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SOCIALIZATION GOALS, PARENTAL ETHNOTHEORIES, TODDLER TEMPERAMENT, AND BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

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Parental ethnotheories (PE) and socialization goals (SG) constitute key components of the developmental niche, as experienced by the developing child (Döge & Keller, 2014; Harkness & Super, 1996), and represent culture-related dimensions of parents' expectations concerning child-rearing practices. Most previous research into SG and PE has addressed their associations with parental practices (Harkness & Super, 2002). However, these factors also have a substantial impact upon children's

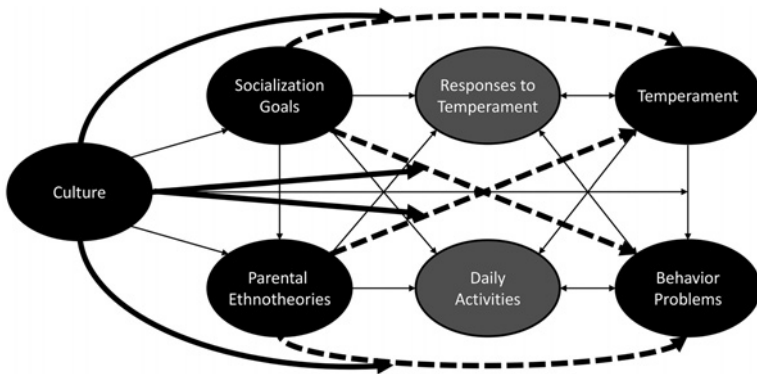


FIGURE 12.1 Goals, parental ethnotheories, and child outcomes in the JETTC Conceptual Model

social-emotional development. Indeed, cross-cultural studies indicate that child-rearing goals and beliefs likely mediate cultural influences on child development (e.g., Super & Harkness, 1986). For instance, Chen, Rubin, and Li (1995) and Chen et al. (1998) suggested that cultural beliefs regarding the appropriateness of assertive and attention-seeking behaviors resulted in differences in the prevalence of behavioral inhibition between Chinese and Canadian children. To date, culturally driven parental goals and ethnotheories have been insufficiently studied in association with temperament and behavioral-emotional problems. Although the literature addressing parental attitudes/beliefs is extensive, it has focused on discrete, relatively stable cultural contexts (Georgas, Berry, Van de Vijver, Kagitçibasi, & Poortinga, 2006; Harkness & Super, 1996; Levine & New, 2008). Although Relational/Autonomous SG and PE have not been directly associated with temperament and behavior problems, we expected such relations to emerge for Negative Affectivity (NEG), Surgency (SUR), Effortful Control (EFF), as well as internalizing (INT) and externalizing (EXT) problems, in the JETTC dataset (see Figure 12.1).

Thus, an exploratory approach was adopted with the following aims: to (1) investigate associations between Relational/Autonomous SG and PE, children's temperament and behavior problems for the JETTC multicultural sample as a whole; (2) determine how differences between cultures with respect to PE and SG are associated with cultural variability in child characteristics; and (3) examine within-country associations to ascertain the degree to which relations between parent and child variables are common or unique across countries.

Results

Initial correlations calculated using the entire sample of individual families, which conflate within-country and between-country differences, are shown in Table 12.1. Several modest, but significant, correlations were apparent. With respect to temperament, high NEG was associated with low Autonomous SG, and high EFF was associated with high Relational and Autonomous SG. With respect to behavior problems, high INT and total problems were associated with low levels of Autonomous SG, Relational, and Autonomous PE. High EXT was also associated with low Relational PE.

The results of between-country correlations, shown in Table 12.2 and Figure 12.2 suggest that countries with high SUR also indicated high levels of Relational PE.

TABLE 12.1 Correlations between temperament/behavior problems and socialization goals/parental ethnotheories for the entire sample

	<i>Socialization goals</i>		<i>Parental ethnotheories</i>	
	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>
Negative Affectivity	0.05	-0.07*	-0.04	-0.01
Surgency	0.00	0.07#	0.03	0.07#
Effortful Control	0.09*	0.15**	0.04	0.03
Internalizing	0.07#	-0.08*	-0.14**	-0.08*
Externalizing	0.03	-0.06	-0.10**	-0.06
Total problems	0.04	-0.09*	-0.12**	-0.09*

Note: ns range from 830 to 837. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, # $p < 0.10$

TABLE 12.2 Between-country correlations between countries' marginal means of temperament/behavior problems and socialization goals/parental ethnotheories

	<i>Socialization goals</i>		<i>Parental ethnotheories</i>	
	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>
Negative Affectivity	0.19	-0.30	-0.02	0.05
Surgency	-0.19	-0.09	0.86**	-0.17
Effortful Control	0.26	0.22	-0.14	-0.49#
Internalizing	0.21	-0.18	-0.14	0.33
Externalizing	0.25	0.02	0.44	0.27
Total problems	0.28	-0.15	0.19	0.32

Note: $N = 14$, ** $p < 0.01$, # $p < 0.10$

TABLE 12.3 Average within-country correlations between temperament/behavior problems and socialization goals/parental ethnotheories

	<i>Socialization goals</i>		<i>Parental ethnotheories</i>	
	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Relational</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>
Negative Affectivity	0.02 ¹	-0.04 ¹	-0.05 ⁰	-0.01 ¹
Surgency	0.02 ¹	0.08 ⁰	-0.05 ¹	0.08 ¹
Effortful Control	0.08 ¹	0.15 ⁴	0.05 ¹	0.06 ⁰
Internalizing	0.01 ¹	-0.04 ⁰	-0.12 ⁴	-0.01 ¹
Externalizing	0.00 ⁴	-0.05 ¹	-0.15 ³	0.04 ¹
Total problems	-0.01 ²	-0.06 ²	-0.14 ³	-0.01 ²

Note: Superscripts indicate the number of countries (out of 14) for which the correlation was significant to $p < 0.05$

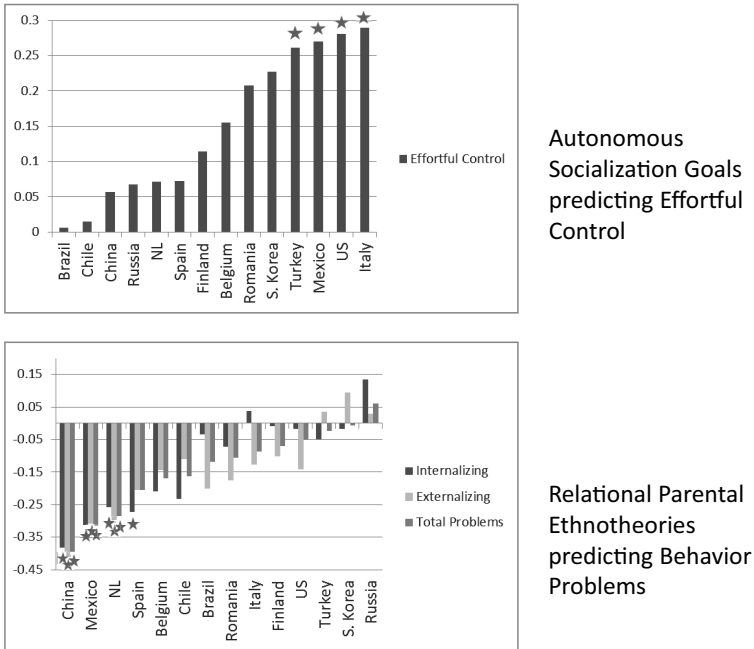


FIGURE 12.2 Goals/parental ethnotheories–child outcome correlations for JETTC countries

* indicates significant correlation

The average within-culture correlations are shown in Table 12.3 and demonstrate limited support for links between child outcomes and parenting psychology. In the interest of brevity, we only describe relations that were significant in three or more countries. The relation between Autonomous SG and EFF was significant and positive in Italy, the US, Mexico, and Turkey (see Figure 12.2). Regarding behavior problems, Relational PE was negatively correlated with INT, EXT, and total problems in Mexico, the Netherlands, and China; and also with INT in Spain.

Discussion

Our results suggest some links between parental SG, PE, and children’s temperament/behavior problems. These associations were obtained across the entire sample, and within multiple JETTC cultures. These findings provide a glimpse of the complex pattern of interactions between cultural dimensions, parental psychology, and children development.

First, our analyses with the entire sample suggested multiple associations between parental goals and beliefs concerning child-rearing practices and both children temperament and behavior problems. Although correlations were generally low, these suggested that expectations for autonomy in children, both in terms of SG and PE, were linked with diminished levels of internalizing behavior. Curiously, relational PE were also associated with low levels of behavior problems. It was similarly notable that both Relational and Autonomous SG were associated with children's ability to regulate themselves. Given the seemingly paradoxical nature of these findings, further consideration of analyses from a within-country perspective is warranted.

Regarding the second aim of the study, a single significant association between SG/PE and child outcomes was obtained at the between-country level. Countries in which parents ascribe to more relational PE also have children higher in SUR. This finding could be a function of practices associated with relational PE, such as motor stimulation, body contact, and prompt soothing. Tactile experiences such as these, consistently offered by multiple adults in a child's life, may allow for comfort in active and risky activities associated with SUR.

The third aim regarded associations of SG/PE with temperament and behavior problems at the within-country level in order to ascertain the degree to which relations between parent and child variables were generalizable across JETTC countries. As noted above, the consistent but low correlations between parenting psychology and child outcomes across the full sample begs the question of why these associations are found in some countries, but not others. Two different patterns could be discerned. The first association, between promotion of autonomy and EFF found in Italy, US, Mexico, and Turkey, suggests that in these cultures, mothers fostering self-confidence, competition, and self-control had better-regulated children. The fact that this association was significant in these countries—and not in the others—may be interpreted in the light of Masculinity/Femininity dimension (i.e., the extent to which a society is driven by competition, achievement, and success, rather than cooperation, modesty, nurturance, and a focus on consensus; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Italy, Mexico, and the US are three of the four most masculine of the JETTC nations, and parents in these countries may facilitate high levels of EFF in their toddlers to meet the challenges. The second association concerns the link between relational PE and lower behavior problems in Mexico, the Netherlands, China (INT and EXT), and Spain (INT). Parents who emphasized quick comforting and a

proximal approach tended to have children with fewer behavioral difficulties, but only in China, Netherlands, and Mexico, all at the lower end of Uncertainty Avoidance. It may be that adults from these countries, who are not excessively threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations, translate this cultural orientation into child rearing, a possibility to be explored in future research.

Alternative interpretations of these findings concern how parental values may influence the representation of child characteristics. This level of interpretation must be taken into consideration, since the parental and child dimensions were both evaluated by the mother. For instance, the link between autonomy promotion and EFF in masculine countries may reflect high social desirability of these two constructs in cultures valuing competition and confidence. Disentangling parent perception from objective differences in child behavior is a consistent challenge in all research of this nature, deserving more extensive investigation in cross-cultural context.

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