The relation between perception of family emotion-related practices and meta-emotion philosophy among Chinese mothers

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INTRODUCTION

- Parental meta-emotion philosophy (MEP), an important construct for evaluating mothers' beliefs about emotions, plays a critical role in children's socioemotional development (Ford & Gross, 2018; Gottman et al., 1996, 2013; Katz et al., 2012).
- Mothers' perception of emotion-related practices (ERP) used by their parents may shape their own MEP (Dunsmore et al., 2009).
- This study investigates the relation between the perception of emotion-related practice from their parents and meta-emotion philosophy among Chinese mothers and the difference between Hong Kong mothers and Beijing mothers.

METHODS

Participants

Thirty-two Hong Kong (HK) and 32 Beijing Chinese mothers with young children (Mage=4.68) were recruited. Majority of mothers are equipped with a Bachelor's degree (59% in HK, 96% in Beijing), married (97% in HK, 94% in Beijing), and working (46% in Hong Kong, 88% in Beijing).

Measures

Meta-emotion Interview

- Mothers were interviewed using the meta-emotion interview (MEI). Quantitative method was used to code the MEI for five aspects of MEP (Gottman et al., 1996; Hunter et al., 2006), including mothers' acceptance and expressivity of their own negative emotion, mothers' acceptance of children's negative emotion and use of age-appropriate, supportive responses on child's negative emotion. This study mainly focus on mothers' acceptance and expressive of own negative emotion and the use of supportive responses on child's negative emotion.
- Thematic analysis was used to code mothers' perception of ERP from their parents qualitatively (Table 1).

Analysis

A series of simple linear regression was run to examine the relation between mothers' attitudes of their parents' ERP and mothers' MEP in Hong Kong and Beijing.

Qualitative codes

Table 1. Qualitative thematic codes on perception of parents' emotion-related practices

Codes	Definition
model supportive emotion-related practices	Participants described accepting, modelling, or passing on positive/supportive parenting habits or practices of their own parents when they raise with their own child. Example: "假如說我有點害怕或者說危險的時候，我媽我都會幫助我，所以我也佳琪一說害怕，我立刻就會幫助她。"
rectify unsupportive emotion-related practices	Participants described unsupportive parents' emotion-related practices they received in their upbringing. Some parents might criticize/disagree with those practices. Parents also talked about how they rectify and change these practices when they raise their own child. Example: "我感覺我自己我媽媽她是一個負面情緒比較重的人，然後在我的印象裡邊，我小時候是天天挨打的。 當我覺得我的負面情緒來的時候，然後我就要盡量克制一下自己就不要在我的孩子面前表現出來。"
model unwanted emotion-related practices	Participants criticized some aspects of family emotion-related practices but described unintentionally copying their parents' negative emotion-related practices and stated that they didn't like it. Example: "我媽同我一樣啦。即係得我同細佬有爭執之後佢都會行出嚟鬧我呀好大聲鬧人，會打我哋咁樣。咁所以就咁copy咗，其實係好唔想copy我媽咪。"
model unsupportive emotion-related practices without internal conflict	Participants described modelling unsupportive aspects of family emotion-related practices. It is unclear whether the participant dislike modelling this practice, or participants did not express internal conflict/regret. Example: "現在想的話，我可能生氣的話，可能就是跟我媽的脾氣比較火爆，可能是有關係。她比較愛發脾氣，當然現在歲數大了好很多。"
neutral view on emotion-related practices	Participants described family emotion-related practices in a matter-of-fact way or stated that they did not consider their past have much impact on them. Example: "因為我我小的時候表達憤怒，基本上家裡人也不太管。"
justifying unsupportive emotion-related practices	Participants offered justification for why their parents use negative emotion-related practices. Some reasons included being too busy, not knowing what to do, thinking it's no big deal. Example: "我覺得佢地認為小朋友自己會大喊啦，父母又好忙翻工，咁呢D咁小嘅嘢就自己處理啦。"

RESULTS

Table 2. Association between mothers' attitude towards their parents' emotion-related practices and their own meta-emotion philosophy

	Hong Kong			Beijing		
	Acceptance of own emotion	Expressiveness of own emotion	Use of supportive responses	Acceptance of own emotion	Expressiveness of own emotion	Use of supportive responses
Rectify unsupportive ERP	.399*	-0.328	-0.261	-.474**	-0.041	-0.33
Model unwanted practice	-0.111	0.124	-.396*	0.133	0.119	-0.182
Model unsupportive practice	0.102	-.605**	-0.263	0.236	-0.216	0.003

*p < .05, **p < .01

- Mothers' rectification of past family ERP was positively related to their acceptance of own emotions in HK (β=0.40 p=.026), but negatively related in Beijing (β=-0.47, p<.01).
- Among HK mothers, modeling unwanted family ERP was significantly related to less use of supportive strategies in response to child's emotion, β=-0.396, p=.025, and modeling unsupportive practices without internal conflict was significantly associated with a lower level of expressivity of own emotion, β=-0.605, p<.01.

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study suggested that mothers' current MEP differentially related to how they perceive their own parents' ERP across regions in Chinese culture.

Reference

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