Parenting Across Cultures

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Key Parenting Tasks

• Provide warmth, affection, cognitive stimulation.

• Socialize children in a way that promotes desired behaviors.
Parenting Changes as Children Develop

- Infancy: responsiveness, attachment
- Early childhood: scaffolding to promote self-regulation and emotion socialization
- Middle childhood: behavioral control
- Adolescence: monitoring, psychological control
Family Systems

• Parent-child, interparental, siblings, extended family relationships

• Not just dyadic relationships, but entire systems

• Interactions in one sub-system can spill over into others
The Importance of Cultural Context

- Participants in the most influential journals in six sub-disciplines of psychology from 2003-2007: 96% were from Western industrialized countries, and 68% were from the United States alone (Arnett, 2008).

- 96% of participants from countries with only 12% of the world’s population.

- Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).
# Form Versus Function of Parenting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Same Meaning</th>
<th>Different Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same Behavior</strong></td>
<td>Cultural universalism</td>
<td>Plasticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Different Behavior</strong></td>
<td>Context specificity</td>
<td>Cultural specificity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Bornstein (1995)
Cultural Contexts of Parenting

• Cultural contexts give parents and children a reference point for norms and expectations about how parents should behave toward children (Gottlieb & DeLoache, 2016)

• Not all parents within a particular cultural group think and behave in the same way
Adolescents referred to clinics for treatment in Thailand exhibit more overcontrolled behavior problems (e.g., fearfulness, worrying); adolescents in the U.S. exhibit more undercontrolled behavior problems (e.g., disobedience, fighting; Weisz et al., 1987).

Cultures differ in the extent to which they emphasize self-control, group harmony, compliance, and other factors that can shape the form behavior problems take.
Cultural Context Also Influences How Positive Youth Adjustment is Defined

• Five Cs theory: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring or compassion (Lerner et al., 2005)

• Specific ways that these Cs are demonstrated may vary across cultures
Individual-Level Predictors of Child Abuse and Neglect

• Child factors: Temperament, conduct problems

• Parent factors: SES, attitudes, stress
Community-Level Predictors of Child Abuse and Neglect

• Laws and policies regarding childrearing

• Community norms and beliefs

• “Culture of honor”
Predictors of Child Abuse and Neglect Over Time

• Developmental
  • Neglect most common in first year, followed by toddler years
  • Physical abuse more common in older children, but more likely to cause injury in younger children

• Historical
  • Rates of abuse and neglect are higher when economy is weak
  • Time-varying factors within families
Mothers and Fathers

- In substantiated cases, mothers have higher rates of abuse and neglect than fathers, but might be because mothers spend more time with children.

- Role of parent gender may differ by country along with expectations regarding mothers’ and fathers’ family roles.
Daughters and Sons

• From an early age, and in diverse cultural contexts, girls and boys are provided with different types of toys and experiences

• More talk about emotions with daughters than sons

• More freedom outside the home for sons than daughters in many cultures
The Importance of Discipline

• Patterson (1982, p. 111): “If I were allowed to select only one concept to use in training parents of antisocial children, I would teach them how to punish more effectively.”
• Wells (1997, p. 338): “Parents of antisocial children simply cannot, or do not, punish well.”
Reciprocal and Transactional Processes

Aversive child behavior

Harsh parenting
Different Forms of Discipline

• Parents hold a wide range of beliefs regarding the acceptability and advisability of different forms of discipline and use a wide range of actions to manage children’s behavior.

• Although there are within-country differences in these beliefs and behaviors, many beliefs and behaviors appear to be shaped by the cultural context in which parents live.
Parents’ Responses to Children’s Behavior

• Nonviolent (e.g., offering explanations, removing privileges)
• Psychologically aggressive (e.g., yelling, name calling, threatening)
• Physically violent (e.g., slapping, beating with an object)
Caregivers’ Use of Different Forms of Discipline in 24 Countries

- Explained Why Something Was Wrong
- Gave Child Something Else to Do
- Took Away Privileges
- Called Child Dumb, Lazy, or Another Name
- Spanked with a Bare Hand
- Hit or Slapped Child on the Arm, Leg
- Shook Child
- Hit Child with an Object
- Beat Child with an Implement
- Need to Punish Physically

% of Caregivers
Caregivers’ Use of Different Forms of Discipline in 24 Countries, By Child Gender

Standard errors too small to note
Necessary to Use Corporal Punishment?

• Across countries, 29% of caregivers believed that corporal punishment is necessary (range = 4% to 93%).

• Country accounted for between 27% and 38% of the variance.

Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012, *Child Development*
Women were asked whether husbands are justified in hitting their wives.

- Range from 7% in Bosnia/Herzegovina and Jamaica to 86% in Sierra Leone
- Average = 47% across countries

Psychological aggression, physical violence, and severe physical violence toward children were significantly predicted by:

1. individual endorsement and higher normative country-wide endorsement of the belief that husbands are justified in hitting wives
2. individual endorsement and higher normative country-wide endorsement of the belief that corporal punishment is needed to rear children
3. interaction between individual beliefs and country-wide norms
Discipline-Behavior Links

Parent Discipline → Child Behavior

?
### Correlations between Frequency of Discipline and Cognition about Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Discipline</th>
<th>Child: Approval</th>
<th>Child: Efficacy</th>
<th>Mother: Approval</th>
<th>Mother: Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologize</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time out</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege loss</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spank</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yell</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treat</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of Corporal Punishment and Belief in Its Necessity

% of Children

- Mild CP
- Severe CP
- Belief in Necessity

Countries: China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, U.S.A.
Links between Corporal Punishment and Children’s Adjustment

Lansford et al. (2005) Child Development
Mediation by Cognitive Appraisals

- Cultural Beliefs
- Discipline
- Children’s Appraisals
- Children’s Adjustment
Mediation by Perceived Hostility

- Harsh Discipline
- Perceived Hostility

Perceived Normativeness

- Child Report Anxiety
- Mother Report Anxiety
- Child Report Aggression
- Mother Report Aggression

Lansford et al. (2010) *IJBD*
Corporal Punishment and Children’s Adjustment: Warmth Moderation

Lansford et al. (2014) JCPP
Conclusions

Perceptions of normativeness and parents’ and children’s appraisals of discipline can affect the link between parents’ discipline and children’s adjustment.

Efforts to eliminate violence against children will need to alter the belief that physical punishment is necessary to rear a child as well as provide caregivers with nonviolent alternatives to replace violence.
Association between Parental Warmth and Control

- Warmth includes affection and acceptance, and is a universally “positively valued” dimension of parenting.

- Control involves physical and psychological verbalizations and behaviors intended to modify the child’s thoughts, emotions and behaviors.
Multi-Group Structural Equation Models

Correlation between warmth and control differed significantly across countries.

Deater-Deckard et al. (2011) *JFP*
## Correlations between Warmth and Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Lower end</th>
<th>Upper end</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 of 52 correlations were significant, all positive.
Avoid Deficit Perspectives

• Asian parents are often characterized as harsh or lacking in warmth when assessed on questionnaires developed in the West to capture direct maternal affection demonstrated physically and verbally.

• Qualitative interviews (Cheah et al., 2015) found that Chinese immigrant mothers expressed warmth through taking care of children’s daily routine needs and providing guidance and educational opportunities.
Research demonstrating the prevalence and negative effects of physical violence and verbal aggression against children has motivated policies to protect children as well as parenting interventions to accomplish these goals.
53 Countries Have Outlawed Corporal Punishment in All Settings

- Green: Prohibited in all settings.
- Blue: Government committed to full prohibition.
- Yellow: Prohibited in some settings.
- Red: Not fully prohibited in any setting.

Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children
Change Over Time in Proportion of Children Experiencing Corporal Punishment

Lansford et al., 2017 Child Abuse & Neglect
40 Parenting Programs in 33 Countries
National Parenting Program Strategies and Service Methods

- 80%: educational courses on parenting and child development.
- 40%: distribution of parent teaching materials.
- 23%: training and manuals for healthcare and social workers.
- 20%: community and mass media campaigns to dispense parenting information.
- 10%: education and service delivery for parents of children with special needs.
Recommended Standards for Parenting Programs

- Support nurturing care ➔ holistic child development.
- Build on a theory of change leading to desired results.
- Tailor content to the child’s developmental stage.
- Serve vulnerable children and their families.
- Involve all key caregivers.
- Adapt to context and build on positive parenting practices.
- Integrate into existing delivery platforms.
- Engage trained workforce and service providers.
- Monitor and evaluate systematically.
Parenting Interventions Focused on Eliminating Corporal Punishment

- Holden et al. (2014): Research findings about detrimental effects of corporal punishment
- Perrin et al. (2017): Biblical reframing
- Durrant et al. (2017): Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting
Implications Across Studies

Just because a form of parenting is normative or endorsed, that does not mean that it should be accepted by researchers or policy makers as inevitable, necessary, or immutable.

Any attempt to change parenting behaviors should be undertaken in ways that are sensitive to the cognitive appraisals and emotional meaning of such behaviors in a given culture.
Clinical Implications:
American Psychological Association

- Opposes “the use of corporal punishment in schools, juvenile facilities, child care nurseries, and all other institutions, public or private, where children are cared for or educated.”

- Has not adopted “homes” as part of the opposition statement.
American Academy of Pediatrics has published position statements declaring that “physical discipline is of limited effectiveness and has potentially deleterious side effects,” recommending that “parents be encouraged and assisted in the development of methods other than spanking for managing undesired behavior.”
Clinical Implications:
American Psychoanalytic Association

- Condemns the use of corporal punishment and recommends alternative methods that “enhance children’s capacities to develop healthy emotional lives, tolerate frustration, regulate internal tensions, and behave in socially acceptable ways.”
- Advocates education, legislation, and research to prevent corporal punishment.
Thank you

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