

DOCTORAL THESIS

Patterns of adolescent-parent conflicts over schoolwork in Chinese families

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ABSTRACT

According to previous studies, schoolwork is the major source of adolescent-parent conflicts in Mainland China. Adolescents' personal reasoning over schoolwork conflicts reveals their desire for achieving autonomy in schoolwork. Meanwhile, their avoiding and obeying conflict resolution strategies co-exist with self-assertion. Parental psychological control is found among Mainland Chinese parents in the situations about offspring's schoolwork, which has detrimental effects on children's autonomy development. With the theoretical underpinnings of social domain theory, ecological systems theory, self-determination theory and family systems theory, the present study aims to examine the patterns of adolescent-parent conflicts over schoolwork in Ningxia of Mainland China, and explore the role of parental psychological control and the development of teenagers' autonomy in schoolwork conflicts.

This study adopted grounded theory approach. Convenience and snowball sampling were conducted at the initial stage of sampling while purposeful and conceptual sampling were adopted to develop the grounded theory. There were 63 parents and teenagers participating in the present research. Specifically, 28 parents and 35 adolescents joined in this research. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interview and joint interview. Coping coding, axial coding and selective coding were used to analyze data.

A grounded theory on patterns of conflicts over schoolwork, as well as parental psychological control and teenagers' autonomy revealed in schoolwork conflicts is developed in this study. Adolescents' reasoning about adolescent-parent conflicts over

schoolwork is reactive to parental expectation and investment. Their resolution strategies in schoolwork conflicts also respond to parents' strategies in the process of conflict resolution. Psychological control is revealed in parents' conflict resolution strategies, which brings controlled motivation revealed in children's reasoning about schoolwork conflicts. Controlled motivation discourages the development of adolescents' autonomy over schoolwork. Contributions are made to fill up the gaps of adolescent-parent conflicts over schoolwork in Chinese families, as well as the advancement of adolescents' autonomy development in the context of adolescent-parent conflicts over schoolwork in Chinese families.

Keywords: Adolescent-parent schoolwork conflicts; Conflict reasoning; Conflict resolution; Parental psychological control; Autonomy

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