Chinese Immigrant and European American Parents' Emotional Expressions in Childrearing Activities: Cultural Norms of Emotions

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Abstract
Both European Americans and Chinese immigrants value emotional expressions that are true to inner feelings, and adhere to social norms dictating appropriate expressions for different situations. However, the two groups differ in how they coordinate the values of being faithful to inner feelings and to social norms. The European American culture values an individual's genuine expressions of emotions over allowing social norms to unduly dictate one's behavior. The Chinese culture values social norms over explicit, individualized expressions of inner feelings. This study hypothesized that Chinese immigrants may be less likely to express inner feelings in social situations that are heavily regulated by cultural norms, and more likely to express feelings in lightly regulated situations. European Americans may differ less in emotional expressions across social situations due to the greater emphasis on self-consistency. Parent interviews about their childrearing practices were conducted, and two childrearing activities, sleeping and privacy-related activities, were selected for analysis according to cultural norms. Findings indicated that the two ethnic groups had different patterns in how their emotional expressions changed according to situation, and the patterns fit their respective cultural norms. Contrary to prediction, while the self-consistent orientation of European Americans was supported in that they were more likely to voluntarily express feelings in both activities, the parents also changed their emotional expressions to fit social situations through variations in positive versus negative expressions. The discussion centered on the interactions among social situations, measures of emotional expressions, and cultural norms.

Keywords: emotion, culture, Chinese immigrants, European-American, parent, childrearing

Introduction

Both European Americans and Chinese value emotional expressions that are true to the self's inner feelings. Also, both ethnic groups value emotional expressions that adhere to social norms dictating what expressions are appropriate in different social situations. However, the two groups differ in how they coordinate the values of being faithful to inner feelings and social norms. In European American culture, expressing genuine emotions typically entails making inner feelings as explicit as possible, employing individualized styles, and not allowing social norms to unduly dictate behavior. The independent self is valued, where the individual is viewed as "an independent, self-contained, autonomous entity" who "comprises a unique configuration of internal attributes" and "behaves primarily as a consequence of these internal attributes" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991:224). The independent self expresses emotions to enhance individuality, and "feels good" when emotional expressions assert the uniqueness of individuals. In comparison, Chinese are more concerned about social relationships than explicit, individualized expressions of inner feelings. The interdependent self is valued, and the focal in the individual's experience is "the self-in-relation-to-other (Markus & Kitayama, 1991:225)." The interdependent self expresses feelings to promote the harmony of interpersonal relationships. Individuals "feel good" when relationships are strengthened through emotional expressions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For the Chinese, emotional expressions are part of an intricate social system in which inner feelings, timing, situational demands, and other people's view are ideally in balance. This holistic view leads Chinese to be relatively less concerned with explicit expression of inner feelings and more reliant on social situations for cues regarding appropriateness when expressing emotions.

Moreover, cultures differ in how much emotions are expected to be consistent or specific to social situations. The Eastern view is one of balance, and the Western is one of consistency (Kitayama & Markus, 1999). The consistency view leads to an emphasis on "genuine" emotions that maintains the view of a consistent-self across situations. The balance view leads to an acceptance of emotional expressions that fit the social situation, even though to Westerners, it may seem compromising to one's personal feelings. The consistency versus balance view is related to the different ways individuals conform to social pressure in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1989; 1990). The public self, or one's generalized view of others, is different in these cultures. In collectivistic cultures, conformity to others in public settings is valued, and the public self behaves accordingly. Whereas in individualistic cultures, it is assumed that the public self values autonomy, independence, and self-reliance. Therefore, individuals behave in ways that distinguish themselves and impress others in public settings (Triandis, 1989).

This study views emotions as sociocultural constructs that are situated in the context of activities. Cultural researchers (e.g. Cole, 1995; Goodnow, Miller, and Kessel, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Shweder, 1991) have long argued that psychological processes are interwoven with context and can not be analyzed in isolation. Rather than focusing on the interaction of individual and environment, one should look into a "supra-individual unit of analysis (Cole, 1995)" that is called *practice, activity, event, context*, or *situation* by different researchers. This unit of analysis refers to "meaningful actions that occur routinely in everyday life, are widely shared by members of the group, and carry with them normative expectations about

how things should be done (Goodnow, Miller, and Kessel, 1995:1)." Cross-cultural research has shown that situation has an important impact on emotions (Frijda, 1988; Mesquita, 2001; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Triandis, 1989). Frijda (1988:349) stated that the first and most important law of emotions was "the law of situational meaning: Emotions arise in response to meaning structures of given situations; different emotions arise in response to different meaning structures."

Sleeping arrangements, researched in past studies (e.g. Shweder, Jensen, & Goldstein, 1995; Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu-Constant 2000) as well as the present study, are an example of an *activity*. European Americans commonly believe that parent-child cosleeping leads to problems, including interference with children's independence, disturbance in parents' relationship with one another, and creation of bad sleeping habits that are difficult to break. Therefore, European American families emphasize the importance of training young children to sleep in their own beds and bedrooms. In contrast, cosleeping is a common practice in Chinese culture, and it is acceptable for young children to sleep by themselves, with their siblings, parents, or other family members. The differences in sleeping arrangement practices are related to parents' *cultural belief systems* (Harkness & Super, 1996) that vary in emphasis on autonomy versus interrelatedness as well as "sacred couple" versus "respect for hierarchy" (Shweder, Jensen, & Goldstein, 1995; Wolfson & Montgomery-Downs, 2013).

In this paper, *activity* refers to childrearing practices, such as sleeping arrangements, bathing, and nudity. These activities are windows into *cultural norms,* which are rules and assumptions shared by a community regarding what constitute appropriate behavior in different situations. Cultural norms are comparable to cultural belief systems. *Situation*, refers to how activities are regulated according to cultural norms. Cultural norms dictate that some situations are *heavily regulated*, meaning that more rules are involved and a smaller range of behavior is deemed appropriate. Other situations are *lightly regulated*, meaning that fewer rules are set and a broader range of behavior is acceptable. Sleeping arrangement is an example of a *heavily regulated* situation in the European American culture, while the Chinese regard it as *lightly regulated*.

Recent studies comparing Chinese and European American parents and children support cultural differences in observed emotional expressions (Camras, Chen, Bakeman, Norris, & Cain, 2006; Chen, Zhou, Main, & Lee, 2015), discussion of emotions (Chen, Kennedy, & Zhou, 2012; Sims, Tsai, Jiang, Wang, Fung, & Zhang, 2015; Tao, Zhou, Lau, & Liu, 2013; Tsai, Simeonova, & Watanabe, 2004; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006; Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007) and emotion situation knowledge (Wang, 2003; Wang & Fivush, 2005; Yang & Wang, 2016). Based on past research, this study explores two main hypotheses: first, emotional expressions are related to whether the situation is heavily or lightly regulated, which, in turn, is dictated by cultural norms. Second, there are cultural differences in the degree to which situation influences emotional expressions. Since Chinese are more situational oriented, their emotional expressions are more influenced by the situation than European Americans, who are more self-consistent oriented. Instead of direct observation of parent-child interaction, parents' discussion of emotions was used as the source of data because it would better capture cultural norms of emotional expressions. The sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983, 2012) studied "feeling rules" through discussing the situations in which her participants' feelings did not fit

the expected norm, and suggested that the richness of feeling management lies in the discrepancy between the emotions experienced by individuals and the expressions expected by the cultural norm. This discrepancy is better revealed in discussion than by observation. According to Affect Valuation Theory (Sims, Tsai, Jiang, Wang, Fung, & Zhang, 2015; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006; Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007), culture has a greater impact on *ideal affect* (how people ideally want to feel) than *actual affect* (how people actually feel). A study on Chinese immigrant parents with various acculturation experiences found that cultural orientations were primarily associated with parents' self-reported expressivity rather than observed emotional expression, and that higher American orientations were associated with higher expressivity (Chen, Zhou, Main, & Lee, 2015). These studies point to the context of parents' use of emotional words as an effective tool to capture how cultural norms influence emotional expressions.

METHOD

The interviews were originally conducted in a study on cultural differences in the meaning and expressions of physical closeness between parent and young children (Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu-Constant, 2000). I participated in developing the interview instrument, constructing coding schemes, conducting the interviews, analyzing the data, and co-authored the paper. Findings of the original study indicated that sleeping activity (such as cosleeping) was deemed lightly regulated by Chinese immigrant but heavily regulated by European American parents, while privacy-related activities (such as co-bathing and nudity) was deemed lightly regulated by European American but heavily regulated by Chinese immigrant parents. The contrast in cultural norms of regulation regarding these two childrearing activities set the stage for exploring the influence of situation on emotional expressions by analyzing the use of emotion words in the parent interviews.

Participants

Forty Chinese immigrant and 40 European American parents of children age 3 to 7 (M = 4 years, 10 months) were interviewed. In each ethnic group, 50% of the participants were mothers and 50% were fathers. All the participants were from intact families and lived in the Greater Boston area. They were predominantly middle-class and highly educated (30 Chinese immigrant parents and 28 European American parents had graduate degrees).

The Chinese immigrant parents were born and spent at least the first 12 years of their lives in Taiwan (50%), Hong Kong (15%), or Mainland China (35%). At the time of the interview, the number of years that Chinese immigrant parents lived in the United States ranged from 2 to 27 (M = 12). Fourteen of the Chinese immigrant parents intended to return to their country of origin, 15 of them did not, and 11 were unsure. Most of the Chinese immigrant parents' English language facility was rated by the interviewers as very fluent (50%) and generally fluent (44%); only 2 parents (6%) were not fluent. Almost all of the Chinese immigrant parents spoke Chinese at home – 69% spoke it most of the time and 26% spoke it about half of the time. When asked whether the interview would be different if conducted in Chinese, 68% of the Chinese immigrant parents said no and 32% said yes. The European American participants, as well as their parents, were born and raised in the United States. The

participants' grandparents were of European origin and had been living in the United States since they were 12 or younger.

The interview was a semi-structured instrument that assessed parents' practices and beliefs about physical closeness and family relatedness. Informants from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and the United States were consulted to ensure that the questions were appropriate for members of both cultures. The interviewers were advanced undergraduate and graduate students taking a year-long seminar on cultural differences in parent-child relationships. Training for the interviewers consisted of listening to 25 hours of tapes of pilot interviews, conducting practice interviews, and receiving supervision. Training focused on how to probe for detailed responses regarding feelings about and reasons for the participants' childrearing practices.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses regarding participants' emotion words and utterances while discussing childrearing activities predict two levels of differences – between subject and within subject differences.

Between subject differences. Between subject differences reflect Chinese immigrant and European American cultural norms of situational regulation of emotions. The predictions are as follows:

1. In sleeping activity, which is lightly regulated for Chinese immigrants but heavily regulated for European Americans, Chinese immigrant parents would have more positive emotion words than negative words compared to European American parents. Also, Chinese immigrant parents would have more voluntary utterances than absent-when-solicited utterances compared to European American parents.
2. In privacy-related activity, which is heavily regulated for Chinese immigrants but lightly regulated for European Americans, European American parents would have more positive than negative words compared to Chinese immigrant parents. Also, European American parents would have more voluntary than absent-when-solicited utterances compared to Chinese immigrant parents.

Within subject differences. Within subject differences reflect the self-consistent orientation of European Americans and the situational orientation of Chinese immigrants. The predictions are as follows:

1. When comparing emotion words in the two activities, Chinese immigrant parents would have more positive than negative words in sleeping activity than privacy-related activity. European American parents would have some differences in the two activities, but the differences would not be significant.
2. When comparing emotion utterances in the two activities, Chinese immigrant parents would have more voluntary than absent-when-solicited utterances in sleeping activity than privacy-related activity. European American parents would have some differences between the two activities, but the differences would not be significant.

Measures

The interviews yielded two types of main measures: (1) words, and (2) utterances.

Words Positive versus negative has been a commonly used dimension to assess cultural differences in emotion word meanings (e.g. Camras, Kolmodin, & Chen, 2008; Frijda, 1988; Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992; Sims, Tsai, Jiang, Wang, Fung, & Zhang, 2015). The purpose of this measure was to test if parents' positive or negative direction of emotional expressions was associated with the positive or negative connotation of their cultural norms.

Coding categories. In this analysis, emotion words referred to both inner feelings, or the conventional meaning of emotions (such as happy, sad, and angry), and behaviors that were a direct expression of emotions (such as cry, laugh, and smile). Coding categories of emotion words were based on Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz' (1992) study of emotion word prototypes as well as definitions from the Webster Collegiate Dictionary and were defined as followed:

- Positive: included positive words, such as 'happy', 'glad', or 'smiling,' and negation of negative words, such as 'not sad', 'not mad', or 'not crying'.
- Negative: included negative words, such as 'sad', 'angry', or 'crying,' and negation of positive words, such as 'not happy', 'not glad', or 'not smiling'.
- Mixed or unclear: words that could be either positive or negative, such as the underlined words in the following -- "mixed feelings", "a range of emotions", or "it depends on his mood."

Word scores. T-tests showed that European Americans had more total words in both sleeping (t (77) = 2.25, $p < .05$) and privacy-related activities (t (78) = 4.45, $p < .001$) than Chinese immigrant parents (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Given the difference in total number of words, it was likely that an ethnic group might have more number of emotion words simply because they had more total words in that activity. To account for the possible bias, the number of emotion words were converted into emotion word scores, which were computed separately for the two activities. In each activity, emotion word scores were computed by dividing the number of emotion words by the total number of words, then multiplying it with the mean number of total words of all the participants. For example, a participant had 568 words in sleeping activity, 5 of which were positive emotion words. The mean number of total words of all the participants in sleeping was 455.48. The score of positive emotion words would be

$(5 / 568) \times 455.48 = 4.01$

The analyses in this study were based on emotion word scores and results reported accordingly.

Utterances The purpose of the emotional utterance measure was to capture emotional expressivity - how parents chose to withhold or to express feelings while discussing childrearing activities. Research has shown that European Americans express emotions more verbally and explicitly than Chinese immigrants (Chen, Zhou, Main, & Lee, 2015; Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996; Tobin, 1995; Wang, 2003; Wang & Fivush, 2005).

Coding categories. An utterance referred to a set of an uninterrupted interviewer's question and an uninterrupted parent's response. An emotion utterance referred to an

utterance with one or more emotion words. The three types of emotion utterances were defined as followed:
(1) Voluntary/Unsolicited: Emotion words were found in the parent's response but not in the interviewer's question.
(2) Present when solicited: Emotion words were found in both the parent's and the interviewer's speech.
(3) Absent when solicited: Emotion words were found in the interviewer's question but not in the parent's response.

Utterance scores. T-tests showed that Chinese immigrant parents had more total utterances in both sleeping (t (77) = 2.92, $p < .01$) and privacy-related activities (t (78) = 2.27, $p < .05$) than European Americans parents (see Table 3 for descriptive statistics). To account for the possible bias resulting from differences in total number of utterances, the number of emotion utterances were converted into emotion utterance scores. Emotion utterance scores were computed separately for the two activities by dividing the number of emotion utterances by the total number of utterances, then multiplying it with the mean number of total utterances of all the participants. In other words,
Emotion Utterance Score = (Number of Emotion Utterances / Total Number of Utterances) × Mean Total Utterances

For example, a participant had 21 utterances in privacy-related activities, 4 of which were voluntary emotion utterances. The mean number of total utterances of all the participants in privacy-related activity was 20.56. The score of voluntary emotion utterance would be
(4 / 21) × 20.56 = 3.91

The analyses in this study were based on emotion utterance scores and the results reported accordingly.

Coder and Reliability

One rater (the author) coded all 80 parent interviews, and another rater coded 20 randomly selected interviews (25% of the total) for inter-rater reliability. Both raters were researchers in the field of psychology, and represented the two cultural groups studied – the author was a Chinese immigrant who grew up in Taiwan, and the other rater was European American. The raters were trained to agree on which emotion words to analyze before coding formally began. All reliabilities were computed using Cohen's Kappa. Reliability for word measure was $\kappa = .90$ in sleeping activity and $\kappa = .90$ in privacy-related activity. Reliability for utterance measure was $\kappa = .98$ in sleeping activity and $\kappa = .93$ in privacy-related activity. Reliability for emotion words in self-statements was $\kappa = 1.00$.

RESULTS

Words

Repeated-measures analysis of covariance was conducted to compare positive and negative emotion words between Chinese immigrant and European American groups. The independent variable was ethnicity and the covariate was parent

gender. Both of the repeated measures factors included two levels: activity (sleeping or privacy-related) and word (positive or negative). Results showed a significant three-way interaction between ethnicity, activity, and positive-negative words, F (1, 79) = 7.96, $p < .01$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .12$. Significant interactions were not found between activity and ethnicity, F (1, 79) = 2.58, $p > .05$, or between positive-negative word and ethnicity, F (1, 79) = .04, $p > .05$. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics.

The significant Ethnicity × Activity × Word interaction effect showed that the interaction of activity and positive-negative words for Chinese immigrants was significantly different than the interaction of activity and positive-negative words for European Americans. The interaction for Chinese immigrants indicated that the difference between positive and negative words was greater in sleeping activity (difference in M = .42) than privacy-related activity (difference in M = -1.32). The interaction for European Americans indicated that the difference between positive and negative words was smaller in sleeping activity (difference in M = -1.01) than privacy-related activity (difference in M = -.13).

To test the hypotheses of within subject differences, follow-up repeated-measures analyses of covariance (with parent gender as covariate) were conducted for each ethnic group separately to examine the Activity × Word interaction. Analysis of European Americans' use of emotion words revealed no main effects of word or activity but a significant interaction effect, F (1, 79) = 8.54, $p < .01$, *partial* η^2 = .18. The interaction effect reflected a significant difference between the two activities in the use of positive versus negative words. In heavily regulated situations (sleeping activity), European Americans used more negative than positive words (M = 2.81 and 1.80 respectively), and this difference was significantly larger than the difference between the negative and positive words (M = 3.24 and 3.12 respectively) in lightly regulated situations (privacy-related activity). Analysis of Chinese immigrants' use of emotion words showed no main effect of word or activity, but a borderline significant interaction effect, F (1, 79) = 3.82, $p < .06$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .06$. In heavily regulated situations (privacy-related activity), Chinese immigrant parents had more negative than positive words (M = 4.04 and 2.72 respectively), and this difference was borderline significantly more than the difference between negative and positive words (M = 3.37 and 3.79 respectively) in lightly regulated situations (sleeping activity).

Utterances

Repeated-measures analysis of covariance was conducted to compare voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances between Chinese immigrant and European American parents. The independent variable was ethnicity and the covariate was parent gender. Both of the repeater measures factors included two levels: activity (sleeping and privacy-related) and utterance (voluntary and absent-when-solicited). Results revealed significant interactions between activity and ethnicity, F (1, 79) = 10.70, $p <$ .01, utterance and ethnicity, F (1, 79) = 17.79, $p < .001$, and a three-way interaction between activity, utterance, and ethnicity F (1,79) = 13.32, $p < .001$.

The significant Ethnicity × Activity × Utterance interaction effect showed that the interaction of activity and voluntary-absent utterances for Chinese immigrants was significantly different than the interaction of activity and voluntary-absent utterances for European Americans. The interaction for Chinese immigrants indicated that the

difference between voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances was greater in sleeping activity (difference in $M = 2.02$) than privacy-related activity (difference in $M = .79$). The interaction for European Americans indicated that the difference between voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances was smaller in sleeping activity (difference in $M = 2.88$) than privacy-related activity (difference in $M = 4.15$).

The significant Activity × Ethnicity interaction effect reflected a tendency of all participants to have a greater difference between voluntary and absent utterances in sleeping activity ($M = 5.80$ and .90 respectively) than privacy-related activity ($M = 7.59$ and 2.65 respectively). The significant Utterance × Ethnicity interaction effect was not interpretable because it combined opposite measures (voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances) and reflected the interactions involving one of these measures. Both interaction effects could also be explained by the higher order, three-way interaction between activity, utterance, and ethnicity.

To test the hypotheses of within subject differences, follow-up repeated measures analyses of covariance (with parent gender as covariate) were conducted for each ethnic group separately to examine the Activity × Utterance interaction. Analysis of Chinese immigrants' emotion utterances showed no main effects of utterance or activity, but a borderline significant interaction effect, F (1, 79) = 3.26, $p < .08$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .08$. For Chinese immigrant parents, the difference between voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances ($M = 2.61$ and .59 respectively) in lightly regulated situations (sleeping activity) is borderline significantly larger than the difference between voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances ($M = 2.35$ and 1.54 respectively) in heavily regulated situations (privacy-related activity). Analysis of European Americans' emotion utterances found significant main effects of activity, F (1, 79) = 6.89, $p < .01$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .15$, and utterance, F (1, 79) = 8.96, $p < .01$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .19$. The significant effect of utterance showed that European Americans had more voluntary than absent-when-solicited utterances in both activities. The significant effect of activity was not interpretable, since it was not meaningful to combine voluntary and absent-when-solicited utterances. The results did not show significant interaction between utterance and activity, which indicated that the differences in voluntary versus absent utterances between the two activities were similar. See Table 4 for descriptive statistics.

Conclusion

To summarize the results, the first main hypothesis was supported by significant three-way interactions among measures of Emotions, Situation, and Ethnicity. The interactions suggest that emotions, situation, and culture are inter-related. The second hypothesis was partially supported by the results. Chinese immigrants' situational orientation was supported by borderline significant results, and the self-consistent orientation of European Americans was supported in that they were consistently more likely to voluntarily express feelings than to avoid providing emotional information across situations. Contrary to prediction, it was found that European Americans varied in their positive versus negative emotional expressions across situations.

In interpreting findings related to the first hypothesis, the emergence of interaction effects in the opposite direction in the two groups clearly indicates that culture and situation cannot be looked at independently if we wish to understand emotional

expressions. Saying that one cultural group expresses emotions more, or that one situation elicits more emotional expressivity than another, is too simplistic. The embeddedness of situation in cultural context is well known in learning activities (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Shweder et al., 1995). Now it has been shown to apply to emotional expressions as well.

In interpreting the findings of the second hypothesis, measures used to assess emotions emerged as an important factor in understanding cultural differences in emotional expressions. It is possible that the two ethnic groups regulated emotions in different ways, and that the measures of emotional expressions in this study tapped into these differences. The study found that European Americans changed only their positive versus negative expressions but stayed consistent in voluntarily providing information. If the borderline significant situational differences of Chinese immigrants are taken into consideration, an interesting possibility emerges. Perhaps European Americans choose to regulate their emotional expressions only through variations in "positive versus negative talk," while Chinese immigrants choose to regulate emotional expressions through both variations in "to talk or not to talk" and "positive versus negative talk." The findings regarding European Americans' emotional expression styles converged with Tobin's theory of cultural differences in self-expressions (Tobin, 1995; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1991; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). He argues that self-expression is emphasized in the United States mainstream pedagogy, but most educators operate under the false belief that self-expression is equivalent to free-expression. Instead, European American children learn from a young age what is or is not an appropriate topic for self-expression at "show and tell" or in writing assignments such as "A Book About Me". In other words, European American children are encouraged to express their feelings voluntarily, but the content of expression is highly controlled (Tobin, 1995). To apply Tobin's theory to the findings of this study, it is possible that European Americans learned to voluntarily express themselves in all situations, but to be selective about the positive versus negative content of expression. When the cultural norms dictate clear standards or rules (i.e. heavily regulated), European Americans tended to follow cultural norms dictating the expressions of negative feelings.

The findings bear important implications for children's emotional development in the context of home and school cultures. Results of this study suggest that cultural differences in emotional expressions can be found in daily interactions between parents and their children aged 3 to 8, which are the formative years for understanding the relations between emotions, situations, and cultural norms. When children from Chinese immigrant families, as well as other minority families, go to school, they encounter a mainstream cultural norm that is likely to assume that voluntary expressions of feelings are the basis for "sharing" or "show and tell", storytelling, writing, and conflict resolution. It is important for educators to be sensitive to the diversity of children's and families' cultural norms of emotional expressions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several methodological factors that limit the generalization of the findings. First, the study measures emotions by analyzing emotional expressions in parent interviews of childrearing practices. This method has advantages: the data are collected in the context of childrearing, which reflect more spontaneous responses

about emotions than would be the case if the study focused on emotions. The interview format also capture how voluntarily or positively participants are to verbally express feelings, and provide opportunities for participants to talk about emotions that may not be observable. This method has disadvantages: the participants may have revealed more feelings if they had known that emotions were a focus of the study. Also, the method may have limited the types of emotional expressions to verbal discussions. With the use of multiple methods of data collection, such as observations, scenarios or interviews with other family members, more measures of emotional expressions would likely emerge.

Second, heavily versus lightly regulated situation is a new construct that needs further clarification. The construct is based on differences in the cultural practices of Chinese immigrants and European Americans. More Chinese immigrants practice cosleeping than European Americans, and thus in this study, sleeping activity is categorized as lightly regulated in the Chinese immigrant culture but heavily regulated in the European American culture. More European Americans accept nudity than Chinese immigrants, and thus privacy-related activity is categorized as lightly regulated in European American culture but heavily regulated in Chinese immigrant culture. However, specific rules or perspectives that constitute cultural norms was not studied. Future research that focus on how the two ethnic groups view sleeping and privacy-related activities would further clarify the construct of heavily versus lightly regulated situations.

Third, the participants were mostly middle-class and highly educated, and all lived in the Greater Boston area. The European American parents were at least third generation, and Chinese immigrants were first generation that were born and lived in their native countries for at least 12 years. Chinese immigrants and European Americans are both diverse populations, so it is unclear how well the results of this study apply to European Americans or Chinese immigrants of different socioeconomic status, Chinese Americans who have lived in the United States for several generations, or Chinese in China and Taiwan. Future studies that include participants representing the socioeconomic and geological diversity of Chinese and European Americans would further the understanding of the two groups.

In conclusion, this study finds parents' emotional expressions to be situated in childrearing activities and interwoven with cultural beliefs of appropriateness. The study focuses on two elements of culture and emotions: (1) situation, which is a unit of analysis in the study of culture, and (2) emotional expressions, which was analyzed by two measures in this study of emotions. Future research comparing more heavily and lightly regulated childrearing activities with multiple methods of data collection would further our understanding on this topic.

Table 1: Total Words

	Chinese immigrant			European American		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Sleeping	388.97	201.99	39	520.33	304.31	40
Privacy	447.80	333.94	40	803.60	379.75	40

Note. The values represent means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and number of participants (*n*).

Table 2: Positive and Negative Emotion Words

		Chinese Immigrant		European American	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Sleeping	Positive	3.79	3.29	1.80	1.93
	Negative	3.37	2.68	2.81	2.48
Privacy	Positive	2.65	3.00	3.11	1.97
	Negative	3.97	3.92	3.24	2.75

Note. The values represent means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of emotion word scores.

In sleeping activity, Chinese immigrant $n = 39$, European American $n = 40$. In privacy-related activities, Chinese immigrant $n = 40$, European American $n = 40$.

Table 3: Total Utterances

	Chinese immigrant			European American		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Sleeping	12.21	4.66	39	9.25	4.35	40
Privacy	22.47	8.35	40	18.65	6.65	40

Note. The values represent means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and number of participants (*n*).

Table 4: Voluntary and Absent-when-solicited Emotion Utterances

		Chinese Immigrant		European American	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Sleeping	Voluntary	2.61	1.70	3.19	1.93
	Absent-when-solicited	.59	.77	.31	.65
Privacy	Voluntary	2.34	1.73	5.25	3.64
	Absent-when-solicited	1.55	1.03	1.10	1.02

Note. The values represent means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of emotion utterance scores.

In sleeping activity, Chinese immigrant $n = 39$, European American $n = 40$. In privacy-related activities, Chinese immigrant $n = 40$, European American $n = 40$.

APPENDIX: Narrative Examples from Parent Interviews

The two ethnic groups' patterns of emotional expressions that differ across situation can be illustrated by the following narrative examples from parent interviews. Four examples from parent interviews are presented in the following order: (1) European American parent discussing privacy-related activity (lightly regulated); (2) European American parent discussion sleeping activity (heavily regulated); (3) Chinese immigrant parent discussing sleeping activity (lightly regulated); and (4) Chinese immigrant parent discussing privacy-related activity (heavily regulated).

In the first example, the European American parent was in agreement with the common European American cultural practice of allowing young children's nudity, while very much aware of how it might affect other people's feelings. In this lightly regulated situation, the parent had no difficulty voluntarily talking about her own, other people's, and her child's positive as well as negative feelings. Emotion words are underlined in the following examples.

Interviewer: Is it okay for [your child] to be around the house naked when not bathing?

Parent: Keeping her in clothes is a challenge. We do have rules about what furniture she can be on without clothes. If we have other people coming over, we certainly encourage her to put on clothes, unless it is people that we know that are comfortable with her being naked. She has some friends that they end up walking around naked together, and no one cares. We certainly do not encourage it around people who do not feel very comfortable about that. We just tell her it is private and it is okay to do that around people who are comfortable with that, but if not, she needs to put on clothes.

Interviewer: Any reasons why you set it up like this?

Parent: For me, I would not really care. But I just know certain people who would be uncomfortable with that. Probably more not to make people coming into our house feel uncomfortable. She runs around the yard sometimes naked, and I do not know how much longer we will let her do that either. At the beach, she wears a bathing suit. I do not think that she would want to go naked in front of a lot of people she did not know, at this point. She is also starting to develop that period where she likes clothes. She has tons of dress-up clothes. I guess she is growing out of that period of liking to be naked. I think it is just kind of evolving.

In the second example, the European American parent talked about sleeping arrangements, a heavily regulated situation in European American culture. Although cosleeping was not commonly practiced in European American culture, the parent had no difficulty voluntarily expressing her feelings. However, the feelings she expressed were more negative than positive.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to have [your daughter] sleep in your bed?

Parent: Because we wished we had done it for [my older son]. Everyone was telling us that kids need their own crib, and if you sleep with your kids they will never get

out of your bed, so we fought our instinct. I would put him in his crib, he would wake up, and he never slept well. He was up every night for three or four year. We lost a lot of sleep because he was up crying – I felt so sad. If I had put him in bed with me and let him nurse, it probably would have been better. So with [my daughter], even in the hospital, she was in my bed. She stayed right with me. Sometimes she would nurse when I was asleep, and I would not even wake up! I was getting a ton of rest with her. I never fought these instincts because things went much more smoothly with her. We were not letting our kids cry it out to teach them, which I do not like.

Interviewer: Were there any disadvantages to this sleeping arrangement?

Parent: No, it never bothered us. It worked out really well.

Comparing the two examples above, European American parents voluntarily spoke about emotions in both situations, but they expressed more negative than positive feelings when talking about cosleeping (heavily regulated) than nudity (lightly regulated). The following are two examples of Chinese immigrant parents talking about the same activities. Chinese immigrant parents differed not only in how voluntarily they discussed feelings, but also in their positive versus negative expressions. When speaking about sleeping arrangements (lightly regulated), this Chinese immigrant parent, whose child slept in a separate bed in her bedroom, voluntarily spoke about both her positive and negative feelings.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to have [your child] sleep in your room?

Parent: Because, first, it is convenient. And also, I was afraid that if something should happen, I would not be able to hear him cry, and he would be scared.

Interviewer: What are the advantages and disadvantages to having him in your room?

Parent: I would love him to sleep in my bed if I can, because it is such a joy. Even now, like the other night, in the middle of the night, he woke up and came into our bed, and I let him sleep in our bed under our blanket. I just held him, his little feet. Oh, it is such a wonderful feeling.

Interviewer: Did you ever consider having him sleep with you in your bed all the time?

Parent: I would like to, but both my husband and I work, so if we cannot sleep well… we just could not do it every night.

In contrast, when discussing children's nudity, a heavily regulated situation, Chinese immigrant parents were typically in agreement with the cultural norm, and provided reasons such as not wanting the child to catch a cold, teaching the child to "be polite," or simply state that "it is not right." Most Chinese immigrant parents were reluctant to express feelings even after the interviewer's solicitation, for example:

Interviewer: Is it okay when not bathing, for [your child] to be around the house without clothing?

Parent: No.

Interviewer: Why do you feel that way?

Parent: It is not appropriate to walk around the house without any clothes on. It just seems wrong.

While explaining how she planned to teach her 3-year-old child to keep clothes on, a Chinese immigrant parent expressed these feelings:

Maybe I would say to [my child], "It feels shameful to go without clothes. It is not good". Later on she will feel, "Oh, it is not good."

This example illustrates features of Chinese immigrant parents' emotional expressions in a heavily regulated situation – when Chinese immigrant parents do express emotions, the feelings are negative and in accordance with the cultural norm.

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