

Chapter 3

The Complexities of Parental Control Among Chinese American Mothers: The Role of Acculturation

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Individuals of Chinese descent comprise the largest Asian American subgroup (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012) and may be represented by people from different geographic origins, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam (Cheah & Li, 2009). In order to promote the positive parenting and healthy development of Chinese American children from an early age, more developmental research on this population is greatly needed.

Parental control is characterized as parental attempts to regulate child behaviors using power assertion (Baumrind, 2012) and centers on the fundamental duality of autonomy and control in parent-child interactions (Barber & Xia, 2013; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). Parental control and strictness is a particularly salient and debated theme in Chinese parenting due to the traditionally hierarchical Chinese family structure (Chao & Tseng, 2002). The restrictiveness and harshness of Chinese parental control was highlighted in some early and comparative research with Western families. However, other researchers have attempted to provide a more in-depth understanding of the cultural meaning of parenting control in the Chinese and Chinese American context (see Chao & Tseng, 2002). Chinese immigrant parents in the United States face additional challenges introduced by immigration-related cultural changes. These parents have been socialized in a more traditionally hierarchical family context but are socializing their children in a more autonomy-promoting

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society. The process of acculturation may motivate immigrant parents to modify their parenting in order to achieve parenting effectiveness. For instance, greater acculturation toward the mainstream culture among Chinese immigrant parents was positively associated with greater parenting efficacy, which in turn was associated with more positive parenting practices (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011). Thus, this current chapter aimed to provide a better understanding of *why* and *how* Chinese American mothers exert control over their young children through interviews and how acculturation plays a role in their use of control.

Conceptualization of Parental Control and Associated Outcomes

Parental control is a fundamental construct in both dimensional and typological approaches to parenting (Barber & Xia, 2013). Barber (1996) distinguished two forms of parental control, behavioral control and psychological control, according to the locus or source of parents' attempts at control. Interestingly, different patterns of associations between these two forms of control and developmental outcomes have been found across independent- and interdependent-focused cultures.

Behavioral Control

Behavioral control refers to parental behaviors that are used to achieve child compliance and emphasizes regulating children's behavior and activity through guidance (Barber, 1996; Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010; Li, Zhang, & Wang, 2013). Behavioral control is further differentiated into confrontive versus coercive behavioral control (Baumrind, 2013). Confrontive control is characterized as reasoned, negotiable, outcome-oriented, and concerned with regulating behaviors (Baumrind, 2012). Baumrind (2012) operationally defined confrontive behavioral control by the following strategies: confronts when child disobeys, cannot be coerced by the child, successfully exerts force or influence, enforces rules after initial noncompliance, exercises power decisively, uses negative sanctions freely, discourages defiant stance, and demands child's attention. Parents who engage in confrontive behavioral control have more competent, well-adjusted, and academically successful children (Barber & Xia, 2013; Steinberg, 1990). In contrast, coercive behavioral control is considered arbitrary, peremptory, domineering, and concerned with making status distinctions (Baumrind, 2012). Strategies of coercive behavioral control include verbal hostility, arbitrary discipline, and severe physical punishment (Baumrind, 2013; Morris, Cui, & Steinberg, 2013). The absence of sufficient regulation and guidance or supervision in family environments place children at risk for aggression and delinquent behaviors (Hoeve et al., 2009).

Even though the effectiveness of confrontive behavioral control and the detrimental effects of coercive behavioral control have been found in different cultures, parents endorse the various strategies of behavioral control to different degrees across cultural contexts (e.g., Nelson et al., 2006; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). For example, European American parents employ withholding privileges, time-outs, and modeling more than Chinese American parents, whereas Chinese American parents exert closer monitoring and more physical coercion than European American parents (e.g., Cheah & Rubin, 2003; Jose, Huntsinger, Huntsinger, & Liaw, 2000). Researchers have argued that the traditionally defined meanings of different strategies of behavioral control are based on European American perspectives, and it is thus imperative to consider indigenous concepts of parental control practiced in other sociocultural contexts (Chao, 1994; Chao & Tseng, 2002).

Psychological Control

Psychological control refers to intrusive and manipulative attempts to control children's psychological and emotional world (Barber, 1996; Baumrind, 2013; Baumrind et al., 2010; Li et al., 2013). Psychologically controlling strategies comprise of guilt induction, shaming, love withdrawal, invalidating feelings, expressing disappointment, negative criticism, suppression of emotions, and constraining of verbal expressions (Aunola, Tolvanen, Viljaranta, & Nurmi, 2013; Barber & Xia, 2013; Louie, Oh, & Lau, 2013). Parents who practice psychological control are more likely to be overinvolved and overprotective with their children (Nelson, Yang, Coyne, Olsen, & Hart, 2013).

Psychological control has been consistently associated with lower levels of parental acceptance and maladaptive developmental outcomes in European American families (e.g., Barber & Harmon, 2002; Rudy & Halgunseth, 2005). However, certain subtypes of psychological control (e.g., relational induction through guilt induction, shaming, reciprocity, social comparison) have been differentially linked to developmental outcomes among more interdependent cultures (e.g., Chao & Aque, 2009; Olsen et al., 2002), perhaps due to parents' socialization goals of promoting desirable characteristics in children within these cultures (Fung & Lau, 2012).

Nevertheless, the associations between psychological control and negative developmental outcomes through the violation of autonomous psychological and emotional functioning have been generally supported even in interdependent cultures (e.g., Palestinian, South Korean, and Chinese cultures; Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005; Camras, Sun, Li, & Wright, 2012; Kim & Dembo, 2000; Wang et al., 2007). Importantly, the use of such practices may also change following immigration due to the influence of the new sociocultural context. For example, Chinese American mothers with preschoolers in the United States reflected that Chinese parents were more likely to use social comparison (i.e., shaming) to correct their children's behaviors than European American parents, but reported decreasing their use of such practices after moving to the United States (Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013).

Family Interactional Patterns and Control: A Focus on Chinese and Chinese American Families

In order to further understand the role of culture in parental control within the familial context, we considered Kağıtçıbaşı's (2005, 2007) family change model, which proposes three prototypical family interactional patterns: the independence, interdependence, and psychological/emotional interdependence patterns. These patterns guide and help integrate how parents manage the socialization of children's autonomy and relatedness while adapting to sociocultural changes globally. The *independence pattern* describes families living in the industrialized Western style, where material independence, individual achievement, and autonomy-promoting values are endorsed. European American family interactions, in which parents are encouraged to provide a loving and supportive family atmosphere to foster children's self-esteem, independence, and personal accomplishments, are consistent with the independence family pattern (Louie et al., 2013). In this context, excessive parental control is considered intrusive and is associated with negative child outcomes.

In contrast, the *interdependence* pattern describes family socialization that values both material and emotional interdependence. This pattern prevails in rural/agrarian societies and contexts where the economic value of the child is important through his or her contributions to the family income and well-being (Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009). In the interdependence family pattern, the child's autonomy may be viewed as a threat to the family whereas obedience in children is desirable. Traditional Chinese culture highly values the family unit, group harmony, protecting the reputation of the family, and being self-conscious about the perceptions of others, which endorses interdependent family relationships. Thus, Chinese parents are traditionally expected to provide a controlled and disciplined environment for their children to foster respect, compliance, and educational diligence.

Finally, the *psychological/emotional interdependence pattern* describes families living an industrial or urban lifestyle that have retained some traditional collectivist values. In these families, material independence and psychological/emotional interdependence are both supported. Material interdependence in the family weakens as affluence levels increases, but psychological interdependence and close family ties often remain (Durgel et al., 2009). Immigrant families who come from cultures that emphasize the interdependence pattern to ones which value the independence pattern are proposed to adopt this psychological/emotional interdependence pattern. Specific to our study, Chinese immigrant parents in North America, particularly those of higher socioeconomic status, may expect less financial and material support from their children than Chinese parents in their countries of origin (Cheah et al., 2013; Chen, Chen, & Zheng, 2012) and are further influenced by the mainstream Western cultural context (Chuang & Su, 2009). Although there is recognition of the need for autonomy in childrearing within the psychological/emotional interdependence pattern, strong parental control, particularly "order setting" rather than domineering control, remains important (Chen et al., 2012). Therefore, parental

control within this family pattern allows for autonomy, rather than being mainly oriented toward obedience.

The differences in the meaning and function of parental control across different family interactional patterns indicate the importance of understanding the indigenous meaning of parental control within various sociocultural contexts. Importantly, further examination on how Chinese American mothers conceptualize control, specifically *why* and *how* they exercise control, can shed light on the stability and flexibility of parenting for immigrant families during the course of global migration. Mothers from different cultures may similarly value and express control or strictness, but the motivations behind parental control and the specific ways they attempt to exercise control may vary highly and are infused with meanings derived from the specific cultural setting. These culturally derived meanings are best revealed through an emic approach and the use of qualitative interviews.

Parental Control and Acculturation Among Chinese American Families

One key issue for immigrant parents is the need to accommodate the socialization goals and practices of their culture of origin and the mainstream host culture. This process of *acculturation* involves the reconciling of discrepant values and behaviors as a result of contact and interaction with another distinct culture (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986). Acculturation toward the mainstream culture and maintenance of the heritage culture has been found to be uniquely associated with parenting (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011). These processes also unfold in two domains, behavioral acculturation and psychological acculturation. Behavioral acculturation refers to immigrants' participation in the observable aspects of a culture, whereas psychological acculturation refers to immigrants' identification with the values of a culture (Berry, 1992). Behavioral and psychological acculturation have been shown to be distinct processes and associated with different aspects of parenting among Asian immigrants (Birman, 2006; Tahseen & Cheah, 2012).

Chinese American mothers in the United States with preschool-aged children learn how to adapt to the mainstream culture with increasing exposure to daycare, school, and their larger community settings (Cheah et al., 2013). These parents reported paying more attention to the socialization of both autonomy and relatedness in their children after immigration to the United States and were influenced by both mainstream and heritage cultures. Thus, Chinese immigrant mothers with preschoolers indicated decreasing their use of coercive parenting and increasing their use of regulatory reasoning after moving to the United States (Cheah et al., 2013). Nevertheless, even middle-class Chinese American parents in the United States continue to use greater amounts of control compared to European American parents (Jose et al., 2000), perhaps because of a greater focus on psychological and emotional interdependence with their children than European American families.

The patterns of associations between acculturation and parenting in Chinese American families are inconclusive. Some studies reported that greater acculturation toward the mainstream culture is associated with more parenting practices endorsed by the host culture (e.g., Liu, Lau, Chen, Dinh, & Kim, 2009), but other studies found no associations with parenting practices (Hulei, Zevenbergen, & Jacobs, 2006) and beliefs (Costigan & Su, 2008). Moreover, little attention has been paid to the associations between cultural maintenance and parenting among Chinese American families. Chinese American parents' ideologies about childrearing may change after immigration only when core heritage cultural values are modified (Costigan & Su, 2008). Thus, the role of acculturation in parental control may depend on the dimensions and domains of acculturation (e.g., behavioral acculturation toward mainstream culture or psychological maintenance of heritage culture) and specific aspects of parental control (e.g., rationales or strategies) being examined. Furthermore, these patterns of associations between different aspects of acculturation and parental control among Chinese American families with preschoolers are understudied. Such information can be used to promote effective and positive parenting for Chinese Americans in the United States.

The Present Study: A Cultural Examination of Parental Control in Chinese American Mothers

To fully understand the meaning of parental control in Chinese American families, a deeper exploration of parental ethnotheories regarding control is warranted utilizing a mixed-method approach. We explored first-generation Chinese American mothers' conceptualizations of *why* and *how* they utilized control using qualitative interviews. In addition, we examined the associations between mothers' psychological and behavioral acculturation toward their heritage and the mainstream cultures and their reasons for and strategies of control. We expected that Chinese American mothers' greater maintenance of their heritage culture would be associated with higher levels of relatedness-based reasons for control and traditionally coercive practices. Also, greater acculturation toward the mainstream U.S. culture was expected to be associated with fewer coercive practices.

Participants

Our sample consisted of 80 Chinese American mothers ($M = 37.37$ years of age, $SD = 4.51$) with children between the age of 3 and 6 years old. All the mothers participated in a larger longitudinal study examining the adaptation of Chinese immigrant families residing in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. On average, the mothers had been in the United States for about 10 years ($M = 9.41$, $SD = 5.91$),

had at least college degrees (95%), and were middle-class status (Hollingshead scores ranged from 40.5 to 66, $M = 60.78$, $SD = 4.87$; Bornstein, Hahn, Suwalsky, & Haynes, 2003). All but one mother was in a two-parent household. Half of the mothers reported being Christian, one third reported no religious affiliation, and a small number reported being Buddhist. Half of the families had more than one child. All the mothers in our sample were first-generation immigrants from Mainland China ($n = 60$), Taiwan ($n = 15$), and Hong Kong ($n = 5$) and were married to Chinese immigrants. Most of the children (91.3%) were born in the United States.

Procedures

Participants were recruited from schools, grocery stores, churches, and community organizations. Mothers who expressed interest in participating were contacted by a research assistant who provided them with additional information regarding the study over the phone. At that time, the research assistant also verified that the mothers were the primary caregivers of healthy children within the ages of 3–6 years old, and both parents were ethnically Chinese.

The mothers signed an informed consent form and were then interviewed for an average of 20–30 min regarding parental control. The interviews were conducted in the language/dialect of their preference (i.e., English, Mandarin, or Cantonese). They also completed questionnaires assessing their psychological and behavioral acculturation toward the mainstream Western culture and their heritage culture. Almost all the mothers chose to conduct the interviews and respond to the questionnaires in Chinese.

Measures

Demographic information. A modified version of the *Family Demographic Measures* (FDM; Bornstein, 1991) was used to obtain detailed demographic information, including maternal age, education level, years in the United States, country/place of origin, religion, child gender, child age, and child place of birth.

Behavioral acculturation: Mainstream and heritage dimensions. The *Chinese Parent Acculturation Scale* (CPAS; Chen & Lee, 1996) containing 27 items was administered to assess mothers' behavioral acculturation toward the mainstream culture and their maintenance of behavioral aspects of their heritage culture, including language proficiency, social activities, and lifestyle preferences (e.g., "How often do you watch American/Chinese T.V.?). Mothers were asked to rate each statement on a five-point Likert scale (e.g., from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (More than Once a Week) or 1 (Extremely Poor) to 5 (Extremely Well)). The Cronbach's α for behavioral acculturation toward the mainstream and heritage cultures were 0.79 and 0.64, respectively.

Psychological acculturation: Heritage dimension. The *Asian-American Values Scale-Revised* (AAVS-R; Kim & Hong, 2004) containing 25 items was administered to assess mothers' maintenance of their heritage cultural values (e.g., "One should be humble and modest."). Mothers were asked to rate their agreement with each item on a four-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The AAVS-R has been found to have acceptable psychometric properties for Asian Americans. The Cronbach's α was 0.72.

Psychological acculturation: Mainstream dimension. The *European-American Values Scale for Asian-Americans-Revised* (EAVS-AA-R; Hong, Kim, & Wolfe, 2005) containing 25 items was administered to the mothers to assess their endorsement of the cultural values of the mainstream culture (e.g., "The world would be a better place if each individual could maximize his or her development."). Mothers were asked to rate their agreement with each statement using a four-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The Cronbach's α was 0.68.

Parental control. A modified version of an open-ended interview (Koh & Chang, 2004) was administered to elicit mothers' conceptualizations of control toward their preschool-aged children. Mothers were asked, "Why is it important (or not important) for you to control, regulate, or be strict with their child?" (reasons), and "What do you do when you are controlling, regulating, or being strict with your child?" (strategies). Mothers were asked to answer the open-ended questions and to provide specific reasons and examples during the interview. The interviewers were trained to avoid giving positive, negative, or leading reactions to the mothers' responses during the interviews; they provided prompts and probes when mothers did not elaborate on the examples.

Interview Coding

Mothers' spontaneous responses to the interview were coded by native Chinese-speaking researchers following the procedures developed by Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor (1987), which have been refined and used by Li (2002, 2003). First, coders met several times to establish codes based on the guidelines for content analysis. Each coder independently identified distinct ideas from the interview and the coding team together created conceptual groupings based on similarities in meaning of the distinct ideas. Potential themes of reasons included moral development and child safety and potential themes of strategies included coercive control and corrective guidance. The themes which mothers mentioned were quantified by a frequency count that was used in the analyses. To assess the reliability of the coding, the coders coded 20% of data independently, which were selected randomly (Shaver et al., 1987; Yamamoto & Li, 2012). The Cohen's Kappas was 0.91 for reasons and 0.77 for strategies. All discrepancies were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached. Due to the open-ended nature of these two questions, proportion scores were created for the reasons (five categories) and strategies (eight categories) and used in all analyses to control for variability in the number of responses that mothers provided.

Results

Chinese American mothers provided five reasons for implementing control with their young children (see Table 3.1). The five reasons were ranked by the percentages of mothers who cited the corresponding reasons. Mothers rationalized implementing control in order to: (1) aid the child in following behavioral standards and norms by establishing behavioral boundaries and rules (66.2%); (2) aid the child in distinguishing right from wrong by promoting their moral development (38.7%); (3) begin training and disciplining the child at a young age through guidance (26.2%); (4) ensure both the physical and mental safety and security of the child (2.5%); and (5) teach the child how to respect and treat others within their social relationships (1.2%). The five reasons did not differ based on mothers' country of origin and child gender, and country and gender were not examined further.

A repeated measures one-way ANOVA demonstrated significant differences between the means of the five reasons, Wilks' lambda = 0.08, $F(4, 76) = 216.89$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.92$. Post hoc comparisons applying Bonferroni correction revealed that establishing behavioral boundaries and rules ($M = 0.52$, $SD = 0.43$) was significantly more frequent than the other four reasons. Also, promoting the child's moral development ($M = 0.25$, $SD = 0.36$) and providing guidance due to the child's young age ($M = 0.18$, $SD = 0.33$) were cited at similar frequencies, but significantly more frequently than ensuring the safety ($M = 0.01$, $SD = 0.06$) and security of the child and teaching the child how to respect and treat others within their social relationships ($M = 0.01$, $SD = 0.06$).

Moreover, mothers reported using eight control strategies when regulating or being strict with their children (see Table 3.2). The eight strategies were ranked by the percentages of mothers who cited the corresponding strategy. Mothers imple-

Table 3.1 Coding categories, percentages of mothers' responses, and examples of direct quotes for the importance of being strict

Ranking	Code category	Percentage (%)	Direct quote
1	Behavioral norms/standards	66.2	Parents need to set boundaries for their children; [children] need to know boundaries and limits to follow rules
2	Moral development	38.7	Young children lack the ability to differentiate between right and wrong; [the child who] lacks discipline will be spoiled
3	Providing guidance	26.2	Children do not know how to self-discipline; appropriate strictness at a young age will ease disciplinary efforts at older ages
4	Child safety	2.5	To prevent dangerous behaviors, such as electrical shocks or playing with fire; setting firm boundaries helps her feel secure
5	Respecting others	1.2	Respect and appreciate other people; how to get along with people

Table 3.2 Coding category, percentage of mothers' responses, and direct quotes of specific ways of being strict

Ranking	Code category	Percentage (%)	Direct quote
1	Nonphysical punishment	67.1	A privilege or toy is taken away; give a time-out if necessary
2	Coercive control	60.8	Physically move him in the right direction; spank his palm
3	Correction	44.3	Tell her when she is breaking a rule; require an apology
4	Show parents' serious/stern attitude	45.6	Speak in a firm tone of voice; look directly into his eyes with a stern look
5	Reasoning/negotiation	43	Explain what will happen if she does not stop the behavior; create an environment and one-on-one time to solve the problem
6	Setting and maintaining rules	26.6	Set expectations for her and make sure that she is aware of them; remind him or her first
7	Psychological control	21.5	Silent treatment; sometimes if I do not look at him and ignore him, then he will know he should not behave like this
8	Consistency	13.9	Try to be consistent when enforcing rules; follow through with consequences

mented control by: (1) using nonphysical punishment or discipline (67.1%); (2) using coercive or physical control (60.8%); (3) pointing out mistakes through correction of behavior (44.3%); (4) expressing and showing parent's serious or stern attitude (45.6%); (5) explaining parental punishment or behaviors and reasoning and negotiation with child (43%); (6) setting and maintaining rules and boundaries (26.6%); (7) engaging in psychological control through love withdrawal, shaming and guilt induction (21.5%); and (8) enforcing consistency by following through with rules and punishments (13.9%). The eight strategies did not differ based on mothers' country of origin and child gender, and so country of origin and gender were not explored further. A repeated measure one-way ANOVA demonstrated significant differences between the means of the eight strategies, Wilks' lambda = 0.33, $F(7, 72) = 21.03$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.67$. Post hoc comparisons applying Bonferroni correction confirmed that nonphysical punishment ($M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.23$) and coercive control ($M = 0.22$, $SD = 0.25$) were cited significantly more frequently than the other six strategies. Correction ($M = 0.14$, $SD = 0.18$), showing parents' serious/stern attitude ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.17$), and reasoning and negotiation ($M = 0.12$, $SD = 0.17$) were cited at similar frequencies, but significantly more frequently than setting and maintaining rules ($M = 0.06$, $SD = 0.11$), psychological control ($M = 0.05$, $SD = 0.12$), and enforcing consistency ($M = 0.03$, $SD = 0.09$).

Next, we examined the associations between various indices of mothers' level of acculturation (mothers' psychological and behavioral acculturation with regard to both their heritage culture and the mainstream culture) and their conceptualizations of *why* and *how* they utilized control. Preliminary zero-order correlation analyses showed that Chinese immigrant mothers' length of stay in the United States was

negatively associated with their use of correction, $r = -.34$, $p < 0.01$, and psychological control, $r = -.23$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the role of mothers' level of maintenance of their heritage culture and acculturation toward the mainstream culture in relation to their reasons for and strategies of using regulation and strictness with their child, controlling for their length of stay in the United States.

Results showed that mothers' maintenance of the cultural values of their heritage culture was positively associated with their reasoning of ensuring the safety and security of the child, $\beta = 0.33$, $t(76) = 2.98$, $p < 0.01$. In addition, mothers' psychological acculturation toward the mainstream culture was negatively associated with their reasoning of promoting their child's moral development, $\beta = -0.23$, $t(76) = -2.04$, $p < 0.05$.

Mothers' maintenance of behavioral aspects of their heritage culture was positively associated with their reported use of reasoning and negotiation, $\beta = 0.32$, $t(76) = 2.72$, $p < 0.01$; showing parent's serious/stern attitude, $\beta = 0.25$, $t(76) = 2.26$, $p < 0.05$; and coercive control, $\beta = 0.30$, $t(76) = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$. Mothers' behavioral acculturation toward the mainstream culture was negatively associated with their use of enforcing rules consistency, $\beta = -0.24$, $t(76) = -2.05$, $p < 0.05$; coercive control, $\beta = -0.29$, $t(76) = -2.31$, $p < 0.05$; and setting and maintaining rules, $\beta = -0.29$, $t(76) = -2.57$, $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

Overall, the qualitative approach used in our study revealed cultural priorities in mothers' rationale for and method of exerting control over their young children. *Establishing behavioral boundaries and rules* was the most frequently-cited reason for being strict or controlling among Chinese American mothers. Training children in the appropriate behaviors has a positive connotation for Chinese parents, and the establishment of behavioral regulation and control is also emphasized in independence-oriented cultures (Steinberg, 1990; Wu, 2013). Thus, Chinese American mothers appeared to value confrontive behavioral control and continued to prioritize the establishment of behavioral boundaries and rules for their children to promote their social competence and appropriate behaviors. Chinese American mothers also emphasized the *internalization of morality and providing early guidance* for lifelong conduct as important reasons for exerting control, reflecting their valuing of self-cultivation as a socialization goal (Ho, 2009). Mothers in interdependent cultures tend to endorse socialization goals promoting proper demeanor and good morals, and their own self-worth is also contingent on their children's performance (Chao, 1995; Harwood, Schoelmerich, Ventura-Cook, Schulze, & Wilson, 1996; Ng, Pomerantz, & Deng, 2014).

With regard to their controlling practices, Chinese American mothers relied on *nonphysical punishment* and *coercive control* strategies equally. Strategies of confrontive behavioral control, involving removal of privileges, time-outs, and exercising nonphysical punishments or consequences when the child misbehaves

(Baumrind, 2012), are often employed by European American parents (Cheah & Rubin, 2003). Chinese American mothers also frequently cited using coercive control when being strict. Teaching children to be attentive, calm, and well-behaved in interdependent cultures requires considerably more physical prompting and control than teaching children to be assertive and self-confident in independent culture (Carlson & Harwood, 2003). Thus, these normative physical disciplinary techniques may have been emphasized when relatedness is valued as a socialization goal. In our previous research, Chinese American mothers indicated that while they believed that exerting certain restraints on children to obtain compliance was necessary, they decreased their use of coercive controlling strategies after moving to the United States (Cheah et al., 2013). Thus, mothers' focus on both nonphysical punishment and coercive controlled supports the idea that Chinese American mothers are incorporating the practices of both cultures, reflecting the family model of psychological/emotional interdependence.

Chinese American mothers' second set of most frequently cited strategies included the *correction of unwanted behaviors and provision of guidance* for appropriate behaviors, *showing a serious/stern attitude* to make sure that children pay attention, and *explaining the reason for rules and negotiating* with the child. Such practices reflect the Chinese training ideology with young children, which stresses the importance of guiding the child towards the internalization of parental expectations for appropriate behaviors through firm governance and continual guidance (Chao, 1994). Although mothers' use of reasoning and negotiating with children seems incongruent with traditional Chinese parenting values, research on Chinese and Chinese American parents with young children finds that the use of reasoning and provision of explanations to young children regarding their misdeed is common (Cheah et al., 2013; Cheah & Rubin, 2003). Young Chinese children (under 6 years old) are considered to be incapable of understanding things and parents should provide guidance and explanations (Ho, 2009). The use of negotiations with young children is a way to indulge them while inculcating behavioral control (Chao, 1995; Cheah & Rubin, 2003). Chinese American mothers have reported to prefer guiding their children rather than imposing absolute control (Chao, 1995; Gorman, 1998). These mothers had behavioral expectations but also explained the reasons for their requests and allowed their children to decide (Gorman, 1998).

In addition, Chinese American mothers tend to socialize their children to be aware of others to promote their sense of interdependence (Chen et al., 2012). The purpose of using psychologically controlling practices, such as shaming, love withdrawal, and guilt induction, is to teach their children right from wrong by using their relationships with parents to motivate the child to behave in a socially acceptable manner (Fung & Lau, 2009; Wu et al., 2002). It was interesting, however, that such practices were not reported more frequently than parents' setting and maintaining of rules and enforcing rules consistently.

Associations between acculturation and control. We also examined the associations between mothers' rationale for and method of using control and their acculturation toward both their heritage and mainstream cultures. Chinese American

mothers who maintained more of the *cultural values* of their heritage culture tended to emphasize the safety and security of the childrearing environment. Traditionally, Chinese parents, especially mothers, are fully responsible of providing their young children with constant care, devotion, protection, and a safe environment (Wu et al., 2002). Chinese American mothers have reported that Chinese mothers are expected to be protective and take precautions to eliminate any chance of their children getting hurt (Cheah et al., 2013). Notably, the mothers in our study also indicated that it was important to be strict with their children because they believed that enforcing certain levels of control can help provide a secure base and protection for their children (e.g., “setting firm boundaries helps her feel secure”).

In contrast, Chinese American mothers who were more *psychologically* acculturated toward the mainstream culture were less likely to consider using control to foster their children’s morality. Traditionally, Chinese immigrant parents value absolute morality (as opposed to moral relativism) and children’s adherence to these values through compliance (Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu-Constant, 2000). Thus, as these mothers increasingly endorse the independent-oriented mainstream cultural values, they may favor and value children’s autonomous decision-making rather than following rules of absolute morality (Durgel et al., 2009).

Chinese American mothers who maintained the *behavioral* aspects of their heritage culture were more likely to endorse using reasoning and negotiating with young children, more traditional practices of showing parents’ serious/stern attitude, and coercive control. These mothers are more likely to socialize with their Chinese peers and may model their peers’ use of these traditional practices. Also, when these mothers participate more in their heritage culture, they also tend to maintain more restrictive and coercive forms of control to stress the importance of child obedience and respect of parental authority (Chao, 1995; Nelson et al., 2006).

Moreover, Chinese American mothers who reported lower *participation* in the mainstream society were more likely to maintain the traditional Chinese parenting practices of coercive control and setting rules. These mothers may engage in these rule-based practices because they have fewer opportunities to observe and model the parenting practices of the mainstream cultural context. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that Chinese immigrant mothers in the United Kingdom who were less acculturated to the mainstream independent culture tended to use more punitive parenting and coercive control (Huang & Lamb, 2015).

Chinese American mothers who have resided for longer periods of time in the United States also decreased their use of correction, and psychological control, perhaps to foster children’s autonomy. Correction, as instructive means to teach and correct the child to meet parents’ expectations, and the use of psychologically intrusive and manipulative practices to control children’s psychological and emotional world are believed to undermine child autonomy in the mainstream culture (Baumrind et al., 2010; Chao, 1994; Wu et al., 2002).

Limitations of the Present Study and Future Directions on Parental Control

The findings and limitations of our present study inform three avenues of future research that may further our understanding of parental control within Chinese American families. First, our sample was middle class, and these beliefs and practices may differ considerably according to SES (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). Specifically, parents of lower SES have been found to engage in more controlling parenting than their higher SES counterparts of the same culture (Park & Lau, 2016). Thus, research that further disentangles the role of SES versus culture in Chinese American mothers' conceptualization of and engagement in control can explain the processes that underlie immigrant parents' maintenance and adoption of certain control practices.

Second, our study only focused on mothers. The parenting roles of mothers and fathers vary early in the children's lives (Lamb & Bougher, 2009). However, little attention has been given to the unique role that fathers play in Chinese families (Chuang & Su, 2008). Traditionally, the father's role is defined as "master of the family" (*yi jia zhi zhu*), so fathers often provide for the family financially, make important decisions about the family, and are the disciplinarians (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Chuang & Su, 2008). Importantly, recent research suggests that contemporary Chinese and Chinese immigrant fathers are actively involved in caregiving (Li & Lamb, 2012). For instance, fathers in Mainland China and Chinese immigrant fathers in Canada are no longer viewed as the disciplinarian, but as a caregiver, playmate, and educator/trainer for their child (Chuang & Su, 2008). Moreover, fathers' acculturation and adjustment in the host culture have been found to impact their relationships with their children and their children's psychological well-being (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011; Qin, 2009). Thus, future research examining Chinese immigrant fathers' conceptualizations of control, and the role of their acculturation in these beliefs and practices, is greatly needed.

Third, Chinese Americans with different countries or places of origin (e.g., Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan) may socialize differently due to the political and sociocultural structures in the respective source countries. For instance, the political context in Taiwan endorses more democratic involvement of its people than in Mainland China. Chuang (2006) also found that Taiwanese-Canadian mothers negotiated and compromised with their children on everyday issues to grant them personal freedom, regardless of mothers' level of acculturation. However, our preliminary analyses did not find differences in maternal conceptualizations by place of origin perhaps due to our relatively homogeneous (75% from Mainland China) and small sample. Thus, future exploration of the complexities of immigrant mothers' place of origin and acculturation in their beliefs and practices is needed.

Conclusions

To capture a culturally derived understanding of control guided by Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) family change model, the current chapter examined first-generation Chinese American mothers' conceptualizations of control in the United States. Using a qualitative approach, we revealed cultural priorities in Chinese American mothers' rationale for and method of exerting control over their young children that reflected the psychological/emotional interdependence family pattern, similar to other immigrant families from interdependent cultures residing within a more independent cultural context (e.g., Durgel et al., 2009). Importantly, Chinese American mothers reported parenting values and practices of both their heritage Chinese and the host American cultures. Moreover, quantitative examinations of the associations between these beliefs and practices and mothers' acculturation also revealed unique patterns of relations for mothers' psychological versus behavioral acculturation to their heritage and host cultural dimensions.

Additionally, knowledge of mothers' culturally derived rationale for using parental control and the specific controlling strategies they believe to be most effective may help service providers develop programs to promote positive parenting and child adjustment among these immigrant families. For example, understanding mothers' goals for engaging in specific practices (e.g., coercive or punitive practices) can inform the development of parenting programs that work more effectively with Chinese American mothers to support their changing parenting within the larger mainstream context. At the same time, cultural strengths in parenting that are revealed can continue to be nurtured, towards achieving bicultural socialization and subsequent child competence in the multicultural American society.

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