The Perceived Influence of Parental Expectations on Asian American Women Who Entered College Early
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Key Findings

Parents Had High, Specific Academic and Career Expectations
- Academic and career decision making starting with the decision to enter the early entrance program, to choice of first major, careers and possibly even choice of graduate schools were influenced by parental expectations.
- Academic achievement in the form of “straight As” and advanced degrees, and career trajectories as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and professionals in the hard sciences were mentioned repeatedly as expectations of parents.
- Asian cultural values and immigration were some reasons cited for high parental expectations.

High Personal Expectations and Perfectionism
- Success became generationally defined differently.
- Expectations also changed over time. By adulthood, participants were more interested in fulfilling personal expectations.
- Participants stated wanting to travel, pursuing multiple interests, and helping others through their careers.

Conflict with Personal and Parental Expectations
- Alumnae reported the challenge of negotiating different career paths with their parents.
- Alumnae reported feeling stress, pressure, and even eating disorders and depression that may have been related to their experiences.

Academic and Career Outcomes
- All women graduated with relatively high GPAs.
- Four participants had obtained advanced degrees, and three were in progress towards receiving an advanced graduate and/or medical degree, with two in very highly ranked medical programs.
- Participants completed undergraduate research, studied abroad, actively served in non-profit organizations, and won a variety of merit-based awards.
- Social justice and/or helping others were important values to these women.
- Six of the women reported working stable jobs in education, law, public health, or technology.
- However they did not all “fulfill” the specific career paths their parents expected of them.

Issues for Further Exploration
- The process by which parental expectations influenced academic, career, and interpersonal decision-making is still not clear.
- Participants did not mention how parents enforced expectations or whether these expectations were explicit or implicit.
- Gender differences and birth order.

Abbreviated References