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Mother-child Discrepancy in Perceived Parental Control and Adolescent Filial Piety in Poor Single-mother Families

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Ethical approval

The authors declare that all procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of Human Subjects Ethics Sub-committee of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Abstract

Based on a sample of 432 poor Chinese single-mother families (mean age of adolescents = 13.7 years; 51.2% girls; mean age of mothers = 43.5 years) in Hong Kong, the interaction effect of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety of Chinese adolescents was examined. Results of polynomial multiple regression analyses showed that the interaction between mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control predicted perceived filial piety in adolescents. At high levels of mother-reported maternal control, high adolescent-perceived parental control was associated with higher filial piety. At low levels of mother-reported maternal control, filial piety increased initially and then decreased when adolescents reported higher levels of maternal control. Using multiple group analyses, these associations were found to be stable across gender and age. The present findings provide insights on how congruencies and discrepancies between mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control predict filial piety of Chinese adolescents growing up in poor single-mother families.

Keywords: parent-adolescent discrepancy; maternal control; single-parent families; filial piety; Chinese; poverty

Introduction

In the Chinese socialization practice, parents exercise parental control to train their children to be obedient, demonstrate proper conduct and impulse control, and meet filial obligations to the family (Wu, 1996). As a unique feature of Chinese parenting (Chao & Tseng, 2002), parental control has raised immense interest, curiosity and controversy for scholars, social science theorists and researchers in the Chinese and global contexts.

Parental control is generally defined as rules, requirements and restrictions that parents apply to their offspring (Smetana & Daddis, 2002). However, it is noteworthy to differentiate parental control from punitive or harsh parenting. In the Chinese culture, parental control contains strong elements of “training” and “monitoring”, as illustrated by the indigenous connotations of “*jiao xun*” (to train) and “*guan*” (to govern; Chao, 1994). “*Jiao xun*” is related to “teaching” of moral conduct and virtues by the parents to their offspring, whereas “*guan*” refers to parental monitoring of the offspring in compliance to the rules and standards. “*Guan*” (i.e., monitoring), in the Chinese understanding, contains a strong sense of parental commitment, love and devotion for the upbringing and benefits of their children (Chao, 1994; Stewart et al., 1998).

In the literature on parenting, parental control typically includes behavioral control and psychological control. Behavioral control is defined as the rules and regulations that parents use to monitor and regulate their children’s behaviors (Smetana & Daddis, 2002), whereas psychological control is regarded as the parents’ attempt to control the child’s activities through manipulating their psychological world (Smetana & Daddis, 2002). Majority of studies showed that behavioral control was a positive predictor of adolescent wellbeing and development, whereas psychological control negatively predicted adolescent positive development (e.g., Barber, Stolz & Olsen, 2005). With reference to the Chinese culture, Yang (1981) identified

several features of parental control strategies intrinsic to the Chinese culture, including training on conformity, modesty, self-suppression and self-contentment, use of shame, punishment orientation, and parent-centeredness. These strategies blur the boundaries of behavioral and psychological control exercised by parents (Wang, Pomerantz & Chen, 2007). In summary, Shek (2007b) highlighted three important characteristics of Chinese parental control. First, parental control combines both behavioral control and psychological control in order to build up unquestionable obedience of children towards their parents. Second, there is a high standard of morality to avoid any disgrace of the family's name. Third, strict and firm rules are set up so as to enforce parental expectations and standards. Previous studies indicated that parental control was positively associated with adolescents' achievement motivation and psychosocial development in the Chinese communities (Leung & Shek, 2013a, 2013b).

Embedded in the Confucian thoughts, parents are obliged to "train" and monitor their children in compliance to rules and standards. In response, children are expected to obey and respect their parents out of filial piety (Yeh & Yang, 1997). Filial piety is the dominant principle for regulating intergenerational conduct in the Chinese culture (Ho, 1994), which entails the obligations of the children/descendants to the superiors under "the same roof" in the Chinese ethical system (Hwang, 1999). Filial piety is a Chinese virtue that requires children/descendants to show respect and care for their parents/ancestors, follow the instructions of the superiors, build prestige of the family, and avoid bringing bad reputations to the family name (Ho, 1996). Previous studies showed that adolescents having higher levels of filial piety had better relationships with parents and were more ready to take up family obligations (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004). Besides, filial piety was positively related to adolescent psychosocial development and life satisfaction (Yeh & Bedford, 2003; Yeh et al., 2013).

The prediction of parental control on filial piety can possibly be explained by three mechanisms embedded in the Chinese familism. First, Ho (1994) used the term “authoritarian moralism” to illustrate the absolute authority of the parents in educating and monitoring their offspring to observe the moral standards. Chinese parents adopt a moral perspective in addressing the moral standards such as filial obligation and decent behaviors, rather than psychological orientation such as responding to the inner needs and emotions of offspring (Ho, 1994). In response, authoritarian filial piety (i.e., suppressing one’s desire and obeying parents’ rules in order to comply with the authority; Yeh & Bedford, 2003) is developed among Chinese children. Second, the indigenous parenting dimension of “*guan*” (i.e., monitoring) in the Chinese culture overlaps with parental warmth, which entails elements of parental commitment, involvement and investment that solely crave for the good and future of their offspring (Chao, 1994; Stewart et al., 1998). Adolescents who recognize the underlying meanings of parental control may feel the love, care and support from their parents. They may become more tolerant of parents’ rule and comply with their parents’ standards (Wong, Leung & McBride-Chang, 2010). Third, parental control predicts filial piety by means of the use of shame strategies (Yang, 1981). Chinese socialization has been regarded as a “shame and guilt-oriented culture” that Chinese people are socialized to be sensitive to the others’ views, and feel ashamed and guilty if there are disapprovals from others (Schoenhals, 1993). Hence, in response to parental control, adolescents usually follow parental standards and expectations. Otherwise, shame and guilt will be generated (Bempechat, Graham, & Jimenez, 1999). These mechanisms help to explain how parental control is used to build up adolescent filial piety.

One may ask the question of what would happen to adolescent filial piety if parents and adolescents perceive parental control differently. This is an important question as filial piety is a

basic intergenerational conduct in the Chinese culture (Ho, 1994), and it also reflects adolescent obligations to their family. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, research studying the prediction of parent-reported and adolescent-reported parental control on filial piety is non-existent in the current scientific literature.

In the scientific literature, there are different theoretical accounts explaining the effects of parent-child discrepancies of family attributes on adolescent development. The developmental perspective suggests that parent-child discrepancies of perceived family attributes are normative developmental events where adolescents search for independence, autonomy and self-identity (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Steinberg, 1991). In contrast, the family systems perspectives propose that parent-child discrepancies are consequences of miscommunication among family members, family stresses and maladaptive interaction patterns (Minuchin, 1985; Olson et al. 1983).

In fact, there is empirical evidence showing that parent-adolescent discrepancies in parental monitoring and control were negatively associated with adolescent psychosocial development and achievement motivation (Guion et al., 2009; Leung & Shek, 2014) and positively related to adolescent risk behaviors such as mental health problems, delinquency, alcohol-related problems and substance abuse (Abar et al., 2015; De Los Reyes et al., 2010; Maurizi et al., 2012; Pettit et al., 2001). In particular, Reynolds et al. (2011) found that greater adolescent-reported parental monitoring predicted lower adolescent delinquency than did parent-reported parental monitoring, and there was an interaction effect between parent-reported and adolescent-reported parental knowledge, with higher adolescent-reported parental knowledge predicted lower delinquency when parents also reported higher parental knowledge. Regarding family interactions, Juang,

Syed and Yakagi (2007) also reported that parent-child discrepant views of maternal control among Chinese American families were linked to family conflicts.

Pertinent researches have indicated that age of adolescents account for parenting attributes and adolescent developmental outcomes (Abar et al., 2015; Shek, 2005), and parent-child discrepancies may intensify in mid-adolescence due to pronounced parent-child conflicts emerging from the individuation process of adolescents in search of autonomy and independence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Ohannessian, 2012). Furthermore, previous studies have showed that the relationship between parenting practice and adolescent behaviors is stronger in girls than in boys (Shek, 1999).

However, there is an alternative argument that Chinese children are socialized to learn and practice filial piety via training, strict disciplinary techniques (e.g., threatening, scolding) and shame strategy when they are young (Fung, 1999). Miller et al. (1996) found that Chinese children early at the age of two and a half were socialized to be obedient to the parents and superiors. Moreover, the Chinese meaning of parental control includes “training” and “monitoring” of moral conduct and virtues, which are fundamental for adolescents regardless of their age and gender. Hence, the prediction of parental control on filial piety may be less susceptible to the influence of age and gender of adolescents. In a longitudinal study of 2,758 Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong, Shek (2007a) did not find any significant difference in parental control between Chinese adolescent boys and girls over time. As such, this is illuminating to explore whether there are age and gender differences in the prediction of the interaction between mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety.

Existing Research Gaps

There are three research gaps in this field of study. First, most studies employed mother-child dyads of intact families, while studies based on underprivileged families such as poor single-parent families are grossly neglected. In fact, it can be argued that parent and child discrepancies of parenting attributes and their effects are amplified in poor single-parent families because single-parents have less time and energy to monitor their children (Leung, 2016), and adolescents have heightened expectations of their mothers' roles in the absence of fathers. This is particularly crucial in single-mother families because fathers take up the role of monitoring and "training" of the children in the traditional Chinese culture, as described by the Chinese saying of "*yang bu jiao, fu zhi guo*" (it is the father's fault if he only nurtures but not teaches his children; Leung & Shek, 2012). In the absence of fathers, single-mothers are expected to take up both nurturing and controlling roles towards their children, which may result in role confusion when mothers fail to handle them tactfully.

Second, most of the related studies examining parent-child discrepancies of family attributes did not take cultural contexts into account. Undoubtedly, culture plays a primary role in the socialization process of children as it shapes the ecology of parenting practice (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006). Shek (2006) argued that family concepts and theories derived from the individualistic orientation in the Western societies may not be compatible with Chinese cultural values where collectivistic orientation is emphasized. In fact, culture may also amplify parent-child discrepancies of family attributes. Echoed by Kim et al. (2013), Chinese parents emphasize the use of negative parenting (e.g. generation of shame and guilt) and focus on academic achievement and family obligation, whereas American parents might prefer positive parenting (e.g., democratic parenting) and encourage children's autonomy. The study of parent-adolescent discrepancies of perceived family attributes in the Chinese communities is theoretically

important as Chinese people constitute nearly one-fifth of the world's population, and it provides important cues for theorists and researchers in the development of indigenous family process models where cultural specificity is expected in a diverse world. Research findings based on Chinese people also challenge the universality of Western theoretical propositions.

Third, majority of the studies on parent-adolescent discrepancies used discrepancy scores to assess the discrepancy effects on adolescent developmental outcomes (De Los Reyes et al., 2010; Leung & Shek, 2016). However, this method fails to provide evidence on how the parent-child discrepancies account for the effects, over-and-above the main effects of the informant reports that they are originated (Laird & Weems, 2011). Hence, this method is regarded as “statistically redundant” in examining the impacts of parent-child discrepancies of family processes on adolescent development (Leung, Shek & Li, 2016; De Los Reyes, Ohannessian & Laird, 2016).

The Present Study

With reference to the gaps in the literature, the study attempted to examine the moderating effect of mother-reported maternal control on the relationship between adolescent-reported maternal control and filial piety of adolescents in poor Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong. There are three research questions:

Research Question 1: Does mother-report maternal control moderate the prediction of adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety of adolescents in Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong? Based on the previous studies that parent-reported parental knowledge moderated the prediction of adolescent-reported parental knowledge on adolescents' developmental behaviors (Reynolds et al., 2011), it was hypothesized that mother reports of

maternal control would moderate the influence of maternal control on filial piety reported by adolescents in poor Chinese single-mother families. Specifically, according to the thesis of “authoritarian moralism” that adolescents show obedience towards their mothers’ authority and supervision (Ho, 1994), and appreciate their mothers’ commitment and “teaching”, it was hypothesized that congruence of higher levels of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control would be associated with higher levels of filial piety (Hypothesis 1a). In contrast, as low levels of maternal control reported by both mothers and adolescents may imply weak supervision and loose standards towards their children’s behaviors, it was hypothesized that congruence of lower levels of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control would be related to lower levels of filial piety (Hypothesis 1b). Furthermore, based on: a) family disorganization theory suggesting that parent-adolescent discrepancies are indicators of maladaptive family interaction patterns and non-cohesive family atmosphere (Minuchin, 1985); and b) previous studies showing that parent-child discrepancies of parental control and monitoring positively predicted family conflicts (Juang, Syed & Yakagi, 2007), it was hypothesized that lower levels of adolescent-reported maternal control would predict lower levels of filial piety when mothers reported higher levels of maternal control (i.e., mothers perceived themselves as more controlling) (Hypothesis 1c). Similarly, higher levels of adolescent-reported maternal control but lower levels of mother-reported maternal control would predict lower levels of filial piety (i.e., adolescents perceived their mothers to be more controlling than did their mothers) (Hypothesis 1d).

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in the interaction effect of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety between younger and elder adolescents in Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong? As Chinese children are socialized to learn filial

piety when they are young (Fung, 1999; Miller et al., 1996), it was hypothesized that there would be invariance between younger and elder adolescents in the interaction effect of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on adolescent filial piety in Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong (Hypothesis 2).

Research Question 3: Is there any difference in the interaction effect of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety between adolescent boys and girls in Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong? Based on the fact that the Chinese meaning of parental control includes “training” and “monitoring” of moral conduct and virtues regardless of adolescent gender, as well as previous findings that there was no significant difference in parental control between Chinese adolescent boys and girls over time (Shek, 2007a), it was hypothesized that there would be invariance between adolescent boys and girls in the interaction effect of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on adolescent filial piety in Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong (Hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants and Procedures

Parents and adolescents from poor Chinese single-mother families in Hong Kong were selected as the target respondents of the study. As there is no comprehensive list of single-mother families in Hong Kong, and single-mother families were hidden in the community to minimize social stigma, purposive sampling method was employed. Different social service centers (e.g., community service centers, family service centers, children and youth service centers) across Hong Kong were invited to participate in the research, with 17 social service centers eventually participating in the study. Social workers of the social service centers helped to identify the

participant families under three criteria: 1) Chinese single-mother families living in Hong Kong, 2) adolescents with ages between 11 and 17; and 3) families living under the poverty threshold of Hong Kong, i.e., monthly household income below 50% of monthly median domestic household income. Finally, there were 432 single-mother families participating in the research.

Social workers were trained to conduct data collection from the respondents. Written informed consent from all participants was sought. The mothers were invited to complete a questionnaire that contained the measure of maternal control and some socio-demographic questions, and the adolescents were invited to complete another questionnaire that contained measures of maternal control and filial piety. They filled out the questionnaires separately in a self-administered format so as to ensure confidentiality. Trained social workers helped to read out the items when the participants (mainly the mothers) had difficulties in comprehending the questionnaires. Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-committee of an internationally recognized university.

The mean age of the mothers was 43.5 ($SD = 5.79$). Regarding their marital status, 12 (2.8%) were unmarried, 302 (69.9%) were divorced, 77 (17.8%) were widowed, 27 (6.2%) were separated and 8 (1.9%) lost contact with their husbands. Regarding educational level, 308 (71.6%) mothers had junior secondary level or lower. There were 25.9% of the mothers ($n = 112$) who were born in Hong Kong, and the other 73.4% of the mothers ($n = 317$) were immigrants from Mainland China (there were three who did not respond). A high proportion of single-mother families received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) ($n = 315$, 72.9%), whereas those entering the labour market were engaged in unskilled work ($n = 43$, 10.0%). The mean number of children was 1.89 ($SD = 0.84$).

Regarding the adolescent sample, 211 (48.8%) were boys and 221 (51.2%) were girls. The ratio is comparable with the Hong Kong statistics. The mean age was 13.7 ($SD = 2.03$).

Regarding the educational level, 27.7% ($n = 124$) studied in primary schools (Grade 6 and below), 46.9% ($n = 203$) in junior secondary level (Grade 7-9), and 24.3% ($n = 105$) in senior secondary level (Grade 10 and above). 267 adolescents (61.8%) were born in Hong Kong, whereas 160 (37.0%) were immigrants from Mainland China (there were five who did not respond).

Instruments

Maternal control

Chinese Maternal Control Scale (AMCS). Based on the Chinese conceptions of parental control that reflect the indigenous notions of “*jiao xun*” (to train) and “*guan*” (to govern; Chao, 1994), Shek (2005, 2007b) developed a twelve-item indigenous AMCS in assessing maternal control. Each item is assessed on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree”. A sample item is “*My mother is very harsh in my discipline*”. AMCS showed good reliability and validity in a validation study in Hong Kong (Shek, 2007b). Higher scores indicate higher level of maternal control perceived by adolescents. The mother-perceived maternal control scale (MCS) was modelled after AMCS. Both MCS and AMCS showed good reliability in the study (MCS: $\alpha = 0.87$; AMCS: $\alpha = 0.86$).

Filial piety

The Filial Behaviour Scale (FBS). Based on Ho’s (1996) conceptualization of filial piety, a 25-item indigenous FBS was developed for the Chinese communities (Chen et al., 2007). An

example of FBS item is “When I have conflicts with parents, I will sacrifice my interest”. Respondents are requested to rate their response on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “totally disagree” to 5 = “totally agree”. The tool showed good psychometric properties in both samples of Beijing and Hong Kong (Chen et al., 2007). The mean score was used as an indicator of the degree of filial behavior, with higher scores indicating higher levels. The scale showed excellent reliability in this study ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Data Analyses

Regarding Research Question 1, polynomial regression analyses (Edwards, 1994) were conducted to assess the moderation of mother-reported maternal control on the prediction of adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety. This analytical strategy was used as it provided a more direct analysis on how parent-child discrepancies predicted adolescent psychosocial development, over-and-beyond the main effects of each single informant report (De Los Reyes, Ohannessian & Laird, 2016; Laird & De Los Reyes, 2013). The scores of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control were standardized. The equation of the polynomial multiple regression model is shown as follows:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 A + b_2 M + b_3 A^2 + b_4 AM + b_5 M^2 + e$$

In the equation, M and A represent mothers’ and adolescents’ reports of maternal control, b_2 and b_5 represent the linear and quadratic effects of mother-reported maternal control when adolescent-reported maternal control was at the mean level, b_1 and b_3 represent the linear and quadratic effects of adolescent-reported maternal control when mother-reported maternal control was at the mean level, and b_4 represents the interaction term between mother- and adolescent-reported maternal control. To minimize misrepresentation of the quadratic effect of mother-

reported or adolescent-reported maternal control by the interaction term, both quadratic effects represented by M^2 and A^2 were added in the equation (Ganzach, 1997; Laird & De Los Reyes, 2013). Furthermore, higher order effects (i.e., quadratic interactions and cubic effects of informant-reported maternal control) were added to the tested model to consider the complexity of the relationships. Post-hoc interpretation of significant interaction terms was performed by simple slopes calculation at high (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) levels of the mother-reported maternal control (Cohen et al., 2003) and plotting of the predicted outcome values.

Regarding Research Question 2, multiple group analyses via structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 22.0 were performed to assess whether there was invariance between younger and elder adolescents in the prediction of the interaction between mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety. The two groups were adolescent age below mean (i.e., < 13.7) and age above mean (i.e. > 13.7), with $n_{(< 13.7)} = 207$ and $n_{(> 13.7)} = 225$, respectively. Two goodness-of-fit indices, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value greater than .90 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) lower than .06, were used to indicate a good fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Chi-square difference test and change of CFI (i.e., $\Delta CFI < .01$; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002) were employed to assess model invariance between the groups. Similarly, multiple group analyses were performed to answer Research Question 3.

Results

The descriptive findings are presented in Table 1. Correlational analyses indicated that both mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control were positively related to adolescents' filial piety, with $r = .16$ ($p < .01$) and $.38$ ($p < .001$), respectively (Table 1). As expected,

adolescent-reported maternal control showed stronger association with adolescent filial piety than did parent-reported maternal control.

Regarding Research Question 1, after controlling adolescents' gender and age, it was found that the interaction between adolescent-reported maternal control and the quadratic effect of mother-reported maternal control predicted filial piety, with $b = -1.98$, $SE = .72$, $p < .01$ (see Table 2). This interaction was interpreted with the quadratic term of mother reports serving as the moderator of the effect of adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety. The main effect of adolescent-reported maternal control was stronger when the quadratic term of mother-reported maternal control was at high levels ($b = 6.59$, $SE = 1.05$, $p < .001$) than at low levels ($b = 4.30$, $SE = 1.16$, $p < .001$).

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction effect observed. When adolescents perceived low levels of maternal control, their filial piety was the lowest irrespective of whether maternal control perceived by mothers was high or low. On the other hand, under high perceived maternal control by adolescents, filial piety differed under higher and lower levels of maternal control perceived by mothers. In fact, the present findings suggested that adolescent perceived maternal control was more important than mothers' view of their own control.

For Research Question 2, i.e., to test whether there was invariance between younger and elder adolescents in the prediction of the interaction between mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety, multiple group analyses were performed comparing between the constrained model (i.e. all paths of predictors to be equal across the two age groups) and the unconstrained model. The linear, quadratic and cubic terms of parent-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control, as well as the interaction terms (i.e., the interaction term between mother- and adolescent-reported maternal control, the interaction term between

adolescent reports and quadratic effects of mother reports and the interaction term between mother reports and quadratic effects of adolescent reports) were taken as the independent variables, filial piety was the dependent variable and adolescent age was the moderating variable. Results showed that the unconstrained model showed a good fit of the data, with CFI = .99 ($> .90$) and RMSEA = .01 ($< .06$; Hu & Bentler, 1999). When constraining all predictive paths to be equal across the two age groups (i.e., age < 13.7 and age > 13.7), the model fitted the data well, with CFI = .99 ($> .90$) and RMSEA = .02 ($< .06$). There was invariance between younger and elder adolescents on the main effects of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control as well as their interaction effects on filial piety, with $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 13.99$ ($p > .05$) and $\Delta\text{CFI} = .00$ ($< .01$).

For Research Question 3, similar procedures were performed with adolescent gender as the moderating variable. The results of multiple group analyses showed that the unconstrained model fitted the data well, with CFI = .99 ($> .90$) and RMSEA = .04 ($< .06$; Hu & Bentler, 1999). When constraining all the predictive paths to be equal across gender, the model also showed a good fit of the data, with CFI = .99 ($> .90$) and RMSEA = .04 ($< .06$). Overall, there was invariance between boys and girls on the main effects of mother-reported and adolescent-reported maternal control as well as their interaction effects on filial piety, with $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 16.84$ ($p > .05$) and $\Delta\text{CFI} = .00$ ($< .01$).

Discussion

The study examined the moderating effect of mother-reported maternal control on the relationship between adolescent-reported maternal control and adolescent filial piety in poor Chinese single-mother families. The present findings indicated that mother-reported maternal

control moderated the prediction of adolescent-reported maternal control on adolescent filial piety. When adolescents reported low levels of maternal control, filial piety was at the lowest levels when mothers reported also low levels of maternal control. As parental control in the Chinese culture contains the meanings of “training” and “monitoring” (Chao, 1994), which lays out the rules, guidelines and expectations for the children to follow, low levels of maternal control reported by both mothers and adolescents may represent loose standards and weak monitoring of the children by their mothers. This may hinder the development of filial piety among adolescents, when familial expectations, requirements and obligations become blurred.

However, in case adolescents perceived high levels but mothers perceived low levels of maternal control, the discrepancy may represent parent-child differences and conflicts on maternal monitoring and supervision. It is a typical case where parents feel that they are not controlling but the children feel that it is the case. In fact, even though mothers exercise low maternal control to their children, adolescents may still perceive that mothers exercise too much control, monitoring and surveillance, which is a sign of mistrust and restriction to autonomy (Leung & Shek, 2014). This may create parent-child conflicts and family stresses that reduce adolescents’ sense of filial piety. Besides, parental monitoring (i.e., “*guan*”) entails the care, commitment and involvement for the better development of the children (Chao, 1994; Stewart et al., 1998). The mother-child discrepancies may imply the unpredictability of maternal commitment and involvement, which further weakens adolescent development of filial piety.

When mothers reported high levels of maternal control and adolescents reported low levels of maternal control, adolescent filial piety was slightly higher than those families having low maternal control reported by both mothers and adolescents. This is a typical case where parents feel that they are involved in the parenting process but the children simply do not feel it,

resulting in detachment in children. The detachment of adolescents may obstruct their development of filial piety.

Finally, when both mothers and adolescents reported high perceptions of maternal control, the sense of filial piety was the highest. This echoes with Ho's (1994) suggestion on "authoritarian moralism" that illustrates adolescents' obedience towards mothers' authority in educating and monitoring their offspring. Maternal control may also be regarded as mother's teaching, concern and care towards their offspring. Adolescents may appreciate their mothers' intention and behaviors of "governing" as these are solely for the sake of their development and benefits. Hence, they show greater filial piety as a gratitude towards their mothers' concerns (Wong, Leung & McBride-Chang, 2010).

In summary, there were two important observations arising from the study. First, adolescents' perceptions of maternal control positively predicted their filial piety in poor Chinese single-mother families. It can be interpreted that maternal control set up standards and expectations for adolescents to follow, which affect the development of adolescent filial piety. Besides, maternal control can be seen as love and concern by adolescent children. Second, informant congruency and discrepancy of maternal control did affect filial piety of adolescents. Mother-adolescent congruency of higher levels of maternal control was associated with higher levels of adolescent filial piety, whereas mother-adolescent congruency of low levels of maternal control was associated with lower levels of adolescent filial piety. However, mother-adolescent discrepancies of reported maternal control showed a different picture. Adolescent filial piety was not high if mothers and adolescents showed discrepant views of maternal control. The unpredictability of maternal commitment, adolescents' perceptions of mistrust and restrictions from their mothers (as in the cases of lower levels of mother-reported but higher levels of

adolescent-reported maternal control), as well as adolescents' detachment from maternal control (as in the cases of higher levels of mother-reported but lower levels of adolescent-reported maternal control) may arise family conflicts, which may reduce adolescent filial piety.

Multiple group analyses further showed that there was gender and age invariance of the effects of parent-child discrepancies of maternal control on perceived filial piety. These findings echo the proposition that children are socialized to learn filial piety regardless of their age and gender (Fung, 1999; Miller et al., 1996). Furthermore, parental control embodies “training” and “monitoring” of moral conduct and virtues, which are essential for Chinese adolescents irrespective to their age and gender. This is especially critical for single-mothers, as they need to take up the roles of parental control in the absence of fathers. The failure to take up these roles would imply the loss of control over their children, as well as risks for adolescents to learn immoral values and misbehaviors. Indeed, as research on adolescent gender and age difference between parental control and filial piety in Chinese families is sparse, more related studies on this area are encouraged.

Implications of the Study

The study has theoretical, methodological and practical contributions. Theoretically speaking, this study is the first empirical effort in the scientific literature that examines the interaction effects of parent-child reported maternal control on adolescent filial piety of Chinese single-mother families living in poverty. Besides, multiple group analyses were used to examine age and gender invariance in the effects of mother-child discrepancies on adolescent filial piety. In view of paucity of studies that examine parent-child discrepancies in family attributes in the Chinese contexts as well as underprivileged communities (Leung, Shek & Li, 2016), the study

brings an important theoretical contribution to the existing literature. Second, the study assesses the moderation effects of mother-reported maternal control on the effects of adolescent-reported maternal control on adolescent filial piety, which helps in the development of Chinese models on adolescent socialization.

Methodologically, the study provides a good illustration of the employment of polynomial regression analyses in assessing the congruencies and discrepancies of parents' and adolescents' reports in influencing adolescent developmental outcomes. In view of the criticism of Laird and De Los Reyes (2013) that the calculation of discrepancy scores "cannot validly assess informant discrepancies" (p. 11), this study brings methodological advances by using polynomial regression analyses to provide evidence on the effects of mother-adolescent congruencies and discrepancies of reported maternal control in predicting adolescent filial piety, over-and-above the main effects of mother reports and adolescent reports of maternal control.

Practically, the study shows that there is an interaction effect between mothers and adolescents in reporting maternal control, which predicts adolescent filial piety. Hence, clinical practitioners should be aware of divergent views of mothers and adolescents in the perceptions of maternal control, rather than simply listen to one single view of family member. It is more advisable to employ a family intervention approach that assesses the perceptions from both parents and adolescents. Furthermore, mother-adolescent congruent views of low levels of maternal control as well as their discrepant views of maternal control predicted low levels of adolescent filial piety. The findings may provide insights for single-mother families. In the Chinese culture, adolescents who have greater filial obligations and stronger familial connections are more prepared to support their parents in the future (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; Chen et al., 2007). The findings suggest that mother-child discrepancy in reported maternal control may

weaken adolescent filial piety, which in turn inhibits their filial obligations in taking care of their aging parents in the future. This is particularly impactful for poor single-mothers as their children may become the main source of financial and affective support in their old age. Hence, clinical practitioners and family workers should be more sensitive to the parent-child interactions, and strengthen their dyadic bonding when mother-child miscommunication arises.

Last but not the least, though high levels of mother reports and adolescent reports of maternal control was associated with high levels of filial piety of adolescents, clinical practitioners should be sensitive to the psychological stresses that both single mothers and adolescents exhibit. As single-mothers shoulder the dual burdens of nurturing and monitoring the children, adolescents may experience shame and guilt when they fail to follow their mothers' rules and standards (Bempechat, Graham, & Jimenez, 1999). They may need to suppress their own interests so as to please their mothers and fulfil their filial obligations (Leung, Shek & Li, 2016). Clinical practitioners may need to respond to their psychological needs appropriately.

There are several limitations of this study. First, as this study adopted a non-random sampling strategy, generalizability of the findings may be limited. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study has the limitation in inferring cause-and-effect relationships. Hence, longitudinal research design is encouraged for future studies. Third, as the findings were based on Chinese poor single-mother families in Hong Kong, there is a concern on the generalizability of the findings to intact families in Hong Kong and families in different Chinese communities (e.g., Mainland Chinese, American Chinese). It is suggested that related studies should be conducted in Chinese intact families in Hong Kong and families in different Chinese communities (such as Mainland Chinese and the American Chinese) to see whether the findings could be generalized to families under the Chinese culture. Last but not the least, as the study

was constrained to the Chinese conceptualization of parental control and filial piety, the findings may not be generalized to the families of other cultures. Specifically, parental control in the Chinese culture combines both behavioral control and psychological control. Moreover, filial piety does not occupy the central place in parent-child relations in the Western world that it does in the Chinese culture. This may bring limitations on the generalizability of the findings to other regions of the world.

The study provides evidence that mother-reported maternal control moderates the effect of adolescent-reported maternal control on filial piety perceived by adolescents in poor Chinese single-mother families. This study advances our understanding on how the effects of congruencies and discrepancies of mother and adolescent reports of maternal control would predict adolescent filial piety, which has important theoretical, methodological and practical implications to the study of adolescence. In view of the urge in examining the relationships between parent-child discrepancies of family attributes and adolescent development in different cultural contexts (Leung & Shek, 2016), this study takes a humble step towards the call.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations of the measuring variables ($N = 432$)

		Range	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Gender of adolescents (boys = -1, girls= 1)	-1 - 1	-.00	1.00	1.00				
2.	Age of adolescents	11 - 17	13.67	2.03	-.00	1.00			
3.	Mother-reported maternal control	13 - 26	38.05	4.68	-.02	-.11*	1.00		
4.	Adolescent-reported maternal control	13 - 48	37.60	5.64	-.03	-.16**	.36***	1.00	
5.	Filial piety	25 - 125	91.42	12.60	.09	-.17**	.16**	.38***	1.00

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Parent and adolescent reports of maternal control as predictors of adolescent filial piety

	Adolescent filial piety			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	91.97	.85		< .001
Gender	-1.38	.56	-.11	.01
Age	-1.27	.56	-.10	.03
Mother report	-.33	1.11	-.03	.77
Adolescent report	5.45	.88	.43	< .001
Adolescent X Mother	1.15	.67	.10	.09
Mother squared	-.81	.50	-.08	.11
Adolescent squared	-.27	.56	-.03	.63
Mother X Adolescent squared	1.13	.79	.12	.15
Mother squared X Adolescent	-1.98	.72	-.18	.01
Mother cubed	.63	.40	.15	.11
Adolescent cubed	-.43	.29	-.16	.15
<i>R</i>			.44	
<i>R</i> ²			.20	

Fig. 1 Predicted values of adolescent filial piety as a function of adolescent-reported maternal control at high and low levels of mother-reported maternal control

