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the China samples. The men in the China sample ranked it number four and the women, number eight. The item "emotional stability and maturity" is a priority for all, but less so for China male subjects, who ranked it number five. In this item we see a desire for a long-lasting personal quality that is necessary for an enduring relationship. The fact that the China male sample did not place as high a priority on it, I think, may be related to what we discussed earlier; namely, marital commitment is not as much of a choice in China, and, therefore, "long lasting" is more "guaranteed." Interestingly enough, "good looks" only received a middle to clearly unimportant ranking from the entire international sample. Even in the U.S. sample, male subjects ranked it number seven and females, number thirteen.

In reviewing the previous data we should remember how life circumstances influence one's outlook on life events. That more similarities exist between Taiwan and U.S. groups than between China and Taiwan groups may largely be due to the fact that China has had much less exposure to Western lifestyle than Taiwan and the questionnaire originated in the United States. Conspicuous in their absence, for example, are items eliciting family acceptability of the future mate or questions about filial qualities. Would we then have greater differences between the Taiwan and U.S. samples and more similarities between the Taiwan and China samples? As a matter of fact, the very omission of culturally relevant items illustrates precisely the difficulties of Chinese Americans in their negotiation in American lifestyle. I have seen Chinese-American individuals and couples for whom the lack of family acceptability became a serious problem in their marriages. Often, when tension exists between the spouse and family of origin, the power of the latter is formidable. This tends to be more true when it is daughter-in-law versus parent-in-law. The husband-son more often than not sides with his parents. Tension of this type is sometimes incomprehensible to Westerners, as is reflected in the omission of family-related items in the question-

naire. To most Westerners, one's family of origin is not even in the picture when it comes to marriage. For the Chinese Americans I have treated, romantic love is, of course, highly desirable and longed for, especially when one is as young as the subjects in the research study. Even at this stage, I noticed in my psychotherapy practice, the issue of how well the future mate meets family expectations is a concern, one carefully monitored and causing apprehension.

THE GREAT WALL MENTALITY: BOUNDARY AS REFLECTED IN DWELLINGS

A few years ago, a friend who had recently come from Shanghai asked me why American colleges and universities do not have a *damen*, a formal front gate, and walls around them: "Any-one can get in from anywhere." I was temporarily stunned: what gate? With his explanations I recalled, yes, there was always a wall surrounding the schools I attended, with a front gate for entrance that can be closed and locked. The same is also true for residences. A walled compound enclosing a *da jiating*, large family, is frequently featured in novels and movies about Chinese life. The "large family" is usually translated by Westerners as "extended family." From the Chinese perspective, a grandfather living in the same compound with his married sons' families and unmarried sons and daughters does not represent an "extension." It is the original whole.

There are numerous variations of such enclosures. Shanghai has "alleys," or *nongtang*. These are lines of homes sprawling out after one enters from the central gate, and the entire "unit" is enclosed by a long wall. Beijing's equivalent is called *hutong*, with the same formal gate and wall around the cluster of homes. Residents in *nongtang* or *hutong* are not families or even related. However, they are neighbors who often become surrogate families, addressing one another with familial titles. Since Chinese

are not as mobile as Americans, these surrogate "families" can be together for a lifetime. Some of these traditional patterns are now being replaced by Western-style high-rise apartment buildings that, interestingly enough, are also "enclosed" by nature of their heights. The difference is that Chinese apartment-building neighbors are much more intermingled than Americans, who may not even know the name of a next-door neighbor after years of living side by side. When one travels in China's countryside, one sees even modest "mud" houses with some kind of a wall surrounding them. And, of course, there is the Great Wall to protect the entire country from the "barbarians" in the North.

These walls and formal gates clearly represent the Chinese position of central control of who is an insider, a *zijiren*, "self-person," and who is an outsider, *wairen*, to be kept out. Each enclosure contains layers of smaller "units" that are, in turn, controlled by the appropriate head of the household. In the United States one finds the legislature actively participating, for example, in problems regarding teenage smoking, pregnancy, or crime. In China, unquestionably, the families deal with such issues within their walls. In counseling parents accused of child abuse, one sees the utter frustration of new immigrant Chinese parents who are suddenly forbidden to discipline their children as they used to do. The traditional Chinese approach has sometimes been criticized by the West as being too rigid, harsh, and authoritarian. On the other hand, when the shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas, involving an eleven-year-old and a thirteen-year-old who shot and killed five persons, happened in 1998, the well-known Harvard pediatrician Dr. T. Berry Brazelton described American youth as "isolated and very angry."

The United States and China are said to represent the two diametrically opposed concepts of individualism and interdependence. We can see problems in both. The Chinese overlap and interact with one another primarily within the "enclosures," as symbolized by their architecture. Their personal "expansions"

tend to occur in more familiar and "official" settings, such as schools and workplaces, or through friends and families. These places, then, become part of their inner circle. Americans, on the other hand, interact with the outside world directly from their nuclear homes. Television talk shows are full of individuals broadcasting personal matters to the whole world. Western personal "expansions" have a wider scope and are more impersonal in nature. This cultural difference is translated into intergenerational conflicts between young Chinese Americans and their parents. Although the young wish to expand like "everybody else" around them, they are, however, without role models or support from their parents. The parents, coming from their own experience, often discourage them and are made anxious by "Western ways." We see these discrepancies turn into hurt feelings, disappointment, betrayal, and loneliness on the parents' part, and the younger generation experiences anger, confusion, and inferiority feelings for being socially "backward."

I used architectural symbolism here to show how the older generation's worldviews are deeply rooted in some fundamental aspects of their lives, without their conscious awareness. Unaware that their preferences are cultural differences and, therefore, arbitrary and relative, the parents may see their worldviews as absolute and the only alternative. Likewise, the young, being exposed only to Western ways, think what they are familiar with is the only option and do not see the cultural relativity either. Ethnocentricity is certainly not a unique feature limited to Chinese Americans or immigrants. We need only to look around and listen or even examine each of our own views to see the bias that whatever one is used to must be the only way, the right way. This universal human idiosyncrasy is at the root of most of the troubles in the world among individuals as well as among groups. It takes an exceptional person and exceptional effort to see another person's perspective.

In this chapter, I attempted to present an overview of a Chinese personal world and contrast it with that of an American personal world. The differences are vast. In this complex and nebulous region of East meets West, young Chinese Americans try to develop a sense of personal identity, which is the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Environment for Chinese-American Self-Identity

"I don't know who I am or what I am", "I don't fit anywhere"; "I feel I'm invisible": these are phrases often spoken by young Chinese Americans. An American-born Chinese complained, when she was about to make her first trip to China, "Why do people keep on saying to me, 'It's nice you are going back to China?' I've never been there, so how can I 'go back'?"

This chapter addresses the process of self-identification, emphasizing factors, to be developed throughout the book, that are particularly salient to Chinese Americans. It is understood that the "self" is formed in the interactions between innate attributes, such as physical features, temperament, native intelligence and talents, and the external environment, a nature-nurture combination.

THE PROCESS OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION

When Snow White's wicked stepmother repeatedly asks the mirror who is the most beautiful woman of all, she is trying to form a sense of herself based on the feedback from the mirror. Likewise, we begin forming a sense of "Who I am" largely based on internalization of reflections and feedback from other people. We see ourselves as others see us. This process starts from the moment we are born. The "others" constitute these "mirrors." As