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Understanding "Tiger Parenting" Through the Perceptions of Chinese Immigrant Mothers: Can Chinese and U.S. Parenting Coexist?

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How Chinese immigrant mothers perceive "Chinese" and "U.S." parenting and changes in their parenting postmigration remains unclear, despite recent interest in Chinese parenting particularly in response to A. Chua's (2011) controversial book on "Tiger Mothers" (Chua, A., 2011, *Battle hymn of the tiger mother*. New York, NY: Penguin.). The present study addressed this issue by examining the parenting beliefs and practices of Chinese immigrant mothers through qualitative interviews. Participants included 50 first-generation Chinese immigrant mothers (mean age = 38.39 years; *SD* = 5.19) with a 3- to 6-year-old child. Mothers had been in the U.S. for an average of 10.20 years and were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the contrasts between typical Chinese and U.S. parenting, the strengths of Chinese and U.S. parenting, and what changes (if any) occurred in their own parenting after they migrated to the U.S. Mothers identified key differences between the parenting in the 2 cultures across 4 themes. Importantly, mothers endorsed different aspects of parenting from both cultures and attempted to achieve a balance between supporting their child's development of autonomy and individuality versus maintaining a sense of relatedness and familism in their parenting, contrary to Chua's (2011) portrayal of rigid "Chinese parenting." With regard to their parenting acculturation, mothers discussed having to be flexible across different areas of their parenting in order to accommodate the cultural values of the larger societal context and promote their child's development in the U.S. These complex dynamics highlighted the challenges that Chinese immigrant mothers face as they adapt and adjust to the new cultural context, and how their parenting beliefs and practices acculturate.

Keywords: Chinese immigrant mothers, parenting beliefs and practices, acculturation

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Harkness and Super (2002)'s developmental niche framework specifies that the culturally constructed environment of the child consists of the physical and social settings in which the child lives, culturally regulated customs of child care, and the psychology of the caretakers. These three components operate together as a system, although each is functionally embedded in aspects of the larger culture. For immigrant parents of young children, the unique parenting niche that they construct is influenced by their immigrant context, traditional parenting customs, acculturative experiences, and the parenting values of the larger mainstream culture. When parents migrate to a new country, they are likely aware of some implicit influence of their heritage cultural values on their family relationships, socialization goals for child development, and child-rearing practices (Bornstein & Cote, 2001). However, these parents also interact in varying degrees with socialization agents in the dominant society who may possess different ideas about optimal developmental outcomes and desired characteristics in children, and therefore endorse different socialization goals and child-rearing strategies (Bornstein & Cote, 2010). Thus, parenting acculturation for immigrants involves constant negotiation between the values and practices of the host and heritage cultures (Bornstein & Lansford, 2010). However, researchers rarely ask parents directly about their beliefs regarding the parenting values and practices of the host versus heritage cultures.

The large numbers of immigrants to the United States in recent decades (Grieco et al., 2012) make it imperative to learn more about these families. Knowledge of how mothers who are acculturating think about the parenting of others and evaluate their own parenting is important for understanding cultural variations in parenting (e.g., Bornstein, 1991) and the role of acculturation in parenting. This understanding is also crucial because a lack of cultural knowledge of the mainstream culture may contribute to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and confusion about what parenting to endorse in the new cultural context (Roer-Strier, 2001). Higher levels of mainstream culture orientation among Chinese immigrant parents indicating greater familiarity with the mainstream culture has been found to be associated with greater parenting efficacy, which in turn was associated with more positive parenting practices (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011). Thus, this parenting knowledge is imperative so that psychologists, educators, and practitioners can effectively assist acculturating families and promote their children's healthy development and well-being.

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Moreover, perceptions of a minority group's parenting by the larger mainstream culture can also lead to contention and stereotyping. One clear example is the focus of the current special issue: the resultant controversy and media attention paid to Chinese parenting generated by Amy Chua's book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. In this book, Chua described her strict "Chinese" parenting, which she espouses to be superior to permissive "Western" parenting (Chua, 2011). A heated debate was raised by individuals of different cultures as to whether the extremely harsh and academically focused parenting portrayed by Chua accurately depicted "Chinese parenting" (i.e., practices endorsed by Chinese mothers) and the consequences of such parenting for children and adolescents.

Using qualitative interviews, we aimed to shed some light on this issue by illustrating how Chinese immigrant mothers conceptualized parenting espoused by the Chinese culture and the mainstream U.S. culture (hereinafter referred to as *Chinese parenting* and *U.S. parenting*). We also investigated what these mothers liked about the parenting of each culture and how their parenting changed since immigrating to the U.S. Examining the themes raised by Chinese immigrant mothers will contribute to our understanding of the parenting challenges that these mothers face as they adapt and adjust to the new cultural context and their parenting acculturation.

Chinese Immigrant Parents

As of 2010, 4.8% of the total U.S. population was Asian, and the Chinese were the largest Asian American ethnic group (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012), representing people mainly from the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Discrepant values such as a general focus on independence (in the U.S.) versus interdependence (in China) may create greater social difficulties for Chinese Americans (e.g., Kağitçibasi, 2003). Developing relationships beyond their own ethnic networks has been identified as a difficult task for Chinese Americans, which may limit their social support networks and resources for parenting (e.g., Tsai, 2006).

Furthermore, Asian immigrants tend to retain their traditional collectivistic values within private domains concerning family, intergeneration relationships, and parenting (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Chao & Tseng, 2002). This higher likelihood to retain traditional values might lead to additional challenges in parenting acculturation, particularly as children get older. A qualitative analysis by Qin (2008) found that parenting for Chinese immigrants became more challenging after migration to the new U.S. cultural context. During their interviews, parents talked at length about the difficulty of assimilating into the U.S. society because of language barriers and perceived discrimination. In discussing the challenges that they encountered in their family dynamics, these families mentioned several key differences between their traditional parenting from those of the mainstream culture. However, these parenting differences were not directly examined. Thus, our first goal was to assess Chinese immigrant mothers' awareness and perceptions of the differences between the typical parenting of their own heritage Chinese culture and that of the host U.S. culture.

Importantly, bicultural socialization, the means by which children "acquire the norms, attitudes and behavior patterns" of two ethnic groups (Rotherham & Phinney, 1987, p. 24), is associated with positive outcomes in immigrant children such as high self-esteem, positive racial and ethnic identities, achievement motivation, and overall adaptive psychosocial adjustment (Cheah & Leung, 2011; Killian & Hegtvedt, 2003). Bicultural socialization prepares immigrant children to learn diverse and complementary values, acquire different coping strategies from various cultural and social experiences and attain competence in the multicultural American society. Immigrant mothers have been shown to recognize the need to adapt their parenting to the new environment in order to prepare their children to function well in the mainstream society (Qin, 2008). Furthermore, more research is needed on the parenting values and practices that may be important to these mothers and, thus, more likely to be integrated into their own parenting toward achieving bicultural competence in parenting. Therefore, our second goal was to investigate what Chinese immigrant mother liked about Chinese and U.S. parenting and their reasons why.

Parenting Acculturation

One key issue for immigrant parents is the reconciliation of differences between their culture of origin and their adopted culture with regard to socialization beliefs, practices, behaviors, and values. This process is known as acculturation and has been conceptualized as the process by which an individual changes due to contact and interaction with another distinct culture (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986). Parenting cognitions includes parents' beliefs, attitudes, goals, and knowledge regarding their parenting, and work to motivate and organize parenting activities and moderate the effectiveness of their child-rearing practices (e.g., Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002). Cognitions related to child rearing and socialization are thought to be rather resistant to change (e.g., Ngo & Malz, 1998) and contribute to the "continuity of culture" by helping to define culture and the transmission of culture across generations.

However, few researchers have directly studied parenting or the dynamics of parenting cognitions among acculturating (i.e., immigrant) mothers. Instead, most of the existing literature on acculturation and parenting independently assess parents' general level of acculturation and then attempt to determine if associations exist with specific parenting beliefs or practices (e.g., Kim, Chen, Wang, Shen, & Orozco-Lapray, 2012; Shin, Bayram-Ozdemir, Lee, & Cheah, 2010). This approach may be problematic because acculturation likely does not impact all aspects of parenting in the same way. Instead, the associations may depend on the components of acculturation (e.g., observable vs. nonobservable aspects of culture) and parenting (e.g., beliefs or behavior) being examined.

The findings in the literature are inconsistent with some studies reporting significant but weak associations between acculturation and parenting (e.g., Lim & Lim, 2005; Yagmurlu & Sanson, 2009) and others reporting no associations (e.g., Costigan & Su, 2008; Hulei, Zevenbergen, & Jacobs, 2006). Therefore, a more direct and thorough examination of parenting acculturation is greatly needed. The current study significantly advanced our understanding of how Chinese immigrant mothers acculturate in their parenting beliefs and practices through our third goal. Specifically, our third goal was to examine changes in these mothers' parenting (if any) since

their migration in order to assess mothers' own perceptions of their parenting acculturation.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 50 Chinese mothers with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 6 years old. All the mothers were first-generation immigrants who migrated to the U.S. at the age of 13 years or older from mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. All the spouses of the mothers were also Chinese immigrants. On average, the mothers had been in the U.S. for about 10 years. Most mothers had at least college degrees and more than one child. About equal numbers of mothers reported no religious affiliation versus being Christian, with a small number who reported being Buddhist. The representativeness of the current sample was limited to Chinese immigrants in the U.S. with high levels of education. Specific details on the sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics of Mothers

Characteristic	Number
Age (in years)	
Mother	M = 38.39 (SD = 5.19); range = 30–56
Child	M = 5.09 (SD = 0.82); range = 3–6
Child gender	
Male	27
Female	23
Child birth place	
In the U.S.	42
Outside of the U.S.	8
Percentage of mothers who had a child prior to coming to the U.S.	46%
Number of children in the family	
One	18
Two	25
Three	6
Four	1
Maternal educational level	
High school graduate or GED	2
Partial collage	3
University graduate or higher	45
Marital status	
Married	48
Married but separated	1
Remarried	1
Religion	
Buddhist	3
Christian	23
None	24
Place of origin	
China	38
Taiwan	6
Hong Kong	6
Length of time in U.S. (in years)	M = 10.20 (SD = 5.00); range = 0.75–21
Reasons for migration	
Education	20
Marriage/came with spouse	21
Family reunification	5
Better living opportunities	3
Political reasons	1
Family SES	50 middle-class

Note. GED = General Educational Development; SES = socioeconomic status.

Data Collection Instruments

The demographic measure and parenting interview were originally constructed in the English language and were translated to Chinese (both simplified and traditional forms) by bilingual translators using a translation and back-translation procedure to ensure that the original meaning of the instruments was maintained. All discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached among the translators (Peña, 2007).

Demographics. A modified version of the Family Description Measure (Bornstein, 1991) was used to obtain detailed demographic and descriptive information about the child, mother, and father, and other information relevant to immigrant families, such as the mothers' place of origin, length of time in the U.S., and reasons for migrating to the U.S.

Interview on parenting. A structured interview was designed to understand the themes raised by Chinese immigrant mothers in the U.S. regarding (a) what mothers perceived to be the differences between Chinese and U.S. parenting, (b) what (if anything) they liked about Chinese and U.S. parenting and why, and (c) whether there had been changes in their parenting since their migration to the U.S. and how they described these changes (if any).

Procedure

Families were recruited from churches, community centers, preschools, and daycare centers throughout Maryland. After obtaining approval from the appropriate authorities, announcements about the study were made at these organizations along with a question-and-answer session with parents. Interested parents provided their contact information to the research assistants and were later contacted to schedule a home visit. The questionnaire administration and interviews were conducted separately but during the same home visit by two trained research assistants who were fluent in the mothers' preferred language or dialect (English, Mandarin, or Cantonese). Written consent was first obtained from the mothers. The course of the audiotaped interview was structured by an interview script containing written instructions for interviewers and a detailed sequence of carefully worded questions and probes (Hill et al., 2005). Trained researchers conducted the interviews in a comfortable and informal manner in which mothers were encouraged to freely share their thoughts with the interviewers. The interviews lasted between 15 and 30 min on average. Almost all mothers chose to respond to the questionnaires and the interview in Chinese, 93.3% and 94%, respectively.

Data Analysis

A qualitative content analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) using a consensus-based iterative coding framework was conducted by Charissa S. L. Cheah and Christy Y. Y. Leung to

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systemically classify and describe the parenting themes revealed by the mothers. A mixed deductive and indicative approach was adopted to integrate the deductive thematic analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994) with the inductive coding process (Boyatzis, 1998), such that codes were derived theoretically to address the research questions and generated to capture the new themes that emerge in the interviews. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed, translated, and checked by multiple bilingual students for accuracy. A start list was first created in which each research question served as a higher-order code accompanied by corresponding subcodes that captured theoretical concepts. On the basis of the start list, open coding was conducted during which interview transcripts were analyzed to identify distinct ideas and create codes pertaining to similar meanings of distinct ideas. Then axial coding was conducted during which codes representing overlapping themes were grouped into higher-level codes and the definitions of those codes were revised. Finally, a cross-analysis was conducted to construct common themes across mothers.

The process of identifying themes, creating conceptual codes, abstracting the core ideas, auditing, establishing coding guidelines, and cross-analyzing was guided by Hill et al.'s (2005) consensual qualitative research (CQR) method to monitor research bias. During the iterative process, coding was first conducted by Christy Y. Y. Leung, and then reviewed by Charissa S. L. Cheah. On the basis of a series of conjoint review and discussion sessions, the team modified and refined the coding until any disagreements were resolved by consensus (Barbour, 2001; Hill et al., 2005; see Table 2 for the list of codes).

To ensure the creditability and accuracy of the data, we established trustworthiness in the present study by prolonged engage-

Table 2
Coding Categories, Definitions, and Number of Mothers Addressing Specific Categories (N = 50)

Coding category	Definition	Number of mothers
Differences between Chinese and U.S. parenting		
Strict discipline	Chinese parents are stricter, exert more control and disciplinary actions, and more accepting of physical punishment than U.S. parents.	39
Regulatory reasoning	U.S. parents are more likely to enforce the established rules and utilize reasoning and guidance to correct children's behaviors than Chinese parents.	18
Social comparisons	Chinese parents are more likely to compare their own children with other children to correct their children's behaviors than U.S. parents.	8
Encouragement and praise	U.S. parents are more likely to have a positive attitude interacting with their children, and encourage and praise their children than Chinese parents.	14
Familial interdependence	Chinese parents are more likely to emphasize interdependence among family, and provide children with constant care and protection than U.S. parents.	15
Independence or self-reliance	U.S. parents are more likely to grant autonomy to and foster independence in their children than Chinese parents.	36
Emphasis on academics	Chinese parents are more likely to focus on children's education, and have high expectations for academic achievement than U.S. parents.	29
Overall child development	U.S. parents are more likely to foster their children's overall (social and physical) development and individual interests.	26
Positive evaluative perceptions of Chinese and U.S. parenting		
Strict discipline or firm control	Parental strictness, discipline, and firm control in Chinese parenting.	31
Regulatory reasoning	Consistent enforcement of the established parenting rules, the use of reasoning and guidance in U.S. parenting.	5
Encouragement and praise	Maintaining positive attitudes and giving children encouragement and praise in U.S. parenting.	15
Familial interdependence	Promoting a sense of interdependence and reciprocity within the family, and maternal devotion to children in Chinese parenting.	31
Independence or self-reliance	Fostering independence and granting autonomy in U.S. parenting.	22
Emphasis on academics	Strong emphasis on children's education and high aspirations for children's success and achievement in Chinese parenting.	21
Overall child development	Emphasis on children's overall (social and physical) development and individual interests in U.S. parenting.	28
Changes in parenting after coming to the U.S.		
Control and Reasoning	Mothers became less restrictive, engaged in less physical punishment or verbal hostility, enforced the established parenting rules more consistently, and utilized reasoning and guidance more.	22
Independence or self-reliance	Mothers became less protective towards, granted more autonomy to, and fostered more independence in their children.	4
Emphasis on academics	Mothers focused less on their children's academic achievement, fostered their children's individual interests more, or utilized more developmentally appropriate strategies.	9
Overall child development	Mothers focused more on fostering children's self-esteem, and social, moral, or personality development.	10

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ment with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The mothers in the current sample had been visited by research assistants at their home four times over the course of 2 years as part of a larger project, and this interview was conducted at the end of the second year. Thus, some levels of trust and rapport between the mothers and our research team had been established, allowing mothers to share more openly during the interview. To minimize the authors' biases, Charissa S. L. Cheah and Christy Y. Y. Leung discussed and came to a mutual understanding that they would attempt to put aside their expectations throughout the coding and data analysis process in addition to utilizing Hill et al.'s (2005) CQR method.

Results

Table 2 presents the final list of coding categories, the description for each code, and the number of mothers who addressed each code.

Mothers' Perceptions of Differences between Chinese and U.S. Parenting and What They Liked About Chinese and U.S. Parenting (Evaluative Perceptions)

The Chinese immigrant mothers in our sample were easily able to discuss their perceptions of how "typical" Chinese and U.S. parenting differed. None of the mothers asked for clarification on what we meant by Chinese or U.S. parenting. Five themes emerged pertaining to cultural differences in specific areas of parenting.

Harsh discipline versus regulatory reasoning. Mothers indicated that Chinese parents rely on strict discipline and firm control to ensure that their children act or behave according to their parents' wishes. Moreover, Chinese parents were believed to be more likely to use physical punishment or verbal hostility than U.S. parents, including inducing fear in their children. For example, Ms. Yang, a mother with a 5-year-old daughter, described how children react to the strict discipline by acting in ways that will avoid parental anger: "What will dad and mom think if I do this? Will I get yelled at?"

Unlike Chinese parents' use of harsh punishment, some mothers such as Ms. Xie, a mother of a 6-year-old boy, believed that U.S. parents engage in more regulatory reasoning with their children:

> If children do not listen, [U.S. parents] do not use physical punishment. They think that is not humane. [They] really emphasize using other ways to explain and guide their children, or give their children opportunities to improve. If you misbehave, [they] do not punish you right away to make you listen/follow because of fear.

Evaluative perceptions. Mothers generally reported liking the use of strictness and discipline in Chinese parenting because certain restraints were thought to be necessary to enforce children's compliance. These mothers, such as Ms. Chiang, who had a 5-year-old son, believed that "Children should be given certain constraints or restrictions. You may need to give children some restrictions, or some necessary corrections. In this aspect, Chinese parents tend to pay more attention, whereas American parents tend to be more permissive." Several mothers favored the use of regulatory reasoning in U.S. parenting because they believed that children are less likely to misbehave when their parents consistently enforce established parenting rules with them. Ms. Wu, a mother with a 5-year-old daughter, described how she helped her child understand the negative consequences of her misbehavior through guidance and reasoning: "There are some positive ways [of talking to children]. For example, if you have done something wrong, you will be treated in this way or that way later. Likewise, if you have done something good, you will end up with this or that." These mothers also expressed an interest in learning more about regulatory reasoning. For example, Ms. Hai, a mother with a 4-year-old son, related, "I don't know what their parenting methods are, how they can socialize [their] children so well that when parents say some things are prohibited then the kids form a habit of not doing that. . .I am interested in getting to know how Americans socialize [their children]."

Social comparisons and criticism versus encouragement and praise. Most mothers also noted Chinese parents' tendency to use social comparisons with other children to correct their children's misbehaviors, as compared to U.S. parents' tendency to use encouragement and praise. Ms. Zhou, a mother of a 5-year-old girl, stated that "Chinese parents always use comparative words [to remind the child that] you are not as good as others, you need to catch up." Mothers noticed that U.S. parents did not tend to make such comparisons. For example, Ms. Qiao, a mother of a 5-year-old boy, described the following:

> When they [Chinese parents] teach [socialize] their children, they always compare them with other children. They always say "you see how that child is doing". . .and so forth. So their children have more pressure. However, according to my observations, parents in the U.S. are not like that.

In contrast, mothers described how U.S. parents emphasize using encouragement and praise and generally have a more positive attitude when interacting with their children than Chinese parents. For example, Ms. Zhou, a mother with a 5-year-old daughter, said, "U.S. parents would say, 'Ah, you are terrific!' [Whenever children] make something, [they would say], 'Ah, really good!' 'Impressive, good, awesome,' words like these." Mothers believed that U.S. parents use encouragement and praise to highlight their children's positive virtues and foster their children's strengths and self-confidence. For instance, Ms. Le, a mother with a 5-year-old daughter, commented, "The difference is that the U.S. way of parenting is positive. [Parents] always encourage [their] children, foster confidence in [their] children, create many opportunities for [their] children, praise them, and give them a lot of freedom. . .. I think that U.S. parenting tries to discover children's positive virtues, whereas Chinese parenting tends to [point out] children's shortcomings."

Evaluative perceptions. Many of our mothers reported liking the use of encouragement and praise in U.S. parenting. The Chinese mothers in our sample admired how U.S. parents socialize their children with such positive attitudes, and believed that this parenting practice enables young U.S. children to have more confidence interacting with others and exploring their environment. For example, Ms. Kou, a mother of a 4-year-old girl, indicated "I think that [giving children] encouragement and praise is also very good because it can foster children's sense of self-confidence from a young age." She further discussed the importance of fostering children's self-confidence in order to overcome challenges in life:

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> They feel great about themselves because they have been constantly getting praise and encouragement since they were young. This [self-confidence] is very important for us. Everyone will face difficulties at some point in his or her life. The key [to success] is whether or not you can persist [through the difficulties].

Interdependence versus independence. In addition, mothers highlighted the emphasis on a sense of interdependence and reciprocity between Chinese parents and children. Chinese mothers were described as inseparable from their young children, and devoted to providing them with constant care, protection, and guidance. Ms. Ji, a mother with a 6-year-old son, indicated that "I think [it is good that] there is a lot of parental involvement [in Chinese parenting]."

Mothers also indicated that U.S. parenting instead emphasizes fostering children's independence from parents. For example, Ms. Han, who had a 4-year-old daughter, indicated, "I think that Chinese parents are more protective of their children, whereas U.S. parents foster their children's independence more. For example, U.S. parents make their children do housework, whereas Chinese parents take care of everything [in the house]." Moreover, U.S. parents are perceived to allow their children freedom to discover their own interests and encourage their children to express their own thoughts and feelings. For example, Ms. Chiang, a mother with a 5-year-old son, indicated:

> In the United States, parents give children as many choices and assistance as possible, which allows them to develop more freely,

and Ms. Hui, a mother of a 6-year-old boy, indicated that

> [U.S. parenting] encourages children to express themselves, to have their own opinions, and also, [allow] different opinions.

Evaluative perceptions. Mothers endorsed the Chinese values pertaining to maternal devotion and believed that young children will develop a sense of security when they are provided with love and care by their devoted mothers. For example, Ms. Pi, a mother with a 4-year-old son, indicated that "I think in traditional Chinese child rearing, there is a bond between the parent and the child when the child is very young. I agree with this very much." Moreover, these mothers highly regarded family interdependence in Chinese culture, especially family values such as respect for the elderly and love and care for young children. For instance, Ms. Cao, a mother of a 5-year-old boy, talked about how "The Chinese [style] is about respecting the elderly and caring for the young, which are our traditions"

However, at the same time, mothers also considered the emphasis on fostering young children's independence in U.S. parenting to be "beneficial for their [children's] future" such that children will be able to "live independently," "have good judgment and be assertive when making decisions." Mothers also indicated the importance of granting their children freedom *along with established rules and guidance*. For instance, Ms. Gao, a mother of a 5-year-old girl, described the approach she preferred to foster children's independence,: "I like having many rules in terms of giving children freedom. So, children can see that [there are] principles, but [we] also do not restrict children's free development."

Academic performance versus overall development. Mothers talked at length about Chinese parents' emphasis on children's academic performance in contrast to U.S. parents' focus on children's overall development. Mothers discussed how Chinese parents highly value their children's education and engage their children in learning activities from early childhood. For example, Ms. Zhuo, a mother of a 4-year-old boy, indicated that "Chinese parents force their children to learn many things when they are young." These mothers discussed how Chinese parents expect their children to excel academically because they consider academic achievement to be the best pathway leading to career achievement, financial success, and increased socioeconomic status. Ms. Bai, who had a 4-year-old daughter, used a four-character Chinese idiom ("Hoping one's child becomes a dragon") to express Chinese parents' high aspirations and expectations for their children's success.

In contrast to the emphasis on academic performance in Chinese parenting, mothers mentioned that U.S. parenting focuses on children's overall development. For example, Ms. Li, a mother with a 6-year-old daughter, indicated that:

> The parents here [in the U.S.] focus on their children's personality, understand their strengths and weaknesses, rather than just focus on attending college and lead their children's development in one direction. I think that [the U.S. way of parenting] understands the child more comprehensively.

Many mothers further indicated that U.S. parents encourage their children to engage in sports to promote their physical development, provide their children with guidance to develop positive social skills, and allow their children to have play time with peers to enhance their socioemotional development. For example, Ms. Ran, a mother of a 5-year-old boy, indicated, "The U.S. families rather have the kids play and do sports, but in our family, we focus more on education and extracurricular activities." More important, these mothers also discussed how U.S. parents tailor their parenting to their children's personality in order to address their individual needs and abilities as illustrated by the following response from Ms. Guo, a mother with a 6-year-old son: "Regarding the Chinese method of raising children, I think that U.S. parents tailor their parenting according to their children's psychological needs [whereas] Chinese parents pay little attention to children's psychological development."

Evaluative perceptions. Mothers discussed liking the Chinese parents' emphasis on children's academic performance because parents are responsible for providing children with opportunities to maximize their potential and chances of success. For example, Ms. Hui, a mother with a 6-year-old son, indicated that:

> I think that [Chinese] parents have higher expectations regarding their children's academics [than American parents], which help children to foster a habit of studying on their own. This is a very good habit because I think that the U.S. way is relatively permissive on this aspect. I also think that in the traditional [Chinese] way, [parents] have many demands of [their children], which is basically more beneficial for maximizing children's opportunities, experiences, and discipline.

Mothers viewed U.S. parents' focus on children's well-rounded development favorably as well. Mothers appreciated the emphasis on fostering children's social development in U.S. parenting. As Ms. Cao, a mother with a 5-year-old son, described, "The U.S. way of child rearing is to foster morality in their children, [to encour-

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age] them to participate in group activities or public activities more and to foster and respect the development of their personalities." Mothers also liked U.S. parents' focus on children's individual characteristics. Mothers such as Ms. Ma, a mother of a 6-year-old girl, endorsed the child-centered nature of U.S. parenting that were thought to optimize their children's development: "[It is] the stronger emphasis on the individual person; [it is to] discover their own abilities/potentials. [It is] to maximize one's strengths, and to encourage one to do what he or she is good at or what he or she likes."

Several mothers also favored U.S. parents' emphasis on promoting children's physical development and participation in sports or extracurricular activities in order to have a balanced, healthy development. For example, Ms. Chiang, a mother of a 5-year-old boy, expressed that "I like how children in the U.S. pay more attention to their physical training; they are given more time to have outdoor activities, various sports activities, and opportunities for all kinds of extracurricular activities."

Parenting Acculturation: Changes in Parenting Since Migration

Overall, all mothers indicated that there were changes in their parenting since they migrated to the U.S. Four specific areas of parenting were identified.

Decreased coercive parenting and increased regulatory reasoning. During the interviews, mothers discussed how some of the traditionally endorsed Chinese parenting practices were considered maladaptive in U.S. society. Specifically, many mothers indicated that they became more flexible and less restrictive in their parenting after moving to the U.S. "After arriving here, [I] feel that even though children are only children, they deserve respect and they need to have rights, thoughts, and opinions," as described by Ms. Xie. Moreover, mothers also recognized that they could no longer rely on coercive strategies to discipline their children. For example, Ms. Yang described how she reacts differently to her 5-year-old daughter's wrongdoings after moving to the U.S.: "Before [when we] were back in China, I might hit [physically punish] her if [my] child made mistakes or misbehaved. Now, I do not [do this] anymore since [I] came to the U.S." More importantly, these mothers realized that the use of physical punishment or verbal criticism might generate children's resistance toward their parents. As Ms. Bai stated, "[My] beliefs have changed . . .. I actually talk with my children more [than I hit them]. Hitting children may generate resentment in children, and lead to further resistance and rebellion; therefore [I] do not hit my children easily." Instead, these mothers reported using more reasoning and explanation of the consequences of misbehavior with their children when correcting their wrongdoings as they observed U.S. parents doing. Also, mothers talked about criticizing their children's mistakes less and providing guidance instead. For example, Ms. Yang described that "When she [her 5-year-old daughter] is not doing so well in something, I remind/guide her when it is necessary, but I do not say too much [make too many negative comments]."

These mothers talked about learning from U.S. parents how to be more consistent when enforcing established parenting rules with their young children and to provide age-appropriate guidance and discipline in order to regulate their children's behaviors. For instance, Ms. Hai, a mother of a 3-year-old boy, illustrated how she changed her parenting since being in the U.S.: "Now, [I think I] should stick to my principles. No indulgence."

Fostering children's independence. Some mothers talked about changes in their parenting associated with their children's independence. Mothers acknowledged that they used to be very protective of their children and did everything for them, especially with regard to their daily routines. As a result, their children did not have the opportunity to develop skills to resolve conflicts with peers or handle their own daily self-care or chores. Thus, mothers discussed implementing changes in their parenting after moving to the U.S. that allowed their children to develop more independence in each of these areas. For example, Ms. Chen, a mother with a 3-year-old daughter, indicated:

> I used to think that [I] should protect my child a lot, never let others bully him or let him fall or things like that. Now [I] think it is normal for children to have conflicts and [I] should let him learn how to deal with them. And [I used to] take care of him a lot, did a lot of things for him. Now, I don't do them for him.

Decreased emphasis on children's academic performance. Although mothers reported liking the Chinese focus on education, they also talked at length about the overemphasis on children's academic performance in Chinese societies and its associated impact on Chinese parenting. However, two subpatterns were identified regarding mothers' conceptualization of their child's education. Although many mothers themselves were socialized in their home country to emphasize education since early childhood, they mostly disapproved of this value after immigration. The first subpattern pertained to mothers who said that they chose not to pressure their young children. These mothers indicated that the cultural context of the U.S. society allowed them to be more relaxed about their children's education during early childhood, compared with their counterparts in China. For example, Ms. Au contrasted her expectations of her 5-year-old son's homework habits with those of her friends in China:

> We sometimes called our friends in China. We do not want my child to study too hard, like the children in China who do their homework until 1 o'clock in the morning. Oh, my God! We can understand it because we also grew up and were educated in China. There are more opportunities here. So even if you don't go to college, you still have other ways unlike in China where the college entrance examination determines your destiny. Therefore, I feel that he may not need to work too hard as he is still too young.

Mothers whose responses fell within the second subpattern also generally disapproved of the overemphasis on children's academic performance in Chinese societies but discussed different changes in their parenting related to this issue. Rather than decreasing their focus on academic achievement, these mothers talked about now allowing their children to choose their future academic paths. For instance, Ms. Shiu, a mother of a 4-year-old boy, discussed how she discovered her children's interests through observing them, and her expectations regarding their future development:

> [I] observe what [my] children like and what [they are] interested in, but I do not plan what they need to do for them. I think that many [Chinese] parents require their children to attain (certain levels of) education and obtain certain types of job. I do not do that.

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These mothers expressed that it was important for their children to develop their own interests, even when they were different from their own expectations. Mothers whose responses reflected this second pattern also focused on educating their children in a more developmentally appropriate manner. For example, in order to encourage her children's learning, Ms. Song, a mother of a 5-year-old girl, reported adapting her parenting practices to better suit her child's characteristics and age:

> I now teach her 10 Chinese words every day. However, it is only 15 minutes. If she still cannot remember after spending more than 15 minutes, [I let her go]. We will just start again the next day. Because I found out about children's attention span. [It is] difficult for her [my child] to focus on a task for too long.

Increased emphasis on children's overall development. Complementing the changes in their parenting goals and practices with regard to their children's education, mothers increased their attention on their children's emotional development. In particular, these mothers discussed how they now value fostering their children's self-esteem more and believe that Chinese children tend to have low self-esteem because their parents rarely praised them. For example, Ms. Zhou, a mother with a 5-year-old daughter, discussed:

> I think that the U.S. [parents] mostly encourage their children, which is a good approach. This approach is different from the [parenting] approach in which I have been socialized to [in China] ever since I was little. I used to think that I needed to improve because I was not as good as other people. [However,] here in the U.S., the goal is to accomplish something rather than be recognized. I think that is a completely different approach, and this is the approach that should be used.

Ms. Kou explained how she learned to praise her 4-year-old daughter more from observing other parents: "I encourage her more in the U.S. When they are getting off from school, her classmates' parents are always surprised when they see their children's projects and they give their children compliments. So, [I tend to give] more praise here [in the U.S]." These mothers also articulated their belief in the importance of fostering their children's self-confidence and esteem through the use of encouragement and praise in order to help their children better adjust to the U.S. society. Ms. Hwang described changes in her parenting since moving to the U.S.: "My child was criticized more when he lived in China. Now we give him more self-confidence by encouraging him."

Furthermore, most mothers talked about changes in parenting associated with paying more attention to their children's social, moral, or personality development after moving to the U.S. and not just on taking care of their children's basic needs. For example, Ms. Yang, a mother with a 6-year-old daughter, reported, "Yes, there are changes. The biggest change is with regard to my child's personality development. [I] mostly adopt an approach that lets nature take its course [in terms of my child's personality development]."

Discussion

The study of parenting among Chinese immigrant parents of young children is limited, and almost exclusively dependent on quantitative methods that rely on investigator-directed parenting themes (Zhou, 2000). As such, our understanding of dynamic processes underlying the various complex and interrelated parenting themes and the associated parenting goals and practices has been restricted. The present study contributes to the current literature by examining parenting themes that emerge from qualitative interviews regarding the two main cultural dimensions that Chinese immigrant mothers encounter in their daily lives (i.e., Chinese and U.S.), and their parenting acculturation.

Across the questions, our analyses revealed that Chinese immigrant mothers were able to coherently identify the typical parenting in the two cultures. Specifically, several Confucian-based tenets related to the socialization of children, parent–child relationships, parenting roles and goals, and preferred parenting strategies to achieve these goals (e.g., Ho, 2008) were highly salient to all the Chinese immigrant mothers and highlighted across all the questions. For example, a central theme raised by mothers throughout the interviews was Chinese parents' reliance on harsher discipline, as compared to the use of more regulatory reasoning, praise, and encouragement in U.S. parenting. Children are thought to develop desirable characteristics and behaviors when their parents provide proper discipline, which reflects a traditional Confucian belief that "a child's disposition derives from environmental influences" (Wu, 1996, p.144) and parents bear the full responsibility of teaching their children using proper discipline (Ho, 2008).

Another practice, the use of social comparisons to other children, reflects a Confucian focus on the socially oriented self, which emphasizes one's self-conception as a connected being who is bound to others (Lu, 2008). Interestingly, Qin (2012) identified that such comparisons with other children who were academically superior to their own was an often-used strategy by Chinese immigrant parents to motivate their adolescents to study harder. However, this strategy was resented by these adolescents and became a common source of parent–child conflict.

Traditionally, Chinese parents tend to be emotionally restrained and reluctant to express explicit positive comments and praise in child rearing due to the belief that the frequent use of praise may threaten parental authority and lead to the child's self-contentedness and lack of motivation to improve and achieve (Cheah & Li, 2010). In contrast, European American parents were found to believe that praising children even for small successes can reinforce children's good behavior and help them develop positive self-esteem (Chao, 1995).

Thus, mothers identified parent-centered goals, harshness, and strictness to be characteristic of Chinese parenting as discussed in Chua's (2011) book. However, in contrast to what was portrayed by Chua, most of the mothers in our sample endorsed and attempted to achieve a more nuanced balance between the parenting goals and practices of both Chinese and U.S. cultures. For example, mothers reported supporting their child's development of *both* autonomy and relatedness in their parenting rather than choosing interdependence or independence (e.g., Juang, Syed, Cookston, Wang, & Kim, 2012; Kağitçibasi, 2005). This hybrid of providing autonomy with regulation reflects the socialization of an "autonomous-related self" (Kağitçibasi, 2003). The autonomous-related self may be particularly relevant for Chinese immigrant families who tend to maintain their collectivistic cultural values of interrelatedness, while adjusting to new lifestyles in the host society that render autonomy adaptive. Thus, rather than construing

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autonomy and interrelatedness as polar opposites, a recognition of the distinctness and coexistence of both dimensions is important.

We also identified another idea that has received less attention in previous research, which must be interpreted in light of the age of the child in the current study. Young Chinese children below the age of understanding (about 6 years of age) who are perceived to be incapable of understanding right from wrong are treated with indulgence and leniency in order to solidify the interdependent parent–child bond (e.g., Ho, 2008). Although mothers valued the strong mother–child bond and interdependence fostered by Chinese parenting, they also believed that the inconsistent parenting resulting from this leniency is a weakness of Chinese parenting. These mothers talked about learning from U.S. parents how to be more consistent when enforcing established parenting rules with their young children and provide age-appropriate guidance and discipline in order to regulate their children's behaviors, reflecting aspects of authoritative parenting valued by the U.S. mainstream culture (Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009).

Moreover, mothers' discussion of the use of strict and harsh parenting mostly pertained to children's education and academic achievement. This focus on education and achievement is characteristic of many foreign-born parents in the U.S. due to the importance of upward social mobility among immigrants (e.g., Hao & Pong, 2008). However, the education system in China may foster an especially intense focus on academic achievement among immigrant parents from this region. Unlike their peers in the U.S., high school students' ability to pursue higher education in China is purely determined by their performance on the college entrance examination. Thus, there is immense pressure to perform well and the psychological and financial costs of not doing so are immense (Cheung, 2009). Many Chinese parents feel an intense need to prepare their children to maximize their chances for success. Some mothers in our sample discussed how they were able to relax this aspect of their parenting because they learned that other pathways toward success were possible for their children in the U.S. (Ho, 2008).

Although most mothers disliked the overemphasis on children to succeed academically, some mothers spoke more generally about decreasing this pressure, whereas others focused on specific ways to foster their children's intrinsic interests in learning and self-esteem. Thus, some mothers appeared to have more concrete ideas about how to change their parenting to support their new ideas. Mothers also indicated that they now encourage their children to have play time with peers in their daily routine, which is not common among families in their Chinese societies of origin (Leung, 2011). These shifts in parental expectations regarding education were similar to those noted by the parents of nondistressed high-achieving adolescents in Qin's (2008) study.

Relatedly, physical activity and sports are generally less valued in Chinese cultures compared to North America as these activities are perceived to interfere with academic pursuits (Ha, Macdonald, & Pang, 2010). Some mothers spoke specifically about wanting to provide their child with opportunities for physical activity, perhaps because they were more knowledgeable regarding the benefits of physical activity. These practices may be particularly relevant in the new U.S. context where there is a high rate of childhood obesity and much media attention paid toward its prevention (Cheah & Van Hook, 2012).

Parenting cognitions and practices are often believed to be adopted from one's culture of origin with little modification, as opposed to being the product of individual deliberation (see McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1992). Importantly, our findings indicated that Chinese immigrant parenting is much more active and dynamic than previously revealed by quantitative studies. How parents negotiate and balance the parenting from both cultures is certainly more complicated than was portrayed in Chua's (2011) book. Importantly, the parent-centered, punitive, and psychologically controlling parenting espoused by Chua were identified to be no longer adaptive and desirable in the new cultural context by almost all our Chinese immigrant mothers. These mothers were easily able to identify and talk about various aspects of U.S. parenting that they liked and appreciated, in addition to aspects of more traditional Chinese parenting that they also valued and attempted to maintain.

Many of these themes matched the sources of conflict and problematic family dynamics among Chinese immigrant and Chinese American families with older children and adolescents identified in previous research (e.g., Juang et al., 2012; Qin et al., 2012). Thus, Chinese immigrant parents are already struggling with these issues early on, and greater attention to these topics should be paid to immigrant parents of young children.

All the mothers discussed having to be flexible with their parenting values, attitudes, and behaviors in different ways in order to accommodate their child's development in the U.S. Mothers often indicated that they were constantly learning and adjusting their parenting as they themselves acculturated and learned more about child development and interacted with the larger social context. These findings are encouraging given the strengths of bicultural socialization mentioned previously, and the potential for immigration to be a positive, growth-enhancing experience for immigrant families and children (Chase-Lansdale, D'Angelo, & Palacios, 2007; García Coll & Magnuson, 1997).

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the present study need to be noted. First, our sample comprised middle-class first-generation Chinese immigrant families and our findings cannot be generalized to immigrant families with lower socioeconomic status (SES) or those beyond the first generation status. Several studies (e.g., Qin et al., 2012; Yamamoto & Li, 2012) have indicated SES differences in Chinese immigrant family functioning and parenting. For example, parents in middle-class families likely have more time and resources to be involved in their children's lives (Lareau, 2002). Although these findings cannot be generalized to Chinese immigrant mothers beyond the first generation, the advantage of focusing on first-generation immigrants is that their negotiation between the values and practices of the host and the heritage cultures is likely more salient (Bornstein & Lansford, 2010). Indeed, some mothers were able to directly compare their parenting with the same child before and after moving to the U.S. Future research should examine the role of important demographic variables (e.g., SES level, generation status) in Chinese immigrant parents' parenting beliefs and practices. Importantly, some mothers may have greater access to parenting resources and gain knowledge of child development. These mothers may be more likely to make adaptive changes in their parenting practices to support the changes in their

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goals (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011). It would be important for future research to examine where these mothers obtain their parenting information in our attempts to support them.

We focused on mothers only despite the different parenting roles of mothers and fathers (Chao & Tseng, 2002). The parenting efficacy and acculturative experiences of Chinese immigrant mothers versus fathers have been found to differentially affect children (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011). Moreover, although both Chinese immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation after migration influences their parent–child relationships, fathers' adaptation difficulties were particular important for their physical and psychological presence in their children's lives (Qin, 2009). Therefore, additional research is needed on mothers' and fathers' understanding of cultural parenting differences and changes following immigration.

Another limitation pertained to the researcher-imposed nature of our interview questions. In order to address the research topics of interest, the course of the interview was guided by an interview script. However, these interview questions and probes were fairly structured and likely restricted the mothers from freely generating other new themes or topics and resulted in relatively short interviews. Mothers were asked to think about differences between Chinese and U.S. parenting, which likely amplified their awareness of potential differences and limited the nature of their responses. Future research should utilize a less structured interview paradigm.

In conclusion, on the basis of these findings, we strongly agree with Qin and colleagues' (2012) call for more studies that capture the complexities in the family dynamics of Chinese immigrants. The use of different methodological approaches can increase our understanding of mechanisms and lived experiences. Our findings contest the rigid and extreme portrayals of "Tiger Mom" parenting depicted by Chua (2011). Complex parenting acculturation processes were clearly revealed when we asked mothers to describe how their parenting changed since their migration using their own words, tapping more directly into their perceptions of parenting acculturation. These findings shed some light on why previous quantitative studies have not systematically reported significant associations between mothers' general acculturation scores and their parenting cognitions, styles, or practices. Future study should incorporate a developmental strengths-based approach to examine how Chinese immigrant parents' individual characteristics, relationships, and social contexts may lead to enhanced coping skills, life experiences, psychological benefits, and positive parenting. Together, this information can be used to support the healthy family functioning and development of children and youth from these families.

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