

IMMIGRANT MOTHERS--AMERICAN DAUGHTERS:
CONTEXT AND MEANING OF RELATIONSHIPS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Life course and gender theorists emphasize the importance of contextual factors on human development and family life, including social structural positions, assignment of meaning to events, and cultural beliefs and practices. In addition, life course theorists punctuate the relevance of event timing on individual and familial growth and they seek to understand adaptive life patterns. Family scholars and gerontologists espouse the use of life course and gender theories to examine ethnic minorities' familial experiences. The present research examined relationships between immigrant post WWII mothers in mid and late life and adult daughters. Five contextual factors were examined: (1) perceptions of minority group status; (2) beliefs of having power, privilege, and prestige; (3) ethnic community involvement; (4) language and communication practices; and (5) expectations of women's relationships within families. In addition, the researcher considered the timing of mothers' immigration on relationship patterns. Twenty-two mothers and daughters participated in individual semi-structured interviews in which they discussed the associations among the contextual factors and challenging, fulfilling, and neutral relationship pathways. Thematic analysis of the mothers' and daughters' interview data and

analysis of the investigator's research journal revealed that dimensions of communication, transitions and turning points, culture, and contact underscore relationship pathway. The findings from the present study contribute to theoretical perspectives, such as life course and gender theory, by illustrating the juxtaposition among factors such as generational position, culture, and gender. The implications of the research include the utility of using gender and life course perspectives jointly, the importance of considering how policies have direct and lingering affects on people's lives, the significance of social geography in ethnic minorities' lives, the need to attend to generational positions within immigrant families, and the usefulness of the research findings for support group settings and for counselors working with immigrant and ethnic minority group members.

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