

Title: Examining the Association between Acculturation and Parental Psychological Control in Chinese Immigrant Mothers

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Abstract

Acculturation is a critical and multipronged process for immigrants. The rapid growth of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. calls for a greater understanding of how acculturation is associated with Chinese immigrant parenting of preschoolers. Previous research has found that acculturation is related to maternal psychological control, a maternal practice comprised of a series of manipulative behaviors such as love withdrawal, shaming, and guilt induction that are intended to control their children's behavioral, emotional, and psychological experiences. However, less is known on how different orientations (mainstream and heritage cultures) and domains (behavioral and psychological) of acculturation are related to maternal psychological control in Chinese immigrant families; and whether there are underlying processes and contextual factors that may explain or influence this association.

Guided by cultural-ecological perspectives, the present study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Is maternal psychological control associated with psychological and behavioral acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures?; (2) Is maternal

psychological control influenced by interactions between psychological and behavioral acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures?; (3) Are there indirect associations between maternal psychological control and psychological and behavioral acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures via psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms, psychological wellbeing?); (4) Are there latent profiles of acculturation patterns among Chinese immigrant mothers; and Do mothers' use of parental psychological control differ across these latent profiles?

Results revealed significant associations between maternal psychological control and behavioral and psychological acculturation to heritage culture, but not to mainstream culture. When mothers scored high on psychological acculturation to mainstream culture, there was a negative association between behavioral acculturation to mainstream culture and psychological control. Results also suggested that maternal psychological adjustment, including depressive symptoms and wellbeing, helped to explain the associations between psychological control and acculturation orientations and domains. Lastly, findings suggested three acculturation profiles of Chinese immigrant mothers (i.e., Behavioral-Marginalized, Psychological-Undifferentiated; Behaviorally-Psychologically Separated Heritage Orientation; and Behavioral-Psychological Assimilated); and mothers' use of psychological control differed across the three profiles.

The current study advances understanding of Chinese immigrant mothers, an understudied area in the parenting literature, who may struggle with pressure to acculturate psychologically and behaviorally to the mainstream and to their heritage culture. Findings also have broad implications for those working with Chinese immigrant families, including mental health professionals, social workers, and teachers, by

suggesting that they consider parental psychological control as multi-dimensional concept and by highlighting the importance of considering both cultural processes and psychological adjustment of immigrant Chinese mothers.

Keywords: Chinese immigrant mothers, acculturation, psychological control, psychological adjustment