Heritage Research Paper: Chinese Parenting Styles

Getting good grades and a high grade point average on my report card was what I mainly focused on in school. After school ended, instead of attending after school activities, I would attend Chinese school. My parents believed that joining an after-school club or taking part in a sports team would be a distraction for me. Instead of spending time on extracurricular activities, my parents would often remind me to spend more time on studying for tests and doing homework assignments because my parents hoped for me to receive straight A’s and a 4.00 grade point average. By doing so, I would make my parents proud, but receiving anything lower than an A would bring me shame and guilt. I can still remember how proud my parents felt when I received the acceptance letter for Lowell High School, which is the top ranked high school in the city of San Francisco. My parents viewed education as very important because they were not given the chance to receive a proper education in China. The reason why they immigrated to the United States was so that my siblings and I could have the privilege of receiving a proper education: “Educated children enter well-paid professions, siblings benefit from older children’s financial support and the entire family achieves a higher standard living” while also bringing pride to the family (Ji 691). Due to their lack of education, my parents were only able to work as custodians, and they did not want me and my siblings to follow the footsteps of living as tough life as they did. This is because my parents believe that with a proper education, I will be able to achieve a higher status in the community.
Chinese parents play an important role in the academic success of their children. Chinese parents “place greater value on education and are willing to invest more in their children’s education” (Li 29-30). Since my parents were not able to receive a proper education, when I had trouble with my homework, they could not tutor me. Therefore, my parents were willing to send me to tutoring sessions to ensure that I was able to get the help that I needed. At home, parental involvement includes ensuring that children’s homework assignments are completed and setting limits on television or computer use (Ji 691). Other than watching the news during dinner time, I was not allowed to watch television or use the computer except for homework assignments. Although it may seem as if my parents were strict, forbidding the use of the television and the computer did create fewer distractions for me, and I was able to focus more on school.

The Chinese parenting style is often described as “authoritarian, controlling, and restrictive” (Chao “Beyond” 1112). However, according to Chao’s research, the Chinese parenting style is different from the authoritarian parenting style, and therefore a misleading description of the Chinese parenting style (Chao “Beyond” 1112). The Chinese parenting style can be seen as associated with strictness and parental obedience, but it also contains “parental concern, caring, or involvement” (Chao “Clarification” 4). Chao also mentions “the notion of ‘guan’ for Chinese means literally ‘to govern,’ but guan has a very positive connotation in China” because it can also mean to care for or to love (Chao “Clarification” 4-5). Therefore, this concept of child training is the parents’ way of showing care or love towards their children. Through this type of child-training, Chinese parents are educating and raising their child “in the appropriate or expected behaviors or morals” (Chao “Clarification” 5). The parents are acting out of love for the betterment of their children. The concept of child training, as indicated by Chao,
teaches children morals and values, with education being one of the important values in the Chinese culture.

Child training starts at a young age for children. Studies have shown that there are benefits in starting young (Ji). Child training is a concept that is part of the Chinese culture. Therefore, it is common to see Chinese parents placing great value on education and enforcing this belief onto their children. “It started for as long as I can remember, probably since elementary school,” said Edna Lin, a Chinese American student. Lin often felt the pressure from her parents telling her to achieve good grades in school. Although Lin’s parents did not send her to a tutor to further help her understand the material she was learning in school, Lin remembers her parents constantly reminding her to study hard. “My parents expect me to get into a good college such as Berkeley,” said Lin. “Sometimes it can become a burden when I do not meet their expectations.” The University of California, Berkeley is a top, well-known school that Lin wishes to attend in the future for graduate studies. Parental involvement not only greatly contributes to the academic success of children, it also helps children “develop self-regulated learning” (Li 30). Although high parental involvement can be a burden due to her parents constantly nagging and reminding her to do well in school, Lin has found that it actually helps her focus more on her school work. Therefore, Lin is able to understand why her parents push her so hard to study and do well in school. Lin knows the reason why her parents immigrated to the United States, and it was for Lin and her siblings to be able to have a better life than her parents did. Her parents did not want Lin to live the life that they had. Her parents believe that receiving a good education can lead to a successful career in the future. Lin respects her parents’ belief, and she values this aspect of her heritage, stating that “I believe that nowadays, it is
important to have a good education,” and further notes that she too would enforce the importance of education with her own children.

I also appreciate and value this aspect of my heritage because it teaches me the importance of education and responsibility for the choices I make. After I moved out of my parents’ home to attend college, my parents would call to check up on me and ask me how things were going. They would often remind me over the phone that the teacher can teach me, but I am the one with the choice to learn. What I learn is my knowledge, and no one can take that knowledge away from me. Therefore, it is my choice as to what I make of my education. My parents’ values about education are also my values, and as a young adult, I appreciate their parenting style.
Works Cited


Lin, Edna. Personal Interview. 4 Nov. 2014.