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### Facing the Past and Climbing the Mountain

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## **Facing the Past and Climbing the Mountain**

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APS 650: Capstone Project  
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May 25, 2022

## Abstract

As children develop their worldview, morals, and viewpoints, family upbringing plays a crucial role. Indeed, the role of Chinese parents has shifted due to the country's fast economic growth, and there have also been significant changes in lifestyle, which include the adoption of new technology, improved living conditions, and increasing educational pressure on the younger generation. This study utilizes a blend of secondary sources and first-hand testimonials in order to examine the influence of Chinese parenting techniques on children of my age, who were born after 1990, normally called the "Post- 90s" generation, as well as how our living situations and school experience amplify our stress. Parenting styles shape our perceptions of gender roles, potential career trajectories, and marital expectations. If the formation of human character is closely related to family, we must evaluate the impact of familial upbringing on children and take the best from both the old and new ways. We must also consider the impact of these styles on children's future growth and psychological well-being as well as how this informs the younger generation's mindset towards the next generation. Finally, this essay considers proposals for a feasible model of effective parenting for future parents. Through a combined analysis and proposal, my research sheds light on the complex structure and role of parent-child relationships in the modern day Asia Pacific.

**Keywords:** Chinese, parenting philosophies, economic boom, education and work stress, psychological outcomes, depression

## Introduction

What we heard and imitated from our parents formed the first lessons in our lives, which in most cases is that family values education. The behavior and treatment from parents subconsciously influence the next generation. Newborns learn about the world by exploring the objects around them, and the way parents treat their children and the way they treat others is undoubtedly implanted in our subconscious minds like seeds when we are young. Research shows that “parental involvement in the form of interest in the child and manifest in the home as parent-child discussions can have a significant positive effect on children’s behaviour and achievement even when the influence of background factors such as social class or family size” are present.<sup>1</sup> Also, a child’s future characteristics are built in their childhood, and they often become mirrors that reflect their parents’ personalities. Thus, one might think it is effortless for the new generation to adapt to their parents’ ways and what they were taught. As the Chinese have gone through this economic boom, however, Western concepts have invaded our culture and technology has flourished which we, the younger generation, have integrated into our identities, creating a division between the generations. Our living situation and schooling creates additional stress for our generation. Thus, the models of the past can no longer be applied to the new generation of children who in some ways are more vulnerable and need more care.

In this study, I will mainly examine the influence of Chinese parenting techniques on children of my age, who were born after 1990, normally called the “Post- 90s” generation. These parenting styles shape children's perceptions of gender roles, potential career trajectories, and marital expectations. In particular, certain cultural foundations and philosophies inform parental attitudes, behaviors, and how parents impact their value systems to their children by emphasizing

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<sup>1</sup> Jinxiu Wang, “Evaluate Influence of Family Education to Minors,” *Contemporary Economics*, n.d.

their sense of authority. Inappropriate parenting styles negatively influence teenagers, and “the mentality of our generation has become fragile, as evidenced by numerous cases of teen depression and suicide.”<sup>2</sup> From overwhelming numerical data, we see that young people are easily damaged and need to be protected in holistic ways since they find it challenging to endure and overcome certain difficulties and tribulations. If the formation of human character is closely related to family, we must evaluate the impact of familial upbringing on children and take the best from both the old and new ways. We must also consider the impact of these styles on future psychological outcomes, including how this informs the younger generation’s mindset towards the next generation. Ultimately, it is inappropriate to utilize past philosophies and value systems for the new generation. In order to adapt to the new generation, policies continue to change, such as the birth of the Juvenile Protection Act, a shift from the One-Child Policy which launched out on parents’ generation, and so forth, and families should also adapt in such ways.

### **Economic Boom and the Generation Gap**

The gap between my parents' generation and mine has already existed without any doubt, due to the fact that the economy of China has boomed, which has improved our living standards, living habits, and living conditions. Parents and those who are my age tend to have different perspectives about various matters due to this shift in economy.

In the last 40 years, with the reform and opening up, the Chinese economy flourished; with modern concepts embraced by the new generation, the country evolved into its current state. China has changed dramatically—from a poverty-stricken country where people couldn't afford

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<sup>2</sup> Chao En, “The Association between Suicidal Ideation and Family Environment and Psychological Resilience in Adolescents,” *Chinese Journal of Contemporary Pediatrics* 21, no. 5 (May 25, 2019): 479–84, <https://doi.org/10.7499/j.issn.1008-8830.2019.05.016>.

to eat or wear clothes to the second-largest economy in the world. The following figures put this into context:

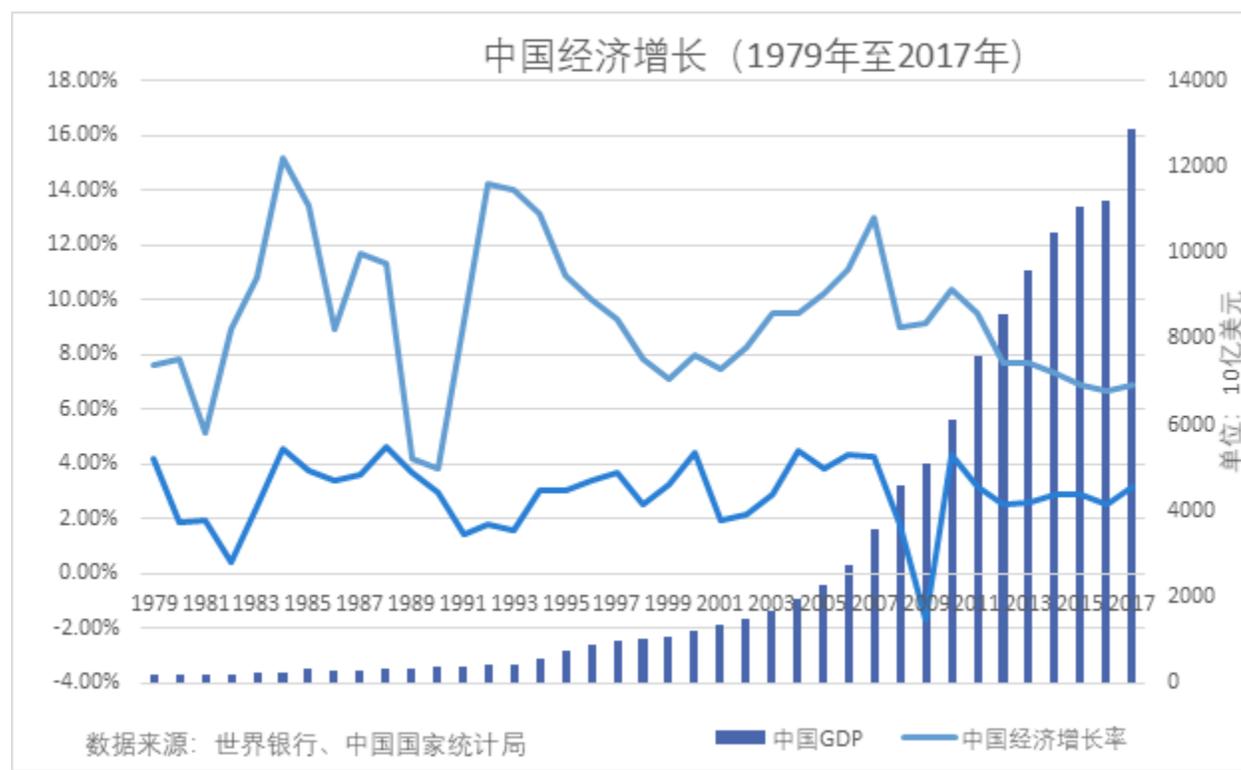
At the beginning of reform and opening-up, China's economy was only RMB 367.9 billion in 1978, while its gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018 was over RMB 82.7 trillion. During these 40 years, China's GDP grew at an average annual nominal rate of 14.5%, and taking into account an average annual inflation rate of 4.8%, the average annual real growth rate was a whopping 9.3%, placing China firmly as the world's second-largest economy.<sup>3</sup>

With the surge of the economy, the identities of the Chinese also developed. Economic growth allowed citizens to elevate their living standards, pursue their dreams, and led to shifts in their training focus. The economic disparities between two generations are the foundation for the diversity of home education technologies, allowing citizens to explore their internal demand and raise their living standards and ideological level. Figure 1 demonstrates China's economic growth rate and GDP from 1979 to 2017. According to the graph below, China's economy swung

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<sup>3</sup> Liu Karen, "Mapping China's Economic Growth in 40 Years of Reform and Opening," accessed February 15, 2022, <https://cn.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/18-40>.

drastically upward in the 1990s, and progress and changeset began from there.



Data sources: World Bank, China Statistical Department

Figure 1<sup>4</sup>

Those in my parents' generation were born between the 1960s and 1980s, when the One Child Policy had not been launched. During this time when China was still poor, this generation experienced hardships in their childhood that were drastically different from my generation. One of my family members indicates that, despite some of the joy and friendships experienced, the poor economic condition brought inconvenience and horrible experiences for him:

To have meat for the New Year, our family used to breed pigs. Your grandparents had the pig butchered for New Year's Eve, but with seven people in the household, your grandma had to cut corners and wouldn't let me eat anymore. But I had countless friends in the

<sup>4</sup> "China's Economic Boom (From 1979 to 2017s)" (World Bank, China Statistical Department, n.d.).

villages, because I have so many pals, no one can beat me to the punch. The good old days were truly wonderful. It's so pity you don't have such a friendship.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of financial stress, the children were neglected. When there were more than two children in a family, the grandparents of our parents' generation needed to survive, so they focused more on generating money than on teaching their children. As a result, the norm for raising a child sometimes meant they were deprived of attention or, at times, took out their frustrations on them. Some parents noticed that this absence of attention had a psychological influence on children and wanted to alter it for the next generation, so they focused their efforts on educating our generation. My aunt shared her own experience with this:

Your grandpa simply did not have time to care about us, to sustain a family of seven people, your grandfather went to do hard job, returned exhausted, heard your great-grandmother reprimand me, I will be subjected to a savage thrashing. I was a youngster who didn't understand him and was resentful of him, but now that I think about it, it's impossible to avoid when you're poor. But that period of my life cast a long shadow over me, and I struggled for a long time to reconcile with your grandpa; it was too tough. So, even if I am busy outside, I will not be inattentive to your cousin, and I will not take my wrath out on him. I will not allow this happen on my son again.<sup>6</sup>

My aunt experience neglect so that she felt unsafe and lonely on her childhood, this brought effect on her future. Neglect of children was a common phenomenon in my parents' generation, as grandparents were faced with the pressure to survive, and being able to feed their children was the best gift they could offer. However, this pressure decreased with the one-child policy came out in 1979s<sup>7</sup>. After that, the family's only child received all of their parents' and grandparents' affection, and their parents have been able to devote their complete attention to them. Just like my aunt said, she cares for her son attentively.

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<sup>5</sup> Yifei Hu, Interview by author, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Dongqing Hu, interview by author, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Wang, "Evaluate Influence of Family Education to Minors."

Fortunately, the middle and late stages of reform were considered the best periods of China's economic boom. Catching up and finding new opportunities, some rose out of poverty and realized their social value. This golden economic age led to a redistribution of wealth:

The 1990s was a key period of China's economic reform, and after Deng Xiaoping's Southern Talks in 1992, China's economy entered another climax of development, and with the birth of the Chinese stock market and the liberalization of the real estate market, China's wealth accumulation entered a climax of redistribution, and this period was called the "gold rush" of China. With the birth of China's stock market and the liberalization of the real estate market, China's wealth accumulation entered a period of redistribution.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this “golden age,” those of my generation, who were born between the 1990s and 2000s, experienced economic conditions much differently than my parents’ generation. As mentioned in my father's recollections, his boyhood was difficult, with insufficient food and clothing, a common sentiment of his generation.

They did, however, achieve joys and friendships that our generation does not have. Due to their grandparents’ neglect, parents had the freedom to play with the neighbors and friends, and tons of games were created that my generation have never heard of or tried. My mother is still proud that she was the master of throwing cobblestones:

Poor you, you view this world from TV or cellphone, those are limited, and you can’t feel it or touch it. But I am more closed to the nature, and I know more games than you. You know how to play “Knitting basket”, “Hopscotch”, “turn over a card”, “fetch water”, “rubber band skipping” . . . You need to compete those games with other groups, you can’t experience this joy, poor you.”<sup>9</sup>

My family, in contrast, had a reasonably affluent lifestyle which contrasted to my parents' and aunt’s struggle; we no longer had to worry about food, clothes, shelter, or transportation, and had a live-in nanny ready to care for me. My parents provided me with wonderful living

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<sup>8</sup> Karen, “Mapping China’s Economic Growth in 40 Years of Reform and Opening.” Accessed February 15, 2022. <https://cn.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/18-40>.

<sup>9</sup> Wenjun Cheng, interview by author, April 20, 2022.

conditions, which required me to study hard and have a diverse set of skills. With their expectations in mind, I began playing the piano at the age of five and began studying diligently.

Even though I had a babysitter to look after me so that I didn't have to perform housework like cook for my family, which my mother had to do when she was 10, I was still expected to play the piano and attend "interest-oriented lessons." Those subjects include primarily arithmetic, Chinese, and calligraphy, which are not directly interest-oriented but could build my characters and broaden my tastes, at least according to my parents. In contrast to my grandparents' need to survive and the intense financial pressures faced, my generation faces a different set of obstacles—ones that appears to be more dramatic but that create their own forms of pressure and stress.

### **The Pressures We Are Face**

While we are the fortunate recipient of the economic boom and are blessed with stability and better lifestyles, we also face pressure to live up to parental expectations and the demands of our contemporary age. Our generation has struggled to reap the rewards of the era and faces pressures from our school and jobs.

A degree of educational pressure is created by our parents. In my generation, some of us live with or near our grandparents and parents. Sometimes our parents monitor what we do. They ask, "Did you do your homework?" "Have you studied?" As a result, our generation feels the weight of expectation but sometimes suppress our feelings, which can lead to mental issues. A middle school teacher introduced the pressure that school causes to my generation:

Every night, school finishes at 8:50 p.m. in our middle school, and we get home about 9:00 p.m. Eat something and get started on your homework; you should be able to finish

it about 12:00 a.m., sometimes until 1:00 a.m., sometimes a bit before; the earliest is also more than 11:00. It happens every day, with barely 5-6 hours of sleep.<sup>10</sup>

The school pressure on my generation is intense, and trying to meet these demands feels like climbing a massive mountain. A semester's worth of textbooks, papers, and additional materials can be compared to a mountain. Because the books on their table are towering and massive, me and my classmates can even hide behind them. The image below depicts my high school, where the textbooks surround us like little mountains.<sup>11</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> "Pressure of School Work," accessed February 26, 2022, [https://wenku.baidu.com/view/f357fdfa1b37f111f18583d049649b6648d7092e.html?fr=income8-wk\\_app\\_search\\_ctrX-search](https://wenku.baidu.com/view/f357fdfa1b37f111f18583d049649b6648d7092e.html?fr=income8-wk_app_search_ctrX-search).

<sup>11</sup> "Little Joy," n.d.

(The picture is from a Chinese drama—Little Joy)<sup>12</sup>



(This picture was shoot by author)

This is the corner of the hallway from my high school graduation, a scene which demonstrates how much pressure we as high school students face. The stacks of books and innumerable exam papers are only a fraction, if not all, of the assignments we must complete in a semester. The smiles on my classmates' faces in this photo clearly demonstrate how relieved we are to be free of schoolwork. However, what we didn't realize is that obstacles would still be there after we graduated and found wherever. We would confront employment demands now that we were no longer worried about high school tasks.

Indeed, there is pressure not only in school, but also in the economic world. The industry structure has been relatively stable, the market is saturated, the competition is fierce, the general

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<sup>12</sup> "Little Joy."

public perception is that only a few elite professionals can obtain high income, and the sudden deaths of young people is happening more and more frequently.

Excessive job pressure is one major problem that puts a strain on the younger generation's psychological and physiological well-being. Swept up by the 996 style, which entails working six days a week and days from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., young people nowadays commonly overwork with little free time and imbalanced lifestyles. This demonstrates the excessive pressures of jobs and the generational divide between the younger and older generations. The following story shows the consequences of such a grueling work schedule:

After a tough day at work, a 22-year-old employee of the Chinese e-commerce giant Pin duoduo was about to depart. She fainted, holding her stomach, all of a sudden. Her coworkers rushed her to the hospital, but she passed away six hours later. A teenage Pin duoduo employee leaped to her death less than two weeks later during a quick visit to her parents. A third employee said he was dismissed the next day for criticizing Pin duoduo's work ethic.<sup>13</sup>

These devastating incidents happen in high-pressure jobs, and some of these are in the technology industry. China is stepping up its pace of technological innovation, and the Beijing Stock Exchange just announced on March 4th the transfer of listing towards the GEM (Growth Enterprise Market). This suggests that the government favors technological growth and innovation, and that technical businesses such as online stores, internet firms, and the new energy industry will see a boom. Unfortunately, we see unexpected deaths occurring in technology corporations lately due to the extreme pressure employees face. When the whole market faces severe competition, the only option to stay afloat is to work harder than the competitors.

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<sup>13</sup> Yuemei Wang, "Pinduoduo Employee's Sudden Death: Young Chinese Can Only 'Trade Their Lives for Money'," *New York Times* Chinese Website, accessed May 14, 2022, <https://cn.nytimes.com/business/20210201/china-technology-worker-deaths/>.

Moreover, the pressure of purchasing a house is another weight on our generation's shoulders. The Figure below shows the house prices in Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou from 2009 to 2018,<sup>14</sup> which keep increasing and put my generation under too much pressure. To get the perspective of the older generation, I interviewed my mother, who shared with me that the first house price she bought in 1998 was in the Chengxi District of Hangzhou. The total price of



a 78 square meter apartment was estimated at \$31,056 in 1998. Then, she told me the 172-square-meter house she bought in 2008 cost about \$232,926. When compared to now, there is a huge difference. The first apartment's price is equal to \$465,852 while the price of their house is

estimated at \$2,118,352.<sup>15</sup> The second house is located in the school district of best primary school in Hangzhou). By looking at this dramatic increase, we can see why the younger generation is so stressed.

## The Technology Divide

Not only do we, as a younger generation, experience a gap with the older generation due to these pressures, but this gap also is experienced by us through technology. Due to Chinese people's passion for finance and hard labor, China's economy is rapidly expanding. Economic growth has also resulted in technological advancement. Times have progressed, and some see the

<sup>14</sup> Jiajia Zhao, "Nineteen Hundred People Can Increase House Prices Tenfold," January 2, 2021, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/FVCGSB7Q05506O99.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Juke An, "Hangzhou Yaojiang Wending Court House Price Trend Chart, Yaojiang Wending Court Average Price How Much Money," accessed April 13, 2021, <https://hangzhou.anjuke.com/community/trends/160752>.

need to push the envelope—not just to keep up with the endless variety of goods now available, but to build children’s characteristics which in turn, can be seen to shape their career trajectories and potential for success.

The development of the internet impacts our forms of communication and interactions. While parents should adapt attitudes towards children that change with the times, some remain out of touch with these new realities. Material wealth has increased unprecedentedly, and all kinds of bad social culture, non-mainstream morality, and heterogeneous concepts are introduced to minors, which can be extremely detrimental to their healthy growth. The emergence and popularity of new things, such as the prevalence of food ordering apps, have confirmed the emergence of a divide between generations. The internet's arrival ushered in new patterns of interpersonal contact and social networking, which have influenced lifestyles and ways of thinking that are vastly different from those of the parents' generation, to the point that they are unable to comprehend the youth today. Wang discusses the transitions and changes caused by the internet:

Before the emergence of the Internet, a fragmented society was filled with atomized individuals. A series of elements represented by mobile microblogs, mobile QQ, and WeChat have broken the original social boundaries and interpersonal interaction patterns, compiled a network of actors, expanded the concept of "living community", and established a " virtual community" or "semi-acquainted society.”<sup>16</sup>

From Wang’s analysis, we can see that our age absorbs information in a very different way than the previous generation and relates to others in drastically different ways. The influence of and popularity of the internet does not only lead to differences in communications styles but also with other modalities. Instead of the traditional phone call and email, my generation prefers WeChat and QQ; we also have more facility with apps than our parents and our own private

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<sup>16</sup> Wang, “Evaluate Influence of Family Education to Minors.”

discourses with friends. Moreover, the range of knowledge obtained is deeper and broader than in the past, leading to a shift in our thinking styles. We are more open to alternative ways of thinking about the same things, which will certainly influence our thinking; we do not regard what professors say as the most essential words; we are more critical. When our parents were in their twenties, they believed that the teacher's words were the truth, that they could not be questioned, and that they had to be obeyed.

This contrast in thinking creates a gap between the older generation and my generation, which takes on multiple forms. One of these relates to food. With rising pressures and the introduction of technology such as take-out apps, more and more youngsters rely on ordering meals rather than preparing for themselves. As young people's consumption habits have shifted from store purchase or restaurant consumption to takeout, merchants have found business opportunities, and the express delivery industry has grown rapidly and matured:

In February 2020, online delivery workers officially became a new occupation and was included in the national occupational classification catalog. These take out consumers are concentrated in cities, with consumption scenes mainly in residential areas and corporate office buildings. Those born in the post-80s and post-90s consume take-out food much more frequently than post-60s and post-70s.”<sup>17</sup>

This behavior is not acceptable to parents, who believe take-out food is unhealthy. My parents say, “Do not order from applications.” For my generation, however, it's more convenient, and some of us don't want to cook for ourselves. I usually use the take-out app called “饿了么” (Are you hungry) to order food for my lunch, which attracted my parents' displeasure, since they assume it's unhealthy and a waste of money.

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<sup>17</sup> “There Are Nearly 500 Million Takeout Users in China, with the Post-80s and Post-90s Becoming the Main Consumers,” ZhanZhang's Family, accessed May 14, 2022, <http://www.chinaz.com/news/1216333.shtml>.

Moreover, the new trend of internet shopping has supplanted the old one of shopping in stores. Young people like to spend money online since it is more convenient and cost-effective for them. The parents are unfamiliar with and unable to comprehend e-commerce. These differences and shifts are caused not just by the advent of the internet and technology, but also by differences in living conditions and education, which are more pronounced than in the past. Jindong, Taobao, Pinduoduo are three top retail online shops in China, Jindong, Taobao, and Pinduoduo are the three top retail online stores in China. They are widely favored by young people because of the complete range of goods, reasonable prices, and impeccable after-sales service; therefore, more and more young people prefer to spend money on online businesses while the popularity of physical stores is in decline. The following statistic underscore this trend:

"Online shopping" has become a mainstream way for people to shop, which to a certain extent promotes the online retail revenue. According to statistics, the total online retail sales from January to August reached 812.27 billion yuan, an increase of 19.7% compared to the same period. The total online retail sales of physical goods accounted for 6,634 billion yuan of total retail sales, an increase of 15.9% compared with the same period, and 23.6% of the total retail sales of consumer goods.<sup>18</sup>

These statistics demonstrates that the shopping habits have shifted, and my generation is surely taking the lead. We prefer to shop online, and online apps can help us satisfy a variety of needs. Ding Dong(叮咚买菜) can be used to buy fresh food,; city flash (同城闪送) can be used to conduct errands and mail items, Meituan (美团) can be used to send medication and food, and so on. However, elders are not familiar with those apps, and they still prefer to purchase goods in physical stores because they think seeing is believing.

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<sup>18</sup> "Are Brick-and-Mortar Stores Losing out to e-Commerce? Online Shopping Has Exceeded 8 Trillion Yuan, Impacting the Old Business Model," Tengxun News, accessed May 14, 2022, <https://new.qq.com/omn/20210928/20210928A0BJNV00.html>.

Besides, technology gives children a sense of autonomy, and parents continue to try to manage them by informing them how harmful take-out food is and urging them to prepare food for themselves. While this parental advice that is healthy and proper, it is not acceptable or appropriate for youngsters, because we are too busy with our job or school work. Parental control stems from their love for their children, and therefore they create long-term stability by providing a solid financial situation and monitoring their children to avoid undesirable situations. However, when parents make recommendations that are not what children want or suitable, youngsters often feel trapped, which adds to our strain.

### **Parental Control**

Different generations have experienced parental control in various forms, but what is constant is that this pressure derives from parents' love for their children, which manifests itself in numerous ways. Our grandparents believed that providing enough food for our parents, so that they could stop worrying about not having enough to eat and wear, was the best love they could give, and our parents believe that providing adequate financial support for us to have good study and living conditions is the best love they can give. There's no reason to doubt a parent's love, but is it the love that the parent believes the child requires? When I interviewed my friend Shirly Sun, she talked about her mighty mother: "I know my mom loves me, but I am tired of her expectation. I grew up with weekends full of varied interest classes; I understand it's expensive, but I'd want to spend time with my pals. My daily itinerary, though, was so packed that I didn't have time to breathe."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sun Shirly, interview by author, March 16, 2022.

Not only Shirley cannot breathe, but it was also a mainstream experience for those in my generation. Since my generation normally lives in flats or apartments, so that we share the space with parents, it is convenient for them to monitor our behaviors, and we do not have a space to escape or express our feelings. These physically and mentally confined states cause certain children to feel insecure in expressing their sentiments to others. Unlike our parents who live in the “Hutong” or “NongTang” where 4-5 families live together so that parents have a variety of approaches to express their feelings. According to Ma Weidu, a famous scholar in Beijing, described his childhood when he was punished:

In our time, there was no such thing as holding a grudge against your parents. Usually, when a child makes a mistake, a group of kids are told to stand along the wall, pouting and waiting to be beaten. The adults kicked the buttocks one by one, after kicking the children turned back to make a face and a large group of people to play.<sup>20</sup>

This type of discipline then might now be seen as an unethical form of corporal punishment. But, at the time, this was perceived as a legitimate form of discipline, and parental affection meant that their children were no longer hungry, causing them to focus less on the children’s education and to make sure their stomachs were expected to be entirely satisfied. One on hand, kids were expected to obey their parents; on the other hand, kids had more freedom than my generation since they were not monitored by their parents and could hang out with their friends. My generation, however, is raised by parents who have high expectations for our living habits and scholastic attainment. As a result, our parents frequently chastise us for not having breakfast in the morning or sleeping too late at night, among other things. My mother, for example, is dissatisfied with my posture and constantly urges me to keep my head up, even while I’m brushing my teeth and sipping water with my head down. I occasionally grumble about it to

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<sup>20</sup> Weidu Ma, “Yuanzhuopai, The Relationship between Parents and Children,” *How Much Your Family Background Can Influence You* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBbhoOdLQjg>, May 24, 2017).

her, but she always claims it's a gesture of love and doesn't bother to remind anybody else. While this can be off putting, this also brings our generation closer to our parents than they were to our grandparents.

However, problems exist as well. Parents' love for their children is exactly proportionate to the demands they place on them, because love comes with expectations and expectations come with demands. Parents think that because they experienced social tyranny and hardships and tribulations as children, they understand the value of education, and they did not absorb those from their parents. As a result, they are tough on their children about their grades while they are young and enroll them in a variety of interest classes to develop their tastes. Shirley's upbringing was not pleasant, even with her mother's company, because she had no time off and couldn't go out with her friends. Perhaps now we understand parents' good intentions, but we didn't as children. Different interest classes and being stuck at home completing homework were part of my childhood. I complained to my mother, I cannot understand why she could have a wonderful childhood, but she refused to offer one to me. I whined to my mother about this, but she told me she was regretful, because she wasted her youth playing and not studying; her parents were not aware of the importance of studying, so she would not allow me to miss out on this; she told me that learning is a lifetime lesson, and that children are the most adaptable.

From their perspective, parents want to tap into their children's potential and advise them what they should do based on their own experiences, which is a display of love. They want their children to experience less difficulties and make fewer mistakes. However, a youngster frequently does not comprehend this, and parents also perceive there is nothing wrong with robbing their children of their liberty and are also unaware of the impact this will have on their

children's future development. Parents appear to forget that everyone's life is unique and that everyone must face challenges as they grow.

### **Our Upbringing: Negative Psychological Consequences**

Most parents make every effort to give their children the greatest possible environment; they may, however, be unaware of the child's genuine underlying needs. Unconscious parenting can mean that parents are not aware of the effect of the actions on their child. Combined with all the external stressors kids face from school, work, and so forth, this can lead to disastrous consequences, such as teenager suicide and juvenile delinquency.

The importance of parenting on children's growth and ultimate outcomes are underscored by many scholars. Various studies reveal a high correlation between negative family upbringing and juvenile delinquency. Research from Institute of Developmental Psychology, Beijing Normal University support this correlation:

Researchers looked studied the psychological functioning, parental ties, and peer interactions of 60 delinquent, sexual, nonviolent delinquent, and non-delinquent adolescents. The findings revealed that violent delinquent teenage households were relatively strict, with little closeness between members. Families of sex offenders were considerably more problematic, with more confrontations between moms and children and little connection between them. Other studies comparing violent and non-aggressive offenders' families discovered that both households lacked adequate supervision. Violent delinquency was predicted by parental conflict and individual inclination toward aggressive conduct. Property crime was predicted by a lack of parental affection and a connection to delinquent peers.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, Professor Li Meijin devoted herself to Adolescent Psychology and Criminal Psychology for decades and is an expert in teaching suitable family education and urging citizens

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<sup>21</sup> Yanwu Liu, "China's Villages Suicide Problem (1980-2009) ," accessed February 26, 2022, [https://www.guancha.cn/LiuYanWu/2012\\_02\\_16\\_121111.shtml](https://www.guancha.cn/LiuYanWu/2012_02_16_121111.shtml).

to look after the mental health of youth. In the following passage, she discusses the importance of healthy family environment.

Human psychological development is logical, and many psychological problems that occur in adults often originate when they are minors. In a 2007 shooting case that occurred on an American college campus, the shooter, Cho Seung-hee, was traumatized by immigration at the age of 8, which led him to kill for no reason at the age of 23. This case tells us: for young children, a sense of security is the most important, and a familiar environment and friendly partners are more likely to make children form a sunny and healthy psychology than luxurious houses and beautiful cars. And to educate children well, it is very important for children and parents to form a good attachment relationship.<sup>22</sup>

By seeing the relationship between healthy parenting styles and healthy parenting, we begin to understand how parenting can serve as a buffer to ward off external stressors. This is significant when, nowadays, we see a number of adolescents who are depressed or even suicidal. Obviously, whether the parents present punitive harshness, warm understanding or are overprotective, their behavior will leave a mark on their children. Now, elders usually use the word “fragile” to describe teenagers because they easily fall into mental illness and hurt themselves, which is incomprehensible in their view since depression was not acknowledged back then. This shows how this mentality is a complex product of parenting but also tied to other factors: namely, school and work pressure. According to the report, the suicide rate of teenager in China is as follows:

Suicidal thoughts were present in 10.72 percent to 12.1 percent of teenagers, with 8.1 percent attempting or planning suicide. Depression, alcohol or psychoactive drugs (e.g., marijuana usage), teenage anxiety, and adolescent maltreatment experiences are all linked to youth suicide. Females in the 15-24 age range had greater rates of suicide, according to national research, with 30% of survey respondents reporting symptoms of depression, 16% confessing to suicidal thinking, and 9% admitting to attempting suicide.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Li Ma, “Li Meijin: Good Parents, Children Less Crime,” accessed May 14, 2022, <https://www.fx361.com/page/2018/0601/3596289.shtml>.

<sup>23</sup> Lipeng Fei, “China Teenager’s Present Suicide Condition” (Beijing, China: Huilongguan Hospital, Beijing, n.d.).

The "China National Mental Health Development Report (2019-2020)" released by the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences shows a series of data: "The detection rate of depression among adolescents in 2020 is 24.6%, of which 7.4% is severe depression; from elementary school to high school, the detection rate of depression shows an upward trend as the grade increases."<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the "China Child Suicide Report" released by the North Medical Child Development Center shows that about 100,000 young people die by suicide each year, with two children dying by suicide and eight attempting suicide every minute.

Teenagers have a high suicide rate because their individual psychology is unhealthy, which can be caused by a variety of environmental factors; however, family organization and environment serves as a protector for a teenager's mental health. In certain data, a whole-group sampling method explored the association between adolescent family environment and psychological resilience and suicidal ideation using multi-factor "logistic regression analysis and a case-control study" after assessing "3,230 junior and senior high school students in Xinxiang of Henan Province," with the General Social Data Questionnaire and the Kutcher Adolescent Depression Inventory, the Chinese version of the Family Environment Inventory, and the Chinese version of the Psychological Resilience Inventory in December 2014. The study found that "There were 2,960 valid questionnaires, and 247 patients (8.50 percent) exhibited suicide thoughts, with 98 males and 149 females participating."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "China National Mental Health Development Report," n.d.

<sup>25</sup> Xiaojing Guan, "Family Education is the key link to prevent minor crime," *Social Science Journal of Colleges of Shanxi* 14 (January 2002).

After adjusting for age and gender, single parent/remarried family patterns were linked to an elevated risk of suicidal ideation among teenagers, according to logistic analysis. Suicidal ideation in male teenagers was shown to be considerably inversely related to family closeness and organization, and significantly inversely related to family ambivalence. Suicidal ideation was adversely connected with familial closeness, emotional expressiveness, and knowledgeability in female adolescents. Adolescents with suicide ideation had substantially lower overall psychological resilience scores than adolescents “without suicidal ideation,” and “adolescents with suicidal ideation had significantly lower scores” on all measures of psychological resilience than adolescents without suicidal ideation. There are four measurement components: competence, tolerance of negative affect, acceptance of change, and control.

According to a total of 300 copies of the "Questionnaire on Career Planning Status of College Students" were distributed to three universities in Nanjing, it discloses that the family economic and social status, family atmosphere, and family parenting styles were found to have an impact on children's career plans.

College students' school, study and interpersonal communication, employment choice, graduation destination, and employment income may be influenced by their family's economic status, parents' occupation, educational background, and other factors such as relationship network, learning conditions, psychological condition, horizon, and access to information.<sup>26</sup>

According to the data and questionnaires provided above, family ties may have a significant influence on children. The type of person you will become, as well as your psychological condition and future profession choice, is primarily determined by your background. Parents are crucial not only throughout a child's early years, but also throughout his

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<sup>26</sup> Wenyan Hu, “Influence of Family Environment on Career Planning of College Students and Countermeasures,” *Science and Technology Information*, January 2012.

or her life. A solid family structure and environment offered by parents might make a youngster feel safer than a secure financial status.

### **Solution**

So how do we climb the mountain and reach the other side?

Our socialization begins with our families, and one of the most essential methods for parents to impact their children's socialization is through effective, healthy parenting methods. Family education is gaining more and more attention in today's culture, and it, along with school education and social education, creates a holistic, integrated system that can maximize the health and growth of a country. Quality education is built on the foundation of family education. When children are born, the first thing they notice are their parents, family members, and the surroundings in which they are raised. Thus, parents should be careful of their own behavior and habits to build a healthy foundation for their children. In terms of physical and mental growth, as well as social maturity, adolescence is a vital phase.

An individual's psychological growth can be imbalanced and volatile, independent and unpredictable. An individual might fluctuate from periods where they are more aggressive and closed and more open and social in nature. These variations are normal. If we do not confront and address these issues, and the impact of parenting, financial, school, and other forms of stress on our generation, they will continue to have a significant detrimental influence on our long-term development.

Moreover, according to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Family Education, family education shall "respect the laws of physical and mental development and individual differences of minors," "respect the human dignity of minors, protect their privacy

and personal information, and safeguard their legitimate rights and interests," and "respect their right to participate in relevant family affairs and express their opinions."<sup>27</sup> Respect means treating the child as a living human being with feelings, inner experiences, life pursuits, uniqueness and autonomy, accepting the child's weaknesses and strengths in their entirety, maintaining trust, and communicating gently and sincerely in conjunction with the child's inner thoughts. Respect means parents should understand the personality and qualities of their child. Respect means. parents should take care of their children's dignity and support them towards achieving a balance of humility and confidence, inner strength and compassion for others.

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<sup>27</sup> Wang, "Evaluate Influence of Family Education to Minors."

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