extended to their choice of majors and careers later in life. Perhaps resulting from limited opportunities to explore and define their personal interests, some of the children reported indecision with regards to what they wanted to do when they grew up. They made attempts to adopt their parents’ expectations as their own, but would sometimes feel uneasy about the decision, because they felt they did not come to the decision autonomously. By the time the children got to college age, they yearned for freedom and independence from their parents, and from the home and business environments, and often elected to move away for college. It seemed, though, that they were able to “figure things out” for themselves during their college years, due to their earlier influences in the home, work, and school.

Even though the participants as children and adolescents perceived their roles and responsibilities as being embedded too deeply in the realms of home, work, and school, and that
there were not enough peer social interactions in the context of other communities, it appears that their structured time (albeit “boring” or “uninteresting”) limited their opportunity for engaging in risk behavior, which are usually found in places where parental and school oversight are reduced. Mancini and Huebner’s (2004) study on time use and parental, academic, and peer influences as related with engagement in risk behavior (i.e., delinquent behavior, illegal substance use, gang involvement), sheds meaningful light on the psychosocial outcomes of participants who spent a significant amount of time alone at home, with parents at work, and little time with friends after school. They found that structured time-use is associated with less engagement in risk behavior. Additionally, less risk behavior was associated with attachment to parents, school, school success, and being female. However, the authors did not find significant correlations between lower risk behavior and time spent with family, reliable adults, or close friends. It appeared, then, that the participants did not miss out too much on the potential benefits of spending time with family, other adults and friends within the context of spending disproportionately more time at the family business or at home alone.

In terms of long-term effects on identity formation, although most of the participants expressed challenges associated with limited opportunities to assimilate into their peer groups and perhaps taking on more responsibilities than their peers, they all expressed foundational identities as a “good girl” or “good child” (Qin, 2009), who are motivated to achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals. With this foundational identity, they were able to tolerate the constraints placed on their freedom to explore their own interests. When they got older, they were able to maximize the resources available during their college years, when they felt they had earned their freedom to differentiate themselves from their parents’ expectations. Also, despite feeling emotionally detached from their parents, their upbringing seemed to have
created a strong sense of positive regard for their parents as simultaneously heroic and vulnerable figures. Consequently, all of the participants reported, almost to a fault, acceptance of their roles and responsibilities to be helpful to their overburdened parents, while feeling inspired by their parents’ grit and determination to improve their family’s socioeconomic position and their futures. Overall, their goals appeared to be inextricably influenced by the witnessing of their parents’ hard work and/or reinforced by their helping out at the family business, their fondness of school, and their loneliness in the home.

**Mesosystem**

The mesosystem, which functions as a conduit to the world beyond the child’s immediate environments, includes interactions or interpersonal relationships between members of the family, school, peers outside of school, religious affiliations, workplaces, and neighborhoods, and works to reinforce interactions within the microsystem (Brofenbrenner, 1994). For the child of the entrepreneurial families, social isolation was a common theme. Due to factors such as lack of free time and parental language and cultural barriers, their parents did not have many interactions with representatives of the children’s school or social groups, and vice versa. Without these external social ties, the children reportedly felt they were enclosed in a “bubble”, in which their parents had reduced or inaccurate awareness of their budding interests and social identities outside of home or work.

**Between Home and School.** The participants characterized interactions between members of the home, particularly parents, and the school system as minimal. Teachers, guidance counselors, and other school officials did not seem to have a large role in the child’s life, even though some reported that more frequent interactions with them could potentially have been helpful to the child. When the school systems did acknowledge the parents’ absence at
school functions, the parents were not always perceived in the most favorable light. These infrequent interactions reinforced the sense of isolation for the child.

Well, middle school, actually, there were these PTA meetings that were held, I believe, once every month, and my teachers always asked me, “Why weren’t your parents there?” And my parents were, because they were at work, and… after every time I explained to them, they would still ask me again the next time. And I felt like they had the idea that my parents didn’t care about my education, which isn’t true, because every parent wants their child to succeed, but yeah, it was kind of those moments where I was…I kind of figured out that I was an outsider because my parents weren’t there at school. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

**Between School/Friends and Business.** The children also reported rare interactions between friends, peers at school, and the business. As a result of limited social interactions, the participants reported that they frequently felt either “out of the loop” or different relative to their peers. They cited feeling “socially awkward” or socially incompetent around their peers. Many reported that they might not have learned how to interact with peers, as they were deliberately or inadvertently excluded from “regular kid” experiences due to their time commitments at home or at their family businesses. They believed this was a consequence of not having time or being allowed to attend parties or getting involved with typical activities of youth. Because they felt their experiences were so starkly different from their peers, the children often did not feel comfortable openly sharing with their friends or peers about what they did after school or on weekends. Also since the children did not know peers who shared similar lifestyles, some felt a sense of shame or fear of being misunderstood, and did not talk about their day-to-day experiences, which further contributed to their sense of alienation from their peers.
Subsequently, their deposit of common interests was simply not robust enough to make conversations with peers easy and natural.

If you stuck a counter between us, and [they] came to order food, I would have no problem talking to them, but I had no counter, there's no barrier, they’re talking about things that I'm not used to talking about, so it’s a lot more awkward for me, usually. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).

Like Iris, most the participants reported greater comfort with establishing connections with customers, who were mainly adults. Customers provided a glimpse into the outside world, into how others lived, in a relatively safe context. Additionally, the child did not have to conceal their identity as helpers in their family enterprise. In fact, they were expected to behave predictably as workers, and the customers were expected to adhere to a specific set of behaviors. These predictable interactions were easy, even if not always interesting for the children. Some of these customer interactions were said to have presented life lessons and opportunities for meaningful personal insights:

(1) There was a customer who ordered food and he paid by credit card. […] I asked him, “Please sign here,” and he said, “Oh, no problem, you might need it in the future when I'm famous.” And that was really unexpected, I was like, “You know what, that might actually happen.” [He] was one of those customers who made you feel hopeful about the future. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

(2) Right after we opened from [Hurricane] Katrina, and there was this one woman that came in and she was crying and she was so upset because she couldn't find food for her three children. […] And I remember standing there and feeling really awkward because I didn't know how to talk about that. That was not one of the usual conversations that I had
even with a customer, but I remember standing there and just listening to her talk and watching her cry […] and how seeing her just made me sad. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).

Between Business and Home. While members of the family and the business did not have many interactions with the child’s school and surrounding communities, the interactions between business and home were constant. These immutable links between the home and business created a fusion that seemed to permeate and dominate every aspect of the child’s existence. As a result, participants reported a sense of monotony or boredom with regards to their day-to-day activities. They felt their conversations with parents were dry and lacked variance, as exchanges with their parents at home were often about business activities, and vice versa. They reported a lack of emotional warmth and nurturance from their parents, as a function of their interactions were frequently dictated by the ebb and flow of business transactions. Outside of their common points of reference to the business, some parents were reportedly more overtly interested in the children’s academics, which sometimes represented the parents’ only link to the child’s school system, as they did not have direct contact with individuals at school. Other parents took a laissez-faire approach in their child’s academic performance, which supported their child’s autonomy, but scaled down the number of conversation they would have with their child that was unrelated to the business.

Also, given the fusion between home and business, children reported that they were often witnesses to their parents’ arguments and other interpersonal conflicts, which were often linked to business operations: “Sometimes, I think the stress of running a family business kind of creates more conflicts. […] My parents fought over sometimes the way that my dad handled things, it wasn’t the kind of work that was kind of nurturing me” (Cara, 29, Liquor Store). A few of the participants reported that issues of personnel and financial management affected the
quality of their parents’ relationship, which had its reverberating effects on the business and family unit:

The fights would last probably like a couple of weeks, and my mom was in charge of deliveries, [so] she wouldn't do deliveries because she would refuse to because she was so angry. Yeah, so she wouldn't do deliveries and so my dad would always have to drive back home to pick up my brother and my sister, and then bring them to work while my mom would be missing for a couple of days. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

Provided the high level of stress outside of the school environment, the children often looked to the school environment for solace. They reported appreciating school, and all the component parts of the academic arena. They sought out extracurricular activities that gave them opportunities to extend their time outside of home and work. Many participants reported that since their parents regarded activities taking place at school as safe and meaningful learning opportunities, they were able to use these academically related activities to carve out some “me time.” “Me time” meant they were able to have some fun, devote to their own interests, and to feel connection to what they perceived to be experiences of mainstream youth. Due to their limited interactions with more diverse relationships, their version of being a teenager often represented a “clean-cut” or “drama-free” version of youth, as compared to peers who had access to a wider range of influences in their communities at large.

The sense of isolation was compounded by the fact that parents reportedly had few social ties outside of members of their own family and people who were affiliated with their businesses as well:

I also think it’s because growing up my parents slowly distanced themselves away from their friends, like when I was younger, my dad's coworkers would come over all the time,
but as I just realized, as we were growing up and right now, my parents are really focused on just coming home and it's really rare when their friends are over… they just keep to themselves, they don’t really go out in big groups. As a child, I never had a night when I had to stay home and they went out with their friends. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

Parents were themselves frequently cut off from the rest of the world, and so may have referenced outdated perceptions of the social systems that their children interfaced with on a daily basis, either through school or their immediate neighborhoods. As the children were confronted more frequently with changes in their environments, parents were often ill informed or completely unaware of current social trends. As a result of this, children often believed their parents to be too rigid or too traditional in their expectations of them. Parents were also reported to be “over-protective,” not allowing children out of their purview to experience the world for themselves. Many of the children also reported a mismatch between their own desires and their parents’ expectations, leading to anger and frustration.

A few of the informants, particularly during their adolescence, felt they did not have the chance to develop their own sense of self or individualism, as their lives revolved around their parents and the business:

Right now [nervous laugh], I am a girl in high school just trying to find… just trying to make my family happy, and, kind of, like the girl who… I don't know who I am, actually. That's the whole point, you know? It’s kind of difficult because I never focus on who I am and who I want to be, but here and there I think about what I want to do, but, you know, it's kind of sad asking myself “Who am I” too. When people ask me that, I don't know how to respond. (Judy, 18, Hair Salon).
Provided their frequent disconnection from wider social references of peers and supportive adults, a few participants alluded to potential delays in their ego development, and therefore their personality formation, as mastery of their selves and social contexts is achieved through varied interpersonal relationships in the mesosystem (Loevinger, 1976). Also taking into account Marcia’s (1966) Eriksonian perspective on identity development as a central developmental task in adolescence, exploration is an important phase in that individuals must undergo an active search and consideration of various identity alternatives before they commit to one that they feel best integrates their personalities. Individuals who are believed to have achieved an identity are those who have explored before committing; those who are actively exploring their identities without making commitments are in moratorium; those who commit to an identity without engaging in the exploration process are foreclosed; and those who are neither exploring their identities nor committed to an identity are diffused (Marcia, 1996). The present study participants who described not having social opportunities to explore identity options reported feeling that they were at risk of not achieving identities of their own, relative to their peers. They also reported a fear of “missing out,” as a function of not having the social connections they believe to be valuable in their identity development. The participants, in turn, expressed harboring feelings of anger and resentment about their situations, externalizing those feelings toward either their parents or the business; the business was often referred to anthropomorphically, as though it had a life and motives of its own.

Exosystem

The exosystem is comprised of larger social systems, such as economic, political, educational, governmental, and religious institutions that function to reinforce the child’s psychosocial development (Brofenbrenner, 1994). For the children of immigrant family
businesses, their development into emerging adults was reportedly strongly impacted by economic and educational forces. In many ways, economic and educational forces, just like the enmeshment of home and business domains, can be viewed as symbiotic in nature. The majority of the participants expressed how their goals and worldviews, and definitions of success and failure were shaped by economic and academic structures, which they were confronted with on a daily basis. Many of the participants spoke about the need to succeed economically and academically as a function of their family’s collective desire to improve their socioeconomic class.

**Economic and Class Influences.** Many of the participants reported that poor economic conditions were what propelled their parents to immigrate to the United States from their native lands. Upon their arrival, their families were also motivated to create opportunities that allowed them to move out of their lesser-well-to-do environments. Thus, many sought to earn their living by opening up family businesses, which were viable options given that they could employ their children and spouses as sources of free labor. The majority of the participants reported that they did not get paid in regular installments for their contributions to the family business, as they might have if working more formally: “I wasn’t paid for it or anything like that, unless you count getting to drink as much soda or candy from the store as I wanted. That was like my payment” (Cara, 29, Liquor Store). The participants also reported that one of the primary sources of stress and worry for families was whether there was enough money not only to subsist, but also achieve financial prosperity. A few of the participants reported that they worried a lot about money, as a result.

(1) At specific moments like at holidays, like around Thanksgiving and Christmas, I would feel at ease because those were really big days [profitable] for my parents at the
store, […] but during the winter when it wasn't the holidays, I would be worried because I would go to the store sometimes and there wouldn't be customers. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

(2) I feel like because financially, I believe we weren’t well off, so like three weeks into my dance classes, I decided not to go anymore because it was really expensive. […] They [parents] would count the money and then give it to me to pay my dance instructor. Every time I counted out that much money for two classes a week, I was like, “I can't do this to my parents.” So I decided to quit it. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

Additionally, parents and children behaved frugally in order to achieve financial stability. Parents were also described as working extremely hard for the financial betterment of the family:

Seeing my parents come home, and my mom's hands would hurt, and seeing them wake up early and coming back home late. And they would tell us, “Oh my god, I haven’t had lunch yet,” and it would be like 5 o'clock, you know? So those things definitely impacted us, especially my brother, I think. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

**Educational Attainment.** Many of the participants reported that economic stability and educational attainment were regarded as almost one and the same in their families. All the participants expressed that graduating from college was a shared endeavor in their families. The messages to achieve academically and professionally were magnified every time the children witnessed their parents’ hardships at the family business. Several of the children mentioned that the only times in which their parents used money liberally was on the children’s educational activities.

They used to put us in a lot of those tutoring programs even though we didn’t really need them. I remember learning calculus in 10th grade. I was like, “Mom, I don’t need this”
and she’s like, “Yes, you do.” And she’ll just put us in those extra programs and I feel like she really does want what’s best for us […] I think the only money that she spent that was not necessary, like ever in her entire life, was probably on those tutoring programs for us. (Bess, 19, Chinese Restaurant).

Many of the participants also reported that their parents saved for their college tuitions. They identified their parents’ dogged pursuit of their future educational status, and therefore financial stability, as sacrifices.

Being able to achieve future economic stability often did not mean that even prosperous family businesses would get passed down to the children. Parents had very specific ideas about what higher educational credentials would mean for their children’s future professions and lifestyles. Many of the participants reported that their parents would be disappointed or angry had they decided to take over the family business:

They would have been probably very, very upset, because they told me repeatedly that they did not want me working in the restaurant business when I grew up, because it was hard work and they didn't want me working so hard. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).

As a result of benefiting from their parents’ sacrifices, the children expressed a desire to “pay them back,” and to do all they can within their potential to make their parents proud, which was often portrayed as not doing anything that will disappoint their parents: “As I got older, I wanted to help my parents more because I understood how hard they worked and how much of a sacrifice it was to work those long hours” (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

There was reportedly tension between obligation to help one’s family achieve continuous economic mobility through academic success and one’s personal values that transcend quantitative measures of success. Regardless of how aligned the participants felt their definition
of success was with their parents’, some expressed feeling uneasy about the extent to which they actually cared in the same way that their parents do about accumulating material signs of wealth\textsuperscript{12}. It seemed that they were more willing to internalize messages about the importance of education, than about achieving materially. A few participants reported electing to distance themselves from their parent’s constant messages revolving around achieving economic prosperity:

So since my mom’s big focus was on money, I had told her that you can be the richest person on earth, but you won’t be the happiest. When I look at success, it’s definitely doing something that you want to do, and that you like to do. ‘Cause if you don’t like what you do, then you’re not going to be as happy, especially when a lot of problems occur, like you know, cancers and tumors and unhappiness. (Elle, 27, Hair Salon).

The premium placed on achieving intrinsic happiness in addition to socioeconomic mobility through education and financial gains appears to be a distinctive feature of children of family businesses. Louie’s (2001) qualitative study found that social-class background affects the messages Chinese immigrant parents give their 1.5 and second-generation children about education, the investments they make in their children's schooling, and the responses these children have to their parents. However, the study did not speak to the children’s desire to optimize their subjective wellbeing in the way the participants described their motivations. Could participants’ entrepreneurial family backgrounds have had a direct influence on the children’s valuation of happiness? While the children did not necessarily talk about having a definition of happiness that differs from their parents, they did allude to a desire to want for themselves what they or their parents may not have experienced in sufficient quantity as they were growing up,

\textsuperscript{12} Even though American society is capitalistic, it also evaluates those who appreciate wealth unfavorably – people are generally uncomfortable talking about their wealth publically.
which is time spent in leisure activities. Participation in leisure activities has been found to be strongly correlated with increased happiness and quality of life (Spiers & Walker, 2008), so perhaps the lack of leisure time may leave the participants in want of happiness. More research in this area would be helpful.

**Macrosystem**

The macrosystem contains the cultures and subcultures, and the norms, values, and overarching beliefs that influence the development of a child’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and therefore identities (Brogenbrenner, 1994). The mostly second-generation Pan-Asian Pacific American (Pan-APA) children of entrepreneurial parents who originated from an East Asian Confucian culture presented worldviews that sought to mediate between both Eastern and Western ideals, as theorized by Kodama, McEwan, Liang, and Lee (2002). The majority of the participants described a strong connection to their Chinese heritage, especially expressing gratitude for their bilingual or multilingual capabilities, as well as their collectivist mentality. Likewise, the majority identified with their American, Western upbringing, often holding in high esteem their values of independence and autonomy. Their development in a family business seemed to have the effect of increasing their appreciation for the richness and privileges of their multicultural background as emerging adults. However, when they were younger, they experienced tension or ambivalence about their bicultural values.

**Obedience.** Many of the participants expressed that their Chinese and/or Asian culture’s emphasis on social hierarchies had an immediate impact on their worldviews. They described a habit of aiming to honor their elders, which included their grandparents, parents, older siblings, customers, and teachers, by way of the ideals of filial piety. As such, many of the participants
believed themselves to be exceptionally obedient or deferent where following orders from parents and other adult figures were concerned:

They just expected me to do everything that I was told to do, and mainly to take care of my brother, and I shouldn't do drugs or anything. When they said you have to pick up your brother after school, I had to. When I was told to come home a certain time, there was really no arguing. It was just a really strict-- not strict, but when my parents were serious about something, I followed through and that's the majority of my childhood-- it was like that. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

More specifically, a few of the participants even reported that they were dutiful to a fault, stating that others have subsequently perceived them as unassertive or lacking freewill: “I felt like I was a bit of a pushover because it's that thinking where you always have to give in to other people, other people's demands. I put myself last a lot of the times, like priority-wise” (Dori, 18, Chinese Restaurant).

Xiao’s (1999) cross-cultural study of American and Chinese parents’ valuation of obedience and independence in children may begin to explain the participants’ obedient conduct in their families. While both the American and Chinese participants of the study valued independence over obedience in children, Americans, on average, were more likely than Chinese parents to think that obedience is a more important trait in children than independence. These findings surprisingly did not support traditional expectations of both cultural systems of individualism and collectivism in America and China, respectively. The emphasis placed on obedience in America in Xiao’s and the present study suggest that this socialization style may be a product of parents’ awareness of the prevalence of social problems such as crime, drugs, violence, and gangs in America’s urban climates. Parents in America may not necessarily believe
independence in children will promote their children’s safety and wellness (Xiao, 1999). Given how the participants reportedly spent so much time unsupervised, parents’ encouragement of obedience in their children may very well be used as a mechanism to protect or prevent their children from coming into contact with perceived harms of urban living in America.

**Responsible Older Sibling.** Corresponding to the Confucian hierarchy decree, the eldest amongst multiple siblings was expected to take on more responsibilities at the business and household, and also to maintain high standards of conduct for younger siblings to emulate. It appears that the eldest child in the family shouldered the greatest responsibilities, at times leading to feeling overwhelmed and possibly an increased risk of experiencing psychological and emotional distress. A couple of the participants reported having older siblings who delineated from expectations to attend and complete college either as a result of getting involved in drugs (an older brother) or developing depression (an older sister). These participants reported that they believe their siblings were negatively affected because of the high stress conditions they endured from having to support the needs of parents and younger siblings. The added stresses experienced by the eldest child in the family business is corroborated by a study by Cheng and Kuo (2000), who investigated links between family structure, language, and ethnic identity among second generation Chinese American children. It appears that the financial and intellectual resources are bestowed upon older children more often, and thus they are more likely than their younger siblings to learn the language and culture mores native to their parents. The findings also show that having more siblings in the family would mean that the same amount of resources is dispersed from a top-down direction. As a result, the youngest children are thus in a disadvantaged position, and would need help from those with more resources. Operating from a hierarchical social structure, the older siblings are then expected to support younger siblings and
please their parents, without any means to reconcile the two pressures in a culturally and socially acceptable way. While most of the participants reported speaking out or expressing their displeasure in having to be so accepting of the roles they were cast into by virtue of birth order, they often ended up complying after being reprimanded by their elders.

(1) It wasn’t something that they [parents] forbade me to do [social activities]. I think if I pried enough, they would have been like, “Yeah, okay”, but at the time, it was just part of my life to go to the store, I just accepted it, as what it was. (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

(2) I honestly resented it. I was a rebel. I definitely fought back whenever possible, but even talking back, you know, dissenting in any form in Chinese culture against an elder is very… is what they consider disrespectful in many sense. So I did get in trouble a lot. (Hope, 21, Transportation Services).

Mother’s Daughter. Related to subordinating to those who are older in their families, the participants expressed some differences of roles and responsibilities given their female gender. While it was not always explicitly stated, the participants noticed that they performed tasks that were less labor intensive by way of having to lift heavy objects in the business setting. Parents were also more protective of their daughters.

I know one time I fell asleep in the kitchen, and I was pretty sure I was just sitting on some bags of rice [laugh], and my mom got really angry because I was female and I shouldn't have been sleeping in the kitchen because of the workers there, because they were all male. So I was usually stuck with… It came back to cashier-- that was my main role-- they [parents] usually wanted to keep me out of the kitchen as much as possible. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).
Regardless of birth order or ability, males in the family were not expected to do as much housework. In some instances, although males in their families also engaged in the same activities as the female participants, it was not the case that the female was permitted or invited to take on all the tasks that were performed by males. In the cases of restaurant businesses, males did the heavy cooking exclusively.

However, in the instances in which the matriarch was the sole proprietor or dominant figure in business functions, the participants expressed a sense of awe and reverence towards their mothers: “My mom, she is really, I can't really describe, but I'm really thankful to her for everything she did and I really look up to her” (Geri, 18, Facial Salon). In many cases, the female participant’s oversight of household chores seems to enable their mothers to perform less gender-normative roles within the family business, and to “lean in” to challenging work outside of the home.

A lot of what I had to do, chores-wise, I would say, would have fell onto my parents if they had the time to do it. My mom was rarely home; she worked seven days a week. If she [were] home she probably would have. Not that she didn't do any of it, by that if she was physically there to do as much housework, as a traditional housewife would, I guess. So I had to step up a little bit more in that sense. […] She [mother] is really active in the sense that she likes to get things done, and be part of…be part of making the money for the family and supporting the family. (Hope, 21, Transportation Service).

In many ways, the participants’ mothers’ executive roles outside of the household appeared to promote a feminist ideology within the participant, in which masculine gender

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This term ‘lean in’ has been popularized by Sheryl Sandberg, the author of *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, who has inspired a neo-feminist movement to change work environments to support the dialectical roles of modern women as workers, as mothers, and as productive members of society.
stereotypes about entrepreneurship did not influence their valuation of self-employment. Even though participants were reportedly discouraged by their parents to consider self-employment, they expressed more favorable views of self-employment when their mothers were heads of their family business, to the point of mentioning what type of business (bakery, dance studio, accounting firm, etc.) they have considered opening on their own had they not had other career options. This finding coincided with Greene, Han, and Marlow (2011) finding that daughters will more likely be self-employed if their mothers were self-employed, than if their fathers were. The paradoxical nature of adhering to gender norms in the household, but enabling their mothers to perform work outside of gender stereotypes is an interesting one from a psycho-social-cultural perspective and warrants further study.

**Being A part and Apart.** Another overarching set of subcultural norms that colored the participants’ lived experiences in immigrant family businesses can be best captured by the concept of collectivism in Chinese socialization and cultural norms. In practice, however, collectivism for participants meant being able to accept that in order to be a part of the family unit and its overarching goals, members have to spend time apart from one another. The children described being extremely aware that they must be a cohesive family unit in order to make it as immigrants in America. Ironically, maintaining family solidarity meant being able to give up time together. Many lamented about how they did not have enough mealtimes or shared other bonding opportunities with their family members because of the time commitment at the family business: “My mom, she comes home around seven or eight [evening], my dad comes home at nine, and so my younger sister and I, we get home at different times too. […] So we eat at our own times” (Judy, 18, Hair Salon). The participants reported simply wanting unencumbered time as a family to fortify their emotional connections with their parents:
It would be on one of the days that the restaurant was closed or something, and we would
be home, eating dinner; that was when, I guess, I would have more of an emotional
connection with them because they would tell me little stories about when they were
little, and so then I could relate to that a little bit more. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).

**Education Always Priority.** Additionally, education was another value that was
consistently communicated (as described above under influences of the Exosystem). Parents
made it very clear that they always prioritize their children’s education even before their
children’s contributions to the business, however it was at times difficult for the children to
reconcile their responsibilities of work and school in practice. Lola’s statement illustrates this
tension vividly:

> They said if I have school, stay home and do my work, but I just want to help them as
> much as I can, because I want to put that first before I put my school first, even though I
> know I'm not supposed to because if they need help, then I’ll helped them. (Lola, 18, Hair
> Salon).

The children again spoke to a dissonance between what is communicated to them by their
parents, and the awareness of immediate labor demands of their family business environment.
Even though high educational attainment is considered the more superior act of fulfilling
parental obligations, some of the participants reportedly felt guilty when they were focused on
school in lieu of helping out, as helping out for them fulfilled an immediate need, while focusing
on schoolwork is perceived as a distal need. Many of the participants reported completing
homework at the business or staying up late at night to study. Despite the conflict between
family assistance and academic achievement, the participants’ experiences seem to support
Fuligni, Yip, and Tseng’s (2002) finding that Chinese American adolescents show a greater
propensity to strategize ways to balance family obligations with their academic demand than with socializing with peers on a daily basis. The authors did not find any correlations between psychological distress and maintaining a balance of familial obligations. While these findings and ours seem to suggest that an integration of Western and Eastern cultural expectations is possible to achieve without grave cost to psychological wellness, these results do not fully account for the participants’ experience of working long hours at demanding family businesses, while attending to other family obligations and academic activities.

**Working Hard.** Another set of values communicated by the children’s immigrant parents is that rewards will only come if members of the family continue to work hard and do not give up despite trying times. Participants reported learning that if members of their family work hard together, toward the same goals, then they would be remunerated as a family. Individual motivation to sustain a group goal was maintained by the desire not to let their parents down, as their parents’ hardly wavered in their contribution of hard work. As such, the children understood the importance of helping out to the best of their potential (either academically or through the family business), as they were responsible not only for their own futures, but that of their family members as well. The reciprocity of their parents’ hard work seemed to have culminated in the form of strong work ethics, and perhaps skills of time management and uneasiness regarding free time, and extreme feelings of guilt over procrastination: “When I have work to do, it’s going to get done, and it’s not a big deal, I have so much work” (Cara, 29, Liquor Store). Most of the participants reported that the value of hard work was a byproduct of their family’s small business involvement, and witnessing their parents working hard reinforced the importance of working towards their goals. This narrative aligns with Lopez’s (2001) call to expand the definition of parental involvement to include teaching children outside of formalized
academic settings, and that just because a parent is a working-class immigrant who is “absent” from parent teacher conferences, it does not mean that their children cannot learn important life lessons from their line of work (Lopez, 2001).

Nonconforming Childhoods. Finally, within the context of their American upbringing, many of the participants expressed sadness over the forfeiture of idyllic childhoods, as they felt that they were not able to be as carefree and playful while growing up in a family business relative to their peers. Participants shared how they felt most regrettable or disappointed about having missed out on certain activities of American youth. A few of the participants described how they have consciously tried advocating for younger siblings to enjoy activities they associate with more traditional childhoods. They also expressed wishing to have spent more time with their parents outside of the family-work dynamics, in which they could be children in a more classic sense, rather than laborers. They also discussed how they were not free to undergo typical rites of passage of American youth. The notion of their immigrant parents not understanding how childhood “should” be like was a common refrain. Speaking to whether she would want to replicate her own childhood for her children in the future, one participant said: “I want them to have a happy childhood…because growing up---I was actually born here, so I know how it is like---I don't want them to go through what I’m going through” (Lola, 18, Hair Salon). The feeling that their childhoods felt foreclosed appeared more pronounced in hindsight, when the participants grew older and learned that their peers’ experiences of childhood were different from their own. However, while they were undergoing the day-to-day experiences as children, many of the participants reported that they “didn’t know what [they were] missing and so it wasn’t a big deal” (Iris, 23, Chinese Restaurant). In other words, they were mostly content
living unaware of the status quo experiences, and did not self-advocate to parents who were equally unaware of conventions of middle-class American childhoods.

*Chronosystem*

In the final ecological system, the chronosystem takes into account a child’s psychosocial development with regards to the zeitgeist of their times (Brofenbrenner, 1994). With respect to the socio-historical, geopolitical, and global economic forces that encapsulated their daily existence, which conformed to inevitable movements through the psycho-social-biological stages of human development, it is important to note that any combination of local and global events could have influenced the participants’ life transitions. For instance, as briefly indicated earlier in the characteristics of the businesses, the participants acknowledged how their perception of their parents’ rationale for going into self-employment could not be divorced from their status as first-generation immigrants. Their parents’ decision to immigrate was presumably influenced by political strife in their home countries, unfavorable economic climates in their home countries and America, and/or America’s more favorable immigration policies toward east Asian countries during the time period (early 1970s-2000s). As a result, the participants’ developmental trajectories were in many ways predetermined by the heavy-handed dominance of political and economic forces that facilitated their parents’ initial involvement in self-employment. Not to forget, even increased social acceptance of working mothers during this time period may have had its effect on family involvement in self-employment (Smolensky & Gootman, 2003). Whether or not the experiences of the children of immigrant entrepreneurs would have been described differently had capitalism not been as strong of an influence on their parents merits further discussion, but it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this conversation, as parents’ narratives were not the focus of this study. However, with regards to the experiences of the
children over the course of their development within Chinese immigrant family businesses, one will see that their narratives develop out of their parents’ baby-boomer (born between 1946-64) generational epoch, while casting a distinct “millennial” (born post-1980) vibe\(^{14}\) (Taylor, 2014). Since all of the participants were undergoing the emerging adulthood stage of human development (ages 18-29), their narratives recounted experiences in a family business during preceding developmental stages, from early childhood to the end of adolescence. Cognitive maturation expected during emerging adulthood seemed to have some influence on how the participants evaluated their earlier experiences. Specifically, the length of time and physical distance away from daily interactions with the family business seemed to have a “warming effect” on their overall impression of their earlier experiences. Participants described an evolution in their feelings about being involved in a family business. During their adolescence, a prominent feeling was dislike and even disdain for having to spend so much of their time helping out at the business; then over time they grew accepting of their prescribed roles and responsibilities; and then they began expressing feelings of gratitude for having their experiences:

Sometimes I would get upset that I was in a way being forced to do it; I couldn’t really see how it would benefit me to work there, and as I got older, then it was more like, “Yeah, this business is my dad’s way of making a living, and helping to save our family.” I grew to be a little bit more grateful about the experience. […] It was kind of an evolution. (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

\(^{14}\) Reviews of existing literature on Millennials’s views on work suggest that they value “the good life” by way of wanting things immediately, good pay and benefits, rapid advancement, work/life balance, interesting and challenging work, and making a contribution to society (Ng, Schweitzer, Lyons, 2010).
Humility from Witnessing Parental Hardships. The act of witnessing their parents work hard seemed to make a lasting impact on the children’s psyche. Every participant repeatedly described understanding the ways they benefited from their parents selflessness, grittiness (i.e., not giving up despite hard work; Duckworth, 2007), and hardship. They experienced humbleness and a belief that they could not have achieved a feeling of belonging to a larger cause as early as they did had they not grown up in a family business:

Well, when I was little, I used to be really bratty, and I would get mad at my parents when they didn’t buy me stuff, but when I started working at the restaurant, I realized how hard they work. When I was little, I used to think my dad just sat at the restaurant, but he really doesn’t. ‘Cause sometimes he cooks, actually, most of the time he yells at people, and I can see that it’s very stressful on him. And when I got older, I realized that he has a lot of health problems, like high blood pressure and things like that, and so whenever I would see people acting out against their parents. I’d be like, their parents probably work really hard and you’re just going through growing pains. (Bess, 19, Chinese Restaurant).

Lessons in Empathy. Along with virtues of humility, participants also cited many soft, values-based skills that they believe they gained because of their involvement in their family business. For instance, many of the older members of the sample reported a high level of empathy and a desire to engage in work that will help other people. This finding supported the conclusions drawn from Lietz’s (2011) study on how resilient families describe and appraise their prosocial actions in relation to their experience of loss, trauma, and/or extreme stress. It appears that members of these families were drawn to assist others to cope with the personal challenges they face, and that their increased compassion for others may stem from their first-
hand interactions with risk factors such as poverty, death of a child, significant health problems, and substance abuse problems. Given that so many of the study participants felt their upbringings were fraught with distressing and stressful experiences, it appears their self-reports of increased empathy and altruism may be related to their distinct process of meaning-making. Their desire to relate to others and to focus their attention away from their own needs could be seen in their development of certain concrete skills. Many of the participants, for instance, expressed personal pride in being able to communicate effectively in professional settings, and reported an increased comfort when being the listener and helper in social situations. Additionally, many of the participants reported that their empathy lends to their savvy money management skills. They talked about how they feel they appreciate the value of money more than their peers, as they know that hard work and labor is required to make money; thus, they tend to spend money thoughtfully and eliminate waste whenever possible. Overall, the majority of the participants reported appreciating their ability to empathize with others, especially their parents. They reported that if they had a family business like their parents’, they would, given a few conditions, absolutely want their own children to contribute to the operations of the business in some way. The conditions are that they would make the hours of helping out shorter, provide some monetary compensation, and to provide some choice in roles and responsibilities.

(1) So I feel like I wouldn’t want them to be working like every day or anything; maybe come out and help out on weekends, but I would also want them to be well-rounded people, pursuing their own interests too. And if I were doing a family business, I would want them to see the value in helping out. I think when I was growing up, it was more like, “Oh you have to do this,” but if I were to do my own…It would be more about
emphasizing the learning and teaching, and that’s how I think I would do it. (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

2) I would despite all the hardships, because, I feel like, if I don't…if I had a business and they didn’t work in it, I feel like they would be spoiled, and they wouldn't really understand like the hardships that I would have to work through just to make a simple living for my children. They wouldn't really understand that unless they feel the stress or the labor I have to go through every day just to make a certain amount of money for my children. So yeah I would have to make them work, but not every day though. Maybe just busy days. […] I think if I gave my kids some money, they would be a little bit happier going to work. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

**Self Discovery During College.** Overwhelmingly, the participants expressed moving on to college as a welcomed change or relief in their lives. They often elected to attend college away from their homes, as they believed that time away would provide a chance to exert their independence and autonomy. Often times, this was a sanctioned and celebrated occasion for the family, as admission to college often represented a culmination of years of hard work for the child and parents. Given more opportunities for exploring one’s interests and time for imaginative reflection, many reported that they were able to “blossom” during this stage of their development. Also without the dependence on their parents, members were able to establish social networks for the first time, however begrudgingly difficult interacting with peers felt in the beginning. Many participants, especially only-children or children with few siblings, described socialization with peers to be an important area of growth in their development into well-rounded adults, as they felt they did not get the opportunity to develop a more complex set of social skills while living at home.
Career as Symbol of Self. The other task associated with the college years was to make the decision about what to study, while balancing the personal desire for fundamentally interesting careers, and their parents’ desires for work that was high paying, stable, and prestigious. While many conflicts and fights were avoided by the participants during adolescence, the decision about what to study and which occupational path to take appeared to cause tensions and, in a few instances, rifts in what were previously described as a mostly peaceful coexistence between parents’ and child’s expectations. As the children began to become increasingly more autonomous over the course of their time away from home, it appears that the desire to live a life of their own making became more urgent and deliberate. A few of the participants made the decision to pursue a career of their own choosing, while others resigned to pursue a career designated by their parents. However, quite a few of the participants reportedly changed their minds in the “last minute.”

They [parents] definitely influenced me into going to law school. They’re very—my mom, obviously wants me to be very successful. So if you're not a doctor, they wanted me to be a lawyer, because they supposedly make a lot of money, so I went into that because I just wasn't going to do anything in science. And in the last-minute, I decided that I’m not really into law school. I'm good in argument but I'm not—I just don't want to be in the environment. It’s a sixty-hour workweek, looking at boring statues; it's not my idea of fun. So I dropped that and decided to kind of stick close to it because I did like law, the criminal justice side of things, so I went to get my Masters in it and tried to finish early. (Hope, 21, Transportation Services).

Many of the participants who veered from their parents’ life paths reported that their parents eventually had to accept their decisions to study or major in something that was not previously
an option. The participants who reported that their parents were not actively involved in their academics reported being unsure/undecided more often than those whose parents had a stronger say.

**Onward Mobility.** With regards to the changes in the socioeconomic status of the immigrant entrepreneurial families, the majority of the participants reported gradual upward movement over time. Many recounted their families moving out of poorer neighborhoods and achieving financial stability as a result of earnings from the business. Despite their financial achievements, a few of the participants reported that they feel their parents had yet to achieve the “American Dream,” provided that their children have yet to establish secure careers, and that they continued to work as hard and for as many hours as they do.

1) I would say for, I mean, for their situation, they achieved it because, I mean, the American dream-wise…they came from another country as an immigrant, to the country of immigrants, they were able to bring their family, make a living, get their own business, and [work] for a good number of years, so I would say they fulfilled it. But I guess they are fine with where they are. I would say that they think they have done what they could. (Iris, 23, Chinese Take-Out).

2) For me, wealth or money is not the only pursuit for me, as a part of the American Dream. I also have an American Dream, I mean, I want more success, I want the career success, and the family success; I mean, that is not like the [immigrant] American Dream, but the dream for everybody. (Mary, 25, Piano Store).

3) I feel like she [mother] thinks working at a restaurant is something anyone can do and she wants us to fulfill the American Dream. You know she basically moved here so she
can have kids, have the American dream. I feel like if we didn’t fulfill it she would be really disappointed in herself and us. (Bess, 19, Chinese Restaurant).

4) I feel like they [parents] succeeded in smaller ways and also in a long-term way. Like they didn't come here and immediately have a large income, but in smaller ways, like having me and my brother, and also long-term, in terms of, you know, one day down the road I'm going to make a real salary, and hopefully be successful as they wish they were. It's kind of like them giving up their chance, so I can step up. (Faye, 18, Hair Salon).

It appears that the changes in their families’ financial situation did not always mean a vertical climb up the socioeconomic ladder, but provided a lateral movement between parents and child along the family’s path to their goals. This lateral movement appears to be more of an “onward” move, rather than an upwards move, as there is often much more distance to go before the family can claim acquisition of their collective goals, which is forever shifting.

**Business Closures Anticipated.** The intensity of hard labor contributed to the prosperity, but also eventual closure of businesses over time. For the businesses that were still opened at the time of the interview, the majority reported that there have been conversations within their families about one day shutting down their business for good. Reasons for closure included physical exhaustion, aging of parents, and economic issues:

He [father] was tired. I mean that store was opened for 14, 15, 16 years and it was opened 12-15 hours a day, 7 days a week. I mean, you just… he was tired. And it’s a job that requires a lot of physical [labor] […] and his health was a defining thing too. He was a smoker for many, many years and so I think all of that contributed to why he closed the store. (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).
Another frequent reason for the business closures was that the business would eventually become obsolete in regards to its primary function to achieve educationally for the children. In other words, once the children began or completed college, parents felt less pressure to keep their business, as they saw their children’s futures more secured:

I think it's [the business] successful in that she makes decent money for her to be comfortable. I don't think she'll keep it for much longer. Maybe just for another couple of years down the road, because for her, education was first. It was a way for her to provide us with a better education and since I'm graduating, and my brother’s graduating, and my little brother is years down the road, it's possible that she might give it up soon. (Hope, 21, Transportation Services).

The children in the study did not express surprise when their parents reported that they were going to close the business, as there was always an understanding that the business will one day be terminated. All of the participants did express that closure of the business signified an important transition in their family dynamic.

**Time for Family.** Overall, as the adult children of families business recounted their earlier experience in an entrepreneurial situation, many resolved to undo the negative effects that the business had on their relationships. They felt that because so much of their time spent with family members were not quality moments. Interactions were mostly practical and emotionally superficial exchanges. Many wished to create opportunities where they can feel connected in a “real” sense of family, as time spent as a family felt fragmented or guilt-laden, even in the rare cases when spent away from the business:

(1) So a few years ago, the three of us [siblings] and my mom went to Bermuda, and my dad refused to go because he didn’t want to leave the restaurant in someone else’s hands
for like four days, so it really stresses the family out a lot ‘cause my dad only wants to take two days off at a time and my mom hates it ‘cause she’s like, “We have the time, we have the money, we should do it while the kids still live in the house,” but my dad never wants to. (Bess, 19, Chinese Restaurant).

2) To this day, I don’t think we have been on vacation… Actually we did go to Florida. Not all of us together, but my mom, sister and I went to Florida when I was in seventh grade, but my sister, I think the whole time, she just hated it because our dad and brother had to work. So it felt like we were being selfish, that we were having fun and they weren’t. (Dori, 18, Chinese Take-Out).

To the same degree, the participants wanted to provide some rewarding experiences to their parents, to show them that their sacrifices of time and energy were well worth the life that their children were able to achieve. They likewise aimed to infuse joy, lightness, and fun, which was also extended to younger siblings; some of the participants expressed a sense of responsibility in preserving their childhoods. However, as the participants reflected on their earlier experiences, all of them wished some aspects of their upbringing were different, but also recognized that who they are today would be different had they not had those experiences:

(1) During and post college, I never had much…I never had adventures until I went to college. We weren’t really exposed. My mom worked at home, we ate Chinese food, we never did anything different or had much exposure. My dad always worked at a Chinese restaurant…I was sheltered. After she [mother] stopped with the business…I [now] always take her to eat different things, whether it be like Indian, Spanish, she never had that food before. (Elle, 27, Hair Salon).
(2) I try to provide my sisters with that feeling [of childhood]. Like for Christmas, I’ll bring home a Christmas tree and we’ll all sit around the tree and put up lights and decorate, I’ll take them on a trip, you know stuff that I didn’t get to have as a kid. (Nora, 26, Chinese Deli).

Those ‘Little Moments’. Finally, with regards to passage of time, and its effect on the psychosocial development of the whole child of immigrant family businesses, the participants reported that they wish to preserve memories of their family business. They reported that looking back to those times of hardship would conjure up mostly “bittersweet” memories. The majority of the memories will likely comprise of “those little moments” when they spent time with members of the family, of customers who made an impression, and of time spent outside of the family restaurants, take-outs, salons, and stores:

(1) I would say that when she [mother] would bring me to work with her or the times she would randomly come home in the middle of the work day and just help me with homework (or mostly math), or just bringing me to school. Just the little things. (Hope, 21, Transportation Services)

(2) There were some funny moments too, at the restaurant. My mom was trying to say, “Give me the rag,” but in Fuzhounese [Chinese dialect] it’s call I ‘wen mor’, and I was like, “Why are you saying want more, want more what?” (Bess, 19, Chinese Restaurant).

With regards to revisiting some of their earlier memories through the course of their participation in research interviews, Nora and Cara captured many of the participants’ feelings about the act of recalling their pasts, and summarizing their lived experiences in a family business:
I don’t know if you could tell. I was very nervous, I’m still very nervous. It’s hard to talk about the past and childhood with people. Though, I don’t know, now I feel like for several days after this, I might be thinking about the past a lot and how it affected me. (Nora, 26, Chinese Deli).

(2) Cara: I’m smiling now because I feel like just recounting all of it, there are a lot of bitter-sweet moments.

Interviewer: I saw that as we were talking, you went through sort of an emotional roller coaster…

Cara: I did. It was. ‘Cause that was what it was: It was an emotional roller coaster… Just my family… (Cara, 29, Liquor Store).

Recalling the “little moments” seemed to speak to the transformative process of qualitative inquiry for the participants, or simply spending time in purposeful reflection. As they traveled through time and bridged their previously unprocessed memories and fully-formed values, personality traits, and identities, it appeared as though they had wanted such opportunity to tell their stories for a long time. It is also important to note that the repeated refrain of relief and feeling of emotional cleansing at the conclusion of the interviews was felt by the researcher as well. In the process of co-constructing one’s past, connecting it to present realities and future aspirations, it was inevitable that the emotional roller coaster would travel along the researcher-participant continuum of phenomenological research.

Conclusion

The goal of this qualitative exploration was to further the understanding of the phenomenon of growing up in an immigrant-owned small family business, with an emphasis on how this specific upbringing impacts the roles and responsibilities, and consequently, the
psychosocial development of second-generation Chinese American children. The contextual factors influencing the lived experiences of the children were organized in an ecological systems framework, and then Kodama, McEwan, Liang, and Lee’s (2002) Asian Pacific American (APA)-specific psychosocial student development theory was used to guide the analyses. The use of retrospective data from emerging adults allowed us to see how the intricate dynamics between family and business relationships and environments affected the participants’ development throughout the course of childhood, adolescence, and into emerging adulthood. This pseudo-longitudinal methodology presented a comprehensive view of the socio-economic-cultural contextual processes that facilitate the development of enduring psychosocial outcomes.

What was noticed is that the children of immigrant entrepreneurs did experience most of the psychosocial issues that Kodama, McEwan, Liang, and Lee (2002) presented as uniquely APA cultural influences. For instance, the participants reported achievement stress with regards to attaining high levels of competence or academic/economic success by way of the Model Minority myth; they recounted the pressures to regulate their emotional expressions; and they wrestled with upholding collectivism over individualism, while honoring Confucian laws of filial piety. However, it appears that the contextual factors were compounded by the operations of the family business functions, and resulted in magnifying and intensifying the experience of these expected APA psychosocial issues. The participants from entrepreneurial families reported a uniquely challenging upbringing that required a dexterous ability to balance relationships with their home, work, and school, in which they maintained a position of being a part of the family business paradigm, but also apart from it in regards to their psychosocial development. They reported roles and responsibilities within these domains that other non-family business children may not have to contend with, along with constant stresses that are inherent in a family-business
paradigm. However they also acknowledged material (i.e., economic mobility) and value-based rewards that resulted from unexpected protective factors inherent in a family business upbringing. The achievement of mobility in socioeconomic class was described not as upward mobility, per se, but as *onward* mobility. This lateral movement suggested that the businesses served as a “stepping stone” to their anticipated educational and future career successes, and not a direct path to a higher status.

With regards to long-term effects of the family business experience on the emerging adults’ sense of identity, and its encompassing personal values, the participants reported a strong Asian American cultural identity, humility and empathy, independence and responsibility, and emotional maturity by way of earning wisdom despite their youth. Fortified by a robust set of personal values, the participants anticipated a secured future for themselves and their families. Their future goals and career/professional aspirations appear to reflect a confident outlook on their skills and abilities learned from the challenges they associate with their parents’ work. Additionally, due to an upbringing in which they were actively involved in and/or consistently witnessed to family members’ labor-intensive work, the participants reported strong motivation to achieve their long-term goals for the sake of their parents. The children’s involvement in family businesses appeared to enculturate them to Chinese cultural norms of filial piety and collectivism, while entrepreneurial processes helped the family assimilate into American culture, by way of achieving socioeconomic stability.

The participants also spoke to the drawbacks of growing up in a family business environment. They talked about spending time away from their parents often, which they attribute with later feeling inept in building and maintaining peer relationships. Their reports of “social awkwardness” appeared to be influenced by their lack of social ties outside of the home,
work, and school environments. Participants reported feeling “missing out” or “out of the loop” due to their lack of involvement in activities that they viewed as “normal” for their age. While it appears that their structured time kept them from getting involved in at-risk behavior, their minimal socialization with peers in environments outside of the home and work seemed to produce feelings of alienation, isolation, and otherness while in social settings during their adolescence, which research has linked to youth maladjustment (Loder & Barton, 2003; Simpson & Roehlkepartain, 2003).

Overall, the participants expressed disliking the daily toils of their family business upbringing, but expressed positive feelings about the psychosocial outcomes of their experiences in retrospect. They reported missed opportunities to feel emotionally bonded to their parents, but also acknowledged that they will cherish the “little moments” when they did feel connected to them. This savoring approach to recollecting their pasts suggests an optimistic worldview and speaks to the resilience of their spirits. Many of the participants reported choosing not to have the challenging times in the past color their perspectives, and expressed feeling in control of their own destinies; they did not feel forced into helping out when they got older, and saw the benefits of doing so of their own accord.

The findings of this present study contribute an integrative, multi-disciplinary, primary-witness perspective to existing literature on the psychosocial processes and outcomes that influence the adaptation of second-generation Chinese American youth in America, as well as general empirical research on demographically diverse populations. This is the first known research of its kind to explore the psychosocial effects of one’s involvement in the phenomenon of immigrant small family business families from the perspective of adult children, while viewing their experiences from a comprehensive ecological systems theoretical framework. The
findings presented have the potential to complement and expand on existing research and catalyze future research in the fields of psychology, sociology, economics (small business development), education, social work, political science (immigration reform, child labor laws), and other applied and theoretical social sciences.

Limitations and Suggestions for Direction of Future Research

I acknowledge a few limitations to the study. First, a disproportionate number of participants was female (14:1). The absence of stories from males prevents the drawing of conclusions about the overall experience of children of Chinese American entrepreneurial families. While a purposeful sampling methodology was faithfully implemented in this present study, other unaccounted factors may have contributed to whether second-generation Chinese American males wanted to participate in such a study. This would be an interesting area to perform future research in, as multiculturally competent research needs to be representative of ethnocultural populations. Second, the wide range of business environments and geographic differences may have had an effect on the results of this study. I recognize that the type of businesses and where the businesses were located may have had different influences on the lived experiences of the participants. Future research might aim to disaggregate the effects of business type and location on the psychosocial outcomes of entrepreneurial families. Third, while all of the participants were screened for having at least one parent who identify as Chinese, there were still intra-group differences in terms of ethnic identity and immigration experience when considering individual parents and the overall racial and ethnic identity of the participants. Future research might further explore these intra-group differences and corresponding experiences. Fourth, the results were derived from self-reports of an inherently self-selected participant sample. Due to the nature of self-reporting, one must account for unspoken personal
biases and preferences to include or omit certain aspects of one’s narrative. It is therefore advised that future studies aim to include a wider sample size. All of the participants represent an educated group who are working towards higher educational attainment. Children of immigrants who took a less traditional educational path may have a different account of their earlier experiences in their family’s business. Therefore, future research will have to account for these differences. Finally, given that this qualitative research was based around semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher was inextricably involved in the meaning-making process (Maracek, 2003), it is important to note that although all measures were taken to assure reliability of data analyses and reporting of results, the conclusions of this study must be viewed with the researcher’s experiences and worldviews in mind. As mentioned previously, my “insider/outsider perspective” is as a child of immigrant family businesses, clinically trained psychology student, and researcher (Chavez, 2008). I was able to bring insights and skillsets from my own experiences to help form a strong alliance with my participants quickly. The alliance relationship allowed me to encourage open discourse, while following a set of open-ended questions. I used the process of reviewing my field notes and reflexive journals to adapt to the tempo of the interviews. However, upon review of my reflexive journal entries, I noticed that I asked more follow-up questions about specific family dynamics than I did with other questions. This heightened curiosity about the participants’ relationship with family may have been influenced more by my outsider bias as a family systems researcher, as I felt drawn to clarify and venture more deeply into the subject. My unwitting curiosity seemed to have had the unintended effect of taking time away from participants to elaborate on other subject matters that may have been equally or more important to the participants. In most of the cases, the participants responded courteously to a request for more time and generously extended their participation
beyond the one-hour time frame. Our biographical and intellectual similarities may have promoted mutual interest in the story-making process, and therefore the participants’ logistical flexibility. Nonetheless, as an ethical consideration, researchers attempting to replicate this study are advised to request more than one-hour and up to two hours to thoroughly complete the interview protocol (Nagata, Suzuki, Kohn-Wood, 2014).

Clinical Implications

When considering the clinical implications of our participants’ experience of the phenomenon of growing up in an immigrant-owned family business, it would be antithetical to our constructivist methodology to impose any one definition of healthy or unhealthy onto our data. It would also be unscrupulous to inflict objectivity since our research framework did not include psychological assessments for clinically significant mental health concerns. Also because participants were recruited from a non-clinical population, it would be methodologically invalid to draw conclusions about ways in which the participants were impacted from a clinical standpoint. What we can speak to is the contextual factors that may lend themselves to further exploration of clinical concerns, which can help us to construct clinical case conceptualizations that may inspire specific ideas for interventions.

For instance, a few of the participants’ narratives highlighted conditions for increased risk of developing psychological distress or behavioral health concerns. These participants specifically presented potential risk factors for developing internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety. The prevalence of acute and chronic stress associated with home, work, and school, social isolation and limited social support, family conflict, and financial worries, may be topics of clinical concern. In a study on emotional reactivity to family, school, and peer stress among 180 Asian American high school-age youth, Kiang and Buchanan (2014) found that
the experience of more distress was linked to more family stress, and more anxiety was linked to more stress within the domains of family, school and peer relationship. Females in the study reported particular vulnerability to daily stress, and chronic experiences of school stress were associated with higher reports of depression and anxiety. Kiang and Buchanan’s findings suggest that there is a great deal of “spillover” with regards to stress reactivity between ecological domains (2014, p. 618). Relevant to our participants, it is possible that since the context of the business is associated with daily stress, a cycling-through of reactivity to distress may pose an increased risk for experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety, and other emotional challenges. Given empirical evidence suggesting that anxiety and depressive disorders during adolescence presents a strong risk of recurrent anxiety and depressive disorder during early adulthood, and that most young adult disorders are preceded by adolescent disorders (Pine, Cohen, Gurley, Brook, & Ma, 1998), it may be worthwhile to explore preventative efforts to support the children of immigrant business owners.

In another study looking at the effects of family, peer, and school risk on depressive and anxiety symptoms in low-income Chinese immigrant youth, having been subjected to peer relational and overt victimization and mother/father alienation and family conflict predicted depression and anxiety. Surprisingly, having peer supportive factors did not predict internalizing problems, while supportive school factors influenced the rate of internalizing problems (Yeh, Liao, Ma, Shea, Okubo, Kim, & Atkins, 2014). While the participants of this present study are mostly second-generation immigrants, their recounting of their families being low-income during earlier years of their life suggests that witnessing parental conflict may increase their chances of developing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Also, many of the participants’ reports of not
having strong mentorship relationships with their teachers at school may suggest another risk factor for increased internalizing behavior.

In light of ecological systems influences on psychological and social development in humans, Stokols (1996) has recommended that a multi-systems approach is helpful in the development and implementation of health promotion programs. If a process were put into place to assist children and families involved in self-employment to maximize their human potential, for instance, then the clinician must understand the interactions occurring within the family, work, and school environments, as well as acknowledging absent domains (e.g., community support, religious affiliation, etc.). Provided that some of our participants alluded to feeling negative effects from social isolation, as well as their feeling of persistent distress in the process of maintaining financial viability as a family, it is possible that the children’s schools can play an active role in promoting their psychosocial wellbeing, as the school system is often already perceived as trustworthy and helpful by their families (Hamilton, Marshall, Rummens, Fenta, & Simich, 2011). This recommendation takes into account the cultural explanation that participation and engagement in therapeutic programming related to the mental health and wellbeing of Asian Pacific Americans is usually low as a result of the well-documented social stigma against behavioral health issues (Sue, Cheng, Saad, Carmel, & Chu, 2012). Therefore, schools may serve as environments for prevention and intervention work for our academically oriented participants. Particularly during the participants’ adolescence, supportive programming to boost time management, social skills training, stress management, and career counseling can perhaps be peppered with psychoeducation around mental health risks, family therapy, and even referral for higher levels of care. Perhaps workshops on school/life/work management may help foster helpful conversations and assist the child in feeling less alienated in their experiences. In
addition to program-based interventions, individual teachers, guidance counselors and other relevant school officials may benefit from education about the lived experiences of children of immigrant family businesses, and in turn, they can be encouraged to reach out to students who have family businesses, to lend an ear if some days are more distressing than others for them, and to provide referrals to available supportive programs.

Disseminating our findings to relevant community members and school officials can help facilitate culturally competent dialogue about the lived experiences of children of immigrant family businesses, which can boost the family’s social and resource capital, and thus improve the child’s opportunities and developmental outcomes across all social ecological systems (Schlee, Mullis, & Shriner, 2008; Williams & Le Menestrel, 2013). With regards to how our findings can impact parent-teacher engagement, participants’ narratives can provide teachers with new insights to parents’ motivations. For instance, a few of the participants reported that some of their teachers were susceptible to false perceptions of their parents, believing that their parents’ minimal or lack of attendance at parent-teacher conferences suggest that the parents simply do not care about their child’s academic wellbeing. By learning that small business-owning parents cannot always accommodate parent-teacher meetings due to their work demands (and that even closing their business for a couple of hours might be detrimental to the family’s weekly income), teachers may be inspired to come up with more creative solutions to build a working relationship with these parents. Lewis, Kim and Bey (2011) found in their study that what works to improve teacher-parent relations included the following teaching practices and strategies: (1) practicing parent outreach, (2) establishing relationships with the parents, (3) creating a positive classroom climate, (4) teaching to involve parents, and (5) making the community and school connection. Lewis, Kim, and Bey suggested that the onus should be on the schools to initiate relationships
with parents because teachers and schools inherently have more resources at their disposal than minority parents in urban settings\textsuperscript{15}. These evidence-based, multi-systems interventions to improve parent-engagement were similar from the perspective of community-based organizations. Warren, Hong, Rubin and Uy (2009) suggested that importance of placing emphasis on relationship building among parents and between parents and educators, focusing on the leadership development of parents, and bridging the gap in culture and power between parents and educators.

To allow for parent outreach amongst our participant group, perhaps teachers and administrators can be more willing to establish a mutually convenient time to meet, or during times that are outside of typical appointment times that may only cater to parents who work mainstream nine-to-five jobs. Additionally, Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) found that parents’ perception of teachers’ specific invitations to become involved better predict parents’ involvement behavior than schools’ general invitations can. As such, in order to facilitate productive conversations, the school can provide language interpretation services to non-English speaking parents if necessary in both invitations and actual meetings. Additionally, schools may allow technology, such as emailing, texting, and real-time video conferencing, to facilitate better communication. Such strategies seem to be supported by a study on the predictors of parental involvement in schools by Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), who found that parents’ perception of the schools’ climate as warm and inviting had the largest effects on parents’ buy-in and engagement in school related activities. When parents see

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\textsuperscript{15} Given the common knowledge that American public schools are disproportionately endowed due to where they are located and who they service (Porfeli, Wang, Audette, McColl, & Algozzine, 2009), impoverished schools may have to first advocate for more funding by citing the importance of promoting the welfare of their students who come from immigrant small-family business backgrounds.
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that the school is empathetic to their situations, they might be more open to collaborating with
the school and community agents to support their children’s biopsychosocial development, rather
than believing they have to be completely self-reliant. Above all, it is important that the children
and families feel understood if they are either receiving or requesting supports. Likewise, it is
also critical to provide a culturally appropriate format or channel for these families, school, and
communities to share ways to advance the best interests of the family-business child.

Colleges and universities can also play a role in assisting children of immigrant family
businesses if necessary, as challenges with career and professional decisions were reportedly
areas of concern for many of our participants. Instances of increased conflict with parents during
this important transitional stage of development, family career indecision, perceived family
conflict, and emotional distress may have long-term ramifications. Constantine and Flores (2006)
found that Asian American students who had higher career certainty had higher career
aspirations; however greater levels of psychological distress predicted higher levels of career
indecision, which was correlated with lower career certainty and greater perceived family
conflict. Therefore, academic and career counseling services can be helpful, along with peer
support groups and or other culturally sensitive support networks. Additionally, support groups
or social clubs can be used to bring together children of immigrant family businesses, so that
they can access a social network of peers who they can share experiences with, feel understood
and, mostly importantly, feel less disconnected from the community at large. These networks
may be available virtually so that the children and other families can still attend to their
responsibilities at home and work.

In addition to school and community-based initiatives, entrepreneurial parents, as arbiters
of their children’s biopsychosocial wellness in every domain of their existence, can stand to
benefit from the perspectives provided here by the children of family businesses. Amongst the many areas for parental intervention, two of the most clinically meaningful appear to be the impact that the family business seemed to have on the parent-child relationship and on the development of the child’s self-identity. Researchers have found that strong parent-child relationships help facilitate healthier psychological adjustment of Chinese American children (Qin, 2008; Qin, Eniko, Rana, & Donnellan, 2012). Many of the participants felt that they were disengaged from their parents emotionally, despite probably secured attachments as evidenced by their repeated expressions of responsiveness, warmth, love, and respect for their parents. While an emotionally reserved parent-child dynamic is believed to be sanctioned by East-Asian cultural mores (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu-Constant, 2000), the family business environment seems to have the effect of completely sterilizing the family system of opportunities for affective exchanges, according to the participant reports. Although the feeling of being emotionally disconnected from their parents may be related to high parent-child acculturation discrepancy (Portes & Rumbaut, 1992) resulting from different lived-experiences of first-generation immigrant parents and second-generation, Chinese American daughters, the children described their relationships with their parents as business transactions and action-oriented interactions. The children reasoned that this way of relating was often due to the logistical, physical, emotional, and psychological restraints of the business. Additionally, many of the participants felt that they did not get a chance to develop a sense of autonomy from their parents, as they were imbedded in the processes of running a business. While the business reportedly contributed to a sense of strong family cohesion because both the parents and children were connected to the same group goals, the participants seemed to yearn for a more dynamic, multi-dimensional relationship with their parents, and to develop an autonomous self.
Furthermore, the participants felt that their parents’ strict control over how they allocated their time may have had the effect of stifling their emotional and social growth. While these issues seemed to resolve themselves as they grew older and went off to college, a great deal of emotional distress was reported during many of the participants’ pre- and early-adolescence.

Parents who rely on their children’s help in the family business may be advised to establish a stronger parent-child connectedness. A privately funded community-based program aimed at developing a high “quality of the emotional bond between parent and adolescent child and by the degree to which this bond is both mutual and sustained over time” suggested several recommendations for parent-child intervention (Lezin, Rolleri, Bean, & Taylor, 2004, p. vii). They reported support of multi-systems interventions aimed at improving parent-child communication, decreasing child problem behavior, improving parenting skills, improving family relationships, addressing issues of parental or child substance abuse, and decreasing family conflict and disorganization (Lezin, Rolleri, Bean, & Taylor, 2004). Adapting these suggested interventions to this present study appears highly feasible. For instance, parents may be encouraged to have regular conversations with their children that do not always revolve around topics of business or academics. Given limited time, parents can also frequently “check-in” with their children about how they are feeling about their roles and responsibilities in the family, and adopt child-driven recommendations to improve the situation where appropriate. Most importantly, parents can provide praise and rewards for their children’s positive contributions. Rewards may even be in the form of time for the children to explore their own interests and opportunities for deeper self-reflection. And finally, parents may be encouraged to reach out to extended family members, community members (co-ethnic or otherwise), schools, and available resources to support their own ideals of work/life balance, so that they can be
sufficiently energized and emotionally available to their children. Families and businesses alike can benefit from programming activities to boost team morale. Parents can sanction dedicated time to devote to low-cost self-care and family bonding activities, perhaps during predicted “downtimes” in the business. Parents may benefit from learning that the majority of the participants simply wished to “slow down” the pace in order to feel more like a family rather than a business all the time.

Finally, from a feminist psychology, positive psychology, and strengths-based perspective, the families in our study present as potential resources to other individuals and families who may be struggling. The adaptive ways in which the children and families were reportedly able to cope under reportedly distressing and challenging circumstances may help inform the work of other parents, teachers, community agencies, psychologists, minority mental health advocates, and other helping professionals who are interested in stimulating individual and group resiliency. Overall, facilitating balanced conversations will be helpful in the continued prosperity of entrepreneurial children, families, and their communities, and even our ever-evolving debate about best practices and theories about how best to raise children in a globalized world.

*Policy implications*

As it is with suggesting clinical implications of our study, one cannot be expected to make a definitive call about what is good, bad, or neutral about the phenomenon of growing up in an immigrant small family business in order to suggest policy implications. The results of this ecological, phenomenological qualitative research can help contextualize the significance of children’s lives in immigrant family businesses. With respect to the complex and nuanced lived experiences of our participants and their report of the psychosocial effects of their earlier
upbringings, it would be prudent to state that a closer examination of how laws define children, family, community, immigration, education, work, wealth, and all the systems that affect our citizens is necessary. Who should get to decide whether current labor laws should exempt parents of family business from employing their children? The results of our study may suggest that the children get their say about how much time is appropriate to contribute to family work, how they define “helping out,” and/or whether or not getting paid for their labor contributions should be a mandate. Too often adults institute laws that subvert children into helpless positions, even though historically and at present they promote the work of adults (our result of how daughters enable their mothers to maintain family businesses by taking on household responsibilities is one example of the many contributions made by children). As such, children deserve equal representation in all decision-making that influence their day-to-day and future wellbeing. Likewise, our current politically charged debates about immigration reform do not necessarily account for the needs of the children and their economic impact on wider social structures. Small family businesses appear to serve the employment needs of families, which in turn enable families’ socioeconomic mobility. The businesses also seem to contribute to the production of well-rounded, skilled, and multicultural employees into the competitive professional labor market. The impact of the families’ long work hours in labor intensive activities on the child and family dynamic is an area worthy of close examination when considering how much federal and local resources are allocated to the development of small business ventures. Can tax cuts to family businesses help create a stronger quality of life for the families? These are all questions that lend well from the results of this study, and it is recommended that changes in public policy to any degree incorporate the voices of children of immigrant small business families.
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