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Parent–Adolescent Relationships among Chinese Immigrant Families: An Indigenous Concept of *Qin*

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Abstract

This study investigated cultural meanings of positive Chinese parent-child relationships through exploration of an indigenous concept, *qin*, as experienced by Chinese American adolescents of immigrant parents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15, first- and second-generation Chinese American high school students of immigrant parents, focusing on adolescents' descriptions of the meaning of *qin* and parental behaviors that foster this quality. According to the Chinese American adolescents who were interviewed, being *qin* with parents was characterized as closeness to parents and a general sense of togetherness and harmony; showing parents their love through respect, obedience, academic effort, and appreciation; and open communication with the parents particularly about school. This relationship is primarily fostered by parental devotion and sacrifice, particularly for the child's education, future opportunities, success, and needs. The results highlight the role of child reciprocation of love and devotion for the parents in a *qin* relationship.

Keywords

parent-adolescent relationships; Chinese American; *qin*; parental devotion and sacrifice; parental respect

Although parent-child relationships share universal components across cultures, such as love and communication, different cultures emphasize their unique norms and practices in parent-child interactions (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Western cultures typically value demonstrative ways of expressing parental warmth, physical closeness, and open communication between parent and child. In contrast, Chinese culture stresses instrumental support, parental sacrifices, thoughtfulness in meeting child's needs, and mutual understanding established mainly through indirect and non-verbal communication (Tseng & Hsu, 1969; Wu & Chao, 2005, 2011). However, few studies have focused on the ethnic cultural norms or indigenous concepts of parent-child relationships among Chinese American families. Yet, research on immigrant families, including Chinese immigrants, has demonstrated that adolescents' understanding and appreciation of ethnic cultural values is beneficial for their academic and psychological adjustment (Vedder, van de Vijver, & Liebkind, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Wu & Chao, 2011). This study investigated the Chinese notion of *qin* (親), an

indigenous concept characterizing the parent-child relationship among Chinese and Chinese American families, in order to provide an in-depth understanding of Chinese cultural norms for positive parent-child relationships.

The Importance of Chinese Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Studies have found that among adolescents in immigrant families, an understanding of ethnic cultural values about the parent-adolescent relationships plays a protective role in their psychological adjustment. For example, although Chinese American adolescents tend to adopt norms of mainstream American culture more than their ethnic culture, they also appreciate Chinese cultural norms about parenting and the parent-adolescent relationship (Wu & Chao, 2011). Such understanding and appreciation of ethnic cultural values mitigate conflicts between the adolescents and their immigrant parents and have positive impact on the youth's psychological well-being (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Shen, Kim, Wang, & Chao, 2014; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Wu & Chao, 2011). Adolescents of immigrants who endorse their family's ethnic cultural values also do better academically and psychologically than those who are solely assimilated to the host culture (Vedder et al., 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

However, contemporary psychological theories of parent-child relationships are primarily based on Western cultural values, which may not capture the central features of Chinese parent-child relationships. Crockett, Veed, and Russell (2010) found a lack of measurement equivalence of established parenting measures between Chinese and European Americans based on nationally representative samples. They found that Chinese American adolescents may have a different understanding of specific parental practices compared to their European American peers, and that their conceptions of parent-adolescent relationships may even consist of a distinct structure, different dimensions and a unique set of cultural meanings (Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Doan, 2010). Therefore, it is relevant to elucidate cultural notions of parent-child relationships within the Chinese cultural meaning systems.

Qin: An Indigenous Concept of the Chinese Parent-Adolescent Relationship

The Chinese parent-child relationship can be described by an indigenous concept of *qin* (親) which is commonly used in Chinese societies (Wu & Chao, 2011). In English, this literally translates to "being close to." The concept of *qin* has a highly positive connotation in Chinese culture because it entails that the child "feels close to" and "loves" the parent in response to the parents' benevolent parenting for the child (Editorial Board for Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Characters, 1986–1989; Jiang, 1996; Zhang et al., 1716/1988). Benevolent parenting is characterized by parental devotion and sacrifice, thoughtfulness in meeting the child's needs, and *guan* (caring for and disciplining) (Chao, 1994; Wu & Chao, 2011). These parental practices lead the child to feel loved, cared for, and supported. They explicitly manifest Chinese norms of parental love (愛) or warmth (溫暖) (Wu & Chao, 2011). Benevolent parenting is the foundation for inducing a state of *qin* in the child and maintaining it through the course of child development. Such parental support towards children is also considered a parental duty (Leung & Shek, 2011)—a standard

against which parents are constantly evaluated on by others in the society such as relatives, neighbors, and their children's teachers (Chao, 1994, 1995). When children are not *qin* with parents, the parents are often blamed for not fulfilling their role responsibilities and are even perceived as irresponsible or deficient.

Qin also involves the child's behaviors, such as reciprocation for the benevolent parenting they receive. As defined earlier, *qin* directly represents the children's feelings and behaviors towards the parents. The child's reciprocation defines the conditions of *qin* (Jiang, 1996; Wu & Chao, 2011). This reciprocation may include a sense of gratitude, love, and closeness to the parents, namely to become *qin* with the parents. Specific responses are characterized by devotion, respect, and trust. Such reciprocation may share some qualities of collectivistic concepts such as family obligation and filial piety. However, *qin* is distinctive given its essentially voluntary set of behaviors deriving from internal desires that surpass the more diffuse and culturally imposed morals required by family obligation and filial piety (Wu & Tseng, 1985). The child's desires to reciprocate for parental support are rooted in the pervasive love, care, and concern that the child would have received from the benevolent parenting. Although parental devotion and sacrifice may possibly lead to pressures on the child, it has been found that a sense of indebtedness in the child actually supported children's well-being in Asian cultures (Kim & Park, 2006).

Wu and Chao (2011) developed a measure to assess *qin* among Chinese American adolescents of immigrants and found that parental practices involved in *qin*, specifically parental sacrifice and thoughtfulness, played a protective role in the Chinese adolescents' psychological adjustment. However, their *qin* measure only captured parental behaviors of *qin*, and not the child's reciprocation of devotion and love. In the present study, we extend Wu and Chao's quantitative study of *qin* (2011) by using a qualitative approach to not only gain a fuller understanding of parental practices fostering *qin*, but to also explore adolescents' perceptions of *qin* which could possibly reflect their reciprocation of benevolent parenting.

Chinese Parenting Practices

Studies have examined Chinese cultural norms of parent-adolescent relationships, specifically how parents express warmth and love to children (Chao 1995; Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010) and how parents communicate with children (Boutakidis, Chao, & Rodriguez, 2011; Wu & Chao, 2011). Chinese parents are typically restrained in their direct affection towards their children (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Wu & Tseng, 1985). They are less physically and emotionally demonstrative in expressing warmth and love to their children than mainstream American parents (Wu & Chao, 2005, 2011). Chinese culture stresses unique norms of parental warmth that are rooted in deep cultural values regarding what is considered appropriate social behavior. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes holding back strong or extreme emotions because they are considered harmful to health and social harmony (Confucius, 500 B.C./1992). According to Taoism, emotions may also prevent the development of tacit knowledge (or intuition and meditation), a highly valued approach in pursuing truth (Laozi, 300 B.C./2001). Thus, Chinese have been long portrayed as emotionally restrained in ethnographic accounts (Klineberg, 1938; Wu & Tseng, 1985).

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that Chinese Americans show more self-restraint in emotional expressions than European- and Mexican-Americans (Soto, Levenson, & Ebling, 2005; Tsai & Levenson, 1997; Uba, 1994). This emotional moderation is also manifested in Chinese parenting (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Wu & Tseng, 1985).

Chinese parents' love for children is more centrally described as parental sacrifice and thoughtfulness in meeting children's needs and focusing on supporting children's academic success (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; Wu & Chao, 2011). Parental devotion and sacrifice entail parents' high levels of investment in providing instrumental support for children's education and daily life, beyond typical parental care of providing food, clothes, and other basic needs. Chinese parents typically put the child's needs before their own by sacrificing their own interest, and even health and career for the child (Leung & Shek, 2011; Chao & Tseng, 2002). Many Chinese parents work very hard and invest all they have to provide the best for the child's education because education is considered as the path to upward mobility for the child's future (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2004; Goyette & Xie, 1999). An example is the Chinese family tradition that parents save money for children's college tuition by restricting expenses on their own needs or interests (Louie, 2001). Chinese parents also tend to express love for children through their thoughtfulness in meeting the child's needs (Wu & Chao, 2011). The actions of anticipating and meeting other's needs are highly valued in Asian cultures for showing love, caring, and favors in social relationships (Hsu, Tseng, Ashton, McDermott, & Char, 1985; Uba, 1994). This reflects the Chinese Confucian belief that true love is established by actions that satisfy others' needs, and that one's good intentions are actually demonstrated through actions more than words (Confucius, 500 B.C./1992). Such parental devotion and thoughtfulness are pervasive in Chinese culture (Leung & Shek, 2011).

Besides distinctive ways for expressing warmth, Chinese parents also rely on a unique set of norms for communicating with their children. Open communication with children is usually deemphasized in Chinese culture. Wu and Chao (2011) found that the U.S.-born Chinese youth perceived their parents as having considerably lower levels of open communication with them than European American adolescents reported. Chinese parents place a high premium on nonverbal cues when communicating to the child. According to Taoism (Laozi, 300 B.C./2001), language and direct verbal communication are limited in conveying one's true meaning to others and may even be misleading, as words are often considered paradoxical or holding a variety of interpretations. Thus, Taoism advocates "no words" in teaching (Laozi, 300 B.C./2001). Confucian doctrine holds similar beliefs that an ideal man should be short of words but good at actions (Confucius, 500 B.C./1992). These cultural values are reflected in Chinese parents' communication with their children. They often convey intentions, expectations, and love to their children through actions such as sacrificial support for their education, as well as through facial expressions or "colors of face" (Wu & Chao, 2011). Chinese children are socialized to be sensitive to and to recognize the parents' desires and expectations behind the non-verbal cues. This makes it possible for establishing a mutual understanding and synchrony between parent and child.

Chinese parents do use some direct verbal communication but mainly for pragmatic purposes such as explaining parental expectations and morals to the child, more than for the

child's emotions and feelings (Chao, 1995; Wu & Chao, 2011). Most Chinese parents directly tell the child their expectations and talk to the child when the child disappoints the parent or encounters problems and difficulties at school. For example, they may explicitly tell the child the average grades they expect the child to get at school and what they think is best for the child. When the child fails to meet these expectations (e.g., receiving a poor grade), the parents may talk to the child by asking why they received the grade and what actions need to be taken to improve it. Many Chinese parents also express care for the child through verbal communication, but their conversations and questions are more focused on the child's school work (e.g., whether the child has an exam) than how the child feels that day. In contrast, the typical open communication in European American families is more centered on children's psychological well-being and abilities to assess, identify, and express their feelings. As Chao (1995) has found in her interviews with European American mothers, these mothers stressed "processing feelings with the child" (p. 335) such as helping children to identify their emotions and articulate it to others. Furthermore, most Chinese parents' verbal communication with children is essentially teaching rather than discussion, which may reflect the emphasis of parental authority in Chinese culture. In contrast, a child-centered approach is more valued in mainstream American culture, with parents taking a more facilitative rather than teaching role in childrearing (Chao, 1995).

Additionally, typical parental practices of parent-child closeness in mainstream American culture such as spending time and doing things with child may also be relevant for Chinese families. However, the prevalence and purpose of these parental behaviors may be slightly different between the two cultures. In mainstream American culture, parent-child quality time is strongly advocated primarily by the contemporary developmental psychology theories that emphasize its benefits for positive child development (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2016). Parents spend time and do things with the child for the purpose of providing stimulation and various experiences to promote self-esteem, exploration, and creativity in the child more than just fostering closeness with the child (Chao, 1995). In contrast, parent-child shared time among Chinese families may be more focused on fostering a good or harmonious relationship, which represents an interdependent value of childrearing (Chao, 1995). However, such parental practice may not be emphasized in Chinese culture as in mainstream American culture. Chinese parenting centers on teaching and training a child with less emphasis on entertaining and having fun with the child (Chao, 1994; Guo, 2013). Asian parents spend much less time on playing games and sports and doing arts and crafts with their children than helping them with schoolwork (Stevenson, Chen, & Lee, 1992; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). As some typical "American" parenting has been adopted by more Chinese families due to the westernization of Chinese societies (Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009; Xia et al., 2004), parent-child quality time may become more relevant for Chinese families. However, it is probably not foundational for establishing *qin* which is deeply rooted in Chinese belief system of parenting rather than western cultural values (Russell et al., 2010; Wu & Chao, 2011).

The Purpose of Present Study

The present study aimed at capturing the unique Chinese cultural norms of parent-adolescent relationships through the notion of *qin*. Although *qin* is a word that has been widely used to

describe parent-child relationships in China, only one empirical study to date has examined this concept (Wu & Chao, 2011). As one of the first steps of research on *qin*, the present study centered on the cultural meanings of the concept with hopes of laying a theoretical foundation for future endeavors on its developmental and contextual processes. We adopted a qualitative research approach to explore, in-depth, how Chinese American adolescents of immigrant parents understand the meaning of *qin* and how it is manifested in the parenting practices. Semi-structured interviews were individually conducted with a sample of Chinese American high school students. The qualitative interviews focused on adolescents' descriptions of the meaning of *qin* and in what ways it is or is not fostered by their parents.

Methods

Sample

As we were primarily interested in Chinese American adolescents' understanding of the indigenous concept of *qin*, this required that the participants understand and communicate their beliefs about this Chinese concept. Therefore, an important inclusion criterion was that the adolescents could speak and understand Chinese language fluently and read and write Chinese at least moderately well. In addition to Chinese language proficiency requirements, only high school students in the 10th grade that were first- or second-generation Chinese descendants born to immigrant Chinese parents were invited to take part in the study. Tenth graders were chosen, as mid-adolescence is a developmental period characterized by the capability to identify complex thoughts, motivations, emotions, past experiences, and present conditions that affect behaviors (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2016). The most diverse acculturation patterns during adolescence also appear at this age level among youth of immigrants across multiple domains of cultural development, including acculturation attitudes towards ethnic and host cultures, cultural identities, and beliefs about family relationships (Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006). Adolescents with different acculturation patterns typically have various experiences and perceptions of *qin*, which may help provide a full understanding of the concept. We selected participants from a sample previously employed in a large survey study on Chinese American families and adolescent development conducted by Wu and Chao (2011). The survey study provided data on the adolescents' self-reports of their Chinese language proficiency based on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not well at all) to 5 (extremely well). After applying the inclusion criteria for the current study, 38 Chinese American youth from the original sample were eligible to participate. Parents and adolescents were contacted by telephone for their initial consent to be interviewed. Written consent (from parents) and assent (from adolescents) were also acquired before the interview. All information provided during the consent process was delivered in both English and Chinese. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to contacting the participants.

After the recruitment process, 15 Chinese American adolescents (seven boys and eight girls; mean age 16.21 years) were selected from the 10th graders at three different high schools in the greater Los Angeles area. The remaining 23 Chinese American adolescents in the contact sample were either excluded from the study due to the parents' or adolescents' refusal to participate, or were not contacted after the target number of participants (i.e., 15)

was reached. As suggested by cultural consensus theory, small samples (i.e., 10 informants) are sufficient for capturing the “cultural consensus” or shared views of the world within a cultural group as long as the participants are familiar with the cultural concepts or domains of inquiry (Atran, Medin, & Ross, 2005; Romney, Weller, & Batchelder, 1986). Besides the consensus theory, our target sample size was further determined based on the evidence-based recommendation for qualitative samples given by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who stated that data saturation is achieved within the first twelve interviews conducted among participants with high levels of homogeneity. Our contact sample was formed using multiple common inclusion criteria, which ensured similar characteristics within the sample. The 23 adolescents excluded from the final sample had very similar demographic characteristics to those included in the study, even though a slightly smaller percentage of the former group (43% vs. 60%) was highly fluent in Chinese (i.e., spoke and understood Chinese extremely well and read and wrote Chinese very well or extremely well). The schools that our participants attended had medium to high percentages of Asian Americans, 37%, 61%, and 72%, respectively. Only a small percentage of the students at the schools (i.e., 6~8%) were receiving federally funded free or reduced-price lunch, for which only students from low-income households (i.e., with an income at or below 185% of the federal poverty line) are eligible. Eight of the selected participants were first-generation Chinese American adolescents, and seven were U.S. born. The demographic characteristics of the participating adolescents are summarized in Table 1.

Data Collection

We developed a semi-structured interview protocol to assess adolescents’ beliefs about the meaning of *qin* and parental behaviors for fostering *qin*. The interview consisted of two parts with six broad questions in total (see Appendix). The four questions of Part I focused on capturing the meaning of *qin*. The questions began with a broad question asking whether the adolescents were *qin* with their parents. The interviewer did not need to provide examples or additional descriptors to address *qin*. All of the interviewees understood the question right away and specified whether they were *qin* with their parents and to what extent. If the adolescents were not very *qin* with their parents, they were asked to specify their level of *qin* with each parent separately. The adolescents were then asked two broad questions to explain what they meant by being *qin* or not *qin* with their parents in detail. Finally, a broad question was asked of all adolescents in general regarding the meaning of *qin*. Part II captured the specific parental behaviors that fostered *qin* in the adolescents. The adolescents were asked two broad questions to describe how parents did or did not encourage *qin*. Follow-up questions also explored parental behaviors, specifically involving warmth and communication, that fostered *qin*. The adolescents who were not very *qin* were also asked follow-up questions about what their parents could do to help them become more *qin*. The interview protocol was first piloted among three Chinese American college students. We simplified some of the wording to ease the understanding of the questions based on the results of the pilot study.

The lead author, who was a graduate student researcher, and two undergraduate research assistants conducted the individual interviews at locations of the adolescents’ choice, e.g., at the families’ homes or at their local libraries. The research assistants received training from

the lead author on the interview protocol and note taking. All assistants were first- or second-generation Chinese Americans and bilingual in Chinese and English. According to Suh, Kagan, and Strumpf (2009), the same cultural background between researchers and participants helps the participants feel comfortable with disclosing their opinions. It is also effective for capturing explicit and implicit cultural meanings of the participants' responses. The lead author was the primary interviewer, and a research assistant took notes as an observer. Nine interviews were conducted in English with Mandarin Chinese mixed in sporadically, and another six were in Mandarin. The interviews took an average of 43 minutes ($SD = 6.44$, ranges, 30 to 60). The adolescents were paid \$30 as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Field notes were written by the lead author soon after an interview was conducted. The interviews conducted in Chinese were translated into English when the field notes were written. Although transcripts generally provide more details than field notes (Tessier, 2012), the study used field notes to focus on the content of the interviews because the purpose of the study was to capture the meanings of *qin*. The content of the interview is more effective for capturing meanings and perceptions of a concept than the mechanics of the conversation (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Unlike the traditional practice of field notes, which are simply based on the notes taken during the interview and the interviewer's recall (Tessier, 2012), our field notes were written primarily based on the audio-taped interviews by listening to the tapes several times, and writing and revising the notes until they described the interview thoroughly. The research assistants' notes were used as references for the main topics mentioned in the interview and the context of the interview (e.g., date, time, location). This approach of writing field notes immediately after an interview by listening to audio-recordings have been reported as more advantageous than using audio-recordings and verbatim transcription only because it generates meanings from the data more effectively and efficiently (Fasick, 1977; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Such an approach has been well-established and widely used in health care research in recent decade (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Ski, Munian, Rolley, & Thompson, 2014). We do acknowledge that some interpretative bias—even if unconscious—can affect how field notes are constructed and utilized (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), but we also believe that the advantages outlined above outweighed that risk.

Coding and Data Analyses

The study adopted a thematic analysis approach, which shares many features with grounded theory for coding and data analyses (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). It primarily involves identifying concepts and themes that emerge in participants' responses through an inductive process and constant comparison of themes. The lead author reviewed the field notes of each adolescent's responses several times to identify distinct concepts. The concepts were compared within and across field notes and grouped into themes. For example, "respecting parents," "listening to parents," "following parents' wishes," "asking for parents' approval before doing something," or "serving parents" were categorized under the theme of "respecting parents." After the initial set of themes was developed, the lead author met with the second author (an associate professor in psychology who specializes in Asian American parenting) regularly to review the specific themes and develop broad

themes based on the relationship among them. A coding scheme with two-level themes was generated with detailed definitions for each theme. The field notes of each interview were then split into excerpts that contained at least one coherent subtheme. For each of the six broad questions of the interview, the lead author and a trained undergraduate research assistant (i.e., one of the interview note takers), coded the same set of interview excerpts independently and met weekly to cross-validate the coding results. They discussed the discrepancies in the coding results until reaching a consensus on their understanding of the codes, and then coded another set of interview excerpts to examine if the inter-rater agreement improved. Inter-rater reliability in the coding was finally established for each of the six questions separately. Cohen's kappa was calculated based on a random sample of 20–30% of the interviews for each question. It ranged from 0.88 to 0.93 across all questions. Once reliability was established (i.e., 0.80 or above), the lead author and the second coder each coded half of the interviews.

The interview responses to the first broad question (i.e., whether the adolescent was *qin* with parents and to what extent) were evaluated using the code for adolescents' perceived levels of *qin*. Responses were coded in categories of "very *qin*" (evidenced by the child reporting being very *qin* with parents), and "not very *qin*" or "somewhat to mostly *qin*" (evidenced by the child reporting being *qin* with the parents but not very *qin*, specifically, being on the middle level or somewhere between the middle and high level of *qin*, if given a scale ranging from low to high level of *qin* with the low-level indicating "not at all *qin*" and high-level corresponding to "very *qin*"). The number and percentage of adolescents at each level of *qin* were calculated across the whole sample and within subgroups designated by the adolescents' sex, generational status, and Chinese fluency. The interview responses for the second through fourth questions (i.e., what the adolescent meant by being *qin* or not *qin* with parents) and for the last two questions (i.e., how the parents did or did not encourage *qin*) were analyzed based on the codes for the meaning of *qin* (e.g., respecting parents) and parental behaviors fostering *qin* (e.g., sacrificing for child), respectively. For example, responses on the second through fourth questions were coded as "respecting parents" when the interviewees mentioned "respecting parents," "listening to parents," "following parents' wishes," "asking for parents' approval before doing something," or "serving parents." For each of these codes, the number and percentage of adolescents who mentioned the code were computed across the whole sample and by the adolescents' perceived levels of *qin*.

Results

Among the 15 Chinese American adolescents interviewed, 5 of them reported being very *qin* with both parents, and 6 were somewhat to mostly *qin* with both parents. The other four reported different levels of *qin* with each parent, being very *qin* with one parent but only somewhat *qin* with the other. Among the four adolescents, three were very *qin* with the mother and one was very *qin* with the father. Although the sample was not adequate for significance tests of subgroup differences, the descriptive statistics showed that there were similar numbers of boys (57%, 4/7) and girls (63%, 5/8), and first- (63%, 5/8) and second-generation youth (57%, 4/7) who reported being very *qin* with one or both parents. However, a great majority of adolescents highly fluent in Chinese (78%; 7/9) reported being very *qin*

with one or both parents, whereas only a third of those who were less fluent in Chinese (2/6) indicated this.

Meaning of Being *Qin* with Parents

The characteristics of *qin* can be captured through three broad themes, with subthemes presented in order, according to their frequencies of occurrence in the results: (a) being close to parents, (b) showing love and warmth to parents, and (c) communicating with parents. Excerpts of field notes are included below to support the explanation of the subthemes. The original meanings of the quotes were faithfully preserved with some edits for ensuring correct grammar and clarity of content.

Child closeness with parents—All the interviewees described *qin* as closeness with parent (15/15). The closeness emphasized by the Chinese youth not only involved specific practices, such as spending time and doing things with parents; it also entailed more global qualities of relationships, stressing connectedness and harmony between parents and adolescents. Four subthemes were identified, as discussed below.

Spending time and doing things together with parents: Many interviewees (12/15) described *qin* as spending time with parents, such as eating dinner, watching movies, playing sports, and going to a park. Two-thirds of the adolescents who were very *qin* with one or both parents (6/9) mentioned this subtheme.

TC [Target Child], her brother, and the parents worked as a team when they hung out together. For example, they worked together to arrive at their destination. The parents drove the car, and the children looked at the map and asked others for directions. (*Female, first-generation*)

All the adolescents who were not very *qin* with both parents (6/6) also talked about this topic. A majority of them (4/6) described “not very *qin*” as not having time to do things together with parents due to having too much schoolwork or the parents being busy with their work.

TC did not have contact with the parents on a daily basis. She did not see them often. For example, she had not seen her father for a month at the time of the interview, as he was on a business trip. She did not eat dinner with the parents either. Her typical day consisted of going to school and coming back. After she got home, she got some food and went to her room to do homework. Later, she would go out to get dinner and would eat it while doing homework in her room. After finishing homework, she would go to bed. Thus, she did not have time to talk to or interact with the parents. (*Female, first-generation*)

Knowing, understanding, and trusting parents: The interviewees also believed that *qin* requires a good understanding of parents’ behaviors and trust in the parents (10/15). A majority of those who were very *qin* with one or both parents (78%; 7/9) shared this view.

Although the father was on business trips most of the time and TC did not have many opportunities to spend time with him, TC thought that she was still *qin* with

him. TC understood that the father did not spend a lot of time at home because he was working hard to support the family, and was practically sacrificing himself for his daughters. (*Female, second-generation*)

Half of the adolescents who were not very *qin* with both parents (3/6) reported on this topic. However, their descriptions were at a more superficial level.

TC knew his mother well. In an activity celebrating Mother's Day held at a temple, kids were allowed to touch their mother's hands first, and then, with their eyes covered, were asked to identify those belonging to their own mother among many other pairs of hands belonging to other mothers. TC was able to identify his mother's hands correctly. (*Male, second-generation*)

Feeling comfortable and being harmonious with parents: The interviewees also described *qin* as feeling comfortable with their parents, feeling relaxed or enjoying spending time with the parents, being harmonious with or even being a friend with their parents (10/15). A majority of the youth who were very *qin* (78%; 7/9) with their parents mentioned this. Some adolescents had fun with their parents even when they did not share common interests or hobbies.

When they had dinner together, the family talked to each other and had fun. Family dinners were very relaxing. TC and her brother talked about funny things that only their generation understood. The parents still laughed with them, although they did not understand what the kids were talking about. TC and her brother also laughed with them when the parents told jokes that the kids did not understand. (*Female, first-generation*)

In contrast, just half of those who were not very *qin* with their parents (3/6) mentioned this subtheme. Their descriptions of the topic were also briefer, with little detail.

TC felt closer to his father than his mother sometimes. They found something to laugh about, such as the jokes from the Internet. This interaction made TC *qin* with the father because there was something that they could both relate to. (*Male, second-generation*)

Feeling a sense of togetherness with parents: The interviewees also described *qin* as a sense of togetherness with parents (9/15). Specifically, to them, *qin* meant that the adolescent and parent care about each other no matter what happens. Most of the youth who were very *qin* with their parents (78%; 7/9) described this. A first-generation Chinese American female participant who was very *qin* said that she and her parents were not just living under the same roof together but were also caring toward each other. Another child provided a more detailed explanation of this concept.

TC felt that children that are *qin* with parents treat parents as a part of their world or life, rather than as "someone else" who does not belong to the family [probably someone living in the same house with the child who has no relation to the child]. He thought many friends of his were not *qin* with their parents. They saw their parents every day at home and lived with them, but did not talk to the parents. TC

never heard them telling him what their parents told them and what they shared with the parents. (*Male, first-generation*)

Only a third of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (2/6) with their parents mentioned this subtheme. One of them thought that his connectedness with parents was not his choice, but was rather the result of the parents needing his help often (e.g., language brokering) because he was the only child. The other described a sense of separateness from the parents when prompted to explain the meaning of “not very *qin*.”

On a daily basis, TC felt that he and the parents were just at home and living in the same household without much interaction. They did not even know each other. (*Male, second-generation*)

Child love for parents—According to the interviewees, *qin* involves not only closeness but also a child’s love for the parents (14/15). The expressions of such love were not as affectionate as one might find among European Americans. A first-generation Chinese American female participant who was very *qin* with her parents described herself as more reserved than “Americans”; she was not used to expressing love for her parents in an affectionate manner (e.g., through hugging). The Chinese youth demonstrated their love for the parents by respecting them, helping or sacrificing for them, doing things to make them happy and proud, and paying back.

Respecting parents: Many interviewees emphasized respecting parents (10/15), specifically obeying them, following their wishes particularly in academic achievement, asking for parental approval before doing something, serving them, and not talking back as signs of love. Two thirds of the adolescents who were very *qin* (6/9) with their parents mentioned these topics during interviews. Some of them clearly supported a hierarchical relationship between parent and child that reflects Confucian belief system.

TC also served his parents. He stated that he never put himself above the parents. He believed that parents should always be in a higher position, although his parents talked to the children as if they were friends sometimes. (*Male, first-generation*)

The same percentage of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (4/6) with their parents talked about this topic. Two of them briefly commented that an adolescent who is *qin* respects parents, while the other two explained how they were disrespectful as an indicator of “not very *qin*.”

TC sometimes ignored what the parents said to her. For example, the parents did not understand why TC spent a lot of time buying stuff [probably clothes and shoes] to prepare for a dance. They thought that her time would be better utilized by studying. They might say “Why didn’t you spend time on studying?” TC did not care what they said. She thought that she was fine as long as she kept her grades up. (*Female, first-generation*)

Helping or sacrificing for parents: According to the interviewees, *qin* also means helping the parents by, for example, doing chores, translating for them, and driving (8/15). They

thought that adolescents sometimes have to sacrifice their interests and time to help the parents. A little over half of the youth who were very *qin* (5/9) emphasized this.

To TC, *qin* also meant that the child and the parent would sacrifice for each other. For example, TC sacrificed her time to help her parents translate bills or write a letter in English. Similarly, her parents sacrificed much of their time by taking her to doctors when she was sick. (*Female, first-generation*)

Half of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (3/6) with the parents mentioned this theme. However, their accounts were less detailed. They also tended to offer such assistance to the parents in compelling or extreme situations only (e.g., parent illness).

TC would help the parents when they really needed it. For example, although he would not ordinarily help his father mow the lawn, he would do so if the father was sick. (*Male, second-generation*)

Doing things to make parents happy and proud: Some of the interviewees (7/15) also noted that doing things to make the parents happy and proud was important. This included studying hard, getting good grades, going to a good college, or being a good child. Nearly half of the youth who were very *qin* (4/9) with their parents discussed this topic.

TC felt that he was also being *qin* with his parents by doing well in school. He believed that most Asian parents care about school and grades, as they are vital when applying for college. Thus, by getting good grades, children make the parents proud and show them that they are trying hard for themselves and for their parents. Hence, TC believed that by studying hard, he would help the relationship between him and his parents improve. (*Male, first-generation*)

Half of those who were not very *qin* (3/6) also talked about this topic. However, their descriptions were very brief, with limited elaborations. They also focused on doing things for their parents to avoid eliciting negative parental emotions (e.g., disappointment, sadness, or anger) rather than to evoke positive ones (e.g., happiness).

TC did not want to disappoint his parents. He would rather see them happy than sad or angry. (*Male, second-generation*)

Appreciating and paying back parents: Just over a third of the interviewees (6/15) believed that adolescents who are *qin* with their parents appreciate the sacrifices the parents have made for them and the advantages, benefits, and opportunities that the parents provided. In return, they would want to pay parents back by studying hard at school, supporting the parents financially in the future, and by being a good person in general. Nearly half of the adolescents who were very *qin* (4/9) emphasized this subtheme.

TC would like to study harder so that her mother did not have to sacrifice too much time and effort on consoling her after she received bad grades. TC felt guilty for the mother sacrificing so much for her. She also "compromised" with her parents by not being selfish and by wanting to give something in return. (*Female, second-generation*)

A third of the participants that were not very *qin* (2 of 6) elaborated on this topic.

TC wanted to pay back his parents. TC felt that he owed the parents a lot because they had raised him and sacrificed for him. Consequently, TC obeyed his parents' wishes most of the time, partly because he wanted to pay them back. His parents told him that the way to pay back is to study hard at school, go to a good college, get a good job, and be a good person. (*Male, second-generation*)

Child communication with parent—The adolescents also described *qin* in terms of communicating with parents openly and frequently (14/15). They illustrated such communication as the adolescent feeling comfortable and having no fear when talking to parents, or telling them almost everything (e.g., discussing school issues, problems, and difficulties related to school and friends, as well as some personal matters). All the adolescents who were very *qin* (9/9) with their parents mentioned this.

TC told the mother almost everything. He talked to her about what he was doing at school, such as getting an A on tests, and readily discussed his problems and future goals. He felt very comfortable when talking to her. He did not feel the need to hide anything from his mother or lie to her, but would do so when he got a bad grade at school [probably because he did not want to make her unhappy]. TC mostly talked to his mother during dinner time and they talked like friends. (*Male, first-generation*)

Almost all the adolescents who were not very *qin* (83%; 5/6) with their parents also mentioned this topic. However, most of them (4/6) did so when describing “not very *qin*,” identifying it as lack of communication with the parents (e.g., not talking to the parents often, or being reluctant or afraid of talking to them). It seemed that both the adolescents who were very *qin* and not very *qin* with parents emphasized the importance of a child communicating with parents, but those who were less *qin* had poorer communication with their parents.

TC did not talk to her parents every day. She only talked to them when she had to. Specifically, she mostly talked to them when she needed money or when she had to go out for a project. She also told them when she was going to take the SATs [Scholastic Aptitude Tests]. She usually locked herself in her room, doing homework and talking to friends. (*Female, first-generation*)

Interestingly, almost all (89%; 8/9) the adolescents who were very *qin* with their parents talked to them about school, but only one of the six participants who were not very *qin* (17%) did so.

In summary, the adolescents' descriptions of *qin* mostly emphasized what children do or feel in the relationship. These behaviors and feelings are perhaps an expression of their gratitude and appreciation to their parents. When asked about what parental behaviors foster *qin*, most of their responses seemed to mirror what they mentioned above as the general characteristics of *qin*.

Parental Behaviors Fostering *Qin*

Parental behaviors facilitating *qin* are also summarized as three broad themes: (a) loving the child, (b) communicating with the child, and (c) being close with the child. Pertinent subthemes are presented in order reflecting their frequencies of occurrence.

Parental love—All the interviewees highlighted parental love or warmth that is expressed through non-affectionate ways as a sign of *qin* (15/15). They shared that their parents showed love to them “quietly,” with few expressive demonstrations. A first-generation Chinese American male participant simply called it “traditional ways of loving.” In sum, the study participants knew that their parents loved them from just being around them, even though the parents did not say “I love you” to them.

TC thought that, after living with his parents for 17 years, he already knew that they loved him. Thus, he would consider it strange if they said “I love you” to him or if the parents and TC talked about whether the parents loved him. His parents may also consider it strange if he wondered whether they loved him because they believe that TC should have known this from a very young age. (*Male, second-generation*)

Only a few adolescents (4/15) mentioned the importance of affection in fostering *qin*. They felt loved when the parents hugged them and said “I love you.” According to the interviewees, Chinese parents made their children *qin* with them through their devotion and sacrifices they make, particularly those that foster the child’s education, and through thoughtfulness in meeting the child’s needs, as described in the following five subthemes.

Spending time and money on the child, particularly for the child’s education: Most of the interviewees (10/15) believed that parents’ high levels of devotion help the youth become *qin* with them. They mentioned that their parents spent a lot of time on driving them everywhere to participate in educational activities, such as music lessons and performances. Some parents made time every day to ask the children whether they had encountered problems at school and had finished homework, even though the parents were very busy with their own work. The parents also spent a significant amount of money on providing opportunities for the adolescents’ education, such as paying for summer programs. Two thirds of the youth who were very *qin* (6/9) with their parents discussed this subtheme.

During the finals week, TC’s dad was in Taiwan. But he still called her every day to inquire about how she did on her tests and ask her if she would be ready for the upcoming tests. This made her *qin* with her parents because long-distance phone calls from Taiwan are expensive. Yet, her dad still called her to check on her. (*Female, first-generation*)

The same percentage of the participants who were not very *qin* (4/6) talked about this topic. However, they only mentioned it briefly, and some did not see its relevance in fostering *qin*.

The parents bought things for TC when he needed it. For example, when TC’s computer ran very slowly, the parents bought a new one for him. However, TC said that buying things for him only made him a little bit *qin* with his parents. (*Male, first-generation*)

Helping the child, particularly with schoolwork: Many interviewees mentioned that their parents also made them feel loved by helping them with schoolwork (9/14), such as answering their questions when they had problems with schoolwork or finding a tutor to help them when they were struggling with a subject. A great majority (78%; 7/9) of the adolescents who were very *qin* elaborated on this subtheme.

The father showed his concerns by helping TC's schoolwork. He had never been impatient when helping TC to solve problems in schoolwork. TC shared that sometimes the father was a little overprotective. When TC asked him a question regarding schoolwork, the father would not only provide an answer, but would bring up a lot of things related to the question to give TC an opportunistic education. (*Male, second-generation*)

Only a third of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (2/6) with their parents mentioned this topic.

The parents let TC do or helped him do whatever TC wanted, as long as these were “appropriate things,” such as science projects. The parents helped him with his science projects by buying him materials and giving him advice. This made TC feel loved because the parents were being supportive of him and made it easier for TC to accomplish his goals. (*Male, first-generation*)

Sacrificing for the child: According to some of the interviewees (7/15), they were *qin* with their parents because the parents sacrificed their own careers, time, and interests for the child's future opportunities, education, or happiness in general. Although this subtheme may overlap with a previously described subtheme of investing a lot of time and money into the child, it required the interviewees' direct use of the word *sacrifice* in their descriptions of parental behaviors and clear perceptions of the parents putting the child's interests above their own. Most of the adolescents who were very *qin* with their parents (78%; 7/9) mentioned this subtheme, whereas none of those who were not very *qin* talked about it (0/6). A first-generation Chinese American male participant stated that his mother sacrificed for him by leaving her home country and working very hard to immigrate to the U.S. He believed that the mother did this to provide a better future for him. Another participant described how his mother sacrificed for him on a daily basis.

TC's mother sacrificed a lot of her own time doing things for TC and his brother. She did most of the housework. Although TC was capable of doing all the housework, such as vacuuming and washing the dishes, his mother took it upon herself to do these chores so that TC would have more free time. She also made TC's lunch, while his father would likely give TC \$10 to buy a lunch. TC also explained that no one else would want to spend time doing the housework if the mother did not do it. His mother's actions made TC feel loved but also guilty and sad because his mother was using her own time so that TC and his brother would not have to worry about these little things. TC felt that it was as if they were robbing his mother of her time. (*Male, first-generation*)

Being very thoughtful in meeting the child's needs: Besides parental devotion and sacrifice, some interviewees (5/15) also mentioned that their parents made the adolescents *qin* by being very thoughtful in meeting their needs, such as paying attention to and anticipating what they needed without the adolescents having to ask. A third of the adolescents who were very *qin* (3/9) with their parents mentioned this topic.

TC finished her homework and came out of her room to relax. She felt hungry and asked her mother if there was anything she could eat. The mother pointed to the kitchen and told her that there was a bowl of noodles on the table. The mother had clearly anticipated that she would be hungry after doing her homework, so she cooked the noodles for her in advance. (*Female, first-generation*)

Although the same percentage of youth who were not very *qin* (33%; 2/6) with their parents talked about this subtheme, their descriptions were very brief, with little elaboration.

The mother cooked and delivered lunch for TC every day when he was at school because the school cafeteria did not always have healthy food on offer. (*Male, second-generation*)

Doing everything for the child or always being there for the child: The Chinese adolescents, particularly those who were very *qin*, highlighted that their parents' lives were always centered around them (5/15). The parents did everything for the adolescents and were willing to try their best to be there for them. Nearly half of the adolescents who were very *qin* (4/9) emphasized this subtheme.

TC realized that the mother did almost everything for TC's good. However, TC failed to appreciate the benefit of being forced by her mother to do something such as mental math when TC was little. But TC saw the benefits when she grew up and saw the fruit of her mother's labor. She probably also did something for TC behind TC's back. (*Female, second-generation*)

Only one of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (17%) with their parents mentioned this topic.

The parents were always there for TC. When she came back from school, one of the parents was always at home and there was always food at the table. (*Female, second-generation*)

Parental communication with children—Parental communication with children was mentioned by most of the adolescents (14/15) as important for fostering *qin*, as reflected in the following two subthemes.

Asking about the child's life or talking to the child often: Many interviewees (12/15) mentioned this subtheme. Almost all (89%; 8/9) participants who were very *qin* with their parents stated that their parents typically talked to them about school, future or college plans, music lessons, and moral stories, rather than having discussions about their feelings or emotions.

TC felt loved when his parents communicated with him. Usually, the parents brought up subjects to talk about with TC, such as school-related matters and news. When they asked him about his day, TC felt cared for by the parents. Sometimes, the parents talked with him like friends when the topic was not very important, such as asking TC to clean his room. At other times, the parents talked in a directive and demanding tone, especially when the topic was important, such as things related to school. TC listened to them and accepted what they said in these situations because he understood how the parents felt [about the importance of school]. It also made him *qin*. (*Male, second-generation*)

Two thirds of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (67%; 4/6) either described their parents' communication with them very briefly or complained about parents not talking to them often.

The parents did not talk to TC every day. They only asked her about school sometimes. They did not address her unless they had to. For example, they had TC sit down and forced her to talk about what colleges she wanted to attend. This made TC feel relieved, as it indicated that the parents cared about her future. (*Female, first-generation*)

Comforting, encouraging, and giving advice to the child: The interviewees (7/15) also mentioned that it helps the adolescents become *qin* with their parents when they comfort, encourage, and give advice to them, particularly regarding problems and difficulties at school. More than half of the youth who were very *qin* (56%; 5/9) with their parents talked about this topic in their interviews.

The parents offered TC encouragement when TC is worried or anxious. For example, when TC was working on the SATs, the parents kept encouraging her and comforting her when she was stressed. The parents were staying by her side and continually giving her encouragement during the whole process when she was preparing for and taking the tests (*Female, first-generation*)

Only a third of the adolescents who were not very *qin* (2 of 6) with their parents mentioned this subtheme. They reported that it made them not *qin* when the parents discouraged them or could not give them advice.

The parents did not encourage TC. For example, before TC was taking an exam, they said to her, "Look, you don't study hard. You won't get a good grade." (*Female, first-generation*)

Parental closeness with children—Parental closeness with children was mentioned by 11 of the 15 adolescents interviewed as important for fostering *qin*, and is reflected in the following two subthemes.

Spending time or doing things together with the child: More than half of the interviewees (8/15) mentioned that parents help children become *qin* by spending time or doing things together with them, such as eating dinner, playing sports, watching television, and traveling.

However, only a third of those who were very *qin* (3/9) with their parents mentioned this topic. The youth's descriptions of the subtheme were also very brief overall.

The father would bring the whole family out for dinner when he came back from business trips. TC believed that this showed that her father loved the family and wanted his daughters to know that. (*Female, second-generation*)

This topic was actually most frequently discussed by those who were not very *qin* (83%; 5/6) with their parents.

Usually, the parents asked TC to go out with them, so that they could spend more time together, which made TC *qin* with them. Sometimes, this made TC felt loved, but not all the time. (*Male, first-generation*)

Knowing, understanding, and trusting the child: Many interviewees (8/15) also believed that children become *qin* if the parents know what is going on in the child's life, understand the child's problems and difficulties, and trust the child. A little less than half of those who were very *qin* (44%; 4/9) talked about parents' understanding of them.

The parents were not very strict with TC compared to her friends' parents. Many of her friends' parents were very strict on kids and would not listen to them. Compared to them, TC's parents were very understanding. TC could tell them about the mistakes she had made and share her problems and difficulties. Her parents understood her problems and forgave her for the mistakes. She felt very happy and lucky for having such tolerant parents. (*Female, second-generation*)

This topic was more frequently discussed by those who were not very *qin* (67%; 4/6) with their parents. They complained about their parents' *lack* of understanding of their lives, the stress that they experienced at school, and the importance of social activities for them.

The parents did not understand a lot of things that TC experienced, such as the problems and difficulties that she had to face at school. For example, currently, TC had to deal with "very stupid people" in drumline. But the parents would not understand it because they had never been in clubs or participated in drumlines. Similarly, her parents were unaware that a lot of kids were on drugs at school. TC did not want to talk to them about it because her parents might wonder whether she was on drugs. She thought that the environments that her parents and she grew up in were different. The kids were thoughtful and listened to parents in Taiwan but the kids in the U.S. had more freedom and were more rebellious. (*Female, second-generation*)

In summary, all the characteristics of benevolent parenting identified previously, such as parental devotion, sacrifice, and thoughtfulness (Chao, 1994; Wu & Chao, 2011), also emerged from the current interviews (the only exception was *guan*). Moreover, the adolescents' elaborations on parental communication with the child clearly showed the parental concern and involved care for the child's education, which is consistent with benevolent parenting. However, typical "American" practices of parent-child closeness were also brought up, which are not features of benevolent parenting.

Discussion

The study captured the indigenous concept of Chinese parent-child relationships, *qin*, as experienced by Chinese American adolescents of immigrants. It has extended a prior quantitative study on Chinese parent-child relationships (Wu & Chao, 2011) by providing a more in-depth understanding of the cultural meaning of *qin*. The semi-structured interviews revealed Chinese American adolescents' understanding of *qin* and the parental behaviors that foster such a relationship. According to the adolescents interviewed, being *qin* with parents was characterized as closeness to parents and a general sense of togetherness and harmony; showing parents their love through respect, obedience, academic effort, and appreciation; and open communication with the parents particularly about school. This relationship was mainly fostered by parental devotion and sacrifice, particularly for the child's education, future opportunities, success, and needs. The findings also indicated a reciprocal process in a *qin* relationship, with the child responding to the parent's benevolent parenting with love and devotion.

Chinese American Adolescents' Beliefs of the Meaning of *Qin*

The findings of the qualitative interviews highlighted the role of child behaviors for *qin*, specifically the child's reciprocation of devotion and appreciation. However, most studies focusing on parent-child relationships place more emphasis on what parents do or feel in the relationship rather than on what the child may feel and do (Bell, 1971; Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2002). Yet, a bidirectional perspective urges more understanding of the role of children in family relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2002; Parke & Buriel, 1998). The Chinese American youth interviewed in the study elaborated on sets of specific child behaviors that manifest a reciprocation of love in a *qin* relationship.

Many of the child behaviors that were mentioned as a part of *qin*, are not stressed in mainstream American culture. One of the major meanings of *qin*, child closeness with parents, provides such an example. Typically, researchers assume that parent-child closeness mainly involves spending time and doing things together and openly communicating with each other (Barnes & Olson, 1985). However, according to the Chinese American adolescents, closeness with parents in *qin* is not only demonstrated in these specific practices of closeness. It is also characterized by more global qualities of relationships, stressing connectedness and harmony between the children and parents. As the Chinese American adolescents explained, adolescents who are *qin* with their parents feel a sense of togetherness with parents. Specifically, they care about each other no matter what happens. The children believe that the parents are always an important part of their lives, and they want to always be with the parents. This aspect of *qin* clearly reveals an interdependent perspective of the parent-child relationship typically held by Chinese families, which is different from an independent view of the family relationship focusing on individuality and separateness (Chao, 1995). Besides a sense of togetherness, adolescents' closeness with parents may also lead to more harmonious relationships. As the Chinese American adolescents illustrated, the adolescents may feel very natural and enjoy spending time with their parents, even if they do not share common interests or hobbies with each other. Other

studies have documented that one of the main cultural concerns of Asian family relationships is maintaining harmony (Chao, 1995; Hsu et al., 1985). Children are taught to get along with their parents and siblings by tolerating each other's differences. A first-generation Chinese girl described this when she noted that she and her brother laughed with their parents when the parents talked about things of their generation, even though the kids did not think it was really that funny. She believed that this demonstrated how harmonious her family was.

According to the Chinese American adolescents, *qin* involves more than closeness; it also demonstrates the child's love for the parents. Unfortunately, the English translation for *qin*, "being close to," is not able to fully capture the dimension of child love. Most literature of parent-adolescent relationships has focused on parent-child cohesion but not child love for parents (Farrell & Barnes, 1993; Olson, 2000). However, all Chinese American adolescents interviewed in the study stressed loving the parents—specifically, in more non-affectionate ways—as an important part of *qin*. According to these adolescents, children who are *qin* with parents love the parents by respecting and obeying them, helping or sacrificing for them, doing things to make them happy and proud, particularly by studying hard at school, and appreciating what their parents have done for them and paying them back. These behaviors involved in child love for parents reflect precepts of filial piety that stresses respect, obedience, and honor of the child to parents (Chao, 1995). It is interesting that although prior studies found that Chinese American adolescents desired affectionate parental warmth as much as European American youth (Wu & Chao, 2005, 2011), the Chinese youth probably learned from their family culture to be not expressive with the parents (Pyke, 2000). What the adolescents feel and do in a *qin* relationship may be actually a reflection of what they perceive their parents have given them (i.e., expressing love in non-affectionate ways).

The Chinese American youth also described *qin* as an open style of communication with the parents. Unlike the open communication of affection and feelings stressed in Western culture (Barns & Olson, 1985), school related subjects were the main topics that the Chinese adolescents who were very *qin* emphasized in their communication with parents more often than those who were less *qin*. Such school-focused communication might be a reciprocation of Chinese parents' concerns and communication with the adolescents that center on school issues.

Chinese American Adolescents' Beliefs of the Parental Practices that Foster Qin

Findings of the qualitative interviews also provided a more in-depth understanding of immigrant Chinese parents' benevolent parenting. It was proposed that parental practices including parental devotion, sacrifice, and thoughtfulness, are relevant for fostering *qin* in adolescents (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; Wu & Chao, 2011). Consistently, the Chinese American adolescents stressed parental love or warmth, which was mainly characterized by parents' high levels of investment and devotion for their child's education; sacrifices for the child's future opportunities, education, or happiness; and thoughtfulness in anticipating and meeting their child's needs. Only a small proportion of adolescents mentioned "affectionate warmth" which is often advocated in mainstream American culture. These findings indicated

that Chinese immigrant parents may hold a unique set of cultural norms for parental warmth that are different from those espoused in mainstream American culture. These Chinese norms of parenting are crucial for the development of *qin* among their children. Although Chinese adolescents highly endorse American standards of warmth as found in prior studies (Pyke, 2000; Wu & Chao, 2005), they did not seem to emphasize this American type of warmth for fostering *qin*.

Chinese American youth also mentioned parental communication with children for fostering *qin*. However, the parent-child communication they described centers on the child's education. It consists essentially of parents talking to children about things such as school, future or college plans, music lessons, and moral stories, as well as parental encouragement and advice particularly for children's schoolwork. This is different from the open communication typically found in European American families that focuses on discussions about children's feelings or emotions. As reviewed earlier, Chinese parents' direct communication with their children is primarily for pragmatic purposes (e.g., explaining expectations and morals) rather than processing feelings (Chao, 1995; Wu & Chao, 2011). This was also consistent with traditional Chinese cultural values that deemphasize open communication, particularly involving dialogues on one's feelings (Confucius, 500 B.C./1992; Laozi, 300 B.C./2001).

The Chinese American adolescents also briefly mentioned parents spending time and doing things together with the child, which may partly indicate a similarity in *qin* and parent-adolescent relationships in the mainstream American culture. As reviewed earlier (Russell et al., 2010; Wu & Chao, 2011), parent-adolescent quality time or joint activities may be relevant for *qin*, but are possibly not as foundational as parental devotion and sacrifice for fostering *qin*. These parental practices were mostly emphasized by the Chinese adolescents who were not very *qin* with their parents, with only a small number of those who were very *qin* mentioning them. Moreover, when describing the meaning of *qin*, the adolescents who were less *qin* with their parents talked more about spending time and doing things together with parents than those who were very *qin*. However, they focused on describing "not very *qin*" as an absence of joint activities with their parents. In contrast, fewer of them emphasized parental devotion and sacrifice in general (i.e., none of them mentioned parental sacrifice), which are key components of *qin*, than those who were very *qin*. This finding might reflect a relatively superficial understanding of *qin* among these adolescents due to their lack of cultural knowledge of the concept.

Another typical parental behavior of parent-child closeness in mainstream American cultures, parents' understanding and trusting the child, may represent another cultural similarity in parent-adolescent relationships. This theme was also more emphasized by Chinese youth who were less *qin* with parents than those who were very *qin*, mostly when they were explaining "not very *qin*" as a result of lack of parental understanding and trust in them. They tended to complain about their parents' lack of understanding and cultural knowledge about youth lives in the U.S. Thus, the prominence of this parental behavior for fostering *qin* might reflect the parent-adolescent acculturation gaps more than the central features of *qin*.

Few Chinese American youth mentioned *guan* (caring for and disciplining) (Chao, 1994) for fostering *qin*, although it was mentioned by Chinese American college students in the pilot study of the interview. It is plausible that *guan* does partly facilitate *qin* in adolescents, as it involves loving and caring for the child. However, a full understanding of the underlying message of love in *guan* or parental disciplining may require higher levels of cognitive complexity. Chinese American high school students might not be as able or mature to appreciate their parents' love of *guan* to the same extent as college students, as they are less cognitively or emotionally sophisticated. Thus, *guan* may not be relevant for fostering *qin* among Chinese American youth in mid-adolescence as opposed to late adolescence. This also indicates a limitation of the study for having relied on college students in the pilot interview. We did not have access to our contact sample of 10th graders to pilot the questions prior to beginning the main study.

Combining the findings on child behaviors involved in *qin* and parental behaviors fostering *qin*, it seems that *qin* may involve a reciprocal process between parental practices and child behaviors. Parental devotion and sacrifice lead the children to feel loved by the parents, so that they reciprocate the love and devotion for the parents in return. In this dynamic process of *qin*, parents take the lead because their child-rearing or socialization goals and practices account for the qualities or behaviors that develop in their children (Dix & Branca, 2003). Their benevolent parenting is the foundation for establishing and maintaining the state of *qin*, which leads to the child fulfilling the role of reciprocation that defines the quality of *qin*. Adolescents' cultural understanding of Chinese parenting may play an important role in this process by enabling the adolescents to properly interpret the positive meanings of benevolent parenting and instilling desire in their hearts to reciprocate the parents' support willingly. As discussed earlier, Chinese American adolescents who were very *qin* with parents emphasized parental devotion and sacrifice more than those who were less *qin*. This might reflect the differences in actual parenting style in their families and also their understanding of Chinese parenting. Those who were very *qin* seemed to have a strong understanding of Chinese parenting that might otherwise not be seen as relevant by the youth who were less *qin*. As a second-generation Chinese American adolescent who was not very *qin* stated, his parents bought a new computer for him when he needed it, but he thought it only made him a little *qin* with them. His lack of understanding of the meaning of the parents' behavior may hinder him from fully capturing the parents' love for him or reciprocating such care and devotion. In contrast, a previously described first-generation Chinese American adolescent who was very *qin* with her parents expressed her appreciation for her father calling her from Taiwan to check on her performance on tests because she thought that long-distance calls were expensive. Her profound understanding of the father's action may help her fully grasp the father's concerns and care for her and motivate her to respond to him with love and devotion. Thus, adolescents' cultural understanding of Chinese parenting may be pivotal in determining their attitudes towards parents' support and eventually the condition of *qin*.

However, adolescents who reported high levels of *qin* might not simply get along with their parents because there were less acculturation conflicts. As discussed earlier, *qin* is deeply rooted within the Chinese value system of parenting by primarily relying on the parents' benevolent parenting and the adolescent's cultural understanding and reciprocation of such parental support. Becoming *qin* may be an independent process from the parents' and

adolescent's acculturation or endorsement of mainstream American culture. According to Berry's bi-dimensional acculturation theory (1997), the maintenance of one's ethnic culture and the endorsement of host culture are two distinct processes. Studies have consistently demonstrated that adolescents' appreciation for ethnic cultural values mitigates the parent-adolescent acculturation conflicts and is beneficial for the youth's psychological well-being among immigrant families (Ryder et al., 2000; Shen et al, 2014; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). Specifically, Wu and Chao (2011) found that U.S.-born Chinese American adolescents' perceptions of *qin* (e.g., parental devotion and sacrifice) reduced the negative consequences of their acculturation gaps with parents on the youth's behavioral problems. Therefore, *qin* may not necessarily develop out of "good" relationships with less acculturation conflicts, but may interact with the family acculturation processes and contribute to overall positive family dynamics and youth development.

Implication for Practice

The results of the present study have implications for approaches to promote positive relationships between parents and adolescents among Chinese immigrant families. When assisting Chinese adolescents who are in conflict with their immigrant parents, it is important for teachers and counselors to help the adolescents understand the cultural meanings of their parents' devotion and sacrifice and encourage them to respond to the parents with appreciation and gratitude. Chinese immigrant parents can be encouraged to purposefully use cultural socialization approaches to help their adolescents understand their devotional and sacrificial efforts for the youth, such as talking to them about the history and assets of Chinese values regarding parental sacrifice for children. They may also need to receive cultural training on student lives in U.S. high schools including typical academic and social activities (e.g., clubs and organizations) as well as student behaviors at school (e.g., risk behaviors). Such cultural knowledge may help them communicate with their adolescents about school and advise them on school-related issues.

Limitations and Future Directions

Two limitations of this study need to be noted. First, it solely relied on adolescents' reports on the cultural meaning of *qin*. Although the concept of *qin* is essentially the child's feelings and behaviors as responses to parental practices, parents may interpret the relationship from a different perspective and offer unique information. Cross-validation with parents is needed in future qualitative research for a fuller understanding of the concept.

Second, the findings may not be generalized to Chinese American adolescents with limited Chinese fluency. All the adolescents interviewed in the study spoke and wrote Chinese well, due to the selection criteria of the sample. This native language fluency is likely to result in greater endorsements of indigenous cultural values given the importance of language in carrying cultural norms (Boutakidis et al., 2011). A greater percentage of youth with very fluent Chinese in the present study were more *qin* with their parents than those who were less fluent, whereas generational status did not seem to make a difference in their perceptions of *qin*. As Phinney (2002) suggested, ethnic language proficiency is a more powerful predictor than generational status for adolescents' understanding and appreciation of their ethnic culture. The adolescents who are less fluent in Chinese may lack an in-depth

understanding of *qin* or have different standards of “good” parent-child relationships, which may lead to lower levels of *qin*. It is possible that they may actually have a positive relationship with their parents if the parents’ practices align with the adolescents’ standards. However, immigrant parents tend to hold onto ethnic cultural norms of parenting (Uba, 1994). Therefore, a lack of cultural understanding of *qin* among the adolescents is likely to be related to poorer parent-adolescent relationships overall.

There is also a possibility that the concept of *qin* remains meaningful for the adolescents if their parents maintain traditional practices of benevolent parenting although the youth may not be familiar with the word *qin*. It was found that adolescents’ perceptions of parental devotion were important for the psychological well-being of U.S.-born Chinese adolescents with moderate or lower levels of Chinese proficiency (Wu & Chao, 2011). Thus, the concept of *qin*, and not the word itself, may still be considered when studying parent-child relationships among Chinese youth with limited Chinese fluency among immigrant families. However, it may not be applicable for the Chinese American families that are more assimilated to the dominant culture.

Research on the notion of *qin* is at an early stage. The developmental and contextual processes of *qin* are still unknown and need further research. It is important to chart the developmental trajectory of *qin* as well as parent and child behaviors involved at different age periods. The contextual characteristics of *qin* also need to be understood. It is important to understand how the immigration context (e.g., acculturation pathways and neighborhood ethnic composition) may affect Chinese American adolescents’ understanding of cultural norms of *qin*. It is also necessary to understand how adolescents’ perceptions of *qin* are affected by their families’ socioeconomic status. Social class and income may determine the amount of resources that parents can provide for the child. However, it is a question whether *qin* is restricted by social capital of the family or relies more on the nature of parental practices. Moreover, as a tradition of Chinese culture, many Chinese children are raised by extended families, particularly grandparents (Yoon, 2005). *Qin* may extend to child relationships with other caregivers. Although these unexplored areas are not the goals of the current study, they may deserve a series of well-designed further studies.

Findings of the present study contribute to the literature on Chinese cultural norms for parent-child relationships by providing clarification of Chinese parents’ benevolent parenting that is characterized by parental devotion, sacrifice, and thoughtfulness. The results also highlight the relevance of child behaviors, such as a child’s love for parents in determining the qualities of parent-child relationships or the child’s reciprocation of devotion and love in a *qin* relationship. This finding provides important implications for improving the measure of *qin* developed by Wu and Chao (2011), which only assesses parental practices fostering *qin*. Future development of the measure should also capture the child’s responses to the parents’ benevolent parenting. In addition, the Chinese American adolescents’ descriptions of *qin* have confirmed that *qin* has very positive connotations in Chinese culture as reviewed earlier (Jiang, 1996). They also revealed potential explanations for the positive impact of parental sacrifice on Chinese American adolescents’ psychological well-being found in prior studies (Shen et al., 2014; Wu & Chao, 2011) noting that the adolescents’ reciprocation of love and devotion might be an important factor in this process.

Finally, the study suggests that parent-child relationships among immigrant Chinese families cannot be properly understood using parenting theories developed and based on Western cultural standards. The qualities and meanings of Chinese parent-adolescent relationships should be evaluated and interpreted through a cultural framework, the notion of *qin* in particular, which reflects the fundamental Chinese cultural norms of parent-child relationships.

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Appendix

Adolescent Qualitative Interview Protocol

Introduction

Children have different relationships with their parents. Some children are *qin* with their parents, some children are not. I would like you to think about your relationship with your parents and describe in what ways you are *qin* or not *qin* with your parents.

Part I. Describing *qin*

Q1. Are you *qin* with your parents?

- If the respondent reports being very *qin* with the parents, ask Q2 questions.
- If the respondent reports not being very *qin* with the parents (i.e., somewhat to mostly *qin*), ask for the respondent's level of *qin* with each parent separately (except for single-parent families), and then ask both Q2 and Q3 questions.
- If the respondent reports not being *qin* with the parents at all, ask Q3 questions.

Q2.1. When you say you are *qin* with your parents, what do you mean? Can you describe this relationship more specifically?

Q2.2. Please give an example of a recent incident that you believe describes how you are *qin* with your parents. Be as specific as possible and tell me when this incident occurred.

Q3.1. When you say you are not *qin* with your parents, what do you mean? Can you describe this relationship more specifically?

Q3.2. Please give an example of a recent incident that you believe describes how you are not *qin* with your parents. Be as specific as possible and tell me when this incident occurred.

Q4. In general, what kind of parent-adolescent relationship would you consider as *qin* for children at your age?

Note: the goal of Part I questions is to capture the cultural meaning of *qin* for the Chinese American adolescents.

Part II. Examining parental behaviors that foster *qin*

- If the respondent says that he or she is very *qin* with the parent, ask Q5 questions.
- If the respondent says that he or she is not very *qin* with the parent (i.e., somewhat to mostly *qin*, ask both Q5 and Q6 questions.
- If the respondent reports not being *qin* with the parents at all, ask Q6 questions.

Q5. Please tell me what your parents do specifically that helps you become *qin* with them.

(Let the respondent come up with a list of parental behaviors fostering qin and then ask the following questions.)

Q5.1. How do your parents show their love and warmth to you? What types of things that your parents do help you feel loved?

Q5.2. How do your parents communicate with you? What types of things do your parents do when they communicate with you to help you feel cared for and *qin* with them?

Q6. Please tell me what your parents do specifically that leads you to be *not qin* with them.

(Let the respondent come up with a list of parental behaviors that lead him or her to be not qin with the parents and then ask the following questions.)

Q6.1. What do you think your parents could do to help you feel *qin* with them?

Q6.2. What types of things could your parents do to help you feel loved?

Q6.3. What types of things could your parents do when they communicate with you that help you feel cared for and *qin* with them?

Note: the goal of Part II questions is to explore the parental behaviors that aim at developing *qin* between the child and the parent. It will examine specific parental behaviors involved in parental warmth and communication with the adolescent that can foster such a positive relationship. If the child comes up with parental behaviors

that are beyond parental warmth and communication when answering the general question in Q5 & Q6, these behaviors will be probed for a more specific description and the child's interpretation of them.

Public Significance Statement

This study suggests that the qualities of parent-adolescent relationships among Chinese immigrant families should be evaluated through a Chinese indigenous concept of *qin* which contains highly positive meanings. As the Chinese American adolescents interviewed in the study indicated, *qin* primarily involves the adolescents' closeness to parents (e.g., a sense of togetherness and harmony) and reciprocation of love (e.g., respect, academic efforts, and appreciation) for their parents' devotion and sacrifice, particularly for the adolescents' education and future success.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 15)

Variable	<i>n</i>
Generational status	First-generation = 8, second-generation = 7
Female sex	8
Speaking & understanding Chinese	
Moderately well	0
Very well	4
Extremely well	11
Reading & writing Chinese	
Moderately well	5
Very well	4
Extremely well	6
Years living in U.S. (first-generation)	< 5 years = 2, 5~10 years = 3, >10 years = 3
Birth place (first-generation)	
Mainland China	3
Taiwan	5
Parents' birth place ^a	
Mainland China	2 mothers, 3 fathers
Taiwan	11 mothers, 10 fathers
Not indicated	2 mothers, 1 father
Parental education	
Some vocational or college training	1 mother, 1 father
4-year college degree	8 mothers, 2 fathers
Graduate degree	4 mothers, 10 fathers
Not indicated	2 mothers, 2 fathers
Single-parent status	1
Mean age (<i>SD</i>); range: 16~17	16.21 (0.43)

Note.

^aOne father was reported as being born in Singapore.