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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Gendered Processes of Adaptation: Understanding Parent–Child Relations in Chinese Immigrant Families

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Abstract Drawing on 5-year longitudinal interview data on 72 Chinese immigrant children and their parents in the U.S., this paper addresses the following research question: How does Chinese immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation after migration influence their relations with their children? Guided by grounded theory, data analyses show that parental adaptation difficulty, particularly among fathers, influences their physical and psychological presence in their children's lives. This, combined with parents' exceedingly high academic expectations, could result in estranged parent–child relations in families. This paper also illustrates how parental efforts to be good *providers* for their children and children's hope for parents as a *source of emotional support* can lead to parent–child alienation in immigrant families.

Keywords Immigrant family · Gender · Parent–child relations · Immigrant adaptation

Introduction

Children from immigrant families are the fastest growing sector of the U.S. child population. By 2040, children of immigrants are projected to reach 30% of the nation's school age population (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Understanding the adaptation of immigrant children and their families has become a pressing issue, with widespread implications for researchers and practitioners. The last few decades have witnessed growing scholarly attention to immigrant families (e.g., Booth et al. 1997). In particular, researchers have noted the gendered process of parental adaptation in the new culture and gender role shifts after migration (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999). Gender offers an important conceptual lens for examining immigrant adaptation. Research on gendered processes of parental adaptation and role shifts offers additional insights into the challenges confronting immigrant families and has important implications for parent–child relations (Dion and Dion 2001). However, little research has been conducted to understand how these gendered processes influence parent–child relations in recently arrived immigrant families. Drawing on longitudinal interview data collected on 72 Chinese immigrant children and their parents, this paper aims to address the following research question: How does Chinese immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation after migration influence their relations with their children? More specifically: How does immigrant fathers' and mothers' stress at work influence their relations with their children? How does immigrant parents' job schedule influence the time they spend with their children? And how do immigrant parents' stress and adaptation influence their expectations for their children?

Findings from this paper contribute to current research by illustrating how challenges in immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation can lead to growing alienation in their relations with their children. In particular, the findings highlight the important distinction between immigrant parents' emphasis of their role *as provider* for their children and the children's need for *emotionally supportive* parents. In most cases, parents chose to immigrate to provide better educational opportunities for their children. After migration, parents tended to focus their attention on working exceptionally long hours to provide for their children.

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However, during the time of transition, what children needed most was warm, emotionally engaged and supportive parents. This conflict often resulted in estranged father–child and mother–child relations at home. Findings from this study also demonstrate differences in the frames of reference held by immigrant mothers, fathers, and children. The resulting gap between expectations based on past experiences and current realities in a new cultural context contributed to emotional chasms at home. Examining these issues is important because family provides a critical context for the healthy development of immigrant children in the new land.

In the next section, I review the literature on immigrant families and children's adaptation and gender role changes in immigrant families. Understanding how immigration may change family dynamics will help shed light on challenges facing Chinese parents and their children, especially in negotiating their relations after migration. In addition, exploring how gender roles shift after migration can help us understand the additional challenges facing immigrant fathers and mothers in their adaptation, and how these challenges may exacerbate parent–child relations in Chinese immigrant families.

Immigrant Families and Children's Adaptation

One of the most important developmental contexts for children is the family. Decades of research have suggested a link between the family context and child adjustment (e.g., Fuligni 1998; Olson et al. 1983). For immigrant children, family plays a particularly important role in their adaptation (Athey and Ahearn 1991). In contrast to earlier theories that suggest losing ethnic language, culture, and identity is key to successful immigrant assimilation (e.g., Park 1914), a dominant theme in current research shows that preserving parental culture, language, and ties to the ethnic community can facilitate upward social mobility in children of immigrants (Kurtz-Costes and Pungello 2000; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Family, as "a primary agency in the immigrant saga" (Gil and Vega 1996, p. 436), is instrumental in helping children to overcome barriers in the new society, for example, racism and harsh urban school and neighborhood environments (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In particular, research has shown that good family relations, parental monitoring, and family harmony have positive impacts on immigrant children's educational adaptation and psychosocial adjustment (Lee and Chen 2000).

Immigrant families, however, are not just a "haven in a heartless world but a place where conflict and negotiations also take place" (Foner 1997, p. 961). Immigration often brings changes to familial roles and tends to destabilize family relations over time. It often requires a family to "walk a delicate tightrope" (Kibria 1993) and adopt new patterns of interaction and coping that may conflict with well-established patterns of the homeland (Garcia-Coll and Magnuson 1997). In Sluzki's (1979) classic model of immigrant family adaptation, immigrant families tend to experience a period of decompensation or crisis after a relatively short period of euphoria and overcompensation motivated by the need to survive and adapt in a new land. Decompensation is a period when "the balance is delicate and difficult to each [family member]. The whole collective's task is complex, painful, and unavoidable" (p. 384). Many family rules and values that were effective in countries of origin may be maladaptive or inapplicable in the new culture.

Clashes between parents and children as a result of the acculturation gap (Qin 2006) or dissonant acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) become a salient issue in most families. After migration, children often pick up English and absorb the new culture at a faster speed at school than their parents, who are often more removed from the American culture. This is especially the case if immigrant parents work with co-ethnics—as is typical for many new immigrants (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Often children serve as their parents' bridge to the new culture. In some families, role reversal occurs, where children become their parents' parents. This can cause significant stress for families that used to operate on parental authority and strict generational boundaries (Garcia-Coll and Magnuson 1997). Dissonance acculturation and role reversal also undercut parental authority and create conflicts at home. This can lead to higher depression rates and lower self-esteem for children, which in turn is likely to have a negative impact on children's academic performance (Aldwin and Greenberger 1987). Immigrant parent–child conflicts may become particularly acute during adolescence when an adolescent's yearning for independence is combined with acculturation into the mainstream American value of individualism (Buki et al. 2003). The above review suggests that the process of migration itself is likely to bring many challenges to parent–adolescent relations in Chinese immigrant families. How may these dynamics differ by gender? In particular, how may gendered processes of immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation influence their relations with their children?

Gender Role Changes and Immigrant Family Dynamics

As one of the most fundamental constituents of a society's symbolic system (Prieur 2002) as well as of an individual's self (Dion and Dion 2001), gender has been largely ignored in early immigration research. Earlier reach focused heavily on the experiences of adult men. In fact, it was not until the 1980s that scholars began to examine the experiences of immigrant women (Simon and Brettell 1986). Only in the

1990s did immigration researchers begin to broaden their focus to examine gender and its effect on immigrant men and women's adaptation (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999). Gender offers an important conceptual lens for examining the continuities and discontinuities of cultural norms and values after migration. Conditions associated with immigration and settlement in the receiving society may challenge expectations about gender-related roles, resulting in the renegotiation of these roles in immigrant families (Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006).

In a majority of post-1965 Asian and Latino immigrant communities, men tended to be the breadwinner and dominate the household before immigration (Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006). In Chinese immigrant communities, for example, a preponderance of evidence suggests that women were traditionally relegated to a more subordinate position in a highly male-dominant family structure (Lee 1997). In parenting, *yan fu ci mu* (stern father, nurturing mother) has been the traditional model. Fathers tend to play the role of the stern disciplinarian while mothers tend to be affectionate caretakers (Parke et al. 2005). In the last century, China has gone through dramatic political and economic transformations that herald cultural and social changes, including gender roles (Fong 2002). In fact, since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, women have acquired greater gender parity with men. This can largely be accredited to the Communist Party's efforts to improve gender equality under the well-known political slogan "women can also shoulder half of the sky" (Kwon 2000). In contemporary Chinese society, women's increased earning power leads to their increased decision-making power at home, elevated social status, and more paternal childcare (Sheng 2005; Song 2004). However, discrimination against women remains and labor division at home is still largely gender-based, with women taking on much more household and childcare responsibilities (Sheng 2005). Most Chinese women today still strive to be a "virtuous wife and good mother" (*xian qi liang mu*). However, research shows that the urban–rural divide is particularly salient, with fathers in urban areas more involved in child care and education than those in rural areas (Song 2004).

After migration, however, there is abundant research documenting immigrant women's general increasing participation in the labor market (Mahdi 1999). This is often driven by the demands of settlement in the receiving society—the need for both spouses to be employed to make ends meet (Dion and Dion 2001). Further, research shows that after migration, niches and mobility paths differ significantly for immigrant men and women; women are more likely than men to be upwardly mobile (Min 2001; Pessar 2002). This pattern has been noted in many post-1965 Latino and Asian immigrant populations who face similar realities in the U.S. labor market. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1999) research of Mexican Americans found that in the labor market, there are more service type jobs available. Mexican immigrant women are more likely than men to find jobs because they possess "soft skills" that the service type positions value. Immigrant men, in general, tend to have a harder time transferring their skills in the job market after migration. Suárez-Orozco (2001) pointed out that immigrant women tend to work in places where they have more contact with the mainstream and adapt more quickly than men.

Research of post-1965 immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds shows that women's advantage in the labor market after migration has important implications for gender roles at home. Women's employment and contribution to household income tend to promote greater gender parity within immigrant households (Debiaggi 2001; Kwon 2005). After migration, women tend to experience elevated status while their husbands tend to experience a decline in status, for example, in control of finances or in making important decisions at home (Debiaggi 2001; Foner 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999). Men also tend to take on more household responsibilities after migration. For example, in her research with Dominican immigrant families, Pessar (2002) found that women were able to use their wage earnings as leverage to obtain assistance from husbands in housework, which was not typically done by Dominican males back home. Women's elevated status both at work and at home often lead to their relatively high levels of life satisfaction. As a result, while men usually express a desire to return to their country of origin, women tend to favor staying because they are likely to experience immigration as liberating. However, research has also documented the negative impacts of transformations of gender roles on family relations between men and women. For example, Min's (2001) study of Korean immigrant families found increasing marital conflicts and tensions due to the discrepancy between women's increased economic role and the persistence of their husbands' traditional patriarchal ideology. Either in positive or negative ways, gender roles do shift after migration, both in the labor market and at home.

While much research has been done to understand how gender roles shift in immigrant families and how these shifts influence husband and wife dynamics, limited research has been conducted to understand how shifting gender roles may impact immigrant fathers' and mothers' relations with their children. The well-being of immigrant parents influences their ability to monitor and support their children after migration (Suárez-Orozco 2001). The challenges immigrant fathers and mothers face in their own adaptation are likely to negatively impact their relationship with their children. For example, overworked, stressed out, or discontent fathers may have less emotional capacity to monitor or support their children. They may also transfer their stress to their children. These dynamics in turn are likely to negatively influence their children's developmental outcomes. Drawing on parent and student interview data collected in the Longitudinal Immigrant Adaptation Study (LISA) data, this paper examines how Chinese immigrant fathers' and mothers' adaptation affects their relationship with their children.

Method

This study is embedded in the LISA study co-directed by Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco. The LISA study, which started in 1997, was designed to understand recently arrived immigrant children's academic engagement and psychosocial adaptation over time. The sample consists of 411 recently arrived immigrant students from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. The students attended public schools in the Boston and San Francisco areas.

Sample

Of the 80 Chinese students, eight students dropped out for different reasons (e.g., moving away) over the course of 5 years. There were no significant differences between these eight students and the remaining 72 students included in this study in terms of age, length of time in the U.S., or family socioeconomic backgrounds. All the Chinese participants were recruited by research assistants in the Boston area guided by the following criteria: age (between 9 and 14) and recency of immigration (have spent at least two-thirds of their lives in the country of origin). The sample in this study consists of 72 students (63% girls and 37% boys) with a mean age of 12. The majority of the students' families (77%) came from Mainland China; the rest were from Hong Kong and Macau. About a quarter of the parents had post-secondary education. The other three quarters of parents had a high school education or less. Most parents (about 85%) worked in service-type jobs while others (about 15%) worked as professionals. Mothers were more likely to be unemployed at the time of the final year interview than were fathers (19% vs. 6%). More fathers worked in the restaurant business than mothers (55% vs. 23%).

Procedure

There is a growing consensus among researchers that mixed method designs, triangulating data, and embedding emerging findings into an ecological framework are essential in cross-cultural child-development research (Hughes et al. 1993; Branch 1999). The LISA study took an interdisciplinary, longitudinal, and comparative approach, employing five major data collection strategies: (1) ethnographic observations, (2) structured interviews of students, school personnel, and parents, (3) psychosocial measures, (4) standardized achievement assessments appropriate for English Language Learners, and (5) academic records. The data were collected during a 5-year period from school year 1997–1998 to 2001–2002. Data for this study came from the first-, second-, and final-year student interviews and first- and final-year parent interviews. In these interviews, we asked questions regarding family immigration history, socioeconomic background, parental adaptation after migration, and family relations (e.g., changes in parent–child relations after immigration, communication between parents and children, and time parents and children spend together). A team of trained researchers, including the author, conducted the interviews. Nearly all parent interviews were conducted with one parent (one of five with fathers and four of five with mothers). The participants chose the language in which they wished to be interviewed. Nearly all the parent interviews were conducted in Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese). Student interviews were in English, Mandarin, or Cantonese. All interviews were taped and translated into English (if conducted in other languages).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by grounded theory, "a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 24). After all the responses to family-related, open-ended questions were transcribed, they were indexed into one master word document organized by questions, marked by student and parent ID number as well as the year when the interview was conducted. The first step of data analysis was reading through this transcribed data and writing down notes and memos on the main themes. Next, data were uploaded onto Atlas-Ti, a qualitative data analysis software and a process of "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1990) was used to generate themes from the data. The purpose of coding is to "fracture" (Strauss and Corbin 1990) the data in order to rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories. This process aids in the development of theoretical concepts (Maxwell 1996). The codes were developed inductively from existing theories and by the researcher during the analysis, paying special attention to gender dynamics when possible (e.g., "Father: Downward Mobility," "Mother: Perceived Discrimination," and "Parental Lack of Economic Security";

Maxwell 1996). Next, "axial coding," was conducted, i.e., grouping the codes and concepts into higher level conceptual categories, which deepens the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990). For example, codes such as "Father: Downward Mobility," "Father: Perceived Discrimination," and "Father: Lack of Economic Security" were grouped into the category of "Father Adaptation Difficulty." Next, selected categories, codes and linked quotations were indexed into a number of matrices arranged by theme (e.g., "Parental Adaptation Difficulties" "Parent–Child Relational Change after Migration" "Parental Stress and Impact on Children"). This served the dual function of reducing the data and displaying the analyses in a format that clearly shows each theme (Miles and Huberman 1994). To understand the contextual factors around parental adaptation and parent–child relations, the researcher also considered the history of migration and family socioeconomic backgrounds before and after migration in each family and constructed a number of mini-case studies (Maxwell 1996) of families whose experiences are representative of many other families from similar backgrounds.

Trustworthiness of the Data

In this study, the quality and accuracy of the data were strengthened by prolonged engagement and triangulation of data collection with the children and their parents. Three interviews related to family dynamics were conducted with the children and two interviews were conducted with the parents over the course of 5 years. This approach allowed for a deep and complex understanding of family dynamics from different perspectives in these families over time. Steps were also taken to help minimize potential researcher bias. As a first-generation Chinese immigrant woman speaking fluent English and working in a U.S. university, I have not experienced many of the challenges described by the working-class parents in the study. This may lead me to overemphasize these challenges and overlook the strength and resilience in some families. To monitor researcher bias and check for reliability of the codes and categories, a trained qualitative researcher helped code about one third of the data using Atlas-Ti independently. Percent agreement was used to assess inter-coder reliability. More specifically, the coded text and assigned codes were cross-checked individually against those developed by the author. While there were some codes that were identical (e.g., "High Parental Expectation"), the majority of the codes were similar, i.e., using slightly different words to connote the same idea (e.g., "Mother: Adaptation Difficulty" vs. "Mother: Difficulty in Adjustment after Migration" or "Father: Downward Mobility" vs. "Father: Decline in Job Status"). Both of these types of codes were considered consistent in the calculations. Based on this criterion, about 85% of the codes were considered consistent. Discrepancies were discussed in a follow-up meeting, which helped redefine the codes and categories.

Results

In the next section, I first present the observed trend of growing alienation in the majority of the Chinese immigrant families over the 5-year period. Next, I focus on one set of immigration-induced factors—the impact of parental adaptation—that may contribute to alienation in some of these families. More specifically, I discuss gender role shifts after migration and the gendered process of parental adaptation after migration. I also explore how parental adaptation and work schedules influence parent–child dynamics in terms of (1) generational transference of stress, (2) parental absence, and (3) academic pressure.

Growing Alienation in Chinese Immigrant Families

Overall, analyses of parent and student interviews over the 5-year period show changes taking place in Chinese immigrant families over time. In the first year interviews, 90% of Chinese parents and children reported good relations before immigration, characterized by regular communication and emotional closeness. By the end of the LISA study, however, 55% of the Chinese parents and 35% of students interviewed mentioned relational problems and growing estrangement between parents and children at home. For example, Qing, a 15-year-old girl who had been in the U.S. for 7 years, described her relations with her parents as "good" in the first year interview. However, she reported in her final interview, "I just don't like to talk to them. I don't want them to come bother me." Sixteen-year-old Carl, who reported feeling "very close" to his parents in the second year interview, said in the final year interview:

> Now I don't want to go home....Before, when we were in Hong Kong, sometimes we sat down and talked. It happened more often in Hong Kong than in here. [Here in the U.S.] we have to work. Even if we have time to talk, I mostly stay in my room. When I get home I stay in my room to play with the computer, listen to the music, sleep, whatever. I just can't communicate with my parents (sigh). I don't know what to say.

Similarly, in the final year parent interview, parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds also voiced a similar concern that their relations with their children had become more strained. Mr. Lai, for example, who described his relationship with his only son as "very close" in the first year interview, said with much heartache in the final interview:

> Now he doesn't want to communicate with us—many important or deep things, like values, how a person should live his life, etc. he doesn't want to talk to us about.... He used to be little and that was fine, but now there is just not that much we can discuss, even like things and people in school, he doesn't want to talk and we do not know.

Thus, both parent and student interviews reveal a process of growing alienation occurring in Chinese immigrant families over time, characterized by structural, attitudinal, and behavioral changes. In terms of structure, parents and children spent less time together and had fewer interactions over time. Parents and children increasingly led separate lives. In terms of attitudes, children became more reluctant to communicate with their parents or felt their parents did not care about them. In terms of behavior, parents and children had more conflicts and less meaningful communication.

Growing alienation was especially difficult for parents who gave up a familiar life in their home country and immigrated to the U.S. for their children's education. During interviews, about 65% of the parents mentioned that they chose to immigrate to the U.S. with their children because of better educational and job opportunities here compared to those in China. For example, Mr. Guo from Fujian province reflected on his decision to come to the U.S.:

> In China, my children might or might not be able to attend college, especially because in our Fujian providence, the standards for the entrance exam are especially high. Acceptance rate is very, very low because there are very few schools....The United States give very good education.

Besides higher opportunities to attend college, another draw for parents was that the U.S. also offers more affordable quality education before college. As Mrs. Lin commented:

> Education is free from pre-school to high school here. This is the good thing about America. In China parents have to work hard to make money for their children's education since their children were born. Needless to say, education in China is all about money (if you have money you children can get education; if you do not have money, you children cannot go to school). Before we came, my daughter was in 4th grade. We had to pay a huge sum of money for her first three years of schooling in China. Both of us had to work during the day, therefore, we had to hire someone to take care of her. All tuitions and child care fees for one month summed up to be the equivalent of my monthly salary. We only had $500 per month. It was very little. Therefore, education is better in the US. It's free here.

While public education is supposed to be free till high school in China, the quality of education varies so much and competition is so fierce that parents feel pressured to pay extra money to get their children into the best schools they can afford. The fees in public schools are also rising in recent years, putting additional pressure on working parents. Thus, it was not uncommon for parents to give up their professional jobs and familiar living environments to start a new life in a strange land, all for their children's future.

However, after migration, many found themselves estranged from their children. So why did parents and children grow more alienated over time? In a previous paper, I elaborated on three general categories of factors that contribute to growing alienation in Chinese immigrant families: developmental, immigration-induced, and cultural reasons (see Qin 2006). During the course of the study, on average student grew from 12 to 16 years old. Developmentally, children growing older is an important factor contributing to parents' decreasing involvement in their child's lives and to children's reluctance to communicate with their parents. However, the age of the children alone does not account for all the changes that occurred in Chinese immigrant families in the study. A host of immigration-induced factors (e.g., parent–child separation, parents' increasing work demand after migration, and language barriers) also exacerbate parent–child relations. Finally, clashes between immigrant native culture and the U.S. culture concerning education and parent–child dynamics can also lead to alienation in immigrant families (see Qin 2006).

In this paper, I focus on one important immigration-induced factor, parental adaptation, and examine its impact on parent–child dynamics. I pay special attention to immigrant parents' gender roles in describing the experiences of the families.

Immigrant Fathers and Mothers: Gender Roles before Migration

Findings from this study regarding gender roles at home showed gender differences in childcare before migration—mothers spent more time taking care of their children than fathers. This was more salient in families from rural areas than in families from urban areas. In the families from urban areas, the great majority of women worked outside the home alongside their husbands. In these families, both parents were involved in their children's upbringing. Although mothers were likely to spend more time taking care of the children's daily needs and provided more emotional support, fathers tended to be very involved in their children's education. In urban families, parental involvement was driven by the high expectations for the only child allowed by the government's "one child" policy. In the Wan family from Beijing, for example, the father was a university professor and the mother was a doctor. The father was as involved as the mother in trying to make sure their only son (Yang) would have the best education possible. They both spent time helping him with his schoolwork, solving problems he encountered, and getting him additional support from a tutor.

However, in the families from rural China, women received fewer years of education than their husbands (the average educational level for women was fifth grade while for men it was eighth grade). The majority of women from rural China either worked as farmers or simply stayed at home. In rural China, women had fewer opportunities to work because of gender discrimination that remains strong in education and labor markets. There was also more of a need for women to stay home to take care of the children because rural families were likely to have more than one child. This was a result of the government's more relaxed execution of the "one-child policy" in the countryside. For instance, the Qi family from rural China had six girls.

Besides working as farmers, men from rural areas were also likely to have other opportunities for employment, such as electricians, truck drivers, or fishmongers. In interviews, children reported that their fathers needed to work outside the home in China and usually spent limited time with them, while their mothers were much more likely to not work or work with flexible hours. It was also not uncommon for fathers from rural areas in the South to have emigrated to the U.S. to work (sometimes illegally) while the mother stayed home with the children. Southern provinces like Guangdong and Fujian have a long history of sending emigrants abroad and have well-established immigration networks. This was the case in the Zheng family from rural Fujian. The father came here in 1988 and worked in a Chinese restaurant for 8 years before he could apply for his whole family to be reunited with him in 1996. During the separation, the mother stayed at home, taking care of her three daughters, supported by the money her husband sent. Interestingly, a number of mothers from Hong Kong also reported that they were more likely to work less than their husbands (or did not need to work), spending much more time taking care of the children. In some ways, it is possible that the hold of traditional gender roles was stronger in Hong Kong than in Mainland China because of communist promotion of women's equality, at least in major cities. It is also possible that Hong Kong, like the U.S., is more developed economically and the cost of child care may be significantly higher than in Mainland China. Thus in some families, it made sense for the mother to stay at home.

What happens after migration? How do immigrant fathers and mothers adapt to the new society? And how are children influenced by their parents' adaptation? In the next section, I will discuss shifting gender roles and parent–child relations in Chinese families after migration.

Immigrant Parents' Adaptation: Gendered Process

After migration, nearly all the parents found certain aspects of the adaptation process challenging. Parents lamented over the loss of extended family support, cultural activities, familiar environments and the difficulty of assimilating into U.S. society due to language barriers and perceived discrimination. Among those with stable, middle-class jobs back home, the majority experienced downward social mobility. A well-respected medical doctor in China, Ms. Liu struggled to put together a small acupuncture practice. Mr. Tang, Vice President of a stock exchange company in Hong Kong, worked as a newspaper production line worker after migration. Mr. Qin, who had a stable government "office job," toiled over 60 h a week in a Chinese restaurant after arriving in Boston.

More than 40% of parents interviewed mentioned economic and work pressure after migration. The stress and constant worry stemming from perceived economic insecurity existed in both working-class and middle-class families. One father, who was a farmer in China and worked in a Chinese restaurant after migration, complained, "Life is not as relaxed as before in China. There is too much pressure from work and from children's education. In the U.S., one has to worry about a lot of things." Another father, who worked in a factory, commented,

> "I didn't have to worry back then in China. After I finished school I was assigned to this factory by the school. I started working when I was 18 and worked at the same place until I immigrated here when I was 45.... I did not worry too much about making a living.... Life here is much more difficult than I expected. I thought that I could just find some jobs that do not require any technical skills....When I got here, I really felt out of place, and helpless."

Forty percent of the parents mentioned "pressure" and "worry" when speaking of their new living situation, including those who held professional jobs. For a mother who worked as a computer engineer, the sense of security was still elusive even though her family's economic situation improved, "We have cars and a big house... We are making more money compared to China. However...we still have a sense of insecurity."

Although both fathers and mothers expressed feelings of difficulty adapting to the new cultural context, fathers seemed to be struck even harder in this process. My analyses show that after migration, women who had jobs before were often able to transfer their skills in finding a similar job in the U.S. For example, Ms. Lin, a beautician in China, easily found a similar job after migration. Ms. Leung, a head nurse in Hong Kong, working as a private nurse after migration. Although she lamented not being able to wear the nice clothing to enjoy night life here, overall she had "got used to life in the U.S.," which was "so comfortable." For women who did not work in China, they did not have the frame of reference of a previous job. For example, Mrs. Qiong and Mrs. Tan, who stayed at home in China, both worked in a Chinese restaurant after migration. They felt happy that they could contribute to the family income.

After migration, men tended to experience more difficulty finding satisfactory jobs because of language barriers and lack of a professional network. The downward mobility that characterized many immigrants' transition experience affect men slightly more than women. Mr. Feng, for example, who had an "office job" in China, worked as a cook in a Chinese restaurant after migration. (In fact, 55% the Chinese fathers in the sample worked in Chinese restaurants after migration, even though only 16% did so back in China.) Although Ms. Leung's husband was a manager of a Hong Kong rental company, he had difficulty finding a satisfactory job and adjusting to life in the U.S. His status at home also declined after migration.

Not surprisingly, men's frustration with their status loss led to higher levels of dissatisfaction with life in the U.S. For example, Mr. Tian, once a manager of a jewelry shop in China, made sushi in a supermarket. He complained,

> I am not used to the language, living and eating here. The living habit is different. I seldom go out. I stay home on my off days. It is not as ideal as I imagined... since we came here and we resigned from the job in China. We have to stay here. If we return we would need to start all over again.

The sentiment of being stuck in the U.S. was a common theme in over 20% of the immigrant parents' experiences, especially for fathers. Because of the decline in their social and familial status, fathers were much more likely than mothers to develop a resigned attitude toward living here. For example, Mrs. Lau who did not work in Hong Kong, was a cashier in a laundry store. She talked about her husband's reaction to life after migration,

> My husband finds it even harder to adjust to the U.S. life...After we migrated to the U.S., since his English proficiency is very low, he finds it even tougher to get used to the life in America. Now when we go shopping, it is always the three of us (our two children and I). My husband seldom goes. He is best at going to Chinatown...Now that all our properties in HK have been sold, we have nothing in HK. We brought everything over with us. So it's impossible to go back.

Both Mr. Tian and Mr. Lau appeared stuck in the U.S. Fathers in similar situation often expressed a desire to return to China. Nevertheless, the majority stayed here because they had no way back or because of their children's education.

Influence on Parent–Child Relations

Generational Transference of Parental Stress

Work stress and adaptation difficulties had a significant impact on the parents' relationship with their children. Children were often keenly aware of their parents' stress after migration. They were also likely to be directly influenced by the bad tempers of unhappy or stressed-out parents, particularly fathers. Overtime, children from these families tended to experience home as a place of little emotional support or warmth.

The adaptation difficulties and shifting parent–child dynamics in the Zheng family, for example, represent common experiences in a number of Chinese families. The father worked in a ship factory before migration and did temporary labor in the U.S.; the mother did not work in Hong Kong. She mainly "watched over and protected the family, watched my children going to and from school." After migration, she took a part-time job in a fast-food restaurant. Adaptation was hard for both Mr. and Mrs. Zheng. Mrs. Zheng said she "dreamed about coming" to the U.S., but after arriving found that she had to take a job—"We would not survive if I didn't work." For Mrs. Zheng, though she valued the opportunity to work, she lamented about her lack of opportunity to supervise and protect her children. For her husband, the stress of work and difficulty adapting was even more acute:

> Of course I ran into difficulties when I came here. Because I didn't know about the people and the society here. How to find money to put food on the table is a big problem...it is difficult to go out. It is because I don't know how to drive. And I don't know the direction. Going out requires knowing English. It's very hard to own a car...I don't know where to look for a job.

For Mr. Zheng, the pressure to find work and put food on the table was heightened after migration. Further, not being able to drive or understand English limited his ability to move around. He felt homesick often, "Although physically I am in the U.S., my heart is in Hong Kong. I will always be miserable if I don't return for a visit."

Their two sons felt the pressure and difficulties that their parents went through after migration. Their younger son Carl, in particular, knew that his dad was unhappy, "My mom has no problem living here. My dad is very dissatisfied. He said he had nothing to eat. The food is not fresh here." He also was aware of his father's struggle to get work, "Recently my father got less work. He had experienced unemployment in Hong Kong.... This is the first time after we came here. There are fewer and fewer odd jobs. I am very worried. It's my family." Carl internalized the worries his parents experienced about job security. At 13 years old, Carl became very worried about his family's future. Unfortunately for Carl, his family's economic insecurity permeated the atmosphere at home. When asked, "What is a good family?" Carl responded:

> No need for me to cook so often. Not to argue that often. Sometimes when dad is free he will come into my room and scold me. There was a time when dad and elder brother nearly got into a fight. Dad always argues with mom. Mom is very troublesome. When she grumbles, dad will get mad. When they argue everybody in the family look grim.

When they were in Hong Kong, Carl's mother took care of the family and did all the cooking. However, since she began a part time job to help the family make ends meet, Carl had to shoulder more familial responsibilities. But what was more difficult for Carl was the "grim" atmosphere at home. His dad, in particular, often took his frustration out on Carl. While Carl still cared very much about his family, by the final year interview, things worsened:

> I feel that there isn't much warmth from my family. Now it is almost impossible to gather the entire family to sit down and talk. Before when were in Hong Kong, we seldom went out at night. Now I don't want to go home because there isn't much to do at home...Here in the U.S. we need to work. Even though we may have time to talk I mostly hide in my room. Whenever I get home I hide in my room, playing on the computer, listening to music, sleeping, whatever... I just can't communicate with my parents.

By the final year interview, Carl had become much more alienated from his parents. He did not want to go home or to spend time with his family, finding it difficult to communicate with his parents. The Zheng family illustrates how the difficulties and pressure experienced by parents, particularly fathers, can negatively influence parent–child relations.

There were also families where the father returned to China because of adaptation difficulties. By the end of the LISA study, five families were fractured, with the father shuttling back and forth. Such was the case in the Zhou family who migrated from Guangzhou. The mother was a part-time worker in a factory and the father held a manufacturing job there. After migration, although Mrs. Zhou worked in a bakery in Chinatown, her husband had a hard time finding a job. Mrs. Zhou's brother had a small business renovating homes. He would bring Mr. Zhou with him to work from time to time, but the work was inconsistent. Eventually Mr. Zhou returned to China. He would spend four to five months in China, came to the U.S. to spend a month with his family, and then would return to China. The mother felt that she had to stay here for their only daughter, Karen.

For Karen, life has changed a lot at home. She felt that she was spending less time with her mother because she had to work full time in the bakery. Although Karen was saddened by not spending enough time with her mother, they still maintained a pretty good relationship despite occasional conflicts and small fights. Karen reported in the final year interview that she listened to her mother's worries more than her mother listened to hers. However, it was the absence of her father that was the most difficult to handle for Karen. In the final year interview, when asked if things had improved in her family, Karen said,

> Nothing has improved. My father is not here all the time. I am like only living with my mom. My dad only comes twice a year. He has a green card, but he does not like it here. It is so weird. Other people have their entire family here; for me, it seems that I do not have a father here.

In families like the Zhous, the absence of father significantly influenced parent–child dynamics at home. Often, children had to take on additional responsibilities and burdens, that were both concrete, like doing more housework, and more psychological, like sharing the worries or even counseling their mothers. These responsibilities could add psychological burdens to children's lives in addition to their own adjustment issues outside the family (e.g., school pressure, their own adaptation). The ambiguous nature of this living arrangement (i.e., not knowing why and how long the situation will persist) could create additional stress on children.

Parental Work Schedules and Experienced Parental Absence

After immigration, both mothers and fathers tended to work more than they did in China or Hong Kong. As a result, the time they could spend with their children became very limited. For example, in the final student interview, one third of the students interviewed reported long parental work hours as a problem in their families. Not spending enough time together was particularly an issue for working-class families where parents worked long hours in service jobs. For example, in the Hoi family from rural Guangdong province, the mother was a farmer in China and worked in a grocery store after migration. The father used to be an electrician and found a repair job in Chinatown after migration. While both worked hard to support the family, they spent a lot less time together. As their 15-year-old daughter Ada lamented, “My family has to work much more than before. They are working so much more, and they are always not at home. Before when we were in China, my mother did not have to work and although my father had to go to work, he certainly didn’t have to work such long hours as he does now.” Both Ada and her parents attributed their family’s growing estrangement to the dearth of time they spent together. Similarly, in the Lin family from rural Guangdong, the mother used to stay at home. After migration, she worked 50 h a week in a bakery. She commented, “Kids brought up in America do not feel as close to their parents as these who were brought up in China. They have more affinity for their parents. Perhaps this is because the parents here both have to work all day, but in China only one parent work, and the other parent can stay at home to take care of the kids. That’s why they feel closer to their parents than those who were brought up here.”

An additional difficulty was that parents’ work schedules and children’s school schedules often did not coincide. About 20% of children or parents mentioned this as an issue in their families. For example, in the Lai family from rural Fujian, the father drove a truck in China and worked in a Chinese restaurant after migration. The mother, a farmer back home, worked in a factory. During the interview, the father spoke with great pain about the time he spent with his two children at home,

> My heart aches when I talk about this issue. Really, the only time I can see my kids is between 6 A.M. to 6:30 A.M. Why? It’s the time they get up. They get ready for school. They’ll make noises, I wake up. I’ll come out of the room and say hi. We talk a little bit. I tell them to be slow, to be careful. Then they leave. They stay in school until around 2 P.M. After school they stay for another two hours for tutorial classes. By the time they get home it’s around 3:00. I go to work at 3 P.M. When I get out of work they’ve already gone to bed. We are a family, but sometimes it’s like, like we can’t understand each other. I don’t know what you’re doing and you don’t know what I’m doing.

Mr. Lai lived in a parallel world to his children, with little interaction or connection. The little overlap between parents’ and children’s schedules was quite common for working-class families, particularly for families in which parents worked in restaurants.

This also appeared to be more of an issue for families that came from rural China than those from urban areas. In rural areas, parents, particularly mothers, were less likely to work than their counterparts in urban areas, thus could spend more time with their children. After migration, children from rural China felt the absence of their parents, particularly mothers, more than those from urban areas. Indeed, although children missed spending time with both parents after migration, the mother’s absence appeared most difficult for them. The situation was largely a result of the contrast of children’s experiences with their mother before and after migration. The father’s absence was often expected, as it might not be that different from what the children experienced in China. With mothers, however, it was quite a different story. The keen sense of loss accompanying their mother’s absence was voiced by close to 20% of the children interviewed. In the Cheung family for example, the mother was a housewife in Hong Kong and worked in a copy center here. When her mother went to work, it was hard for 14-year-old Christine:

> I hope that they do not need to go to work all the time. It is because my mother did not go to work in Hong Kong. Thus suddenly I felt like I haven’t seen her for a long time. I don’t want her to go to work. But it doesn’t matter for my father. He always went to work in Hong Kong. It doesn’t matter if I didn’t see him.

For Christine, her mother’s new schedule represented a significant change in her life. Thus, it was much more difficult for her to adjust to. She was used to her father’s absence. The separation was also very hard for the mother who sobbed during the interview, “In Hong Kong, I always watched her at home at that time. We were closer.... we were closer at that time. Now I have very little time with her. I don’t know whatever problem she could have now.”

Over time, the lack of quality time together gradually removed parents from their children’s lives, limiting parents’ availability to interact and communicate with, monitor and support the children. In some families, parents and children became strangers to each other. Mrs. Liang from Hong Kong expressed the lack of communication that resulted from parents’ long hours of work. She poignantly commented:

> Nowadays, many immigrant parents work long hours, hoping that their children will lead a better life in the future. However, their children do not receive any warmth from their families. Some children never have dinner with their parents. Some parents work more than 10 hours a day. Children are already asleep when their parents come home from work. When children leave for school in the morning, their parents are still sleeping. How can they communicate with their parents? When they have something to say to their parents, they stick a note on the refrigerator. Parents and children communicate with each other through “passing paper.”....The impressions these children have on their parents probably are “my parents give me money to spend” and “my parents buy me whatever computer or games I want.” Yet how much

> communication do you think you have with your children each day? ... It is not communication if you do not know things about me and I do not know things about you.

Mrs. Liang pointed out the realities of parents and children living under the same roof, leading separate lives, with little meaningful communication. While parents could provide material goods, they were often unable to offer any emotional support. When economic pressures took the full attention of parents, their relations with their children were often ignored or sacrificed. These relations were key to children's adjustment and development in the new land.

High Academic Pressure

"We as parents, put all our hopes on our children." This comment from one parent represented a common feeling among Chinese immigrant parents. As a result, despite the tremendous adaptation challenges they experienced after migration, the great majority of Chinese parents chose to stay in the U.S. for their children's education. For example, Mrs. Qiu who worked in a Chinese restaurant commented:

> If I were alone, without a family, I would not come again. But since I have a family, I would come again because it's better for the kids for their education. I had little education because I grew up during the Cultural Revolution, so I hold education in high regard. The schooling is good here.... In this society people who are restaurant workers with low class jobs will find it hard to integrate and get ahead. But after college, you can earn more money, have same chances of getting ahead...everybody [in the restaurant] is Chinese. We are all cows, doing cow's work...For kids, school is important for their economic advancement, for them to get a better life. We can't pursue a better job because of the lack of education.

As a result, parents expected their children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities in the U.S. and had very high expectations for their children's schooling. Mrs. Qiu, for example, hoped that her daughter would be a medical doctor. In student interviews, 90% of students reported that their parents expected them to get at least a college degree. Although high parental expectations can have a positive effect on the child's educational outcomes, excessively high parental expectations can put tremendous pressure on the child and strain parent–child relations. It can also blind parents to the social and emotional needs of their children.

In the Guo family from rural Fujian province, the father used to be a factory worker and the mother was a housewife. After migration, both worked more than 65 h a week in a Chinese restaurant, which limited the time they spent with their three children. The adaptation process was difficult for both parents, and during interviews, the father talked about the gap between what he expected and what he found out about living in the U.S.:

> There is a big difference between what we expected and what we found out. Before I came here, I thought U.S. was heaven. After coming here, we got completely tired out. It's especially [hard] for those of us who don't understand English and work in the restaurant business; it's a lot of hard work. Everyday we work 12 hours before we come back home... I don't like working in the restaurant. It's too much. I feel tired to death.

However, even though the father felt "tired to death," he stated clearly that he would still choose to come to the U.S. because his children could receive better education here. Like Mrs. Qiu quoted above, Mr. Guo also explained that his own education was curtailed by the Cultural Revolution, which doubly intensified his high hopes for his children's education, "This has been my lifelong regret. Certainly I would advise my children to study well and hard. I tell them, 'If you want to succeed, if you want to enter this society, you must study.'"

Mr. Guo's high educational expectations were keenly felt by his children. Yue, their only son, said during the interview:

> I don't see my parents that often, and every time they come home, they ask only about two things 'Have you eaten?' and 'How's your study?' They ask only about these two things. It's really annoying! Asking this all the time every day. Very annoying. I just give them really simple answers.

From the parents' perspective, they were toiling everyday to make it possible for their children to study. From the children's perspective, not only did they infrequently see their parents, each time they saw each other, the parents only cared about their basic needs like food and schooling.

Complaints of academic pressure from parents were voiced by close to 40% of the Chinese students interviewed. For example, An An, Mrs. Lin's daughter, stated during the interview, "You have to get good grades and study hard. This issue has been discussed many times at home. If I ever fail a test my mom will just keep lecturing even when you go to bed, she's still lecturing. I would dream that she's lecturing me. They are anxious. They want me to do well in school." In particular, 53% of students interviewed in Year 5 reported that their parents were upset about their grades. It was especially difficult for the students when their parents reacted negatively to a bad grade at school. For example, students reported that their parents would “feel sad and not talk to me,” “feel that I’m not competent,” “get unhappy with me,” “get very angry,” “very upset,” or “mad.” It was also common for parents to “scold,” “yell,” or even “hit me with a big stick,” or “treat me as an inmate.”

Thus, it was not surprising that students might feel resentful about parental academic pressure, particularly when they compared their parents with American parents. For example, Wei, a 14-year-old boy complained:

> I think parents in general want you to succeed in life. You know it’s like one of those Chinese phrases, *wang zi cheng long* (expecting a son to become a dragon). They want you to be like this great person. So they’re constantly pushing you to get like 1600 on your SAT and everything...but from the movies and everything, what you see is you have all these [American] parents who want their child to have fun in their life instead of having success or whatever it is.

High parental expectations for academic success was a salient theme in both working-class and middle-class Chinese immigrant families. It has often been credited as a key reason for Chinese and other Asian students’ high academic achievement. However, when parental expectations in immigrant families are fueled by their own adaptation difficulty and educational histories, it can also negatively influence their children’s development. When children can no longer bear this burden, they may feel guilty, ashamed, and break down both psychologically and academically.

Discussion

To summarize, most parents in the sample had difficulty adapting to their new life after migration. This difficulty was manifested in economic stress, particularly among fathers, and led to decreasing physical and psychological presence of parents in their children’s lives. This, combined with parents’ exceedingly high academic expectations, resulted in estranged parent–child relations in many families. The physical and/or psychological absence of parents in children’s lives can be very difficult for children. Children may need parental guidance and support most as they navigate their way in a completely new cultural environment.

Empirical and theoretical research on gender and immigrant families in the U.S. has focused predominantly on how gender roles shift in immigrant families and how these shifts influence husband and wife dynamics (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Min 2001; Pessar 2002). Scholarly literature on parent–child dynamics in immigrant families tends to focus on bicultural conflicts and acculturation gap (e.g., Garcia-Coll and Magnuson 1997; Suárez-Orozco 2001; Sung 1987). Little research has been conducted to understand how gendered processes of adaptation among immigrant parents influence immigrant fathers’ and mothers’ relations with their children in recently arrived families. In this paper, drawing on longitudinal data collected on 72 Chinese immigrant children and their parents, I found that parental work pressure and adaptation difficulties after migration had important influences on parent–child relations. In particular, fathers tended to experience more difficulty adjusting to life in the U.S. as a result of the double loss in social mobility and status at home. Although mothers often experienced economic hardship, many also experienced an increase in their status at home due to their participation in the labor market after migration.

My analyses showed three dynamics related to immigrant fathers’ and mothers’ adaptation that often led to growing alienation in parent–child relations at home. First, fathers were more likely than mothers to transfer stress and dissatisfaction onto their children, which often strained the relations between parents and children. Second, while children might spend less actual time with their fathers after migration, they felt the loss of time with their mothers more acutely because of their experiences back home when mothers generally spent more time with them. Third, immigrant parents’ sacrifice after migration as well as their perception of great educational opportunities in the U.S. translated into very high academic expectations for their children. In families where there was excessive concern about academics and not enough support in other aspects of children’s lives, children often became resentful toward their parents.

When an immigrant family goes through adaptation difficulties, both sons and daughters are likely to be influenced by these dynamics. Some previous research has found that daughters from immigrant families are more vulnerable than sons to adjustment and family-related stress (e.g., Aronowitz 1984; Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006; Zambrana and Silva-Palacios 1989). For example, in their study of gender differences in stress among Mexican immigrant adolescents, Zambrana and Silva-Palacios (1989) found that immigrant girls had statistically significant higher stress levels than boys. More specifically, girls were more stressed about issues related to family, loss (leaving family and friends back) and change (moving from one neighborhood to another). In this study, I did not find salient gender differences in terms of Chinese immigrant children’s reactions to parental adaptation challenges and perceptions of resulting relations with their mothers and fathers.

My findings contribute to current research on immigrant families in three ways. First, this is one of the first studies that examine the influence of immigrant parents' gendered process of adaptation on parent–child dynamics at home. Previous developmental research has linked parental work or other stress with children's psychological outcomes (e.g., Hsueh and Yoshikawa 2007) and documented the important impact of family environment on children's development (e.g., Marturano et al. 2005). However, little of this research has focused on recently arrived immigrant families. Furthermore, little research has documented *how* parental stress may lead to negative psychological outcomes in children. Through longitudinal interview data from both parents and children, this paper demonstrates in different ways how the stress experienced by immigrant mothers and fathers after migration may negatively impact parent–child dynamics at home through three dynamics: (1) parental transference of stress to their children, (2) children's perception of parental absence and lack of support, and (3) academic pressure. These dynamics in turn are likely to have an important effect on children's psychological adjustment.

Family relationships play a significant role in the child's ego development, identity formation, and overall psychosocial functioning (Florsheim 1993; Greenberger and Chen 1996). Parents play a crucial role shaping children's development by providing what Fillmore (2000) calls "the curriculum of the home," such as a sense of belonging and the ability to deal with adversity and shoulder responsibility. These are things children can not learn at school. Emotional detachment from parents during adolescence is harmful to their development (Ryan and Lynch 1989).

Erosion of parental authority and poor parental supervision are also linked to antisocial involvement, association with delinquent peers and academic failure in children (Dishion and McMahon 1998; Laird et al. 2003). In short, alienation in parent–child relations can have a range of negative influences on children, especially those navigating a new cultural context.

Second, this study illustrates the important distinction between parental roles as a *provider* and as a *source of emotional support*. As the findings illustrate, an important contributor to alienation in many of the Chinese families was differences in immigrant parents' and their children's perceptions of the expected parental role. As seen from the experiences of the families presented in the study, parents experience tremendous difficulty in both economic and social adaptation after migration. Being able to provide for the family, "put food on the table," becomes the main focus. Although one parent might have worked in China, after migration both parents needed to work to ensure the family's economic survival. In addition, they might have to work longer hours than they did in China to make enough money to pay the rent, or for a house in a highly regarded school district. The sense of economic and social insecurity which was clear in the families across the board, both engenders and heightens the parents' sense of their role as provider for their children after migration. To be a good parent is to be able to provide children with food, home, clothes, computers and school supplies. To achieve this goal, parents work harder than ever. In their minds, they are sacrificing so much in order to support their children (most immigrated to this country for their children in order to provide them better educational opportunities). This is the immigrant parents' "code of love" (Linklater 2002). However, children are in their own process of adjusting to the new environment, which can be challenging because of language barriers, peer discrimination at school, lack of support from teachers, and general acculturation stress. They long for their parents' emotional presence, engagement and support. They want warmth and caring in the family. This dynamic is also shown in the study of Xiong et al. (2005) of Southeast Asian immigrant families, in which parents believed "a good parent" was someone who provided food, clothing, and cultural education for the children. However, for children, good parents were those who understood their children and verbally expressed their love. It is important for parents to broaden their conception of support and pay attention to the psychological needs of children.

Third, findings from this study indicate that different frames of reference of immigrant fathers, mothers, and children in a new cultural context are central to the gendered process of adaptation and estranged parent–child dynamics in recently arrived immigrant families. For example, fathers tend to experience additional difficulty in their adaptation because they perceive a drop in social and familial status relative to what they enjoyed before migration. Immigrant children felt their mothers' absence more acutely after migration because they were more accustomed to their father's absence in their home country. Immigrant fathers, mothers, and children constantly compare the "here and now" with the "there and then." In many ways, migration is characterized by shifts of things that give meaning to one's every day life—relatives, friends, familiar environment, language, food, and expected roles at home and at work. In immigrant families, it is the changing circumstances, status, experiences, and roles that are the most destabilizing and difficult to deal with for immigrant fathers, mothers and their children. It is important for counselors and therapists working with immigrant families to be aware of these role transitions and the gap between expectations and realities that tend to strain family relations over time.

There are a number of methodological limitations in this study. First, because of parental work schedule, nearly all parent interviews were conducted with one parent (most with mothers), which limits the full perspectives from each family, particularly the fathers' views and experiences. Second, it is important to note that findings from this study based on recently arrived, largely working-class Chinese immigrant families can not be generated to all Chinese American families. Chinese American families are highly heterogeneous in terms of length of residence in the US as well as social class. In this sample, all the families consist of recently arrived immigrants. Adaptation and acculturation difficulty may be much less in families that have resided in the U.S. for a longer period of time. Further, the majority of the families are from working-class backgrounds. Some of the issues presented (e.g., lack of time together) may be more salient in working-class families than middle-class families where parents have professional jobs and schedules that tend to overlap more with their children's schedules.

It is important for future research to continue examining the important role gender plays in immigrant family dynamics. For example, how does a child's gender mediate his or her reactions to parental adaptation difficulties and work stress? Only through understanding the challenges and struggles immigrant fathers, mothers, and children face can we develop effective intervention programs and public policies to help immigrant families thrive in the new land. Because one out of every five children in the U.S. lives in an immigrant family, such efforts to support immigrant families will have long-reaching social benefits for the larger society.

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