

Maternal Perceptions of Children's Shyness as Predictors of Overprotection and Critical

Control: The Role of Culture

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Maternal overprotection and critical control were found to associate with the development of children’s shyness. The question of interest was the reasons for such controlling behavior from mothers when dealing with children’s shyness. The current research moved beyond the focus on parents’ attributions and goals in existing shyness literature to examine mothers’ negative perceptions of shyness to explain mothers’ overprotective and critically controlling behavior. In Study 1, Hong Kong mothers (N=134) and Western mothers (N=59) whose children were aged 3-5 from international kindergartens in Hong Kong reported their perceptions, negative emotions and behaviors towards hypothetical scenarios where their children behaving shyly. Hong Kong mothers who perceived the shy behavior as socially unacceptable and expected greater negative consequences for child’s future adjustment reported greater critical control, while those who perceived the shy behavior as reflecting child’s present emotional distress reported greater overprotection. Hong Kong mothers’ negative emotions were found to fully contribute to the

relations between their negative perceptions and critical control. Similar associations were not significant in Western mothers.

In Study 2, an experimental method was employed to establish a causal interpretation of cultural knowledge in leading to maternal perceptions and behavior given established parenting differences across Chinese and Western culture. A subset of Hong Kong mothers participated in Study 1 (N=60) completed a similar set of questionnaires after culturally primed (Chinese or Western primed). Priming effect were not found, with both groups of mothers reported similar level of controlling behavior and negative perceptions towards the hypothetical scenarios displaying children's shyness.

Taken together, the results suggest that whether mothers are overprotective or critically controlling when dealing with children's shyness may depend on how negatively they perceive children's shy behavior, as well as their negative affect. It proves the importance of capturing mothers' perceptions on children's shy behavior to understand mothers' controlling behavior and opens up a new arena to look at mothers' cognition in the study of shyness.

Lastly, given the different results emerged in Hong Kong and Western mothers and the lack of cultural priming effect, the current research also discusses on the possible role played by culture in parenting and future improvement for conducting cultural priming experiment on similar studies.

母親對孩子羞怯表現的負面看法以預測母親過度保護或嚴格控制孩子的行為，

## 及中西文化在當中的角色之研究調查

### 摘要

研究發現母親的過度保護和嚴格控制與孩子發展出差怯表現有所關聯。現有的研究專注了解父母對孩子表現的歸因及在處理孩子表現時的目標去了解父母的行為，但結果並非一致。因此本研究提出母親對孩子羞怯表現的負面看法來解釋母親的過分保護和嚴格控制的行為。

擁有介乎 3 至 5 歲，就讀於香港的國際幼稚園的 134 名香港和 59 名西方母親參與了研究的第一部分。母親看了假設她們的孩子表現羞怯的情景後，報告了她們當時會有的看法，負面情緒和行為。結果顯示越認為該表現不被社會接受和預期該表現會為孩子帶來負面影響的香港母親，就越偏向顯示有嚴格控制孩子的行為；而越認為該表現正反映孩子當時的情緒困擾的香港母親，就越偏向顯示有過度保護孩子的行為。報告亦顯示香港母親的負面看法與嚴格控制孩子的正關係乃基於她們的負面情緒。西方母親的報告中並沒有類似顯著的關聯。

研究第二部分用實驗的方法來建立母親的看法和行為乃受文化知識所影響的因果解釋。60 名參與了研究第一部分的香港母親分別在被激發起中國或西方文化知識後完成類似第一部分研究的問卷。結果顯示兩組母親報告的負面看法與行為相近，未有激發起動效應。

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