

Similar yet different:

Parenting in Chinese mothers in the U.S., U.K. and Taiwan



Ching-Yu Soar Huang chuang4@alliant.edu
NTU Family and Children Research Center/
Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma, Alliant International University

Charissa S. L. Cheah ccheah@umbc.edu
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Nan Zhou zn1@umbc.edu
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Introduction

The Confucian tradition, which is dominant in Chinese societies (Ho, 1994), is reflected in the social values, beliefs, and behaviors of parents (Fung et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2002). Immigrant parents face unique challenges in childrearing when moving into a new country, and their parenting practices and beliefs are subjected to social and cultural influences from both cultures (Costigan & Su, 2008). Recent research has suggested that the ideologies of Chinese immigrant mothers may be modified in the course of acculturation (Cheah, Leung & Zhou, 2013), and depend on the receiving context (Berry, 1996; Bornstein & Cheah, 2006). Nevertheless, no published research exists comparing Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. and in the UK despite these groups being one of the largest immigrant groups in the UK (ONS, 2013) and U.S. (U.S. Census, 2012) in recent years.

Thus, in the present study, we aimed to compare Chinese immigrant parents' parenting practices across three groups of Chinese mothers: (a) Chinese in Taiwan, (b) Chinese immigrants in the U.S., and (c) Chinese immigrants in the UK.

In general, Taiwanese mothers were expected to report more Confucian-based traditionally controlling practices than both groups of immigrant mothers, but no specific hypotheses were proposed for the two immigrant groups.

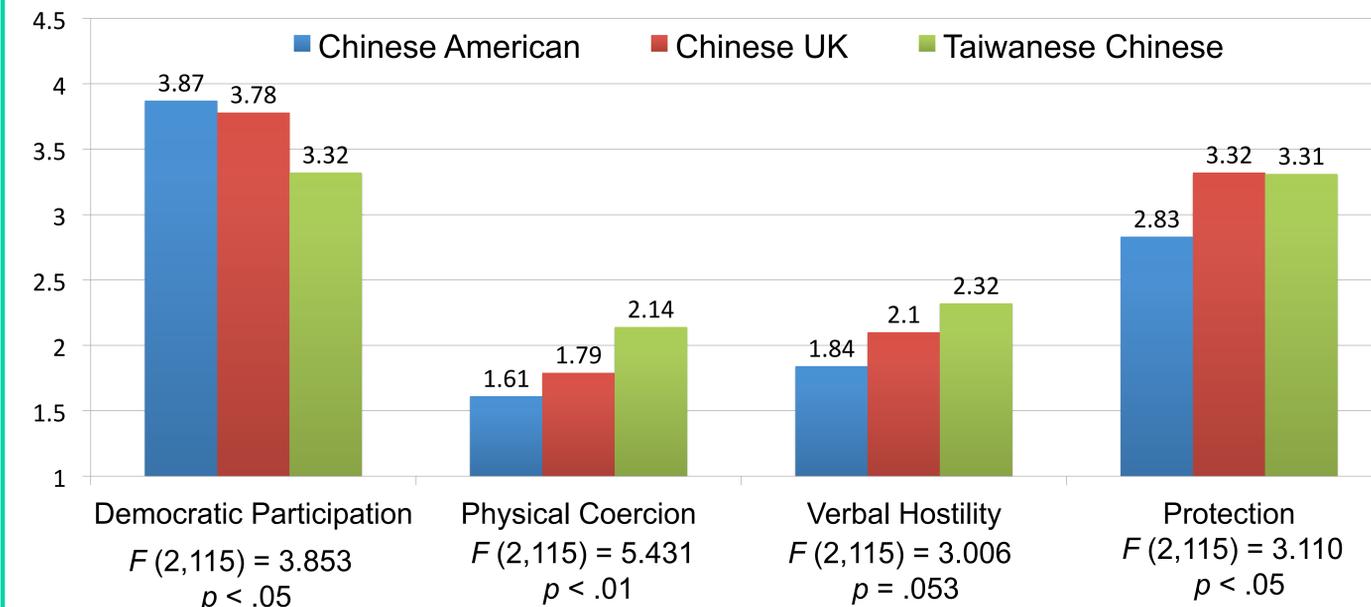
Measures

Reported parenting : Mothers completed the **Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (Wu et al, 2002)**, measuring the following 11 parenting dimensions on a 5-point likert scale. Mothers completed the measures in their language of preference:

- (1) Warmth/acceptance
- (2) Reasoning/induction
- (3) Democratic participation
- (4) Physical coercion
- (5) Verbal hostility
- (6) Non-reasoning/punitive
- (7) Encouragement of modesty
- (8) Shaming/love withdrawal
- (9) Protection
- (10) Directiveness
- (11) Maternal involvement

Results

A 3 (cultural groups) × 2 (child gender) Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) controlling for the mother's length of immigration revealed significant cultural group differences in these 4 dimensions:



Child gender had no significant effect on any of these parenting dimensions. However, there was a significant interaction effect of gender × group in directiveness, $F(2,115) = 4.297, p < .05$, where Chinese-American and Chinese-UK mothers reported higher level of directives over boys than girls, whereas Taiwanese mothers reported the reverse trend.

Participants

Participants included **122 mothers** (46 Taiwanese Chinese, M age=37.2, SD =4.20; 40 Chinese-American, M age=39.7, SD =5.94; 36 Chinese-UK, M age=36.8, SD =3.97) of 5-7 year-old children (M age: CA=5.58, CB=5.95, TC=5.79) with slightly more boys than girls (CA=20 boys, 20 girls; CB= 20 boys, 16 girls; and TC=28 boys, 18 girls).

The mothers were mostly middle-class with higher education levels (8.2% high school level, 41% college level, 50.8% graduate or professional level). The immigrant Chinese mothers had been living in the UK for an average of 9.73 years (SD = 5.97) and the immigrant Chinese mothers had been living in the U.S. for an average of 12.65 (SD = 8.20) years.

Summary of findings & Implications

Taiwanese mothers report **higher** level of **physical coercion** than both the Chinese-American mothers and Chinese-UK mothers, and **higher verbal hostility** level than the Chinese-American mothers. **Taiwanese mothers** also reported **lower** levels of **democratic participation** than the Chinese-American and Chinese-UK mothers. Both groups of immigrant mothers may have decreased their use of controlling and coercive practices as a result of exposure to more autonomy promoting values in the Western U.K. and U.S. context (Cheah, Leung & Zhou, 2013).

Chinese-UK mothers showed **higher protection** than the Chinese-American mothers, perhaps indicating a greater sense of security or greater acculturation among Chinese-American mothers, compared to their counterparts in the U.K.

Our findings underscore the importance of considering the social-cultural context of the host societies of immigration when examining immigrant parenting.

Acknowledgements

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Notes for Special Poster Session

1. This study provided valuable insights into parenting practices within the Chinese diaspora in different cultural contexts, underscoring the importance of examining immigrant groups in their host context, which provide a more complete understanding of immigrant and racial issue.
2. Our multi-national research was made possible by the opportunity to network during SRCD biennial meeting.