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Cultural Perspectives on Parenting

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter focuses on cultural influences on parenting, examining patterns across countries, but also within countries in different ethnic groups. Whereas forms vary, two broad functions of parenting practices can be consistently identified across cultural contexts: establishing a relational bond providing safety and security in infancy (commonly referred to as attachment), and transmitting culturally appropriate behavior, knowledge, and skills throughout the childhood years. The chapter then looks at the role of culture in ethnic minority parenting, which has unique features that are different from those in ethnic majority groups. It concludes by reflecting on the state of the research field of culture and parenting, and directions for the future. Given the high cultural diversity in many urban regions in the world where professionals deal with families from all over the world, and the frequent “export” of parenting interventions from the West to other parts of the world, the field would benefit enormously from investing in mixed-methods studies examining these processes in situations where cultures meet, and where it is not immediately clear which cultural norms should prevail.

Keywords: cultural influences, parenting, ethnic groups, parenting practices, attachment, culturally appropriate behavior, ethnic minority parenting, cultural diversity, parenting interventions, cultural norms

The term “culture” is generally understood to refer to a constellation of customs, traditions, knowledge, beliefs, and values shared by the members of a certain community or society. Both material and symbolic manifestations of culture develop over time in relation to the physical and social environment, through a dynamic process of adaptation that has been likened to and framed within biological evolution mechanisms (e.g., Boyd & Richersen, 2005; Durham, 1990; Mulder et al., 2006). Although the early formulations of evolutionary approaches to culture have now been rejected because of their assumptions of linear societal progression, and distinctions between “backward” and “advanced” cultures, the current literature on the evolution of culture is highly fruitful. Particularly interesting lines of research in this field are those in human behavioral ecology (Nettle et al., 2013), investigating geographical effects, historical socialization effects, and their in-

terplay on the development of cultural diversity (e.g., Mathew & Perreault, 2015; Von Cramon-Taubadel & Lycett, 2018).

(p. 98) In each of the leading paradigms on the evolution of cultures, intergenerational transmission is one of the key processes assumed to be responsible for the development and maintenance of cultural patterns. Clearly, every new generation needs to learn in one way or another how to behave given the social norms and expectations of a particular cultural context but also how to navigate the opportunities and constraints of the physical environment. The highly impressive diversity in the ecological niches and cultural patterns of humans is also necessarily reflected in a high diversity of specific socialization practices involved in the transmission of behavior, customs, and beliefs across generations. This diversity has been described as reflecting cultural differences in parental ethnotheories about socialization goals: What is the ultimate goal of parenting, and which child behaviors does one aim to foster or discourage (Harkness & Super, 1996)? Research shows that such socialization goals can vary widely, from primarily focusing on child personal happiness and self-confidence, to a focus on obedience and respect for elders and social norms, but also various combinations (e.g., Keller et al., 2006; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2007). It makes sense that when the end goals of socialization efforts are different, the parenting practices of choice are also different. And even when the goals are similar, community-specific traditions can still mean that practices vary between cultural groups. Nevertheless, each of these culture-specific manifestations of childrearing can be understood in terms of more universal aspects of human parenting practices when their functions are considered. Whereas forms vary, two broad functions of parenting practices can be consistently identified across cultural contexts: establishing a relational bond providing safety and security in infancy (commonly referred to as attachment), and transmitting culturally appropriate behavior, knowledge, and skills throughout the childhood years. These parenting domains will be the organizing principle of the first part of this chapter, discussing their culture-specificity and species-general aspects.

Cultures are rarely easy to demarcate in terms of their geographical boundaries or sharp divides in customs and traditions. The blurring of cultural demarcations has become even more notable in a world that has become increasingly globalized in the past decades (e.g., Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998). Not only is there an almost continuous exchange of cultural goods and expressions across large distances due to modern technology, the migration flows between world regions have increased dramatically in the past century. This has created salient ethnic minority groups in many (urban) areas of mostly Western migration-receiving countries, such as the Turkish in Germany, the Latino group in the United States, and Indians in the United Kingdom. The role of culture in ethnic minority parenting has unique features that are different from those in ethnic majority groups, and it deserves specific attention. This will be the focus of the fourth section of this chapter. Finally, we will offer some concluding remarks reflecting on the state of the research field of culture and parenting, and directions for the future.

Because “culture” is such a broad term, and every cultural community (meaning tens of thousands across the globe) is unique in some way when it comes to parenting, it would (p. 99) be impossible to represent all possible cultural variations in parenting. Instead, we will focus more broadly on distinctions between Western and non-Western parenting patterns (or the Global North versus the Global South in more modern terms) that are most commonly used in the research literature. This is clearly an oversimplification, and it does not do justice to the large variations within those enormous regions. However, this oversimplified distinction will do well enough as a framework to make important points about the role of culture in parenting and to illustrate issues of universality versus culture specificity.

Culture and Attachment

Of all parenting domains, the one addressing attachment processes is probably the most strongly contested in terms of the role of culture, with core attachment theory and research generally advocating universality of attachment processes (e.g., Mesman et al., 2016), and cultural theorists rejecting the universality hypothesis, instead calling for a more contextualized approach (e.g., Keller, 2007). The arguments for a universal interpretation of the attachment construct and its related concepts lie in the evolved nature of strong bonds between an infant and an adult caregiver. Attachment refers to human infants’ propensity to form strong social bonds with one or more caregivers (Bowlby, 1969) that, when developed optimally into a secure attachment relationship, results in the child preferentially seeking proximity to the caregiver when in distress, and the child exploring the environment when all is well (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Given the helpless nature of human infants in the first few years of life, making sure that you can have quick access to an adult caregiver when necessary, and that you can use them as “backup” when you’re out exploring the world is a sound survival strategy, applicable to all cultural contexts. Indeed, the universality of the human need and ability to form strong social bonds from an early age is not contested. The contention regarding culture and attachment lies in two related areas: the nature of the caregiving environment, and the assessment of the quality of the attachment relationships.

The original attachment theory framework considered only mothers as caregivers of infants, although this was soon rectified by expanding its scope to fathers and other caregivers such as daycare professionals (Lucassen et al., 2011; Rutter & Azis-Clauson, 2016). However, in non-Western cultural contexts, the mother-father-daycare constellation is not the norm, whereas extensive shared caregiving between a variety of family members, including juveniles, is widespread (Hrды, 2009). These networks of caregivers are dense, as well as fluid in the sense that caregiving is simply shared throughout the day without clear routines for who does what and when (Meehan & Hawks, 2014). This can be described as a simultaneous multiple caregiving environment where many caregivers are available at the same time, which is in contrast to the sequential multiple caregiving in most Western countries, where caregivers take turns according to preset schedules, and the child is mostly with one or at maximum two caregivers at a time (Mesman et al.,

2017). How, then, do dyadic attachment relationships develop in cultural contexts where dyadic (p. 100) interaction is rare and shared between so many people? Would a child in such a context show preferential proximity-seeking to a limited number of attachment figures or let itself be comforted by whomever happens to be close by? These questions tie in with the issue of assessment.

The gold standard for the assessment of attachment security is the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) developed by Mary Ainsworth and colleagues (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The SSP consists of a standardized laboratory-based procedure which assesses responses of an infant to being separated from its attachment figure, but most notably its response to the return of the attachment figure after separation phases. The infant's differential treatment of the attachment figure versus the stranger who joins the infant during the separations, the infant's proximity-seeking, reduction of distress, and return to exploration behavior when the attachment figure has returned, are some of the key behaviors that determine the infant's attachment classification as secure versus insecure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The book that first introduced the SSP has been cited over 25,000 times according to Google Scholar, and the procedure has been widely used in many studies, mostly in Western countries, but also in non-Western countries. A synthesis of those studies showed that the distribution of secure versus insecure attachment is quite similar across very different countries (Mesman et al., 2016), and that cross-cultural differences are mostly found in the rates of subtypes of the insecure attachment classification.

However, with few exceptions, the samples in the overview study were from urban areas, and there are valid concerns about the usefulness of this standardized procedure in rural multiple-caregiver contexts where being left alone (as in one of the separation phases) is unheard of, and where infants' experiences with a large number of caregivers give a different flavor to the "stranger" who is part of the observation paradigm (e.g., Gottlieb, 2014). It has been suggested—but not tested—that infants from simultaneous multiple-caregiver communities might develop a more indiscriminate attachment to a community and its members, rather than a preferential attachment to a limited number of individuals (Mesman et al., 2016). Given the wide variety of human caregiving contexts, it seems unlikely that one standardized procedure can capture all relevant variations in how infants become attached to individuals or groups. The likely cross-cultural universality of infant-caregiver attachment per se notwithstanding, the universality of its processes and manifestations (and thus its assessment) is by no means a given.

A similar argument has recently been made regarding another one of attachment theory's key concepts: caregiver sensitivity, which was originally defined by Ainsworth and colleagues as the caregiver's ability to notice an infant's signals, to interpret these correctly, and to respond to them promptly and appropriately (Ainsworth et al., 1974). The construct was originally developed to explain individual differences in infant attachment patterns, which it does do, but only to a moderate extent (De Wolff & Van IJzendoorn, 1997; Lucassen et al., 2011). Caregiver sensitivity has, however, also become important in explaining individual differences in other areas of development—without attachment

(p. 101) security as intervening variable—predicting children’s social-emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning (Mesman & Emmen, 2013).

In contrast to discussions regarding the attachment construct and assessment instrument, however, going back to the original formulation and measure of sensitivity appears to be the answer rather than an obstacle to some cross-cultural contestations. The sensitivity construct has been subject to numerous iterations over the past decades, with a large variety of new instruments that each have added elements to the operational definition of sensitivity (for an overview, see Mesman & Emmen, 2013). These added elements were likely based on the researchers’ observations in their studies of Western families, and the most common additions to the sensitivity concept indeed reflect typically Western parenting patterns, such as face-to-face communication, verbal exchanges, and expressions of positive affect. With this morphing of the sensitivity construct, it has become decidedly more Western than the original, which in fact did not specify any particular behaviors, just that they had to be attuned to the infant’s signals. Here the notion of universality without uniformity comes into play again: Caregivers of infants are highly likely to be predisposed toward providing appropriate care when the child needs it, but the ways in which this care is shown may differ widely between cultural contexts (Mesman et al., 2018). Indeed, research shows universality in neurological responses to infant crying, even though behavioral response patterns vary across cultures (Bornstein et al., 2017).

Whereas in the literature and for many current instruments of sensitivity, the emphasis is on verbal and affective exchanges, ethnographic work in non-Western contexts shows that sensitive responsiveness can also be expressed in subtler and more physical ways (e.g., Fourment et al., 2018; Mesman et al., 2018), consistent with local caregiving customs. Indeed, in cultural contexts where close bodily contact with infants (through carrying the infant around in various types of slings) and breastfeeding on demand are common practice, sensitivity may not need to be as expressive as it is in other cultures. In fact, precisely because infants are almost always physically close to a caregiver, they are far less likely to show elaborate signaling, because all is well when there is bodily warmth and physical safety. Of course, the infants do sometimes express being uncomfortable or hungry, and these signals are typically met with prompt and almost imperceptible changes in position and/or a quick transition to breastfeeding (Mesman et al., 2018). Because we are so used to framing sensitivity in Western terms (involving a lot of talking and smiling), it has mistakenly been suggested that sensitivity is not a relevant caregiving concept in non-Western communities. If we consider function (giving an infant what it needs) over form (how this is given), the sensitivity concept has a strong claim on universality. For a more elaborate discussion of this issue from different perspectives, see the commentary by Heidi Keller and colleagues (Keller et al., 2018) to the Mesman et al. (2018) paper, and Mesman’s reply to this commentary (Mesman, 2018).

Of course, the caregiving behaviors discussed earlier also serve functions of cultural transmission across generations, in the sense that number of caregivers, mode of responsiveness, (p. 102) and specific strategies of nurturance teach children about what is expected of them when they grow up, and foster certain types of behaviors more than oth-

ers (for example, showing verbal versus physical affection). Apart from culture-specific, attachment-related caregiving patterns that imply and transmit broad relational frameworks for children, a host of other parenting behaviors are more explicitly aimed at imparting culturally relevant behavior, skills, and knowledge, including most notably teaching and discipline strategies.

Culture and the Transmission of Behavior, Skills, and Knowledge

It has long been assumed that parent-to-child teaching does not take place in many non-Western communities, because of the absence of verbal instructions that researchers were used to seeing in Western families (Lancy, 2014). However, similar to the other domains of parenting, understanding teaching requires a functionalist approach that does not assume a uniform manifestation of this aspect of parent-child interactions (Kline, 2015). The functionalist approach to teaching—here applied specifically to parenting—describes it as consisting of (a) a parent changing their way of doing something for the benefit of a child that is present, (b) some form of feedback loops between parent and child, and (c) some form of changed behavior on the part of the child signifying learning. The first definitional requirement—changing the way of doing something when a child is present—allows for nonverbal knowledge and skills transmission. Changing a behavior means the parent doing something more slowly, more often, with exaggerated gestural emphasis, or accompanied by verbal instructions compared to what they would do if the child was not present. This wide range of options for “behavior change to teach” allows for both Western patterns of teaching that are generally more explicit and verbal, as well as for non-Western patterns that in many places are subtler and more physical (Kline, 2015; Rogoff et al., 2003).

The requirements of feedback and behavior change on the part of the child reflect the fact that teaching effectively has to incorporate some way for the teacher (in this case the parent) to assess the child’s needs in terms of intensity and duration of “instruction,” be it explicit verbal or implicit physical (Ronfard & Harris, 2015). This brings us back to the concept of sensitivity, because effective teaching means that a parent has the ability to see what the child needs to master the skills in question. A feedback loop again does not assume verbal exchange, but it leaves room for any form of communication that leads both parties to adapt their behaviors in response to what the other is doing (Kline, 2015). When allowing for such differences in form in otherwise functionally similar interaction patterns, it is clear that parents teaching children is a universal characteristic of childrearing (Strauss et al., 2014). Interestingly, however, active teaching (in whatever form) does appear to occur less often in cultural contexts where children are part of a family’s daily routines. When children are carried around everywhere all day, and at later ages routinely accompany the family in almost all daily tasks, there are many learning opportunities through imitation without a parent significantly changing their behaviors (Paradise & (p. 103) Rogoff, 2009). By the time a child is physically able to contribute to a task, they

have seen it performed countless times before and can (depending on task complexity) step right in, with only minimal teaching efforts on the part of the parents or other family members.

Making sure children know and adhere to culturally appropriate behavioral rules is a specific domain of teaching generally referred to in the literature as discipline. The term “discipline” encompasses all parenting strategies aimed at exerting control over a child’s behavior so that it will follow certain rules. This means making sure the child does what it is supposed to do, and stopping the child from doing things that it ought not to do. Discipline can be considered a universal aspect of parenting in that all children need to learn behavioral boundaries, not only to make them successful members of their community but also simply to keep them safe from harm.

As with all studies on parenting, the bulk of the research literature on parental discipline concerns Western urban middle-class families, where the most common strategies are authoritative in nature, meaning that they are aimed at fostering children’s intrinsic motivation to comply with rules through preventive reasoning and explanations (“If you touch that, it will break”) and allowing the child some form of agency in the rules (e.g., “You need to clean your room, but you can choose whether to do it today or tomorrow”) (Baumrind, 1971). This pattern is mostly verbal and rarely physical in nature, which is also consistent with the fact that physical forms of discipline (including spanking) are increasingly seen as undesirable and are even forbidden by law in several northern European countries. Research shows that the authoritative parenting style that includes a discipline pattern that is preventive, nonphysical, and mild is associated with more positive outcomes in children in Western countries (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Discipline strategies that have been found to be associated with worse child outcomes in Western samples include more authoritarian approaches relying on power assertion (“Because I say so”) (e.g., Piquart, 2016), physical punishment (Gershoff, 2002), and psychological control, which is characterized by strategies such as shaming, guilt induction, love withdrawal, and threats (Barber, 1996). Interestingly, most of these “bad” discipline strategies are to some extent normative or at least not frowned upon in quite a few non-Western societies. For example, physical punishment is used by the vast majority of parents in many parts of the world (e.g., Lansford et al., 2010), as are practices such as shaming and guilt induction, particularly in Asian countries (e.g., Peña Alampay, 2014; Xu et al., 2014). Based on Western research, these patterns would be assumed to be detrimental to children’s development, but surely that would be a problematic conclusion, suggesting that children in non-Western countries are parented badly and will grow up showing compromised functioning. In the literature examining discipline strategies in these parts of the world, the points of view are mixed, with some studies suggesting room for cultural relativity (e.g., Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010), and others rejecting this approach and arguing for the universality of detrimental effects of certain discipline strategies (e.g., Gershoff, 2002).

(p. 104) Physical punishment is probably the most-researched and most-debated discipline strategy in the literature on culture and parenting. It is important to point out that the category of physical punishment does not include child physical abuse, and it is limited to punishments such as spanking or slapping that do not leave the child with severe injuries. In a seminal study by Lansford and colleagues (2005), the association between physical punishment and problematic child outcomes was examined in nine countries, and it found that the more normative (i.e., more socially accepted) this form of discipline was in a certain country, the less strong its negative effect was on child development. Several other studies have found similar results: When physical discipline is the norm in a cultural context, it is not—or less so—associated with problematic child outcomes (e.g., Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). It has been suggested that where physical discipline is normal, it is used with more control and is a more predictable form of punishment for children that is seen as fair and a sign of parental care than in places where it is frowned upon and done more in anger and as an expression of rejection (Grusec et al., 2017). In that case, the former situation would be less detrimental to children’s development than the latter. Further, there is some evidence that whereas physical punishment is part of a parenting pattern that is low on warmth and responsiveness in Western countries (and thus a sign of less optimal parenting), this is not necessarily the case in other cultural contexts where it can coexist with a warm and responsive parenting style (Deater-Deckard et al., 2011).

To date, the scarce studies examining discipline practices reflecting psychological control such as shaming and guilt induction across countries find almost exclusively negative effects, suggesting that its effects are not ameliorated by cultural normativeness (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). However, there are still only a few cross-cultural studies on this topic, and in-depth qualitative analyses (rather than just questionnaire-based self-reports) might shed more light on the perceived meaning of psychological control in different contexts. Anecdotally, some expressions of psychological control appear to be more symbolic than literal. It is clear to any child in India that the mother who threatens to kill herself because of the shame of having a disobedient child will by no means do so. The child receives the message that his or her behavior was unacceptable and learns a lesson, but the child was never worried about the mother’s potential suicide. The open question is whether the effects of this type of threat could be diminished by its symbolic nature or whether it conveys an emotionally stressful message nonetheless, fostering feelings of unsafety and worry in the child. More research is needed to understand psychological control in a cultural context.

In addition, even though the negative effects of physical punishment on children in non-Western countries are less strong than in Western countries (where they are already small; see Ferguson, 2013), they are generally still there, suggesting that it is better to refrain from such discipline strategies. In addition, scholars and others opposed to physical punishment have invoked the universal declaration of children’s rights, which includes article 19 describing that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence (...) while in the care of parents (...)” (p. 105) (United Nations, 1989, Article 19). This declaration has been ratified by 196 countries, which suggests that each of these should be putting measures into

place to prevent parents from using physical punishment or psychological control. Of course, this is not easily done in countries where, according to statistics, the majority of parents make use of such practices. Even if through public campaigns these parenting practices can be minimized, it is important to then invest in providing parents with alternatives. Ensuring a spanking-free upbringing for children all over the world will require careful consideration in terms of culturally viable alternatives to serve the universal function of parental intervention to minimize unwanted child behavior.

On another note regarding physical punishment, it is also important to point out that only a few generations ago, physical punishment was a widely accepted part of childrearing in Western countries as well. Often, local sayings from non-Western countries are quoted to illustrate that physical punishment is the norm there, but of course the English equivalent “Spare the rod, spoil the child” echoes the same sentiment and was routinely evoked as a reason to spank disobedient children in earlier generations. Spanking in schools was only abolished in 1986 in the United Kingdom, and parenting books from the 1950s in many Western countries recommended spanking as a valid, even necessary discipline strategy. Of course, children from those generations did not universally grow up with a myriad of problems, suggesting that the culture of a specific time period is also relevant to consider as a context for interpreting discipline practices and their effects.

The most important conclusion from cross-cultural studies on parenting beliefs, norms, and behaviors is that context matters when it comes to interpreting childrearing practices and their effects on children, not just regionally and culturally, but also temporally. Rigid norms about what is good and bad parenting can hardly be maintained knowing that not just the occurrence of certain parenting practices, but also their effects on children, may vary widely depending on context. The adaptive qualities of specific parenting practices need to be seen in light of the wider social and ecological environment, which means that parenting behaviors may look different but serve the same basic childrearing functions. When it comes to studying parenting in ethnic minority populations, context becomes more salient yet, because it describes one culture functioning in another culture. The salience of this issue is particularly relevant to the current globalized world in which around 240 million people are international migrants (International Organization of Migration, 2018). The specific challenges of multicultural societies and parenting are addressed in the next section.

Culture and Parenting in Migrant Families

Multicultural societies with a history of migration provide the opportunity to test key questions about the influence of cultural and geographical context on parenting beliefs and practices. A series of different types of comparisons are particularly relevant for such (p. 106) research, including those between parents from the same cultural group in their country of origin versus those who have migrated to another country, between ethnic minority and majority parents, between parents from different minority groups in the same host culture, between the same minority group in different host cultures, and between

first- and later-generation migrants. A growing body of literature addresses these comparisons (often with multiple comparisons represented in one design) elucidating various mechanisms that drive the extent to which and the domains in which parents maintain the parenting beliefs and practices of their culture of origin and/or adapt to the host culture.

Berry's two-dimensional model of acculturation describes the independent dimensions of maintaining one's heritage culture and having contact and participating in the dominant host society (Berry, 2001). Based on these two dimensions, four main acculturation strategies can be distinguished that can also be applied to parenting strategies, namely integration (maintaining heritage culture and participating in host culture), assimilation (rejecting heritage culture, participating in host culture), separation (maintaining heritage culture, rejecting host culture), and marginalization (rejecting both heritage and host culture). We will use examples of the different types of comparison studies to illustrate how culture and the larger context can shape parenting beliefs and practices during the process of acculturation.

Comparing parents in various countries of origin to migrant parents from those countries can show the extent to which parenting beliefs and practices of culture of origin are maintained. One study found that the parenting beliefs of Argentinian immigrant mothers in the United States were more similar to those of European Americans than to those of mothers in Argentina, whereas the parenting beliefs of Japanese immigrants were more similar to Japanese mothers than European American mothers (Bornstein & Cote, 2004). The authors suggest that Latin American groups have a longer migration history in the United States and are culturally more similar to Americans than Japanese mothers are. Another study compared parenting practices of Turkish families in Turkey, migrants moving within Turkey (mostly rural to urban), and Turkish migrants to the United Kingdom. Results showed that Turkish migrant parents in the United Kingdom were less permissive and more authoritarian compared to nonmigrants and migrants within Turkey. Migrants were also more likely than nonmigrants to show authoritarian parenting (Daglar et al., 2011). These parenting practices of migrant groups may reflect anxiety about the new cultural context, and they may be particularly strict to make sure their children succeed in a potentially hostile environment. It is not just a different culture that may be daunting but also the physical living circumstances in a new environment. For example, immigrant Mexican parents living in Los Angeles were found to keep their children under tighter control and monitoring compared to parents living in Mexico, which was due to the unsafe neighborhoods where the Mexican migrants were living in Los Angeles (Reese, 2002). These studies show that parenting does not always change in the direction of the parenting practices of the host country, nor does it necessarily resemble the parenting (p. 107) practices of the country of origin. Parenting practices change in response to the new cultural and contextual conditions.

Designs in which majority parents are compared to minority parents can examine which minority parents' parenting beliefs and behaviors are the same (potentially through acculturation) and which remain different. Turkish immigrant mothers in Germany have been

found to be more likely to expect their children to have close relations with the family and to be well-mannered, and they were less likely to value autonomy than were German mothers (Durgel et al., 2009). This is consistent with broad differences between the Turkish and German cultures. However, Turkish mothers who were more integrated into German culture were found to value individualistic goals such as self-control more than Turkish mothers who were more separated from the German culture, yet both groups valued mutual support within the family highly (Durgel et al., 2009). These findings show that immigrants can both hold on to certain aspects of their parenting and adopt new values and practices as they engage more with the host society. Studies comparing minority to majority parenting beliefs and practices also show the importance of including contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and family demographics. In most countries, ethnic minority families are overrepresented among the lower socioeconomic classes (e.g., Beiser et al., 2002). A review of parenting in minority families, for example, showed that minority families generally show less sensitive parenting compared to majority families, but that this difference can largely be explained by stress due to socioeconomic disadvantage or other stressors such as teenage or single parenthood (Mesman et al., 2012). For this reason, any comparison between majority and minority parents should consider socioeconomic and family differences.

Acculturation and cultural background of specific minority groups may also play a role in differences in parenting behavior between different minority groups as well as in how parenting practices relate to child behavior. One study found that—correcting for all relevant socioeconomic and demographic variables—European American mothers were less intrusive and showed more warmth compared to Mexican American and African American mothers (Ispa et al., 2004). Further, more acculturated Mexican American mothers showed more warmth than less acculturated Mexican American mothers. Maternal intrusiveness predicted increases in child negativity in all four groups. However, this relation was moderated by maternal warmth for African Americans only, and among European Americans only intrusiveness also related to a negative change in child engagement. This study shows that even when background variables such as educational level and maternal age are considered, there is a complex interplay between specific cultural background, level of acculturation, parenting levels, and parenting outcomes.

Studies testing differences in parenting beliefs and behaviors across different minority groups show that acculturation differs per group and per parenting domain. A study conducted in Australia, for example, found that with respect to parenting goals Vietnamese minority parents valued child independence and compliance more than Somali minority (p. 108) parents, and the length of time parents were living in Australia did not account for this difference (Wise & Da Silva, 2007). For discipline beliefs regarding the effectiveness of reasoning and for developmental expectations, the years that parents had spent in Australia did account for observed differences between Somali and Vietnamese parents (Wise & Da Silva, 2007). A study comparing Vietnamese, Korean, and East Indian parents and adolescents living in Canada also found that different acculturation domains induce different acculturation attitudes across groups. For example, parent's view on parental authority did not differ between groups, but parent's view on children's rights and obliga-

tions did, with Korean parents more likely to endorse children's right to date and marry who they want, and East Indian parents more likely to endorse children's household responsibilities. In addition, despite many group differences across acculturation domains (language, marriage, and cultural tradition), overall parents preferred integration for their children for cultural traditions and language, and preferred separation for their children's marriage (Kwak & Berry, 2001).

In study designs that compare first- to later-generation immigrants, it is possible to follow the change of parenting beliefs and practices across generations. In addition, it allows scholars to distinguish between, for example, generational status (or length of residence) and acculturation attitudes in relation to parenting beliefs and practices. A study among first-, second-, and third-generation youth of Mexican origin living in the United States, for example, showed that the proportion of teens with permissive parents increased with generation, whereas other parenting styles (e.g., disengaged, authoritarian) declined. This shift in parenting styles from generation to generation results in a distribution of parenting styles that is similar to the distribution among US-born White parents (Driscoll et al., 2008). The degree to which parenting styles and behavior shift from generation to generation may differ between immigrant groups. A study comparing parents of first-, second-, and third-generation Hispanic and Asian students in the United States, for example, found that generational differences in parent-child decision-making are more pronounced among Hispanics than among Asians. In addition, ethnic differences in decision-making are larger between the White and Hispanic group than between the White and Asian group. Hispanic parents of first- and second-generation students, for example, were in general more likely than native White parents to be strict and to make unilateral decisions without involving their children (Pon et al., 2005).

Studies comparing the same minority group in different host cultures in terms of parenting practices are scarce, but they can shed light on the influence of host culture and the larger society on the acculturation process for parenting beliefs and practices. An example comes from a study testing differences in socialization goals between German, Dutch, Turkish-German, and Turkish-Dutch mothers (Durgel, 2009). Results showed stronger effects of cultural and immigration status than host country. Turkish immigrant mothers, for example, endorsed more personal and economic potential, avoidance of illicit behavior, moral values, respectfulness, and family solidarity, and endorsed less psychological (p. 109) well-being, psychological development, and social skills than both Dutch and German mothers. After correction for maternal age and education, the differences became smaller but remained significant (Durgel, 2009).

As the series of studies discussed here shows, cultural background and host culture both influence parenting in migrant families. Importantly, the struggles at the intersection of the two cultures are also a factor in trying to understand parenting in migrant ethnic minority families. Such processes are related to culture, but they can also be confounders in the study of cultural differences in parenting when the experience of acculturation stress

and discrimination influence parenting more so than the actual cultural context or cultural background.

Acculturation stress is a reaction to events that occur during the process of acculturation, such as discomfort with unfamiliar norms, missing family members living in the country of origin, and lack of social support (Leidy et al., 2010). Conflicting acculturation strategies between and within ethnic groups can also lead to acculturation stress, for example when there are acculturation gaps between minority parents and children (Kim et al., 2009; Martinez, 2006; Smokowski et al., 2008; Telzer, 2010). Children tend to be more engaged with the dominant society, whereas parents are more involved in the minority community, leading to differences in norms and behaviors between parent and child (García Coll & Pachter, 2002; Leidy et al., 2010). These differences can in turn lead to parent-child conflicts, less optimal family functioning (Smokowski et al., 2008), and family (cultural) stress (Martinez, 2006). Parental acculturative stress has been found to be related to less optimal parenting (Emmen et al., 2013; Zeiders et al., 2016).

Related to acculturation stress, experiences of prejudice and discrimination can also negatively impact parenting practices in ethnic minority and migrant families. Intergroup prejudice is generally thought to be rooted deeply in evolutionary history in which groups provided survival and reproductive benefits for their members (McDonald et al., 2012). Intergroup attitudes such as in-group favoritism, majorities' social dominance orientation (i.e., the degree of preference for inequality among social groups), and acculturation preferences of majority and minority groups are all factors that have been found to be related to prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003; Michinov et al., 2005). For example, when the majority group perceives immigrants as rejecting the host culture and not identifying with the national group (and the majority prefers assimilation), discrimination of minorities increases (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003). Interestingly, within-country studies suggest that when prejudice and discrimination against immigrants increase, immigrants show a stronger desire to maintain their heritage culture (e.g., Christ et al., 2013). A study across four migrant-receiving countries showed that in countries with the least societal pressure to assimilate, immigrants were most adjusted to the host society (Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2012). Thus, sociopolitical climate and acculturation orientations of the majority also contribute to minorities' acculturation process and (p. 110) may lead to societal pressure and discrimination. Acculturative pressure and discrimination are in turn related to parenting behavior.

Ethnic (or racial) discrimination refers to an unfair treatment because of a person's ethnic background (e.g., being teased or insulted, unequal opportunities at work). Ethnic discrimination has been shown to induce physiological arousal and psychological vigilance, which, over time, result in the development of health problems, frustration, and depression (e.g., Brody et al., 2008). Research findings consistently show that perceived ethnic discrimination is associated with more depressive symptoms for ethnic minorities (e.g., Benner & Kim, 2009; Brody et al., 2008). Depression, in turn, has been consistently related to less positive parenting (e.g., more authoritarian, less sensitive, more harsh discipline). Combining these findings, ethnic discrimination has been found to be related to

less positive parenting through depressive symptoms (e.g., Brody et al., 2008; Zeiders et al., 2016).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have provided an overview of cultural influences on parenting, examining patterns across countries but also within countries in different ethnic groups. The overview is necessarily limited in scope and lacks detail about parenting and child development in specific cultural contexts. Even though there are many excellent studies on parenting “off the beaten track,” there are still large gaps in our understanding of parenting in non-Western contexts and how it relates to child development. The vast majority of studies on parenting are conducted in the United States and other Western countries, which leads to Western normativity in how papers are written. Only when studies have been conducted in non-Western communities is culture explicitly mentioned in the introduction and discussion of publications, whereas, of course, this should ideally be done for every paper to show that context matters, and findings cannot be automatically generalized to other contexts. This does not only apply to a country as context but also to a specific region with a specific lifestyle for a specific part of the population with certain socioeconomic characteristics. Treating all contexts as culturally laden—not just the non-Western ones—would help to emphasize the importance of cultural interpretations of findings.

Questions about cultural normativity are challenging in any situation, but they are much more difficult when cultural diversity is involved. Given the high cultural diversity in many urban regions in the world where professionals deal with families from all over the world, and the frequent “export” of parenting interventions from the West to other parts of the world, the field would benefit enormously from investing in mixed-methods studies examining these processes in situations where cultures meet and where it is not immediately clear which cultural norms should prevail (Raffaetà, 2016). How do we balance the rights of families to decide on their own parenting norms and the rights of children to be protected from harmful practices? Unfortunately, theory and (p. 111) research on parenting are still too often built around Western-normative conceptualizations of parenting, when in fact the study of the richness of cultural diversity in parenting has the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and behaviors first and foremost as a fundamentally human process.

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