Differences in association of psychological control and child behavior problems in Latvia and Lithuania

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Familial and sociocultural

- Cross-cultural comparisons of the associations between parenting practices and child behavior problems allow one to examine early child development beyond the “microsystem” of the child-parent relationship and to consider the sociocultural context of the “macrosystem” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)

- Child behavior difficulties undoubtedly influenced by the multiple, multi-directional effects of the biological, familial, societal, sociocultural

- the following study focuses upon the familial and sociocultural spheres
Psychological control

- Psychological control – a specific aspect of parenting practices which has been studied cross-culturally

- Construct elaborated by Barber (1996; 2002) --
  -- induction of guilt and shame
  -- constriction of child’s emotions and self-expression
  -- love withdrawal

- An intrusive manipulation of the child’s emotional experience

- Predictive of adolescent depression and delinquency
Psychological control as parenting practice linked to broader societal psychological control practices within the Soviet system – i.e. restrictions on self-expression (Hart et al., 1998)

Soviet pedagogy – advising parents to use love withdrawal and guilt induction (Bronfenbrenner, 1970)

Hart and colleagues study of Russian pre-school children in Post-Soviet period – mothers’ and fathers’ psychological control associated with higher ratings of preschool child aggression
- Parental psychological control cross-cultural comparisons China and USA, Japan and USA

- Psychological control has more negative effects for adolescents in USA than in China (Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Wang et al., 2007; Chao & Tseng, 2002)

- Chao (Chao & Aque, 2009) – Chinese adolescents feel less angry with parental psychological control – less negative effects

- USA adolescents increased externalizing problems, not Chinese
• Chao -- emphasizes “culture specific definitions of parental control”

• Chinese character “guan” -- “to govern” as well as “to love”

• Parental control perceived as normal in more interdependent cultures  (Chao and Aque, 2009)

• Implications of collectivism -- in Kuwait ( “a very collective/authoritarian country”) parental psychological control has positive impact on adolescent psychological well-being (Dwairy, et al., 2010)
Portugal (Pereira, 2009)—

“rejecting-controller” parenting show higher levels of behavioral problems in their children.

“supportive-controller” parenting and “supportive” parenting show similarly lower levels of behavioral problems in their children.
Cross-cultural comparison of USA and China
Cross-cultural comparison of Latvia/Lithuania
Hofstede’s cultural dimension ratings (Huettinger, 2008) for Latvia and Lithuania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>USA</th>
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<tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
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Extraversion

- Mechanisms of the national character stereotype: How people in six neighboring countries of Russian describe themselves and the typical Russian (Realo, et al., 2009).

- Lithuanians rate themselves higher on Extraversion scale than Latvians

- Interview data -- Muktupāvela (interview, 2010) – Lithuanians more emotional; Latvians more individualistic

- “here in Latvia – you have to rely upon yourself to solve your problems – in Lithuania there is much more support from family and friends”
Lithuania is characterized by high emotional expressiveness and Collectivism. Latvia, on the other hand, exhibits low emotional expressiveness and Individualism.
Research questions

- What are associations between psychological control, direct punishment, parental responsiveness and child internalizing and externalizing behaviors in Latvia and Lithuania?

- What are similarities and differences between the associations for Latvia and Lithuania parenting practices and child behavior problems?
Participants

- Total of 440 parents of preschool children

- Latvia – parents of preschool children from 138 families, for a total of 276 respondents.

- Lithuania – parents of preschool children from 82 families, for a total of 164 respondents.

- Preschool children -- ranging in age 2 to 5 years, mean age Latvia -- 3.77 years, Lithuania 3.80.

- Latvia 52% boys; Lithuania 51% boys.
Questionnaires

- Block’s Childrearing Practices (Roberts, Block & Block, 1984; Aunola & Nurmi, 2004), revised –
  - -- Responsiveness (emotional warmth and support)
  - -- Psychological Control (guilt induction and shaming, intrusiveness)
  - -- Direct Punishment (including scolding, spanking)

- Child Behavior Checklist for preschool age (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) –
  - -- Internalizing Behaviors (anxious/ depressed, somatic complaints)
  - -- Externalizing Behaviors (aggressive behavior)
Figure 1: Summary of all dimensions of maternal and paternal parenting simultaneously regressed on girls’ internalizing behaviors (Latvia and Lithuania separate regressions). Shown are standartized Beta values.
Figure 2: Summary of each dimension of maternal and paternal parenting simultaneously regressed on boys’ internalizing behaviors (Latvia and Lithuania separate regressions). Shown are standartized Beta values.
Figure 3: Summary of each dimension of maternal and paternal parenting simultaneously regressed on girls’ externalizing behaviors (Latvia and Lithuania separate regressions). Shown are standartized Beta values.
Figure 4: Summary of each dimension of maternal and paternal parenting simultaneously regressed on boys’ externalizing behaviors (Latvia and Lithuania separate regressions). Shown are standardized Beta values.
Figure 5. The interactive effect of paternal responsiveness and psychological control on child internalizing behaviors as reported by Latvian fathers
Figure 6. The effect of paternal responsiveness and psychological control on child internalizing behaviors as reported by Lithuanian fathers.
Discussion

- Similarities –
  - Responsiveness predictive of less child behavior problems (internalizing and externalizing)
  - Direct Punishment predictive of greater child behavior problems (internalizing and externalizing)
  - both maternal and paternal parenting practice effects for both boys and girls
- Differences in association

  -- Lithuania data -- maternal effects more prominent
  -- Lithuania higher “Masculinity” ratings

- Lithuania data – paternal psychological control positive association with boys’ internalizing behaviors
  -- similarity with findings from China/ Kuwait/Portugal
  -- Lithuania higher “Collectivism” and “Interdependence”

  -- greater parental control as expression of greater care and affection – different meaning/interpretation of behaviors associated with psychological control
Limitations and future directions

- Limitations include reliance on the parents’ self-report of their parenting practices and their own evaluations of the child behavior (although both parents’ child behavior ratings were taken into account and averaged).

- In the future it would be most meaningful to continue a study such as this longitudinally in order to ascertain the direction of effects. As shown in previous studies, most likely there is a bidirectional effect between parent and child behaviors.

- Also, it would be beneficial to increase the size of the samples in both countries and to include observations of child behaviors.
References

Thank you for your attention!