INTRODUCTION

Recognition of the importance of culture in understanding parenting has included a keen interest in many Asian countries and societies. However, some clarification of the designation of “Asia” or “Asian” is necessary in light of the vast amount of variation that exists across different cultures and societies within Asia. For the purposes of this chapter, geographically speaking, “Asia” represents countries in the regions of East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea), South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka), and Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), in addition to countries such as the Philippines and Thailand and also other countries or regions in Asia that have rarely been included in studies of parenting (Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, and Indonesia). Depending on one’s sociopolitical perspective, “China” may also be an oversimplification, because a number of countries may or may not be represented in this designation, including the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.), Taiwan, and Hong Kong (although Hong Kong is now part of the P.R.C.). Similarly, Asian countries such as India are comprised of extensive regional, ethnic, linguistic, and religious distinctions. This chapter will reveal some of this diversity, although more attention is paid to East Asians, especially Chinese, due to the greater amount of research conducted with this group, including Chinese immigrants in the United States.

The immigration of Chinese and other Asians to countries such as the United States has helped to create substantial populations of Asians in these receiving countries. For instance, between 1980 and 1988, Asians made up 40% to 47% of the total U.S. immigrants (Min, 1995). However, this proportion had gone down to 27% in 1999 due to the increasing number of Mexican and other Latino immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Also, between 1965 and 1999, the number of Asian Americans soared from 1 million to over 10.9 million, constituting 4% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In the next 20 years their numbers will more than double to over 20 million, the majority of whom will continue to be immigrants and their children. These recent Asian
immigrants comprise distinct, cultural groups by bringing with them their own beliefs, practices, and norms. Thus, the Asian immigrant parents in the United States may be important to examine not only with respect to parents in Asia, but also with respect to parents of European descent in the United States. This chapter will incorporate the parenting research conducted on Asians both in Asia and in the United States. In addition, other countries that have substantial numbers of immigrants from Asia will also be included, although there are only a few studies.

The first of our central themes for Asian parenting, that of “family as center,” the importance of family, and family interdependence captures some points of commonality across Asian societies. However, each society or group has different notions of the family and of the roles, responsibilities, and membership for defining families that also reflect their diversity or uniqueness. A range of indigenous notions or terms for describing the central importance of family is provided across a number of Asian societies. Also, shifts or transformations in these views of the family are recognized that further capture the diversity of Asian parenting. Another salient theme in Asian parenting that has generated some debate has been control and strictness. Some early and comparative research stressed the restrictiveness and harshness of Asian parental control. Other research though has attempted to provide further elaborations or distinctions of the parental control of Asians that provide a more in-depth understanding of its cultural meaning for Asians. Ultimately, cultural differences in the meaning of parental control for Asians are also addressed in studies examining the effects that parental control may have on children’s development and well-being. Finally, the third theme focuses on the societal and parental importance placed on educational achievement. Because a great deal of attention has been given to the school success of Asians in the United States, a number of the studies reviewed in this chapter focus on Asian Americans. In this theme, parental concern over the educational achievement of children is described in a number of ways—through examining parental beliefs regarding children’s development and learning, their educational expectations, and the type of support or involvement that parents provide for their children’s education and schooling.

While the majority of research on Asian parenting is relatively recent, the chapter begins by addressing our topic from a sociohistorical perspective. We trace Confucian and Buddhist views of childhood and their influences on Asian parenting historically and in the modern era, with Japan as an example. Then we also provide some of the classic research on Asian parenting. The three central themes we have identified above are then discussed. These emphases include the centrality of the family and family interdependence, the use of parental control and strictness, and fostering educational achievement in children each have their own major section. Finally, some suggestions for future research are presented followed by our conclusions.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING ASIAN PARENTING

Historical, Religious, and Philosophical Perspectives of Childhood

Many of the historical sources of childrearing can be found in historical perspectives of childhood that encompass the meanings accorded childhood as a distinct period in the life course and perspectives on children’s basic in-born nature and their process of development. Beliefs about childhood have direct implications for childrearing, specifically in shaping how parents regard and treat children in order to foster or protect them from their own basic nature and how they should help children develop and grow. The historical roots of childhood and childrearing, emphasized in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, have often been traced to Confucian sources, particularly Mencius, and Buddhist influences that spread throughout many regions of Asia (Boocock, 1991; Chao, 2000a; Kojima, 1986). Although these sources represent only a few of the many historical perspectives of childrearing in Asia, these examples are some of the more widely recognized accounts provided by researchers and historians.

Throughout most of Asia, Confucian views regarding the nature of the child have been captured in analogies such as “children are like white paper,” indicating their innocence, lack of knowledge, and innate goodness. According to Boocock (1991), the notion of children’s innocence and innate
goodness is also consistent with Buddhism as it developed in Japan. Both Confucian and Buddhist influences suggest that children can only be corrupted by the adult world, not by their own nature. That is, children are regarded as naturally good unless tainted by their environments. Childhood also has been regarded as an important and even revered period in the life course, particularly in Japan (Chen, 1996). Some societies view childhood as an inevitable but not negative state, or simply as a period that must be grown out of. In Japan, however, childhood is seen as having merit or virtue of its own (Chen, 1996). Researchers have even typified Japanese childhood as a cherished and highly romanticized period of life that is continuously recapitulated throughout adulthood in images of leisure, relaxation, and enjoyment, especially in advertisements for travel agencies (Lebra, 1994).

This cherished and special quality of children is captured in folk proverbs or popular sayings such as “There is no treasure that surpasses a child.” This specialness also extends to notions about children being divine or sacred, reflected in the folk proverb, “Until seven, children are with the gods.” Young children were believed to be closer to the spiritual than the human world because of their physical vulnerability or increased chances of mortality. According to Hara and Minagawa (1996, p. 14), children before age 7 were for many centuries believed to “develop not only in the hands of parents, family, and neighbors, but also under the protection of super-natural beings.” Because of their relationship to the spiritual world, very young children were afforded special religious recognition, such as acting as mediators between the spiritual and earthly worlds or walking at the head of religious processions, indicating their closeness to the gods (Boocock, 1991; Hara and Minagawa, 1996). Hara and Minagawa also argue that such traditional beliefs are the foundation for parental indulgence, and even respect and awe for young children before age 7.

There is also some evidence that such notions of children’s pureness or divinity are espoused in regions and societies in Asia that extend beyond East Asia. Minturn and Hitchcock (1963) provide similar descriptions of Rajputs in India. Children are not only considered pure, they are also considered holy in that “God resides in them” (Minturn and Hitchcock, 1963, p. 311). They are considered to be without sin and unable to distinguish between good and evil. Mothers in their study commented that children remain in this state of purity until they begin to eat solid food. Mothers also reiterated the expression that “children are born with their hands shut because they are sent from God fully equipped and do not want anything from the world” (Minturn and Hitchcock, 1963, p. 311).

These views about the importance of childhood and the nature of the child are linked to views about how children develop and parents’ roles in fostering that development. The importance placed on the parental role is evident in “plant cultivation” metaphors espoused in many Japanese writings about childhood (Chen, 1996). In fact, Chen points out that in Japanese, the word for cultivating a person is the same as that for cultivating plants. The development of children is analogous to the cultivation of a tree that first begins with the seedling. As the tree grows, the grower’s care is needed in the trimming of its branches and leaves to enable it to grow in the right direction. However, care must also be taken to let the plant’s own “inner tendencies” unfold before such shaping is initiated. Shaping should not be started too early. The parent is essential in starting the child off in the “correct” direction, by providing the proper education, as the child is ready. Chen points out that the plant metaphor is apparent today in principles involving the education or schooling of children, though plant cultivation images are not explicitly invoked in parenting or by parents.

Childhood in the Modern Era: Change and Continuity in Japan

Japan is a compelling example of an Asian country that has undergone rapid economic growth and demographic transformations and yet retained some of its traditional folk beliefs. Japan, now has the lowest infant mortality rate of any modern society and, during the decade following World War II, the most rapid and unprecedented declines in fertility (Cherlin, 1994). Japanese men and women also marry later than previous generations and even later than couples from some countries in the West (Tsuya, 1994). Also, just as in countries in the West, birth rates for women over 30 have increased dramatically in Japan (Cherlin, 1994). Social shifts in Japan have also been noted in the number of children considered desirable. Between 1945 and 1971, the ideal number was three, whereas in
1973, over 47% of wives considered two children ideal, and 40.7% considered three children ideal. Finally, Hara and Minagawa (1996) argued that contacts and relationships with extended family or relatives have changed in Japan, with over 75% of people over the age of 65 living with one of their children and his or her family in 1971, and less than 40% doing so today.

These changes in Japan have also spurred childrearing views that reflect not only Western influences, but also traditional notions of childhood. Hara and Minagawa (1996) summarized three primary contemporary, social views of children. The first is that children are regarded as important human resources for the future of society. The second is based on humanistic and Western views emphasizing human rights for children. A third view is based on the traditional notion, mentioned above, emphasizing devotion and tolerance toward babies and children. Children are still the focal point of families. Children have also become a national priority in the development of private and federal programs devoted to their well-being.

Despite major demographic changes, Hara and Minagawa (1996) argue that many traditional folk beliefs are still practiced today. Even with government initiatives to conduct research on and eradicate the influence of “superstition,” some folk beliefs have actually increased since World War II. As part of the views of children “being a gift from the gods,” couples still turn to the supernatural when they are expecting a child. In the fifth month of pregnancy, parents visit a shrine or temple to pray for a healthy pregnancy and safe delivery. In the first month after the baby is born, parents again visit the shrine to report the birth of the baby and to thank the gods. Hara and Minagawa argue that these are more than just rituals practiced without belief in their impact on children’s development. They provide additional evidence of the saliency of folk beliefs of childrearing in modern Japan. One popular book on childrearing, *Japanese Ways of Childrearing* (Matsuda, 1964), was written by a famous pediatrician who extolled the virtues of some traditional folk beliefs. Hara and Minagawa believe that this book had such a significant impact because a medical authority advocated and incorporated folk beliefs about childrearing into a modern framework.

The popular Japanese metaphor, “river crossing,” also reflects traditional folk beliefs for childrearing (Chen, 1996). This metaphor broadly reflects the Japanese view of children’s development and the type of assistance parents should provide to help their children “cross the river.” In Western societies, such metaphors often imply that the parent is on the other side of the bridge urging the child to cross. In Japanese society, Chen explains adults provide assistance by being on the *same* side of the bridge as the child and walking them through to the other side, representing the adult world. This assistance suggests a dynamic process of socialization involving the interactive experiences of both parent and child. Japanese parents feel that this assistance necessitates the physical presence of the parent because of the potential risk and particularly the loneliness that is entailed in bridge crossing. According to Chen, Japanese are very concerned about children’s feelings of loneliness and being left alone. Chen believes that the extensive physical closeness of Japanese mothers with their babies reflects parents’ preoccupation with keeping the child from feeling lonely. In particular, the practices of cosleeping and coppingathing are examples of what Chen identifies as another important metaphor involving the “loneliness-prone child.”

Classical studies of Asian parenting incorporated an important integration and demonstration of these historical, religious, and philosophical perspectives. Through much of the early ethnographic studies on parenting provided by anthropologists, research on parenting in different regions of Asia became very prominent.

**CLASSIC RESEARCH IN ASIAN PARENTING**

The study of culture and parenting gained prominence through the work of anthropologists such as Benedict (1934) and Mead (1928). Mead, in particular, placed socialization as one of the central aspects of studying and understanding culture. In the mid-1950s, the study of culture and parenting became more explicitly comparative as Whiting, Child, and Lambert (1966) conducted their research
of childrearing in six cultures, including several Asian groups: the Rajputs of Kthalapur, India (Minturn and Hitchcock, 1963), the Taians of Okinawa, Japan (Maretzki and Maretzki, 1963), and the Ilocanos of Tarong, the Philippines (Nydegger and Nydegger, 1963). Across most of the cultures, responsibility training was an important goal, but cultural beliefs about the development or timing of training varied. For example, Taira adults believe that before age 6, children “do not have sense,” and so parents do not begin to seriously train their children until that age (Minturn and Hitchcock, 1963, p. 480). Similarly, Tarong parents believe children begin to acquire “sense,” or the ability to benefit from instruction, at age 4 and should have it by age 6 (Nydegger and Nydegger, 1963, p. 840). Compared to the Taira and Tarong parents, Rajputs do not have discrete stages for childhood, and children’s transition from infancy to middle childhood is a gradual one from child as observer to participant in village life. Similarly to the other groups, Rajputs believe that children cannot be directly trained until they have learned speech so young children learn best by imitation and observation rather than by direct instruction. Whiting and Edwards (1988) later followed up the Six Culture Project with a volume on Children of Different Worlds, to which they had added several additional sites to the data collected from the original samples. In this later volume, they present evidence of both transcultural similarities in childrearing as well as cultural forces that “modulate” development and particular behaviors in children. This ethnographic work conducted by anthropologists and a handful of psychologists represented the first large-scale, systematic comparison of child training and its influences on children within different cultures.

At about the same time in the 1950s, Hsu (1953) published his comparative work Americans and Chinese. Weaving together ethnographic observations, anecdotes, and literature, Hsu portrayed differences between the two societies, often linking them back to the structure of the family and parenting goals and practices. Decades before the study of independence–interdependence or collectivism–individualism came into popularity, Hsu contrasted the emphasis placed on individualism within American families to that of filial piety and children’s obligations to their parents within Chinese families. Whereas “in America, the child learns to see the world strictly on an individual basis,” “the Chinese child learns to see the world as a network of relationships” (Hsu, 1953, p. 88). Preceding much of the literature on parental control, Hsu noted the great importance placed on parental authority among Chinese parents and linked it to the Confucian philosophies regarding filial piety and respecting parents. He also noted the sociohistorical differences in approaches to schooling across the two cultures, though spending less time than recent scholars have on the role of Chinese and European American parenting on children’s education.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Wolf (1972) collected ethnographic observations that examined the roles of mothers versus fathers within rural Taiwanese families. According to Wolf (1970), Chinese mothers and fathers played very different and complementary roles in child training. She and other scholars emphasized that, traditionally, fathers’ principal duties were to provide economic support, moral instruction, and a suitable inheritance for their sons. Emphasis was not placed on developing warm emotional relationships with children; instead, part of a father’s role was as a disciplinarian who should “not encourage or tolerate emotional indulgence” (Jankowiak, 1992, p. 347). In contrast and complement, the role of a Chinese mother was to provide a “secure and loving environment within the home” (Jankowiak, 1992, p. 347). Mothers, then, often developed very intense, emotional relationships with their children that were not seen between fathers and children.

Other research by Solomon (1971) on Chinese fathers pointed out that fathers were not without a deep, warm sentiment for their children. Although fathers were expected to assume the role of a strict disciplinarian, they nonetheless, felt a compassion and love toward their children. Solomon stressed that fathers’ expressions of their sentiments were constrained by their traditional parenting role. He provides a historical basis for his descriptions of father–child relations in a Qing dynasty quote that explained that “a father loved his child with all his heart, but he would not express it” (1971, p. 60). Solomon also argued that Chinese mothers and fathers provided important complementary roles for their children to develop into responsible and ethical individuals.
During roughly the same period, other American scholars were pioneering work with other Asian societies. Lynch (1984), an anthropologist and sociologist, was developing his research on cultural values within Philippine society. Although he was not explicitly interested in parenting or socialization, his early writings on smooth interpersonal relations (SIR) noted the emphasis on interdependence among Filipinos and its manifestation in culturally indigenous concepts such as pakikisama, hiya, and utang na loob for parenting (described below). Anthropologist Seymour (1999) similarly studied the importance placed on interdependence and family obligations among mothers within rural and urban families in Bhubaneswar, India. Both bodies of work are evident in the scholarship on family interdependence across diverse Asian cultures discussed next.

INTERDEPENDENCE IN ASIAN FAMILIES

Perhaps the most often cited characteristic of Asian parenting is the strong emphasis on interdependence among family members. Typically, researchers contrast Asian and American emphases on interdependence with European and American cultures. Interdependent construals of the self stress persons in relation to others within harmonious relationships, whereas independent construals stress individualism and persons as separate or unique from others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In Asian parenting, the strong emphasis on interdependence has “important implications for what is responded to, emphasized, and sanctioned in the socialization process and for the character of social relations” (Greenfield, 1994, p. 4).

Interdependence orientations depend on the reference group, and within Asian cultures, children are socialized to view the family as the focal reference group for interdependence. The family is so prominent in Asian cultures that some scholars have asserted that “the family is considered the prototype for all relationships,” including educational, political, economic, and religious ones (Ho, 1996; Javillonar, 1979; Kim and Choi, 1994). Similarly, Rhee, Uleman, and Lee (1996) have found that delineating kin versus nonkin reference groups is important for contrasting cultures along the related concepts of collectivism and individualism. Collectivistic cultures emphasize interdependent relationships and prioritizing of the in-group’s goals over personal ones. Individualistic cultures, in contrast, emphasize independence and prioritizing personal goals over those of the in-group. Their findings indicated that Koreans were more collectivistic (interdependently oriented) and less individualistic (independently oriented) than were European Americans in relation to their families. In relation to nonkin or general others, Koreans either did not differ from European Americans or were actually less collectivistic and more individualistic. These findings generally were obtained across several established measures of collectivism and individualism, including Triandis’s (1991) Self-Behaviors, Attitudes Scales, and Parent’s Behavior Scale and Hui’s (1988) Individualism–Collectivism (INDCOL) Scale.

Asian parenting beliefs are shaped by a cultural emphasis on interdependence among family members. Chao’s (1995) comparisons of childrearing beliefs among immigrant Chinese and European American mothers provided a contrast between parenting for interdependent versus independent goals. Both groups of mothers stressed the importance of loving the child. However, Chinese mothers emphasized the importance of love for fostering a close, enduring parent–child relationship, whereas European American mothers emphasized the importance of love for fostering the child’s self-esteem. Both groups of mothers stressed the same quality, but Chinese mothers were motivated toward relational goals and European American mothers were motivated toward individual goals. Moreover the Chinese mothers’ interdependence goals were focused principally on harmonious relationships within the family.

Even with infants and toddlers, Asian and American parents are oriented toward interdependence. For example, Japanese mothers are more likely to engage in social interactions, emphasizing physical and verbal interpersonal exchanges with their infants than are European American mothers (Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, and Ogino, 1990). In addition, mothers
in Japan and Japanese mothers in the United States actually engage in more social than didactic interactions, the latter of which involves encouraging attention toward objects, properties, or events, rather than people (Bornstein et al., 1992; Bornstein and Cote, 2000; Cote and Bornstein, 2000). In another study of Japanese mothers’ verbal interactions with their 2-year-old children, Clancy (1986) found that these mothers strongly engaged in what she labeled “empathy training.” Such training was achieved by these mothers through (1) directing their children’s attention to fulfilling the wishes of others, (2) expressing their own feelings to their children in the hopes that their children will feel the same, and (3) fostering the ability to anticipate the needs of others by instructing or telling children what others are thinking and feeling. Clancy also points out, in another study by Matsumori (1981) of interactions with 3- to 6-year-old children, that Japanese mothers often used directives that appealed to social norms, particularly those reflecting the intimacy of the mother–child relationship.

Scholars have often noted this emphasis on family interdependence within Asian cultures, but they have rarely examined the sociocultural roots of interdependence for different Asian groups. Below, we contrast some of these sociocultural roots among diverse Asian groups and the insights they lend for understanding different meanings or manifestations of family interdependence.

Sociocultural Roots of Family Interdependence

Very little attention has been directed at understanding the underlying cultural principles for defining family interdependence across different Asian cultures. Where does family interdependence arise from in different Asian cultures? How do the sociocultural roots of interdependence shape parenting within each culture? In Confucian-based societies in East Asia and parts of Southeast Asia, filial piety has been identified as a set of unifying principles underlying parenting and specifically, notions of family interdependence. In countries such as India or the Philippines, such sociocultural roots may be more difficult to define. This may be due, in part, to greater difficulties in identifying unified cultural principles in these countries that have vast regional or island differences and that have been influenced by extensive colonization.

**East Asians and Vietnamese.** Over several centuries, Confucian philosophy regarding filial piety has shaped parenting within China and its neighboring societies, particularly Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Ho, 1994; Sung, 1995; Zhou and Bankston, 1998). Ho (1996, p. 155) has written extensively about filial piety and describes it as “a guiding principle governing general Chinese patterns of socialization, as well as specific rules of intergenerational conduct.” Filial piety traditionally entails a rigid system of age veneration and patriarchy. Parents and elders wield greater authority and should be treated with respect and obedience, and children often continue to seek their parents’ advice and guidance throughout their adulthood. Respecting and honoring elders extends beyond those who are living to those who are already dead, in the form of ancestor worship, and to those who are not yet born, in the continuation of the family line. In this patriarchal system, fathers also wield greater decision-making power than do mothers. In caregiving, fathers play a lesser role during infancy and increasingly assume the role of disciplinarian as the child matures (Ho and Kang, 1984). Traditionally, sons are reared to be the caregivers of their elder parents, whereas daughters are reared “for someone else’s family” (Wolf, 1970). Among contemporary families, however, Jankowiak (1992) has found that Chinese parents in the P. R. C. maintain extensive contact with their daughters, even perhaps more than with their sons. Despite a similar patriarchal structure, Zhou (1998) suggests that Vietnamese mothers possess a larger share of power than that found in many East Asian families by managing the family finances and playing the role of noi-tuong, or “home minister.”

Within East Asian and Vietnamese families, filial piety strongly influences parenting around family interdependence, specifically in how parents admonish and teach children to behave or orient themselves toward their parents and even ancestors. Ho’s and Lee’s (1974) and Sung’s (1995) measures of filial piety identify a number of prescripts for children’s filial behavior. These include treating parents with great respect, being obedient, caring for parents materially and emotionally,
providing for family continuity, performing ancestral worship duties, bringing honor and glory to the family, making sacrifices for the family, and seeking parental advice and guidance. These precepts stress particular filial behaviors as well as ways children should regard their parents more generally. Simply caring for parents’ material needs is not sufficient. Children should have strong, positive regard, respect, and warmth for them (Cheung, Lee, and Chan, 1994; Sung, 1995). Filial duties not only extend to one’s parents, but also to one’s overall family in terms of respecting and honoring the family and the family name. Thus, filial piety emphasizes family interdependence in that children’s actions do not simply have ramifications for themselves. Instead, their actions can potentially bring honor and pride or, conversely, shame and loss of face to the entire family (Cheung et al., 1994).

**Asian Indians.** In contrast to the larger volume of research on filial piety among East Asians, less work has examined parenting among South Asians. Similar to East Asian and Vietnamese families, fathers in India are traditionally the heads of the household within a patriarchal system (Ranganath and Ranganath, 1997). Mothers spend the most time caring for children, but fathers’ relationships with their children are marked by greater physical distance and high levels of deference. Similar to research on Confucian-based societies, parenting work on Indian families indicates that family interdependence is of utmost importance, but this work does not extensively explicate the social, cultural, or historical roots that have shaped this emphasis on family interdependence. For example, Seymour’s (1999, p. 71) ethnographic work on families in India (in Bhubaneswar) found that the “principal value ... children must learn is interdependence—the understanding that they are one of many, are not unique individuals.” This early socialization toward interdependence has similar elements to that of filial piety, stressing obedience, sacrifice, harmony, and identification with the family (Ranganath and Ranganath, 1997).

Gupta (1979) indicated that the emphasis on family interdependence throughout India may be guided by the main text of Hindu law, *Mitakshara*, which specifies common ownership of property among a joint household, consisting of brothers and their respective spouses and children and also their elderly parents. Seymour’s (1999) ethnographic analysis describes how joint households in India might bring family interdependence to the forefront of parenting. A large proportion of adults’ verbal interactions with infants and young children is spent teaching them the numerous terms for nuclear and joint household members, including parents, older versus younger sisters and brothers, and relatives on their father’s versus mother’s side of the family. Children, too, are often addressed by their kinship, gender, and birth order rather than by their personal names, which might place undue emphasis on their individuality.

**Filipinos.** In contrast to families from East Asia, Vietnam, and parts of India, Filipino culture does not as rigidly emphasize patriarchal authority and age stratification. Children take on their fathers’ surnames, but lineage is traced through both parents (Yu and Liu, 1980). Husbands and wives share financial and family decision making (Javillonar, 1979). This is consistent with a Filipino creationist legend that both man and woman emerged simultaneously from a large bamboo tube (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995).

Although unifying cultural principles are often difficult to determine for Filipinos, researchers have found that family interdependence is important. When asked what it means to them to be Filipino, Filipino youths in the United States often respond in ways that centered on the family. They cite the importance of spending time with family, emphasizing the needs and well-being of the family, and providing emotional and instrumental support for family members. As with families from India, however, the cultural or historical roots for this emphasis on family interdependence in Filipino families are less clear. Lynch (1981) offered one interpretation when he related family support and cooperation to the more general cultural value of smooth interpersonal relationships. SIR specifies that the interests or desires of individuals should be sacrificed for the good of others, especially the family. Family relationships should be guided by parental authority, sacrifice, and obligation, and
family members should not bring shame or *hiya* to the entire family (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995; Ranganath and Ranganath, 1997). SIR also includes *pakikisama*, which means going along with others to maintain harmony, even if it contradicts personal desires or needs (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995).

Although SIR is a culturally specific value for Filipinos and filial piety for East Asians, there are similarities in the parental expectations of family interdependence within these cultures. Structurally, age veneration and patriarchy might be more salient among East Asian, Vietnamese, and Indian families than in Filipino families, but Filipino parents still have strong expectations for parental authority and children’s obligations to their families. For example, adolescents’ self-reports show that both East Asians and Filipinos place greater importance on parental authority and children’s family obligations than do European Americans (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam, 1999). This section has contrasted some of the sociocultural roots of family interdependence across different Asian societies; the next section examines the similarities in how interdependence is structured in Asian families.

Role Relationships and Reciprocity

Despite differences in the sociocultural roots of family interdependence across Asian societies, commonalities in parenting can be found in the particular roles through which authority and responsibility are conferred among family members. Family members fulfill different roles within an overall family system of reciprocity, defined by caring and mutual obligation. Parents and other elders hold considerable authority and responsibility, and are to be treated with great respect by their children. For example, Chinese mothers hold the primary responsibility for their children’s early training and are expected to provide immense devotion and sacrifice for this training (Chao, 1994; Wu and Tsong, 1985). Children, in turn, are expected to fulfill obligations and responsibilities to their families. Similarly, Filipino families are guided by the concept of *utang na loob*, which translates literally as “internal debt” (Almirol, 1982). Just as children can expect to receive support and assistance from other family members, they are also expected to fulfill responsibilities to the family.

**Parental authority, respect, and caring.** Family roles in most Asian societies are structured largely by age (Javillonar, 1979; Yee, Huang, and Lew, 1998). Parents as well as other elders (i.e., grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, and cousins) wield greater authority than do younger family members (Javillonar, 1979). They are expected to be highly involved, responsible for decision making, and caring for children throughout their lives. Parents should provide advice and guidance even after the child becomes an adult and moves out of the household (Yu and Liu, 1980). Children, in turn, are expected to consult with parents and other family members on important decisions. For example, Gibson’s ethnography of Punjabi Sikhs (1988) noted that even adult men consult with their parents and siblings before making decisions on issues ranging from mate selection to business transactions.

Cross-cultural research often finds that Asian American parents place greater importance on parental authority than do European American parents (see section below on parental control), but there are different interpretations as to the expression or extent of parental authority, particularly in Chinese families. Ho (1996, p. 161) argued that filial piety is associated with authoritarian moralism, defined as “overcontrol, overprotection, and harshness; placement of emphasis on proper behavior; and neglect, even inhibition of the expressing of opinions, of independence, and of self-mastery.” Other research, however, seems to indicate that contemporary Asian parents, or at least mothers, do not appear to endorse absolute parental authority or control. In qualitative interviews and focus groups, immigrant Chinese mothers reported that they prefer to guide their children rather than impose absolute control (Chao, 1995; Gorman, 1998). They often have particular expectations and desires for their children’s behavior, but they also explain the reasoning behind their requests and
expectations and allow their children to “make up their own minds” (Gorman, 1998, p. 78). Children are thus encouraged to make their own decisions, but to do so interdependently by taking the welfare and wishes of family members into account (Chao, 1995). These findings, however, are limited to Chinese mothers, and Chinese fathers’ expectations of parental authority or control rarely have been assessed in similar qualitative ways. Given the traditional role of fathers as disciplinarians who are more emotionally distant, it is possible that more absolute forms of parental authority or control may be more appropriate for describing fathering.

Interpretations of Asian parenting emphasizing the harsh, stifling nature of parental authority also may reflect independence-oriented cultural frameworks. In contrast, Asian cultural frameworks that emphasize interdependence suggest that parental authority reflects parents’ caring for their children within a highly interdependent family system. These distinct cultural frameworks for parenting goals are reflected in Chao’s (1995) findings that both immigrant Chinese and European American mothers emphasized loving the child as their first priority. However, Chinese mothers emphasized the importance of love for fostering close, enduring parent–child relationships, whereas European American mothers emphasized the importance of love for fostering children’s self-esteem or positive feelings about themselves as individuals. Both groups of mothers stressed the same value, but Chinese mothers were motivated toward relational goals, and European American mothers were motivated toward individual goals.

Based on both survey data and qualitative interviews, East Asians report that love and affection are among the most important aspects of filial piety and childrearing (Chao, 1995; Sung, 1995). Indeed, Chao’s immigrant Chinese mothers asserted that parental love and sacrifice were critical for developing loving and harmonious family relationships. As with parental authority, parental respect may be best understood in terms of the emotional qualities defining family relationships. In a factor analysis of filial piety items, Sung (1995) found that respect loads on the same factor with items such as “family harmony” and “love and affection,” reflecting the emotional aspects of filial piety rather than behavioral aspects. Sung (1995, p. 245) described parental respect within East Asian cultures as “deference, courtesy, esteem, and earnest and sincere consideration,” such that respect involves an emotional component of fostering harmonious and loving relationships.

*Children’s obligations to their parents and families.* Similar to the greater endorsement of parental authority among Asian and Asian American parents, studies find that they also have stronger expectations for their children’s family obligations than do European American parents (Fuligni, Tseng, and Chan, 1999; Phinney, Ong, and Madden, 2000). Throughout childhood and adulthood, Asian children are socialized to believe they should respect and follow the guidance of their parents as well as fulfill a range of financial, instrumental, and caregiving obligations to their families. Although the specific obligations and their relative importance vary somewhat across the child’s developmental stage, gender, and socioeconomic status, the common, underlying theme is the emphasis on reciprocity in role relationships and the importance of “repaying” parents for their sacrifices and caring. In a study of Filipino Cebuano families, a woman described her family’s reciprocal financial obligations in the following way (Yu and Liu, 1980, pp. 213–214):

My father lives on what my brother Manuel [can afford to] give him. Every fifteenth of the month, when Manuel receives his share of the fishing earnings, my father gets a certain amount. The other [siblings], Manang Auring, Opring, and Proceso, also contribute a little amount of money to support my old father. He supported us by fishing. Now it is our turn to support him. We would feel ashamed if we as children abandon him. Especially those of us who live near him have an obligation to support him.

*Developmental stage.* Few systematic studies have examined longitudinally parents’ changing expectations of their children’s obligations (Jose, Huntsinger, Huntsinger, and Liaw, 2000). There are some suggestions, however, that parents’ expectations for their children’s responsibilities may increase at about 5 to 6 years of age (Ho, 1986). Seymour’s (1988) work on responsibility
among families from Bhubaneswar, India, suggested that children begin to take on chores at about 3 to 5 years of age, but the dramatic increase in chores does not begin until age 6. Similarly, Wolf (1985) and Suzuki (1988) found that Chinese mothers’ expectancies for when children should begin to take care of themselves and perform chores was also at about age 5 to 6.

During childhood and adolescence, children are expected to assist the family in day-to-day chores as well as strive toward long-term goals of economic and social betterment, usually through educational and occupational achievements (Santos, 1997). Parental expectations for their children’s obligations to the family continue well into children’s adulthood. Yu and Liu (1980) also reported that it is not uncommon for Filipino Cebu parents to visit their children on payday to collect money to support themselves. In addition to financial support, children who are not married are expected to live with or near their parents to maintain family closeness and support (Feldman, Mont-Reyna, and Rosenthal, 1992; Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam, 1999). In Japan, for example, almost 80% of unmarried young adults live with their parents (Kinoshita and Keifer, 1992, in Silver, 1998). Similarly, Filipinos in Almirol’s (1982, p. 302) study reported that it was “good” and “practical” to live with their parents even if they could afford to live on their own.

**Gender and socioeconomic differences: Obligation attitudes and behaviors.** Although gender and socioeconomic comparisons of children’s obligations to their families have been assessed in somewhat different ways, most studies confirm that there are no gender differences, and in some studies, no socioeconomic differences. Ho (1993) is one exception. Ho’s (1993) Filial Piety Scale (FPS) contains wide-ranging beliefs about filial piety, but the vast majority of the items in the scale pertain to expectations of filial obligations by adult respondents. He found among Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan that women endorsed filial piety more than did men, and those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds endorsed filial piety more than did those with higher socioeconomic backgrounds. However, using the FPS, Zhang and Bond (1998) did not find gender differences after accounting for various personality constructs. Studies of late adolescents and young adults in the United States also did not find gender differences among Asian Americans on the FPS (Lin, 1999).

Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) and Phinney et al., (2000) have developed measures of “family obligation” that specifically assess expectations for children to assist and respect their parents, and support or live near them in their old age. Fuligni and colleagues did not find gender or socioeconomic differences on three separate measures of attitudes of family obligation (i.e., current assistance, respect for family, and future support). Phinney, Ong, and Madden also did not find gender differences on their measure of family obligation attitudes.

Although gender differences in attitudes regarding children’s obligations are not consistently found, it is nevertheless possible that gender differences do exist in the extent to which girls and boys carry out or fulfill their obligations. Indeed, Seymour’s research on obligation behavior or practices suggests that parents rely more heavily on girls than boys to fulfill family obligations, at least within the home. Her work on responsibility among families in Bhubaneswar, India (1983), found that girls performed at least twice as many chores as did boys, with the gender difference being the greatest in low socioeconomic households. She argued that mothers, particularly those with few financial means who work outside the home, relied more heavily on their daughters than sons to fulfill the responsibilities that they were unable to do themselves. Similarly, Fuligni and his colleagues (1999) found that Chinese American girls spent more time each day fulfilling their obligations than did boys, but girls did not differ from boys in the number of different behaviors that they performed. These gender differences in family obligations are confined to responsibilities within the home. Parents may have different expectations for their sons’ and daughters’ obligation behaviors outside the home, such as in educational and occupational endeavors that would bring support or honor to their families.

Seymour also finds that children’s obligation behaviors are heavily influenced by socioeconomic status and, more specifically, mothers’ employment. As mentioned above, Seymour’s (1988) study of families from Bhubaneswar, India, found that mothers with lower socioeconomic status were more
likely to work outside the home. These mothers relied quite heavily on their children to perform the chores and childcare duties that would otherwise have fallen to the mothers. In contrast, children in higher socioeconomic households performed fewer chores but were more likely to attend school and fulfill their family obligations by concentrating on schoolwork. Many lower status children were unable to attend school because their labor was needed at home.

Cases of Change and Continuity

Given the rapid changes in the last century, increasing interest has been paid to examining change and continuity in the family interdependence of Asians in the diaspora. Two aspects of change include how urbanization in Asian countries and how migration to and settlement in Western Hemisphere countries have influenced parenting by altering family structure and children’s obligation behaviors.

**Urbanization.** One area of concern in Asian countries is how urbanization and social change are affecting beliefs that undergird family interdependence. In Ho and Kang’s (1984) study of intergenerational changes in Hong Kong, few differences between mother and grandmother pairs in childrearing attitudes and practices emerged, but there were more consistent, substantial differences between father and grandfather pairs. Fathers placed less emphasis on filial piety and were more involved in infant caregiving than were their own fathers.

Seymour’s (1988, 1999) ethnographic studies of childrearing in India examined how urbanization can bring about transitions in parenting by altering family structure. In her research in Bhubaneswar, India, she contrasted an older, more rural section called Old Town and a newer, more urban section called New Capital. New Capital families appeared to be living in smaller, more nuclear households that had arisen as families moved to this new area to take advantage of occupational opportunities. Despite this change in family structure, however, Seymour found there was also continuity such that families were still ideologically, if not always structurally, joint. For example, several New Capital households had extended family members living with them, but were not entire joint households. These households included a few nieces or nephews because they wanted to attend the better schools in Bhubaneswar, or an uncle because he wanted to be closer to the doctors in this urban area. Because of shifts away from joint households, the caregiving of children by a myriad of elders had also changed. In Old Town, childcare was provided principally by grandmothers, aunts, and older sisters over one third of the time, and only about one tenth of the time in New Capital. In the smaller more nuclear households of New Capital, grandmothers were still involved in caregiving, but the role of older sisters and aunts had diminished. Instead, New Capital mothers and to some extent fathers took on a larger role in caregiving than did their counterparts in Old Town.

**Immigration and settlement: Intergenerational differences.** Changes among Asian immigrants in Western Hemisphere countries are evident in intergenerational differences between parents and adolescents. A few studies and much anecdotal evidence of Asian immigrants in the United States suggest that parents and adolescents often disagree about their expectations regarding family obligation. Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) and Phinney et al. (2000) confirm these parent–adolescent differences: Parents placed greater importance on family obligation than did their children, particularly in regard to treating parents with respect. These findings may not be surprising given the greater emphasis placed on independence and egalitarianism among many families in the United States.

Some clarification is needed as to whether these differences are due to acculturation challenges faced by immigrant families (i.e., the more accelerated acculturation of adolescents compared to their parents) or to normative disagreements between all parents and adolescents. There is some evidence of normative disagreement: Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) and Phinney and her colleagues (2000)
found parent–adolescent differences in beliefs about family obligation among European American families, and not just among Asian immigrant families. In addition to normative disagreements, Phinney and her colleagues also found evidence of acculturation effects. Among immigrant families, there was greater disagreement among those with U.S.-born adolescents than those with foreign-born adolescents. That is, immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children disagree to a larger degree than do immigrant parents and immigrant children. Future research needs to examine the acculturation of family obligation expectations and practices by examining changes in expectations over time. As foreign- and U.S.-born adolescents become parents themselves, their expectations for their children’s family obligations might shift to more mainstream views of the family in the United States.

Settlement into a new society can also alter the traditional roles between parents and children, particularly in caring for elderly immigrant parents (see Yee et al., 1998). Kim, Kim, and Hurh (1991), for example, reviewed how socioeconomic conditions for Korean immigrants in the United States strain traditional filial piety precepts of caring for and respecting elderly parents. In some cases, elderly immigrant parents lose their social status as they become reliant on their children and grandchildren to negotiate the new host society. They often are not accorded the traditional levels of authority and respect, and their children may no longer seek their guidance in important family decisions. Instead, some elderly parents feel “neglected, slighted, and humiliated in their children’s home” (Kim, Kim, and Hurh, 1991, p. 239).

The socioeconomic challenges of settling into a new society can also affect the ability of immigrants to fulfill their filial duties to their elderly parents. Kauh (1997), for example, found that 40% of Korean adults in the United States felt that they couldn’t carry out their filial obligations because of time constraints. Many Korean immigrants report declines in occupational status from pre- to postmigration (Kim and Kim, 1998). In the United States, they often experience underemployment such that their occupations in the United States are not commensurate with their education. Barringer and Cho (1989) reported that this downward occupational mobility occurs initially and generally improves over time in the United States. These socioeconomic challenges may initially be too great to allow for continuity in filial obligations to elderly parents. Future research will need to assess whether obligations to elderly parents rebound along with an upswing in mobility over time in the United States or whether obligations continue to decline due to acculturation to Western independence orientations.

Change and continuity in Asian families and their emphasis on interdependence are also noted in the research on parental control and authority. Early research on the parental control of Asians has suggested almost absolute indulgence of very young children, with more harsh strictness applied when children reached school age. Similarly, some comparative research suggests strong restrictiveness in Asian parenting. However, other recent research suggests that such descriptions of Asian parenting may be somewhat limited.

**PARENTAL CONTROL IN ASIAN FAMILIES**

One of the more prominent and controversial aspects of Asian parenting has been concern over their strictness or what some have labeled as “excessive” control. A Chinese researcher, Ho (1986), has in fact described the parental control of Chinese as harsh strictness due to their primary concerns over children’s “impulse control.” Although many comparative studies (across societies or across ethnic-immigrant groups within societies) have also characterized the parenting of Asians as “restrictive” or “domineering,” other research relies on indigenous concepts of Asian parenting. This research makes important distinctions in the control of Asian parents that raise questions about whether the labels of “restrictive” or “domineering” are entirely accurate. This research provides support for cultural arguments that the meaning of control may differ for Asian and Asian American parents compared to European and European American parents. Support for the different meanings of control can also be found in research examining the effects of parenting on child outcomes.
Early Research on Parental Control

In his review of Chinese parenting, Ho (1986) first described the Chinese parental concern over what he, as a clinical psychologist, referred to as “impulse control.” Interestingly, although Ho never explicitly defined what he meant by impulse control, he did describe how Chinese parents are stricter with their children when they reach school age compared to when they are infants. Among Chinese, childrearing of infants and toddlers consists of immediate gratification of their needs and a great deal of indulgence with almost no demands or expectations. A fairly abrupt shift, however, toward greater harshness or strictness begins when the child reaches the age of 6, or “the age of understanding.” Before then, children are not yet considered capable of understanding things, so parents do not hold them responsible for their actions or behaviors. This parental indulgence of young children has also been reported for parents in Japan (Lanham and Gerrick, 1996), Korea (Kim, Kim, and Rue, 1997), all of Southeast Asia (including Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, Morrow, 1989), and India (Joshi, and MacLean, 1997; Kakar, 1978). In fact, researchers have argued that Japanese parents are less authoritarian, more lenient, and more permissive of young children’s exploratory behaviors than American mothers (Conroy, Hess, Azuma, and Kashiwagi, 1980; Lanham and Gerrick, 1996).

Some researchers clarify though that these depictions of total indulgence of young children are not completely accurate among contemporary Asian parents (Ho and Kang, 1984; Seymour, 1999; Wu, 1996). Ho and Kang (1984) and Wu (1996) have found that more recent generations of Chinese parents believe that children are capable of understanding before the traditional distinction of age 6. Ho and Kang attribute this change to increases in education and a concomitant awareness of children’s early development and abilities. Wu has argued, in response to concerns among officials in People’s Republic of China over “spoil” of single or only-children, that parents are actually demanding even more of children at younger ages than parents of previous generations. Likewise, in her ethnographic study of families from Bhubaneswar, India, Seymour (1999) argued that indulgence is not the norm. Children are taught very early that their needs do not always come first and that they must submit to the authority of others in order to foster family coherence and harmony.

According to Ho (1986, 1996), parental control of children’s impulses around sex and aggression are especially prominent among Chinese. Ho pointed out that regardless of the traditional leniency given to children before age 6, Chinese parents often begin disciplining children as early as 2½ years of age around any displays of aggression or sexual interest. Chinese concerns over aggression are based on their beliefs that quarreling among children would lead to parents being drawn into such conflicts, thereby disrupting family relations and harmony (Wolf, 1970).

This control of children’s aggression is not found, however, among Japanese parents. Although Japanese parents also strongly disapprove of aggression among children, they believe that expression of aggression is a natural developmental challenge that young children must experience in order to learn how to handle their emotions and resolve conflicts with others (Osterweil and Nagano-Nakamura, 1992; Tobin, Wu, and Davidson, 1987). These beliefs are very clearly demonstrated in studies of Japanese preschools. Japanese parents and teachers tend to take a very hands-off approach to children’s conflicts, even those that involve physical aggression, because they believe that children need to experience and resolve these conflicts on their own (Lanham and Gerrick, 1996; Lewis, 1988; Tobin et al., 1987). In contrast to Chinese parents’ more authority-driven approach to aggression, Japanese teachers and parents de-emphasize their authority role and appeal more to the social or interpersonal consequences of the child’s actions. Although such de-emphasis of parental authority may be apparent with Japanese socialization around aggression, Japanese parents will rely on their authority for socialization around what Clancy (1986) has referred to as “empathy training.” Clancy (1986) has found in verbal interactions of Japanese mothers, that even with their 2-year-old children, mothers will often use forceful directives such as statements of obligation and prohibition, instructions, as well as indirect imperatives such as, posing questions to children.
Comparative Research on Parental Control

Other research involving cross-societal or cross-ethnic comparisons with European Americans and Australians has found that Asians and also Asian Americans are more restrictive in their parenting. Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States are higher on restrictive control and hostility, and lower on encouragement of autonomy than parents of European descent in the United States and Australia (Chiu, 1987; Feldman and Rosenthal, 1990; Feldman and Rosenthal, 1991; Fuligni, 1998; Kelley and Tseng, 1992; Kriger and Kros, 1972; Law, 1973; Lin and Fu, 1990; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1991; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992; Stewart, Bond, Deeds, and Chung, 1999). The greater control among Asian parents may be specific to definitions of control as “restrictive.”

However, based on observational data of parent–child interactions during a counting game, Jose et al. (2000) have also found that both immigrant Chinese in the U.S. and Taiwanese parents were more directive than European American parents, but that they were equally warm. Using other types of control (i.e., Moos’ Family Environment Scales of rule setting and order keeping and a subscale of parental decision making), Chiu, Feldman, and Rosenthal (1992) found that Hong Kong Chinese were lower on all the scales than European Americans and Australians, and first- and second-generation Chinese immigrants in the United States and Australia.

Studies show that other Asian groups also tend to demonstrate higher levels of restrictive control than groups of European descent. Japanese parents were more controlling and likely to report scolding or speaking angrily toward their children than European American and German parents (Trommsdorff, 1985; Winata and Power, 1989). Vietnamese parents in Australia were also more controlling, intrusive, and less encouraging of autonomy than Australians of European descent (Herz and Gullone, 1999). Compared to their European-descent counterparts in the U.S. and Australia, Chinese Americans, Hong Kong Chinese, and Asian Americans overall were also higher on the authoritarian parenting style, which involved high parental control (Chao, 1994; Chao, 2000b; Chao, 2001; Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts, and Fraleigh, 1987; Herz and Gullone, 1999, Leung, Lau, and Lam, 1998; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling, 1992).

Distinctions in Parental Control

Whereas much of the literature on the parental control of Asians and Asian Americans primarily involved cross-societal or cross-ethnic comparisons, other studies have provided examinations within specific Asian groups, focusing on differences (1) between fathers and mothers, (2) between sons and daughters, and (3) across social class or socioeconomic status. Another important goal of some studies has been to examine parental control in its sociocultural context to provide a more culturally based or in-depth understanding of control. This research has primarily involved different methodological approaches. These approaches not only include qualitative and ethnographic research, but also survey-based research that attempts to derive culturally relevant constructs for defining and measuring parental control.

Differences within Asian groups. Parenting differences purported between Asian fathers and mothers have been based on the traditional adage, “strict father, kind mother”—wherein fathers exert high degrees of authoritarian control and mothers manifest high degrees of warmth. The traditional role of fathers as authority figures also implies that fathers do not typically display much closeness and affection toward children. This traditional distinction is mostly supported in research involving East Asians, but not in the research involving different Asian immigrant groups in the United States. In studies of Chinese from the P.R.C., Taiwan, and Hong Kong, mothers in all three countries were more warm and less restrictive than fathers, but they were also more demanding (Berndt, Cheung, Lau, Hau and Lew, 1993; Shek, 1998). Shek (2000) has also found with Hong Kong Chinese that adolescents not only reported less communication with fathers, they also reported more negative communication with fathers. A study of Japanese adolescents found that they perceived their fathers
and mothers to be similar on “conformity demands,” but that mothers were perceived as being more supportive than fathers (Trommsdorf and Iwawaki, 1989). Studies of Asian immigrants in the United States, though, found that Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese fathers and mothers were similar in their levels of authoritarian parenting, control, and warmth (Chao and Kim, 2000; Kim, 1996; Nguyen and Williams, 1989).

Though not specific to parental control per se, another question researchers have addressed is whether fathers and mothers each have unique contributions to the child’s development. A study conducted by Chen, Dong, and Zhou (1997) of Chinese in Beijing provides some indication that Chinese fathers’ parenting styles have effects on child outcomes above and beyond the effects of mothers’ parenting styles. In another study of 11- to 12-year-old Chinese children from Shanghai, the P.R.C., Chen, Liu, and Li (2000) found that father’s indulgence and sometimes their warmth, above and beyond their control, over two years was associated with different child outcomes (e.g., leadership, social skills, and academic achievement) than mother’s parenting. Specifically, mother’s warmth, above and beyond her control and indulgence, was positively associated with the child’s self-worth and negatively with feelings of loneliness and depression. According to these researchers, the traditional role of the father as the authority figure is to assure that children achieve academically and socially, whereas mothers serve as an emotional support, and so their parenting is likely to affect children’s emotional well-being and perceptions of the self. Studies of Asian fathers are especially needed to determine whether fathers today are as strict and harsh as traditional notions imply.

In one of the few studies on Asian fathers, specifically Chinese fathers in P.R.C. (the inner Mongolian region), Jankowiak (1992) found that among the college educated, greater importance is now being given to intimate father–child relations. Newer attitudes are apparent stressing that fathers should demonstrate care and affection toward their children rather than the traditional style of aloofness. Jankowiak attributes much of this change to a new urban infrastructure that includes (1) women working outside the home, (2) smaller domestic space consisting of one-room apartments which place fathers and children in constant close proximity, and (3) new folk notions promoting fatherly involvement. Jankowiak also found that even though mothers are generally more involved in the caretaking of children, fathers are more involved with their children regarding their education once children enter middle school. In another study by Sun and Rooopnarine (1996) involving Chinese parents from Taiwan, mothers were more involved in childcare responsibilities of their infants than fathers were, but mothers and fathers were similar in their displays of affection to infants.

Studies examining gender differences of the child find that parents exert more control over sons than daughters. Xie’s (1998) study of Chinese students (ages 9 through 12) in Beijing assessed the child’s and parent’s reports of parental control and found that both reported more control for sons than daughters. Similarly, Trommsdorf and Iwawaki (1989) found that Japanese adolescents reported more “negative sanctions” for sons than daughters. Additional studies yield mixed findings when sons’ and daughters’ reports of their mothers and fathers are compared. Based on adults’ retrospective reports of their parents, Berndt et al. (1993) found that Chinese daughters from Hong Kong, P.R.C., and Taiwan perceived their fathers to be less restrictive and more warm than sons did. Similarly, Chen, Liu, and Li (2000) found in their study with 12-year-old Chinese children from Shanghai, the P.R.C., that daughters reported less control from their fathers than sons did. In contrast, Shek (1998) found for Hong Kong Chinese that daughters perceived their mothers to be more demanding but less harsh than did sons, and no differences were found for fathers. Studies of Korean parenting also yield mixed findings. Based on adolescents’ reports, Rohner and Pettengill (1985) found that Korean daughters found their fathers to be more restrictive or controlling than sons did, but Rohner, Hahn, and Rohner (1980) found no differences among Korean immigrants in the United States in sons’ and daughters’ reports of their mothers’ and fathers’ control.

Studies examining socioeconomic (SES) differences in parental control and even in other areas of parenting for Asians are quite limited. Studies comparing mean levels of parenting indicate a greater restrictiveness among lower SES parents than among higher SES parents (Chauhan, 1980; Li et al., 2000). Chauhan assessed childrearing attitudes of Asian parents and found that low-SES parents emphasized dominance and conformity, but also attitudes of loving the child more than
middle- and high-SES parents. Another study by Li et al. of childrearing behaviors of mothers of young children (under age 7) in the region of Yunnan, the P.R.C., found that lower education in mothers was associated with less teaching and playing with children, but more corporal punishment. Finally, studies including Asian Americans seem to indicate some SES differences in mean levels but not in the effects of parenting on child outcomes. A study conducted by Rohner, Hahn, and Rohner (1980) focusing only on differences in mean levels found that among Korean Americans, children from middle-SES families perceive their mothers as less rejecting than children from lower-SES families. A few studies that have specifically examined the effects of parental control and parenting style on child and adolescent outcomes seem to indicate that these effects for Asian Americans are similar across socioeconomic status (Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, and Flay, 1996; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch, 1991).

Different types of parental control and their meanings. Some studies have examined distinctions in the types of control used among specific Asian groups based on more indigenous notions of control. These indigenous notions reflect different meanings for parental control than the meanings implied by “restrictive” or “domineering.” Researchers have also found that control may have different meanings for parents of Asian and European descent, such that parental control may be associated with warmth and caring in Asian families.

Fung (1999) described a range of control and discipline techniques that she labeled as “shaming” in her recent ethnographic study of parents of preschool-age children. Different Asian societies, including Taiwan, were described as “shame cultures,” in that children from these cultures were “taught to be aware of what others think of them” (p. 181). Parental socialization of shame in children involved explicit techniques such as using gestures and labels of shame (e.g., “shame on you”), and implicit techniques such as reminding the child that other people were watching or seeing them, and comparing the child to other well-behaved children. Parents’ own descriptions of how they disciplined children involved what Fung labeled “opportunity education.” Parents would use specific events in children’s direct experiences, such as pointing out another misbehaving child and explaining why such behavior is not allowed. Parents in Taiwan believe that children should be introduced earlier to notions of shame than do parents in the United States, and their children acquire shame-related terms earlier than do U.S. children. Fung (1999) and other researchers (Miller, Fung, and Mintz, 1996; Miller, Wiley, Fung, and Liang, 1997) also described how Chinese parents often used personal storytelling, in which a past event involving the child was invoked in order to convey the transgression the child committed and to shame them.

Another indigenous notion of parental control for Chinese has been described by Chao (1994) as guan, which, when translated, literally means “to govern.” Guan also has a very positive connotation among Chinese, because it can mean “to care for” or “to love” as well as “to govern.” Therefore, parental care, concern, and involvement are synonymous with a firm control and governance of the child. Chao (2000a) has described the control practices of Chinese parents as a more “preventative” approach to child misbehavior. These preventative approaches have been richly described by Tobin et al. (1987) in their study of preschools in the P.R.C., Japan, and the United States. Teachers in China would continuously monitor and correct children’s behaviors by appraising whether children were meeting the teacher’s expectations or standards, by comparing children to each other on these appraisals and making very clear what they expected from the child. Control and governance of children were also regarded as the role responsibilities or requirements of parents as well as teachers. Without guan, parents would be viewed as negligent and uncaring. Based on this notion of control, or guan, Chao (1994) derived and tested an alternative conceptualization for the parenting style of immigrant Chinese that she labeled as chiao shun, or “training.” She demonstrated that even after controlling for mothers’ levels of authoritarian and authoritative parenting, styles originally derived by Baumrind (1971), training was still more important or endorsed more by Chinese mothers than European American mothers. This study provides some support for the argument that parental control may have different meanings for Asians and Asian Americans, specifically Chinese immigrants, than it does for Europeans and European Americans.
There are also studies that have provided empirical support for the different meanings of parental control among Asians by demonstrating positive associations between dimensions of parental control and warmth. These associations reflect the positive connotations that Asian parents have for control that are not found among European-descent parents. For example, Nomura, Noguchi, Saito, and Tezuka (1995) found that parents’ ratings of family cohesion or closeness were positively correlated with their control among Japanese, but negatively correlated among Americans. These positive connotations for control and governance should also be reflected in children’s perceptions of their parents’ control—that is, how children interpret such control. If Asian children feel or perceive that parents’ control and governance reflect their care and concern, then this provides additional evidence of the differential, positive meaning of control for Asians.

Indeed, there appears to be support for the positive interpretation of parental control among Asian adolescents. Stewart et al. (1998) conducted a study of Hong Kong Chinese in late adolescence in which they derived a measure for assessing guan. They also included a measure of control that combined aspects of strictness (e.g., “My parent is strict” and “… is restrictive”) with aspects of hostility (e.g., “I am afraid of my parent” and “My parent becomes angry”). Interestingly, they found that guan was strongly and positively associated with warmth. They also found that guan was only weakly associated with restrictive or hostile control. Thus, the concept of guan may overlap somewhat with restrictive control, but it is also distinct from restriction or domination of children per se. Additionally, guan appears to have positive connotations for Chinese adolescents, as it was positively associated with their perceptions of parental warmth.

Studies that have assessed control in terms of the degree to which parents place demands on children and attempt to direct their behaviors have also found similar positive associations with warmth among Asian adolescents. In North America and Germany, parental control was found to be associated with perceived parental hostility and rejection (Rohner and Rohner, 1978; Trommsdorff, 1985; Trommsdorff and Iwabiki, 1989), but in Japan and Korea the same behaviors of parental control were associated with perceived parental warmth and acceptance (Kornadt, 1987; Rohner and Pettengill, 1985; Trommsdorff and Iwabiki, 1989). Trommsdorff (1985, p. 238), in fact, stressed that “Japanese adolescents even feel rejected by their parents when they experience only little control and a broader range of autonomy.” These studies provide support for the culturally based arguments that Asian children seem to perceive their parents’ control as very positive, important, and necessary.

However, Lau and Cheung (1987) and Lau, Lew, Hau, Cheung, and Berndt (1990) argue that a more domineering or restrictive control may have negative associations with parental warmth among Asians as it does among Europeans and European Americans. In a study of Chinese from Beijing, Lau et al. (1990) derived their own measure of “domineering control” (i.e., the degree to which parents restricted children’s autonomy, were strict, kept them in awe, and were angry with them). Their measure of control appears to combine aspects of control, such as strictness, with aspects of harshness or hostility. They primarily found that both sons and daughters who perceived their mothers and fathers as more domineering also perceived them as less warm. This domineering control was also negatively associated with family harmony by both sons and daughters. In another study of parents in Hong Kong, Lau and Cheung (1987) distinguished what they labeled “family-based” control from a domineering control based on the functions that each type served, or in other words, the purpose of control. If the function of domineering control is to dominate and subjugate children, the function of the family-based control is to maintain the harmony and integrity of the family unit. Based on Moos’ Family Environment Scale (FES), they found that the “organizational control” subscale, assessing their notion of “family-based” control, was positively correlated with warmth, whereas the “domineering control” subscale was negatively associated with warmth. Thus, for Chinese and perhaps for other Asian groups, control may be perceived very positively by both children and parents unless it includes aspects of harshness or hostility.

Examination of the effects of parental control on child and adolescent outcomes may provide another window onto the cultural meaning of parental control. For Asians, do different types of
control have different consequences in that more indigenous notions of control have positive effects on child outcomes, whereas, as Lau and Cheung (1987) have argued, more domineering or restrictive types of control do not? Are there different consequences for the parental control of groups of Asian descent versus those of European descent?

Effects of Parental Control

With regards to the first question, the effects of control on child well-being for Asians appear to depend on the way control is defined such that indigenous notions have positive effects and a domineering control primarily has negative effects among groups of Asian and European descent. Most of this research though has focused on either Asian Americans in general, or specifically on Chinese in the United States, Hong Kong, and the P.R.C., and has relied heavily on correlational analyses without examining effects over time using longitudinal studies.

Parental control defined as domineering or overprotective was generally associated with negative outcomes for children of Asian and European descent. Herz and Gullone (1999) found that control (defined as “overprotection”) was negatively associated with adolescents’ self-esteem for both adolescents of Vietnamese and European descent in Australia. The magnitude of these associations also did not differ across the two groups. Similarly, Cheung and Lau (1985) found that Hong Kong Chinese adolescents with parents high on Moos’s domineering control were also low on self-esteem. Stewart et al.’s (1998) study of young Chinese women (nursing students) in Hong Kong also demonstrated that their mother’s restrictive control was negatively associated with adolescent’s self-esteem, relationship harmony, and perceived health, but not with their life satisfaction, and their father’s restrictive control was unrelated to these adolescent outcomes. In another study by Stewart, Bond, Zaman, McBride-Chang, Rao, Ho, and Fielding (1999) of young Pakistani women (also nursing students), domineering control was negatively associated with perceived health, life satisfaction, and relationship harmony.

In contrast, parental control defined more indigenously for Asians has been associated with positive child outcomes. In their study of Hong Kong Chinese, Stewart et al. (1998) found that control defined as guan was positively associated with adolescents’ health and life satisfaction, and except for the outcome of health, was found for both mothers and fathers. Stewart, Bond, Zaman, McBride-Chang, Rao, Ho, and Fielding (1999) also found with Pakistani young women that Chao’s (1994) “training” parenting style, which is based on the notion of guan, was positively associated with relationship harmony. This positive effect was found even after accounting for the effects of parental warmth and domineering control. Based on factor analyses in which their items for warmth loaded positively on the same factor with the training items, they also found that this combined warmth–training dimension was positively related to all four of their outcomes, specified previously. Zhengyuan et al. (1991) found that control defined as parental emphasis on child compliance was positively associated with traditionally desired characteristics such as self-control, tolerance of frustration, and being hardworking, in addition to independence, self-confidence, and positive attitudes toward others. More research is needed to examine the effects of different types or definitions of parental control for different Asian groups. The effects of parenting style though have been examined somewhat more extensively among Asians in the United States.

Research on parenting style

Studies examining the effects of parenting style on children’s development provide further evidence for the cultural arguments made above by examining the composite effects of parental control and warmth. Parenting style may actually have different effects for Asians or Asian Americans than it does for Europeans or European Americans. This could be demonstrated in two ways. First, based on within-group examinations, the pattern of associations between control and child outcomes for some Asian groups may be somewhat different from the associations found for groups of European descent.
Likewise, examinations across groups in the magnitude of associations found between control and child outcomes may indicate that some types of control have more positive effects for Asians than for their counterparts of European descent.

Much of the research on parenting style has been based on Baumrind’s (1971) original conceptualizations involving initially three typologies—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. These typologies were primarily based on assessments of parents’ control or demandingness and warmth or responsiveness, with a third dimension recognized as involving reasoning or democratic give-and-take with the child. Authoritative parents are described by high levels of demandingness, responsiveness, and democratic reasoning; whereas authoritarian parents are described by high levels of control but low levels of warmth or responsiveness and democratic reasoning. Chao (1994) has demonstrated that these parenting style typologies may not be culturally relevant or meaningful to Asians and Asian Americans due to the different meanings they ascribe to parental control and warmth. That is, there are qualitative distinctions in how both these dimensions are defined or conceptualized and measured for Asians. Often measures of parental control or demandingness involve a restrictiveness or domination of the child that does not capture the essential features of parental control for Asians, described above. Likewise, measures of warmth or responsiveness typically include an emotional and physical “demonstrativeness” (e.g., praising the child, and hugging and kissing the child, respectively) that does not capture the primary features of responsiveness for Asian parents. The responsiveness of Asian parents can be more accurately described as involvement and support, through their prioritizing of the caregiving and education of their children. These distinctions in both the dimensions of control and warmth were then incorporated in an alternative parenting style for Chinese training, previously discussed.

In examinations of the effects of parenting style on child outcomes, consistent results across studies have not been found for Asian Americans as they have for European Americans. For European Americans, researchers have consistently found that the authoritative style has positive effects on child well-being, whereas the authoritarian style has negative effects (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Steinberg, 1996; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, and Dornbusch, 1994). For Asian Americans, however, the authoritative style was unrelated to adolescent’s school performance, whereas the authoritarian style was negatively related (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Steinberg et al. (1994) though found that, in tests across ethnic groups, the effects of authoritarian parenting were less negative and the effects of authoritative less positive among Asian Americans than European Americans.

Studies conducted on Asians in the United States have attempted to examine specific subgroup distinctions involving ethnicity and generational status. In a study of immigrant Chinese parents in the United States, Chao (2001) and Chao and Tran (2001) used Steinberg et al.’s measures of parenting style. Among first- and second-generation Chinese adolescents, parenting style (authoritative relative to authoritarian) was not predictive of their school grades, but was predictive of the grades of European Americans. That is, for European Americans only, authoritative parenting predicted higher school grades than did authoritarian parenting. Also, the effects of authoritative parenting on school effort were significant and positive for European Americans and second-generation Chinese, but not for first-generation Chinese. Thus, first-generation Chinese adolescents from authoritative homes were not better off in school than those from authoritarian homes. The effects for second-generation Chinese primarily ranked between those of first-generation Chinese and those of European Americans, indicating that they may be more similar to European Americans than first-generation Chinese are. This is consistent with a cultural explanation, because first-generation immigrants have had more exposure to Chinese society and culture than second-generation immigrants who have spent all their lives in the United States. In testing for differences in these effects across the groups, the effects of authoritative parenting (relative to authoritarian) on school grades and effort were also more positive for European Americans than for both first- and second-generation Chinese.

In examining the effects of parenting style another way, Chao and Tran (2001) broke down the parenting style typologies into their separate dimensions of parental control and warmth in order
to examine their interactive effects. Consistent with the above findings, the influence of control depended on warmth for European Americans but not Chinese Americans. Specifically, for European Americans, parental control had increasingly more positive effects on school grades and school effort at higher levels of parental warmth. This interaction was not found for both first- and second-generation Chinese immigrants. These interactive effects were also more pronounced among European Americans than first generation Chinese, providing further evidence for cultural arguments that the meaning of parenting may differ for Chinese immigrants. Another study on Korean immigrants in the United States also found that parenting style was unrelated to adolescents’ school performance (Kim, 1996).

Studies of Chinese in Hong Kong have found either no effects for parenting style, or the effects that were found were in the opposite direction as those found for European American adolescents. Using the same measure of parenting style by Dornbusch et al. (1987), Leung et al. (1998) found that the authoritative style was unrelated to the grades of Hong Kong Chinese but positively related to the grades of Americans and Australians of European descent. More surprisingly, the authoritarian style was positively related to the grades of Chinese adolescents and was unrelated to the grades of European Americans. Using parents’ reports of their parenting, McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) found that both the authoritative and authoritarian styles were unrelated to adolescents’ achievement test scores. Surprisingly, they also found parents who were more authoritative were less encouraging of their adolescent’s autonomy. Thus, even with outcomes other than school performance, the effects of parenting style for Chinese are not consistent with what has been found for European Americans.

In contrast to these studies of Hong Kong Chinese, Chen et al. (1997) found that the authoritative style of both mothers and fathers was positively related to children’s school achievement and social competence, and the authoritarian style of both parents was negatively related to these outcomes. However, this study involved much younger children (6 and 7 years old) than the studies conducted in Hong Kong, which may account for the different findings. The different findings between these studies may also be due to geographical distinctions in parenting style. Studies have found that parents from Hong Kong were more authoritarian and controlling than those from Beijing and Taiwan (Berndt et al., 1993; Lai, Zhang, and Wang; 2000). Further studies must be conducted to determine whether there are differences in the effects of parenting style among Chinese from large urban regions in the P.R.C., Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

In summary, Asian parents have been found to be relatively more restrictive in their parenting compared to parents from other societies or ethnic groups. Parental control though may not have the same meanings or the same negative effects on children’s development for parents of Asian descent as it does for parents of European descent. Although restrictive control appears to have negative effects for Asians, parenting style, specifically authoritarian parenting, does not always have negative effects, and in some studies the effects are actually positive. These findings provide additional demonstration that there are important cultural distinctions in the meaning of parental control for Asians. Another concern, though, of Asian parenting involves their emphasis on educational achievement, which also has important cultural distinctions.

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ASIANS

One the more prevalent impressions held by the media, the larger public, and researchers has been Asian educational achievement. In the United States, this picture of school success has served to promote stereotypic views of Asian Americans as the “model minority.” As a group, Asian Americans do indeed have higher grades during mid to late elementary school (Okagaki and Frensch, 1998), grade point averages in middle school, high school, and college (Fuligni, 1997; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995; Sue and Abe, 1988), higher scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT, Reglin and Adams, 1990; Sue and Abe, 1998), and higher scores on other standardized achievement tests (Kao, 1995; Mau, 1997; Peng and Wright, 1994). In addition, higher rates of completion of high school and
enrollment in college have also been reported for Asian Americans compared to all ethnic groups, including European Americans (O'Hare and Felt, 1991; Suzuki, 1988). Cheung (1982) reported that although Asian students had parents with less education and family income than European Americans students, they had higher grade point averages in college and completed more years of schooling. However, great disparities have been reported in achievement across different ethnic subgroups with Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and South Asians performing better than Southeast Asians, Filipinos, and Pacific Islanders (Bradby and Owings, 1992; Kao, 1995; Olsen, 1988; Wong, 1990). Studies have also found that Asian Americans apply more effort to their schoolwork and spend more time in activities such as private tutoring, after-school study groups, and music and language lessons, which may enhance their education (Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Huang and Waxman, 1995; Kao, 1995; Peng and Wright, 1994; Yao, 1985). They also spend less time on activities that may compete with their studies, such as holding a part-time job and performing household chores, and are less involved in dating (Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Kao, 1995; Lee, 1994, 1996; Reglin and Adams, 1990). When students’ time use, attitudes and values for education, and educational aspirations are accounted for, differences in the academic performance of Asian American and European American students are no longer apparent (Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Kao, 1995).

International comparisons of academic achievement have also revealed the school success of students in Asia. Stevenson and Lee (1990) compared students from Taipei (Taiwan) and Sendai (Japan) with American students in the United States (in Minneapolis, Minnesota) on tests of reading, vocabulary, comprehension, and math. They have shown that Chinese children obtained the highest scores on all sections of the reading test at Grade 1 and on the vocabulary and comprehension sections at Grade 5. In mathematics, the Chinese and Japanese both scored higher than the Americans on word problems involving application of mathematical principles and on items requiring only calculation. Stevenson and Lee (1990) also reported that these students spent more time studying and engaging in educationally related activities than students in the United States.

Regardless of the conclusions drawn by the media or by researchers regarding the educational success of Asians, one thing that is rather clear is parental concern in many Asian societies over children’s educational achievement. Children’s schooling is regarded as the primary responsibility of Asian parents. In fact, for many Asians, their efficacy in parenting is judged by how well their children do in school (Chao, 1995, 1996; Tu, 1985; Wu and Tseng, 1985). Tu has emphasized that a successful Confucian father is defined by the scholarly achievements and cultural attainments of his family. The importance placed on educational achievement for Asian parents is reflected in broader cultural folk beliefs and attitudes about child development and learning, in their educational expectations and aspirations, and in their involvement in their children’s schooling.

Cultural Folk Beliefs and Attitudes

Folk beliefs regarding child development and learning. Cultural folk beliefs of children’s development and learning have shaped how parents regard children’s schooling and education. Notions about how children learn and the timing of children’s learning are based on “cultivation” perspectives discussed above (see section on historical perspectives), which are espoused throughout many parts of Asia, particularly East Asia (Chen, 1996; Kojima, 1986). This perspective places a great deal of importance on the parental role. The education of children is analogous to the cultivation of a tree that first begins with the seedling and necessitates the grower’s care in the trimming of its branches and leaves as the tree grows. In order to keep the child on the morally right course, early educational intervention is regarded as essential. However, as Kojima (1986) clarifies, early does not mean earliest, but rather when children are ready.

Li (1997, in press) also examined historical and contemporary cultural notions of learning for Chinese that are very similar to “cultivation” perspective discussed above. As Li explained, folk notions of learning date back several thousand years to Confucian philosophies emphasizing human malleability and self-improvement as a moral purpose. Li also clarified that the goals of learning are
not only to seek inner self-cultivation and virtue (*neisheng*), but also to give back this learning to society in the form of “meritorious service” (*waiwang*).

Li (in press) conducted a study of Chinese college seniors from the eastern region of the P.R.C. in which they performed a sorting task for common learning terms. Based on cluster analyses for determining students’ categorizations, Li found two superordinate-level categories, “desirable approaches” and “undesirable approaches.” Many more words were generated for the desirable than the undesirable, indicating that, for educated Chinese, a heavier emphasis is placed on positive than negative models of learning. The most strongly emphasized category under desirable approaches involved “seeking knowledge,” the idea that learners should assume primary responsibility for their own learning. This category included the Chinese notion of *hao-xue-xin*, literally translated as “heart and mind for wanting to learn.” Li explains that this notion is a common folk term used to describe one’s desire to learn, or a passion for learning, which is somewhat distinct from the term *achievement motivation*, used in the United States. Also under the category of “seeking knowledge” was the idea of learning as a “life-long pursuit,” and a combination of related ideas involving diligence, hardship, steadfastness, and single-minded concentration. Jose et al. (2000) have also found with parents of preschool children that personality traits such as persistence, neatness, concentration, and precision were also endorsed more by both Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and Chinese in Taiwan than European American parents.

These cultural notions of cultivation and learning among Asians emphasize education both broadly defined as well as specific to schooling. Cultivation through schooling is still regarded as the primary avenue for social mobility. However, it is also important for “building character,” or qualities such as being hardworking, self-disciplined, persevering, and moral. Many of the cultural beliefs and views about children’s development and learning espoused throughout parts of Asia are distinctly linked to views about education and the importance of children’s schooling.

*Cultural and parental attitudes regarding the importance of effort.* Researchers have examined parental and cultural attitudes regarding the importance of effort in school. As Li (in press) explained, Confucian philosophies have stressed the importance of human malleability and values for self-improvement with effort being the route to self-improvement. There are also a number of folk tales reiterating the importance of effort in attaining educational achievement (Hess, Chih-Mei, and McDevitt, 1987; Li, 2000a).

Hess, Chih-Mei, and McDevitt (1987) conducted a study on parents’ causal explanations of their children’s performance in math among Chinese parents from the P.R.C. and parents of Chinese and European descent from the United States. They found that all three groups put more weight on effort than on other causes (i.e., ability, school training, home training, and luck). For the P.R.C. parents, however, lack of effort was the predominant cause of low performance, and relatively little weight was attributed to the other causes. The Chinese American parents were similar to the P.R.C. parents, but gave slightly less weight to effort and more to lack of natural ability and poor school and home training than the P.R.C. parents. European American parents placed more equal weight on all five causes than did the Chinese groups. Research on Asian Americans, Chinese from Taiwan, and Japanese have also found that parents’ beliefs in the importance of effort are associated with their children’s beliefs in effort and academic achievement (Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Huang, 1997).

**Parental Expectations and Aspirations for Education**

Asian parents also have very high expectations and aspirations for their children’s education. Asian Americans, compared to other groups, including European Americans, tend to have higher parental expectations for educational attainment, the school grades they consider acceptable, and the amount of effort or work they believe their children can accomplish (Chao, 1996; Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Fuligni, 1997; Hao and Bonsted-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995; Lee, 1987; Okagaki and French, 1998; Yao, 1985). Furthermore, studies across a range of Asian American ethnic subgroups have found
that parental expectations explain a large portion of children’s high educational expectations, even more so than socioeconomic and other demographic factors (Goyette and Xie, 1999; Kim, Rendon, and Valdez, 1998; Lee, 1987).

Asian American parents also value education more for their children’s future than do parents of other ethnic groups (Chao, 1996; Chen and Stevenson, 1995; Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown, 1992; Yao, 1985). In a study by Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) involving high school students from Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, and European American backgrounds, all students reported that their parents believed in the value of education for their future success. However, Asian American parents, more than any other ethnic group, also believed in the negative repercussions of not getting a good education—the idea that one could not be successful without a good education.

Important differences across ethnic subgroups of Asian Americans have also been found. A study by Fuligni (1997) compared adolescents of East Asian (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans), Filipino, Latino, and European backgrounds on different measures of parental educational expectations. East Asian and Filipino parents had similar values for academic success (e.g., doing well in school by getting “A” grades) and educational aspirations (i.e., educational attainment level), but on another indicator of parental expectations (e.g., disappointment over not getting high grades on tests), East Asian parents were higher than Filipino parents. Other studies based on the National Educational Longitudinal data have found differing results, depending on the ethnic and immigrant groups that were included (Blair and Qian, 1998; Fuligni, 1997; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995; Kim, Rendon, and Valdez, 1998). Specifically, when aggregated across generations of immigrants, Kim and colleagues found that Asian Indians, and Blair and Q-ia-n found that Chinese, had the highest expectations (although the latter study did not include Asian Indians). Among recent generations of immigrants, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) found that Koreans had the highest levels of parental expectations across all ethnic subgroups.

Despite differences in mean levels of parental expectations across ethnic subgroups of Asian Americans, their effects on children’s academic achievement appear to be positive for all groups. For Asian Americans, overall, parental expectations for educational attainment were positively associated with the academic achievement of students in elementary school and middle school (Okagaki and Frensch, 1998; Peng and Wright, 1994). For different ethnic subgroups (i.e., Chinese and Filipinos) Blair and Qian (1998) found parental expectations for educational attainment had positive effects on the educational performance of high school students even after accounting for other socioeconomic and parenting factors. Finally, Mau (1997) found positive effects for both U.S.-born and immigrant Asians, even after controlling for socioeconomic status, parental involvement in school, and students’ effort. The findings though for parental involvement in school are not quite as consistent as they are for parental expectations.

Parental Involvement in School

The findings for both differences in mean levels and effects of parental involvement in school are not consistent for Asian Americans, largely because of differences due to the age of the child and the type of parental involvement studied. In a summary of the literature, Keith et al. (1993) identified four general types of parental involvement: (1) parents’ expectations for children’s school achievement (previously discussed), (2) participation in school activities and programs (e.g., involvement in PTA), (3) discussions between parents and children about school, and (4) a home structure that supports learning (e.g., family rules about homework). Epstein (1987) has also reported types of parental support that include the above as well as providing children with practice activities and an enriching environment (e.g., reading to the child, visiting the library, and exposing children to parents’ own educational activities).

Descriptive studies. More descriptive or ethnographic studies have found that Asian American parents provide types of support for children’s schooling and education that may not be tapped in
typical assessments of parental involvement. These include teaching basic school-readiness skills before children entered school, assigning extra homework during their early elementary school years, purchasing extra workbooks or textbooks, arranging for a desk or study area, enrolling children in academically related activities such as private tutoring, supplementary study classes, music and language lessons, saving money for children’s college education, and structuring and monitoring children’s after-school time (Chao, 1996; Hiehima and Schneider, 1994; Mordkowitz and Ginsburg, 1987; Schneider and Lee, 1990; Shoho, 1994; Yao, 1985). Many of these studies, though, relied on parents’ or college-age students’ retrospective reports of parental involvement when they or their children were much younger.

Surprisingly though, as Leong, Chao, and Hardin (2000) have pointed out, Asian Americans are less likely to be involved in their children’s later schooling than European Americans, especially by the time their children are in high school. For instance, Rosenthal and Feldman compared first- and second-generation Chinese immigrants from the United States and Australia and groups of European descent from both countries, and found that first-generation Chinese reported less parental involvement than second-generation Chinese and adolescents of European descent, and second-generation Chinese reported less than both groups of European descent. In another study involving comparisons of Asian American, Hispanic, African American, and European American adolescents, Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) found that Asian American parents were the least involved in their adolescents’ schooling. However, these findings may be due to how parental involvement was assessed, as well as to the child’s age. In both studies, assessment of parental involvement involved a global scale that included helping children with homework, participating in school programs and sports activities, and discussing school courses.

*Clarifications of findings due to child’s age and types of involvement.* These types of involvement reflect a more hands-on or direct participation in the child’s schooling that may not be as salient for Asian American parents with their older children. Rather, some types of direct support may be more salient for Asian parents during children’s early elementary or preschool years as opposed to later high school years. Indeed, studies have shown that East Asian parents exert a more intensive educational socialization during the child’s early school years, with this socialization decreasing as children become older (Chao, 1996; Choi, Bempechat, and Ginsburg, 1994; Shoho, 1994). For example, Huntsinger and her colleagues (1997, 1998, 2000) found that Chinese American parents, and to a lesser degree Chinese parents from Taiwan, were more likely than their European American counterparts to teach their 4- to 5-year-old children mathematics and reading. They did so by employing focused, directed methods such as vocabulary flashcards, extra homework, and math programs rather than informal, play-oriented methods such as spontaneously bringing up math or reading in everyday experiences. Furthermore, the focused or formal teaching method predicted higher levels of achievement during these early elementary school years. In light of the argument put forth by many early childhood educators, that teaching academics to young children is dangerous to their social development, Huntsinger, Jose, and Larson (1998) also examined whether parents’ formal teaching methods are related to later problems in children’s social adjustment, and no effects were found. Thus, in the child’s early years, Asian American parents are providing much more formal and direct types of support.

At later years, Asian American parents may be offering a range of indirect types of support. In four studies involving eighth-grade students from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey from 1988 (NELS: 88), a variety of aspects of parental involvement in school was assessed. Asian Americans generally scored lower than European Americans on some measures of parental involvement, including discussions about school, helping with homework, and participating in school, whereas they scored higher than European Americans on helping prepare for ACT and SAT tests, planning for college, and providing a home structure and resources such as a place to study, a personal computer, and savings for college (Ho and Willms, 1996; Kao, 1995; Mau, 1997; Peng and Wright, 1994). Thus, by the time their children reach middle school, Asian American parents are not providing direct support for children’s homework nor are they participating in school. Instead, they are
already beginning to prepare for the child's eventual entrance to college as they continue to provide structure in the home. This pattern of change in the parental involvement of Asian Americans as their children reach high school may explain some of the negative effects found for parental involvement on school achievement that are described next.

**Examinations of the effects of parental involvement in school.** Several studies examining the effects of parental involvement in school on child and adolescent school achievement also suggest that these effects vary according to how parental involvement is defined. Even with elementary school children, Okagaki and Frensch (1998) found that Epstein's distinction of an "educationally enriching environment" (e.g., parents and children reading nonschool material) was unrelated to the school grades of Asian Americans, but helping with homework was negatively related. With adolescents, studies using the NELS:88 data have found a lack of association and some negative associations for Asian Americans. Kao (1995) found that discussions about school, providing educational resources in the home, and enrolling adolescents in outside classes were unrelated to the school performance of Asian Americans but were positively related to the school performance of European Americans. Peng and Wright (1994) reported similar findings, except that for European Americans helping with homework was negatively related to adolescents' school achievement. Mau (1997), however, found that for Asian Americans helping with schoolwork and participating in school were negatively related to adolescents' school performance, whereas discussions about school were unrelated. For European Americans, primarily positive associations were found. Additionally, Mau found differences across generations of Asian immigrants such that the effects of parental involvement on school performance were more negative for U.S.-born adolescents than for foreign-born adolescents. In examining the effects of parental involvement for different ethnic subgroups, studies have found that parents' provision of educational material in the home (i.e., an encyclopedia and atlas, a dictionary, typewriter, computer, calculator, and many books) had positive effects on adolescents' school performance for both Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans (Blair and Qian, 1998; Kim, Rendon, and Valadez, 1998).

The negative associations found among some Asian American groups underscore the necessity for longitudinal studies that account for prior school performance. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine whether parental involvement is influenced by adolescents' prior school performance. That is, by the time their children are in high school, some Asian American parents may only become involved with their children's schooling when they are experiencing difficulties. However, a study by Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) found that even after accounting for adolescents' prior school performance, parental involvement had no effect on the school performance of Asian Americans, although for the overall sample it had a positive effect. As mentioned above though, their assessment of parental involvement relied on a global scale. Longitudinal studies are still needed that examine different aspects of parental involvement in school across different ethnic subgroups and generations of Asian immigrants.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH ON THE PARENTING OF ASIANS**

Research on Asian parenting has increased dramatically in the past two decades, but much research is still needed. In particular, the emphasis on identifying and assessing indigenous cultural notions of parenting, such as the research on parental control, involving Fung's (1999) descriptions of "shaming" and the notion of *guan*, represent substantial steps forward in conceptualizing Asian parenting. Studies must attempt to derive measures for such indigenous concepts because they shed light on important aspects of parenting that may not have been captured in studies relying on parenting constructs typically used with samples involving those of European descent. Indigenous concepts of Asian parenting allow us to understand the limitations and complexities of our typical constructs.
and measures of parenting as applied to Asians as well as to families of European descent. What may be most critical in understanding the parenting of different Asian groups is to determine how different assessments of a particular domain of parenting affect child well-being. Studying the effects of parenting on child outcomes, especially how the effects vary across time, can inform us about the consequences of such cultural differences in parenting for children. The research on Asian American parental involvement in school seems to indicate that whereas there appear to be negative effects for parental involvement, these effects depend on the type of involvement and the age of the child, in addition to the longitudinal association between these variables. Direct types of parental involvement among Asian Americans seem to have negative effects on adolescents’ school performance. However, these negative effects may disappear once preexisting levels of school performance are accounted for. Such a longitudinal study would provide support for arguments that Asian American parents are not directly involved with the schooling of their older children, and they only become involved with their schooling if they are having difficulties. In addition, research has predominantly involved East Asians, and further research is needed on the parenting of South and Southeast Asians.

Descriptive studies on cultural differences in parenting overwhelmingly demonstrate the importance of family and family interdependence within Asian families. In extending research beyond descriptive differences in independence and interdependence across nations in the Eastern and Western hemispheres, further research is needed to examine the bases underlying these differences. For example, research has rarely explored the sociohistorical or ecological roots for the strong abiding theme of interdependence across Asian societies, despite their vast differences in religion, language, geography, climate, and economic conditions. What role does family interdependence serve? Are there sociohistorical or ecological similarities for which parents are preparing their children to meet? While discussing the similarities in family interdependence across Asian societies, we have tried to describe the different cultural roots for the particular expression or manifestation of interdependence. These subgroup differences require further study into why different Asian societies would develop somewhat dissimilar views on parenting.

Research on changes in parenting due to urbanization and migration are interesting because they begin to tap into some of the ways in which ecological changes can affect the parenting of Asians from different regions in Asia and of immigrants from these regions. Further research, however, needs to systematically assess the particular elements of ecological or acculturative change that affect parenting themes, styles, and practices. For example, does the emphasis placed on education erode across successive generations of Asians in the United States? If so, are those declines due simply to cross-cultural contact of values or do later generations of Asians simply find additional, noneducational avenues to mobility in the United States?

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although the parenting of Asians is extremely diverse, there are also important commonalities or overarching themes that can be identified for describing their parental concerns or goals. Even with important forces of change, there may be some degree of continuity in parenting among some Asian groups or societies, with Japan provided as one example. While Japan has experienced impressive economic growth and demographic transformations, many traditional Confucian and Buddhist perspectives of childhood and the parenting role have been infused into contemporary Japanese parenting, resulting in some continuity across time and across generations of Japanese parents. Likewise, such broad themes as the importance of the family and family interdependence can be identified across many Asian subgroups or societies. However, different notions or ideas of the importance of the family for East Asians, Asian Indians, and Filipinos have been described in this chapter. These different notions of the family can be more fully understood in terms of the sociocultural roots or principles underlying the family and family relations—the precepts of filial piety in East Asian societies, principles of *Mitakshara* specifying joint household structure in some Hindi societies in
India, and notions of *pakikisama*, stressing family harmony over personal desires or needs among some Filipino societies. Each set of principles prescribes its own structure for how family roles are defined, even though each also incorporates the importance of reciprocity among family members and parental authority and respect. Another broad commonality that can be identified as a concern of Asian parents is their control or use of control, although perhaps this theme may be more salient to the eyes of many Americans, especially European Americans, than it is to Asians in Asia and the United States.

According to some researchers, parental control seems to be very limited or nonexistent with very young children, before they reach the "age of reasoning," especially among Japanese. However, among more current generations of Asian parents, especially those that are well educated, parental expectations of children at earlier ages appear to be increasing. Perhaps also, comparative studies, as opposed to within-culture studies, have contributed to the impression that parents of Asian descent are quite controlling relative to parents of European descent. On the other hand, within-culture or within-group studies of Asians have attempted to examine traditional distinctions between fathers and mothers or between daughter's and son's perceptions of parenting, and to a very limited degree, distinctions across social class. Many within-culture studies have also attempted to provide a more in-depth understanding of parental control by relying on more indigenous notions of control. What may be summarized from this research is that different definitions or notions of control seem to have different associations with child and adolescent outcomes. Whereas restrictive or domineering distinctions of control, especially when incorporated with hostility and rejection, have primarily negative effects on Asian children's well-being, control defined in terms of guidance and structure, and also in terms of indigenous notions such as *guan*, have positive effects on Asian children's well-being.

In addition, an important cultural argument for the different meanings of control between families of Asian descent and European descent has also been demonstrated by examining whether the effects of control on child and adolescent outcomes differ across these groups. Indeed, there is some evidence, especially in studies focusing on parenting style (involving combinations of control and warmth), that the effects do differ. For example, in studies conducted on Chinese in the United States and Hong Kong, the beneficial effects for authoritative parenting do not seem to be found among families of Chinese descent, but they are found among families of European descent. Additionally, in a study of Hong Kong Chinese, it was the authoritarian style that had beneficial effects on adolescents' school performance. Such different patterns in the effects of parenting style found among families of Asian-descent, as compared to families of European descent, seem to indicate that applying these parenting style typologies to Asian families may be problematic. These typologies may not be capturing the types of control and warmth that are used and endorsed by these families.

Another area that has certainly drawn a great deal of attention in the United States to the parenting of families of Asian descent is their concern for children's educational achievement. Many cultural distinctions can be drawn between families of Asian descent and families of European descent in the different beliefs and attitudes toward learning and education, different expectations for educational achievement, and ways of engaging in and supporting children's education and schooling. Both the age of the child and the type of educational support or involvement offered by parents must be considered when describing families of Asian descent. Parents of Asian descent try to offer more direct, instructional support to children's education and schooling very early on, when the child is young. By the time their children enter high school, this type of support would not only be considered unnecessary, it would also be regarded as inappropriate because children at this age are already supposed to have the skills to succeed or apply themselves in school. Although cross-sectional studies of Asian American adolescents' school performance indicate negative associations, especially with direct types of parental involvement (e.g., helping with homework), such associations may be indicative of preexisting school problems among adolescents rather than the consequences of parental involvement per se. With longitudinal data, researchers may be able to determine whether adolescents' difficulties in school are actually driving parents' involvement at a later point in time, rather than
parental involvement influencing adolescents’ school performance over time. If so, such a demonstration would indicate that Asian American parents may become involved in their older children’s schooling only when these children are experiencing difficulties. Considerations of both the child’s age, type of involvement, and the association over time between school performance and parental involvement need to be addressed in future studies. In addition, studies are particularly needed that capture change across the age of the child in addition to change across generations of parents.

REFERENCES


