Chapter 8

DIRECTIONS IN UNDERSTANDING, PREVENTING, AND TREATING DISRUPTIONS IN PARENTING AND CHILD BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN ASIAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

Studies of minority parenting and child development have often focused on heritage cultural values or contextual stressors as the primary influence on these developmental processes. However, determinants are often multifaceted and there is a need to consider an array of possible antecedents and how they may interact in shaping minority family processes. In our review, we adopt an integrative framework in which both heritage culture and unique environmental factors associated with minority group status and immigration are considered (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). Hence, we begin with an overview of cultural themes of interdependence followed by contextual stressors arising from acculturation and immigration processes. We then discuss the implications of these cultural and environmental factors for developmental processes and outcomes among Asian American children and youth. First, we review stress attributed to ethnic

minority status, such as racial discrimination and stereotypes. Second, we examine how a cultural emphasis on family obligation and avoidance of loss of face may have implications for academic stress and school achievement. Third, we explore how stressors arising from the clash of traditional Asian values and mainstream American values may be related to the disrupted family relations, including family violence. Finally, in light of the risk factors reviewed, we discuss implications for prevention and intervention that may be indicated for Asian American families and youth.

HERITAGE CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Confucianism is a cultural ideology upon which socialization, familial, and parent-child relationships are built in many East and Southeast Asian cultures. In Confucian societies, the guiding principle governing socialization is embodied in the ethic of filial piety. Filial piety entails a system of age veneration and patriarchy where children are taught to respect, honor, and obey their parents. Children are expected to fulfill obligations to their families in return for their parents' sacrifices in caregiving (e.g., Ho, 1986). Parents, who hold authority, in turn are responsible for governing, teaching, and disciplining their children. Filial duties also extend beyond the parents and include respecting and honoring elders in the extended family. As such, loyalty to family and respect for elders are strongly valued as socialization goals among Asian families.

Closely related to the tenets of Confucian philosophy is the broad cultural dimensions of collectivism or interdependence thought to be characteristic of Asian cultures marked by the tendency to see every individual in relation to some collective group, with the goals of the group superseding those of the individual (Oyserman, et al., 2002). As such, Asian Americans may be more likely to prioritize the well-being of their family and peers as a group than their own individual desires and may be more likely to subordinate personal goals in lieu of relational goals, such as fulfilling family obligations and responsibilities (Triandis, et al., 1988). These value systems may be associated with developmental patterns of adjustment among Asian American children raised according to these traditions, often with adaptive benefits. For example, valuing family obligation and suspending expectations for adolescent autonomy is associated with fewer conduct problems among Chinese American youth (e.g., Juang & Nguyen, 2009). Yet, in the context of other influences, maintaining these value orientations may also present some developmental challenges for Asian American youth and families.

ACCULTURATION AND ADJUSTMENT

In addition to heritage cultural values, contextual stressors associated with migration and acculturation may also impact parenting and child behavior problems in immigrant families. Acculturation is the process by which an individual's attitudes and/or behaviors from one cultural group are modified as a result of contact with a different culture (Moyerman & Forman, 1992). Among immigrant groups, it is important to understand the extent to which adaptation to new cultural patterns may co-occur with maintenance of heritage cultural orientations (Ryder, Alden, & Paulus, 2000). Studies suggest that youth in immigrant families who are able to integrate their acculturation toward American culture while maintaining ties to their heritage culture are better adjusted and higher achieving (e.g., Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002). In contrast, youth who feel marginalized from both ethnic and dominant cultures tend to experience the highest levels of stress and lower levels of adjustment (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). Marginalization is one outcome illustrating how acculturation can negatively impact mental health. More generally, "acculturative stress" involves the exposure of immigrants to the array of hardships associated with adjusting to a new cultural environment (Berry, et al., 1987). This may involve social isolation, experiencing discrimination, linguistic barriers, and downward social mobility. Acculturative stress tends to be related to psychosocial problems, including anxiety and somatic symptoms, depressive symptoms, and feelings of marginalization (Krishnan & Berry, 1992; Shin, 1994).

Another source of acculturative stress among immigrant families may be attributed to differential patterns of acculturation within immigrant Asian American families. Children and youth in immigrant families may acculturate more rapidly than their parents given their greater exposure to host culture socialization influences and relative openness to adopting new values and behaviors earlier in the lifespan (Okagaki & Bojczyk, 2002). This differential rate of acculturation results in a discrepancy in acculturation attitudes between immigrant parents and their children, a pattern described as acculturation gap or dissonant acculturation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Such gaps may be most problematic when acculturation processes result in a relinquishment of ethnic heritage values and language among youth that stands in contrast to parental ethnic cultural maintenance (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Acculturation gaps may lead to breakdowns in communication and emotional distancing between immigrant parents and children, thus placing families at risk of mental health problems (Hwang, 2006). When youth in Asian immigrant families perceive discrepancies between their own and their parents' levels of acculturation and adherence to cultural values,

they report more intergenerational conflict (e.g., Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2004). Such intergenerational cultural dissonance further predicts youth behavior problems in Southeast Asian American families, and this relationship is mediated by overt parent-child conflict (Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008).

Hwang (2006) further articulated how acculturative family distancing involves both growing incongruence in values and breakdowns in communication as consequences of different rates of acculturation between parents and children. Among Asian American adolescents, higher levels of acculturative family distancing are associated with higher distress and greater risk for clinical depression that is explained by family conflict (Hwang & Woods, 2009). The typically observed negative effects of family conflict on youth adjustment in general may be exacerbated among Asian American immigrant families where cohesion, harmony, and hierarchical relations are strongly valued. Family conflict in the context of more traditional expectations for family structure may in turn place Asian American youth at heightened risk of severe difficulties, including suicidality and hopelessness (Lau, Jernewall, Zane, & Myers, 2002). In such family contexts, overt conflict may be viewed as a major violation of developmental expectations rather than a common facet of growing up (Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006).

However, other studies have suggested that normative acculturation processes in immigrant families are not inevitably related to increased family conflict and maladjustment. Immigrant Asian American families have been shown to be resilient to conditions where youth acculturate more readily to American orientations than their parents (e.g., Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009). Furthermore, Fuligni (1998) found that ethnic difference in beliefs about adolescent autonomy and parental authority were not related to elevated family conflict among youth in immigrant Chinese and Filipino families. Such findings dispel the notion of rampant family discord in immigrant Asian American families. Therefore, it is most important to understand the conditions under which Asian American immigrants are vulnerable to heightened conflict and mental health problems associated with family adaptation to a new culture.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

In addition to the challenges engendered by the acculturation process, Asian American children and families also face instances of discrimination and racial stereotypes in intergroup relations. While Asian American youth are not overrepresented among victims of school bullying (Juvonen,

Graham, & Schuster, 2003), other studies have suggested that Asian American youth are subject to higher levels of peer discrimination compared to other ethnic minorities. Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton (2000) found that encounters with peer discrimination, such as being called racially insulting names and being excluded from activities based on race, were reported most frequently by East and South Asian Americans compared to African American, Hispanic Americans, and White Americans. Asian American students more often reported feeling threatened because of their race compared to other ethnic minority youth. Contrary to African American and Latino youth, who typically report more frequent "institutional" discrimination or discrimination by adults, such as teachers, shopkeepers, and police officers, Asian American high school students frequently report higher levels of peer discrimination and harassment (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

Perceived and experiences of discrimination and racism are associated with low self-esteem, low personal and social self-efficacy, and depressive and anxiety symptoms (e.g., Fisher, et al., 2000). In a three-year longitudinal study of an urban public high school, Asian American adolescents who reported more peer discrimination experienced a greater acceleration in symptoms of depression over time and a greater deceleration in self-esteem compared to African and Latino American youth (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). Way & Chen (2000) also reported that Asian American students in this sample were more likely to report depression, low self-esteem, and poor friendship quality than were African American and Latino students. Peer discrimination and harassment experiences may explain these disparities in psychological and social well-being, suggesting a very high risk to Asian American youth even as compared to other youth who share minority-status stress. Despite considering the United States as their home, many Asian Americans are aware of their perpetual-foreigner status and corresponding inferior social position and may also internalize the associated stereotypes in their self-concept (Zhou & Xiong, 2005).

Differences in experiences and frequency of discrimination may in part be the result of different stereotypes faced by each ethnic group. Qualitative research finds that African American and Latino students perceive Asian American students as lowest on a social hierarchy in school because they often appeared weak, unwilling to defend themselves, and lacking the ability to get along with people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). This peer discrimination and harassment may be traced to tensions in school environments stemming from the model-minority stereotype ascribed to Asian Americans. This stereotype encompasses the widely shared belief that Asian Americans have

successfully overcome discrimination to become a uniformly successful minority group (Chun, 1995). Asian American students are typically perceived to be academically competent, well-behaved, and hard-working (Lee, 1994). Rosenbloom & Way (2004) found that Asian American students were often preferred by their teachers based on model-minority beliefs, whereas African American and Latino adolescents more often felt they were discriminated against by their teachers and wrongly disciplined. Divisive stereotypes and perceived preferential treatment of Asian American students may fuel resentment and contribute to discrimination of Asian Americans by other ethnic-minority peers.

Although the model-minority stereotype connotes positive attributions of cognitive ability and diligence, several scholars suggest pernicious negative effects on Asian American youth in school settings. For example, Lee (1994) argued that the stereotype may prevent teachers from identifying Asian American students who struggle academically, particularly in math and science. Similarly, Lew (2003) noted that Asian American students who drop out of school are often overlooked and fail to receive the needed support. It becomes necessary to reconcile our popular understanding of Asian American academic achievement with a more nuanced understanding of intragroup diversity and the repercussions of the perpetuation of a grossly generalized stereotype of success.

These experiences of discrimination may contribute to disruptions in parenting and parent-child relations in different ways. For example, Rumbaut (1994) found that discrimination from peers was strongly associated with greater parent-child conflict among a sample of Mexican and Filipino immigrant children. Furthermore, a larger percentage of the Asian American population is recent immigrants. It is not clear whether immigrant parents are aware of the discrimination and barriers their children may face. As such, Asian American parents may be less likely to prepare children for bias or provide them with proactive methods to cope with these negative experiences. Children's negative experiences of disparagement at school coupled with a lack of understanding or support from parents may lead to increased conflict and emotional distancing between parents and children. However, it is important to note that more research is needed to help clarify the issue of how experiences of racism contribute to family and parent-child relations among Asian American families.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ADJUSTMENT

Indicators of Asian American academic success at the aggregate level are widely acknowledged. Across elementary and secondary school levels,

Asian American students have higher GPAs, better scores on achievement tests, and lower dropout rates than other ethnic groups (e.g., Goyette & Xie, 1999; Aldous, 2006). Yet, academic difficulties are a real source of stress for youth whose performance falls outside the range of expected achievement. As in every other racial/ethnic group, there is of course wide variability in educational attainment and success among Asian American youth, with notable variability among different ethnic groups. Research suggests that Samoan Americans, Cambodian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Laotian Americans have not, as separate groups, been highly successful in school (Lee, 1996; Reeves & Bennett, 2003). Even among high-achieving Asian American youth, concerning numbers report poor psychological and social adjustment (e.g., Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Qin, 2008), suggesting an achievement/adjustment paradox. For example, Rumbaut (1995) found that Filipino American youth had high levels of education and professional success, but lower levels of psychological functioning indexed by self-esteem and depressive symptoms compared to other ethnic groups.

One explanation for the achievement/adjustment paradox concerns the high emotional toll of culturally and contextually shaped expectations for achievement. Values and socialization experiences that are common across Asian-origin cultures emphasize the need to succeed academically. Socialization of Asian American children may be permeated with demands and high expectations for hard work, achievement, upward mobility, and respect for education (e.g., Stevenson & Lee, 1996). Parents are held responsible for their children's schooling, and a child's success honors the family; poor performance results in loss of face for the family (Stevenson & Lee, 1996). Children are made aware of the public consequences of under-achievement and internalize the need to fulfill obligations to the family and repay parental sacrifice through achievement (Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Yu & Yang, 1994). While these values and patterns of socialization are thought to contribute to high educational aspirations and attainment, they may also contribute to subjective distress. Research on high-achieving Chinese immigrant adolescents suggests that parents of distressed adolescents adhered strictly to the importance of education and the hierarchical parental role at home compared to parents of non-distressed adolescents (Qin, 2008). Poor achievement in the context of such high expectations can compromise children's well-being, resulting in high levels of depression, social anxiety, loneliness, and isolation (Zhou, Peverly, Xin, Huang, & Wang, 2003).

Furthermore, as an immigrant group, the pressure for scholastic achievement may take on a specific set of meanings in Asian American families.

A primary reason for immigration is often to provide children with more favorable educational opportunities than are available in the homeland (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2004). Immigrant Asian American parents often expect children to succeed in school and secure professional employment as a return on this investment. Asian Americans are more concerned than other ethnic groups about the consequences of not getting a good education (Chao & Tseng, 2002), and Asian American students accordingly report high levels of fear of failure (Eaton & Dembo, 1997; Zusho, Pintrich, & Cortina, 2005). Asian American students are most likely to believe that doing poorly in school will have negative repercussions on their future (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown (1992). This pressure may stem from the perception that other avenues of social mobility are limited (Sue & Okazaki, 1990).

This orientation of Asian American youth to succeed for their family has been thought to fuel "maladaptive perfectionism," marked by fear of failure, self-doubt, and excessive concern over mistakes (Bieling, Israeli, & Antony, 2004; Slade & Owens, 1998), which in turn heightens risks for depression and suicidality (e.g., Beevers & Miller, 2004). Values related to family interdependence coupled with tendencies toward perfectionism may jointly place Asian American youth at risk for distress. Among Asian American college students, adhering to interdependent values predicts greater maladaptive perfectionism and exacerbates the risk of depression related to perfectionistic tendencies (Yoon & Lau, 2008). While values concerning family interdependence and obligation predict academic performance among Asian American youth, the practical burdens of family assistance in immigrant families actually compromise achievement (e.g., Telzer & Fuligni, 2009; Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002). Thus, in lower-income immigrant Asian American families, the demands for achievement can collide with demands for daily assistance to the family (e.g., caring for siblings and/or wage-earning) (Tseng, 2004). This can culminate in a real double bind for less-affluent Asian American youth, and it is not surprising that family economic strain is associated with lower GPAs and poorer school engagement among Chinese American students (Mistry, Brenner, Tan & Kim, 2009).

Academic achievement motivation also has the potential consequence of "opportunity cost," such that youth may focus on studies to the exclusion of other domains of development. This imbalance may create fewer opportunities for children to have positive interactions with family members and more instances of familial conflict. Asian American students appear to study more hours per week compared to their European American peers (Sue & Zane, 1985). For example, while Asian American 11thgraders

have reported studying an average of 19.9 hours per week, their European American counterparts reported an average of 13.8 hours (Chen & Stevenson, 1995). With so much time devoted to academics, children may not spend quality time with their families. In a *San Jose Mercury News* article on academic stress among Asian Americans, a reporter described an Asian American mother who pulled her daughter from the high-stress track at school because when the family was planning a vacation, her daughter objected to missing a day of school. According to Qin (2008), from the parents' perspective, they are working hard every day to make it possible for their children to study; however, from the children's perspective, not only do family members infrequently see each other, the parents only care about basic needs like food and schooling. In Asian American families where there is excessive concern about academics and not enough support in other aspects of children's lives, children can become openly resentful (Qin, 2009). In addition, Asian American students may feel like they are missing out when comparing themselves to their European American peers or media portrayals and blame their parents for their lack of free time (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Thus, it is possible that a disproportionate emphasis on schooling may limit participation in cultivation of family and peer relations, extracurricular activities, or recreation that may in part explain observed findings of poorer social and emotional functioning of Asian American youth (e.g., Way & Chen, 2000).

Another aspect of risk concerns the family climate that may accompany the pressure for academic success. High parental expectations for academic success may contribute to alienation in the parent-child relationship. According to Qin (2008), Asian American children may react to such pressure by becoming reluctant to communicate with parents, thereby decreasing emotional closeness as a form of "passive rebellion." On the other hand, when parents are disappointed in children's academic performance, the relationship can be compromised when punitive responses take hold. Children's school problems appear to be a risk factor for physical discipline in Chinese American families (Lau, in press). Poor grades or behavior problems in school may trigger harsh physical discipline among Asian American parents who feel so deeply invested in their children's education. In sum, despite high aggregate levels of educational achievement, Asian American children may experience associated risks to adjustment, raising concerns about a paradoxical disconnect between academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

Thus far we have reviewed cultural themes and contextual stressors in Asian American families and how they impact such outcomes as academic achievement and adjustment. Although conflict is a normative process in

the parent-child relationship for many families, the cultural values and stressors unique to Asian American families may amplify family disruptions, thus leading to family violence. Of course, not all Asian American families that experience such disruptions resort to family violence. However, culturally salient factors and stressors arising from minority status and acculturation processes may put Asian American families at an elevated risk for family violence.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Exposure to family violence is a major risk factor for psychological distress among children and youth. However, little research has been conducted on risk in Asian American families. Children exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) suffer many consequences, including the development of externalizing and internalizing psychological disorders (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Arseneault, 2002) and the perpetuation of family violence in the next generation (Kalmuss, 1984). Child victims of physical abuse suffer the obvious risks to injury, but also elevated risk of chronic illnesses, health impairments, and mental health problems (Goodwin & Stein, 2004; Kolko, 2002). Both forms of family violence remain poorly understood in Asian American families, especially with regard to prevalence.

Some research suggests that rates of IPV are higher among Asian American families compared to European American families. Regional surveys conducted among specific Asian American ethnic groups have yielded high lifetime prevalence of IPV ranging from 60 percent of married Korean immigrant women in Chicago (Song-Kim, 1992), to 53.3 percent of Vietnamese refugee women in New England (Tran, 1997), to 40 percent of South Asian women in Boston (Raj & Silverman, 2002), to 33 percent of Japanese American women in Los Angeles (Yoshihama, 1999).

However, in contrast, nationally representative population-based surveys have indicated that rates of IPV are lower among Asian American families compared to overall national estimates. For example, the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey reported lifetime prevalence rates of 15.0 percent and 3 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander women and men, respectively, compared to 21.7 percent and 7.3 percent for U.S. women and men, respectively (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Similarly, data from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) also revealed relatively low rates of IPV among Asian Americans, affecting 10.2 percent of women and 12.0 percent of men (Chang, Shen, & Takeuchi, 2005). The much lower estimates from national surveys may

reflect limitations such as the inclusion of only English-speaking Asian Americans in the NVAW, or response-style tendencies of participants in large and more generic epidemiological surveys as compared to focal ethnic-specific surveys, where participant engagement may differ.

Concerning rates of child abuse, official data reported by child-protective services agencies nationally indicates that Asian American children have the lowest victimization rate of all racial/ethnic groups, with 2.5 per 1,000 children, compared to the national rate of 12.1 per 1,000 children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). However, these low reported rates of child abuse are thought to grossly underestimate actual incidence due to underreporting associated with both lack of awareness of child-welfare laws and reluctance of community members to report what is often considered a private family matter (Larsen, Kim-Goh, & Nguyen, 2008). When Asian American families are reported to authorities for suspected maltreatment, the primary content of allegations tends to be physical abuse, whereas neglect is more prevalent among other racial ethnic groups (Rhee, Chang, Weaver, & Wong, 2008). Outside of officially reported data, other studies suggest high risk among Asian American youth. For example, retrospective reports among Asian American young adults suggest higher levels of childhood physical abuse compared to Whites (e.g., Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Carlin, 1999). In addition, Asian American/ Pacific Islander youth involved in public-service sectors are just as likely as youth from other racial/ethnic groups to self-report being victims of parental physical aggression but are less likely to label these experiences as abusive and are less likely to receive child-protective services (Lau, et al. 2005). These data suggest that official estimates of low risk of child maltreatment among Asian Americans belie the true extent of this public-health problem.

While we lack robust and reliable estimates of the extent of family violence among Asian Americans, a growing research literature examines pertinent culturally salient risk factors. However, research focusing on putative cultural value orientations as risk factors for family violence has not yielded a clear picture of the role of traditional values. For example, an emphasis on Confucian-based teachings about marriage and traditional patriarchal gender roles is thought to drive a greater tolerance of male-to-female IPV (Ahmad, et al., 2004; Yoshioka, DiNoia, & Ullah, 2001). Yet, Chang, Shen, & Takeuchi (2005) found that more traditional gender role expectations that advantage men's decision-making power were not associated with risk for men perpetrating IPV. Further, traditional gender role expectations for women to assume greater household responsibility were associated with increased risk for IPV perpetration and victimization

among women. Such findings are not consistent with a straightforward interpretation that traditional cultural values have a direct correspondence to risk of violence.

Likewise, some observers have speculated that certain traditional values concerning childrearing in Asian cultures may exacerbate risk of parental aggression and physical abuse (Tang, 1998). The Confucian ethic of filial piety emphasizes the duty of children to be obedient and attend to the needs of their parents (Ho, 1986). These socialization goals may promote strict control, intolerance of misbehavior, and reliance on physical discipline (Ima & Hohm, 1991; Tang, 1998, 2006). These ideas of childrearing and parent-child relations may elevate risk for child physical abuse in Asian American families. Yet, many traditionally Asian parental control strategies, such as close monitoring, frequent correction of behavior, shaming, criticism, and upward social comparison, do not invoke physical discipline (Chao, 1994; Fung, 1999). Lau (in press) examined whether cultural value orientations commonly associated with Asian cultures were associated with parental aggression among Chinese immigrant parents. Findings suggested that valuing firm parental control and strict discipline were not related to parental aggression overall, and certain other traditional Asian values emphasizing restraint over expression of intense emotion were protective against parental aggression. This study suggests that traditional cultural values alone do not lead to higher risk of physical abuse.

Thus, contrary to the sentiment that Asian values concerning patriarchy and hierarchy in family structure may place families at risk of violence, empirical studies suggest otherwise. Recent research instead suggests that more proximal risk factors for family violence involve stressors that result from minority status and acculturation processes. Examining data from the NLAAS survey, Lau, Takeuchi, & Alegria (2006) found that parent-to-child aggression was related to experiences of acculturative stress and discrimination among Asian American parents. Moreover, the previously discussed phenomenon of acculturation dissonance in immigrant Asian American families has been associated with increased conflict between parents and children (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002) and higher occurrence of physical and verbal aggression in parent-child disputes in Asian American families (Park, 2001). Finally, Lau (in press) found that elevated intergenerational acculturation conflicts exacerbated risk of parental aggression among parents who adhere to values concerning strict discipline in parental control. This suggests the possibility that while cultural childrearing value orientations in and of themselves may not be risky, they may compromise parenting in the context of acculturative stress in the parent-child relationship. Further studies are

needed to elucidate and confirm these findings and further investigate the relative contributions of heritage cultural orientations and acculturative stress factors that may lead to increased risk of violence in Asian American families.

It should be noted that although the heritage cultural values and stressors arising from minority status and the acculturative process may interact to place Asian American families at an elevated risk for family violence, how this process occurs remains unknown. The current empirical literature lacks an understanding of the point in which normative family disruptions reach a maladaptive threshold to lead to family violence. An understanding of how increased family disruptions arising from culturally salient factors and contextual stressors can predict violence in families, and Asian American families in particular, is needed in future investigations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

As reviewed above, Asian American children and families may encounter stressors that place them at heightened risk of disrupted parent-child relationships and child behavior problems. Among the most well-researched and widely disseminated treatment approaches for such problems is parent training (PT), which has been found to be effective in improving parent-child relationships, decreasing externalizing behavior problems in children, and preventing recurrence of physical discipline or child abuse (e.g., Brestan & Eyberg, 1998). PT is based on social learning theory—emphasizing the role of observing and modeling the behaviors of others in the learning process—while integrating principles of behavioral reinforcement and play therapy. Parents are taught to strengthen parent-child relationships by increasing attentive play and social and tangible rewards and to replace physical discipline with alternative strategies to manage misbehavior, such time-out and loss of privileges (e.g., Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003).

Several trials of PT have found such interventions to be effective in improving parent-reported child behavior problems and parent-child relationships for Asian immigrant families residing in Western societies, such as Chinese Americans and Vietnamese Americans (Reid, et al., 2001; Ying, 1999), Korean Americans (Kim, Cain, & Webster-Stratton, 2008), Japanese Australians (Matsumoto, Sofronoff & Sanders, 2007), Chinese Australians (Crisante & Ng, 2003), and Asian Pacific Islanders in Hawaii (Kumpfer, et al., 2002). In addition, there have also been multiple studies showing the efficacy of PT among Hong Kong Chinese families (Ho, Chow, Fung, Leung, Chiu, Yu, et al., 1999; Leung, Sanders, Leung, Mak, &

Lau, 2003; Leung, Tsang, Heung, & Yiu, 2009). Although many of these studies include small sample sizes, and some lack a randomized control design, the corpus of evidence provides some confidence in the generalizability of PT effects for Asian-origin families.

However, researchers have documented challenges among Asian Americans and other ethnic minority families in participating and engaging in PT. For example, Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities show significantly lower participation rates (Reid, et al., 2001) and higher drop-out rates in PT (Kazdin & Whitley, 2003) when compared to European American families. For example, in one large prevention trial conducted with 634 at-risk low-income families of Head Start preschoolers, 28 percent of ethnic minority families including Asian American families that were invited declined participation, compared to 17 percent of European American families (Reid, et al., 2001). In another randomized clinical trial, 41.4 percent of ethnic minority families dropped out of intervention, compared to only 20.2 percent of European American families (Kazdin & Whitley, 2003). A meta-analysis of PT trials conducted between 1980 and 2004 confirmed that ethnic minority status is significantly and reliably associated with attrition (Reyno & McGrath, 2006).

The difficulties of engaging immigrant Asian American families are multifold. On the practical level, barriers to attendance may include lack access to reliable child-care, transportation, or work schedules that allow parents to participate. Certainly, a lack of linguistically appropriate services may be a particular problem, with an estimated 800 spoken languages and dialects among the Asian American population. Cultural perceptions that are less consistent with the contemporary understanding of the etiology of child behavior problems and the mechanisms of action underlying PT may also reduce the likelihood of engagement (Yeh, et al., 2005). These factors, coupled with a history of underutilization of mental health and its related stigma, may explain why Asian American families are often reluctant to participate in PT even when it is offered in accessible community locations with language-matched providers.

Some researchers have found that making cultural adaptations to PT programs has helped to improve recruitment of ethnic minority families (Harachi, et al., 1997) and increase retention rates by as much as 41 percent (Kumpfer, et al., 2002). To encourage participation, interventionists worked closely with credible members of the targeted ethnic minority community who have direct contact with families in the community to aid recruitment. Recruitment efforts often focused on existing social networks of the targeted community, such as those provided by churches and community centers. Intervention is likewise delivered in facilities within such

community sites, for both easy access and an added sense of familiarity and legitimacy. Critically, PT providers are bilingual therapists, and recruitment and outreach emphasizes incorporating culturally relevant messages about program goals.

Once Asian American families are initially engaged in PT, difficulties in retention may be more directly attributable to perceptions of the cultural relevance and of PT intervention strategies. Some researchers have suggested that PT may be especially sensitive to cultural differences, since changing parenting behaviors involves intervening with what may be deeply rooted cultural practices and values governing childrearing and familial structure (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996). The skills and perspectives offered in PT have largely been developed and validated with European Americans and may not resonate as well with diverse families (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Wood & Baker, 1999). The traditional hierarchical and patriarchal family system in many East Asian cultures may cause immigrant parents to be reluctant to use techniques such as praise, ignoring misbehavior, and negotiating tangible rewards for desired behavior (Gorman & Balter, 1997). Others suggest that immigrant parents may perceive assimilation messages in PT interventions that can breed resistance among ethnic minority parents. For example, South Asian parents in the United Kingdom have expressed concerns that PT programs undermine parental authority and forcefully apply Western values of autonomy and independence (Paiva, 2008).

Crisante & Ng's (2003) discussion of process issues arising in their trial of PT with Chinese Australians group supported some of the concerns about cultural fit. They reported that the parents were reluctant to use the parenting techniques of praising and clear commands, as they run counter to traditional parenting roles and expectations. Likewise, Asian American mental health providers have reported that immigrant Chinese Americans families have particular concerns about using praise to encourage desired behaviors. Therapists reported that immigrant parents feel that the traditional role of Chinese parents is not to praise or nurture a child's self-esteem, but to criticize misbehavior in order to facilitate self-improvement (Lau, in press). Therefore, Chinese parents may resist praise for fear of spoiling children and dampening their motivation to do better. In addition, the Asian American therapists in the focus groups also detailed how many other parenting techniques in PT programs, such as attentive play, ignoring misbehavior, and time-outs, may be experienced as foreign and inconsistent with their cultural sensibilities about family functioning and parenting (Lau, in press).

Interventionists have thus described strategies to address potential discordance between PT techniques and traditional childrearing values held

by Asian immigrant parents (Crisante & Ng, 2003; Lau, in press). One strategy involves validating parents' heritage cultural perspective while framing the target parenting techniques within the demands of a bicultural family environment. For example, when discussing praise, therapists highlighted the fact that children growing up in the United States will likely benefit from the confidence and self-assertiveness that often comes from receiving praise from adults. The explicit teaching of praise should emphasize the congruence with valued goals. One common misgiving about praise among Chinese parents is that this positive reinforcement will make children feel like they have done enough and they will no longer continue to try to do better (Lieh-Mak, Luk, & Lee, 1984). Parent trainers can actually validate this concern, noting that children may stop making efforts when praise is trait-focused (e.g., "you are so smart") rather than effort-focused (e.g., "you tried very hard"). Effective PT provides instruction in specific labeled praise focused on effort to increase persistence of positively valued behavior. Another therapeutic strategy in teaching parenting behaviors that are culturally foreign is to ensure ample experiential learning. Crisante & Ng (2003) found that creating opportunities for parents to experience being praised in sessions helps them shift their focus from a parent-driven to a more child-centered perspective.

Finally, it is possible that Asian immigrant families may be less likely to persist or participate in PT when the intervention content does not appear relevant to their most immediate needs. For example, as previously discussed, acculturation gaps in Asian American families have been associated with increased conflict and aggression, yet strategies for addressing this phenomenon may not be central in PT. Moreover, given the emphasis on education in Asian American families coupled with the difficulties immigrant parents face when navigating the academic system, PT can be tailored to address these contextual stressors. Specialized PT protocols have been designed to address specific culturally salient risk factors that are salient in Asian immigrant families. The SITICAF (Strengthening Intergenerational/Intercultural Ties in Immigrant Chinese American Families project; Ying, 1999) intervention specifically targets the acculturation gap by helping parents develop empathy and understanding of the challenges of biculturalism that their children face. Such programs have the potential to improve intergenerational relationships and increase parental self-efficacy. However, culturally adapted PT may run the risk of compromising fidelity and reducing treatment effects when core PT content is omitted. While cultural adaptations can improve engagement and acceptability to PT, research has documented reduced efficacy relative to standard PT when behavioral skills training is displaced by coverage of cultural issues (Kumpfer, et al.,

2002; Lau, 2006). The challenge is to design culturally responsive PT that can improve engagement while retaining the core treatment elements that reduce behavior problems and enhance parent-child relations.

In our own work, we provide PT to Chinese immigrant families while maintaining treatment fidelity and comprehensiveness of coverage of core skills such as attentive play, praise, tangible rewards, ignoring, clear commands, time-out, and logical consequences. However, we augment PT by targeting risk factors such as communication problems and school-related stress. To help reframe and resolve recurrent acculturation conflict, we introduce attribution retraining to help parents replace negative thoughts about child misbehavior with calming and self-efficacious thoughts that promote the use of PT skills. Communication training focuses on active listening and problem-solving skills. Finally, immigrant parents are taught to support their children's schooling structuring a homework routine, limiting television screen time, and coaching persistence in the face of academic difficulties. Preliminary findings reveal significant reductions in parent-reported externalizing that are mediated by reductions of negative discipline among immigrant Chinese families. These and other efforts suggest that Asian American families can and do benefit from PT interventions. More research is needed to identify the conditions under which Asian Americans seek and remain in treatment as well as the factors that lead to improved efficacy of these apparently robust interventions.

CONCLUSION

Our review of the literature demonstrates that Asian American children and youth may be subject to heightened mental health risk derived from the unique demands of navigating two diverging cultures and the contextual challenges associated with their immigrant and ethnic minority status. Academic stress, disrupted family relations, and discrimination and stereotypes may be specific areas in which Asian American youth face heightened stress and vulnerability. Yet, while the presence of risk factors may suggest that Asian American children and youth are more vulnerable to certain developmental maladjustment, at the same time, this population reflects much strength and resilience. For example, while features of the native culture such as filial piety may promote strict parental control or authoritarian parenting (Wang & Phinney, 1998), heritage values such as strong family cohesion and family obligation may buffer children and adolescents against misconduct (Juang & Nguyen, 2009). Similarly, while certain acculturation processes may pose significant challenges to Asian American children and youth, other forms of adaptation to acculturative demands lead to higher levels of academic

achievement, stronger ethnic pride, and higher levels of self-esteem (e.g., Farver, et al., 2002). Indeed, studies have indicated that bicultural youth who can draw resources from both the heritage and mainstream American cultures are best situated to enjoy academic success (Feliciano, 2001). Thus, we believe that an interdependent cultural orientation that emphasizes social relationships and family duty can be a source of competency and resiliency for Asian children and youth. Yet, it is important to understand the conditions under which straddling two cultural ideals can contribute to risk. We also review the promise of culturally responsive PT interventions for meeting the needs of immigrant families of Asian descent. It is important to identify factors that increase engagement and participation from Asian American families. Moreover, while some efforts have been made to examine outcomes of PT in various Asian immigrant groups, the paucity of research on this topic makes it difficult to understand whether these implications apply to groups other than Chinese-origin families. Finally, an exciting outgrowth of this intervention work will be the study of adapting interventions to promote efficacy among immigrant families. The area of study is ripe for exploration and represents a line of inquiry of theoretical interest as well as applied public-health importance.

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