

Adapted from: "Growing Up American", by Min Zhou, in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. 1997. 23:63-95.

*2 groups* *1 group* *2 group* *parents concerns that children become Americanized so quickly*  
Immigrant children and their parents tend to interpret their new country and their relationships

with it from different angles. In the United States, immigrant children often become Americanized so quickly that their parents cannot keep up with them. There is a fear in the older generation that their children will leave them, become like other American youth, and forget about their roots. Meanwhile members of the younger generation are anxious that they might never become "American" because of *ojetoren worried* these close family ties.

The younger generation tends to focus on adjustment right now, paying attention to the external qualities of what they call "American." They struggle to fit in based on what they see and learn from their American classmates, friends, and coworkers, and from television and other forms of mass media. They often find themselves confused by such questions as: How do I fit into American culture and my own ethnic culture at the same time? Which side should I stay loyal to, American or my own ethnic culture? Can I ever become American without leaving home?

At times, immigrants' children feel embarrassed by their parents' "old" ways. Because parents lack proficiency in English, children often act as interpreters and translators for their parents. Such role reversal usually leads to greater dependence of parents on children and a loss of parental authority.

Parents, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with making the best of a new environment and with retaining traditional family life. These parental concerns tend to lead them to focus on the future and to emphasize discipline and scholastic achievement. When children respond to these requests in an unexpected way, parents are puzzled: Why are my children so disrespectful? How can I make my children understand that everything I am doing is for their own good? Can't they understand that I chose a life here only to benefit them? What should I do to keep my children from losing their cultural roots and from assimilating too much?