Chinese family values in Australia

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Chinese settlement in Australia has a long history, beginning soon after the discovery of gold in Australia in 1851. Large numbers of men from China came to work in the goldfields in Victoria, hoping to return to their homeland when they had made enough money (Wang 1988). Some eventually stayed and had children with Australian women. Over time, the presence of a sizeable number of Chinese gold-diggers led to tension and hostility against them. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Act was passed in the newly set up Federal Parliament, effectively closing Australia’s doors to immigrants from non-European backgrounds (Yuan 1988). It was not until the formal adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy in 1973 by the Whitlam Labour Government that significant numbers of Chinese, from various parts of Asia, migrated to Australia (Chan, H.M.H. 1988).

Chinese settlement since the 1970s

Most of the Chinese settlers in Australia arrived post-1973; they are concentrated in the urban areas of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Malaysia, with its sizeable proportion of ethnic Chinese, became one of the ten top source countries for immigration to Australia in the 1970s. Vietnam, again with a substantial proportion of ethnic Chinese, joined the top ten in the early 1980s. During the 1980s the most dramatic rate of growth in immigration to Australia came from those born in Taiwan (Khoo et al. 1993). From the mid-1980s to 1993 Hong Kong and China were among the top ten source countries; in the four year period from 1989 to 1993 Hong Kong was second only to the United Kingdom as a source of immigrants (see also BIR 1992b).

The significant increase in ethnic Chinese immigrants in Australia was reflected in 1991 census figures (BIPR 1993b; Ho 1994), which ranked China as the ninth most common place of birth for Australians (0.5 per cent of the population) and Hong Kong the fifteenth place (0.3 per cent of the population). Cantonese—the dialect spoken by Hong Kong Chinese and those from the Guandong Province in China—was the third most commonly spoken community language in Australia, while Mandarin, the official Chinese language, was the twelfth most commonly spoken (BIPR 1993b).

As the census did not include a question on ancestral or ethnic identification, it is not possible to accurately determine the number of people of Chinese ancestry in Australia. Nevertheless, Kee (1992) estimated that it would probably be around 300,000 in 1992, a significant 50 per cent increase from the 1986 census estimate of just over 200,000 Australians claiming primary or secondary Chinese ancestry.
The Chinese in Australia are diverse in their countries of origin, socio-economic backgrounds and religious affiliations (Ho and Kee 1988b; Kee 1988; Kee 1992). The 1986 census listed a dozen countries which contributed more than a hundred Chinese immigrants to Australia, making the Chinese community the most diverse in their countries of origin of all immigrant communities in Australia (Kee 1992). Kee's analysis further indicated a bimodal distribution in the socio-economic profile of the Chinese in Australia. Many Chinese who arrived as refugees, and others who arrived under the family reunion program, tended to have considerable English language difficulties and experienced a high rate of unemployment. In stark contrast, a substantial number of Chinese came as professional and business migrants, bringing with them great skills and wealth. Many of the immigrant Chinese to Australia and their descendants profess no particular religion, but there are also substantial numbers of Buddhists, Catholics and Anglicans (Kee 1992). Large numbers of Buddhists and those professing no religion may practise ancestor worship at home in the Buddhist or Confucian tradition (VICSEG 1993). This chapter discusses Chinese family values in general but with some emphasis on more recently arrived Hong Kong Chinese families.

Family structure
Patterns of Chinese family structure in Australia are diverse, and are often in contrast to the traditional ideal of extended, multigenerational families with large numbers of children. The structure and size of Chinese families in Australia tend to be more in line with the trend in contemporary urban Chinese societies, for example Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Taiwan, which favour small nuclear families (Da 1993; Tanphanich 1988; Duan-Mu 1994; Wong 1975). Some Chinese families in Australia may have elderly grandparents living under the same roof, but it is relatively uncommon for adult siblings with offspring to share the same dwelling. Recent settlers from China are now freed from the one-child policy in place in their homeland since 1979, and some have chosen to have more than one child, or more children until the arrival of a son.

Traditionally, divorce and having children outside wedlock are frowned on. There are relatively few single-parent and blended families in both contemporary overseas Chinese communities and Australian-Chinese communities. However, a recent phenomenon in Australia is an increasing number of 'split' Chinese families from Hong Kong and Taiwan, coinciding with Australia’s economic recession in the early 1990s (Wong 1993; Kee and Skeldon, in press). These are families where one or both parents, usually only the father, continues to work in Hong Kong or Taiwan, where thriving economies have generated attractive business opportunities and employment prospects. The absent parents are referred to as ‘astronauts’ who spend much time travelling between their family home in Australia and their business or employment overseas (Mak 1991; Tsang 1990). Where both parents have returned to work in their original countries, the teenage children left behind to attend school in Australia are referred to as ‘parachute children’. 
Traditional family values

Despite the diversity of their countries of origin and socio-economic backgrounds, Chinese families in Australia share, to varying degrees, a heritage of traditional Chinese values handed down through the generations (Chu and Carew 1990). Arguably, Chinese culture may be specified as the culture of the family. Hierarchical and tightly knit family structures in the Confucian tradition have for centuries provided the Chinese with a stable environment for the fulfilment of a whole spectrum of human existence needs (Yee 1989). Indeed, all the core Chinese family values serve to ensure the family's stability and cohesion.

Importance of the family

A fundamental Chinese value is the importance of the family unit. Traditional Chinese society has a collectivist orientation that endorses the family, not the individual, as the major unit of society (Lee 1982). Individuals' identities are defined in terms of their roles and interpersonal relationships within the family rather than by their own sense of self or who they are (Hsu 1971). Individuals also identify closely with their family's fortune, striving to preserve and further it, not so much for themselves as for their families (Yee 1989). Family prosperity brings 'face' or acclaim to family members, whereas its demise bestows shame. Responsibility to the family transcends individuals' personal concerns (Shon and Ja 1982).

Preserving the family as a unit also means the continuation of the family throughout the generations. Thus, traditional Chinese families favour having a large number of children. Sons are preferred to daughters because the former carry the family name.

Individual matters are often treated as family matters. Traditionally, important life choices are usually made according to the family's wishes. For example, the family decides, or at least has a major input into, grown-up children's choices of vocations and marriage partners. On the other hand, individual members in need can count on other family members for aid. Parents and siblings may feel obliged to lend money to an individual in financial trouble. Pre-school children are often left in the care of their grandmothers when both parents work. Disabled children and ailing elderly grandparents can expect to be looked after by other family members.

Chinese families are proud to be self-sufficient as a unit and will attempt to muster all their resources to cope with difficulties. The Chinese are often hesitant to bring their own and other family members' problems to outsiders' attention. This would violate the Chinese motto of 'keeping family disgrace from outsiders' and cause family members to lose face. As a result, families in need are often reluctant to seek social security and welfare assistance.

Chinese families tend to associate mental illness with great guilt and shame for the entire family and are particularly unwilling to make it known outside the family (Lin and Lin 1981). When disturbed behaviours have persisted despite intense intrafamilial coping effort, the family is likely to present the problems as physical health concerns and seek help from a general practitioner. By the time psychiatric treatment is sought, the patients' symptoms tend to be more severe than Caucasian patients' (Tsai, Teng and Sue 1981).
As a general principle, one way to avoid seeking outside help is to minimise the potential for family conflicts through adopting a hierarchical family structure in which individuals are expected to obey senior members.

Respect and filial piety
The traditional Chinese value of respecting seniors is derived from Confucian principles, which define authority within the family according to the seniority (determined at birth by generation, birth order and gender) of the members. There is a strong emphasis on specific familial roles and the proper relationships among incumbents of these ascribed roles (Shon and Ja 1982). Children are taught to respect and defer to their parents, grandparents and older siblings. Women are expected to defer to their husbands and parents-in-law. Most importantly, individuals (including adults) are expected to show respect for their parents by observing filial piety through unquestioning obedience to their parents (Hsieh 1967)

Traditionally, dead parents, grandparents or great grandparents are believed to continue to live, albeit in another world, and therefore should continue to be respected. Ancestors are often remembered and their human needs tended to by their descendants through offerings of food, flowers, burning incense and candles in small altars set up at home, in practices known as ancestor worship (VICSEG 1993). The descendants pray for protection from their dead ancestors.

Respect for members higher up in the family hierarchy preserves order and dictates proper behaviours, maintaining the status quo in family relationships. Individuals seen to be challenging this hierarchy are severely criticised for their impropriety. Members at a higher level of seniority are accorded both higher status and greater responsibilities. The father is thus expected to be the family's head and provider. The eldest son is often under a great deal of pressure to achieve academic success so as to set a good example for younger siblings.

Harmony
Another cluster of traditional family values that serve to stabilise family structure and functioning is the maintenance of harmony within the family. This is often achieved through deliberate avoidance of conflicts and confrontation. Self-restraint, agreeableness and moderation are hailed as virtues to be espoused. The nonconfrontational tactics ensure the protection of face (King and Bond 1985). Compromises, hints, intermediaries, flexibility and other face-saving ploys are preferred to confrontation as strategies for conflict management (Bond and Hwang 1986).

Harmony within the family is intertwined with other family values. The hierarchical nature of familial roles and relationships often spells out the demeanour and behaviour expected in interactions between family members, thus minimising the potential for ambiguities and interpersonal conflict. Harmony within the family is frequently attained at some cost to individual members, who are expected to suppress their own views or put the family's interests ahead of their own when occasions arise. The Chinese further believe that harmony within the family brings prosperity in all its endeavours, while a family's demise is marked by constant squabbling.
Achieving security and prosperity

Financial security and prosperity are valued as a yardstick of the family's success (Redding 1990). Outstanding achievements are cherished because they often bring wealth and acclaim, and therefore honour and 'face' to the family or even to the entire clan, including ancestors. Accruing human capital in the form of qualifications and skills is highly regarded because these accomplishments are associated with improved prospects for monetary gains. For this reason the Chinese are eager to seek education and training, especially in areas associated with financially rewarding prospects such as business and the professions. A popular Chinese saying promises that 'gold is to be found in books'. By comparison, individual pursuits for excellence in sports and the arts, which in most cases cannot be translated into financial gains, tend to receive little encouragement from traditional families. The Chinese are pragmatic and cautious, believing in investing in property and being careful to save for rainy days. The tragic circumstances that China has faced in the past two centuries—invasions by foreign countries, internal uprisings and civil war, the Cultural Revolution and numerous natural disasters—have taught the Chinese to anticipate times of turmoil and deprivation. Family prosperity means that there will be enough wealth to tide members over any unforeseen circumstances, increasing the family's chances of survival in difficult times.

Role of family values

The core family values discussed above are central to Chinese cultural identity and serve an important protective function. In every phase of the life cycle, the Chinese family unit is assumed to be of central importance in providing the necessary resources for growth and the definition of social expectations and responsibilities (Lee 1982). In dealing with adjustment difficulties in the initial period of settlement, Chinese immigrants can derive great strength from the traditional values of sacrificing self and working hard to provide for the family.

However, the traditional importance of the family, relative to the individual, may have been undermined by processes associated with modernisation and migration. Chinese-Australians may find that their ethnic cultural values sometimes conflict with mainstream Australian values. Differences between values at home and those transmitted by peer groups, schools and the mass media may cause second-generation immigrants considerable confusion and frustration.

A question thus arises as to whether the Chinese family unit in Australia has continued to be of central importance in providing the necessary resources for growth in every phase of the life cycle (Lee 1982). Does it meet the ideal image of providing a strong, tightly knit family structure that fulfils the whole spectrum of human existence from cradle to afterlife? (Yee 1989.) In the following sections the experiences and expressed values of Chinese families in Australia will be discussed in the context of different stages of the life cycle—the formation and breakup of families, childbirth and child rearing, adolescence and old age.

Forming and re-forming families

To the Chinese, getting married and starting a family are two of the most important transitions in life. Traditional Chinese families cherish stable marriages and believe that separation and divorce epitomise violation of harmony within the family.
Marriage

Adult children who put off marriage and having children are likely to cause their parents great concern and, in traditional families, they may be criticised as unfilial. Parents with bachelor sons are often anxious to see them marry, so parents can enjoy a special cup of xin bao cha or ‘daughter-in-law’ tea at the marriage ceremony. They hope that this will soon be followed by news of the daughter-in-law’s pregnancy when the parents can look forward to bao sun or cuddling grandchildren. Parents with unmarried older adult daughters may experience a loss of face in failing to marry daughters off, and often feel sorry for them.

The positive attitudes towards marriage are consistent with Ho’s (1994) findings from the 1991 Australian census. Sixty-five per cent of Chinese-born people in Australia (aged 15 and over) were married, compared with 56 per cent of the total Australian population. There were 22 per cent of ‘never married’ among the Chinese-born, compared with 28 per cent among the Australian population. The percentage of ‘never married’ was particularly low (only 18 per cent) among Chinese-born females over the age of 15 years.

Concern about finding compatible partners is noticeable among unmarried ethnic Chinese adults in Australia. A substantial number of classified advertisements in Chinese daily newspapers published in Australia are routinely devoted to those seeking marriage partners. According to community informants, while many single adult immigrants would prefer ethnic Chinese partners from similar backgrounds, others are open to dating non-Chinese people and would consider intermarriage.

Intermarriage

Traditionally, China as a nation has tended to be shy in its interactions with foreigners, and Chinese people have generally found marriages to non-Chinese partners to be an unattractive proposition. In reality, patterns of Chinese marrying those of non-Chinese backgrounds in Australia have been influenced by the sex ratio of the Chinese in Australia. Early Chinese settlers in Australia were predominantly men. In 1901, there were just under 30 000 full Chinese in Australia, of whom fewer than 500 were female (Crissman, Beattie and Selby 1985). Many Chinese men who chose to stay and raise their families in Australia married non-Chinese women, and had children with them. Chin (1988) reported that in 1947 there were 9144 full-blood and 2950 mixed-blood Chinese people in Australia. The sex imbalance of the Chinese in Australia remained a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, and contributed to marriages with those from non-Chinese backgrounds and to international marriages. Inglis (1972) reported that in Darwin, from 1946 to 1966, 35 out of 80 marriages involving Chinese people were with non-Chinese spouses. Choi (1972) revealed that in Melbourne 32.5 per cent of Chinese immigrant males who were unmarried upon arrival, and half of the Australian-born Chinese males, had married non-Chinese wives. By 1968 family reunion had become easier and some Chinese people had returned to China or Hong Kong for marriage, resulting in a more balanced sex ratio (Chin 1988). Nevertheless, Shum (1988) noted that marriages with those of non-Chinese background were still common in New South Wales in the 1960s and early 1970s. May (1988) pointed out that in Queensland Chinese women have come to Australia in order to marry Australian-born Chinese men. There is also recent evidence that some ethnic Chinese men in Australia, who themselves were not born in China, have sponsored women born in China to join them as wives or fiancees (Brown 1994).
Recently a much larger ethnic Chinese population and a more balanced sex ratio in Australia have resulted in a trend towards higher rates of in-group marriage. This is evident in Price's (1993) analyses of second-generation in-group marriage percentages for Australian-born brides and grooms with mothers born in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. He found that in the years 1965-72 in-group marriage rates were a low 11 per cent for brides and 10 per cent for grooms. By 1987-90 the corresponding figures had increased to 23 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. Shum (1988) observed that the tendency towards intermarriage was particularly strong among part-Chinese families.

In the early 1960s most Chinese parents in New South Wales were still very traditional in their outlook towards intermarriage. However, there are indications that second-generation Chinese Australians' attitudes are more liberal than those of their parents (Tan and Chiu 1988).

Sex roles in marriage and family life
According to community informants, parents are concerned about intermarriages because non-Chinese sons- and daughters-in-law have little understanding of the proper behaviour (in the Confucian tradition) expected of individuals in an ideal Chinese family. It is often believed that such ignorance of Chinese proprieties leads to marital discord and intergenerational conflict, and so compromises the harmony of the family.

Stable family life in traditional Chinese families is maintained by women adopting a submissive role in relating to their husbands, and a nurturant role within the family. This is derived from Confucian principles dictating that girls be educated not in books, but in 'three obediences'-obedience to the father at home, obedience to the husband after getting married, and obedience to the eldest son after the husband's death. Women are expected to defer to their husbands in decision making, to put their husbands' career development ahead of their own needs, to be responsible for all the household chores, to nurture and care for their children and to look after elderly parents.

In contemporary Chinese societies, substantial changes to the position of women have occurred in recent decades but much is yet to be attained. Lin (1993) has pointed out that the prominence of suicide as a major cause of death among women in China aged 15-45 might reflect their lower levels of well-being. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, many middle class families can afford to hire domestic help for child care and housework. Men may also share household responsibilities to some extent, but it remains the wives' main responsibility to organise and coordinate these activities, including the supervision of the maids. As regards women's submission to their husbands, paternalism remains the more typical pattern of behaviour in families in contemporary Hong Kong (Yee 1989). While some women may claim and obtain shared and differential powers in the family, they are likely to defer to their husbands when the occasion arises.

The authors' observations as participants in both Australian and overseas Chinese societies suggest that hired domestic help is much less accessible in Australia than in contemporary Chinese societies, so that many men in dual-income families have to help, to varying degrees, in child care and household chores. In addition, like many men in Australia, Chinese men are expected to be responsible for gardening and tasks associated with the maintenance of the house.
As a result, they often find themselves playing a much more active role in family and house-related responsibilities than in their country of origin. This increased involvement can be a source of new-found pleasure for some men as they develop new life skills and spend more time at home with their families. For others, the new responsibilities are time-consuming, burdensome and a source of marital conflict.

Some immigrant women without adequate access to community services and support from their husbands may get trapped in their care-giving roles at home, looking after both the elderly and children (McCallum 1992). They are often expected to take on the intricate task of mediating conflicts between the older and younger generations.

In the case of 'astronaut' immigrant families described earlier, where one parent (usually the father) works in Hong Kong or Taiwan and returns to Australia for rather frequent but short visits, sex-role dynamics within the family can be a real issue. The wives in Australia have to cope with raising a family in a foreign culture without domestic help and the support of their husbands and extended families. They often have to make decisions on their own about themselves, their children and their dwellings. This reversal in sex roles pertaining to decision making, coupled with the difficulties of cross-cultural transition and frequent separations from their husbands, can place great strain on women and their marriages (Lau 1991).

Real or threatened reversal in sex roles may also occur in cases where women have little trouble obtaining employment, whereas their husbands remain unemployed for long periods. Unfortunately, prolonged unemployment is a realistic prospect for newcomers from non-English-speaking backgrounds in the Australian workplace, especially in times of economic recession (Mitchell et al. 1990). Some immigrant men with jobs experience underemployment (DEET 1989; Miller 1987). Men brought up to believe they are their family's chief breadwinner may feel very uncomfortable with this shift in the source of the family's income and the accompanying threat to customary sex roles. As well, the frustration of unemployment and underemployment are likely to cause considerable personal, marital and family stress.

Divorce and remarriage

In traditional Chinese families marital discord tends to be minimised through avoidance of conflicts, with women deferring to men within the patriarchal tradition (for example, wives turning a blind eye to their husbands' infidelities). As marital problems escalate, they may be discussed with senior members of the families of the husband and the wife with a view to resolving the conflicts within the extended family network; for example, through mediation by trusted family members. Marriage problems are considered a disgrace to the family and it is best that people outside the extended family know nothing about them. Unhappily married couples often choose to remain married so that their children can live in an intact family. Where remarriages occur, children from a previous marriage are sometimes subject to social stigma and consequently suffer from low self-esteem. Women often perceive a loss of face when their failed marriage is made known to the public through a divorce. According to traditional Chinese customs, women who remarry can expect social disapproval from having lost their chastity, whereas widows who refuse to remarry are likely to be praised for their chastity.
In contemporary Chinese societies, urbanisation and industrialisation have led to more relaxed attitudes regarding divorce and remarriage in recent years. According to a report by Duan-Mu (1994) in the Australian Chinese Daily, the divorce rate in Taiwan increased from 0.5 per cent in 1976 to 17.2 per cent in 1991. The report also noted that more than half of the Taiwanese women surveyed in a recent study approved of separation or divorce in circumstances where a marriage was no longer working. Attention has been drawn recently to the dramatic increase in divorces filed in China—a jump from 287,000 couples filing for divorce in 1989 to 909,000 in 1993 (Sing Tao newspaper, Australian edition, 14 May 1994, p. 7). The main reasons for divorces in China were thought to be conflict over financial matters, extramarital affairs and quarrels over domestic matters. It may be the case that traditional family values are being eroded, and that the gap between Chinese and western divorce rates is closing.

It is conceivable that the divorce rate for Chinese-Australians may begin to approximate that of the Australian population for a variety of social and demographic reasons. There are social support benefits for single parents, little social stigma attached to divorce in Australia and a substantial proportion of intermarriages. However, Ho's (1994) analysis of the 1991 census data shows that only 5 per cent of Chinese-born people (15 years old and over) were separated or divorced, which was relatively low compared with 8 per cent of the general Australian population.

Nevertheless, divorce trends among Chinese-born people in Australia reveal that the number of divorces has increased dramatically in recent years. In 1985, 84 divorces for Chinese-born husbands and 84 divorces for Chinese-born wives were filed in Australia (ABS 1986), whereas the corresponding figures were 542 and 592 in 1992 (ABS 1993b). This was disproportional to the increase of Chinese-born immigrants during that period (their numbers had approximately doubled), but coincided with the significant increase in divorce rates in contemporary China. By comparison, the increase in divorces among the Hong Kong-born in Australia was less dramatic. In 1985 there were 63 divorces for Hong Kong-born husbands and 57 for Hong Kong-born wives, while the corresponding figures were 153 and 145 in 1992.

Chinese-Australians' reasons for and experience with divorce are little understood because of a lack of reported research in the area. Anecdotal evidence from Chinese-language interpreters suggests that couples from China seeking divorce-related property settlement and custody of children in Australia's Family Law Court tend to find these processes particularly traumatic because of their unfamiliarity with the western legal system (see Nan 1988). This adds to the stress that families undergo during their breakup.

Statistics on remarriages due to the death of a spouse or a previous divorce are unavailable. However, Ho (1994) reported 7 per cent of 'widowed' among the Chinese-born immigrants in the 1991 Australian census, which was somewhat higher than the corresponding figure of 5.2 per cent for the Australian population.

Childbirth and child rearing

An ideal Chinese marriage is expected to produce healthy and well-disciplined children. Traditional practices have been handed down to ensure that the foetus is well nourished and that the mother will recover quickly after childbirth to perform her maternal role.
Confucianism has had a tremendous impact on traditional child rearing and education. It stipulates that early education of the child should start from pregnancy. It is believed that if the mother is healthy, calm and in good spirits, her infant will also be the same. Consequently, great care and support are given to the mother during and after her pregnancy to secure the well-being and healthy development of the infant.

Reproductive and post-partum practices
According to traditional beliefs, the pregnant woman is in a delicate transitional state and it is vital for her to observe physical and dietary restrictions to safeguard both the foetus and herself. She is advised to observe physical restrictions, such as not carrying heavy objects, to ensure the safety of the foetus. She should also avoid eating food that is of an extreme yin nature (very bitter, salty or sour foods that are raw, steamed or boiled) or of an extreme yang nature (very sweet, spicy and fatty foods that are baked, roasted or fried) (Chu 1993).

The month after childbirth is regarded as an important period in Chinese culture and is termed zuo yue or ‘to sit the month’ (Chu 1993). This is a time for a woman to take proper care of herself, otherwise she may suffer long-term health problems. Mothers and mothers-in-law often provide support and supervision to make certain that proper conduct is observed. Special herbs such as dang gui and food such as a tonic of pork and ginger are consumed to dissolve blood clots, replenish the blood and energy, improve circulation and provide warmth. The woman is confined to complete rest and is advised to avoid coming into contact with elements considered to have yin qualities, such as cold water and wind. There are also beliefs that men can contract specific serious disease from women during the period immediately following childbirth (Topley 1970). Many of these dietary and physical restrictions and zuo yue are still observed by contemporary Chinese women (Chu 1993; Pillsbury 1982).

In Australia, many Chinese immigrant women have difficulty in observing dietary and physical restrictions during pregnancy and after childbirth. Loss of support from extended family members and lack of culturally sensitive maternal and child care services often lead to frustration and anxiety. Many are concerned that their health will be adversely affected due to their inability to follow traditional practices.

Growth and development of children
Traditionally, Chinese parents do not have exclusive control over their children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and in-laws share in teaching and discipline. It is believed that a child should be a passive recipient of adult teachings, should be inculcated with moral values and shaped into a traditional Chinese personality (Hsu 1981; Ho 1981)—a personality which Mickle (1985) describes as ‘non-expressive emotionally, strongly reliant on "will power", more society-centred, more authoritarian, more accepting of authority and less verbal’ (p. 97). However, before children are taught discipline and self-control they enjoy a period of freedom, leniency, indulgence and protection (Bunzel 1950; Hsu 1967; Li 1970; Wolf 1970). Strict bedtimes are rarely implemented, and weaning and toilet training are mild (Sollenberger 1968; Wu 1966). Children eat and sleep according to their needs and not according to a set schedule (Bunzel 1950).
When children reach the age of 'understanding' or 'reason', at about age 4-6, parents (and teachers) begin to inculcate important Chinese family values-the primacy of the family, respect for parents and seniors, harmony within the family and achieving security and prosperity.

For many centuries Chinese children were instructed by tales such as 'The twenty-four examples of filial piety', stories which dramatised the most significant cultural ideals of the Chinese, namely that support of one's parents comes before all other obligations and that this obligation must be fulfilled even at one's own expense. In the past, Chinese children were taught from an early age that they must try to satisfy their parents' wishes and look after their well-being in all circumstances. It was believed that 'in the service of the elders, no effort was too extraordinary or too great' (Hsu 1981, p. 81).

Although the importance of this virtue has gradually eroded with time, filial piety still occupies a key position in present-day Chinese values. In her study of 237 Chinese senior students in Melbourne, Chan (1987) found that an overwhelming majority (79 per cent) still felt that filial piety was either important or very important to them.

Traditionally, Chinese parents are also very concerned about their children's ability to control impulse, a concern which is grounded in the Confucian ethic of filial piety (Ho and Kang 1984). Children are encouraged to suppress aggression and to avoid activities which will involve risk of physical injury to themselves or others. Exposing oneself to danger is contrary to the Confucian injunction: 'The body with its hair and skin is received from parents; do not cause it harm'. For parents in Hong Kong, attitudes towards filial piety correlate with a strong emphasis on strictness of discipline and proper behaviour, and much less emphasis on the child's expression of opinions, creativity, self-mastery, independence and all-round personal development (Ho and Kang 1984).

Since preserving the family harmony is a major concern, any expression of aggression, especially physical aggression, is often prohibited. Children are taught positive values of endurance, gentleness, unselfishness and non-competitiveness. Parish and Whyte (1978) found that in rural Guangdong Province fighting and stealing were most feared because such misconduct threatened harmonious relations between families. Ryback et al. (1980) compared university students' responses in six cultures (Ethiopia, Israel, India, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States) and reported that the Chinese ranked third on not allowing children to express aggression and on not encouraging aggressive behaviour. Chan (1987) found that 60 per cent of her sample of Chinese senior students in Melbourne regarded the ideal of endurance as either important or very important to them.

In recent years there have been some changes in the way Chinese children are raised, due to western influence and population control. Ho (1986) observed that in present-day Taiwan some efforts are directed towards training children to become more active, self-reliant, competent, intellectually critical and achievement-oriented. In China the one-child policy has given rise to changes in child-rearing practices. Chinese parents pay more attention to the physical and intellectual development of their 'onlys' and are less concerned about disciplining them (Da 1993). Da believes that these 'onlys' are given too much care and attention by their parents and grandparents and are spoilt like 'little emperors' because they have become so precious to their parents.
Traditional child-rearing practices undergo more changes when Chinese parents have to raise their children in a western society. Assertiveness, independence and individualism taught at school may not be compatible with teachings at home, such as conformity, humility and obedience. Chinese children are often confused about what values to adopt and their parents are concerned about their children’s loss of Chinese identity and values. Da (1994) found some one-child Chinese-Australian families were worried that their children had too easy a life in Australia and would not be equipped to deal with later life in a complex and competitive society. Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) found that 74 per cent of their Chinese-Australian sample (predominantly immigrants from Hong Kong) felt that children in Australia were less respectful towards adults; 84 per cent wanted to preserve Chinese culture and language in Australia.

Culture and language maintenance
The extent of Chinese-language maintenance varies considerably among the ethnic Chinese in Australia. An analysis based on the 1986 census revealed that language maintenance was almost universal among the Chinese born in Timor, followed closely by those from Hong Kong and China. Chinese was used at home by 80 per cent of Malaysian-born Chinese, 70 per cent of the Singaporeans, 37 per cent of Thai and Filipino Chinese, and 22 per cent of Indonesian Chinese (Kee 1992). Chinese immigrants in Australia have tried to maintain their language and culture by speaking Chinese at home, sending their children to Chinese weekend schools, frequenting or living in Chinatown where there are Chinese restaurants and bookshops, and supporting Chinese newspapers, television and radio programs (Yee 1981; Chan 1987). They also form and support Chinese associations which organise cultural activities and celebrate major Chinese festivals such as the Chinese New Year.

Despite the effort made to maintain language and culture, the use of Chinese at home decreases with the second and third generations. Analysis of 1986 census data showed that, even though 81 per cent of the single-ancestry Chinese immigrant generation spoke Chinese at home, the level of maintenance dropped to about 66 per cent in the second generation and 16 per cent in the third and later generations. Among those with mixed ancestry the use of Chinese at home was greatly reduced, falling to 1 per cent by the third generation (Kee 1992).

The decline in the use of Chinese at home may be due to a number of factors. Yee (1981) found that parents with higher academic and occupational status tended to be more fluent in English and to use predominantly English, or both English and Chinese, at home. Fluent English was also seen as an important force in upward mobility while the Chinese language did not seem to have any useful function outside the home. It was, therefore, not surprising that even though most parents interviewed acknowledged the value of Chinese only half of them sent their children to the weekend schools.

Adolescence
As the child from a Chinese family becomes an adolescent, he or she is made more aware of the importance of bringing honour to the family by behaving in a socially accepted manner, and of helping the family achieve security and prosperity. Above all, parents have high expectations for their children to achieve academically so that they can be successful in later life.
Academic achievement

As indicated earlier, the Chinese value education as the best way to achieve security and prosperity, and parents and children share high academic aspirations. Parents usually hope that their children will become professionals with high incomes and social status; children regard high academic achievement as one of the main ways to express filial piety and to repay the many sacrifices of parents in providing for their education.

High aspirations are often matched by high academic achievement. H.K.Y. Chan (1988) reported that her sample of Chinese students in Melbourne performed very well in their Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination, with most belonging to the top 20 per cent of all candidates and about 24 per cent among the top 5 per cent of all candidates. Among the top 500 scorers at the New South Wales HSC examination in 1989, 88 (17.6 per cent) were of ethnic Chinese origin (Australian Chinese Daily, 15 January 1990, p. 1).

Reasons for high academic achievement are varied. Research into Chinese children in the United States showed that the children often modelled their parents' conscientiousness and concern for good work performance; children were goaded to success by parental demands and high expectations; and Chinese parents compared the achievement of their children with that of their relatives' children (Sue, Zane and Lim 1984). Consequently, Chinese children felt the pressure to perform well in order to give their families 'good name', and usually felt worthless or rebellious when they failed to bring honour to their families.

The above research also suggested that academic success was due to Chinese children's ability to use a bicultural adaptation strategy, involving capitalising on strengths, reducing limitations and seizing on opportunities presented to them (Sue, Zane and Lim 1984). Such strategies can include preferring to study subjects that demand fewer English skills, and opting for science and mathematics majors. Sometimes students who do not have the aptitude to succeed in such majors choose them against the advice of teachers because the subjects are associated with university entry into prestigious degree courses and subsequent professions.

Cultural identity and life satisfaction

Problems of culture conflict, identity and the 'generation gap' between parents and children usually become intensified when children reach adolescence. However, a number of studies of Chinese-Australian adolescents suggest that most have high academic achievement and a fairly high sense of well-being (Chan 1987; Chiu and Tan 1986; Fan 1993; Rosenthal and Feldman 1989; Wong 1985). Only a small group of adolescents who have been caught between two cultures suffer a high level of stress.

A study of 237 Chinese Year 12 students in Melbourne (Chan 1987) indicated that those who adapted well had been in Australia for a longer period of time, had weaker Chinese affiliations, higher ability to communicate in English and better relationships with their teachers. The majority said they were satisfied with their lives in Australia. Those most satisfied tended to have a stronger sense of filial piety and respect for authority, better relationships with their teachers, better command of spoken English and no experience of discrimination by their peers.
There was evidence that the Chinese immigrant families showed some accommodation to the autonomy-promoting norms of their new cultural environment. Adolescents from Chinese immigrant families perceived their families as more controlling and as placing greater emphasis on achievement than did adolescents from the host culture and from Hong Kong.

Fan’s (1993) study of 154 Chinese-speaking girls attending Years 8 to 10 in various State, Catholic and independent schools in Melbourne suggested five patterns of cultural identity. ‘Chauvinistic’ girls identified very strongly and closely with the Chinese culture and made friends mainly with Asians. ‘Ethnic-bicultural’ girls identified with the Chinese culture but their interpersonal relationships were more flexible. ‘Anglo-bicultural’ girls were more mixed in their ethnic identification, with some identification with Australian culture and some identification with Chinese culture. ‘Passing’ girls identified as Australian to some extent and did not mix with Asian friends. ‘Marginal’ girls also identified to some extent as Australian, mixed mainly with nonAsian friends and claimed to be influenced more by their friends than by their parents. Those caught between two cultures (the ‘Anglo-bicultural’ and ‘ethnic-bicultural’ girls) suffered a higher level of stress than those girls who had a firm sense of cultural identity (the ‘chauvinistic’ and ‘passing’ girls). The ‘marginal’ girls experienced a high level of stress too because they rejected their Chinese identity and yet were not accepted by their Australian peers (Fan 1993).

Family interviews in Melbourne

To supplement the above studies one of the authors interviewed 14 Chinese-Australian families from Hong Kong about their family values. The families had been resident in Australia for an average of nine years, with a minimum of six months and a maximum of fifteen years, and were of mixed educational and occupational status. Their offspring ranged in age from 7 to 22 years. With the exception of two families with grandparents living under the same roof, all parents indicated that their own parents and siblings were in Hong Kong or Canada.

The parents indicated that the values of filial piety, respect for authority, harmony within the family and achieving security and prosperity were important but that there were difficulties in upholding and transmitting these values to the next generation. It seems that bringing up children in a western society demands compromise and changes to basic Chinese values. Values compatible with western values, such as achieving security and prosperity, are readily accepted by the younger generation. Values less compatible with the mainstream Australian culture, such as respect for authority, are less well received by the offspring. Harmony within the family is sometimes disrupted by intergenerational conflicts.

Parents’ comments suggested other changes to traditional Chinese family values. The ideals of preserving the family as a unit and subjugating the wishes of individuals are being challenged by an increasing number of ‘split’ Chinese families (where family members live separately in different cities). ‘Astronaut’ parents (usually fathers) who travel frequently between Hong Kong and Australia for business and personal reasons have much less time to spend with their families. There are indications that ‘split’ families have high incidences of marital discord, divorce, parentchild conflicts and behavioural problems of children (Mak 1991).
The value of achieving security and prosperity also takes on new dimensions. In the past the Chinese saw conscientiousness and frugality as means of achieving security and prosperity. In present-day China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, financial prosperity is still an overriding yardstick for measuring the success of a family, but frugality is no longer a cherished ideal. Money earned is often spent lavishly on famous-brand clothes, expensive cars, banquets, electronic equipment and overseas holidays. Parents try to instil in their children the importance of building wealth and then using it for the enjoyment of their lives. The traditional concept of passing on wealth to the next generation seems no longer to be important. All parents interviewed wanted their children to become financially independent by having highly paid and high status jobs. Some parents mentioned that their children had already acquired ‘expensive’ tastes and preferred famous brand clothing and shoes. Older adolescents liked to drive parents' luxury cars to impress their peers.

Harmony within the family is still much valued by the Chinese, but many Chinese-Australian parents have to compromise traditional parenting methods in order to achieve accord with their children. Some Chinese parents interviewed coped by becoming more flexible themselves. Instead of expecting submission, they reasoned with their offspring and respected their opinions, especially those who were young adults and older adolescents. Others, however, refused to compromise because they firmly believed in maintaining a hierarchical pattern within the family. These parents produced what Fan (1993) termed ‘chauvinistic’ offspring, namely obedient children who identified very strongly with the Chinese culture.

Although the concept of filial piety remains important, the parents interviewed did not expect their children to provide for them materially because they had invested in superannuation or other financial plans to secure their livelihood in old age. They did, however, expect emotional support, love and respect from their children.

The importance of filial piety was evidenced by the sadness expressed when elderly parents were mentioned. Interviewees regretted that their parents were far away in Hong Kong or Canada and that they could only express their love and concern by correspondence and long-distance phone calls. They regularly send gifts and money to their parents; four travelled at least once a year to visit their parents in Hong Kong.

Old age

There are few studies focused on the adaptation and family life of elderly Chinese-Australians. According to Legge and Westbrook (1993), health-care workers in Sydney indicated that many aged Chinese provided practical help to their families, but relationships with family members were not very affectionate and harmonious. The elderly Chinese depended on their family members to provide transport for them, to act as interpreters, to assist with shopping and to accompany them when they visited their doctors. Two studies (Legge and Westbrook 1991; Westbrook and Legge 1990) showed that Chinese patients were favoured by the staff of nursing homes in Sydney because many of their illness behaviours can be accommodated comfortably by people with Anglo-Australian values. Compared with Greek and Italian patients, Chinese patients caused less tension at meals and when they were in pain.
McCallum's (1989) survey on the retirement adjustment of Australian immigrants indicated that retirees from China (along with those from Greece and the former Yugoslavia) seemed to have extra adjustment difficulties. The author found that those who were sheltered in an ethnic enclave during their working life and who retained preferences for practices and customs which were not part of the Australian mainstream had more adjustment difficulties after retirement.

A report by the Victorian Elderly Chinese Welfare Society (1984) identified some of the problems encountered by elderly Chinese. Almost 70 per cent of the 632 surveyed lived with their children. With the gradual erosion of the traditional Chinese respect for the elderly, many aged parents found it difficult to accept their total dependence on their children and the lack of reverence paid to them by their children and grandchildren. Even if family relationships were harmonious, the aged parents suffered from intense isolation because they spent most of their time on child care and housekeeping. Little time could be devoted to leisure activities and meeting friends. Their inability to speak adequate English and their dependence on public transport were great obstacles to social contacts with Australians.

The study also found that financial insecurity was a major problem for some, especially those who were single or widowed. Being unemployed and not eligible for the aged pension, many had to depend on their children for maintenance. If their children could not or would not provide for them, life was little more than a hand-to-mouth existence. The elderly were also concerned about buying burial plots so that their Chinese burial customs and traditions could be observed. Since the publication of the above report, significant changes have occurred to improve the quality of life of the elderly Chinese in Victoria, including the establishment of senior citizens clubs in nearly every suburb to lessen their isolation.

There are indications that family conflict is the major problem for the elderly Chinese. They usually come to Australia late in their lives and after their children have been in the country for a substantial period of time. While their children have become 'westernised' and have accepted Australian cultural values, the elderly retain many of the traditional Chinese values. There is consequently conflict over child rearing, control and authority. The problems are often compounded by communication difficulties. Sometimes their children's spouses and grandchildren speak only English while they speak only one of the Chinese dialects. Many Chinese children would like to care for their parents, but have neither the time nor the energy after work to do so. While it is economically viable in many parts of Asia to employ a domestic helper to look after the elderly, it is regarded as too expensive for ordinary people in Australia. Traditionally, Chinese parents live with their sons. As a result, the carer may be a daughter-in-law who has only a limited emotional attachment to her spouse's parents. Reports of verbal abuse and physical violence between parents and daughters-in-law are, therefore, not uncommon. Those who can live harmoniously with their children tend to be more tolerant and flexible in their approach.
Issues and opportunities

Important issues in the future for Chinese families in Australia include adequate care and other services for elderly Chinese, questions concerning cultural identity of children and adolescents, the impact of the recession on recently arrived families, problems faced by scattered or ‘split’ families, and the provision of culturally appropriate mental health services for families.

Services for the elderly

Despite the improvements mentioned above, the inadequacy of community and health services for elderly Chinese migrants is one of the emerging issues facing the Chinese-Australian community. Currently, many of the elderly are not receiving culturally appropriate health and social services, and have difficulties accessing recreational activities. Daughters and daughters-in-law often have to shoulder the burden of looking after the frail elderly at home with little support from existing health and social programs. On the other hand, with the significant recent increase of Chinese professional immigrants in Australia, including more Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking health care and social service providers, there will be more personnel available to provide ethno-specific services for the elderly and support services for the care-givers.

Cultural identity of children and adolescents

Cultural identity problems faced by many children and adolescents are exacerbated by language difficulties in their first few years of settlement. Many have experienced racial discrimination and in some cases marginalisation in schools. Perhaps, in the longer term, multicultural education conducted in Australian schools can alleviate these problems and make it easier for children and adolescents to be proud of their bicultural identity. In recognition of Australia’s increased trade and cultural links with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, a federal language policy has recently been put in place to include Mandarin as a priority second language to be taught in Australian schools. At last there is a policy that endorses the value of acquiring and maintaining competencies in the Chinese language and culture. This will serve to make biculturalism a valued option of cross-cultural adaptation and increase children’s motivation to learn and use Chinese.

Recent immigrants

New immigrants inevitably experience varying degrees of acculturative stress. However, the large numbers of recent ethnic-Chinese immigrants who have arrived in times of economic recession face particular challenges. Those regarded as elites in their home countries because of their qualifications and successes as professionals and administrators are faced with multiple losses in the initial period of rebuilding their careers in Australia (Mak 1991). For many families the challenges of cultural adjustment have been compounded by poor employment prospects during the recession.
Ho’s (1994) analysis of 1991 census data has revealed a relatively high level of underemployment among Chinese-born migrants. Although 13.8 per cent of them had a bachelor degree or higher, compared with 7.7 per cent among the Australian population, the Chinese-born were concentrated in lower skilled or unskilled occupations in labouring and factory jobs, and were underrepresented in professional, administrative and clerical work. According to community informants, some ethnic-Chinese business people have exploited the labour of new co-ethnic settlers by hiring them at low wages to work in their restaurants, retail outlets and factories.

At the same time, the new arrivals include a large number of highly educated professionals and wealthy business people, whose presence in the Chinese community has raised the social image of the Chinese in Australia. The large increase in Chinese immigrants has also given rise to a much more vibrant Chinese community in the metropolitan areas, especially Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, in recent years. Along with an increase in the number of Chinese community organisations there is now a greater variety of community language classes, radio and television (including a pay television station featuring programs produced in Hong Kong), newspapers and other periodicals vital to the validation and maintenance of the Chinese language and culture.

Scattered families

As noted earlier, among the new settlers from Hong Kong and Taiwan are wives and children of 'astronaut' immigrants. Being a split nuclear family and having scattered extended families can threaten the integrity of the family unit by causing marital problems and reducing family cohesion. Moreover, these situations can weaken such families' determination to develop their roots in Australia. Some recent business and professional immigrants have become 'mobile' family members, moving to and fro between Hong Kong, Australia and Canada (which is the biggest receiving country of Hong Kong emigrants in recent years). This is in part a reflection of a global trend towards increased international mobility. On a positive note, the existence of scattered extended families has provided excellent trade opportunities, linking Australia to Hong Kong and China (Kee 1994; Tracy and Ip 1990).

Mental health services

A final emerging issue relates to the provision of culturally appropriate marriage counselling and mental health services. For some new settlers aspects of the immigration experience, such as cultural conflict, perceptions of discrimination, separation from spouses, unemployment and underemployment, and cross-cultural differences in the workplace, are likely to generate a great deal of marital and personal stress (Hofstede 1980; Mak 1991; Mak, Westwood and Ishiyama 1994). Unfortunately, as noted earlier, Chinese families tend to associate marital and mental health problems with guilt and shame; generally sceptical of the effectiveness of western psychotherapy, they tend to postpone seeking counselling and psychiatric treatment until the problems are too severe to contain within the family. When that occurs, the first professional likely to be contacted tends to be a general practitioner rather than a mental health professional.
T.Y. and M.C. Lin (1981) have noted a growing acceptance of psychiatry among western-educated and second-generation Chinese-Americans. Nevertheless, the importance of developing general and mental health services with greater cultural sensitivity (in this case an awareness of the Chinese tendency to somatise their psychiatric problems and to delay seeking psychiatric treatment) cannot be overemphasised. The challenge remains for mental health professionals to develop psychotherapeutic approaches effective in working with the Chinese. Problem-solving and other directive approaches are more congruent with Chinese cultural beliefs than non-directive, insight-oriented therapy methods and so may be more acceptable to Chinese patients (Exum and Lau 1988; Tsai, Teng and Sue 1981). Bilingual and bicultural health professionals have an especially valuable role to play in the prevention and early detection of psychiatric problems and in early intervention.

Conclusion
Despite their diverse countries of origin and socio-economic backgrounds, Chinese immigrant families generally retain many of their original cultural beliefs. However, many parents find it difficult to insist that their offspring also maintain the Chinese culture and language in Australia. Achieving security and prosperity may be the only fundamental Chinese family value that has not been weakened in Australia, because western societies also value achievement. However, the traditional emphasis on the importance of the family has been undermined by western values of individualism. Respect for the elderly, filial piety, patriarchal authority and emphasis on harmony within the family are being eroded in the face of Australian values of egalitarianism, independence and assertiveness.

In order that family members in different phases of the life cycle can attain optimum development and be adequately looked after, Chinese-Australian families will at times need to seek and accept help from mainstream and ethno-specific services. The Chinese community's needs for welfare provision and mental health services remain largely unknown to the mainstream society. Chu and Carew (1990) attribute this in part to the law-abiding image and low profile of the Chinese in Australia. Australian research is greatly needed to identify the settlement needs of different groups of ethnic Chinese immigrants and to develop a variety of family services that are congruent with Chinese cultural beliefs.