

Acculturation Orientations of Chinese Immigrant Parents:
The Formation and Approach of Ethnic-Racial Socialization Towards Children

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Abstract

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Chinese immigrants are among the largest Asian immigrant groups in the United States (U.S.) and can face unique parenting challenges. Their own acculturation experiences may influence parenting practices including their ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) towards children, which may further influence children's acculturation orientations leading to different outcomes. This study aimed to investigate acculturation orientations, ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents, relations between these two variables, and factors that influence the two variables. The study used semi-structured interviews with 10 Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. with elementary school-aged young children. Inductive and deductive thematic approaches were used to analyze the interview transcriptions. Results indicated that Chinese immigrant parents of various acculturation orientations tend to adopt a "let-nature-take-its-course" ERS attitude, which refers to not initiating conversations about race and ethnicity with children until problems arise. Five ERS types were identified including cultural socialization, preparation for bias, egalitarianism and silence about race, nationality selection and global citizen identity development. Various levels of factors that influence acculturation orientations and parental ERS approaches were also identified to inform future development of culturally responsive parenting interventions for Chinese immigrant parents. Finally, potential relations between acculturation orientations and ERS approaches among Chinese immigrant parents were proposed.

Introduction

Chinese immigrants are among the largest Asian immigrant groups in the United States (U.S.), with China being the top sending country since 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2021, as cited in Hyun et al., 2022). After migrating to the U.S., immigrants often experience acculturation processes, which include acquiring, strengthening, relinquishing, or rejecting various cultural constructions (Ward & Szabó, 2023).

Acculturation is the process of change in cultural identity, values, and behaviors due to intercultural contact (Schwartz et al., 2010). Yet, different acculturation orientations may lead to differing outcomes for Chinese immigrants. Specifically, acculturation orientations, also known as cultural orientations in the literature (e.g., in Kim & Hou, 2016), describe how a person orients to certain cultures. Studies have found that acculturation orientations are often associated with child outcomes, including socioemotional well-being and academic performance (Chen et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2014a, b; Lim et al. 2008, as cited in Kim & Hou, 2016). Researchers have also demonstrated that acculturation orientations relate to behavioral health (Schwartz et al., 2023, as cited in Salas-Wright et al., 2023) and child adjustment (especially social competence) (Chen et al. 2014).

Notably, parents are an important source of microlevel contextual influence for immigrant youth's acculturation orientations. Through parental ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) (Hughes et al., 2009), which refers to informational transmission from adults to children regarding race and ethnicity (Hughes et al., 2006b) and their own acculturation orientations (War & Szabó, 2023), parents can shape child adjustment via parenting processes (Chen et al., 2014). Negative effects of parent-child acculturation gaps among immigrant families with children in early elementary school years have also been observed by researchers (Chen et al., 2014). Parental acculturation orientations, ERS approaches towards children, as well as factors influencing the formation of these two variables are important for improving our understanding

of family processes and for informing the development of culturally-responsive parenting interventions of Chinese immigrant families in the U.S. These questions have been rarely studied by prior research on the Chinese immigrant population. Figure 1 is a conceptual framework created by the researcher to propose potential relationships between each concept.

The present study aimed to answer five research questions in total: a) What acculturation orientations do Chinese immigrant parents have? b) How do Chinese immigrant parents approach ERS towards children? c) What are the relationships between acculturation orientations and parental ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents? d) What factors influence acculturation orientations of Chinese immigrant parents? e) What factors influence parental ERS approach of Chinese immigrant parents?

These questions are important to answer as children start to understand race and ethnicity at an early age (Katz & Kofkin, 1997) and immigrant children experience important developmental tasks of acculturation during elementary school period (Chen et al. 2014), under the influence of their parents. One developmental task, for instance, is to become adjusted to the mainstream education system, and establish meaningful social relationships with people outside the family such as teachers and peers (James, 1997, as cited in Chen et al., 2014). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework guiding the study to better understand the general relationships between ERS and acculturation orientations. We targeted Chinese immigrant parents who had elementary school-aged children in the U.S. with the long-term goal of informing future parenting interventions for Chinese immigrant parents.

Background and Significance

Acculturation Orientations

Acculturation, as Berry (2019) defines in his book *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures*, “is the process of group and individual changes in culture and behavior that

result from intercultural contact”. In this present study, we use Berry’s framework for conceptualizing and studying acculturation as illustrated in Figure 2 (Berry & Sam, 2016).

As Figure 2 shows, contact between cultural groups and their individual members is where acculturation begins, which leads to both cultural and psychological changes. These changes lead to different forms of adaptation (Berry, 2019). At the cultural/group level, key features of both host culture and heritage culture need to be understood in order to understand the acculturative influence among groups and resulted changes in both groups (Berry, 2019). At the individual level, psychological acculturation and adaptation to new situations need to be considered (Berry, 2019). Berry (2019) also points out that “psychological changes are the components of individual acculturative changes; these include behavioral changes such as acculturative stress, acculturation strategies and eventually various forms of adaptation”.

Acculturation is a complex and multidimensional construct (Schwartz & Unger, 2015) that can influence immigrants’ health (Schwartz & Unger, 2015). However, the majority of studies on associations between acculturation and health outcomes have used unidimensional conceptualizations of acculturation (see Abraído-Lanza, Armbrister, Flórez, & Aguirre, 2006; Suinn, 2010, for reviews, as cited in Schwartz & Unger, 2015). Specifically, in many studies, demographic variables including birthplace, years of residence in the host country, and language selected to complete the survey have been used as markers of acculturation (e.g., Padilla et al., 2011; Yang, Chung, Kim, Bianchi, & Song, 2007, as cited in Schwartz & Unger, 2015). Furthermore, validated scales used in clinical or epidemiological studies often focus primarily or only on language use as an acculturation marker (e.g., Echeverria & Carrasquillo, 2006). Therefore, considering the complexity of the construct of acculturation, this study took into account various domains of acculturation, including direct self-report of acculturation orientations and cultural rituals practiced at home (language, festival celebration and food).

More recently, acculturation theory typically uses a bidimensional approach to cultural

identity, which independently assesses individuals' attachment to traditional heritage identities and new host identities and does not view heritage and host cultures as intrinsically oppositional (War & Szabó, 2023). The bidimensional approach can be used to delineate four strategies or ways of acculturation: Integration, marginalization, assimilation, and separation (Berry, 2005, as cited in War & Szabó, 2023). Specifically, integration refers to having a strong attachment to both cultural referent groups. Marginalization, on the other hand, represents a detachment from both groups; assimilation reflects a strong affiliation with the host culture; and lastly, separation represents a strong affiliation with the heritage culture (War & Szabó, 2023). The present study adopted this bidimensional model of acculturation to investigate acculturation orientations of Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S.

Parental ERS Approach

Wide variation still exists in terminology, conceptualization, and operationalization of relevant cultural constructs, which poses challenges for scholars to integrate them into the literature (Hughes et al., 2006b). Both racial socialization and ethnic socialization have been used extensively to refer to informational transmission from adults to children regarding race and ethnicity, where racial socialization has still been used almost exclusively in research with African Americans while ethnic socialization has been applied in research that include multiple ethnic groups including African Americans (Hughes et al., 2006b). Although research on racial socialization and ethnic socialization has comparatively different targeted populations, the two concepts have developed to overlap considerably, where the current conceptualization of racial socialization also includes “exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society” (Hughes et al., 2006b). Furthermore, both ethnic and racial socialization are applicable to all ethnic-racial groups (Cooper et al., 2005, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b). Therefore, the combined term ethnic-

racial socialization (ERS) is adopted in the present study to represent parental transmission of messages about race and ethnicity towards their children.

Hughes et al. (2006b) proposed a parental ERS model, which labeled four dimensions of ERS including cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, egalitarianism and silence about race. Specifically, cultural socialization refers to “parental practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children’s cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly” (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006a; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Thornton et al., 1990; Uman~a-Taylor & Fine, 2004, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b), which is central to parental influences on children’s ethnic and racial identity formation (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Knight et al., 1993a; Knight et al., 1993b; Ou & McAdoo, 1993; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Spencer, 1983; Stevenson, 1994; Thornton et al., 1990, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b).

Preparation for bias refers to parental efforts to promote awareness of discrimination and prepare children to cope with it, which has been emphasized as another critical component of ERS (Hughes et al., 2006a; Hughes & Chen, 1999, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b). This ERS type is not typically among the first things that parents talk about when approaching ERS (Hughes et al., 2006b). Chen’s (1998, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b) dissertation study on Chinese immigrant families with young children (4 to 9 years old) suggested that only 10% of parents discussed racial prejudice or discrimination with children, which may reflect Asian cultural values that “emphasize suppression of emotion, self-restraint. and maintenance of harmony (Nagata, 1990, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b).

Promotion of mistrust is another ERS type, which refers to practices that promote the need for wariness and distrust in interracial interactions (Hughes et al., 2006a; Hughes & Chen, 1999, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b). This is distinct from preparation for bias messages as

they provide no coping advice with discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001, as cited in Hughes et al., 2006b).

The last ERS type that Hughes et al. (2006b) identified is egalitarianism and silence about race, referring to messages that “orient youths toward developing skills and characteristics needed to thrive” in mainstream or dominant culture. Studies suggest that this ERS type is salient to parents across multiple ethnic groups (Hughes et al., 2006b). Additionally, egalitarianism promotes color blindness ideology and/or neglect racial discussions altogether (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Hughes et al., 2006b, as cited in Huguley et al., 2019). Color blindness ideology refers to “denying, minimizing, or attempting to ignore racial differences” (Penner & Dovidio, 2016).

Among the 45 studies that Hughes et al. (2006b) reviewed, only one study targeted Chinese immigrants (Ou & McAdoo, 1993), which also looked at first-generation immigrant Chinese parents with young children (grades 1-2 & 5-6) using 22 items assessing attitudes towards Chinese values vis-a-vis child rearing and maintenance of Chinese traditions and 1 item assessing attitudes toward child’s study of Chinese language (Hughes et al., 2006b). Although scarce, there have been more studies focused specifically on Chinese American families (Wong et al., 2024). The present study aims to obtain a bigger picture of parental ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents, without limiting specific ERS domains through corresponding measures. Hughes et al.’s ERS model (2006b) was used as a reference for deductive thematic analysis on parental ERS approaches.

Methods

Demographic Information

This study included ten participants (mothers $n = 8$, fathers $n = 2$). The average age of the participants was 40.14 years old. The majority of participants (90%) had obtained a college degree, among whom four were with a bachelor’s degree, four master’s degree, and one a

doctoral degree. All participants had child(ren) who were currently in elementary school, with an average age of 8.46 years old. Children's grade levels ranged from kindergarten to fifth grade. Half of participants (50%) had lived in the U.S. for over 10 years (with one over 20 years), four participants for five to 10 years, and one participant for two years. All participants chose to use Chinese (Mandarin) during the interview.

Study Design

This is a cross-sectional, qualitative exploratory study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to examine acculturation orientations, ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents with elementary school-aged young children, relations between these two variables, and factors that influence the two variables.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Ten Chinese immigrant parents with elementary school-aged children in the U.S. were recruited mainly from Chinese social media platform Wechat by sharing recruitment information in online groups and with the help of personal connections. Snowballing sampling was used to recruit additional participants in the study. Specifically, participants recruited at an earlier stage of this study were requested to invite people they know who were also eligible to participate in this study, and some participants invited more people to participate in the study. Asian Counseling and Referral Services, a local non-profit organization, and a local Chinese church also supported the recruitment. The researcher posted recruitment information on some other social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Red and Instagram to recruit potential participants across the U.S.

Inclusion criteria for participants included being over 18 years old, identifying as Chinese, being born in China, and currently having at least one elementary school-aged child. Those who were interested in participating in the study were asked to fill out a screening form, where information including their name, gender, ethnic and racial identity, immigration status,

occupation and education level, children's age and gender, number of children, reasons for immigration, duration of residence in the U.S. and contact methods were collected. Eligible participants were asked to schedule a time for a semi-structured interview with the researcher, which lasted around 45 to 60 minutes. Study procedures were reviewed by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was deemed exempt.

Procedures

Participants could choose to attend either virtual or in-person interview, with virtual interviews on Zoom and in-person interviews at booked meeting rooms of School of Social Work Building at University of Washington. Participants could choose to use either English or Chinese (Mandarin) during the interviews, as the researcher, who was also the interviewer, is bilingual. The researcher also identifies as Chinese. All participants chose to attend a virtual interview using Chinese (Mandarin).

The interviews used a semi-structured approach where a list of leading questions was asked to the participants followed by some clarifying questions to obtain comprehensive data. Interview questions were designed to answer these five research questions: a) What acculturation orientations do Chinese immigrant parents have? b) What factors influence the formation of Chinese immigrant parents' acculturation orientation? c) How do Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. approach ERS towards their young children? d) What factors influence Chinese immigrant parents' approach of ERS towards their young children? d) How are Chinese immigrant parents' acculturation orientations associated with their approach of ERS towards their young children?

Interview questions were guided by the commonly used bidirectional model of acculturation. The followings are some examples of leading questions asked in the interviews with follow-up probing questions in the parentheses: a) What culture do you orient to the most? (Why do you orient to this culture the most?) b) What other cultures do you also orient to?

(Why do you also orient to this/these culture(s)? c) Have your cultural orientations ever changed since your immigration to the U.S.? (If so, how and why?) d) In your daily conversations with your child, what do you usually talk about? e) Do you talk about race and ethnicity with your child? (How often? If so, could you tell me more about what you usually talk about? Could you give me an example of your conversations?) f) Why do you (not) talk about race and ethnicity with your child (in this way)? (Do you think it is important to talk about race and ethnicity with your child? Why?) g) Have your approach of talking about race and ethnicity ever changed before? (If so, what shapes your change?)

Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in Chinese. Both inductive and deductive thematic analysis were conducted on the Chinese transcriptions to inform Chinese immigrant parents' acculturation orientation, ERS approach towards young children, factors that influence both variables, as well as potential relations between both variables. Specifically, Hughes et al.'s ERS framework (2006) was used as a reference for coding ERS approaches in the current study. A recursive process of thematic analysis with six phases was conducted by the researcher, including familiarizing myself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report, which is the final opportunity for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes and themes were all created in English from analyzing the Chinese transcriptions. Quotes included in this thesis were all translated to English from the Chinese transcriptions.

For a better understanding of relations between different themes within each subject, as well as themes across all subjects, themes were further organized into mind maps for each subject as well as the whole sample. Mind maps, also known as the note-taking technique which was introduced by Tony Buzan in the early 1960s, help people organize their thoughts and

connected nodes stemming from a central image (Buzan & Buzan, 2002, as cited in Ordu & Caliskan, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

There were two main ethical considerations for the study. First, the study had no monetary compensation for its participants due to a lack of funding. To show respect for participants' time and commitment, interviews were kept around 45 to 60 minutes, and were conducted in a safe and caring space. The interviewer had received training in clinical social work and conducted interviews in a human-centered approach. Active listening was used in the interviews, aiming to provide a positive experience for the participants. The researcher hoped that the participants would find the experience rewarding by becoming more aware of and starting to pay more attention to acculturation orientations and their ERS approach through participation in the study.

Second, there was a possibility that participants might feel uncomfortable about discussing their past experiences related to race and ethnicity and acculturation orientations. To address this concern, participants were reminded that they could stop the interview at any time or skip any questions during the interview.

Results

The present study aimed to explore acculturation orientations of Chinese immigrant parents with young children in the U.S. and their ERS approaches towards children to understand family processes and inform the development of parenting interventions for Chinese immigrant families in the U.S.

To identify participants' acculturation orientations, the study assessed cultural rituals at home, including language spoken among participants, festivals that were celebrated, and foods that were consumed and prepared among participants. Additionally, data on the topics that parents discussed daily with their children and parents' ERS approach were also assessed.

Acculturation Orientations

All ten participants reported orienting to Chinese culture. Seven participants (70%) reported orienting to both Chinese and American culture. It is worth noting that the degree of orientation to each culture varied. Specifically, among the seven participants who oriented to both cultures, three reported orienting to Chinese culture the most and four orienting to American culture the most. Moreover, some reported orienting moderately and partially to American culture, and some not orienting to it genuinely. Some participants reported not orienting to certain parts of Chinese culture (e.g., Confucius philosophy). Many participants reported being open to American culture. Furthermore, some reported orienting to a different culture depending on the circumstances. For instance, many reported orientating to American culture in terms of education while others reported orientating to Chinese culture in terms of social interactions.

Cultural Rituals at Home

Participants' cultural rituals at home (language, festival celebration, and food), were important indicators of their acculturation orientations. Language, for example, is an important part of acculturation. The majority of the participants reported speaking mostly Chinese at home, acknowledging the importance of providing a consistent heritage language environment for heritage language maintenance. One participant reported only speaking Chinese and never English at home. Some participants reported speaking mainly English at home because they had become used to speaking English at home and did not persist in speaking Chinese when their child(ren) were little. One participant spoke English at home as her partner was American and did not understand Chinese. This demonstrates that there were some challenges to speaking their heritage language at home. At the same time, participants explained that they wanted to maintain speaking their heritage language. To facilitate their children's learning of Chinese, some participants noted that they taught their children Chinese songs often sung during Chinese

festivals to help their children maintain their heritage language. Moreover, participants reported that they taught their children Chinese idioms through Chinese historical stories.

Festival celebration is also an important indicator of acculturation. Almost all participants reported observing Chinese festivals at home, except for one who reported not observing Chinese festivals because she was very busy with work. Some participants mentioned that celebrating Chinese festivals was essential for children to form their cultural identities. One participant reported encouraging her child to give red envelopes to their classmates at school, which is an important part of traditional Chinese culture of celebrating the new year. Moreover, celebrating traditional Chinese festivals such as the Spring Festival with family from their heritage country was reported as a way to keep connections with family back in China.

Many participants reported that they observed both Chinese and Western/American festivals at home. Chinese festivals that they observed included Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival. The most frequently mentioned Western/American festival that participants observed was Christmas. It is also worth noting that some participants brought up resistance to observing Chinese festivals in the U.S. as Chinese festivals were mostly not national holidays and thus, they had to observe Chinese festivals often on weekdays when they needed to go to school or work. As a result, they observed it quite symbolically and in a rush. These data demonstrate that while participants prioritized celebrating Chinese festivals, there were barriers to doing so.

Food, like language and festival celebration, also represents an important element of acculturation. Notably, all participants reported eating Chinese food at home. For example, participants reported eating zongzi, which is a traditional Chinese rice dish made of sticky rice stuffed with various fillings and wrapped in bamboo leaves, to observe Dragon Boat Festival,

a traditional Chinese holiday. Hence, food was an important way to celebrate Chinese holidays and observe traditional customs.

Factors that Influence Acculturation Orientations

Participants reported a wide range of factors that influenced their acculturation orientations. These factors are divided into individual, interpersonal, and societal factors.

For individual factors, participants mentioned survival, program of study, and open-mindedness to other cultures. Specifically, a participant who brought up survival originally came to the U.S. as an international student studying business and reported little efforts made to acculturate as she “had to focus on survival (study and finding a job after graduation) and thus had no time to think about acculturation.” On the other hand, another participant who also came to the U.S. as an international student who was studying social work reported being treated nicely by professors and cohort members, which helped her orient to American culture. In addition, many participants reported being open to learning more about American culture. Thus, participants’ open-mindedness to other cultures was considered an important individual factor that may have facilitated orientation to American culture.

Participants also reported interpersonal factors such as their relationship with their children, as influential in their acculturation orientations. Some participants whose children were born outside of the U.S. reported worrying about child adjustment at the beginning of their immigration journey. As a result, this concern related to adjustment may hinder some parents from orienting to American culture. At the same time, some parents explained that their concerns about child adjustment gradually reduced as their children adapted to the U.S. as time went by. Further, children encouraged parents to adopt American customs. One participant said, “After having a child, you need to grow together with them. When they learn something, you are more willing to explore and discuss. So, I think the biggest factor is children, which makes you experience the American culture in a deeper way”.

Other participants mentioned social support from the Chinese community as an important factor that led them to orient to Chinese culture. Additionally, feelings about certain social interactions had different influences on participants' orientations. For instance, positive interpersonal experiences such as being treated respectfully by others in the U.S. served as a factor that facilitated orienting to American culture. By contrast, negative interpersonal experiences such as "being treated as a foreigner" and "being treated in a hostile way by coworkers after standing out as an immigrant" was a factor that hindered some from orienting to American culture. Moreover, it is worth noting that some participants explained that meeting very nice people in the U.S. may make them think that people in the U.S. have high social ethics, which facilitated orienting to the American culture.

Notably, participants also reported societal factors that influenced their acculturation orientations. Some participant reported experiencing the "glass ceiling" effect in the workplace, which were social barriers that prevented them from moving up the corporate ladder. This served as a factor that hindered them from orienting to American culture. In addition, participants mentioned national economies of both the U.S. and China as an important factor that influenced how they viewed these cultures. Specifically, during a period of economic downturn in the U.S., immigrants may have struggled to find a job. Therefore, weaker U.S. economics may be a factor that hinders Chinese immigrants from orienting to American culture. Likewise, some participant mentioned that China's recently stronger economy brought them more cultural confidence, thus serving as a factor that may facilitate them orienting to the Chinese culture.

In addition, positive regard, referring to how those of other ethnic-racial groups perceive one's own group (Sellers et al., 1997) was brought up as a factor that influenced perceptions towards American and Chinese cultures. Specifically, some participant mentioned low positive regard of Chinese ethnicity in the U.S. and considered it as a factor that may hinder

them from orienting to American culture. Some participants mentioned that because the U.S. has so many immigrants residing in the country, the openness towards immigrants facilitated orientation towards the American culture.

ERS Approach Towards Children

All participants reported that they seldom talked about race and ethnicity topics with their children. Specifically, the ERS attitudes of letting nature take its course characterized how parents approached ERS. Additionally, five ERS types emerged among participants, including cultural socialization, preparation for bias, egalitarianism and silence about race, nationality selection as well as global citizen identity development.

ERS Attitude: Let Nature Take Its Course

Participants explicitly expressed their ERS approach of “Let Nature Take Its Course (*顺其自然*)”, by not initiating the conversations about race and ethnicity with their children until problems arose. The following is a quote from a participant: “I tend to let nature takes its course and if my child raises it (topic about race and ethnicity) up, I can talk about it. I don’t find a better way to do it now.” This let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude explains why participants reported that they seldom talked about race and ethnicity with their young children. Importantly, participants explained that they adopted this ERS attitude to avoid creating problems when there were none.

ERS Types

Cultural Socialization. Cultural socialization is the most salient ERS type among participants. As previously mentioned, some participants noted they would teach their children about Chinese culture at Chinese festivals. Some participants would help promote Chinese culture by attending Chinese-related activities at school with their children, giving red envelopes to her child and their classmates, and sharing about Chinese festivals at school. One participant sought to transmit multiculturalism values to her child and the value of diversity: “I also tell

him that each ethnicity is different, and we need to respect these differences and other people, just like how your classmates and teachers respect you.”

Moreover, many participants would talk about ethnicity, nationality, birth country and home country with their children. For instance, a participant shared that “I would tell my child that you grow up in US, hold US passport, and are an American. But it doesn’t interfere with you being a Chinese in your heart, which is your ethnicity. These two should have no conflicts.” Participants demonstrated variations in whether parents or children initiated this kind of conversation. Furthermore, some participants reported expressing cultural pride to their children, as shown by the following quotes “I would always tell him my respect to Chinese culture, the importance of it, and my pride of being a Chinese”, “For my kids, they don't identify as Chinese that much, but I have been saying that I'm proud of being a Chinese”.

Preparation for Bias. Some participants reported teaching their children about discriminative words and acts to avoid using with other people, as well as ways to identify discrimination against Chinese people. Moreover, she also educated her child about what he might do if he faced discrimination. The following is a quote from the participant demonstrating her ERS on preparation for bias: “Some of his classmates would pull their eyes in a line, which my child does not care. I told him that it is okay that you don’t care but what they do is unfriendly, and you can report to your teachers.” It is worth mentioning that the participant initiated these conversations after school reported her child repeating racial discriminative words after a classmate, which reflects her “let-nature-take-its-course” ERS attitude.

Notably, one participant expressed avoidance of preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust, with the purpose of helping their children avoid feeling unsafe in their environment, as shown by the following quote “I would not tell them that you should be careful because you are Asian. I do not want them to feel that their environment is dangerous”.

Egalitarianism and Silence about Race. One participant expressed egalitarianism values, as the following quote shows, “We are only small individuals. But only when individuals are strong, a country can be strong. Even if you have strong national complex but without good health and various abilities, it is meaningless”. Moreover, some participants reported being silent about race in situations when race can be important: “During the pandemic, we talked about robbery that had happened, and we would not mention anything about race”.

Some participants expressed a color blindness ideology, including both parents’ own color blindness ideology and belief of their children’s color blindness ideology: “I don’t think we should distinguish people to different races. Children don’t know this concept”, “In their (children’s) eyes, everyone is about the same, so they would not care about this (race)”. The color blindness ideology may be influenced by participants’ religion as shared by a participant: “In Christianity, we are all equal and do not distinguish each other by race.”

Nationality Selection. Some participants reported discussing nationality selection with their children, which can be a typical topic for immigrants from countries that do not allow dual citizenship for adults. Specifically, before reaching 18 years old in the U.S., Chinese children born in the U.S. can hold dual citizenship of both the U.S. and China. There existed variations in whether parents or their child initiated the conversation. One participant reported initiating this conversation with her child, with the hope that her child could be on “the Chinese side” and go with her if she would move back to China. Another participant reported being asked by her child about nationality selection because her child wanted to move back to China, as shown by the following quote:

My child would raise the question (over nationality selection) once in several months or half a year. Sometimes we even have some small arguments. Especially when he was younger at six or seven. Now he is eight and it becomes much better. He now knows that things will not change even if he talks about it every day. He has the idea to go back to China and have Chinese passport. He now firmly holds the view that he stays in the US for his mother.

Chinese immigrant children who were born and/or had lived in China might be more likely to initiate the conversation about nationality selection with their parents. Salient differences between China and the U.S. in terms of their composition of race and ethnicity may contribute to Chinese immigrant family's discussion over selection of nationality when they talk about race and ethnicity.

Global Citizen Identity Development. Ethnicity can be very important for one's identity. However, second-generation immigrants may face difficulties in developing their ethnic-racial identities. One participant proposed developing global citizen identities within their children as an additional option for them to diminish the impact of feeling conflict between Chinese and American cultures. "A global citizen is someone who identifies with being part of a global community and whose actions contribute to the bettering of that community's values and practices" (AMP Global Youth, September 24, 2015). The following is a quote from the participant:

To be honest, we first and also second generations of immigrants are in a quite embarrassing position. Especially first generation. But for the second generation, their problem is their sense of ethnic identity. They may neither identify as Chinese nor American, which can be more embarrassing than us (first generation immigrants) as we at least identify as Chinese right? Therefore, I want my child to know that nationality is not that important. We can identify as a global citizen but deep in the mind there should be at least one country giving you this sense of ethnic identity. You are Chinese, right?

Factors that Influence ERS Approaches

Participants provided a wide range of factors that influence their adoption of the most salient ERS approach: let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude. First, participants raised questions about ERS practices, including how to talk about race and ethnicity with their children, impact of ERS practices, as well as whether "right answers" existed for ERS practices, indicating a need for more resources of ERS practices specifically designed for Chinese immigrant parents. The followings are some quotes from the participants: "I don't know if talking about this with him (child) will influence his personality in the future", "I tend to let

nature take its course. I don't know a better way to do it now" "The reason why I let nature take its course is because I do not have a correct answer for him (child)".

On the other hand, participants brought up factors related to their children that explained their adoption of this ERS approach. Specifically, they raised concerns over the developmental level of their children, noting that young children do not have the cognitive ability to understand racial and ethnic topics, and/or not face identity-related issues, as shown by the following quotes: "He (child) is still little and can't quite understand", "young children do not face identity issues as adolescents do, so it is important talk about race and ethnicity with them when they become adolescents".

Most of the participants reported that they would increase the frequency of talking about race and ethnicity with their children when they grew older and have a higher developmental level. Nevertheless, one participant shared that she would keep using the let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude even when children grew older as "children know better about race and ethnicity" than her. Growing up in a comparatively monoracial and monoethnic environment in China, the participant felt that she had nothing to teach her child, who grew up in a multiracial and multiethnic U.S. society, about race and ethnicity, which also calls for a need to provide more ERS resources to first-generation immigrant parents. The following quote demonstrated this theme:

When they (children) grow older, the (ERS) approach will not change. I think they know better than us. Because at school they can see people of different race. On the contrary, I grew up in China, I only met Chinese most of the time. So when you met foreigners, you would have a strong sense of othering feelings. You do not think they are the same with us, and you would have fear or hate easily. But if you grew up in an environment where there are people of all ethnicities, I think it would be helpful for you understand the world. I don't have anything to teach them.

In addition, some participants reported that their children had good cross-racial peer relationships, which reassured parents that they did not need to talk about race and ethnicity

with their children, as well as strengthened parents' beliefs about color blindness in their children.

Notably, some participants mentioned that their children were living in a diverse neighborhood and going to a diverse school, which may protect their children from bias and discrimination. Therefore, being in diverse neighborhoods and schools reassured parents that they did not need to talk about race and ethnicity with their children. Furthermore, many participants shared that public schools in liberal states attached great value to diversity and talked a lot about race and ethnicity with students, as shown by the following quote:

We talk about race and ethnicity not often. But school will talk about it and children may talk about it at home. Public schools attach importance to it. For instance, they would have a specific month to celebrate and learn ethnicities. Teachers would read them picture books. A while ago was Asian month, they would discuss accomplishments of Asian Americans. We will also talk about these with them.

Therefore, parents avoided the responsibility of having these conversations given their assumptions that their children were having these conversations at school.

Relations between Acculturation Orientations and ERS Approaches

First, the present study found that Chinese immigrant parents' let-nature-take-its-course ERS approach existed across acculturation orientations (i.e., integration and separation in the present study). Second, Chinese immigrant parents who oriented to Chinese culture the most tended to engage in more cultural socialization compared with parents of other acculturation orientations. For instance, those who orient to Chinese culture the most tend to express pride about Chinese culture to their children. Third, those who orient to both Chinese and American culture and to Chinese culture the most, tended to hold views of color blindness ideology, as three out of four participants (75%). Lastly, those who only oriented to Chinese culture tended to talk about nationality selection with their children, as two out of three participants (66.67%) who oriented only to Chinese culture reported talking about this with their young children.

Discussion

The present study sought to explore acculturation orientations, parental ERS approaches towards their children, relationships between these two variables, and factors that influence these two variables among Chinese immigrants in the U.S. The study sought to improve understanding of family processes and better inform culturally responsive parenting intervention development for Chinese immigrant families in the U.S. In depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to inform the research questions above.

All participants reported orienting to either only Chinese culture, or both Chinese and American cultures, with variations in the degree of their orientation to each culture. Participants reported a wide range of factors that influence their acculturation orientations, which were divided into individual, interpersonal and societal factors. Various factors may have a different impact on individuals' acculturation orientations, which may inform immigrant families about their acculturation process.

This study identified a let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude as salient across parental acculturation orientations (i.e. integration and separation in the present study) of Chinese immigrant parents. It needs to be pointed out that "let nature take its course" is an important philosophy of Taoism in Chinese culture, which is a philosophy that emphasizes living in harmony. Moreover, the Chinese philosophy of living in harmony matches well with how the participants chose to avoid talking about controversial issues related with race and ethnicity until problems arose. As all the participants reported orienting to Chinese culture and no one indicated disorienting to Taoism, this Chinese philosophy might have an important underlying influence on the participants' adoption of the let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude.

Many of the reported factors that influenced participants' orientation toward this approach suggested that Chinese immigrant parents are in need of more ERS resources to inform their ERS practices. Specifically, some participants believed that young children were not ready to learn about or talk about race and ethnicity. Yet, prior research has found that

young children develop racial stereotypes and prejudice around 3 to 5 years of age (for reviews see Cristol & Gimbert, 2008; Levy & J. M. Hughes, 2009). Moreover, some participants shared a lack of knowledge on the impact of ERS. There were also participants' beliefs that there may be no right way to talk about race and ethnicity with their children. Notwithstanding, acculturation orientations, as previously mentioned, have been found to be related to behavioral health (Schwartz et al., 2023, as cited in Salas-Wright et al., 2023) and child adjustment (especially social competence) (Chen et al. 2014). Therefore, it is worthwhile for parents to attach great value to their ERS approach towards children, which can influence their children's acculturation orientations (Hughes et al., 2009).

Additionally, participants reported factors that reassured them that they did not need to talk about race and ethnicity with children and thus consolidated their let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude. These factors included their belief of children knowing more about race and ethnicity than they did, being a part of diverse schools and neighborhoods, and recognition of good cross-racial peer relationships among their children. Here, parental beliefs that their children know more about race and ethnicity than they did, and consequent adoption of let-nature-take-its-course ERS approach may support the development of acculturation gaps between immigrant parents and their children. Acculturation gaps have been proposed to compound normative intergenerational gaps and causes stress in family, leading to "family conflict, youth problem behaviors, and maladjustment" (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Sluzki, 1979; Szapocznik et al., 1984, as cited in Telzer, 2010).

Even though children can receive important ERS outside of the home such as in school, parental ERS is still important for children's development. Parental cultural socialization has been positively associated with children's self-reported ethnic centrality and positive regard (Wong et al., 2024), as well as positive outcomes in academics, social life and mental health for students of color (Neblett et al., 2012; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Although all the Chinese

immigrant parents in this study reported not talking often about race and ethnicity with their young children, cultural socialization was still one of the most salient reported ERS types, which aligns with Hughes et al. (2006b)'s study that suggested cultural socialization is a salient aspect of child rearing. Apart from explicitly talking about culture-related topics with children, the participants were also indirectly relaying cultural beliefs to their children by engaging in various cultural rituals (language, festival celebration, and food). Findings in the present study align with Juang et al. (2018) that parents tend to share more positive messages such as cultural heritage and pride compared with critical messages of racial discrimination and bias preparation.

On the other hand, the present study found that Chinese immigrant parents tended to focus more on ethnicity-based messages than race-based ones when they are talking about race and ethnicity with children, which aligns with Juang et al. (2017). Research shows that racial socialization can be very beneficial to Asian American children (Nguyen et al., 2015, as cited in Wang & He, 2024) and children whose parents have open communications about racial issues are more likely to share their own experiences of racial discrimination with their parents (Juang & Syed, 2014), which can help to reduce children's psychological stress (Wang & He, 2024). Yet, only one participant reported the ERS type of "preparation for bias" in the present study. Moreover, the participant was only apt to engage in this after the school reported the child had repeated racially discriminative words to a classmate. Therefore, this ERS type of preparation for bias might be worth more attention from Chinese immigrant parents. That said, more culturally responsive interventions should be developed in the field to support Chinese immigrant parents to build on ERS knowledge and skills especially in the preparation for bias.

The present study also found that some Chinese immigrant parents use the ERS approach of egalitarianism and silence about race. Notably, there are relatively few studies that have studied the effects of this ERS approach (Yasui, 2015). That said, studies on ERS

approaches that deemphasize ethnic-racial identity have been negatively associated with psychoeducational outcomes (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002) and found having less effects on academic performance compared with cultural socialization and preparation for bias ERS approaches (Bowman & Howard, 1985). It is also worth noting that being silent about race and ethnicity can also transfer values to children that race and ethnicity is something we should not talk about.

The last two ERS approaches found in the present study were nationality selection and global citizen identity development, which have not previously been identified as ERS approaches in the current literature. Discussion over children's nationality selection can be a typical topic for immigrant families from countries that do not allow dual citizenship for adults, such as China. Nationality, as an indicator of one's national identity, plays a pivotal role in one's personal identity and a sense of belonging (Croe, 2023). Furthermore, it would not only influence where the person lives and what people and culture they will contact, but also serve "as a basis for cultural preservation and the transmission of heritage from one generation to the next" (Croe, 2023). Therefore, Chinese immigrant parents' discussions over the selection of nationality with their children should be a meaningful ongoing process for their children's identity development.

The notion that one can develop a "global citizen" identity may be especially beneficial for immigrants who encounter conflicts between their ethnicity and nationality, and/or experience difficulties of developing their cultural, ethnic-racial identities. Global citizenship identification has been positively associated with prosocial values (Reysen et al., 2013). Moreover, citizenship education that narrowly focuses on patriotism discourage students from engaging in civic life (Myers, 2009) while global citizenship may encourage Chinese immigrant students to increase their civic participation, and enhance their sense of belonging especially in an era of globalization where global citizenship has been given more concrete

status than ever before (Dower & Williams, 2002, as cited in Myers, 2009). More studies in the future on nationality selection and global citizen identity development of immigrants might be helpful to better inform immigrant family processes.

Lastly, the present study identified four potential relations between parental acculturation orientations and parental ERS towards children, as discussed in the results section, which are potential areas for further examination in future studies.

Conclusion

Immigrant parents have a significant influence over the development and outcomes of their children. Studies have found that acculturation orientations are often associated with child outcomes (Chen et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2014a, b; Lim et al. 2008, as cited in Kim & Hou, 2016). This study aimed to investigate acculturation orientations, ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents with elementary school-aged young children in the U.S., relationships between these two variables, and factors that influence these two variables.

Semi-structured individual interview with 10 Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. found that the let-nature-take-its-course ERS attitude existed among Chinese immigrant parents of different acculturation orientations, specifically integration (orientation to both cultures) and separation (orientation to only heritage culture). Additionally, based on the foundation of their let-nature-take-its-course ERS approach, Chinese immigrant parents used five ERS types including cultural socialization, preparation for bias, egalitarianism and silence about race, nationality selection, as well as global citizen identity development, among which nationality selection and global citizen identity development were novel ERS types identified in the present study.

The current study fills the research gap of ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. which has been an understudied population in the literature. Moreover, this study focused on immigrant parents with elementary school-aged young children, which has

also been very understudied as most studies focused on adolescents. Furthermore, this study linked parental ERS approach with parental acculturation orientations, to enhance our understanding of Chinese immigrant parents' ERS approach and their potential associations with their acculturation experiences. This study can serve as a cornerstone for developing culturally responsive parenting interventions for Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, it had a small sample size of only 10 participants, who adopted either integration or separation acculturation strategies. As a result, this sample did not have Chinese immigrant parents who adopted acculturation strategies of assimilation (orientation to only American culture) or marginalization (orientation to neither American nor Chinese culture), which may limit our understanding of these issues. Additionally, the study findings may not be generalizable to all Chinese immigrant parents due to the small sample size.

Second, due to expansive topics in the interviews, sometimes following up questions for each topic to every participant was not 100% the same. Therefore, without completely standardized the interview process, it is possible that some participants did not receive the same prompts and they would otherwise give different responses.

Third, due to the qualitative nature of this study, participants' answers to acculturation orientation and ERS approach during the interview can be subjective and thus it might be helpful to utilize other research methods including quantitative measures and observance in the future to measure the constructs.

Fourth, the researcher encountered difficulties in translating important constructs in this study from Chinese to English. Nationality, for example, also has the meaning of "an ethnic group constituting one element of a larger unit (such as a nation)" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 15 May 2024), which is very similar to the meaning of ethnicity. Likewise, this

situation also exists in the Chinese language, and the Chinese phrase “民族” can have these two similar meanings. Moreover, acculturation in Chinese is “文化适应”, which can be literally translated to “cultural adaption”. Therefore, the researcher was concerned with participants mixing the constructs of acculturation, cultural adaption and even assimilation, though she tried to explain the differences between the constructs to the participants. More research in the future is needed to ensure that relevant constructs in different languages align with their original meanings in English.

Fifth, as this study involved a lot of translation, including translating the quotes from Chinese transcriptions to English, as well as creating codes and themes in English from the Chinese transcriptions, some meanings might have been lost during this process. Words and phrases in English and Chinese may not always have the same meanings due to cultural differences,.

Sixth, as interviews were conducted by the researcher with the participants, social expectancy bias may have influenced participants’ responses in the interviews.

Seventh, this study focused on Chinese immigrant parents with elementary school-aged young children in the U.S., so the findings should be used with caution when generalized to other populations.

Eighth, among this sample, one participant married a non-Chinese person while the rest all married a Chinese person. As cross-racial marriage may influence parental ERS and acculturation orientations, future research may consider studying this topic among immigrants of cross-racial marriages.

The present study calls for more studies on the ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents who adopt assimilation and marginalization acculturation strategies to examine whether the findings are applicable to Chinese immigrant parents of these two different acculturation orientations. Quantitative designs may be used to statistically examine the

potential relationships between acculturation orientations and ERS approaches of Chinese immigrant parents. Factors that influence acculturation orientations and parental ERS approaches may be examined in greater depth in future studies. Additionally, future studies should be focused on designing culturally responsive and age-appropriate immigrant parental ERS interventions with children of different age groups.

Despite these limitations, this study contributed to the current literature by revealing Chinese immigrant parents' acculturation orientations in multiple aspects. Specifically, this study revealed Chinese immigrants parents' approach towards ERS practices with their young children and identified self-reported factors that would influence their acculturation orientations and ERS approaches. ERS attitude and ERS types that are distinctively applicable to Chinese immigrant parents were also identified in this study. Our study findings are valuable for developing culturally-responsive parenting interventions for Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S.

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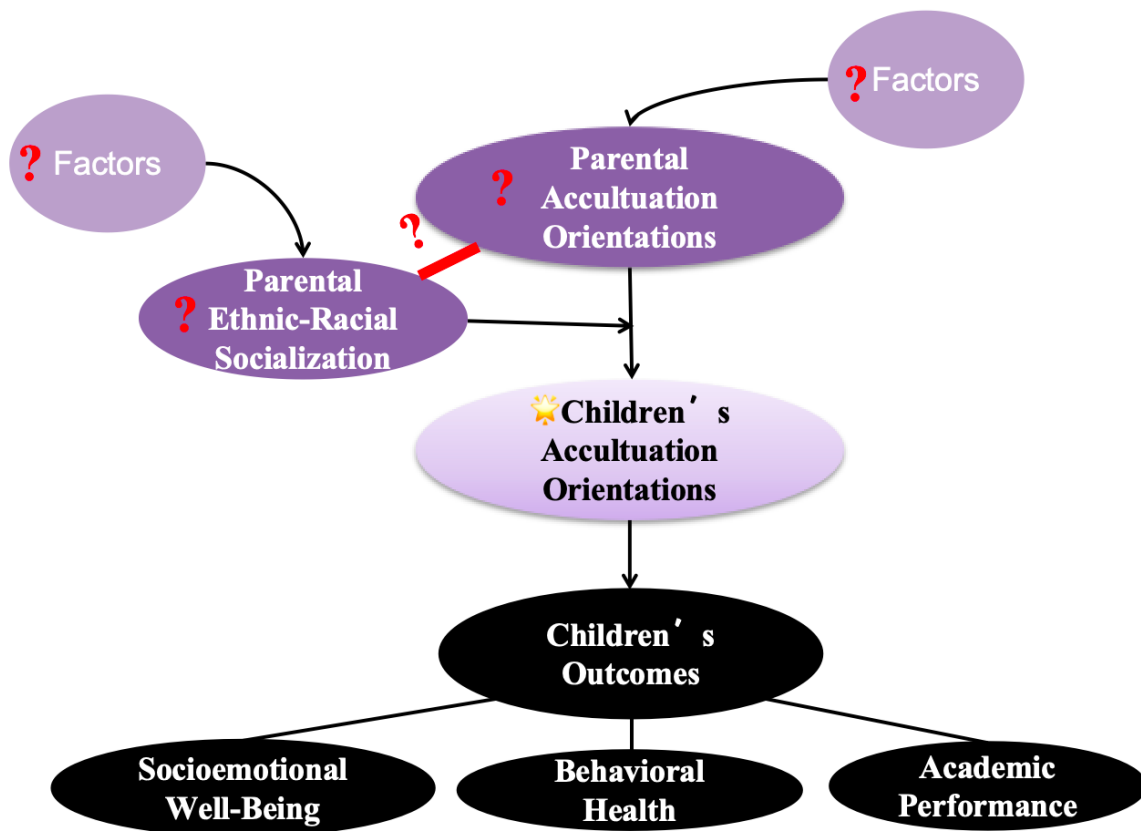
Figure 1*Conceptual Framework*

Figure 2

A Framework for Conceptualizing and Studying Acculturation (from Berry & Sam, 2016)

