


LIFE ON TWO CONTINENTS: UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT ROLES OF  
CHINESE GRANDPARENTS WHO HAVE GRANDCHILDREN BORN IN THE

U.S.

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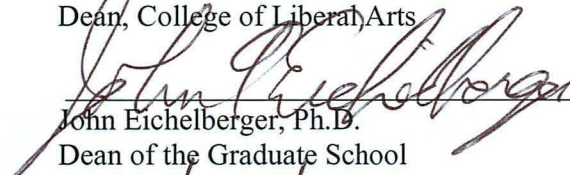
  
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A  
THESIS

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## **Abstract**

The present research explored the roles Chinese grandparents play regarding their grandchildren born in the United States. Due to the differences in language, cultures and family values in China and the U.S., these Chinese grandparents balance their lives between two continents and experience possible disconnect in communication with their U.S.-born grandchildren. In order to understand the lived experiences of these Chinese grandparents and to develop co-constructed meaning of their intercultural interactions, this research employs qualitative narrative analysis as the primary method. Eight conversational interviews were conducted and four emergent themes were discussed. This research shows that Chinese grandparents do encounter difficulties, cultural conflicts and disconnect with their grandchildren because they split their time between living in China and the U.S. There are insights provided to mitigate these problems.



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **1.1 Statement of the Problem and Goals of the Research**

From rather humble beginnings, the Chinese immigrant population in the United States has grown steadily throughout history. According to the United States Census Bureau (2011), the Chinese immigrant population started to increase since the 1960s, and had reached about 1.8 million in the year 2010. Most of them started in California and currently there are Chinese immigrants in every state of the U.S. Of these, the college student body takes up a large proportion. Compared to the overall foreign born population in the U.S., Chinese immigrants report higher levels of educational attainment, are less likely to live in households with an annual income below the poverty line, and are substantially more likely to have naturalized as U.S. citizens.

With the development of the Chinese economy and the growth of competition in the country, an increasing number of Chinese students seek to achieve higher education in the U.S. Many of them stay in the U.S. after graduation to look for jobs and start a family. Because of the traditional Chinese family values, young people are supposed to take care of their parents after marriage and after beginning their independent lives. Many of them help their parents move into their new homes so they will have direct means to provide their elders better lives. Compared to what young people do in China, it is more difficult for those who have started their family overseas to do the same.

The major characteristics of the Chinese family system are well known: subordination of the citizens to the country, individual to the group, the young to the aged, the living to the ancestors through ancestor worship, the wife to the husband, the daughter-in-law to the mother-in-law, etc. Although some of these values nowadays are shown in different ways, they are still largely encouraged and carried out by the entire society. When Chinese children are very young, they are taught to respect their elders by using the right and modest terms when communicating, not to argue, and to take good care of the elders when they become adults. Parents will try their best to be good role models to the young. The elderly in China are most imposing figures, dignified, respected and made to feel in every way that they have passed the period of their usefulness and are now gratuitously fed by their children. Faced by the challenges of starting their own life and also wanting to take good care of their elders in their home country, Chinese immigrants have to compromise. Since it usually takes years of effort for a Chinese immigrant to settle down in the U.S., the responsibility of taking care of his or her parents is usually less of a priority compared to starting a new life.

This researcher's uncle and his wife came to the U.S. for further education more than 10 years ago. After a decade of hard work, they finally settled in New Jersey and had twin boys. The new parents found it difficult to balance their usual workload and the challenge of caring for their sons, and thought about asking for help. They invited their parents – the children's grandparents who live in China – to visit, but their elders ended up doing more work once they became familiar with everything in the house. Since their elders already had experience in taking care of children and had a lot of free time because

they had no social life in the U.S., they became great helpers. When the grandparents were there, even knowing Americans used different diapers and baby food that was more convenient, they chose the traditional Chinese ways to take care of the babies because they thought that would be the best for them. They did not think much about how the traditional Chinese ways of taking care babies could be time consuming and tiring. Because of the language barrier, the grandparents rarely went out to make friends or did things they wanted to do. Rather, they mostly focused on the family, from looking after the babies to cooking for their adult children so their adult children would have prepared food after work. As time passed, the grandparents began to get accustomed to the new life style, but they had to return to China because they were only visitors. No matter how much they wanted to stay with their grandchildren, it was too difficult for them to keep returning to the U.S. Besides their grandchildren in the U.S., the elders still have other grandchildren in China who also need their love and attention.

I have always been very close to my grandparents. The most important reason is that as a child I was raised in my grandparents' house until I was three. They played a very important role in my earliest years and continued to do so later on. Based on all the casual conversations with my classmates and friends throughout the years, I noticed that was basically how all of the traditional Chinese families functioned. The parents are always busy at work and they lack the experience of raising a baby, so the grandparents should help. This is almost an unwritten rule in the Chinese society. The grandparents are usually respected by the young, but on the other hand they spoil their grandchildren in their own way. Once in a while they would feed the children food they love but are not

supposed to eat by the parents' standard, or give pocket money for candies and toys. During the annual Spring Festival, everybody in the family will gather at my grandparents' house, eat dumplings and stay up all night. Because the parents have to also respect the grandparents, children tend to have grandparents on their "team" to go against their strict mom and dad. Many children in China think grandparents are cooler than their parents and establish a very special relationship with them through time.

I visited my uncle's family about a year ago. It was difficult for me to imagine living without constantly visiting my grandmother, and also difficult to imagine how my grandparents would live without having me there. So I went with curiosity to find out how my U.S.-born cousins and their grandparents communicate and interact. The first shocking thing I discovered was that English had become the dominant language at the house. I was always influenced by movies that portray Chinese people's lives in the U.S. to believe that children speak Chinese at home but English at school. Though both my uncle and aunt speak perfect Mandarin and try to communicate with the children in their language, the children rarely reply back in Chinese. Through conversations with my uncle I discovered that the children did not need to speak Chinese. They feel much more comfortable speaking English since it is the language they use to talk to friends and when attending school. When they talk to their grandparents, whose English is very limited, the children go to their parents for help. Thus the communication between the grandchildren and the grandparents will always need to have the parents act as intermediaries. This makes this researcher wonder how their grandparents, and thousands of other Chinese grandparents in the same situation, feel. Away from their closest family members, they

probably find it difficult to express their feelings to anyone. This raises some questions. “Do they have clear expectations that the U.S.-born children learn and use more Chinese so they can speak to each other naturally?” “Do they talk less because they are afraid it is too much trouble to translate?” “What other means of communication do they use to understand each other?” One other thing I noticed when I was with my uncle’s family was how my cousins addressed their grandparents. One night, my uncle was talking to the children about going to China to visit their grandparents, one of my cousins said, “Why do I have to go and visit your parents?” I was really surprised that my uncle didn’t say anything to correct him. In China, children call their grandparents from their dad’s side “nainai” (奶奶) and “yeye” (爷爷), which are short, loving terms and show close relationship. Though not blood related, children were taught to also address all elders as “grandma” and “grandpa” if they are a similar age to the children’s grandparents. It is considered the only way that is appropriate and polite. While in the U.S., a country where individualism is valued, it seems as if it is okay to address the elders in a more casual way. The common words for addressing “grandma” and “grandpa” are relatively long and are not sounds children can make when they first start making meaningful noise. Respect to the elders does not have to be shown through addressing them in the right way.

As researcher, this makes me wonder what caused this phenomenon. Is it purely because of the language barrier? Between the parents in the U.S. and the grandparents in China, who gets to decide how children are educated? How many Chinese traditions and norms should be kept? When the grandparents are visiting, do grandchildren in the U.S.



do similar things Chinese-born children usually do with their grandparents? How do the grandparents deal with the cultural differences they notice in their grandchildren?

In this research I examine the lived experiences of Chinese grandparents who have grandchildren who were born and raised in the U.S. The goal is to understand their experiences by discovering how important a role language plays, how involved the grandparents were in educating the children and how they deal with the cultural differences. By looking at the lived experience of these Chinese grandparents, I may better understand the reasons and mechanisms behind these phenomena, and provide insights that could be applied to similar situations.

## **1.2 Review of the Literature**

Many people throughout the globe agree that the family is the bedrock of society. It has been basic to society and serves an important role. All countries in the world share some similarities in family structure, usually meaning couples get married and have children, but countries in different parts of the world feature distinct family values. China, a country deeply influenced by agricultural history and Confucianism, formed its own unique family system. In ancient China, farmers were compelled to live on their lands without the ability to relocate unless it was where one's father or grandfather lived, or where their children would continue to live. Even in modern times where it is usual for young people to leave their village and start new lives in big cities, the ancestral rural village is still considered the real "home" and the young would strive to include their parents or even help them move to their new life. It is this sense of belonging,

promulgated by generation after generation that had given the Chinese family its stability and cohesiveness. According to Fung Yu-lan (1948), the Chinese family system was considered to be one of the most complex and well-organized family systems in the world. It was the social system of China. A great part of Confucianism is “the rational justification of this social system, or its theoretical expression”. Economic conditions prepared the basis for this unique family system, and Confucianism expressed and described its ethical significance (p. 21).

Through the teachings of Confucius, some major themes are conveyed. The themes are closely related to people’s daily lives and are taught and implemented to the Chinese by schools and families at a very young age. Of the major themes, two are closely related to family values. “jing” (敬), which means respectfulness and attentiveness toward people, is shown through body language, using the right words and assisting the elders in daily lives. “xiao” (孝) is a traditional cultural imperative and more self-explanatory to the Chinese. It requires everyone to show filial piety and obedience to parents and other elders in the family. It also extends to the entire society. Confucius explains filial piety as consistent efforts and no slacking, which means that parents should be served in the proper spirit while living, buried with the proper rites after death, and worshipped thereafter with the proper sacrifices. These behaviors are for people to tell if they are being filial and do not constitute filial piety, unless prompted by a genuine dutiful feeling in the heart. Confucius said, “It can hardly be gauged from mere outward acts. When there is work to be done, to relieve one’s elders of the toil; or when there is

wine and food, to cause them to partake thereof – is this to be reckoned filial piety”

(Fung, 1948, p. 21).

With the development of the Chinese economy and people having bigger goals, staying in the hometown with the parents has become one’s least desire. In modern China, it is generally encouraged that young people go out and see the world, but once settled, they would want to help their parents move in with them. Confucius stated, “While one’s parents are alive, one should not travel to a distance; if one must travel, it should be in a fixed direction,” and “The age of one’s parents should always be kept in mind – on the one hand, as a subject for rejoicing, on the other, as a cause for alarm.” As one is exposed to these principles and experiences how the entire society is performing them, “jing” and “xiao” have become deeply rooted in the minds of Chinese. For the immigrants who are starting their new lives in the U.S., managing to care for their parents is one of the biggest challenges.

Confucianism places value on education at societal, familial, and individual levels. Gove and Huang (2012) investigated Confucianism’s influence on Chinese families in the United States, especially in educational practices and family relationships. The concept of filial piety was thoroughly explained in their study. In daily life filial piety is reflected in children’s respect and obedience to parental demands and authority. In most cases, children do not have many choices but to comply with parents’ expectations. Rebellion or even arguing against parents’ authority is generally unacceptable and will result in harsh consequences (p. 13). Since the study is focused on

Chinese families in the United States, it also discussed the extent that the Confucian tradition has changed. The family may have to adapt and learn a new mainstream culture and decide what parts of the traditional educational values and practices are to be retained or satisfied (p. 12). It might be difficult for immigrant parents to implement all the Confucian values, but certain values are slow to change. The U.S.-born children are influenced by observing their own parents' behavior or while visiting other Chinese households. Additionally, the study examined the hierarchical relationship in the Chinese educational system and within the family's educational practices. Chinese cultures value family hierarchy and harmony, which are also central concepts in Confucianism. Children are taught to avoid arguing with their parents. And both the children and the parents try to avoid having conflicts with their elders at the house, which can be the grandparents or great-grandparents.

Falk and Falk (2002) explored roles grandparents play in different cultures. They pointed out that the United States permits grandparents to choose from a variety of roles, which is not true of Chinese, Filipino, and other Asian groups. Because individualism and independence are so highly prized in the U.S., a great number of American grandparents are not very involved with their grandchildren. Intergenerational obligations are not prescribed in the U.S. Instead, they are re-created by each family member throughout his or her life. In some families grandparents provide a great deal of emotional support and assist with day-to-day family needs as well. Grandparents care for the children when parents are working. Some are also role models and provide historical continuity to the family. In other American families grandparents play a marginal role. In some situations

grandfathers and grandmothers seldom see their grandchildren, particularly if the grandparents live some distance from their children and grandchildren. The authors also analyzed the situation of these Chinese who live in the United States. During the second half of the twentieth century, the traditional Chinese family changed considerably in the United States. There has been an increase in the number of nuclear families and a corresponding decline in the prestige of elders in Chinese families. In the United States, the easing of intergenerational bonds within Chinese families has become pronounced. Assimilating mainstream American values, both Chinese seniors and their adult children agree that it is not desirable for the old to move in with the young (p. 134).

Students constitute the main body of the Chinese who have been admitted to the U.S. They graduate, stay in the country, and attempt to have their Chinese families immigrate to the U.S. The typical Chinese-American family is nuclear. The children in the family seldom have grandparents or other relatives in the country. This development is due to the great geographical distances between the United States and China and within the United States. Many grandparents of Chinese-American children live a great distance away from their families. This has come about because a great number of Chinese immigrants are professionals who have had to relocate for economic reasons (Falk & Falk, p. 135). Nonetheless, most Chinese families try their best to make arrangements. Some bring grandparents to the United States for multiple short visits for childcare while both parents work. Some immigrant parents allow their children to stay in China with their grandparents as long as possible when they visit. Some invite their elders to join their annual family trip in the U.S. to replace the visit to China. The arrangements are

made because many Chinese want their children to be influenced by and acculturated in Chinese folkway traditions and mores. Because many of the Chinese immigrant grandparents do not speak English, grandchildren under their grandparents' care learn, or at least try to speak, more Chinese at home.

Fan (2007) states in a study that Chinese moral values such as virtue and filial piety are embedded in a Confucian moral and social context, and cannot be recast without distortion in terms of modern Western European notions. The study compares Chinese style and Western style family values. Westerners see long-term care as based on social welfare. They are considered so individualistic that westernized Chinese youth do not think they have any role in caring for their parents. Chinese culture is different – people rely on their families, not the government – to take care of the elderly. In a Chinese family, the presence of the elderly offers the grandchildren valuable educational opportunities. In addition to receiving physical care from their grandparents, the young children can also learn from their life experiences and historical stories, if not other types of knowledge. This will help them come to appreciate the identity and integrity of the family as a whole (p. 505). Furthermore, the study discussed how the Chinese who are living in the U.S. take responsibility of caring for their parents. The author stated that almost three-quarters of Asian immigrants who live in the U.S. say they should do more for their parents.

Parenting and grandparenting are two completely different things. Xie and Xia (2011) introduced in their study responsibilities of grandparents in Western countries.

Those responsibilities run the gamut from socialization of grandchildren to providing financial resources to the younger generations. But for the Chinese, taking care of grandchildren is the most predictive grandparent behavior. Chinese immigrant families continue to value the Confucian family style when they come to the U.S. by inviting grandparents to care for their grandchildren. Taking care of small children is, understandably, a demanding job. Many foreign-born elders assume full-time responsibility for their grandchildren, a practice that is not so common in most Western cultures. Because of the nature of their work, immigrant grandparents, often socially invisible, contribute greatly to the financial state of their adult children by saving childcare costs and making it possible for both parents to continue working. The study also states that, on the other hand, seniors received satisfaction from their involvement in the lives of their adult children and grandchildren. They found their current lives, with challenges of caring for and passing intellectual experiences to their grandchildren, were “more interesting and less lonely and isolated” (p. 386). This research conducted in-depth interviews with grandparents, who were all from a relatively homogeneous group: mostly healthy, college-educated, and professional before retirement. Three major themes were extracted: intergenerational connectedness and continuity of cultural practices, role variety and responsibilities, and adjustment and adaptation. Because of their own education and ability to perceive and endure, grandparents in this study continued to adapt and adjust, no matter how much difficulty they met. Many faced challenges at the initial stages, such as lack of language skills and mobility around town, in-laws issues,

and isolation and loneliness. Gradually, they searched for, found, or established support in the community, which added more meaning to their stay in the United States (p. 394).

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.3.1 Manage Conflict in Intercultural Settings**

Hall (2005) defines conflict as “the expression of perceived incompatibility” and culture as “a shared system of making sense”. He also points out that intercultural conflict happens when there is an incompatibility generated by a difference in how meaning is produced or interpreted (p. 233). From the Chinese grandparents’ point of view, coming from China to the U.S. is an obvious change and there is a difference in how meaning is produced or interpreted. In the new environment, they see the differences in the own child, whom they haven’t been living with for years; they hear different languages spoken around them but are not able to understand much; they experience living with their U.S.-born grandchildren, who are technically Americans – a kind of people most of them have never dealt with; they go out and see a world where the norms and rules are new; and they go back after some time and have to try to re-acclimate to their Chinese lives again. Thus there are intercultural conflicts in various aspects of their lives.

Three types of intercultural conflicts are suggested by Hall (2005): 1) Object conflicts, 2) relationship conflicts, and 3) priority conflicts. The first type is object conflicts, which “involves conscious or unconscious disagreement and misunderstanding about something” (p. 233). Here the key term is “differing interpretations”, not clear-cut



definitions of things. Whenever there are different interpretations of things, there are possible object conflicts. Because of their U.S.-born grandchildren, Chinese grandparents attempt to comprehend a new culture. Different interpretations of things happen in all aspects in their new lives. The second type is relationship conflicts, focusing on the disagreements people tend to have when they try to connect with each other. Hall points out that, “whereas object conflicts bring attention to differences in knowledge about things, relationship conflicts often highlight the implications of human actions relative to one another” (p. 236). When Chinese grandparents interact in U.S. society, they have to balance their relationship between them and their children, and also their grandchildren. Having experienced different life styles, the three groups of people – grandparents, parents and grandchildren – would definitely have different understandings and come from different standpoints. Not paying attention to the conflicts the differences might bring would be detrimental to their relationships. Priority conflict is the third type, which involves people’s prior morals and values. “Feeling about what is good or bad, and judgments that reflect particular moral orders are at the core of priority conflicts” (p. 238).

Base on the research done by Hall (2005), there are five styles or approaches to conflict that individuals appear to choose from. They are 1) avoiding, which obviously means to avoid as much as possible; 2) accommodating, which emphasizes finding out that the other party wants and trying to match the concerns; 3) competing, which reflects “a strong win/ lose perspective to any conflict”; 4) compromising, which shows a person agrees to give a little in order to get a little; and 5) collaborating, which refers to the

process of “forging an agreement to minimize the conflicts” (p. 229-231). In the case of the Chinese grandparent, there are multiple sources of conflicts and also approaches they take to harmonize things.

### **1.3.2 Communication Accommodation Theory and Code Switching**

People communicate in different ways and the specific ways are decided based on the people they are interacting with. This conscious or sometimes unconscious process is called accommodating the speech. Communication Accommodation Theory (1987) is an intercultural theory developed by Howard Giles. Two strategic forms of communication that diverse people use when they interact were developed through years of work on interethnic and intergenerational context, which are convergence and divergence. Convergence is a strategy by which people adapt the communication behavior or the language they use in a way to become more similar to another person or group. Divergence is a strategy by which people accentuate the differences between them and the other person or group (Griffin, 2011, p. 395-440).

The Chinese grandparents are usually the ones who speak one language, and the grandchildren speak two. Normally it is the grandchild who is making the decisions to learn or not to learn and to speak or not to speak their ethnic language, which is Chinese. Because the grandparents represent the Chinese traditions and cultures, to the grandchildren, choosing to make efforts of learning and speaking Chinese might be the efforts to converge or diverge with the language, as well as traditions and cultures. On the other hand, through the study I discovered that grandchildren who are unwilling to speak

Chinese do so because they want to converge and get closer to their friends in the U.S. The children have the most fun when they play videos, play sports, go to school, and have parties together. They would want to use the language most people are using to feel included. Studying Chinese takes time and energy, so they would rather spend that time on mingling with friends. Since English is the mainstream language in the bigger context, the efforts of convergence are made so U.S.-born Chinese can fit in the culture they live in.

Code switching happens when a speaker alternates between two or more languages or styles in the context of a single conversation. It is a widespread phenomenon in bilingual or multilingual speech. Giles (1987), through Communication Accommodation Theory, explored and explained the cognitive reasons of code switching. Ideally, the U.S.-born Chinese speak both fluent Chinese and English and only code switch according to the different target listener. They use code switching not only to signal language preference but also to enrich and enhance their conversations.

Philipsen (1975) also coined a term “speech community”. The speech community is a place that creates and establishes its own speaking code/norms. He explains that each community has its own cultural values about speaking and the values are linked to judgments of situational appropriateness. (Griffin, 2011, p. 423) He proposes that in any given speech community multiple speech codes are deployed, and this applies well in a Chinese home in the U.S. In a Chinese home in the U.S., multiple language systems are developed.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to understand Chinese grandparents' interaction and communication styles with their U.S. – born grandchildren. The understanding was achieved by the sharing of the lived experiences of my research participants. My objective was to lead conversations by asking previously designed questions so the lived experiences of the research participants would be stimulated and given expression. Through describing those experiences, common themes will be extracted and analyzed.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

My conceptual framework for this qualitative study is based on the perspective of Social Constructionism. Crotty (1998) defines Constructionism as:

. . .the view that knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (p. 42).

Epistemology addresses the issue of and directs the “way to understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (p. 8). It requires that research methodology and method are “concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (p. 8). As an epistemological position, Constructionism claims that

knowledge and understanding arise in social interaction. Compared to the other major type of epistemology, Objectivism, which believes that a meaning or a truth exists out there in the world waiting to be discovered by a researcher, Constructionism rejects the objectivist epistemological view of human knowledge and believes that there is no truth waiting to be discovered (p. 8). Crotty states that “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (pp. 8-9). This means people, who live in the world and have all types of interactions, create meanings. By taking the viewpoint of constructionists, I, as a researcher, take the job to “make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). In this study I explore the relationships between Chinese grandparents and their U.S. – born grandchildren by asking the grandparents questions about their interactions with their grandchildren. I then interpret the meanings the grandparents construct through their narratives. To fully understand the meanings of the participants’ behaviors, I take constructionism as my epistemological approach, narrative inquiry as methodology, conversational interviewing as method of data collection, and thematic analysis as the analytic approach.

The key purpose of performing qualitative research design is to understand meanings, and “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1987, p. 43). Interpretivism holds that human beings construct and co-construct meanings in daily life and maintain the meanings by having daily interactions in certain ways. In interpretive research study, an extensive collection of thick description with detailed records relating context, people, interactions, and the

perceptions of research participants will be produced as “the basis for inductive generation of explanatory theory” and be built by the investigator (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 1998, p. 140). Interpreting occurs in various stages of an interviewing study. Even during the designing of the research question and the actual conversations, the researcher’s tentative interpretations of the issues influence the path of their research, bringing up multiple meanings. Creswell (2007) explains that each person develops “subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (p. 20). These meanings are created and constructed in different life situations and interactions, in turn influencing the individuals in various ways.

## **2.2 Conversational Interviewing**

Experiences will be best understood through story telling. Qualitative investigators must be able to handle all realms of human experience – not to analyze them, not even to understand them, but to first be able to listen and truly take in the meaning of the other’s lived experiences (Brown, 1996, p. 32). Without conversations, there would hardly be insights and knowledge shared about everyday life. The goal of my research was to conduct research interviews as a specific form of conversations with my research participants and interpret the meanings through their narratives. Conversational interview methods seek “to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects” (Kvale, 1996, p. 31), thus serving my research purpose. The interviews have the purpose of obtaining “descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6).

Kvale adds that, “the construction of knowledge is not completed by the interaction of the researchers and their subjects, but continues with the researchers’ interpretations and reporting of their interviews, to conversations with other researchers about their findings” (p. 296). With the interviewer’s knowledge, experience, sensitivity and empathy, meaning will be created between the interviewer and interviewee, and new knowledge and insights will be gained through their interactions. As the researcher, when I encountered the participants, a communicative event took place both verbally and nonverbally. I was never completely detached or dispassionate as I interacted with them in face-to-face contact. I was hearing, smiling, sensing, and seeing people before me; I took in their voice, bodies, eyes, and facial expressions. My research participants had reactions, and those reactions are only made when meanings are created. With all these elements in conversational interviewing, I was able to build relationships with my research participants and obtain valuable insights.

### **2.3 Analysis**

Kvale (1996) states that an interview analysis can be treated as a form of narration. It is basically a continuation of the story told by the interviewee. “A narrative analysis of what was said leads to a new story to be told, a story developing the themes of the original interview” (p. 199). In an interviewing study, people who are interviewed provide insights and construct meanings through the conversations, and the interviewer reconstructs those into new stories and tell them in his or her own way. Although all the interviewees involved in one study have common interests on the topic, they tell their

stories in many different ways and aspects. The analysis, which may be a condensation or a reconstruction, presents the tales told by different subjects into a richer, more condensed and coherent story than the scattered stories of the separate interviewees (p. 199). The researcher, as the analyst, uses personal narratives as a window into the lived experiences of the narrators and tries to achieve empathic understanding of that experience (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 248).

Bracketing is another approach that needs to be taken into consideration in the narrative analysis. Newman and Tufford (2010) define bracketing as “a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged perceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (p. 81). As the designer of the study, the researcher inevitably brings in assumptions, interests, values and emotions about the topic. All these have a certain influence throughout the project. Although they can never be totally avoided, these things the researcher brings can be mitigated by bracketing. In my study I employed the method of bracketing and took my own experience and understandings of the issue into consideration. This ensured that I had plenty of empathy and also brought self-consciousness when analyzing the transcripts of the interviews.

## **2.4 Research Participants**

Both social science and human science research seek to work out of “consistent and recurrent patterns through intensive case studies” (Kvale, 1996, p. 103). The difference is human science study focuses on a single case, making it possible to



investigate in depth and detail the relationship of a specific behavior to its context, to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation (p. 103). There is no need, in a human science study, to have a large number of research participants involved. As a researcher, I interviewed the optimum number of subjects to find out what I needed to know. Taking into consideration a combination of time and resources available for the investigation and of the law of diminishing returns, Kvale (1996) states that in current interview studies “the number of interviews tends to be around  $15 \pm 10$ ” (p. 102). This means that there should be five to twenty-five conversational interviews in one interview study. All my research participants were Chinese grandparents with grandchildren who were born and raised primarily in the U.S. I was able to interview eight grandparents who were either in China or currently visiting the U.S. They were from all walks of life with various levels of education and different experiences.

## **2.5 Procedure**

Participants in this study were selected via snowball sampling. This kind of sampling design requires an initial sample of individuals to nominate their network partners, and these network partners are traced and asked to recommend more potential individuals, and so on. Coleman (1958) is recognized as the researcher who introduced snowball sampling. He argues that it is a method uniquely designed for sociological research because it allows for the sampling of natural interactional units (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141). The reason I employed it was because I do not have a strong

social network in the U.S., but I know a few people who do. The process began with asking faculty members who were on my thesis committee to start sampling through personal connections in the community. These people were then asked if they knew others who would meet the category criteria and were willing to take part.

I was introduced to many potential participants, but some of them failed to take part in the study due to various reasons, including only able to speak a regional Chinese dialect instead of Mandarin. Knowing that relationship building is important when working with Chinese, I was trying to go to different places and socialize. Some of my initial contacts were people I respected and addressed as “teacher” or “uncle”. They gave directions of how I needed to respectfully talk to my research participants. For example, I was told to go to my potential participant’s house and chat about things in life, and also to be as polite as I could. During the initial contact, I informed the potential participants the topic and purpose of my research, described the procedure, and introduced credibility. They were informed that the interview would take thirty to sixty minutes and it was entirely voluntary. Prescribed IRB regulations regarding this qualitative research were followed. The Chinese Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) with details of the study was presented to my research participants.

After they agreed to take part, we moved on to the next step. For the convenience of signing, the informed consent forms were converted into picture format (jpg) and sent via QQ (social networking software from Tencent) to participants who were in China. They signed them using QQ “doodle” and returned them as picture format (jpg). For

participants who were in the U.S. but not the Fairbanks area, this same strategy was used. For participants who happened to be in Fairbanks, the informed consent forms were printed and brought to them before conducting the interview. I had conversational interviews with my research participants through phone calls, FaceTime, or QQ video chat. All the interviews were recorded and saved in my password-protected phone and laptop.

After the volunteers agreed to take part in the interviewing study, I then scheduled time with them through phone calls. The interviews usually started with their questions and concerns, not only about the interview, but also about me. In China, it is respectful to address them as “grandma” or “grandpa”, thus the relationships were built at the very beginning. I asked them both closed and open-ended questions regarding their experiences in both China and the U.S., their interactions with their grandchildren, and their perceptions on grandparenting children who were born and raised in a different country. I transcribed the interviews shortly after, so to record the details about the nonverbal gestures I remembered.

## **2.6 Researcher as Research Tool**

In qualitative inquiry the researcher and research participants influence each other by having interactions and by co-constructing meanings. It is necessary for the researcher to be capable of using him/herself well as an instrument (Brown, 1996, p. 28).

Openness is one of the most important skills a researcher needs when conducting conversational interviewing. Trusting oneself and using a personal perspective regarding

the topic facilitates openness, meaning the researcher feels “secure about one’s emotional reactions and being able to tolerate emotions expressed by others” (p. 23). Seidman (2006) also encourages researchers to follow their hunches, trust their instincts and risk asking the difficult but valuable questions (p. 91). All these, of course, are based on researchers’ knowledge gained through practice. Without certain experience and understanding on the topic, it would be hard for the researcher to be sensitive about the themes and meanings that need to be created. The researcher’s perspective and reflections are a necessary part of the study due to the influence they will have on the whole procedure. The subjective factors like personality, experiences, skills and emotions might lower the research validity, but they can also be a benefit because the researcher will be flexible and provide in-depth descriptions.

Self-reflexivity is another important and essential skill a qualitative researcher needs. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explains the importance why reflexivity is a required skill of qualitative researchers:

Narrative complexity requires an interview format that accommodates contextual shifts and reflexivity. Rather than suppressing the respondent’s and the interviewer’s reflexivity, the active interviewer encourages contextual shifts and reflections (p. 55).

Reflexivity brings an awareness of misperceptions and bias for the interviewers. It enables and helps the researchers design and present the questions, clarifying the outcomes of the study. Reflexivity is also a powerful learning tool both during and after

the research efforts (Watt, 2007, p. 83). On the other hand, researcher reflexivity could be an underlying threat to the accuracy of the research results. Linda Finlay (2002) identifies variants of reflexivity so it can be utilized in the best way and encourages researchers to consider introspection, inter-subjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique, and discursive deconstruction (p. 212).

Inspired by my experience of living and interacting with some Chinese families in the U.S., I designed and conducted this study. Because I was born and raised in China and am now living in the U.S., I brought perceptions about both cultures into my analysis. I felt empathetic about the Chinese grandparents' experience and struggles about adapting to a different culture, and also understood the difficulty for the Chinese parents to balance both Chinese and American cultural values when educating their children. All these influenced the way I conducted the interviews and interacted with my research participants. In the process of analyzing and seeking meaning, together my participants and I co-constructed and gave meaningful depth to the descriptions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Chinese Grandparents' Narrative Perspectives**

Conversational interviewing is the best way to gain detailed knowledge on the co-researchers' lived experiences. Eight Chinese grandparents participated in the study and all their stories touched me and provided valuable insights. Each interview was conducted in Chinese.

#### **3.1 Grandma Sun's Conversational Interview**

I came to know Ms. Sun from a new friend, Lily. Lily came to Alaska with her two China-born daughters to further her education years ago and was introduced to me because she knows many Chinese in the community. The first day I met her was also the day we became friends. She was very nice and eager to help, and I was really amazed at how fast connections between people could be built. Lily asked her friend Wendy, who was a mother of two daughters in Fairbanks and the daughter of Ms. Sun, if she thought it was okay for me to interview her mother. Unlike other co-researchers who took my interview through international phone calls, Wendy's mother happened to be in Fairbanks visiting. Wendy agreed to be interviewed and said I could give her a call. I called her later that afternoon and scheduled the second day to meet the grandma.

The second morning, I arrived at their family take-out restaurant where we were supposed to meet for the interview. Directed into a workroom next to the restaurant, I saw two women around 60 years old making wontons. It was only 11 am in the

morning, but all the material was prepared and a lot of wontons were already done. It was possible they had been working for hours. They transferred their attention from the piles of wonton wrappings to me and immediately figured out who I was. I asked which one was Grandma Sun, and the one wearing black cardigan stood up and nodded at me. She said the other grandma was her other daughter's mother-in-law. She had two daughters. One is in Shanghai and the other daughter is Wendy, who is residing in Fairbanks. Greetings were made with smiles spread on their faces and in the next second, I was sat on a chair next to them. Grandma Sun was walking around the room trying to find me something to drink. After I said I didn't really drink soda, she put down the can she found and immediately went to make hot tea. A minute later, I had both in front of me and was told to start drinking to warm up. All these actions were accompanied with questions after questions from both grandmas on everything about me. In China, it is considered respectful and polite to address people in the right way. I was always calling them "grandma". The two elders, in turn, asked me questions not just to greet but also to care. "What's your major"? "Why did you come here"? "Do you have relatives here"? to list just a few. Having stayed in the U.S. for more than a year and half, the feeling of addressing somebody I do not know as "grandma" and having her care about me at the very first meeting was both familiar and strange at the same time. While adjusting myself, I carried on and continued our conversation. With my answers to the questions came Grandma Sun's empathetic comments:

It's really not easy... You are a girl and came to a dark and cold place like this by yourself. Your parents must be worried. Same like my daughter and daughter-in-

law. They get up very early every morning to get ready for the day's work at the restaurant. I just want to come and help whenever I could. It's too difficult for them...

"How's school going?" the other grandma asked suddenly when I was thinking about how to react to Grandma Sun's concerns about her daughter's life here. "Oh, school is good. It's very different compared to Chinese colleges. I've been adjusting and adapting". She nodded and said she noticed a lot of differences in many cultural aspects by hearing, asking and observing. Since she had been a teacher for a long time before she retired, it was interesting for her to see the different levels and methods of cross-cultural education systems. Both of them explained that they liked the system here because the children were under less pressure. It was a relief for them to know that their children are learning a lot of things but does not have to feel stressed a few years later like most Chinese children do, even at age 7 when they just start school. When we were talking, the two grandmas didn't stop their work and were trying to focus on both me and on the wontons. Except for chatting about life in the U.S., both of them kept bringing up their lives in Shanghai. They mentioned how driving in China was scarier than driving here because of the population difference, and also it was good for the young to experience both American and Chinese life styles.

I thought it was time to ask Grandma Sun to officially start our interview, so I asked if we could get in a room that is quieter for me to record. She immediately said yes and led me to a small room close to the kitchen of the restaurant. As we walked into the



room, I noticed a baby stroller in the corner, some coloring books and crayons on the desk. I asked, "Is this for the kids to hang out?" She answered:

Yes. I have two grandkids, one 15-month old baby grandson and one 12-year-old granddaughter. Sometimes the girl gets picked up from school and put here. We don't want her to always stay at home because she would feel lonely. There are a lot more people at the restaurant. She gets to hang out and talk to us. Fairbanks is cold, so people don't get to do a lot of outdoor activities for months in winter. Kids need to go outdoors with friends. I'm always worried about her.

I expressed my agreement while getting the camera ready. I explained in detail the purpose of my study, her rights to exit the study anytime she wanted and asked her to sign the informed consent form. She signed and signaled me that she was ready. I started by asking, "How old are you?" She replied, "I am 61 years old. I was born in the year 1952." I asked, "When was your first here visiting your granddaughter?" She said:

The first time was in 08. I came again in 2011, and then again in 2012, this is the fourth time. I came last month by myself. I used to always come with my husband but he suddenly passed away a month ago. My daughter in Shanghai told her mother-in-law, who had never visited the U.S., to come with me so I would have company. She was willing to join me. Ever since my husband passed away, I felt really down. There is no way I can cheer up and I constantly feel there is a lot missing. Everybody was worried about me, so they found me a company and someone to talk to on the way. I am actually going back on April 1st. I want to

take my trip partner to Los Angeles because my daughter Wendy's father-in-law is there so I'm pretty familiar with that city. My daughter cannot come with us. She has to take care of my grandkids.

I said I was sorry about her loss, and asked why she was going back soon. She said she had to go "see her husband off", and that one last step of the funeral has to happen at the beginning of April (Chinese Ghosts' Day). She went on and said, "Actually, two of my closest family passed away in these past three months. The other one was my mom. A month after I lost my mom, my husband's heart just stopped working. We used to come together. . ." I didn't know what to say to make her feel better, so I decided to mention her grandchildren. "Do you feel better with the company of your grandchildren?" She said, "Absolutely! I feel a lot happier playing around with the little baby and my granddaughter. Helping at the restaurant also helps a lot. These keep me occupied." He is very smart as a 15-month old baby. He already knows how to say "baba" and "mama" (Chinese for "dad" and "mom"), and the parents would teach him to sing "wo shi hao baobao" (Chinese for "I am a good baby").

I continued, "How was your previous stay in the U.S.?" Grandma Sun answered, "I was staying in Las Vegas for three months once, and back then my granddaughter, oh, her name is Nina, was 6 years old. She was going to kindergarten." I asked if she would take her to school and she confirmed. She added, "We were always together because I rarely left the house. She came back from school and I was home. Back then her parents didn't have a restaurant, so we mostly had fun at the house. We spent a lot of time

together and became very close. I stayed for 3 months.” I then asked when did she come to the U.S. again, and she said she came in 2011 and stayed for half a year.

I didn't get in details to ask her about the exact time she stayed every year. For Chinese grandparents who have family in the U.S., the visa they can apply for is the B-2 visa. There are no certain regulations relating to durations listed on the government website. It shows half a month as the limit when the visa applicant fills out the application form. It has become an unwritten rule among Chinese people to vary the durations of their stay so they will have a modest record. People who had a lot of visa application experiences said that those who apply for a visa and stay for half a month every year would be suspected of having a desire to immigrate, resulting in less chance of getting the visa approved.

Grandma Sun then told me that the visit in 2011 was already in Fairbanks. Although in a different place, she was undertaking the same role of caring for her granddaughter. At that time, Nina was almost 10 years old. She was at the stage of learning many new skills and was learning them while playing around with other children. Since the parents were starting a new restaurant and were fairly busy, Grandma Sun became the person to witness her growth:

I walked her to school and home when it was warm. What I noticed was the American kids would just run around in the park without the parents' direct control. Compared to them, Nina was the bigger one, but I just couldn't take my eyes off her and always wanted to follow her. A couple of years ago Nina was

learning how to ride a bicycle and it really worried me because she was always riding by herself. She was doing pretty well already, but I had to run after her bicycle to make sure she wouldn't fall. Other kids, especially American kids, were all on their own. I saw a lot of little ones doing activities by themselves or with some friends of the same age. I was even worried about them. We Chinese always say American kids are more independent, now I can really see it myself. And as a grandma, I worry even more about her getting injured. On the other hand, in China, we worry about other people not driving well and hit the children. But I feel people here drive really carefully, especially when in the neighborhood.

We nodded at each other and smiled. I went on and asked another question, "When did you see your granddaughter again?" Grandma Sun said that Nina's parents left Nina to spend her summer vacation in Shanghai in 2012 and they flew back to Fairbanks in August. Nina's grandpa was also with them. "Oh! You all flew together?" I was a little surprised that they could make a trip to the U.S. together. "Yeah, good memories. . . My husband was still with us. It doesn't make sense. I lost two relatives in a couple of months. My mom's death was predictable because she had been sick for 10 years. I had been taking care of her for a good ten years already. But my husband. . . Anyways, there is nothing you can do but accept the arrangements of God." I expressed my condolences and said I hoped she could focus on life here to forget the sorrows.

Grandma Sun smiled and thanked me. The next question I asked was if she could speak English. She laughed out loud and said she only knows how to say easy things like

“thank you”, “hello”, and “how are you”. She continued, “I never got a chance to learn English. But I know it’s important to say those polite words. I think greetings and polite words are very important in the U.S.”. “Do you speak Chinese with Nina then?” was my next question. “We talk in Shanghai dialect.” “Wow. That’s impressive.” I said. “I know. She can speak both Shanghai dialect and Mandarin.” “Then does she speak Shanghai dialect with her parents?” I followed. “She does. That’s our language at home!” I was surprised at Nina’s language skills. My great grandmother is in Shanghai. Although I’ve only met her once because most of my family lives near Beijing, I talked to her plenty of times on the phone. I never understood much and always felt that the Shanghai dialect was one of the most difficult dialects to understand, even if I knew some words. I then asked Grandma Sun, “Are there people speaking Mandarin with Nina? What if she forgets how to speak Mandarin?” She explained:

We actually speak both. We’ve been constantly trying to not let her forget about her hometown. She is still a Shanghai girl. Now a lot of Shanghai children don’t know how to speak the dialect. I have another granddaughter there, and she only speaks Mandarin at school and has no idea how to speak authentic Shanghai dialect. My granddaughter Nina can speak both because she talks to us in Shanghai dialect and other people who work at the restaurant in Mandarin. But she doesn’t know how to write. There are only very few characters that she could write. I was trying to teach her how to write Chinese characters not long ago, and she was very impatient and unhappy. I’m thinking. . . when we go back to Shanghai again, I’ll put her in a Chinese school to learn how to write. Even

foreigners are trying so hard to learn Chinese. Nina definitely needs to get better. She's really not patient and not willing to write. Sometimes when I'm mad at her because she refuses to write, I will say, "Don't ever go back to China again if you don't even know the language! Do you want to regret when you are 20?" I think she should not forget she is a Shanghai-er. What if she wants to live in Shanghai later? I am actually going to give my house in Shanghai to her. I put her as the owner already. I hope she could live in both places later.

I was amazed that Grandma Sun had already started thinking about Nina's future. Passing down heritage is a big thing in China. I remember hearing my family talking about splitting the old house even when I was only 10 years old. My grandparents too, were going to give their property to my twin brother and me, instead of our parents. To them, we are the new hope.

"How often did you talk when you were back in China?" I continued with a new question. "A phone call each week." "What did you usually talk about?" I asked. "We talked about things happened in school or new skills she learned." I was interested in who usually initiated the phone calls, and she said sometimes Nina and most of the time Wendy called first. Nina would always want to talk to Grandma Sun. She would tell stories, and if it happened to be during traditional Chinese holidays, she would greet the grandparents in the traditional way. She had a very good relationship with her grandfather. I asked if Nina would talk to her about things she wouldn't talk to her parents. Grandma Sun laughed and answered:

Sometimes she would whisper to me, “Grandma, please don’t tell my mom and dad.” If she had done something wrong, I would tell her, “If you don’t improve, I’ll tell your parents.” She would apologize and say she would change. But she is a very good kid. She never asks for a lot of things from me, like toys. My grandkid in Shanghai does. But Nina would feel really happy to accept birthday and Christmas gifts. She loves the holidays.

I wanted to talk more about the holiday, so I asked, “Does she know about the traditional Chinese holidays? Like the Moon Cake Festival or the Dragon Boat Festival?” Grandma Sun said, “Not much. I think it’s a pity that she can’t experience some of the traditions. The Chinese community here in Fairbanks is really small. The family has nobody to celebrate the holidays with. But she certainly does experience other things. She went skiing with her teachers and classmates. This is something she can’t do in Shanghai.”

I asked if she noticed any changes in the way Nina talked throughout the years or if she noticed any differences between American and Chinese children when they address the elders. She expressed her thoughts on the question:

Nina has been really polite. We maintained that by speaking Chinese and Shanghai dialect with her. I did notice that American kids are not very polite when talking to the elders. They don’t address me as grandma. Nina is still very respectful. But sometimes I think she should have a big sister like you. We get along really well, but we have a big age gap after all. If she has a sister like you,

she will learn a lot more things and will also have somebody to keep her companied. I'm just worried about her. She doesn't have a lot of friends or cousins to hang out with. That's one of the reasons why my daughter had another child. But still, they will always have a 10-year age difference. She would more love to have a sister like you."

I said I would love to meet up with Nina and hang out. I went on and asked my last question: "When are you planning on coming to see Nina again?" She said if everything goes well, she is coming next year. "I don't necessarily want a green card. It will certainly save a lot of trouble, but I still have family in Shanghai. I need to also take care of them." Grandma Sun said, "My other daughter sometimes complains about me coming to the U.S. all the time. She also wants me to be there for my grandchild in Shanghai. I'm trying my best to help both sides. I said to my daughter in Shanghai that she should understand. It's really not easy for Wendy to come to the U.S. They understand each other!"

"That's good!" I said. At that moment Grandma Sun yawned and said, "Sorry, I'm really sleepy because I got up really early to prepare breakfast for Nina. I try my best to let her have good, healthy food. She has already started eating more American food, like burgers. It's okay. But I want to help her to be aware of and control what she eats." I thought it was time to end the interview so she could take a break, so I thanked her and turned off the recorder. Grandma Sun said, "Whenever you come to Shanghai, you are welcome to our house. I'll cook for you! Here is my Shanghai number." She wrote her



number for me and gave me a big smile. I said I would go when I visit Shanghai and also gave her my number. I told her that if she ever wanted me to hang out with Nina, she could give me a call.

### **3.2 Grandpa Fan's Conversational Interview**

I conducted some of the interviews during the 2014 Chinese New Year period and was hoping to get introduced to some participants who happened to be visiting the U.S. Grandpa Fan was one of the guests and I was introduced to him through my uncle. My uncle, wanting me to call first and start building a relationship, gave me Grandpa Fan's number and asked me to schedule a time for myself. I called him and was told he would love to participate. We agreed to talk the second day. Grandpa Fan told me that a phone call was the best way for us to conduct the interview. So I had the phone call recorder set up and was ready for it.

Our conversation started with him saying, "Hello, yes, it's me! You are really on time!" This gave me the feeling that he had a welcoming and easy communication style. Coming from the crowded Beijing city areas, Grandpa Fan told me he was really enjoying the peaceful, natural and suburban life in New Jersey. I said I went to New Jersey twice and liked it very much. I then explained my study again and asked if he was ready. He said he was and we started the conversation.

I asked, "Is your granddaughter or grandson in New Jersey?" He answered, "I have both. My daughter and son-in-law are here, and they have two children. My grandson is one and half years old and my granddaughter is a little over four years old."

When he was saying this, I heard the noise of children playing. Since we were doing a phone interview and I wanted to guarantee the best quality, I asked, “Grandpa Fan, do you think it is okay that we move the conversation into a different room so we will guarantee the best recording quality? Also, you will have a quiet and private environment to talk with me.” He laughed and said, “No problem. But I’m just with my family. There is really no need to speak in a different room. The kids are playing in the same room, that’s all.” I heard him walking and thanked him. I remembered him mentioning his daughter, so I asked my first question, “You said you are here visiting your daughter’s family, did she come here for school?” “Yes.” Grandpa Fan answered. “She obtained her bachelor’s degree in China and came for grad school. That was a long time ago. Now, a lot of people are rich and just send their child to the U.S. for school. Years ago, you had to have scholarships if you wanted to go abroad for further education. My daughter and her husband were moving a lot. They moved from Hawaii to St. Louis, and had settled down here in New Jersey, to them the best place to raise their children. They heard from a friend that the East coast had more job opportunities and they would earn more money. Both of them found jobs in New York City.” “I see.” I said, “Like lots of other Chinese who decided to come to the U.S. to start a new life. Right? It must be a life-changing experience to all of you guys. I would love to hear your story.” He confirmed and then told me the story of himself before he retired.

Grandpa Fan is 63 years old. He was born in Beijing and earned an education in one of the best middle schools there until he graduated. He didn’t go to high school because China was experiencing the Cultural Revolution and young people were

supposed to go out and do physical work to help with construction or agriculture.

Grandpa Fan worked in a Beijing automobile factory with 1500 other young people and 800 experienced older workers for a couple of years, and they were all sent to work in a different factory in Xi'an. They did a lot of hard work. He enjoyed working with people in the factories but never forgot his real passion which was to study and do research.

When the Cultural Revolution was over and people could enter college by taking college entrance exams again, Grandpa Fan studied hard, got prepared and signed up for the exam. He successfully got into one of the best colleges and met his wife there. Both of them were the most excellent electrical engineering students in their college. Grandpa Fan wrote his graduation paper and was spoken highly of by some of the experts in the field. He decided to go to grad school. Both Grandpa Fan and his wife successfully got into one of the best grad schools in the country and Grandpa Fan was ranked number one in the exam. He said that the year he took the grad school tests, the Chinese government was sending students abroad for further education, and one of the qualifications the government was looking for was scores on the English test. Although his English was very good, he had one point less than the standard. It was a shame but he enjoyed going to grad school in China. Grandpa Fan then started getting his doctorate degree and going to academic meetings abroad. He went to a couple of different countries, including the U.S., and even met some world-famous experts in the electronic engineering field. His wife, during that time, was focused on taking care of their young child. Grandpa Fan ended up being a professor at a university. Years later, when it was time for his daughter to go to grad school, he suggested that she try schools in the U.S. It was a daunting idea

for most people, but because of his experience of attending international meetings and being a professor at a university for years, he was clear about the qualities American colleges were looking for and helped his daughter to get ready. His daughter was accepted into University of Hawaii with financial support and he also retired not long after that.

I was hooked to his life story and was amazed that he remembered so many details. There were not only his life experiences, but also many historical events involved. I could tell he was passionate about his academic goals and was eager to share his experiences with others. This reminded me of how my grandpa used to tell me about the events that happened tens of years ago in his life. I couldn't help but ask Grandpa Fan, "Do you want to tell the stories to your grandchildren one day?" "Yes. I do." He said with a laugh. I then asked, "How long do you usually stay in the U.S. with your family?" He said usually three months to half a year. His wife and he would take turns to come visit. Now his wife is in her hometown Xi'an taking care of her 90-year-old mother. This time, Grandpa Fan had his visa prolonged and was planning to stay for a year. "Are you considering becoming a permanent resident in the U.S.?" I asked out of curiosity.

Grandpa Fan immediately replied:

No. I want to live in China. I wouldn't mind living in both countries because I have family in both places, but I have my private space in Beijing. My wife and I, we were waiting for our daughter to have her own life, and then we could go

travel around. I've already been to many places in the world, and I want to experience more with my wife.

“Nice!” I said. “How’s your English level now?” “My English. . . No problem on the daily language. But if people talk too fast, I can’t follow.” I went on, “How’s your grandchildren’s Chinese skills?” “My grandson is only able to call his parents and say some baby words. My granddaughter is really good. Her dad tells her tons of bedtime stories in Chinese every day. She always repeats them and now she is good at speaking both languages. Having people to implement language skills is very important.” He then shared on his life in New Jersey:

Both my grandkids go to kindergarten. I don’t have much to do during the daytime except for chores like cleaning vegetables. We have dinner and hang out at night as a family. I like how American kindergartens have all sorts of classes so the kids could learn a lot. Another thing I like is that the teachers here are really responsible. There are laws saying that one teacher cannot take care of more than 4 kids, thus the quality of the education is guaranteed. It’s expensive to send the kids in a good kindergarten like that, but it’s worth it. In China, one teacher has to manage to keep 20 or even 30 young kids under control. I was offering to help teach one of the kids, but my daughter refused. She wanted them to experience school life and get to know some friends. My granddaughter has even started to learn Spanish. She talks to me in it sometimes. I understand nothing!

We both started laughing. After a couple of seconds, I went on, “There are so many languages going on at the house! Grandpa Fan, so what language do you use when you talk to your grandchildren?” “All Chinese at the house!” He gave a quick answer. “I discovered that half of the foreign families in the U.S. speak English at the house. There are about ten households in my neighborhood area. None of us are American families. Half speak their original language at the house. There are in some Chinese families who refuse to speak our language. They are westernized too much! Some of them don’t even eat Chinese food!” He then said he believed that the children’s behaviors were closely related to how their parents wanted to educate them. “The kids mostly eat what you provide them. They will eat whatever they are used to eating. In our house, there’s Chinese food every night. My grandkids love it!” He added.

Since Grandpa Fan mentioned he spoke English, I wanted to know if there were specific situations where his granddaughter spoke English to him. He answered, “Really rare. We all speak Chinese.” Then he said:

I like to go out to different places. That’s when I speak English. It’s funny that I discovered I could use the Chinese word “nihao” (hello) to test and see if the person walking towards me speaks Chinese. It’s a very important function of the word “nihao”. I love to go fishing, taking a walk and talking to random people.

Knowing that Grandpa Fan loves to talk to people even while residing in a different country, I asked, “Do you feel it’s a privilege that you know how to speak English? I’ve talked to some grandparents there, and most of them can only speak

Chinese.” “Exactly!” He answered, “Those who don’t would definitely feel boring! Actually, it would not be that bad, at least in my neighborhood. There are lots of Chinese and we get together constantly. There are always people speaking your own language with you!” I agreed and asked my next question, “How often did you talk to your grandchildren when you were in China?” He answered, “Once a week. We used all sorts of video chatting software. With the image available on the screen, my wife and I got to see our grandkids.” I asked who usually initiated the phone calls and Grandpa Fan said both sides did at times. The technology and the Internet are not hard for Grandpa Fan and his wife to use and the types of software are really convenient.

“Do you have conflicts with your daughter and son-in-law regarding how to educate your grandchildren?” was my next question. “No.” Grandpa Fan said. “We respect their parents’ way of educating. I’m not a hardcore traditional guy. On the other hand, since I grew up in traditional Chinese society, I bring some of the traditional values and norms here. The kids get influenced through daily life.” “That’s right. That is probably better than any purposeful enforcement,” I said.

The last question I asked was when he was going to come and see his grandchildren again. He said, “Next year, maybe at the end of the year.” At that moment, I noticed that it was almost 9 p.m. in New Jersey time and I was taught not to keep people on the phone that late, so I told him those were all my questions and asked if he had anything else he wanted to talk about. He said it was time to rest. I thanked him and

ended the interview. He then said good luck to me and said they might visit Alaska one day.

### **3.3 Grandpa Su's Conversational Interview**

Grandpa Su is currently living in China. He is my uncle's father and I call him "yiye" (Chinese for one's father's uncle's father). Even if he is not one of my closest relatives, I remember that he and his wife (whom I call "yinai") used to play with me and take me for walks. I haven't seen them in years because we lived in different cities, and because I was away from home for college. Throughout the years, I always heard news about them from my other relatives. I know they have two grandsons (Taotao and Naonao, which are the children's nicknames and have the meanings of "naughty" and "loud". They were named so for the good intentions of their family wanting them to be healthy and active.), who are my cousins, and I know how the children's lives are from the visit. But I have never got to listen to the elders' side of the story. Now I have the great chance. When I was first trying to contact my yiye, he said he didn't have Internet at their house. We agreed to talk when he had time to go to his daughter's (one of my aunts, who lives in the same city and takes care of the elders) house where he could use the Internet. I heard from this auntie that my yinai and yiye visit all the time because they want to help care for her children. The interview took place not long after that. In order to formalize, I will be referring to my yiye as "Grandpa Su". I informed him about the purpose of my study and told him he could exit the study anytime he felt like doing so.



I made sure that Grandpa Su was ready for the interview, and started by asking, “How old are you?” “75 years old.” He answered. “When was your first and last time coming to the U.S. to visit your grandchildren?” He said the most recent visit was in 2004. I was a bit shocked, because that was almost 10 years ago. He then added, “We came in March, the end of March to the beginning of April. That was the most recent visit.” “What about the first time?” “The first time was in 1999. We went to Hawaii. Back then my son was still in school.” “When was the first time you saw your grandchildren?” I further asked. “That was in 04” was his answer. I finally figured out that they only came to the U.S. one time for the purpose of visiting the grandchildren. “That was when the kids were only three months old. They were just born.” Grandpa Su continued. I then said, “So that means you stayed for a while and never came to the U.S. again.” “We stayed for two years and helped raise the babies to little kids” was what he said after that. I went on and asked why they never came again and he replied they weren’t able to get a visa and were told by the embassy they had violated immigration rules by staying over half a year. I wonder what happened. Did they not know there was a limit to the visa or had they simply just forgotten about it? Grandpa Su answered this question. “We knew the rules and also prolonged our visas to a year. Then my wife fell and got hurt, and we just didn’t get a chance to apply to stay longer. We ended up staying half a year longer.” I felt so sorry but didn’t really know what to say. Sometimes one does not have any say when faced with conflicts between strict man-made rules and the unpredictable accidents of life. He seemed unwilling to talk about it more, so I decided to move on to the next question. “Can you speak English?” He smiled and said, “No. I can’t

“speak the language. I’m okay at reading. I like reading English books about technology.” I then asked about his grandchildren’s level of Chinese language and he said, “They used to know how to speak but not anymore. When we were there, they had a reason to learn Chinese, so they could communicate with us.” I commented, “Motivation lost after you left.” “Right.” Grandpa Su said:

The reason they lost the motivation to speak Chinese is English is the language they use in school. Kindergarten, grade school, all English. [In Chinese] they only know how to say “hello, grandpa” and “hello, grandma.”

“You said you couldn’t speak English. How about listening?” I further asked. “Very limited. . .no, not really” was his answer. I then asked, “How are you and your grandchildren communicating? Do they try to speak Chinese?” “Yes! They have started learning Chinese. At school.” I reacted immediately, “That’s good. They can practice what they’ve learned with you! How often do you talk?” He smiled and said:

Every week. My son calls and the kids are put on the phone. I usually ask them simple questions like what they are up to or what they had for lunch. Sometimes they can answer the questions in Chinese. They are getting a little bit better at each time.

I was interested if they were just talking on the phone or using video chatting tools. Grandpa Su said they only tried video chatting once and that was years ago. Since there is no Internet at the house, only phone calls would work. When he was talking about this, I thought about how I have been communicating with my grandma who lives

in China. Since one of my cousins (as well as his mom and dad who are my auntie and uncle) lives in her house and he had the Internet set up, I sometimes ask him to schedule a time to video chat with my grandma. Even if the Internet is always there, throughout these almost two years that I have been in the U.S., I have only video chatted with her 3 times. She told me many times on the phone that she missed me a lot and wanted to see my face, but was too afraid to bother my cousin because of his busy schedule. This makes me think that the thousands of grandparents in China who live by themselves and have children/grandchildren living some distance away must face the same problem.

I quickly drew my thoughts back and asked him the next question. “Do your grandchildren try to ask you questions in Chinese when you have the weekly phone calls?” He answered, “No. They don’t ask anything, they just try to answer whatever I ask. They constantly say in Chinese to their dad ‘I don’t understand. I don’t know what the question was.’ Their dad then translates for them.” I remembered him saying his grandchildren’s Chinese used to be better. I was curious how the grandparents notice the differences, so I went on and asked, “Have you noticed any changes in the way they talk? For example, how do they address you?” He thought about it for a while and explained:

The differences. . . They cannot pronounce certain words that well anymore. . . When we were in the U.S. ten years ago, my grandchildren were able to call me “yeye” perfectly! I remember there was one time when I was walking our guest out, I heard them yelling, “yeye, yeye!” They thought I was leaving. Their dad used to say, “The kids are super close to their grandpa. They don’t want him to

leave.” Now they are not like that anymore. About their Chinese level. . . there was another time when I was watching them playing on the slide, I was worried one of my grandchildren Naonao would fall off the slide. So I stood closer and was trying to help. He said, “Naonao by himself. . . Naonao by himself” in Chinese. He didn’t want any help and expressed that in Chinese. It was really good. Now he cannot do it anymore. I feel that kids in China have to study English, but they don’t want to speak and practice English; [Chinese] kids in the U.S. should speak Chinese, but they don’t want to speak and practice.

I said he was right. It does sound paradoxical. The environment really changes everything. I asked if he noticed any other big changes and he shared:

When I was in the U.S. caring for my grandchildren, I had a friend from Guangxi Province. I remember he used to pick up and drop off his grandson at the school because the kid’s parents were quite busy. The senior went back to China after his visa expired. Sometime after, the kid stopped calling him “grandpa” when they were talking on the phone. The parents taught him how, but he just refused to say it. He was doing that to show that he doesn’t like speaking Chinese. Taotao and Naonao are still trying. Although all they could say were “Hello, yeye” and “Hello, nainai.”

“Better than stop using the language at all. One important step is to make sure they understand the importance. Maybe things will be better when the kids grow older.” I noticed that Grandpa Su remembered a lot of details about the language use, so I came up

with one more related question. “How about other seniors they meet when they are with you? You know. Chinese children are supposed to address elders of the similar age ‘yeye’ and ‘nainai’ if they are told to.” He immediately said, “They behave pretty well. When they were in China, I would take them out for a walk. One time we bumped into my friend and I asked them to address him as ‘yeye’. They really did, although they were not used to doing this.”

Since I heard from my uncle that he and the twins went back to China not long ago, I wanted to get some information on their newest visit. So I asked, “How was the most recent time seeing your grandchildren?” He said:

I noticed many big changes in the kids. The first time they came to China, they were saying to their dad, “Can we go home?” Their dad said, “This is our home!” Now they don’t complain anymore. We wanted to hug and kiss them. They would let us. Another thing is they have started to play a lot of video games. My son brought them their video game consoles. They play all the time.

I laughed and said, “Typical youngsters.” He agreed. I continued with another question, “Did you do anything fun together? Like taking a walk like you used to?” “No.” He said. “It took them really long to get rid of the jet lag. They would be excited at night, and always had a hard time getting up in the morning.” He laughed and said, “The first time they came to China, the same thing happened, I mean the really bad jet lag. One time my wife and I were sleeping in our room, they ran in there and yelled, ‘Hello?!’ (in English) We laughed about this for a long time. It was really funny.” Grandpa Sun had

really big smiles on his face when sharing this with me. “They come to China every two years,” he continued, “and they are pretty familiar with the environment, with the house we live in. One time they were telling their dad about the big square outside of grandma’s house. There are memories.”

The next question I asked was, “Do you have any conflicts with your children regarding educating your grandchildren?” He answered immediately, “No. I’ll go with whichever ways they think are the best.” “You don’t agree with being strict with children?” I asked. He replied:

Not at all! If the kids don’t want to do things, forcing wouldn’t do well to them either. Following the children’s nature is the best way. I used to be really strict with my children because the context was different. There are also a lot of Chinese kids getting spoiled these days. It’s necessary that the parents be responsible on the premise of respecting the children’s personality and nature.

“True!” I responded. At last I wanted to know if it was almost time for them to try to get a visa again, so I asked. Grandpa Su said, “The embassy told me to go back on July 20th, 2016. We came back from the U.S. in 2006. They gave us a 10-year punishment. I asked if I could ever go again, and was given the date.” “Are you going on that day?” I couldn’t help but ask. “Depends on my health condition. I’m almost 80!” “You look really good,” I said “and hope you get together with your grandchildren soon again!”

From his expressions, I could feel his hope. Although the grandchildren go visit them in China every two years, but can only stay for a very short time, usually 2 weeks or

so. If the grandparents could get a visa to the U.S., they can stay for a couple of months to half a year. It would also be better for the grandparents to witness their grandchildren's everyday life. I told Grandpa Su, my yiye, that I would go visit him in China after my graduation. He smiled and said he would be looking forward to it. I thanked him, wished him good health, and ended the video chat session.

### **3.4 Grandma Wang's Conversational Interview**

Grandma Wang is the wife of Grandpa Su. I address her as "yinai". I hadn't seen her in about four years because I was constantly moving. By having this interview, I had a chance to catch up with her about life and also hear her story. When our video chat session started, she first gave me a big smile and said I looked different. She asked me a lot of questions regarding my school, relationship, and things in the U.S. in general. Three years ago, my mom talked to her about my plan of coming to the U.S. for further education. My mom was hoping to get some advice or words of experience, but my yinai said to her, "You shouldn't let her go! Letting her go means not having her back ever again!" My mom, although always remembered what my yinai told her, respected my choice. To my yinai, sending her child to the U.S. was a bittersweet thing. She was very proud when my uncle settled down and started his family in the U.S. after years of hard work, but also felt sad because she would never be able to care for him in the way she wanted to. I asked a couple of questions as well and we were both ready to start the interview. In order to formalize, I will be referring to her as Grandma Wang. Since she visited the U.S. with Grandpa Su, I skipped some of the same technical questions.

“How old are you?” “69 years old.” She replied. I went on by asking, “Can you speak English?” “I forgot what I knew!” She said. “You were able to speak English years ago?” “Some. I used to talk about weather with the neighbors, like ‘it’s going to rain’ or greetings of the same sort. I also knew the basics, like ‘hello,’ ‘bye’ or ‘you are welcome to visit again.’” “Not bad!” I said. “That was all I knew!” She laughed a bit. “Can your two grandchildren speak Chinese?” “They used to be able to speak Chinese. But they stopped after we left! These days Naonao is still trying, but Taotao almost doesn’t speak Chinese.” Here she has more details than Grandpa Su. “What do you think caused the difference between the two kids?” I asked. “Generally, it’s because of the environment. They are used to speaking English. Their mouths don’t cooperate when they try a different language. Then they would refuse to speak.” “They need a lot of translating, right?” “The beginning of the conversations is always the greetings. They can easily nail that part. As the questions get ‘more difficult’, they start to ask their dad for help.” I went on and asked, “Do you see their dad trying to get as many words out of them as possible? Or does he just translate whatever he needs to translate?” “He doesn’t force the kids. They can’t express themselves clearly in Chinese. They don’t know how.” Grandma Wang answered. I continued, “I know you talk to them once a week through phone calls. Do you put the phone on the speaker so both you and Grandpa can hear it or do you talk to them separately?” “We talk separately. One of us first and the other after.” I moved to the next question, “What are the topics?” She shared:



I like to ask my grandchildren if they are studying hard and what grades they are getting. I usually tell my son to drive safe. If anything new happened, they will tell me.

I went on and asked “Grandpa Su told me the kids visit China every two years. Did you notice any changes in the children when they recently visited you?” She thought about the question and replied, “Changes. . . The kids are growing taller and taller, and my son is getting older and older.” “That’s because you don’t get to see their pictures or video chat with them, right?” She said, “Right. We don’t video chat. Sometimes my son sends us a disc with pictures or videos of our grandchildren doing all sorts of activities.” I wondered how often do they get a disc, so I asked. She said, “It depends. We will usually get one if they have new school activities, parties or go on a tour somewhere.” “Most of the time the parents must be busy working. They probably don’t have time to take a lot of pictures.” I commented. “Yeah. My son. . . it takes him 3 to 4 hours to go to work and get back every day. It’s not easy. . .” I then asked if she felt changes in how her grandchildren talked or how they behaved in front of her. She shared:

I think it might be because we naturally connect really well, so comparatively my grandchildren are closer to their grandma. They come to me whenever they need help or want to check out something. They would come to me, not really their grandpa. . . If I am not around the house, then they ask their grandpa for help. Of course, they are always going to be closer to their parents. But when their parents are at work, they rely on me.

I continued with the next question, “How do they ask for help?” She said, “They stand next to it and point.” We both laughed. I then asked if they did fun things together, and she said:

Yes, yes. I have the habit of going outdoors in the morning to do some physical exercises. I took them with me a couple of times. We would usually see people doing all sorts of activities, like juggling a feathery ball or practicing with a long sword, and the kids got really curious about those things. One time they used broken Chinese and gestures to ask me if it was okay to take a look at the feathery ball someone was juggling. I said “of course” and borrowed it for them. When they were done looking at it, they gave it back and said “xiexie (“thank you” in Chinese)”.

“That’s nice!” I said. I used to go to the parks to do morning exercises with my grandparents. This brought back a lot of memories. My last question was, “Do you have any conflicts with your son and daughter-in-law regarding how to educate the children?” She replied:

No conflicts. I always say that we were way too strict on our son. He used to get “beaten up” if he didn’t do his homework well or did something wrong. Now I feel the best way of educating a kid is following the kid’s nature. If a kid is meant to be successful, he or she will be successful without being forced to do things. I feel that following the nature of a child is the best way.

I smiled and said, “I agree!” But on the other hand, it must be unrealistic to have most of the thousands of parents or grandparents in China who have a child around age 10 to think in the same way. The competition in school is too fierce that without strict parenting or grandparenting, most children will lag behind and not end up in a good college, and have a “good life”. Before I came to the U.S., I was a private English tutor to a couple of children of age 10-13. They had been studying English for years, although formal English classes in school would not start until a few years later. Their parents spent a huge amount of money to get them started at a very young age so they could be the best in class later. The ways people choose to discipline their children really depend on the social setting and situation of the specific country.

### **3.5 Grandpa Hu’s Conversational Interview**

Grandpa Hu was introduced to me by my uncle in New Jersey, when he happened to be visiting his family in the U.S. Through my uncle, I got to know that Grandpa Hu’s daily schedule was similar to almost all the other grandparents who visited the U.S. When his grandchildren were at school, he cleaned the house and cooked for the family. After these chores were done, he could relax and watch Chinese TV programs on his iPad. Grandpa Hu has two grandchildren. One is a 9-year-old boy whose name is Dave and the other is a 6-year-old girl named Dee. We agreed to video chat through FaceTime.

I called him when it was 10 in the morning New Jersey time. When the call successfully connected, I noticed that Grandpa Hu was speaking to me while resting in bed. After the greetings, I introduced the purpose of my study and the time the interview

usually takes. He kept saying, “No problem at all! I’m all ready!” So, I started by asking, “How old are you?” He said, “70!” I went on, “when was the first time visiting your grandchildren in the U.S.?” He said the first time was 9 years ago. The year his grandson was born. “I witnessed the birth of my grandson and stayed for half a year. Before that, when my son was still in school, I had already visited him in the U.S. But the visit 9 years ago was to witness the birth of my grandson.” I then asked, “Do you speak English?” “No!” He said quickly. “Does your grandson speak Chinese?” I continued and asked. He hesitated for a moment and said, “A little bit. Both my grandchildren can speak and understand a little bit of Chinese. Only the easy daily language.” That was an expected answer, but I wondered if the children were learning more Chinese so they can communicate better with their grandparents, so I asked. “Yes! They are trying to learn. I want them to study harder to be better at speaking Chinese. But they really don’t talk in Chinese that much. And their listening is better than speaking.” “How do they express themselves if they have something to tell you? Or what do you do if you have something to say to them?” I asked. Grandpa Hu answered, “They would say as much as they could, and ask their mom for help. For me, I would say what I think they will understand and just ask their mom to explain the rest. They have been going to language school to learn Chinese.” I moved on to a question I had in mind, “Do your grandchildren have both English and Chinese names?” “Yes,” Grandpa Hu said, “we call them by the nicknames we gave them. They really don’t care which name I use. They answer to any name.”

Name-calling is a very interesting topic. In China, normally people have one full name that has two to four characters. The family will give a baby a nickname, which can

be a new name or part of the full name. The nickname is usually a name made of two of the same characters. Most of the time, the closer the relationship is, the shorter the name gets. There may also be many other versions of the nickname. To take myself as an example, I have a Chinese name of three characters, the majority of people call me by my first name that has two characters and three syllables, and my family calls me by “yaya”, which generally means “little girl” and a name given to me by my grandparents. My grandma is the only one who calls me “yadan”. I do not know where this came from, but she calls me this all the time. The literal meaning of this word is “duck egg”, which is used by her to express her love and care. “Egg” is an unborn baby and is used in children’s name to show that they are still naïve and young. To my grandma, I am still and always will be her little girl.

Holding these thoughts to myself, I asked Grandpa Hu the next question, “Since you mostly live in China, how do you keep in touch with the children?” He answered, “Sometimes we use phones to call each other, and sometimes we use FaceTime. This iPad I’m using is mine. Technology has made everything very convenient.” I said, “Good for you! You get to see each other through images instead of only listening to voices.” “Exactly.” I went on, “How often do you talk to your grandchildren?” “Mostly,” he said, “we talk once every one or two weeks. Sometimes their parents call me and sometimes I call them. We talk during the weekend. My son and daughter-in-law are too busy on weekdays. I can’t really get ahold of them.” I asked if he ever got phone calls from his grandchildren and he said, “Sometimes! Both of them now know how to use the iPad.

This makes them really have the tendency to call me more!” I then asked about the content of the conversations. He shared:

We talk a lot about their daily life. Because of the language barrier, we limit the topics of our conversations. The kids cannot understand a lot of Chinese. But if I ask easy questions about their daily lives, they will feel confident and comfortable enough to talk.

I was wondering if they talked about the school life of the children, so I added, “Do you ask about their grades or what they do in school?” He laughed a little bit and said:

Not really. Their parents are the ones making sure they get decent grades and behave well in school. We as grandparents don’t really ask about this. I think if you ask and the kids tell you their grades are not going well, you must be able to give suggestions. I don’t know how American schools work at all. I can’t even help them with their first-grade homework because it’s in English. Thus, I shouldn’t ask. Do you understand?

“I do, I do!” I said. “But did you notice any differences regarding education systems in China and the U.S.?” He said: “I did! The kids in the U.S. are much more relaxed. That’s for sure! Kids in China study a lot harder in school.” I then asked if he noticed any differences in the way his grandchildren conversed in Chinese over time. He said:

The kids are growing up and changing in different ways every day. The major difference I noticed was. . . they are speaking less and less Chinese. It's pretty obvious that if we, the grandparents, are not around, they really don't get to speak Chinese. Their parents talk to them in English, maybe because talking in English saves a lot more time. The kids themselves do want to talk to us more, and are really trying to learn more Chinese. There were a lot of times when my grandson Dave would want to say something, he would try to think, then stumble over words and then really get stuck. But we could tell that he was thinking really hard. He also makes mistakes, but the most important thing is he is trying. It's a certain thing that if the language is not used, it will be not be mastered.

I then moved on to the next question and asked if his grandchildren addressed the grandparents well. He said:

They have no problem at all addressing us well at all! They 'bother' us all day and all the time! We have a pretty close and intimate relationship. Their grandma and I come to visit almost every year and stay for almost half a year each time. The two years we were not here in the U.S., they all went to China to visit us.

"I see. . . do your grandchildren like you to come here in the U.S. or do they like visiting you in China more?" I asked. "Of course they want us to fly to the U.S.," he said, "and they don't want us to leave. Sometimes my grandchildren say that they like China, but would only stay there when they have the company of their parents." I nodded and went on with another question, "do you walk them to school while you are here?" "We

do.” He said, “Their school is right outside of the neighborhood. It’s really close. After we drop them off, we come back to the house and cook whatever they want for lunch and dinner.” “Do they like Chinese food?” I asked out of curiosity. “Very much! I cook whatever they crave for the day. They love Chinese food!” He answered. Then I asked, “Since you said that. . . do you provide food they crave but your son and daughter-in-law wouldn’t allow them to eat?” He laughed and said:

Um. . . Yes! I have done that. We would sometimes bring Chinese snacks for them. When their mom is around, she would always tell them not to eat too much. She would limit how much they eat. When she is gone, the kids would come ask for more from me and I always gave them as much as they wanted. Grandparents and grandchildren would naturally have this sort of relationship.

“That’s true. Grandparents probably spoil the children more than parents. My grandparents also did that when I was little.” He nodded at me and laughed. I moved on to the next question, “Are there any conflicts between you and your son regarding how to educate your grandchildren?” He replied:

Not really. Educating the kids is not my responsibility. And to be honest, I don’t even have the ability to educate them. We speak different languages and I don’t know about the American school system. I respect my son and daughter-in-law’s ways of educating. People always say: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Whatever their parents feel right is what I believe the right thing to do. There is no need to apply traditional Chinese ways of educating a kid on kids born in the U.S.



In our family, we don't take part in educating Dave and Dee at all. What I want to do well in is generally caring for them in life, like cooking for them or picking them up from school.

“Right. Got it! My next question is: do you celebrate traditional Chinese festivals? Are you here to celebrate the upcoming 2014 Spring Festival?” Grandpa Hu's face lit up and became a little excited. He said:

Yes! We do. We celebrate the major festivals like the Moon Cake Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival. I want the kids to understand the meaning behind them, so I made the traditions into fairy tales and told them.

“That's nice! How's the relationship between the boy and the girl?” I asked in another question. “They are extremely close! They like to hang out with each other. Their parents always tell them that they are brother and sister and they should love and care for each other. These two kids rarely fight over things.” “Wow!” I said, “That didn't happen to my brother and I! We fought a lot when we were little!” He laughed really hard and said, “My two grandchildren get along extremely well!” I asked my last question, “When are you going to come visit them again?” He answered,

We haven't made any plans yet. We'll come whenever my son and daughter-in-law need us! So far we have been constantly visiting. But to be honest, I want them to come back and live in China (He laughed). To us, this is a foreign country after all. We cannot speak the language, so we cannot get around and cannot do anything! Life is a lot easier in China. But it all comes back to them. The kids are

happy here. They have parties in holidays, play video games with friends, learn a lot of things and are really healthy. I feel satisfied!

“That’s good!” I said. I told him I had no more questions and if he wanted to talk about something else. He said he enjoyed the conversation and I could contact him again if I needed to talk more. I thanked him and ended the interview.

### **3.6 Grandma Hu’s Conversational Interview**

Grandma Hu is the wife of Grandpa Hu. Grandpa Hu mentioned during our interview that he always visited the U.S. together with his wife. For this reason, I skipped some technical questions to which they would have the exact same answers.

When I finished my interview with Grandpa Hu, she was called in from the other room. She took over the iPad, looked at me on the screen and said “hello!” I greeted her and asked how she was. She said she was feeling very good. “I just finished some housework. It’s a beautiful day!” “Good!” I said, “Do you go out a lot?” “Not really.” She said.

We have to wait if we want to go to the mall or go buy groceries. We don’t speak English and don’t know how to drive. It’s not convenient. And we really don’t have friends and relatives here, and this is the bad part about the experience. But I feel that my son and his family are happy. They have good jobs. And they are used to living in the U.S.

“I see. . . When your grandchildren visit China, do they stay at your house?” I asked. “I have a daughter who lives in Beijing,” she said, “and we are currently living with her. When the grandkids visit China, we meet there. They never stay long in China though. It was always only ten days. They visited us for a couple of days, and had to go visit their grandparents on their mom’s side.” I then asked her if she found it hard to communicate with them. She answered:

I really hope their Chinese could be better. Whenever they are back in China, we would try to take them out to see more parts of China and get exposed to the language and culture. Now in the U.S. we are just using all sorts of body language to make sense. And we need a lot of translation. The kids need to study hard. After all China’s their country, and Chinese is their language! When their parents are around, things seem easy. When their parents are not, we can’t communicate.

She hesitated a little bit when she was saying that. I then asked, “Do they just hang out on their own when the parents are not around?” She said yes and went on:

I also noticed that they are really independent, especially my granddaughter. Whenever she is doing something, I would offer to help. But she always says she doesn’t need help and can do it on her own. One time the two children were outdoors riding bikes, and their grandpa and I were looking at them. I was so nervous and worried that they would fall. But they actually knew what they were doing and knew how to protect themselves. I think they were told even if they fell,

they could stand up and start again. In China, a lot of children are very dependent and clingy.

I asked her what she thought the reason was and she said part of the reason was due to the American education system. “Kids are encouraged to be independent and I think it’s a good thing. I’m very happy my grandchildren are solving a lot of problems and doing activities on their own. Although sometimes they do come to us and ask for things.” “Are there examples?” “Yeah. They would ask for food from me, and would ask to hang out with the grandpa. Hahaha. . .” I shared a good laugh with her. She went on and said, “I love to make them food!” “Nice! Did you feel they interacted with you in different ways? I mean compared with their parents?” “Yeah, yeah, yeah! Especially when their parents told them not to do something, they would come to us. We as grandparents are relatively easy on them.” “Got it!” I said. “Have you and their parents had conflicts then?” “Conflicts? Not really. Because our principle is to not interfere with the way they educate the kids. The kids’ parents are the ones who make the major decisions.” I then said, “The next question is how often do you talk to them?” Grandma Hu answered, “We’ve set the rules that phone calls are only made during the weekends, and we talk every one or two weeks. I don’t want to bother them on weekdays because they are usually really busy.” “Okay. Is it usually one of the parents who makes the phone call or sometimes do the children would want to call first?” Grandma Hu said, “The kids would want to call us! Sometimes they go to their parents and say they want to talk to their grandparents, especially my grandson. The last time his dad told him we were coming to the U.S., he even told his dad to buy us first-class tickets so we could be

more comfortable.” We both laughed really hard and I said, “Good boy!” “Yeah! He is a good kid.” Grandma Hu said. “Do you and Grandpa Hu usually video chat with them at the same time or separately?” “We video chat together.” “Everybody sees each other?” “Yes. There are no secrets, really. We all talk together.”

“Okay! Earlier Grandpa Hu told me he wanted the children and their parents to move in China. Do you have the same feeling?” Grandma Hu said, “I hope they should try to visit more but I don’t necessarily want them to live in China! I think their life here is good! They are happy!” She had a warm smile spread on her face. I told her those were all the questions for her and asked if she wanted to talk more. She said she needed to go back to her housework and cooking, and that her grandson loves what she cooks. I thanked her and ended the conversation.

### **3.7 Grandma Wang’s Conversational Interview**

One of my uncle’s closest friends introduced Grandma Wang to me. She currently resides in Beijing and has visited the U.S. a few times. She heard about my study and was willing to take part. It took me two days to get ahold of her because she is an extremely busy grandma. The day I scheduled the time of the interview with her, I noticed that she’s a very sweet and caring person. She not only called me “honey”, but also was concerned about the time of our interview. She said if our interview was scheduled too late (by Alaskan time) I wouldn’t be able to go to sleep before midnight, although that would be a perfect time for her. I successfully persuaded her to do the interview with me based on her best interests after I promised I would sleep more the second day.

I called her at the scheduled time. After greeting her, she asked me more details about what my study was about and where in China I was from. I explained and she said she was happy that she had a chance to talk to me and would be very open with me. “From my experience, Chinese people in the U.S. hang out with other Chinese most of the time, not the Americans. The Chinese should help each other and I would love to participate in your study.”

I thanked her for her openness and asked her the first question. “When was your first and last time in the U.S. visiting your grandchildren?” She shared her experience of visiting the U.S.:

I’ve been to the U.S. for ten times, and mostly to take care of my grandchildren! I’ve gone more often than my husband because I’m the one taking care of the children more and also because I retired five years earlier before my husband. My first visit to the U.S. was in 1999. My grandchildren weren’t born yet. I went to travel with my son. That time I stayed for only one month, January to be specific, in 2005, because my other son in China was having a baby. My son in the U.S. had a baby a few months later in June. I couldn’t go because that didn’t give me enough time to get a visa. That’s why my son invited my daughter-in-law’s parents to witness the childbirth. They stayed for 9 months with my grandson Aaron until I was able to obtain a visa. I stayed for exactly half a year without prolonging my stay, for the reason that I didn’t want to have a “bad” history in the immigration bureau’s records, so I could still get visas easily later on. I didn’t

want to leave my grandson, so I took him back to China with me when he was 15 months years old. I took care of him myself on the airplane! He stayed with his grandfather and me for a year and was sent back to the U.S. by us to embrace the birth of his little sister. The little girl Alison was born 10 days after we arrived in the U.S. That was in 2007. I stayed for another half a year and went back to China. Things were just repeating like that. Half a year in China and half a year in the U.S. . . . I think I've been to the U.S. for 10 times. I never prolonged my stay except for the very last time. I didn't want to be put on the immigration bureau "black list" because I have to be there for my grandchildren. I stayed longer that last time because I really had to help. The parents were really too busy. To me, the responsibility of a grandmother is to take care of her grandchildren, meaning to "serve" the younger generations. I have no regrets doing that. I think as a senior, it's your duty and natural call to take care of the family. Nothing much needs to be said (she laughed).

"Right!" I said. At that moment her voice was broken up. I tried to call again. She picked up in a couple of seconds and said, "Kiddo! I think my signal is pretty bad. Call again if the same thing happens later." "Thank you Grandma Wang!" I quickly said. She then continued, "As I was saying, all a grandmother should do is to care for her grandchildren, no matter where they are." "That's what my grandma did!" To my reply, Grandma Wang said, "That's good." "How old are you this year?" I asked. "I'm 71! Times when I was young are gone and will never return (She laughed)! It's time to see all you young kids grow up and achieve things in life! I have all my hopes on you!" I

laughed and asked her, “You mentioned you retired earlier than your husband. Was it because you wanted to better take care of your grandchildren or was it about time to retire?” She answered, “Back then women retired at age 55, and men at age 60.” “Things are different now.” I said. “Exactly! Things have been constantly changing. It’s a whole new era!” She went on and shared more insights:

No matter what, remember, kiddo, for a person, who has been busy working everywhere and going to places, the ultimate goal is to have a happy life and family. This is especially true to the older generations. To them, there are no such things as sacrifices or contributions, those are just things you should do! “Family” is the most important thing! You are still young, so you might not be able to understand this. It was the same for me when I was young. I used to choose work over my children. When I wanted to work more, I just left my two boys at home by themselves. Since both your Grandpa (she meant her husband) and I were Japanese teachers, when Chinese young people started the “Foreign Language Studying Heat” forty years ago, we received a lot of requests to teach at night. In order to pursue our dreams of teaching and also to make money, we had to leave our boys at home. Thinking back, I’m still very guilty. The reason was not because of money, but because as young people, we wanted to pursue our careers. Back then, we were actually really good Japanese teachers. We were even teaching Japanese to professors in all fields. What I want to say is, no matter how much you have achieved, once you are retired, you are just a family member. If other people in your family need you, you serve them and give them all your



energy, time and everything. Some of my friends were asking, “What are you going to do in the U.S.? You have your life here and nobody will play Mahjong with you!” I go to serve my kids! To be honest with you, kiddo, your grandpa (her husband) and I, or any Chinese grandparents, don’t really want to stay in the U.S. at all. Remember this. There is a saying among the Chinese grandparents saying, “The U.S. is heaven to young people, but hell to the seniors.” I don’t know how to drive, meaning I can’t walk; I don’t understand English, meaning I can’t talk. What are you going to do when you can’t talk and walk? Although we went to different places with the company of my son and daughter-in-law, for the most part, we really can’t do anything except to care for the children.

“But I do feel you are very positive.” I said. “Yes! It’s all about attitude!” “People can’t think only of how much they can get out of something for themselves. For elders, being able to spend time and care for their grandchildren is the greatest joy in life. It’s impossible to get the easy and free life like what the elders get in China, but they have to desire less and contribute more.” Since Grandma Wang has been to the U.S. many time, I wanted to know if she did anything special with the children except for cooking for them. So I asked: “Do you play a lot of fun games with your American grandchildren?”

Yeah. We play hide and seek, or arm wrestle, or the simple pushing game the kids made up in which they push each other and see who is more powerful. One time my grandson asked, “Grandma, how do I play the pushing game with you when you are in China?” “We can do it while video chatting!” I said. He then asked,

“Grandma, when are you coming back to the U.S.?” After hearing this, I became really emotional and could not calm down for a long time. I could not calm down. . . The kids want you to be there with them, but you just can’t be there for them. They are so busy. They have piano lessons, soccer games, swimming lessons and dancing lessons. If I’m there, they will at least have decent food. I get my grandson ready for soccer, give him water and everything else he needs.

“Flying between two continents to take care of both sides, it’s really not easy!” She said it was not easy, but the love is reciprocal. The grandparents give their love by caring for the children, and the children love them back. She said the love is shown in different ways, but it’s always there and that’s what matters. “Am I talking too much?” She asked all of a sudden? “No, no, no! What you just said provided really valuable insights. I appreciate your openness!” “There are a lot of stories. Since I constantly visit, and there were two years I was with my grandson every day, there are a lot stories of what happened.” I said, “You are an important part of each other’s lives.” “Exactly!” She said. Grandma Wang then went on and told me:

Actually, I’m usually very strict on children. I have high standards for them and want them to study well and achieve something for themselves in the future. But I don’t get to see my grandchildren in the U.S. all the time, so whenever I see them, I can’t be strict at all. They are so innocent. All I have is love. But our grandchildren usually behave well, because their parents are harsh on them. I can say my grandchildren and I are like good friends. My son and daughter-in-law are

like my friends as well. My son is very humorous and so is my daughter-in-law. When the family gets together, you hear us laughing all the time! We love humor (loud laughter)! One can't be too serious and picky about life. Taking things easy will make everything better. I'm talking too much. You didn't even get a chance to say much (laughter).

“It's all good! I love listening to your stories! Very interesting points! Let's go to the language question. You mentioned you and Grandpa were Japanese teachers and you are generally strict on children. How do you think your grandchildren's Chinese is?” She said they could speak Chinese decently. Because the grandparents visited constantly and the parents try to only spoke Chinese at home, the grandchildren spoke acceptable Chinese. “My grandchildren's trips to China also helped a lot.” “Right!” I said. She went on, “Of course there are times when they can't come up with a word and they would ask their parents for help. But they have no problem in speaking daily Chinese at all! There were also times they tried to communicate with us in English, hoping we could respond. Their parents would usually step in and tell them it was rude. That helped them form the habit of speaking Chinese with me. This kind of thing, the entire family needs to work on together.” She explained and then shared more of her thoughts:

I've seen a lot of U.S. – born children who can't speak Chinese and refuse to speak Chinese. I think that's because their parents are not helping to create the right environment, and their grandparents are not visiting enough. The entire family really needs to work together and reinforce daily language use and

practice. We are conscious about the children's language use. When they are in China, we take them out to experience and listen to the culture. As grandparents, there is nothing much we can do. This is one of the little things.

“This is great already!” At this moment we lost signal again. After we reconnected, I told her I had a few more questions for her. “Go ahead, go ahead. I've been too chatty (laughter).” “How often do you talk to your grandchildren when you are in China?” “If time permits, and both sides are not busy, we video chat every day!” “Wow, daily?” “Now the children are busier than when they were little. We used to video chat every single day. Now we see each other on the Internet most of the days. If not video chatting, we call each other or even send text messages. Because I'm at a different apartment today and there is no Internet, my son just called me at noon and we talked for an hour. That's also why I can't video chat with you. When you are back in China, come to visit me!” “I will, I will!” We both laughed. She then said, “I can't say I'm the best cook ever, but I'm confident to say that you will love my food. We used to host parties in the U.S., I would cook tons of dishes that fed 50 to 60 people! We were always required to host parties!” “I can't wait!” We both laughed again. “Another question I have for you is are there conflicts between you and your son and daughter-in-law regarding how to educate your grandchildren?” She thought about it for a while and said,

My son and daughter-in-law are Americanized in some ways. They have accepted some values that are not our traditional Chinese values. We had conflicts and I always argued with them. But I never won (laughter). The reason is. . . Chinese

are moderate and good at hiding what they have, but Americans are more encouraged to show what they have. I think. Americans are taught to show their talents and express themselves, but Chinese are taught to always be cautious and not show off. Both styles have their advantages and drawbacks. I saw some children who were too arrogant, and it was really bad. I think being too confident leads to being arrogant, and there are consequences to being arrogant. There was one time I thought what my grandson was doing was too much, but my son said it was okay. I just gave in. That worries me because what if you show off at work later and people don't buy it? Then you will not be able to mingle with your colleagues. I'm always trying to think of a perfect way but there isn't one.

Through my observations I've noticed a lot of differences between American and Chinese children.

“Since your grandchildren are in the U.S., they get influenced the most by the big environment.” “You are right! So as grandparents, we can only have hopes for them. Speaking of daily education, their parents are the ones taking control, and we are fine with it! We don't really know what is going on in the U.S. and don't know the system well enough to interfere, so I think I'll trust my son and daughter-in-law. I want them to be healthy and happy. That's the most important!” We both shared a laugh, and I asked her the last question, “When are you visiting your grandchildren in the U.S. again?” She thought about it for a second and said, “Maybe at the end of this year! I really want to see them. Hope we can get a visa at the end of the year.” I said good luck and asked if she had anything else she wanted to talk about. “When are you coming home?” I was

surprised she asked me this. “In May.” I answered. Then she said whenever I have time to stop by Shijiazhuang (the city she lives in), I should call her and she will cook me a meal. I thanked her and said I would love to go! “I’ve been missing the real Chinese food for almost two years!” She laughed, “You are welcome anytime! Now you have my number, you can just call me. Or whenever you want to talk to anybody, I would love to be that person!” I thanked her again, and ended the interview. I was so grateful that I had the chance to talk to Grandma Wang.

### **3.8 Grandpa He’s Conversational Interview**

Grandpa He is the husband of Grandma Wang. I contacted him by calling Grandma Wang’s phone and we had the interview on the same night I interviewed Grandma Wang. He was also very caring and worried about me not getting enough sleep. I explained to him the purpose of my study, and told him the study was voluntary so he could stop if he felt he wanted to. He said no problem at all, he would love to answer all my questions and I could start whenever. So I started by asking, “How old are you this year?” “I was born in 1943, so. . . almost 72 years old.” I then asked him when were his first and most recent times visiting the U.S. He said, “My first visit was at the beginning of 2005. Back then, my son was still in school and hadn’t had children yet. My grandson was born in June, and I was already in China. My granddaughter was born in 2007. I was retired at that time. I had nothing much to do, so I went to help them care for their newborn and do housework.” “Got it! When was your most recent visit then?” “It was. . .” he thought about it for a while and said, “It was October, 2012 and I stayed till March,

2013.” “Okay.” I said. “How is your English level? Do you speak some?” He laughed and said, “Not really. I was a Japanese tutor, so I know a couple of words of a lot of languages. But I can’t really speak English.” “That’s good!” I said. “How’s your grandchildren’s Chinese level then?” “Their Chinese is pretty good!” He said without hesitation. “I’ve seen a lot of American-born-Chinese, most of them can’t speak Chinese well. Some don’t even know the basics. My grandchildren sound just like Chinese!” “Good! That’s impressive!” He then said, “That’s all due to their parents’ effort of speaking Chinese with them. So the kids don’t have problems understanding Chinese. Certainly if you say something that has jargons or slangs in it, they would have difficulty understanding. Other than that, they are good!” “Oh. . . their parents played an important role.” I said. Grandpa He then added, “Yes! The parents speak Chinese at home, and they also watch Chinese TV shows or programs with the children. Plus their grandma and I go visit all the time and the only language we could use to communicate is Chinese.” “Your grandchildren are benefiting from all aspects!” I said. “I’ve been there for 7 or 8 times.” “Did you go with your wife all the time?” I asked further. “No.” Grandpa He answered. “We went together for twice, and that was it.”

“What are the names of your grandchildren?” I then asked. “My grandson is Aaron. He is 9. And my granddaughter’s name is Alison, and she is 7 this year.” “What do you call them?” “I call them. . .” He thought about it for a second and said, “I call them Baobao and Beibei (‘baobei’ is a Chinese words which means ‘sweetheart’). Baobao is my grandson, and beibei is the granddaughter! Sometimes I call them by their English names.” “Cute nicknames!” He laughed after hearing my comment. “We used to

call them more by their nicknames, but they are growing bigger, and would not appreciate it if we keep calling them their nicknames. So we are getting used to calling them their English names.” “Who gave them their names?” “Their dad gave them their Chinese names, and their grandma and their mother came up with the nicknames.” “Where did your son go to college? Was it in the same state he is living in now?” I asked out of curiosity. “They went to college in Texas and they are still there apart from moving to a different city.” “I see.”

I told him the next group of questions would be about his stay in the U.S. and started with the first question, “How was your stay in the U.S. like?” He answered:

It was generally really good. I was doing a lot of housework and had fun with the kids. Their grandma was always in charge of cooking, because she is a super good cook. There was really nothing much to do, just the household chores. Oh right. Sometimes we picked up the kids when they got off school. For a senior, I don't think life in the U.S. is too different from life in China. I hate it that the U.S. doesn't have all the vegetables and good foods we get in China. We try to go to China Town as much as possible to get the ingredients we need. My grandchildren can't eat well in the U.S. without us. All four of them are too busy, so they just get McDonald's or cook the easiest meals. Another thing is that we can't really speak English nor do we know how to drive. So we can't really go anywhere.

“Yeah. That's a common situation for Chinese grandparents with grandchildren in the U.S. are in.” “That's right! A problem not easily solved.” I then asked, “Grandma



Wang told me you have a younger son in China?” “Yes! My younger son is in the same city as us. We all live in the same city and visit each other very often.” “Good! So you have a grandchild in China?” “Yes! The grandchild here also needs us.” I then asked, “Are there conflicts between your two children? Since you have to take care of both sides?” “Not much!” Grandpa He answered immediately. “We don’t want to cause any conflicts, that’s why your Grandma Wang and I have only been to the U.S. together twice. Most of the time we made sure each side had one grandparent. The two sides have similar yet different needs. Our grandchild in China has a lot of homework, so besides cooking, we sometimes help our grandchild with the homework. But our grandchildren in the U.S. have a little bit of homework, so most of the time we just need to make sure they play safely and eat well.” “A lot to do no matter where you go, right?” “Right (laughter)!”

At this point I remembered, when my twin brother and I were in middle school, we would go to our grandparents’ (grandparents from our mom’s side) house for lunch every day. They always wanted to be posted on our grades. Almost every weekend, we would visit our other grandpa and grandma from our dad’s side. The question we were asked the most was if we were studying well. If we were doing well, we would get some pocket money. If we didn’t, the grandparents would sit us down and ask for the reasons. Even if they were not able to help us with a specific math question, all our grandparents were highly involved in our academic performance.

The next question I asked was, “How often do you talk to your grandchildren in the U.S.?” “We basically video chat every day. Of course there are days we can’t. But it has become a habit to try to reach each other on a daily basis. Since there is a time difference, we actually video chat in the early morning to fit their free time, which is at night. Sometimes we would just turn it on while doing other things. That way we can see each other. Sometimes my son talks to us while the kids are taking a shower; other times the kids talk to us while their mom washes dishes.” “That’s an nice idea!” I said. “There is really no need to be formal about vide chatting!” “Exactly!” Grandpa He said. “Sometimes we call or text each other. But I would say we are always in frequently contact.” “Nice! Are the children sometimes the first ones to talk to you?” “Lots of times! They are usually very excited to see us and would talk a lot.” “How do they address you?” “They call me ‘yeye’ (grandpa). They would never forget that and they are willing to address us in the right way.” “Good!” “They are very polite and respectful!” Grandpa He said. “Do they like visiting China?” I asked. “Yes! They love visiting China and are always requesting their parents to arrange a trip to China. They’ve been a few times and thought China was really fun. On the other hand, they see us in the video chatting every day and are always interested in our life in China. They also love their cousin, who is my granddaughter in China.” “Nice! Do they video chat with their cousin?” “They do, and mostly during the weekends. My granddaughter is only three months older than my grandson Aaron, and they get along really well. They sometimes even use a couple of English words because my granddaughter in China is learning English.” “That’s cute! I’m glad to hear they are interacting well!” “That actually reminds me to ask you if you

are trying to teach your grandchildren in the U.S. to be better at Chinese?” “I was! I was teaching them to write. Their speaking is almost perfect, but they can’t write much. I tried to teach them about five characters each day. If I gave them too many, they get bored soon. Just like all kids, they still are the most attracted to games (laughter).” “Are their parents strict with them?” I asked in a related question. “Yes. They are very strict with them. The kids are not allowed to play games until they’ve finished all their homework and assignment, including playing piano, practicing Chinese, etc. Usually they only get to relax during the weekends.” “Do they complain?” I asked. “Not really. They don’t complain to us. But we try to say nice things or buy nice things to make them want to work hard. We sometimes send toys or stickers from China as a reward to our granddaughter for her hard work. That really works on her. The kids’ parents are harsher on them. Whenever they are playing piano, us grandparents are not ‘allowed’ to be around. They are afraid we are too easy on them. They specifically told us not to interfere. We really understand and think it makes sense. The kids need to be under control.” “Right! My last question for you is when are you planning on visiting the U.S. again?” “It has not been decided yet. Maybe all of them will visit China. If they are not coming to China, I will need to go. It depends on them. I can see my grandchildren in May no matter what.” “Hope everything goes well!” “Thank you!” Grandpa He said. I thanked him and ended the interview.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis

One of the primary goals of qualitative research is to give descriptions and interpretations of people's lived experiences. After I finished all my interviews, I transcribed them into eight transcripts. My research consisted of a large database full of stories. I listened and read the Chinese transcripts several times and was trying to discover patterns of meanings. At that stage, I was not doing any translation because I wanted to keep my participants' words and thoughts as original as possible. Those patterns of meanings are reflected on the data by asking generative questions (Locke, 2001). I discovered commonalities among the Chinese grandparents' experiences in the U.S. and identified the commonalities as emergent themes of the study. Over the course of the analysis, I was always making sure that the themes emerged naturally and I was trying to understand my research participants without being judgmental or biased. Throughout the process, I was then able to separate the rich narratives and interpretations presented in the previous chapter into discrete parts and elements (Kvale, 1996, p. 184).

In this study I discovered four emergent themes (listed as quoted in the transcripts):

- Chinese grandparents help maintain language use;
- We are there to care for the children and do not take part in educating them;
- Sacrifices for a closer family bond;

- Having a big Chinese community is very important.

The central themes drawn from the interpretations would reflect implications for understanding the human world. I will illuminate four themes in this chapter. Plus, I will also present the conclusions of my study. I then discuss limitations of this study, and provide implications for future research.

#### **4.1 Chinese Grandparents Help Maintain Language Use**

It is difficult for people to maintain their heritage language while they acculturate to the English-speaking dominant culture (He, Loong, and Ng, 2004, p. 452). The Chinese American children who were involved in this study are second-generation Chinese American children. They have a special intercultural communication experience compared to their parents, who are first-generation Chinese and originally lived in their home country China, and then immigrated to the U.S. to start new lives. The Chinese parents, who have been struggling for years to start their lives in a new country and have finally settled down, still find life challenging. The U.S.-born Chinese children are facing a dilemma. On the one hand they know that their parents can speak English and want to speak English with them because it is easy. On the other hand their grandparents, who come once in a while to the U.S. and to whom they talk through video chatting sessions, speak only Chinese. This dilemma makes the grandchildren change languages and accommodate their speech, as well as make decisions about whether or not to learn Chinese.

All eight grandparents I interviewed mentioned that their child in the U.S. was very busy because of their workload. One of the interviewees happened to mention that the parents sometimes speak English instead of Chinese to their children because they do not have time to explain everything and English is more efficient. As a result, the U.S.-born children's grandparents take the role of maintaining their language use. All eight of my research participants feel that their U.S.-born grandchildren need to speak Chinese better, and they have been not only talking to them in Chinese constantly, but also making all types of efforts to help them. One out of the eight research participants knows how to speak English, but he chose to speak Chinese with his grandchildren. All eight of research participants identified themselves as a tool to implement Chinese speaking among their family in the U.S.

Grandma Sun mentioned that she had been trying to teach her granddaughter how to write Chinese, since she spoke Chinese fairly well. She also said, "When we go back to Shanghai again, I'll put her in a Chinese school to learn how to write. She definitely needs to get better," and "Don't ever go back to China again if you don't even know the language!" Grandpa Fan said he believed the children's behaviors were closely related to how their parents wanted to educate them, and as long as Chinese is the official language at home, the children would get used to speaking it. Grand Su shared his thoughts: "When we were there, they had the reason to learn [Chinese], so they could communicate with us." Grandpa Hu wanted his grandchildren to study harder to be better at speaking Chinese. Grandma Hu, who had the same wishes as Grandpa Hu, also said, "Whenever my grandchildren are in China, I would always try to take them out to get exposed to the

language and culture.” Grandma Wang and Grandpa He shared that their grandchildren are okay at speaking Chinese because they “constantly visit,” and it is important that “the entire family work together and reinforce the language use in daily life.” Grandpa He also mentioned in the interview that although his grandchildren seemed to be unwilling, he was trying all kinds of motivational strategies to get the children to learn how to write Chinese characters. These all represent what the Chinese grandparents do to help maintain the usage of the language.

To the U.S.-born Chinese children, their grandparents, coming all the way from China, are not only relatives from another country, but also representatives of Chinese cultures. Lu and Shi (2007) state that speaking one’s ethnic language is perceived as an indication of willingly identifying oneself with the coordinating ethnic culture (p. 317). The other aspect of why Chinese grandparents in the U.S. help their U.S.-born grandchildren with their Chinese is about hoping the grandchildren remember they are Chinese. Grandma Sun shared in the interviews that she thought that the Shanghai dialect is “our language at home,” and her granddaughter is “still a Shanghai girl.” Grandpa Sun shared with me his insights on this. He said, “Since I grew up in the traditional Chinese society, I bring some of the traditional values and norms here. The kids get influence through daily life.” Grandpa Hu, while in the U.S., was always telling his grandchildren fairy tales about traditional Chinese festivals, helping them get better at Chinese as well as learning the culture. Similar to Grandma Sun who mentioned the importance for the grandchildren to remember their hometowns, Grandma Wang said in our interview, “We’ve been constantly trying to not let her forget about her hometown.” Grandma Hu

also mentioned that her grandchildren needed to study Chinese because “after all China is their country, and Chinese is their language!”

#### **4.2 We Are There to Care for the Children and Do Not Take Part in Educating Them**

Since the seniors are the most daunting figures in traditional Chinese culture, one would think that they play a very important role in deciding how to educate the children in the family. While this is mostly true in China, it does not apply in a Chinese family who had their children in the U.S. The fourth theme I discovered is concerning the roles Chinese grandparents take in educating their American grandchildren. All eight of my research participants said that they go to the U.S mainly to care for their grandchildren’s daily life, not to take part in the education. Seven of them said they never had intense conflicts with parents regarding how to educate the children, or not even to ask much about the children’s grades. Only one of my research participants said she had conflicts with the children’s parents, but she gave in for the reason that she knew too little about the U.S. to argue. Grandpa Fan said he respected his adult child’s way of educating his grandchildren. Grandma Wang and Grandpa Su revealed that they used to be too strict with their son, and now they had changed and thought following a child’s nature was the best way of educating. When asked if he was concerned about his grandchildren’s grades, he said he was not concerned and it was the parents’ job to make sure the children do well in school. He also shared the reason he did not interfere was because he did not



know the American education system. Grandma Hu, Grandma Wang and Grandpa He also gave the similar response.

While all eight Chinese grandparents come to the U.S. mainly to care for the grandchildren, they do feel less needed when they are with their grandchildren in the U.S. compared to when they are with their grandchildren in China. In China, generally, people take care of children by keeping a close eye on them, help them no matter what they do, and tell them not to do things that are considered dangerous. Seven out of eight Chinese grandparents who were interviewed in the study felt that children in the U.S. are very independent, including their grandchildren. Grandma Sun said when her granddaughter Nina was learning how to ride a bicycle and was always trying on her own, she was very worried. "I just couldn't take my eyes off her and always wanted to follow her." At the meantime, she noticed how independent the other American children were and was even worried about them. Grandpa Su was told by his grandson not to help when he was trying to protect him on the sled. Grandma Hu and Grandma Wang also had the same experience. Grandma Wang specifically mentioned that her adult children were more westernized. She argued with her daughter but there were no results.

The independence of the children who were born in the U.S. might be because of the different education system and the entire social setting, which the Chinese grandparents know little about. The independence of the children results in less need of caring. All the grandparents feel it is okay to let the children's parents adopt the American way of educating, which encourages the children to speak up and rely on

themselves rather than forcing them to do things and be obedient. Compared to this, the traditional Chinese way of educating children is to educate them in the spirit of obedience and virtue. Chinese parents find it useful to submit the children to strict discipline. Although new ideas have been imported from the West, meaning the importance of developing the children's independence, imagination, will, self-respect, etc., they are applied by only some Chinese families (Lang, 1946, p. 239).

#### **4.3 Sacrifices for a Closer Family Bond on Both Continents**

Liu and Lo (2009) state in their study that relevant components of Chinese filial culture include joint living arrangements, financial support, emotional bonding, and practical help with everyday activities (p. 1477). All of my eight research participants revealed their hope of a closer family bond, and five out of eight showed they did not want to be in the U.S., but they had to be because they wanted to help the busy parents and also to bond with their grandchildren. Grandma Sun mentioned in the interview that Fairbanks is a "dark and cold place." She is worried that her granddaughter does not get to do a lot outdoor activities with other children, and she feels her granddaughter is lonely, and not being able to go outdoors is one of the reasons. Grandma Sun also said that she was giving her house in Shanghai to her granddaughter in case one day her granddaughter would want to live in China. Grandpa Hu shared that he hoped his family in the U.S. could move to China so they can stay close. He said, "To us, this is a foreign country after all. We cannot speak the language, so we cannot get around and cannot do anything!" Grandma Hu said both she and her husband cannot go grocery shopping and

cannot go to the mall. To them, life in the U.S. is “very inconvenient.” In the interview with Grandma Wang, she revealed that in the U.S., she “cannot talk” and “cannot walk” because she did not know how to drive and how to speak English. These grandparents showed in the conversations that they do not really like living in the U.S.

Five out of eight research participants have grandchildren in both China and the U.S., and the fact that they want to care for their grandchildren on both continents makes their life difficult. Grandma Sun said she wanted to take care of both her daughters’ families, and her daughter in Shanghai sometimes “complains” about her coming to the U.S. Grandpa Su and Grandma Su are constantly visiting their daughter and grandchildren in China, and they live very close to their adult children. Grandma Wang mentioned that one time she left the U.S. for China earlier than the planned because her other son’s wife was having a baby. Later she could not make it to come to the U.S. to witness the birth of her U.S.-born grandchildren because there was not enough time for her to get another visa. This grandmother, whose grandson is 9 years old, and has visited the U.S. for 10 times, said she has been trying to balance her efforts of caring for her grandchildren on both continents. Grandpa He shared that he knows his grandchildren in both China and the U.S. need him. He does not want to cause any conflicts between the two sides, so he and his wife visit U.S. separately, making sure “each side has a grandparent.”

Chinese grandparents feel great achievement by taking care of the younger generations. In her study, Langosch (2012) states that grandparents feel a renewed sense

of purpose for living. They feel that being able to find meaning in the caregiving situation helped to minimize the negative effects and sacrifices they had made (p. 166). In this study, all the Chinese grandparents mentioned that to them, coming to the U.S. is a sacrifice and an achievement at the same time. By saying sacrifices, they meant they were leaving their comfortable life in China to come to a country where they “cannot walk” and “cannot talk”. The same or similar expressions were mentioned in my conversations with Grandma Sun, Grandpa Hu, Grandma Hu, Grandma Wang, and Grandpa He.

The Chinese traditional sense of family bond is shown not only through the fact that these grandparents are constantly traveling between the two continents, but also through the details they happened to have mentioned about their other family members in China. Grandma Sun said she had been taking care of her sick mother for ten years before she passed away. Grandpa Sun also shared that his wife was not in the U.S. with him because she was caring for her 90-year-old mother.

#### **4.4 Having a Big Chinese Community is Very Important**

Chinese people come from a collectivistic society and are accustomed to be surrounded by other people, whether they are families or friends. Even in a foreign country, the Chinese would usually try to get together by attending churches, going to neighborhood parties or joining Chinese associations. Though most of the grandparents find it difficult to live in the U.S. because they cannot drive and cannot speak English, having parties among local Chinese families adds a lot more fun to their lives. Some grandparents have children in smaller cities where there is no strong Chinese community,

and the grandparents are worried that their grandchildren are not going to get the support they could get from a Chinese community. Grandma Sun mentioned in the interview that, “the Chinese community here in Fairbanks is really small. The family has nobody to celebrate the [traditional Chinese] holidays with.” Grandpa He said he had some Chinese neighbors, so his grandchildren were able to associate with the other children. He also mentioned he enjoyed the parties held among the local Chinese families. Grandpa Su was able to talk to many of the Chinese people in the community. He mentioned that a new Chinese friend he made, who was also a grandfather in the same situation, shared with Grandpa Su his story with his grandson. Grandma Wang, who said she used to cook for 50-60 people when she had a Chinese party, expressed that community support meant a lot to a Chinese family.

In summary, from this study one can tell that community support means a lot to a single family. The children get to know other children, and the grandparents get to know other grandparents. The sense of community is also shown by other details in the interviews. Six out of eight research participants asked me many personal questions before we started the interviews. Our relationships were different from the moment I addressed them as “grandma” or “grandpa.” They cared about me and wanted to know about me, and some were even hoping to keep in touch after the interviews. Two of my research participants said I could call and visit them when I return to China, and said they would cook for me. The grandparents believe that a strong community overseas would be very beneficial to Chinese immigrant families. All these show that Chinese have a strong

tendency of building relationships and of staying together. The stronger the community is, the more benefits the children and grandchildren are going to get.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The Chinese grandparents who have grandchildren born in the U.S. live their lives on two continents and play various roles. They live in China but also spend as much time as they can in the U.S. to care for their grandchildren. Because China and the U.S. are countries that feature very different languages, family values and cultures, these grandparents experience a possible disconnect in communication with their U.S.-born grandchildren once they have left the U.S. and returned to China. My original inquiry and purpose was to explore the Chinese grandparents' lives on two continents by discovering their Chinese language use with their U.S.-born grandchildren, by inquiring into the grandparents' involvement in educating their grandchildren, and by unveiling the general cultural differences the grandparents encounter when living in the U.S. The inquiry was kept in mind when designing research questions of this study. After conducting conversational interviews with eight Chinese grandparents, thanks to their shared of their life stories, the research questions were answered by the interpretations and meanings constructed by both the research participants and the researcher.

The research results reinforce current literature. It supports past study results by reflecting the grandparents' efforts in the U.S. in caring for the younger generations and the presence of a great language barrier. However, this study also indicates new ideas and developments. The four major themes that emerged during the thematic analysis show the

experience of the Chinese grandparents providing perspectives for Chinese families in similar intergenerational situations. The Chinese grandparents who visit and care for their U.S.-born grandchildren take the role of maintaining their grandchildren's Chinese language use and claim that they do not take part in educating the U.S.-born grandchildren at all because they know little about the country and its education system. The Chinese grandparents also reveal making sacrifices for a tight family bond, and they think that having a strong Chinese community is necessary when living in the U.S. As mentioned in the first chapter, little research has been done on understanding Chinese grandparents' experiences of interacting with their U.S.-born grandchildren. The four themes and the suggestions given by this research provide more insights on the issue.

First, the more often the Chinese grandparents visit the U.S., the U.S.-born children experience greater improvement in language skills and familiarity in understanding Chinese culture. The study shows a tendency that the U.S.-born children who talk to or live with their Chinese grandparents for greater frequencies and lengths of time are better at speaking Chinese. The grandparents serve both as a reason and a force to their grandchildren to learn Chinese. As it was mentioned in the interviews of the study, the parents of the U.S.-born children are usually too busy to reinforce Chinese usage in their daily lives, thus the role of the grandparents become extremely important. Language use is a habit. The study concludes that the grandparents, no matter in the U.S. or China, are consciously helping their U.S.-born grandchildren form these language habits. It is important for Chinese immigrant families in the U.S. to recognize and try to implement the practice of developing these habits. Another point that was brought

forward by the Chinese grandparents is that the ability to speak Chinese is important to any American-Chinese. It is this heritage language that connects the U.S.-born children with China and Chinese culture. This research suggests Chinese grandparents contribute in connecting their grandchildren with China and Chinese culture when interacting with their U.S.-born grandchildren.

Second, Chinese grandparents share that they do not take part in educating a U.S.-born grandchild at all because they feel they know little about the U.S. and its education system. Although they are revered in China because of their years of life experience, these grandparents with grandchildren born in the U.S. do not play the same role on the Western continent. The majority of the Chinese grandparents who participated in this study have grandchildren in both China and the U.S. Thus, varying degrees of involvement in their grandchildren's education are shown through story told about the interactions between the elder and the young on both continents. The fact that the Chinese grandparents are more involved and comfortable in educating their China-born grandchildren but not the U.S.-born grandchildren suggests that the grandparents do want to play an active role and be a part of their grandchildren's education. Frequent updates on their grandchildren's school life will provide more opportunities in communicating with their adult children about educating their grandchildren.

Third, in accordance with the current literature, this study shows that Chinese grandparents contribute a lot to their families in the U.S. What the study also shows is that they contribute to the family even if they do not enjoy life in the U.S. The family



value of taking care of one another is so important that sacrifices are made to have a closer family bond. Based on this research result, it is important for Chinese immigrant families in the U.S. to understand the grandparents' needs and allow them to feel involved. Some grandparents shared that spending time with their U.S.-born grandchildren in China is really helpful. The U.S.-born children get to know about life in China through this and they grow closer to their grandparents. The communication disconnect some grandparents feel with their U.S.-born grandchildren comes from deficient interaction. If more ways of interacting are encouraged and reinforced, the Chinese grandparents will feel less disconnected.

Fourth, according to the participants in the study, a stronger Chinese community and the support it provides would benefit not only the Chinese families in town, but also the Chinese grandparents who visit from China. Getting the grandparents involved in the Chinese communities in the U.S. will give them people to talk to and activities to do. As suggested by grandparents in the interviews, a community can be formed of families who socialize and gather together to meet often. The grandparents can meet other grandparents in these party-like settings and share experiences about interacting with their U.S.-born grandchildren. Such gatherings or similar activities need to be hosted more often among Chinese immigrant families for the sense of community they provide to overseas Chinese.

In summary, this study discovered that the Chinese grandparents play multiple roles when they visit the U.S. and interact with their U.S.-born grandchildren in various

creative ways due to the language barrier and the cultural differences. If the existing language barrier and discomfort caused by the cultural differences are ignored or neglected, the Chinese grandparents will feel further disconnection in communicating with their grandchildren. But as the four themes and the further suggestions have shown, there are a lot can be done to make the grandparents feel more involved.

Results of this study not only enhance the current understanding of this specific phenomenon of intercultural communication, but also provide new insights on a bigger scale. First, since some Asian countries share many of the similar family values, this study also has implications on the experiences of grandparents who have grandchildren in the U.S. and are from Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. Secondly, the researcher of this study is living in Alaska, where some of the Alaska Native language communities are endangered. The research sheds light on why new generations of Native Alaskans are losing their ability to speak the language of their heritage. With more and more Native Alaskans born in big U.S. cities where English is the dominant language, they have less chance of using their heritage language, similar to the U.S.-born Chinese. Alaska Native grandparents will feel the same disconnect with the younger generations if the language of their heritage is no longer implemented or the cultural differences they feel are ignored. In this manner, the research results and suggestions given by this study can be applied to the diverse intergenerational communities currently present and thriving in the United States.

#### **4.6 Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

Seidman (2006) states that “The narratives we shape of the participants we have interviewed are necessarily limited. Their lives go on; our presentations of them are framed and reified” (p. 129-130). Even the most carefully designed studies have certain limitations.

There were eight interviewees who participated in this study. Because of my limited networks in the United States, all those interviewees’ families are living in one of the three places: Alaska, New Jersey and Texas. Although there are more and more Chinese immigrants in every state of the U.S., there are some states where Chinese communities are more developed. The Chinese communities might be formed because of the establishment of the Chinese associations, the clustering of Chinese families in one neighborhood, socializing in Chinatown, or the gathering in the local Chinese church. The local Chinese families who are willing to participate and socialize would usually benefit from these communities. If I were able to find interviewees whose families are in U.S. states where there are a lot more Chinese and larger Chinatowns than the other states, different stories would have been told and different interpretations would have been shared.

All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese because my interviewees are Chinese grandparents. Although one of the grandparents told me he was able to speak English, the true feelings are best shared when one is using his or her most original and familiar language. I transcribed the interviews and left the transcripts all in Chinese to

prevent myself from unconsciously taking the original meanings out by translating. The actual translating process occurred when I started interpreting and narrating the transcripts. This posed a challenge for my data analysis because with any type of translation, there are meanings lost. Chen, Liu and Smith (2008) point out that researchers are making decisions when translating qualitative data into a different language, and these decisions can directly affect the accuracy of data collected and the validity of the research reported (p. 46). The research of Mangen (1999) also sheds light on this problem by saying it is difficult to work in more than one language, especially in research aiming to examine emotional responses (p. 111). As a researcher, I noticed the problem of translating at the beginning stage of interpreting. Chinese is such a rich language that no matter how great the translation is, there are meanings missing. This is especially true when I interpreted the part where the grandparents talked about how they interacted with their grandchildren. In summary, I did my best interpreting and presenting the meanings presented through the narratives. For the very few parts that could not be accurately translated, I made efforts to paraphrase so they were the closest to the original meanings.

Further research needs to be conducted from different perspectives of this topic. Although I was posing questions to the Chinese grandparents to understand their roles regarding their grandchildren born in the U.S., the roles of the parents were mentioned throughout the interviews for the reasons that they are “bridges” between the younger and older generations. The Chinese parents have children in the U.S. and the majority of the other relatives including their parents in China. They need to adjust their life styles to

balance the different cultures and they are the ones who had their pre-college or pre-grad school lives in China but are building their new lives in the U.S. after they graduated. In my study, the roles of the parents emerged many times. Research designed to understand what efforts the parents make to balance their two lives would add more insights and understandings.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Informed Consent Form

Life on Two Continents: Understanding Different Roles of Chinese Grandparents  
Who Have Grandchildren Born in the U.S.

IRB # \_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved \_\_\_\_\_

You are being asked to take part in a research study exploring the interaction between grandparents and their grandchildren overseas. The goal of this study is to learn how Chinese grandparents who had been in the U.S. visiting their U.S.-born grandchildren still communicate with them after they are back in China. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a grandparent who lives in China and has grandchildren born and raised in the U.S., and because your insights can be valuable to finding out the ways to interact well while balancing two cultures. You are invited to ask any questions you may have now or at any time during your participation.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked a series of 15-20 questions with follow ups for clarification as necessary. The interviews with participants who are in China will be conducted through QQ (features similar functions as Skype) video chatting. The interviews will be recorded in my password-protected computer for later transcribing. I will record the interviews with participants who happen to be in the U.S. For interviews like this, I will be using my digital Flipcam, and will transcribe the verbal

component. These files will be preserved on my password-protected computer only for as long as the study is ongoing. You may withdraw from participation at any time, and you may also ask to stop the recording at any time. If you wish to withdraw from participation after the interview is completed, simply contact myself (Ms. Tianyu Qiao at [tqiao@alaska.edu](mailto:tqiao@alaska.edu))

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to take part in the study you can stop at any time or change your mind and ask to be removed from the study. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to you as a result. If you have questions now, feel free to ask me now. If you have questions later, you may contact me. My e-mail address is [tqiao@alaska.edu](mailto:tqiao@alaska.edu) and my office phone number is 907-474-1876; or my thesis advisor Dr. Peter DeCaro ([padecaro@alaska.edu](mailto:padecaro@alaska.edu) or call 907-474-6799).

Statement of Consent:

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

Signature of Participant & Date

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## Appendix B

### Chinese Informed Consent Form

#### 知情同意书

两个大陆上的生活：了解有美国孙子／孙女的中国祖父母／外祖父母的经历和他们扮演的不同角色

机构审查委员会编号：\_\_\_\_\_ 审查通过日期：\_\_\_\_\_

您被询问是否愿意参与一项关于中国的祖父母／外祖父母和他们在海外的（外）孙子或者（外）孙女交流方式的研究学习。这个学习的目标是了解来看望过出生在美国的（外）孙子或者（外）孙女的中国祖父母／外祖父母在回国后是怎么继续和他们保持沟通的。您被要求参与这项学习，是因为您是一位住在中国的祖父母／外祖父母，您的（外）孙子或者（外）孙女住在美国，并且因为您的见解对研究跨文化交流很有价值。请认真阅读这份材料。在同意参与研究之前，如果您有任何疑问，请随时提问。

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行转录和抄写。在进行研究期间，这些文件会被保存在我上了密码的电脑中。您可以随时退出研究并且可以在采访期间要求我停止录像。如果在采访结束后，您希望可以退出研究，您可以联系我（乔天钰，电子邮件：tqiao@alaska.edu）或者我的导师彼得·德卡罗教授（padercaro@alaska.edu 或者拨打电话 907-474-6799）

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我明白上面所描述的研究程序。我的问题都得到了满意的回答并且同意参与研究。我已被提供这个协议书的附件。

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