



Parenting hassles mediate predictors of Chinese and Korean immigrants' psychologically controlling parenting



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ABSTRACT

We examined: (1) the mediating role of parenting daily hassles in the associations between three predictors (child temperament, maternal psychological well-being, and marital quality) and psychologically controlling practices in two Asian immigrant samples. We also explored the moderating role of maternal acculturation in the path from parenting daily hassles to psychological control. Participants were 152 Chinese and 165 Korean immigrant mothers with preschool children in the U.S. Multi-group path analysis revealed that easier child temperament, higher psychological well-being, and better marital quality were each associated with fewer parenting daily hassles, which in turn were associated with less psychological control. These general mediating effects held for both groups. However, the indirect effects of child temperament, maternal psychological well-being, and marital quality through parenting daily hassles were further moderated by acculturation for Chinese immigrant mothers, but not Korean immigrant mothers. The culturally similar and different findings across the two groups were discussed.

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Psychological control refers to parents' intrusive control of the child's thoughts and emotions through guilt induction, love withdrawal, invalidating feelings, erratic emotional behavior, personal attack, and constraining verbal expressions (Barber, 1996). Asian parents have been found to engage in higher rates of psychologically controlling practices than their Western counterparts (Chao & Aque, 2009; Wu et al., 2002). Importantly, some recent research efforts have been devoted to understanding the culturally unique meanings and measurement of psychological control among Asian families (Chao & Aque, 2009; Ho, 1986; Yu, Cheah, Hart, Sun, & Olsen, 2015). The overall construct of psychological control as defined above has been generally found to be associated with negative developmental outcomes, such as aggression, withdrawal, depression, and delinquency among children and adolescents in diverse cultural settings, including those from Asian samples (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005; D. Nelson, Hart, Yang,

Olsen, & Jin, 2006; L. Nelson et al., 2006; Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007).

However, few studies have examined the concomitants and predictors of psychological control. Examinations of whether individual characteristics and familial processes are associated with the use of psychological control are crucial for understanding the unique patterns of parenting among Asian immigrants. In this study, we focused on Chinese and Korean immigrant parents because they are two of the largest East Asian immigrant populations in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and come from cultures where psychological control is commonly used relative to other cultures that endorse more autonomy promoting parenting (Chao & Aque, 2009; Wu et al., 2002). Moreover, Asian immigrants in general are racial minorities and experience linguistic difficulties in the U.S. They have to contend with not only with the daily stresses of parenting but also with acculturative stress (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010), which makes these two groups ideally suited for studying contextual influences on parenting behavior.

Previous research has tended to consider immigrants from East Asian countries as a single group because of their shared characteristics and traditions. Their commonality is a set of longstanding cultural values rooted in Confucianism that emphasizes education, family honor, discipline, and respect for authority. However, Chinese and

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Korean immigrants are different in important ways, including language use, histories of immigration, homeland conditions, pre-migration socioeconomic backgrounds, and modes of incorporation into the U.S. (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Another noteworthy difference between the two ethnic groups is that the Korean immigrant community has more extensive involvement in religion than the Chinese immigrant community. The Korean church serves multiple functions, including meeting religious needs, offering socio-psychological support, economic assistance, and educational resources (Min & Kim, 2002). Moreover, Korean immigrants in the U.S. have been found to maintain stronger ethnic attachment and cultural traditions (Min, 1995), and experience lower psychological well-being (Wong, Yoo, & Stewart, 2007) than other Asian immigrants. In contrast, some researchers have suggested that Korean immigrants tend to arrive with values that are more consistent with those found in the U.S. than Chinese immigrants due to a longer period of 'Westernization' in South Korea than in China, which impacts their parenting (Ju & Chung, 2000; Park & Cheah, 2005). Exposure to Westernization may predispose Korean parents to engage in less controlling parenting practices than Chinese parents.

Although we have no direct measure of the precise features of the social context that may shape mothers' parenting, we drew from the literature presented below in examining differences in mothers' psychological well-being, parenting daily hassles, acculturation, perceptions of child temperamental characteristics and psychologically controlling parenting to provide insight into how the social context may affect Chinese and Korean immigrant parenting experiences. Whether such contextual and cultural differences may also be reflected in ways that psychologically controlling practices are linked to individual characteristics and family processes in Chinese versus Korean immigrant families is unknown, and thus requires examination.

1. Concomitants and predictors of psychological control

Several theoretical models have been proposed to illuminate the determinants of parenting. However, extant empirical studies have rarely systematically examined multiple concomitants and predictors of parenting, especially psychological control, in one model (Kuppens, Grietens, Onghena, & Michiels, 2009; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001; Li, Putallaz, & Su, 2011; Ong, 2010; Shuster, Li, & Shi, 2012). Belsky's (1984) parenting process model suggests that child characteristics, psychological resources of parents, and contextual sources of stress and support are the three important domains of factors that determine parenting. Based on the proposition of this model, we selected child temperament, parents' psychological well-being, and marital quality to represent the three domains of determinants. In addition, Abidin's (1992) model also informed our study, which proposes parenting stress as a central construct leading to more coercive parenting and also as a mediator in the relations between parenting relevant stressors (e.g., work, parental mental health, marital relationship, and child characteristics) and parenting behaviors. Finally, we examined the role of acculturation, which is considered a particularly important determinant of immigrant parenting (Foss, 1996), in these processes.

In the following subsections, each proposed factor is discussed along with their potential associations with psychological control. Due to the lack of research specifically examining concomitants and predictors of psychological control, relevant studies on other related parenting styles and practices were also reviewed in order to have some literature to draw from in our conceptualizations. Psychological control shares certain conceptualization and/or predictive significance of child outcomes with coercive parenting constructs (Barber & Xia, 2013). More specifically, psychological control is conceptualized as one of several authoritarian-distinctive parenting practices that are coercive, domineering, and centered on retaining hierarchical family relationships (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010). Barber, Bean, and Erickson (2002) have argued that authoritarian parenting and psychological control are linked "in that the same concepts of the violation of the child's development

of self are explicitly implicated in theoretical and conceptual formulations" (p. 269).

Although there is debate over how Western culture derived authoritarian and authoritative constructs may or may not fully capture unique dynamics in Asian parenting practices (e.g., Chao & Tseng, 2002; L. Nelson et al., 2006; D. Nelson et al., 2006), research has shown that psychological control and other coercive authoritarian-distinctive parenting practices are associated with similar negative behavioral outcomes for young children in Asian cultural settings (e.g., D. Nelson et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2004). Thus, we relied on evidence from studies on coercive parenting and opposing parenting patterns that are characterized as warm, supportive, but appropriately demanding (e.g., Baumrind, 2012; Baumrind et al., 2010) to provide guidance in the development of our hypotheses regarding how each factor may be associated with psychological control.

1.1. Child temperament

Although prior examinations of parenting have mostly focused on the impact of parenting on children's characteristics, children in fact elicit distinct parenting behaviors (e.g., Kiff, Lengua, & Zalewski, 2011). Previous studies (see Putnam, Sanson, & Rothbart, 2002 for a review) have shown that easy temperament (e.g., more soothability) is linked to warm and responsive parenting, whereas difficult temperament (e.g., negative emotionality) is associated with less responsive and harsher parenting. In this study, we focused on a continuous overall construct of child temperament comprised of children's levels of inhibitory control and anger/frustration. Research has indicated that children with better inhibitory control elicit less parental rejection and inconsistently applied strategies (Lengua, 2006). A recent study of Chinese children also showed that higher child effortful control or lower anger/frustration was associated with less authoritarian parenting (Lee, Zhou, Eisenberg, & Wang, 2013). Moreover, Chinese children's negative emotionality predicted more authoritarian parenting (Porter et al., 2005) and parental use of psychological control (Yang et al., 2004). Similar associations were therefore anticipated in this study for Chinese mothers. Although prior research on child temperament and parenting in Korean families is lacking, we hypothesized that mothers would use less psychological control to parent children who have easier temperamental dispositions (higher inhibitory control and less anger/frustration) for both Chinese and Korean families.

1.2. Psychological well-being

Research consistently shows that depressed parents, including those in Chinese families (Chang, Lansford, Schwartz, & Farver, 2004), tend to be more irritable, engage in negative and hostile interactions with their children, and control their children by coercion rather than by negotiation. Illustrative studies also indicate that depressed Korean mothers are less responsive towards their children (Oh & Moon, 1995) and that Chinese immigrant mothers' positive psychological well-being is associated with more authoritative parenting when they report less parenting daily hassles (Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009). Even though Korean immigrants tend to experience lower psychological well-being as noted earlier (Wong et al., 2007), we anticipated that better psychological well-being would be similarly associated with lower engagement in aversive parenting practices (i.e., psychological control) in both Korean and Chinese immigrant samples.

1.3. Marital quality

Inter-spousal disagreement and hostility may negatively influence the quality of parenting, whereas positive marital relationships are the primary support system for parents that enhance their parenting abilities (Erel & Burman, 1995; Hart, Olsen, Robinson, & Mandelco, 1997; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Specifically, marital satisfaction is

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