





Parent–Child Conflict Profiles in Chinese American Immigrant Families: Links to Sociocultural Factors and School-Age Children’s Psychological Adjustment

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Research suggests that parent–child conflict is a salient family process in Asian immigrant families and often a stressful experience for Asian American youth due to value discrepancies between Asian and Western cultures. The present study examined ratings of parent–child conflict across conflict topics from parents’ and children’s perspectives in a sample of Chinese American immigrant families with school-age children (N = 239; age = 7.5–11 years). Latent profile analyses identified three parent-rated conflict profiles and four child-rated conflict profiles. Parent and child conflict profiles were unrelated to each other and differentially related to family sociocultural factors and children’s psychological adjustment. Parents’ moderate conflict profile scored highest on parent-rated child behavior problems and had the highest household density and lower parent Chinese orientation. Children’s moderate-specific and high conflict profiles scored higher on child-reported behavior problems than the low conflict profile. These results highlight the need to assess family conflict from both parents’ and children’s perspectives and target parent–child conflict communication as a pathway to prevent or reduce behavioral problems in Chinese American children of immigrant families.

Keywords: Parent–Child Conflict; Chinese American Immigrant Families; Children’s Adjustment

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Parent-child conflict, a normative phenomenon in middle childhood through adolescence, is theorized to facilitate children's autonomy and social competence by challenging family boundaries and roles (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). While moderate levels of conflict predict better adjustment in European American youth, highly frequent and intense conflict is a risk factor for children's maladjustment (Burt, McGue, Krueger & Iacono, 2005). Parent-child conflict in immigrant families can be exacerbated as parents and children attempt to adapt to social contexts that are culturally dissonant (Telzer, 2011). Due to value differences between Asian and Western cultures (Triandis, 1995), researchers hypothesized that Asian families living in Western cultures may be especially susceptible to heightened conflict (Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2008). Parent-child conflict may have a marked adverse impact on Asian American youth's adjustment because conflict violates the Asian cultural norms of respect of authority and family harmony (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). In light of increased parent-child conflict and decreased parent-child warmth and closeness between middle childhood and early adolescence (e.g., 7-14 years; Marceau, Ram, & Susman, 2015), research on parent-child conflict in bicultural families with school-age children can inform preventive interventions.

The present study identified profiles of parent-child conflict by topics in Chinese American immigrant families with school-age children (7-11 years of age). We assessed conflict from both parents' and children's perspectives and examined the links of conflict profiles to family sociocultural characteristics (e.g., SES, cultural orientations) and children's adjustment.

Parent-Child Conflict in Asian Immigrant families

Research on parent-child conflict in Asian immigrant families has typically compared the overall mean frequency/intensity of conflict between Asian and non-Asian families. This literature has found that Asian American adolescents endorsed higher conflict and more conflict-related emotional distress than their peers from other ethnic groups (Chung, Flook, & Fuligni, 2009). Compared to youth in the United States, the quality of parent-child relationships was more strongly related to depression in youths from Mainland China (Greenberger, Chen, Tally, & Dong, 2000), suggesting that parent-child conflict is salient for families who are more oriented toward Asian values (Lau, Jernewall, Zane, & Myers, 2002). Within-group research has found individual differences in conflict among Asian immigrant families such that parent-child conflict was related to increased distress and risk for suicidal behaviors among Asian American adolescents (Lau et al., 2002; Lim et al., 2008). Few studies have studied parent-child conflict in Asian immigrant families with school-aged children.

Parents' and children's discrepant reports of conflict are an important methodological issue because parents and children may not only differ in their perceptions of conflict (De Los Reyes, Lerner, Thomas, Daruwala, & Goepel, 2013; Ehrlich, Cassidy, & Dykas, 2011), but their reports of conflict may be differentially related to the family's sociocultural characteristics and child adjustment. European American parents, for example, viewed conflicts as social conventions (i.e., arbitrary norms that regulate familial interactions), whereas adolescents viewed conflicts as means of establishing autonomy (Smetana & Gaines, 1999). Conflict rated by Asian American youth (but not parents) was linked to greater parent-child cultural gap, whereas conflict rated by parents (but not youths) was linked to higher youth behavior problems (Choi et al., 2008). The present study assessed conflict from parents' and children's independent perspectives and examined their respective relations to sociocultural variables and child adjustment.

Relations Between Conflict Topics and Sociocultural Factors

Understanding what is most salient for each individual within the context of daily lives is at the crux of effective clinical work with bicultural families (Lakes, López, & Garro, 2006). To increase cultural sensitivity in clinical interventions, researchers need to better understand the content of conflict in Chinese American immigrant families. Due to the East Asian values of parental control and familial obligations, topics such as family rules, discipline, parental supervision, and friendship choices may be especially salient in Chinese American families (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Indeed, Chinese youth in Hong Kong endorsed more conflicts on topics that reflected cultural norms such as homework and school (Yau & Smetana, 1996). Compared to research that aggregated conflict ratings into mean frequency/intensity (Smetana & Gaines, 1999), the present study investigated profiles of conflict topics (e.g., rules, chores) to identify which topics are most salient to parents and those to their children.

The present study also examined the relations between conflict profiles and parents' and children's orientations to the host and heritage cultures, which may be intricately linked to the content of conflict (e.g., Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Acculturation is viewed as a bidimensional process in which an immigrant affiliates with and/or rejects their native and host cultures (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mock, 1987). The acculturation gap-distress model purports that the clash of values and preferences arising from parent-child gaps in cultural orientations results in family conflict, which in turn leads to youth maladjustment (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000). Intergenerational cultural gap has been hypothesized to exacerbate conflict in Asian American families, and Chinese American youths with higher U.S. orientation may experience higher conflict-related distress than their less acculturated peers (Lau et al., 2002; Lim et al., 2008). Indeed, Asian immigrant families with greater gaps in heritage or host cultural orientations reported more intense parent-child conflict (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Ying & Han, 2007).

Conflict in immigrant families is associated with sociodemographic factors. Families with higher SES and/or extended kin may have more monetary and social resources to buffer youth from acculturative stress. Child sex and generation status have also been linked to parent-offspring conflict in Asian American families in a recent meta-analysis (Lui, 2015): Females and second-generation youths report greater conflict than males and first-generation youths. Asian American female offspring may have more intense conflict than male offspring with their parents due to higher expectations placed on females to conform to culturally defined responsibilities. Second-generation offspring may struggle more with understanding their parents' perspectives due to a quicker rate of acculturation to the mainstream than first-generation offspring who may acculturate at a more similar rate to their parents (Lui, 2015). Higher conflict has also been associated with a greater mother-child gap in Chinese language use and a greater father-child gap in Chinese values endorsement in Chinese Canadian families, indicating unique influences of parent sex (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Because cultural and sociodemographic factors are interrelated in immigrant families (Telzer, 2011), these factors were included in the same model to examine their relations to parent-child conflict.

Links Between Conflict Profiles and Children's Adjustment

Among nonimmigrant samples, high levels of parent-child conflict have been associated with youths' higher externalizing and internalizing problems (Burt et al., 2005; Marmorstein, & Iacono, 2004), but low-to-moderate levels of conflict were linked to positive adjustment (Laursen & Hafen, 2010). Some conflict may thus play a vital role in maturation, and the association between conflict and children's adjustment may be nonlinear. As Bergman (2001) suggests, nonlinear relationships are better understood by

simultaneously assessing multiple dimensions of interest. By examining conflict intensity, frequency, and negativity, three groups were identified in a sample of ethnically diverse mother–youth dyads: Placid dyads had low conflict intensity and negativity, explosive dyads had high conflict intensity, and squabbling dyads had frequent and intense conflict (Huey et al., 2017). Compared to placid dyads, youths from both explosive and squabbling dyads had higher behavior problems. We used a similar approach to identify profiles of conflict topics and their links to child adjustment.

Summary of Hypotheses

The present study examined the intensity and topics of parent–child conflict in Chinese American immigrant families as reported by both parents and children. *First*, we used latent profile analysis (LPA) to identify groups of parents and children with similar ratings across conflict topics. We expected to find a group of parents that endorsed higher conflict on topics related to the traditional Chinese values of family harmony and obligations (e.g., respect/manners, school, family rules) and a group of children who endorsed higher conflict on topics related to autonomy (e.g., family rules, free time, appearance). *Second*, we examined the relations between conflict profiles and family sociocultural characteristics (e.g., SES, cultural orientations). We hypothesized that parents with higher Chinese orientation and/or from lower-SES families would endorse higher conflict on topics related to traditional Chinese values. We expected the older and second-generation children and those with higher U.S. orientation to endorse higher conflict on autonomy-related topics. We hypothesized that families with greater gaps in parent–child cultural orientation would endorse higher conflict than those with a smaller gap. *Third*, we examined the relations between the conflict profiles and children’s adjustment (reported by parents, teachers, and children). We hypothesized that the children from families with the highest conflict would display the most behavior problems (e.g., Burt et al., 2005).

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 239 children (48.1% females, M age = 9.2 years, SD = 0.73, age range = 7.5–11.0), their parents, and teachers who participated in a two-wave longitudinal study on socioemotional and academic development of Chinese American children from immigrant families in the San Francisco Bay Area (Chen et al., 2014; Main, Zhou, Liew, & Lee, 2017). The present paper used data from W2 (collected 1.5–2.5 years after W1) because conflict was not assessed at W1. The families who dropped out after W1 did not differ from those retained (239 of the 258 in W1, 92.6%) on key family demographics. At W2, the children were mostly in third (45.6%) or fourth (47.7%) grade, from two-parent families (90.6%), had at least one sibling (81.2%), and did not reside with grandparents (65.8%). The majority of children were U.S.-born (2nd generation, 76.4%), and 23.6% were foreign-born (1st generation). The majority of parents (n = 239, 99.2% of mothers, 96.2% of fathers) were foreign-born. Parents’ birth places included Mainland China (74.7%), Hong Kong (9.4%), Taiwan (3.0%), and other (10.7%), and the amount of time since immigration ranged from 2 to 43 years (M = 13.98, SD = 7.92). Parents’ age at W1 ranged from 27.9 to 54.8 years (M = 39.5, SD = 5.2). Parents’ education ranged from 0 to 20 years (doctorate or other advanced degree), with a mean of 13.0 years for mothers and 12.9 years for fathers (some college education). Employment types included full-time (49% of mothers, 81.7% of fathers), part-time (19.0%, 10.5%), or unemployed/homemakers (31.7%, 7.8%). Families’ household per capita income ranged from \$1,000 to \$33,750 (M = \$11,910, SD < \$8,359). The majority of children (58.5%) were eligible for free or

reduced school lunch. Twenty-nine percent of families lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates between 20% and higher, and 68% lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates lower than 20%.

Procedure

The child and one primary caregiver (81.4% mothers and 18.6% fathers) participated in a 2.5-hour laboratory assessment, which included a parent questionnaire, child assessment, and parent–child interaction tasks. All tasks were administered in the participant's preferred language (English, Mandarin, or Cantonese). All written materials were available in English and simplified or traditional Chinese. The majority of parents (75.6%) completed the surveys in Chinese. All children completed the assessment in English. The child's teacher completed the Teacher Report Form (TRF; see below for measure details; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) by mail. Teacher surveys were collected for 81.0% of children.

Measures

Demographic characteristics (parent report)

As used with Mexican American immigrants (Roosa et al., 2008), the Family Demographics and Migration History Questionnaire asked for parents' education, age, and length of stay in the United States, family income in the past year, child generation status, number of persons living in the home, and number of bedrooms in the home. Family SES was calculated by averaging the standardized scores of parents' education and per capita income. Household density was calculated by dividing the number of persons in the home with the number of bedrooms in the home (Evans, Kim, Ting, Teshler, & Shannis, 2007).

Parent–child conflict discussion issues checklist (parent and child report)

During the laboratory visit, the parent and child were each administered the Issues Checklist (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979) to indicate: (1) which of 13 topics of conflict had been a major source of disagreement in the past month, and (2) the degree to which each topic had upset them (1 = *not at all upset* to 5 = *very upset*). Topics included the following: (1) Cleaning up/Chores, (2) Free Time, (3) Family Rules, (4) Appearance/Health, (5) Respect/Manners, (6) Noise, (7) How Family Gets Along, (8) Supervision, (9) Money, (10) Alcohol/Smoking, (11) School, (12) Extracurricular Activities, and (13) Traditional Chinese Values. Each topic consisted of several subtopics (e.g., Family Rules included time for going to bed, what time to have meals, and consequences for breaking rules). To capture culturally unique conflict in Chinese families, the authors added Traditional Chinese Values with subtopics that reflected key Chinese values as identified by emic research (Kulich & Zhang, 2010). The subtopics of being thrifty, honest, and humble/modest reflected the values of 道德 (morality), 信 (trustworthiness), and 仁 (benevolence), and spending time and helping out with family reflected 孝 (filial piety) and 家 (familism; Kulich & Zhang, 2010). Alcohol/Smoking and Supervision (i.e., going places without your parents) were dropped due to their irrelevance to our age group. The Issues Checklist has been utilized to examine parent–child conflict in ethnically diverse families with school-age and Chinese children (e.g., 6–12 years old; Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Zhang, Cui, Han, & Yan, 2017).

Parent and child cultural orientations (parent and child report)

The Cultural and Social Acculturation Scale (CSAS; Chen & Lee, 1996) assessed for parents' and children's adherence to heritage (Chinese) and host (United States) cultures

across language proficiency, media use, and social affiliation domains. Item ratings ranged from 1 = *extremely poor* to 5 = *very well* or 6 = *almost every day*. Eight items assessed for language proficiency (e.g., “How well do you speak/read in English/Chinese?”), ten for media use (e.g., “How often do you watch English/Chinese movies?”, “How often do you listen to Western/Chinese music?”), and six for social relationships (e.g., “How often do you invite Caucasian-American/Chinese friends to your house?”). The CSAS showed satisfactory internal reliabilities in studies of Chinese immigrant families (e.g., Chen & Tse, 2010). The alphas for the present sample were, respectively, .88 and .70 for the U.S. and Chinese orientation subscales among the parents and .63 and .78 among the children. Composite scores for orientations were computed by averaging standardized item scores in the corresponding subscales. Parent–child gaps in cultural orientation were tested using two interaction terms of parent cultural orientation \times child cultural orientation to best assess for both types and directions of differences (see Birman, 2006 for a review).

Child behavior problems (parent, teacher, and child report)

Parents completed the externalizing and internalizing scales of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), teachers completed the TRF (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), and children completed the Behavior Problem Index (BPI; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Each item was rated to the extent it described the child on a 3-point scale (0 = *not true*, 1 = *somewhat true or sometimes true*, and 2 = *very true or often true*). *T*-scores were calculated utilizing standardized scores based on normative data collected from a national sample. For the CBCL and TRF, *T*-scores ≥ 60 (84th percentile and above) indicate borderline clinical elevations for internalizing and externalizing scales compared to peers their age (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). The child-reported BPI does not have standardized scores; raw scores were used in the analyses. In a study of Chinese school-age children (Zhou et al., 2008), the Chinese CBCL, TRF, and BPI demonstrated good internal consistency (α s $> .80$) and test–retest reliability (r s $> .80$). In the present sample, the alphas for parent, teacher, and child report were .99, .87, and .84 for externalizing problems, and .98, .85, and .65 for internalizing problems.

Analytic Strategy

We first used LPA (Muthén, 2001) to identify groups of parents and children with similar profiles of conflict ratings by topics. A series of models ranging from one to four profiles were fit for the parents and one to five profiles were fit for the children using Mplus Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015). Standard fit indexes, including the Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1987), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978), and the sample size adjusted BIC (Sclove, 1987), were used to determine the best model fit. The entropy statistic (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996), bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLRT; Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007), and practical implications of the model (i.e., class sizes) were also used to determine the optimal number of profiles. Multinomial logistic regressions were then used to assess the links between sociocultural variables and conflict profile memberships. Lastly, analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were used to examine the links between conflict profile memberships and children’s adjustment, controlling for family sociocultural variables.

RESULTS

For the full sample, conflict intensity across all topics ranged from 0.14 to 3.29 ($M = 1.43$, $SD < 0.51$) for parents and 0.07 to 3.14 ($M = 1.16$, $SD < 0.56$) for children indicating low conflict intensity levels when aggregating the means. Parent and child report

of overall conflict intensity significantly differed with parents reporting higher levels, $t(238) = 5.64, p < .001$. Parents' Chinese and U.S. orientations, respectively, ranged from 1.42 to 5.17 ($M = 3.89, SD = 0.60$) and 1.00 to 4.83 ($M = 2.63, SD = 0.83$). Children's Chinese and U.S. orientations ranged from 1.08 to 5.00 ($M = 2.76, SD = 0.74$) and 2.00 to 5.00 ($M = 3.29, SD = 0.55$). Respectively, 10.3% and 8.7% of parents and 6.9% and 12.9% of teachers reported at least borderline elevations for children's externalizing and internalizing problems. Child-reported adjustment problems correlated with parent and teacher report (r s ranged from .15 to .22, p s $< .05$) except for parent- and child-reported externalizing ($r = .09, p = .15$). Regression analyses controlling for sociocultural variables showed that child-reported conflict was associated with child-reported externalizing and internalizing scales (respectively, β s = 3.81 and 1.35, p s $< .001$).

Identifying Conflict Profiles: Latent Profile Analyses

Profiles of parent-rated conflict

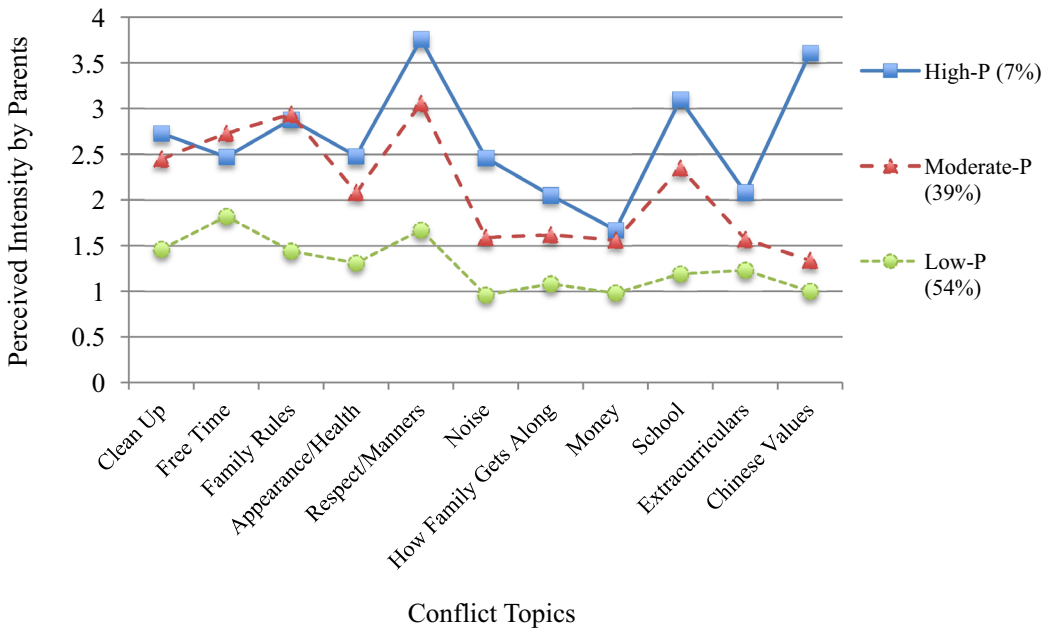
As shown in Table 1, although the four-profile model had the lowest AIC and adjusted BIC values and an entropy score that was closest to 1.00, the size of the fourth profile was too small to have meaningful value ($n = 7$). The three-profile model had the next best fit for the parent-rated conflict (Figure 1a). We identified a low conflict profile (Low-P, 54% of parents) that endorsed the lowest levels of conflict on all topics, a high conflict profile (High-P, 7%) that endorsed the highest intensity of conflict on the majority of topics, and a moderate conflict profile (Moderate-P, 39%) that endorsed more intense conflict on all topics relative to Low-P and less intense conflict on nine of the 11 topics relative to High-P. High-P rated Respect and Manners, Chinese Values, School, Family Rules, and Free Time as the most contentious topics; ratings fell in the "somewhat upsetting" to "upsetting" ranges. Moderate-P rated Respect and Manners, Family Rules, Free Time, Clean Up/Chores, and School as the most contentious; ratings fell in the "a little upsetting" to "somewhat upsetting" ranges. Low-P rated Free Time and Respect and Manners as the most contentious.

TABLE 1
Latent Profiles of Parent- and Child-Rated Conflict

	AIC	BIC	Adjusted BIC	Entropy	BLRT, p -value
Parent-rated					
1-Profile	8036.42	8112.90	8043.17	–	–
2-Profile	7760.34	7878.54	7770.77	0.80	–3996.21, $p < .001$
3-Profile	7660.02	7819.93	7674.13	0.82	–3846.17, $p < .001$
4-Profile	7618.45	7820.08	7636.24	0.85	–3784.01, $p < .001$
Child-rated					
1-Profile	8357.75	8434.23	8364.49	–	–
2-Profile	7982.77	8100.97	7993.20	0.84	–4156.87, $p < .001$
3-Profile	7947.88	8107.80	7961.99	0.81	–3846.17, $p < .001$
4-Profile	7877.32	8078.95	7895.11	0.89	–3927.94, $p < .001$
5-Profile	7854.72	8098.07	7876.19	0.91	–3880.66, $p < .001$

Note. For the parent-rated conflict, the model fit indices suggested that a four-profile model was most appropriate, but due to the small size of the fourth profile ($n = 7$), the three-profile model was chosen as the best fitting model. For the child-rated conflict, the model fit indices suggested that a five-profile model was most appropriate, but due to the small size of the fifth profile ($n = 6$), the four-profile model was chosen as the best fitting model. The identified three parent profiles and four child profiles are distinguished by ratings of distress across 12 conflict topics.

a



b

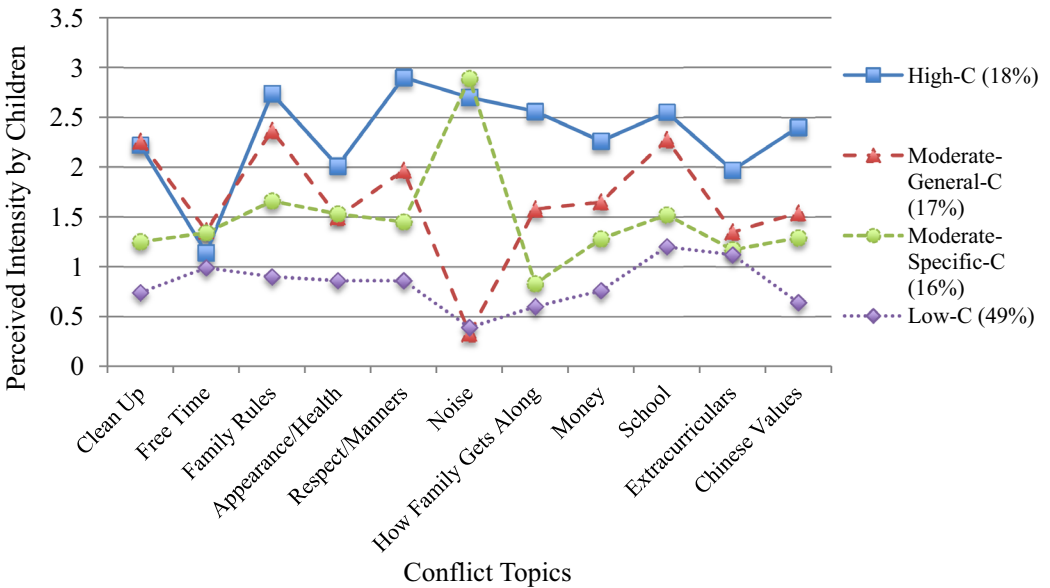


FIGURE 1. Latent Profile Analysis of Conflict Intensity by Parents' (a) and Children's (b) Ratings of Conflict Topics.

Profiles of child-rated conflict

As shown in Table 1, the five-profile model had the lowest AIC and adjusted BIC and the highest entropy, but with a small group size ($n = 6$) in one of the profiles. The four-profile model (Figure 1b) was thus chosen as the best fit. We identified a low conflict group

(Low-C, 49% of the children) that endorsed the lowest levels of conflict across all topics, a high conflict group (High-C, 18%) that endorsed the highest intensity for eight of the 11 topics (with the majority of topics falling in the “somewhat upsetting” range), and two groups (16% and 17%) that endorsed higher intensity on topics than Low-C, but lower intensity than High-C (with the majority of topics falling in the “a little upsetting” range). The two moderate conflict groups differed on topics of conflict: one group rated Noise as the most conflictual topic, and thus named Moderate-Specific-C to reflect the specific topic of Noise; the other group endorsed moderate conflict across most topics, and thus named Moderate-General-C.

Relations between Family Sociocultural Characteristics and Conflict Profiles

A Pearson’s chi-square test showed that parents’ and children’s conflict profiles were not significantly associated, $\chi^2(df = 6, N = 239) = 2.52, p = .87$. Multinomial logistic regressions were conducted using the low and moderate profiles as the reference groups. The sociocultural variables were entered simultaneously into each model, including parent- and child-reported cultural orientations and the interaction terms for parent–child cultural orientation gaps. Table 2 shows the results predicting parents’ profiles, and Table 3 shows those predicting children’s profiles. A positive coefficient indicates a higher likelihood of inclusion in the comparison profile than the reference profile, whereas a negative coefficient implies a lower likelihood.

For the parents’ profiles, High-P parents were more likely to be younger in age and more likely to have been in the United States for a longer length of time than Low-P parents ($\beta_s = -0.17$ and $0.12, p = .029$ and $.046$). High-P parents were more likely to have

TABLE 2

Multinomial Logistical Regression Predicting Contrasts Among Parents’ Conflict Profile Groups from the Demographic Variables

Independent variables	High versus low		Moderate versus low		High versus moderate	
	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a
Intercept	7.66	–	0.34	–	7.32	–
Child’s age	–0.56	0.57	–0.12	0.89	–0.44	0.64
Child’s sex	–0.61	0.55	–0.17	0.85	–0.44	0.64
Child’s generation status	1.63	5.12	–0.42	0.66	2.05*	7.76
SES	0.01	1.01	–0.13	0.88	0.15	1.16
Household density	–0.75	0.47	0.62**	1.86	–1.37*	0.26
Parent’s sex	1.19	3.29	–0.09	0.92	1.28	3.59
Parent’s age	–0.17*	0.84	–0.02	0.98	–0.15†	0.86
Parent’s length of time in the United States	0.12*	1.13	0.03	1.04	0.09	1.09
Parent’s Chinese orientation	0.18	1.20	–0.71†	0.49	0.89	2.43
Child’s Chinese Orientation	–0.09	0.92	–0.13	0.88	0.04	1.05
Parent’s US Orientation	–0.18	0.84	0.27	1.32	–0.45	0.64
Child’s US Orientation	0.40	1.50	0.35	1.42	0.06	1.06
Parent × Child US Orientation	0.13	1.14	–0.79	0.45	0.92	2.52
Parent × Child Chinese Orientation	2.36*	10.57	–0.09	0.92	2.45*	11.55

Note. ^aAdjusted OR = adjusted odds ratio, or the odds ratio adjusted for the effects of other predictors in the regression model.

† $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (significant results are bolded).

TABLE 3

Multinomial Logistical Regression Predicting Contrasts Among Children’s Conflict Profile Groups From the Demographic Variables

Independent variables	High versus low		Moderate-general versus low		Moderate-specific versus low	
	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a
Intercept	3.43	–	3.19	–	–0.33	–
Child’s age	0.16	1.17	–0.20	0.82	–0.22	0.81
Child’s sex	0.64	1.90	–0.16	0.86	0.06	1.07
Child’s generation status	0.11	1.12	–0.73	0.48	–0.12	0.89
SES	0.14	1.15	0.29	1.34	0.01	1.01
Household density	–0.09	0.92	0.05	1.06	0.23	1.26
Parent’s sex	–1.36**	0.26	–0.59	0.55	1.79	6.01
Parent’s age	–0.12*	0.89	–0.02	0.98	–0.02	0.98
Parent’s length of stay in the United States	–0.03	0.97	–0.08 [†]	0.92	–0.002	1.00
Parent’s Chinese Orientation	–0.91 [†]	0.40	–0.89 [†]	0.41	0.30	1.35
Child’s Chinese Orientation	0.01	1.01	0.53	1.70	–0.10	0.90
Parent’s U.S. Orientation	–0.38	0.68	–0.49	0.61	–0.18	0.84
Child’s U.S. Orientation	0.13	1.14	–0.28	0.75	0.06	1.06
Parent × Child United States	–0.53	0.59	0.17	1.18	–0.32	0.73
Parent × Child Chinese	–0.32	0.73	–0.42	0.66	0.53	1.71

Independent variables	High versus moderate-specific		Moderate-general versus moderate-specific		High versus moderate-general	
	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a	B	Adj. OR ^a
Intercept	3.76	–	3.51	–	0.24	–
Child’s age	0.37	1.45	0.01	1.02	0.36	1.43
Child’s sex	0.58	1.78	–0.22	0.80	0.80	2.22
Child’s generation status	0.23	1.26	–0.61	0.54	0.84	2.32
SES	0.13	1.14	0.28	1.33	–0.15	0.86
Household density	–0.32	0.73	–0.18	0.84	–0.14	0.87
Parent’s sex	–3.15**	0.04	–2.38*	0.09	–0.77	0.47
Parent’s age	–0.09	0.91	0.003	1.00	–0.10 [†]	0.91
Parent’s length of stay in the United States	–0.03	0.97	–0.08	0.92	0.05	1.05
Parent’s Chinese Orientation	–1.20 [†]	0.30	–1.19 [†]	0.31	–0.02	0.98
Child’s Chinese Orientation	0.11	1.11	0.63	1.87	–0.52	0.59
Parent’s U.S. Orientation	–0.21	0.81	–0.31	0.73	0.11	1.11
Child’s U.S. Orientation	0.07	1.07	–0.34	0.71	0.42	1.52
Parent × Child United States	–0.21	0.81	0.48	1.62	–0.70	0.50
Parent × Child Chinese	–0.85	0.43	–0.95	0.39	0.10	1.10

Note. ^aAdjusted OR = adjusted odds ratio, or the odds ratio adjusted for effects of other predictors in the regression mode.

[†] $p < .1$; * $p < .05$. (significant results are bolded)

2nd-generation children than Moderate-P ($\beta = 2.05, p = .047$). Compared to Low-P and High-P, Moderate-P parents were more likely to come from homes with higher density ($\beta_s = 0.62$ and $-1.37, ps = .006$ and $.029$, respectively). Despite significant comparisons found for parent–child Chinese orientation gap, the simple slopes were not significant upon post hoc investigation.

For the children's profiles, compared to Low-C and Moderate-Specific-C, High-C parents were more likely to be mothers than fathers (β s = -1.36 and -3.15 , p s = $.007$ and $.005$, respectively). Similar to the parents' profiles, High-C parents were also younger in age than Low-C parents ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = .011$). Moderate-General-C parents were also more likely than Moderate-Specific-C parents to be mothers than fathers (β s = -2.38 , p s = $.036$).

Several similar comparisons on Chinese orientation across parents' and children's profiles trended toward significance. Moderate-P reported lower Chinese orientation than Low-P ($\beta = -0.71$, $p = .061$). Compared to Low-C and Moderate-Specific-C, High-C also reported lower Chinese orientation (β s = -0.91 and -1.20 , p s = $.065$ and $.059$, respectively).

Relations between Conflict Profiles and Children's Psychological Adjustment

As shown in Table 4, after adjusting for alpha errors using the Tukey post hoc tests, significant differences were found among the conflict profiles in measures of children's adjustment. For parents' profiles, Moderate-P had significantly higher parent-reported externalizing and internalizing behaviors (respectively, 16.6% and 13.8% of the children met borderline elevations) compared to Low-P (respectively, 1.5% and 2.8%). High-P had higher teacher-reported externalizing behaviors (11.9% met borderline elevations) compared to Low-P (1.2%). For children's profiles, Moderate-Specific-C and High-C profiles had higher child-reported externalizing and internalizing problems than Low-C.

DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, this was the first study to examine both the intensity and topics of conflict perceived by Chinese American parents and their school-age children. LPA identified different sets of profiles for parent- and child-rated conflict topics, which were independent of each other. Parents' and children's conflict profiles were differentially associated with sociocultural factors, and children's adjustment and child-reported adjustment problems had weak correlations with parent and teacher reports. These findings are in line with previous research demonstrating discrepancies in parents' and children's perception of overall levels of conflict, with parents often reporting greater levels of conflict than children (e.g., Ehrlich et al., 2011), discrepancies in parent's and youth's endorsement of conflict topics (De Los Reyes et al., 2013), and discrepancies in parent's and offspring's report of offspring mental health outcomes (Lui, 2015). Children's conflict ratings were positively related to their adjustment issues controlling for other variables, supporting the notion that parent-child conflict may be more salient for the mental health outcomes of Chinese American youth and parents may be unaware of the extent to which conflict impacts their children's functioning (Chung et al., 2009; Lui, 2015). Furthermore, when aggregating conflict intensity means across all topics, it appeared as though the families in our sample experienced relatively low levels of conflict. LPA demonstrated, however, that a subset of parents and children found the conflict to be moderately to highly intense for specific topics. These findings highlight the value in assessing conflict from both parents' and children's perspectives while using a multidimensional approach among immigrant families.

For parents, respect and manners was among the most contentious topics for all three groups, which was consistent with our hypotheses regarding Chinese cultural values. Respect and manners (which includes subtopics such as lying, arguing and talking back to the parent, and having bad behavior or attitude) taps the culturally salient values of 信 (trustworthiness), 孝 (filial piety), 礼 (politeness), and 仁 (benevolence) (see Kulich &

TABLE 4

Analysis of Covariance Predicting Children's Adjustment Outcomes From Parents' and Children's Conflict Profiles

Parents' conflict profiles	Low-P (n = 128)		Moderate-P (n = 94)		High-P (n = 17)		———		F value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Externalizing behaviors									
Parent report	43.15 ^A	7.72	50.74 ^B	9.50	48.38 ^{AB}	10.02	—	—	17.70***
Teacher report	46.04 ^A	6.15	47.91 ^{AB}	6.91	49.80 ^B	8.65	—	—	2.69[†]
Child report	8.74	5.44	9.05	5.16	11.56	6.91	—	—	2.84 [†]
Internalizing behaviors									
Parent report	43.54 ^A	8.63	48.07 ^B	10.90	45.69 ^{AB}	9.43	—	—	4.80**
Teacher report	48.39	9.26	46.78	9.32	46.67	7.66	—	—	1.52
Child report	4.81	2.72	4.74	2.99	6.25	2.93	—	—	2.93 [†]

Children's conflict profiles	Low-C (n = 116)		Moderate-Specific-C (n = 39)		Moderate-General-C (n = 40)		High-C (n = 44)		F value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Externalizing behaviors									
Parent report	45.85	9.46	46.16	9.61	47.70	10.05	48.08	8.38	0.79
Teacher report	46.57	6.47	49.03	7.81	45.97	6.60	47.76	6.50	1.56
Child report	6.90 ^A	4.96	10.42 ^{BC}	5.78	9.70 ^B	4.83	12.98 ^C	4.35	16.47***
Internalizing behaviors									
Parent report	45.18	9.20	45.59	10.60	45.30	10.16	46.60	9.20	1.47
Teacher report	47.70	8.73	46.26	9.15	51.00	10.03	45.57	8.98	2.28
Child report	4.09 ^A	2.71	5.76 ^B	3.11	5.33 ^{AB}	2.78	5.85 ^B	2.59	6.50***

Note. Parent and teacher report of externalizing and internalizing behaviors are represented by *T*-scores; *T*-scores ≥ 60 (84th percentile and above) indicate borderline clinical elevations. Child report of externalizing and internalizing behaviors is represented by raw scores. Controlling for the demographic variables child's sex, generation status, and age, household SES and density, parent's sex, age and length of stay in the United States, and parent and child's cultural orientations (United States and Chinese).

^{A, B, C} = Tukey post hoc contrasts with * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. (significant results are bolded)

Zhang, 2010), as well as the Chinese parenting ideology of 管教 (training), which emphasizes parents' responsibilities to instill obedience and proper conduct in the child (Chao, 1994). School was also among the most contentious topics, which was consistent with previous cross-cultural findings on parent-adolescent conflict between Hong Kong and European American families (Yau & Smetana, 1996). The low conflict group rated low levels of conflict across all topics, suggesting significant heterogeneity in the everyday issues that Chinese American immigrant parents perceive as the most salient.

Contrary to our hypotheses, parents who endorsed low conflict had been in the United States for a shorter amount of time and trended toward higher Chinese orientation. These findings indicate that more recent immigrants are more likely to ascribe to Chinese cultural valuing of family harmony and filial piety, in which children are expected to respect and support their parents (e.g., Kulich & Zhang, 2010). These families may have children who are also new to the United States and whose cultural orientations have not yet differentiated from their parents', reducing the likelihood of having intense conflict (Lui, 2015). Indeed, we found that parents who endorsed high conflict were more likely to have second-generation children. Similar to Dixon et al. (2008), we found that younger parents

endorsed higher conflict. This may reflect a higher amount of anxiety due to fewer resources (Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011) and lower empathic understanding for their children found in younger parents (Black & Leszczynsk, 2013).

Our findings are generally consistent with the view that high family conflict is a risk factor for child externalizing behaviors in both the home and school contexts, whereas the impact of moderate levels of conflict may only be salient at home. Our findings indicated, however, that even moderate levels of conflict put children at greater risk for psychopathology in Chinese immigrant families. Parents who endorsed moderate conflict lived in homes with higher density (i.e., fewer bedrooms per person), which was a better predictor of family conflict than the typical SES indexes (e.g., income, parental education) in our sample of Chinese immigrant families, potentially due to the high costs of living of the target geographic region. Approximately one-third of our sample lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates between 20% and higher and the household income of the majority of our sample fell well below the median income of the region (Guzman, 2019). Economic hardship has long been established as a risk factor for parental distress, which in turn, along with neighborhood problems, precipitates parent–child conflict and youth maladjustment (e.g., Eamon, 2002). The stressors related to household crowding and noises may evoke or exacerbate negative parent–child interactions via parental distress (e.g., Zvara et al., 2014). Indeed, parents in our sample endorsed more intense conflict than their children, potentially reflecting the strain that economic hardship places on their own psychological health. In line with ecological models of development (see Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017 for a review), the cumulative psychosocial and environmental risk appeared to adversely impact children’s well-being. This seemed to be especially true for those without the advantage of family adherence to heritage culture mitigating this association.

The moderate conflict group was notably also characterized by lower parental Chinese orientation. Our findings lend some support to the growing body of literature that suggests that maintenance of heritage culture is beneficial for psychosocial adjustment and family life satisfaction among immigrants (e.g., Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Telzer, Yuen, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2016). Heritage culture maintenance, for example, was associated with Chinese American immigrant parents’ use of authoritative/supportive parenting, which conferred benefits for children’s adjustment (Chen et al., 2014). Future research should test the mediation hypothesis (cumulative psychosocial and environmental stressors → conflict → child behavior problems) and examine the mechanism by which immigrant parents’ heritage culture maintenance may be protective for their children’s psychosocial outcomes.

The children’s report of conflict appeared to vary more by topics than parents’ ratings: While the high conflict group rated respect and manners and family rules as the most contentious similar to parents’ endorsements, one moderate group rated noise as the most intense topic, and the other moderate group and low group rated school as one of the most conflictual topics. Children in Chinese immigrant families thus seem to be attending to various topics of conflict, including those related to culturally salient values (e.g., respect and manners) and those related to environmentally salient issues (e.g., household noise). Children were more likely to endorse overall higher conflict with their mothers than fathers, potentially because mothers in Chinese families are more likely to take on child-rearing duties and spend more time with their children (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Similar to the parents’ report, children who endorsed higher levels of conflict were more likely to have parents who were younger in age and had lower Chinese orientation. Our findings also indicate heightened risk for children who perceive overall intense conflict with parents as well as for those struggling with specific topics.

Contrary to our hypotheses, parent–child cultural orientation gaps were not significant predictors of conflict. This may be due to our measurement of culture orientation gaps in behavioral domains, namely the use of language, exposure to media, and choice of friends. Past research has shown that acculturation gaps measured as *both* behavior and value differences show the strongest links to parent–offspring conflict, and of the two, value discrepancies may explain greater variance in conflict (Lui, 2015). Our study found that respect and manners was the most contentious topic for all parent groups, whereas the children found several topics to be the most contentious. Given that the majority of parents were first-generation and children were second-generation, the acculturation gap–distress model and value discrepancies may be better conceptualized by how parents and their children differentially perceive as what is most salient to their daily lives than as adherence to particular behaviors.

Limitations, Conclusions, and Implications

Several limitations and future steps warrant discussion. *First*, the cross-sectional design did not allow us to test hypotheses on causal relations among variables. The relations between children’s behavior problems and family conflict can be transactional (Burt et al., 2005; Marmorstein, & Iacono, 2004). Longitudinal research is needed to disentangle the direction of these relations. *Second*, our sample was recruited from a metropolitan area with a relatively dense Asian immigrant population. Future research should examine whether our findings generalize to immigrant populations residing in geographic regions with different cultural and socioeconomic composition and pay close attention to the impacts of neighborhood conditions, exposure to discrimination, and immigration experience, which can meaningfully influence parent–child conflict via context-induced stress or exposure to immigration trauma. *Third*, because Asian children may enter puberty later than Caucasian children (Bhudhikanok et al., 1996), we did not assess for puberty in this sample, which future research should consider (Marceau et al., 2015). *Fourth*, a more balanced sample of mothers and fathers can benefit the examination of the impact of father–child conflict on children’s adjustment (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). This research should consider parent–child gender match/mismatch, which may influence parent–child interactions (van Polanen, Colonesi, Fukkink, & Tavecchio, 2017). *Fifth*, the same informants (i.e., parent, child) who were used to identify the latent profiles also reported on the criterion variables, leading to common method variance among independent and dependent variables. Future research should incorporate mixed methods such as observer-rated data. *Finally*, although we adapted the widely used Issues Checklist measure, the checklist format may not thoroughly capture the rich content of parent–child conflict in immigrant families. Multimethod research (e.g., behavioral observations, experience sampling method) can examine the process and dynamics of parent–child conflict in immigrant families.

The study has several implications for clinicians working with Asian immigrant families. *First*, our results highlight the importance of assessing topics of family conflict from both parents’ and children’s perspectives. Disagreement between family members on the targets of therapy may pose a risk for engagement in therapy (De Los Reyes et al., 2013), which may be especially relevant for Asian immigrant families, a group at heightened risk of low therapeutic engagement (Lau, Fung, & Yung, 2010). *Second*, when assessing family sociocultural context for immigrant families, clinicians should move beyond the commonly used socioeconomic variables (e.g., income, education) and consider heritage cultural maintenance, household density, and other living conditions (e.g., noise). *Third*, the associations found between school-aged children’s perception of conflict and endorsement of behavioral problems suggest that clinicians should assess children’s perception of conflict

during the elementary school period. When working with Chinese immigrant families, clinicians should be mindful of the heterogeneity in the everyday issues that different family members perceive. Clinicians should also consider the dialectic notion that though ascribing to traditional values of filial piety and family harmony may create barriers to the explicit discussion of conflict, heritage culture maintenance can play an important role in children's well-being. For example, clinicians may find it effective to utilize contextual communication (e.g., body language, silence, and pauses) in family therapy sessions with Chinese immigrant families (Qingxue, 2003). Finally, clinicians can also incorporate interventions that teach positive communication skills between parents and children and provide psychoeducation about the cumulative adverse impact of psychosocial and environmental stressors on youth adjustment.

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