IMPLICATIONS OF PARENTAL AUTONOMY SUPPORT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL FOR ADOLESCENTS’ SOCIOEMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING: A MULTI-ETHNIC COMPARISON IN CHINA

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The implications of parental autonomy support and psychological control are similar but not uniform in the U.S. and China (e.g., Qin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). Moreover, specific types of psychological control have different effects on Western and Chinese children (e.g., Fung & Lau, 2012; Helwig, To, Wang, Liu, & Yang, 2014). However, research on Chinese parenting is predominantly based on Han Chinese, with much unknown about ethnic minority groups.

This longitudinal study investigated the implications of Chinese parents’ autonomy support and psychological control for their adolescents’ socioemotional functioning, with emphasis on exploring ethnic variations in these links and distinguishing among different types of psychological control (i.e., love withdrawal, guilt induction, and dominance). Focus was on the Han and the three largest, Muslim ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang. At Wave 1, 2037 adolescents (1220 Han, 297 Hui, 413 Kazakh, 107 Uyghur; mean age = 13.53 years; 51% girls) in 7th and 8th grade from three schools reported on their parents’ autonomy support and psychological control, their relationship with parents, and their positive and negative affect; they completed the same survey a year later.

Using data from Wave 1 (data from Wave 2 is being entered and longitudinal results will be reported in the poster), path analyses were conducted separately for the four ethnic groups on the links between parenting practices and adolescents’ socioemotional functioning, controlling for adolescents’ age and gender, paternal and maternal education. Across all groups, parental autonomy support and love withdrawal were associated, respectively, with better and worse emotional functioning and parent-child relationship, suggesting similar implications of parenting across ethnicities. There were also ethnic differences: Parental dominance was associated with more negative parent-child relationship among the Han and the Hui, but not among the more traditional and collective groups of the Kazakhs and Uyghurs.