

How National Context Influences the Childrearing Practices of Second-Generation Chinese Tiger Parents

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Abstract

Amy Chua's 2011 memoir evoked heated debate on the childrearing practices of Chinese 'Tiger Mothers' and on how some Chinese ethnocultural values can push children toward academic success. To date, little scholarly attention has been paid to the childrearing practices of second-generation Chinese or to how they may influence this part of their children's assimilation. I conducted in-depth interviews with second-generation Chinese parents in the United States and the Netherlands in order to examine specific ethnocultural socialization techniques that could boost children's academic outcomes. Findings show that national context—focusing on different school systems and social security safety nets—can act as an intervening variable by affecting the intergenerational transmission of ethnocultural values regarding educational expectations and academic outcomes. U.S.-born Chinese parents continue to channel their offspring towards high educational achievement, while their peers born in the Netherlands instead emphasize the importance of their children's free choice and their happiness.

Keywords: second-generation, assimilation, childrearing, cultural transmission, cross-national

Introduction

During the last few decades, the size the 'second-generation' population has been growing in both the United States and Europe. The majority of these children of immigrants were socialized with the rich ethnic culture of their parents' country of origin. In this paper, the focus lies on second-generation Chinese and on a selection of their rich ethnic culture: their values regarding their children's academic achievement, which is operationalized as the educational expectations that parents have for their children, and the way they utilize elements from their own upbringing

to motivate their children to realize these goals. I isolate this specific component from their larger set of cultural beliefs, practices, and customs. Chinese ethnoculture includes many components, such as: language, traditional beliefs, dietary habits, ancestor worship, and medicinal customs. Some may be transferred intergenerationally and some may not. While these other ethnocultural elements are not any more or any less important to take into account as second-generation Chinese raise their children, they are not within the scope of the current study.

When the second-generation Chinese grew up, their ethnoculture was prominently present in their lives; most spoke their parents' language,

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ate Chinese food, and were raised with numerous ethnocultural values (Geense and Pels 1998; Chao 2001, 1996). For many first-generation Chinese parents, one important ethnocultural value was to stress their children's materialistic success; they wanted their children to obtain high education and succeed academically. They engaged in three distinct mechanisms to enforce this outcome, they: instilled ethnocultural principles of filial piety, collectivism, and zeal; invested in their education; and moved to academically stimulating environments (Chao 1996; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Zhou 2009b; Geense and Pels 1998). Their efforts paid off and, on average, second-generation Chinese are more successful than their peers: they are less likely to drop out of high school, have higher GPAs, and are more likely to attend top universities (Lee 2012; Vogels 2011; Louie 2004).

But, the literature shows that second-generation may no longer agree with the specific childrearing strategies with which their parents pushed them toward academic success (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Lee and Zhou 2013). However, in her 2011 memoir, Amy Chua claimed that compared to American parents, first *and* second-generation Chinese parents (continue to have) higher academic expectations of their children and enforce these with particular Chinese ethnocultural childrearing strategies. Chua's account sparked a lively discussion on the link between these specific aspects of ethnocultural childrearing and academic success. But, since this account was merely the narrative of one parent, I set out to examine this question more systematically. It is important to scientifically analyse to what extent educational expectations remain important to second-generation Chinese parents because it may impact aspects of the assimilation and socioeconomic outcomes of their children, the third-generation. This study places the childrearing of second-generation Chinese in a cross-national perspective to reveal that certain aspects of their ethnocultural childrearing practices appear to be not only influenced by time, but also by space. Specifically, national con-

text—focusing on school systems, approaches towards education, and social security safety nets—impact these specific elements.

Literature Overview: Childrearing of First-Generation Chinese and the Adaptation of Second-Generation Chinese

The extent to what parents with an immigrant background hold onto their ethnoculture often impacts how their children assimilate into the mainstream. Parents can use their ethnoculture to distance their children from certain populations. Early Chinese immigrants in the Mississippi Delta, for example, dissociated themselves from the black population to emphasize their similarity with the white mainstream (Loewen 1988) and recent first-generation Chinese parents use their ethnoculture to redefine their children's position in the ethnoracial hierarchy by motivating their offspring to outperform their native-born white peers (Jiménez and Horowitz 2013).

The Childrearing Practices of First-Generation Chinese Parents Include Three Mechanisms

Chinese ethnocultural childrearing is complex and includes a range of values, beliefs, practices, and tactics. When it comes to instilling values regarding education and academic achievement, scholars have pointed to three main mechanisms that first-generation Chinese parents include in their larger arsenal of childrearing practices to promote exceptional academic outcomes of their second-generation children. While parents of other ethnic groups might also include one, two, or all three of them, they are most commonly incorporated in the childrearing scheme of Asian (especially Chinese) immigrant parents (Chao 2000; Zhou 2009a). First, Chinese immigrant-parents use specific elements of their ethnoculture to generate academic success. For example, parents raise their children in an 'authoritarian' (Baumrind 1971) fashion; Chinese immigrant-parents reinforce strict rules (Chao 2000; Geense and Pels 1998) and are more likely to yell and use corporal punishment, compared to Americans (Kelley and Tseng 1992). Many of

these authoritarian values are rooted in Confucian ideology. Parent-child hierarchy, parental discipline (*guan*), and respect for parents are collectivistic values that are described as 'filial piety' (Chao 2000; Geense and Pels 1998). Following this principle, children should obey to their parents, including their parents' academic expectations, because their (academic) performance reflects on the family as a whole. In fact, parents use their children's achievements as a measure of their own parental success. The second ethnocultural mechanism that parents employ when raising their children, focuses on parents' investments. Sun (1998) shows that compared to other ethnic groups, Chinese (as well as Japanese and Korean) parents devote more financial, cultural, and human capital, as well as within-family social resources to their children's education (see also: Chao 1996). They are also more aggressive in using these strategies to secure their successful outcomes (Sun 1998). The third tactic through which first-generation Chinese parents in the U.S. increase their children's academic potential is by relocating to a particularly high-ranking school district or an ethnocultural community. This strategy is similar to Lareau's (2003) notion of concerted cultivation because parents take an active role in exposing their children to stimulating environments. Moving to highly-rated school districts improves the quality of children's education and thus their academic potential. It also enables Chinese parents to reside among co-ethnics who share their ethnocultural values, and to live in an area with venues to promote their children's achievement, such as after-school activities, SAT preparation programs, and homework support groups (Lee 2012; Zhou 2009a; Louie 2004).

Upward Assimilation and the Interaction between Ethnoculture and National Context

Like other immigrant parents, first-generation Chinese are socioeconomically diverse and want their children to do better than they did, or in American terms, to realize the American dream (Goyette 2008). First-generation parents' socio-

economic background, a dose of immigrant optimism, and a selection of their ethnocultural values pushed their children toward academic success and professional development (Geense and Pels 1998; Zhou 2009b; Lee and Zhou 2014). The second-generation, as well as their parents, created a new frame and narrative of what it means to be successful (Lee and Zhou 2014). But, the way in which they adjust to their host country is not only determined by their parents, but also by the opportunities, constraints, and institutions of their national context (Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Crul and Schneider 2009; Kasinitz et al. 2008). By growing up in the receiving country, the second-generation became familiar with the mainstream values and culture of their native-born peers (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Crul and Vermeulen 2003). While their adjustment to the mainstream enabled them to become successful, it also made them critical of their own upbringing. Consequently, second-generation Chinese may no longer agree with (all) their parents' childrearing styles (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998) or subscribe to their parents' standards of success (Lee and Zhou 2013). In other words, the assimilation process could alter their perspective of their own upbringing and their current childrearing practices.

To date, there are no studies that examine how, and if, second-generation Chinese adults continue any of the ethnocultural practices as they raise their own children. This study examines a select set, focusing on educational expectations and the childrearing mechanisms parents employ to promote their children's academic outcomes. The dynamics described above suggest an interaction between the context in which second-generation Chinese live and this specific subset of their childrearing practices. In different countries, second-generation Chinese are raised with similar (ethnocultural) approaches. However, when they raise their own children, they may have different attitudes and adjust the elements of their ethnoculture that pertains to the academic expectations and success of their

third-generation children to specific elements in their national context.

While Chinese ethnoculture is distinct, many of the ethnoculture values under study here are actually very similar to American ideals. For example, both American and Chinese cultures place high value on (academic) achievement and success. The Chinese ethnocultural emphasis on education and achievement has Confucian roots (Zhou 2009b) but match the U.S. setting, the American Creed and its deeply rooted notions of the American Dream (Lipset 1996; Hochschild 1995). Taking these values into consideration, American and Chinese values are actually more similar than they appear at first blush. Moreover, these aspects of the Chinese ethnoculture are beneficial because in the liberal U.S. welfare state, educational achievement and materialistic success are applauded (Esping-Andersen 1996). Similarities of these entrenched values make contexts for child-rearing very similar which makes it easier for the second-generation Chinese parents to maintain them. This is especially the case when compared to the Netherlands, a nation with a distinct lack of emphasis on material success, especially compared to American and Chinese ethnocultures.

In the Netherlands, the need for higher education and occupational prestige is reduced by a school system that promotes mediocrity and an extensive social security safety net. Although academic achievement does increase socioeconomic wellbeing also here, it is less crucial to a sustainable lifestyle. Hence, the elements of the Chinese ethnoculture that stress academic excellence are less suitable to the mainstream compared to the American mainstream, because they have little added value in a society that places less emphasis on material possessions and status. Past research has demonstrated that when the cultures of origin and receiving context differ greatly, cultural dissonance between parents and children can occur (Zhou 2009b; Geense and Pels 1998; Zhou 2009a) and may lead to the second-generation opposing their parents' focus on performance and success (Zhou 2009b). Second-

generation Chinese may reduce the elements of their ethnoculture that stress education when they raise their own children and consequently adopt more mainstream ethnoculture.

The divergent processes in the United States and the Netherlands suggest that national context interacts with the way that second-generation Chinese conceptualize of parts of their parents' ethnocultural upbringing and the way they transmit these specific elements intergenerationally; parents either accept or oppose the aspects of their ethnoculture that stress their offspring's educational achievement. Although seemingly counterintuitive, these dynamics lead second-generation Chinese in both the U.S. and the Netherlands to choose childrearing practices that promote this element of the assimilation of their third-generation children.

Research Settings and Methods

Data Origins

Data are based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with second-generation Chinese mothers and fathers in the United States and the Netherlands. Because this study includes both spouses as respondents, the total of interviewees in the Netherlands is 21 (11 couples, one partner was not present at the interview) and 41 in the United States (21 couples, one partner who was first-generation was excluded). Interviews with both spouses results in an equal gender distribution (all couples were heterosexual). Interviewing both partners at the same time provides dynamic narratives regarding parenting practices, experiences, and aspirations.

To recruit respondents, I posted ads, contacted Chinese organizations, visited day-care centres, joined 'mommy and me' groups, and utilised a snowball sampling technique. Only native-born respondents with foreign-born Chinese parents (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan) and with young children were selected. In the U.S., I focused on the greater LA region, California's largest metropolitan area, which contains more than 10 percent of the Chinese population. In the Netherlands, I conducted interviews in the 'Randstad', the

nation's main urban region which contains twice as many Chinese as elsewhere. Interviews lasted around two hours and took place at a location chosen by the respondents (e.g. their home or a local coffee shop). During the interviews, I took an inductive approach by addressing a same set of topics (through questions, comments, and probes) in both countries. The topics included the respondents' own childhood (e.g. birthplace, siblings, parents' approach towards education): the way they raise their children (e.g. leisure time activities, division of labour, disciplining/rewarding methods), and their educational expectations (e.g. academic prospects, extracurricular activities, choice of school). During the conversations (which took place in either English or Dutch) the 'Tiger Mother Debate' came up frequently. Because the debate was such a 'Hot Topic' during the time of the interviews, this usually happened naturally. I always focused on the respondents' opinion about the book and never on my own.

Throughout the study I utilised Grounded Theory, implying I intersected data collection, analysis, and hypothesis testing. This approach helped me to examine common concepts across countries and to synthesise shared notions. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed with AtlasTi. After re-reading all the interviews, I coded them based on general topics and then recoded each topic in more detail to dissect specific themes.

Settings and the Cross-National Comparison as a Quasi-Experiment

Cross-national research can be approached as a quasi-experiment (Bloemraad 2006; Noam 2013). Keeping factors constant between national contexts and research populations creates a pseudo-experimental design. This design allows me to analyse the effect of the 'treatment' (national context) on the variable of interest (childrearing practices) within my research population (second-generation Chinese). To increase the validity of the findings, it is important to hold variables in the countries and the Chinese populations constant. The United States and the Netherlands are

modern developed nations. The U.S. has a larger population than the Netherlands (315 and 17 million respectively), but both have a white majority, and similar age and gender distributions (United Nations 2013; CBS 2013). The Chinese populations in both countries are analogous too: they are about a half percent of the total populations, have similar histories and experiences, and are the largest and fastest-growing Asian groups in their respective countries (CBS 2013; Linder et al. 2011; PewResearchCenter 2013).

This study focuses on two differences between the United States and the Netherlands: their school systems and their (interrelated) social safety net. In the U.S., which is typically described as a 'liberal welfare state', society is stratified, almost bifurcated, and education offers a potential ticket to upward mobility (Esping-Andersen 1996). The education system is untracked and—at least in most public schools—students ostensibly receive the same basic curriculum. One consequence of this system is that it rewards only those who graduate (e.g. acceptance to college, increased chance of merit-based grants, access to better jobs) and penalizes those who do not (low-skill and low-pay jobs that provide limited benefits). Consequently, students aim to outperform their peers, making the U.S. academic system competitive. Moreover, there is a strong belief in personal responsibility and social benefits are only allotted to those in absolute need. Compared to the Netherlands, the U.S. has a higher percentage of the population living in poverty, but the public spending on social welfare as a share of GDP is lower (Dewan and Ettliger 2009). The Netherlands, where social benefits are more abundant, is a typical social-democratic country (Esping-Andersen 1996). The Dutch government provides more social security through income subsidies or other assistance. But, more importantly in light of this study, it also has different education systems and approach towards educational performance (see Holdaway, Crul and Roberts 2009 for an overview). The Dutch education system is tracked from seventh grade. Based on a national test and teacher's recom-

mendations, students are channelled into educational trajectories. Most pupils take the test without preparation because parents and educators consider the scores to represent their innate abilities and potential (Van Tubergen and Van de Werfhorst 2007). Children's tracks determine their subsequent level of high school: lower (*VMBO*), middle (*HAVO*), or higher (*VWO*), and continue after high school into either lower vocational, professional, or academic training. Children of immigrants usually follow the lower track (Crul and Schneider 2009), except second-generation Chinese (Vogels 2011). A tracked education system reduces competition. Since the majority of universities are public and accepts most graduates from academic track (*VWO*) high schools, students have little reason to outperform their peers. Furthermore, the Dutch government provides students with monthly stipends and affordable loans, which reduces the incentive to compete for merit-based fellowships (Van Tubergen and Van de Werfhorst 2007).

Findings

The divergence in the extent to what the second-generation Chinese in the United States and the Netherlands transmit their ethnoculture reflects how parents and their children adjust to their national context. Before addressing differences in regard to the educational expectations they have of their children and the specific ethnocultural mechanisms they transmit to promote their children's academic outcomes, it is essential to stress the similarities between the second-generation Chinese parents in the U.S. and the Netherlands. Keeping variables constant strengthens the validity in pseudo-experiments (Bloemraad 2006; Noam 2013) and suggests that differences between the two countries are not caused by individual factors, but related to national context.

Similar Socioeconomic Standing and Ethnocultural Background

Table 1 compares the samples of this study. In both countries, respondents are in their thirties and have young children. (This is in part

because I only selected respondents with pre-teen children and in part because the population second-generation Chinese is still young (Linder et al. 2011; Kasinitz et al. 2008)). In both countries, parents identify with being Chinese; nearly all respondents identify as either only Chinese or as American- or Dutch-Chinese. Parents' ethnoracial identity can impact the way they socialize their children in ethnoracial terms (Hughes et al. 2006). The socioeconomic status (SES) of the second-generation Chinese is similar too. Parents have high levels of education and highly skilled jobs, which reflects the overall populations (Vogels 2011; Louie 2004). SES is related to social and cultural capital and can influence parents' childrearing approach; parents of higher SES have usually higher educational expectations of their children and may ascribe to different cultures (Lareau 2003).

One difference between the parents in each country is their labour-force participation: the average number of working hours each week is higher for parents in the Netherlands than for parents in the U.S., as is the number of respondents with a full-time job (not stay-at-homeparents or students). This is remarkable because the opposite is the case for overall populations in both countries (OECD 2012). Another difference is the sector in which the second-generation Chinese are employed. In the Dutch sample, respondents were more likely to own a (family) business, while respondents in the U.S. were more employed in highly skilled occupations (e.g. architect or physician).

Perhaps second-generation Chinese on both sides of the Atlantic express such resemblance because they were raised similarly. Their accounts on their upbringing include strict rules, limited socialization with native-born peers, and a strong emphasis on education. Their parents' approaches towards their education reflect the childrearing theories on which this study draws (e.g. Chao 2000; Geense and Pels 1998; Zhou 2009b). Respondents repeatedly mention that their first-generation parents had expected them to excel. For instance, parents, such as those

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample, by country

Characteristic	The United States		The Netherlands	
	Mean	St. dev.	Mean	St. dev.
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	39.4	4.79	35.9	3.86
Number of children	1.7	0.71	1.7	0.63
Age of first child	6.2	2.91	4.6	3.17
<i>Ethnic self-identification (%)</i>				
Chinese	47.5		47.5	
American/Dutch Chinese	45		47.6	
American/Dutch	7.5		4.8	
<i>Socioeconomic</i>				
Weekly hours work	38.4	13.13	43.7	13.92
Years of education	18.5	2.50	17.2	1.84
Stay at home parents (%)	20.0		4.5	
Number of respondents	41		21	

of U.S.-born Maria (all names are pseudonyms) were “making sure that we got straight A’s.” First-generation parents also expected their children to obtain at least a college degree, and, as Fen explains “the decision that I was going to college was made not by me.”

Second-generation Chinese perceive their parents’ pressure for high achievements as essential to their ethnoculture. Bao, a mother in the Netherlands, explains that she and her siblings “had to get the highest degree possible, and my parents emphasized this strongly!” She stresses that this was common among her Chinese peers: “the Chinese of my generation, at least the ones we know, were all pushed pretty hard.” The question is, how do second-generation parents in both countries conceptualize these experiences and how do they influence some of their own childrearing practices? As discussed below, analysis of the interviews reveals differences in two domains: expectations of their children’s educational path and their reasons to emphasise education.

The Educational Path: Parents’ Expectations vs. Children’s Freedom of Choice

When second-generation Chinese grew up, their parents accentuated the importance of educa-

tion and academic achievement. Most respondents were at the top of their class, attended university, and even obtained graduate degrees. Their education placed them in the upper-middle class of society, providing plenty of opportunities. Despite their similarities, second-generation Chinese parents in the U.S. and the Netherlands now differ in how they view this element of their upbringing and their intergenerational transmission of these elements of their ethnoculture. In the U.S., parents expect their children to obtain a graduate degree, and parents in the Netherlands are satisfied if their children complete the highest-level high school (VWO). In the former, second-generation Chinese accept their ethnocultural emphasis on education and employ some of their parents’ specific childrearing mechanisms that focus on their children’s academic outcomes. In the latter, parents oppose the emphasis on academic achievement and stress that their children can choose their own educational path, as long as they finish high school.

U.S. Second-Generation Chinese: “She needs to have at least a graduate degree”

Second-generation Chinese parents in the United States still see ambition and achieve-

ment as imperative and ascribe their disposition for hard work, zeal, and determination to their ethnoculture. They experienced how beneficial these traits are in their competitive society and how it provided access to the upper-middle class. Because they want the same for their own children, they continue to pass on these ethnocultural values. Most second-generation Chinese parents in the U.S. expect graduate degrees from their children. While parents of most ethnic groups hope that their children will finish university (Goyette 2008), second-generation Chinese aim higher: "I think we would probably expect them to get graduate degrees, you know, go on to a graduate school of some sort" Lydia says of her daughter (8) and son (6). This expectation is similar to the expectations their parents had of them. Parents do not want their children to do worse than they did. Mark explains that because he has a graduate degree he tells his daughter to obtain the same: "at minimum, or else. I mean, I kind of make fun of it, but I said, 'if you don't achieve it, then you fail as a person'."

Parents take their educational demands for granted and do not take their children's wishes into account. They set a minimum level of education for their children from the moment (or before) they are born and focus on these goals rather than looking at their children's capacities. For example, when I ask Karen if she has any educational desires for her toddler and six month-old, she passionately answers: "college, definitely!" Having expectations for children at such an early age emphasises that their children may not have much input, stressing the importance of filial piety. Ruby explains that her two children "know that college is expected. It is not going to be a 'should I go to college?' kind of thing." While it may be that the children of the second-generation Chinese in the United States will rebel against their parents demands at an older age (Lee and Zhou 2013), parents make it seem that they will not allow their children to choose their own educational path.

Parents say that their educational expectations are not unreasonable because they deem

their children smarter than the average. They believe that their children do not need to be pushed that much because, as Fen puts it: "a lot of that stuff comes very naturally." This taken-for-grantedness is a common aspect of culture (Small, Harding and Lamont 2010). It appears that the second-generation accepts the elements of their parents' ethnoculture that focus on education. Parents in the United States are also able to take these for granted because they do not clash with the (educational) values of their surroundings. The American principle that one can create a better life through education and hard work is deeply rooted (Lipset 1996; Hochschild 1995). These mainstream values reinforce parents' dispositions. Still, parents ascribe it to their own ethnoculture as well. They see it as typically Chinese or Asian to stress academic achievements, which accentuate the acceptance of their ethnoculture further. Scott explains why for him ethnoculture and educational achievement are linked:

Education. Education, of course. Gosh, education is... you know, for Asians...Asians just have a thing where we like to criticise and harshly criticise. Like, if you get like an A-minus you must be stupid, or retarded. You must have done something disrespectful to your teacher, that's why you got an A-minus.

This positive stereotyping of their ethnoculture and culturalisation of educational expectations—especially when it is reinforced by teachers—can boost actual academic outcomes (Lee and Zhou 2013). Another indicator that the second-generation Chinese in the U.S. accept their ethnocultural emphasis on education is their effort to promote their children's academic outcomes through mechanisms similar to those of their parents, such as investing in their children's education. Traditionally, Chinese parents support their children's education as part of a 'social contract'; parents invest in their children's schooling and children provide for their parents once they become old and frail (Zhou 2009a). While second-generation Chinese no longer expect their children's assistance in the future, they do continue to invest in their academic path; they

either become a stay-at-home-parent, or as Fen explains “put in the money, or the environment, or whatever we need to help [our daughter] along [in her education].”

Parents also increase the academic outcomes of their children by choosing specific schools. Some send their offspring to private schools, such as Sandra. Sandra explains that she chose a private school to increase the chance that her children will continue to college: “I assume they’ll go to college. I am not paying for private school for them not to go to college.” Other parents move to neighbourhoods within particularly high-rated school districts. Sometimes, as Betty explains, even before their children are born:

When we were looking at this home that was definitely one of the first things we checked out, even though we didn’t have kids at the time. We looked at the school system, the school district here, and the school that we would be sending our kids to.

Second-Generation Chinese Parents in the Netherlands: “I want her to obtain certain basics, get a foundation”

Similar to their U.S. peers, second-generation Chinese parents in the Netherlands grew up with parents who had high academic hopes for them. This immigrant generation typically worked long hours in restaurants with minimal compensation. They did not want the same for their children and saw education as the way out. Based on the ethnocultural values of filial piety, second-generation Chinese were required to meet their parents’ expectations (Geense and Pels 1998). But, as the second-generation got older and compared their efforts and outcomes to those of their native-born peers, they became aware of alternatives. They realised that there is more to life than educational accomplishments, and that fulfilment is not an outcome of academic success per se. The second-generation Chinese find themselves with academic competencies or in high-skilled professional jobs to please their parents, not because they chose this path themselves.

Second-generation Chinese explain that they do not want their children to have the same experience and take a different approach. They

disagree with their parents’ ethnocultural emphasis on educational achievement and no longer stress education to the same extent. Contrary to their parents and U.S. peers, they do not instruct their children to obtain (at least) a college degree. Instead, they stress their children’s free choice in deciding whether or not to continue their education and in determining their specific direction. They expect their children to complete the highest level high school (*VWO*) and obtain an educational foundation. A *VWO* diploma, parents argue, provides their children with a solid base and opportunities to choose either a professional or academic career. Marcel says that: “for me it is important that [my son] will attend *HAVO* or *VWO* high school. I don’t care if he will continue to the professional or academic track afterwards.” Marcel’s wife explains that because they both grew up with the pressure from their parents, they do not want to push their children, which, she adds, is very common among her peers: “I also see it among our generation who we meet at church; the younger generation doesn’t want to [push their children].” Yunru and her husband Ruben illustrate this point too. When I ask them about the importance of education for their daughters (4 and 8) Yunru answers that it is “very important. But they are free to choose to study what they want to study, *if* they want to study.” Ruben adds that it is not about the level of schooling but that “the basics are the most important: language, mathematics, and those types of things.” Rather than focusing on their children’s educational endpoint, parents stress their children’s choice in determining their educational path and the importance of basic education. Qing explains: “I don’t think that the education by itself—university or a Ph.D.—is the most important. It is important that the child chooses something that feels good. But, you do have to have a certain base.”

Reasons to Stress Education: Financial Security vs. Personal Happiness

Second-generation Chinese parents in the United States and the Netherlands give their children

different levels of freedom to make decisions regarding their education. These differences are influenced by the country's school systems and the opportunities after completing education. Parents in the U.S. argue that a graduate degree is the minimum requirement to find a job with financial security. Parents in the Netherlands do not talk about financial wellbeing but stress that their children need a basic education to achieve personal happiness. This discrepancy highlights that parents adjust their expectations to constraints and opportunities in their national contexts.

In the U.S., High Education Provides More Job Opportunities

In the United States, second-generation Chinese parents feel they have no choice but to stress education when raising their children. The U.S. society is unforgiving and competitive, parents explain, and education is fundamental to success. Parents insist that a graduate degree can increase their children's potential job security and financial well-being. Sarah explains: "If you want a job, a good job, you have to at least get a Masters (...) you need to do more education to be more valued." Like most second-generation Chinese parents, Sarah believes that children need more education these days. Contemporary employers are looking for workers with at least a college degree. Economists at the Bureau for Labour Statistics (2013) explain that this so-called 'degree inflation' implies that higher levels of education are required for lower skilled jobs and that college degrees are the minimum to get hired for entry level positions. In the U.S., the unemployment rate for people with a college degree is almost half (4.5%) of those with only a high school diploma (8.2%). Since parents motivate their expectations with their children's occupational opportunities and financial wellbeing, it is not surprising that they adjust their outlooks to this degree inflation and prefer graduate degrees. Karen says that she "want(s) them to do well and have opportunities", and realises that a college degree might not be enough. "There's no

guarantee, with a college degree it's still hard to find jobs."

Parents also ascribe the need to create occupational opportunities to their ethnoculture. Karen's husband Steven says: "it is definitely the Asian or Chinese belief that the more...the higher educated you are, or the better school you go to, it opens up greater doors." The association between schooling and future opportunities is a recurring theme among second-generation Chinese in the United States. For example, Lydia, says that "we want to give our kids the best opportunity to make an even better life, at least equivalent or better, so that they can be comfortable and have a good quality of life." Given that it is similar to their parents' expectations, it is safe to assume that they accept this element of their ethnoculture and implement it in their own childrearing. The interactive process stresses the association between context, expectations, and these childrearing practices.

In the Netherlands, Parents Emphasise their Children's Happiness

Contrary to their U.S. counterparts, second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands do not see academic success as prerequisite to (financial) wellbeing. They talk negatively about prestige and high income, and object to this element of their ethnoculture. Instead, parents stress their children's happiness. By letting their children choose their own (educational) careers, parents express that their opinion is not more valuable than their children's, which suggests that they oppose their ethnocultural values of filial piety.

Their exposure to alternative approaches of education and academic achievement enabled second-generation Chinese to question their own upbringing. They believe that there are innate limitations to the educational abilities of their children and that having expectations their children cannot meet can result in frustration. While this process has also been documented in the United States (Lee 2012; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998), it only lowered the expectations of parents in the Netherlands. Here, parents feel

that financial wellbeing is not crucial to achieve happiness. Parents do not talk about financial incentives to push their children towards academic achievement. Cheng explains that his children's level of education "depends on their abilities. There is no point in pushing children if it turns out that they do not have the abilities to do more. This will only make them very unhappy." Cheng's argument demonstrates how the childrearing practices of second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands differ from the ones they were brought up with. It stresses also how the conceptualization of their ethnoculture is altered by the dominant notion of education and performance.

Second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands reduce their ethnocultural emphasis on education as a response to their own upbringing and are able to do so as a reaction to the society in which they live. Parents express no concern about their children's (future) financial situation. Growing up in the Dutch society made them realise that education, prestige, and income do not imply a much higher living-standard. Yunru explains how this realisation changed her and her husband's lives and the socialization of their children:

We made very conscious decisions to change our careers so that we could do something we enjoy, and this awareness of 'what is enjoyable and what is important' is something we would like to teach our children too. We don't want them to first think about making money and only then see what they enjoy.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I demonstrated that national context interacts with the transmission of specific elements of Chinese ethnoculture. Comparing second-generation Chinese in the United States and the Netherlands shows that parents can adjust their childrearing practices to their context. In the former, second-generation Chinese parents accept the ethnocultural values of high educational achievement; in the latter they oppose them.

U.S.-born Chinese parents continue to have high educational expectations of their children. The Chinese ethnocultural values regarding hard work, zeal, and academic achievement fit well within the American context (Lipset 1996; Hochschild 1995), and allows parents to take these elements of their ethnoculture for granted. Parents want their children to succeed and they continue to display the three ethnocultural mechanisms that promote their children's accomplishments: they raise them with high academic expectations and ethnocultural values such as filial piety and collectivism; they help them succeed by investing in their education, for instance by staying home to care for their children; and they select reputable schools and neighbourhoods. But while second-generation Chinese in the U.S. accept these segments of their parents' ethnoculture, they no longer instil them as punitively as the first-generation parents described in the literature or as austere as the 'Tiger Mothers' depicted in the popular media.

Second-generation Chinese parents in the Netherlands have lower expectations of their children's educational outcomes and (only) require them to finish the highest level high school (VWO). After obtaining the basics, parents leave it to their offspring to decide: continue to university, follow a professional track, or start working. Parents oppose the ethnocultural values regarding education, with which they were raised, and do not want to put their children under the same parental pressure. Happiness, they stress, is their main childrearing goal. Consequently, parents no longer raise their children with these strict ethnocultural values, do not invest in their children's academic outcomes as much, and do not move to specific neighbourhoods. This is not to say that other elements of their ethnoculture—such as diet, holidays, and values—are not important, they might be. But they lie beyond the scope of this study.

Second-generation Chinese parents in the Netherlands are able to reduce the specific elements of their ethnocultural that emphasizes education because the national educa-

tional system offers schooling alternatives and the state provides a social security safety net (Esping-Andersen 1996). Second-generation Chinese parents explain that they do not worry about their children's academic outcomes because they realize that obtaining a VWO high school diploma might be enough to succeed. Indeed, most VWO graduates continue to university and (children of) immigrants are even more likely to do so (Van der Aart 2002). Another reason for second-generation Chinese parents in the Netherlands to only stress this basic education and object their ethnocultural values of academic success may be the accessibility of college. Dutch universities are nearly all public and usually accept VWO graduates from the right specialisation. Moreover, the need for external merit based fellowships is reduced because they have relatively low tuition fees. This Dutch school system is in stark contrast with competitive U.S. school system. In the U.S., only successful high-school graduates can continue to good colleges and/or obtain merit based funding. Thus, here parents have an incentive to stress those elements of their ethnoculture that promote academic achievement.

Another difference between the second-generation Chinese parents in both countries is the money or time that parents invest in their children's education. In the Netherlands, parents are less concerned about school rankings; rarely move to different neighbourhoods, and do not invest in their children's education in any direct way. This is in stark contrast with their peers in the U.S., where, for example, parents are more likely to stay-at-home, suggesting the investment of both time and money in their children. The differences can be partially explained by their respective school systems. In the Netherlands, nearly all primary schools are public and under the same governmental supervision. Hence, they all implement the same core curriculum and are of comparable quality. In the United States, there is a large discrepancy in the quality of schools and school districts; parents can improve the potential academic outcome of their children by selecting a highly-rated school (district) (Zhou 2009b).

The last reason why second-generation Chinese parents in the Netherlands may raise their children with fewer elements of the ethnoculture regarding education could be because there are fewer severe penalties of having lower academic achievements. The Netherlands has a social-democratic welfare system which provides a social security safety net. The U.S. is a liberal welfare state where education provides this security (Esping-Andersen 1996).

The analysis of the findings shows that to what extent second-generation Chinese parents intergenerationally transmit the specific elements of ethnoculture, and the manner in which they do, is influenced by an interaction between their conceptualisation of their own upbringing and their national context. This conclusion should, however, be taken with some caution since findings are drawn on relatively small and select samples. Future research with larger and more diverse samples can indicate whether or not these processes regard the whole second-generation Chinese population, if they apply to other ethnic groups as well, and whether there are in-group differences (e.g. between mothers and fathers).

Thus far, scholars examined either the role of ethnoculture in the childrearing practices of first-generation Chinese (Chao 2000; Geense and Pels 1998) or the incorporation of the second-generation Chinese youth (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). By bringing these two literatures together, I moved the debate forward. Long-term assimilation processes are in part determined by the intergenerational transmission of ethnoculture. Decedents of immigrants either lose components of their ethnoculture by the third or fourth-generation or merge them with elements of the host culture, creating a type of new hybrid culture and childrearing practices. While this study only examines a selection of ethnoculture, it does provide a piece in the larger 'assimilation' puzzle. It demonstrates that certain aspects of assimilation are not the same in every national context and nor is the culture into which the second-generation mixes

their own culture to create a new hybrid form. Second-generation Chinese parents match their intergenerational transmission of their ethnocultural emphasis on education to the needs of their national surroundings, which, naturally, affects their third-generation children differently. In the U.S., adaptation implies that parents accept the part of their ethnoculture that stresses educational achievement. Their children will most likely continue to obtain high academic achievements, especially given the high socioeconomic status of their parents (Lareau 2003). In the Netherlands, parents adjust to the mainstream by opposing this part of their ethnocultural values; they no longer stress academic achievement and success, and raise their children with values similar to the native-born Dutch, focusing on innate abilities and happiness. In the United States and the Netherlands the second-generation Chinese approach their ethnocultural values regarding education in dissimilar ways—either accepting or opposing them—yet they both adjust them to their national context. These findings indicate that adjustment to the host society may not have the same (long-term) implications in different countries. Although it is too early to examine the educational outcomes of the third-generation Chinese, it is likely that their potential academic achievement, and as such, their socio-economic assimilation, depends on the context in which their parents raise them.

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