



Influence of Child Behavioral Problems and Parenting Stress on Parent-Child Conflict among Low-Income Families: The Moderating Role of Maternal Nativity*

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Introduction

The developmental niche framework indicates that development takes place within the child's cultural context. Despite the growing cultural diversity in the U.S., studies focusing on the contexts in which immigrants' lives are embedded remain sparse (Hsin-Chun Tsai, 2003). The current study focuses on factors that may contribute to parent-child conflict.

- **Parent-child (P-C) conflict** is characterized by disagreeable interactions where the parent and the child display negative affect and behavior towards each other (Weaver et al., 2014).
- **Parenting stress** refers to a condition where the perceived parenting demands exceed the actual resources necessary to parent effectively (Deater-Deckard, Chen, & El Mallah, 2013). Low-income parents are more susceptible to experience stress and parents who reported more stress have more conflicts with their children (Nelson Taylor, 2011).
- **Child Behavioral Problems** include problems relating to aggression, attention, emotional control, and withdrawal (LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1999). Children with more behavioral problems tend to experience more P-C conflict (Nelson Taylor, 2011).
- **Migration and Parental Nativity.** Although research has indicated that immigrant parenting is also a complex and stressful experience (Guo, 2013), not much is known about the specific pathways by which the stressors influence how they parent. Additionally, although it has been found that children of immigrants have higher propensities to develop behavioral problems (Gelatt et al., 2015), it remains unclear how behavioral problems are specifically related to P-C interactions in the context of immigrant families.

Research Questions

- Do parenting stress and child behavioral problems predict parent-child conflict?
- Does maternal nativity moderate the effect of child behavioral problems and parenting stress on parent-child conflict?

Method

Data were collected in fall 2014 as part of the 2014-2015 Educare Implementation Study. The Educare Learning Network is comprised of various centers throughout the U.S. that provide services for children aged 6-weeks-old through preschool and who are from low-income households.

Participants

- A total of 236 mothers of preschool children participated in the study, and 43% of the them were born outside the U.S., out of which 62% were born in Mexico. The average age of the mothers was 26.7, and 77.5% of the mothers has obtained at least a high school diploma or GED.
- Children's ethnicity: 25% African American, 47% Hispanic, 15% White, 10% Biracial, 3% Other
- 56% of children are male

Measures

- **Parent-child Conflict (parent-report).** Child Parent Relationship Scale, Short Form (CPRS-SF), Conflict subscale (Pianta, 1992) *e.g.*, "Dealing with my child drains my energy."
- **Parenting Stress (parent-report).** Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI) (Abidin, 1995) *e.g.*, "I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent."
- **Child Behavioral Problems (teacher-report).** Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Rating – Preschoolers (DECA-P2) (Lebuffe & Naglieri, 1999a, 1999b) *e.g.*, "How often did the child fight with other children?"
- Questionnaire on demographic information, including country of birth (maternal nativity).

Statistical Analyses

- Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the moderating effect of maternal nativity

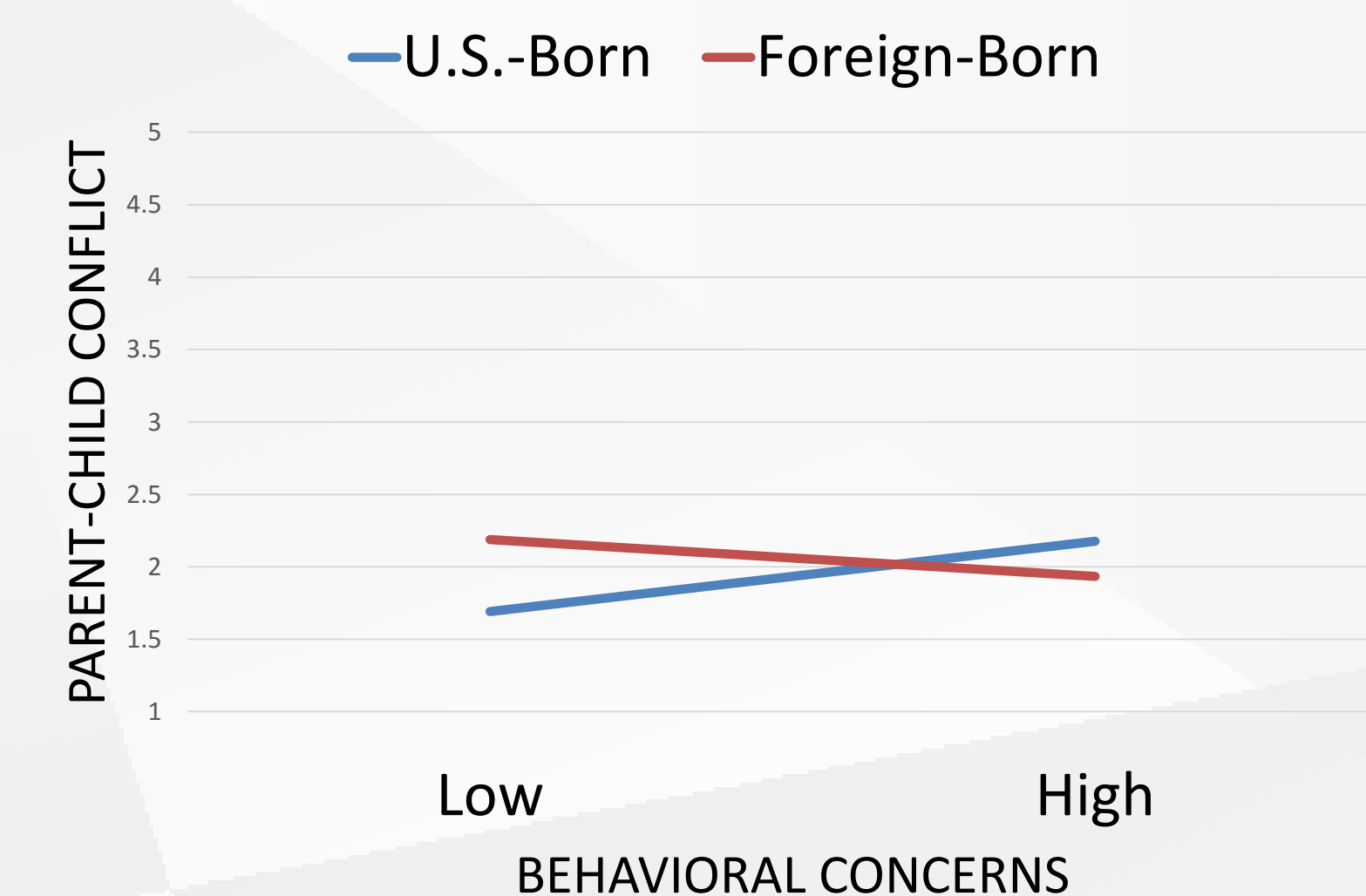
Results

Table 1. Regression Coefficients, Standard Error Estimates, and P-Values in the Final Regression Model

Predictor	B	β	SE	p-value
(Constant)	1.934	0	.062	< .001
Caregiver education	-.084	-.183	.026	.001
Maternal age	-.011	-.077	.008	.184
Maternal nativity	.127	.077	.103	.219
Parenting stress	.621	.514	.066	< .001
Behavioral problems	.023	.294	.006	< .001
Maternal nativity x Behavioral problems	-.035	-.277	.009	< .001

- Parenting stress was positively associated with parent-child conflict, but it did not interact with maternal nativity. This suggests that more parenting stress was related to more parent-child conflict regardless of whether the mothers were born in or outside the U.S.

Figure 1. The interaction effect between maternal nativity and child behavioral problems on parent-child conflict



- Maternal nativity interacted with teacher-reported child behavioral problems in predicting parent-child conflict. Simple slope analyses were conducted to better understand the interaction (Figure 1).
- For children of U.S.-born mothers., the more behavioral problems they have, the greater the parent-child conflict. However, for children of foreign-born mothers, behavioral problem was not significantly associated with conflict. In addition, the regression line approached significance, but the direction of the regression was opposite.

Conclusion

- This study underscores both the differences and similarities in P-C conflict among U.S.-born and foreign-born mothers.
- The similar effect of parenting stress on P-C conflict on the two groups can be explained by the potentially common stressful experiences brought about by adverse economic conditions.
- The developmental niche framework elucidates the difference in the nature of the relation of child behavioral problems and P-C conflict between U.S.-born and foreign-born mothers (Super & Harness, 1986). This draws attention to how the mothers' respective cultures permeate their parenting beliefs, practices, and the ways they interact with their children.
- The results further illustrate the distinct experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant mothers in the U.S. Because parenting is embedded in socioecological contexts, different configurations of parent-child interaction may be expected. Given the foregoing, it is essential for educators, policy makers, and child care providers to address these differences appropriately and to consider the role of culture or place of origin in examining parental behaviors and child outcomes.

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