

# Tiger parenting: Authoritative or authoritarian?

Based in Darling and Steinberg's Integrative Parenting Theory (1993), which examines parenting goals and values, instead of Baumrind's parenting typology (1971), which cannot fully capture the cultural aspects of parenting, this proposal aims to employ mixed methods methodology to join in the movement of pushing back the "tiger parenting" stereotype of Asian parenting. To achieve this, the study plans to employ a battery of self-report parenting questionnaires, as well as engaging participants in semi-structured interviews to examine how the parenting goals, intentions, and practices of Asian parents are more "authoritative" than "authoritarian". With its mixed method design, findings from this research can provide valuable insights on Asian parenting that are contextualized.

**Huy Vu-Quang Hoang**

First reader: Jenny Lee-Vaydich, PhD; Second reader: Jessica Fossum

**Seattle Pacific University**

School of Psychology, Family, and Community

## Introduction

The "tiger parenting" stereotype has garnered significant attention following Amy Chua's 2011 book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. Noted for its alleged harshness, achievement-oriented nature, and emphasis on obedience, this parenting stereotype has unfavorably influenced public perceptions of Asian immigrant parenting, portraying it as controlling and lacking in warmth—a characterization faced strong opposition from many Asian immigrant families (see Cheah et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2023). Both researchers and parents argue that Asian immigrant parenting practices exhibit diversity and do not conform to a singular model, with a predominant alignment towards the "authoritative" parenting typology proposed by Baumrind (1967; 1971) rather than being "authoritarian" (Cheah et al., 2013; Choi et al., 2013; Juang et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2023). Consequently, recent studies on Asian parenting have endeavored to challenge these harmful myths, including the model minority stereotype, that inaccurately portrays the Asian community as a homogeneous group. By analyzing self-report questionnaire results and themes from semi-structured interviews, while using a culturally robust theoretical framework, this research can contribute to the movement and the literature with valuable and contextualized findings.

## Tiger Parenting & The Model Minority Myth

Asian American parenting has been miscategorized as "authoritarian" due to its perceived emphasis on academic achievement and socialization (Chao, 1994), reinforcing the model minority stereotype that portrays Asian immigrants as solely focused on academic success (Zhang et al., 2023). This mischaracterization, coupled with Chua's (2011) portrayal of an extreme "at any cost" parenting approach, has cast Asian immigrant parents in a negative manner. Upholding the narrative of tiger parenting, which extends the model minority myth, perpetuates these harmful stereotypes about the Asian immigrant community.

## Theoretical Framework

Moving away from the Eurocentric framework of Baumrind parenting style typology (1967; 1971), which cannot fully capture the cultural values and goals of parenting in other cultures (Baumrind, 1971; 2010; McNeely & Barber, 2010; Sorkhabi & Mandara, 2013) this study utilizes Darling and Steinberg's integrative parenting theory as its primary theoretical framework. Integrative parenting theory posits that parenting practices are a product of parents' goals and values, which explains and accounts for the cultural variations in parenting behaviors across cultures and socio-economic statuses (Darling & Steinberg, 1991; Zhang et al., 2023). This makes integrative parenting theory a suitable choice in examining parenting in a historically misunderstood group.

## Hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1 (Survey Analysis)

- Parents will score higher on supportive parenting measures (e.g., parental warmth) than harsh parenting measures (e.g., punitive parenting).

### Hypothesis 2 (Thematic Analysis)

- Parents will report goals and values that contextualize their parenting practices, which will reveal that their parenting style closely resembles supportive/"authoritative" parenting.

## Methodology and Participants

The study will employ a mixed methods design, meaning that there will be both quantitative and qualitative analysis involved. The quantitative portion of the study will analyze self-report measures while the qualitative analysis will include phenomenological thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.

### Surveys for quantitative analysis:

- **Parental warmth:** adapted measures from the Iowa Youth and Families Project (Conger et al., 1995)
- **Parenting Practices Questionnaire—Democratic Parenting Subscale** (Robinson et al., 1995)
- **Parenting Practices Questionnaire—Punitive Parenting Subscale** (Robinson et al., 1995)
- **Psychological control:** Barber's (1996) version of the **Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory** (Schaefer, 1965)

The study intends to employ a community-based participatory approach (CBPR) for participant recruitment. To enhance the efficacy of CBPR, the researcher will establish collaborations with prominent organizations within Asian immigrant communities, involving their researchers in the project. This collaborative effort aims to foster rapport with the communities, facilitate recruitment, and enrich the research dialogue by incorporating experts knowledgeable about these specific communities into the research team.

### As for participants, the study plans to only recruit caregivers. Their eligibility criteria include:

- Ethnically identify as Asian.
- Over 18 years old.
- 1st or 2nd generation immigrant.
- Must be a caregiver of a child aged 6-16.
- Must live within the Greater Seattle area.

## Expected Findings and Future Direction

**Key Finding 1:** Strong and contextualized evidence on the nature of Asian immigrant parenting style, including the emotional environment in which they raise their children in.

**Key Finding 2:** A better understanding of the underpinning motivations of Asian parenting practices/behaviors from the lens of integrative parenting theory.

**Future Direction: (1)** Examining the research questions from the perspective of Asian immigrant children. **(2)** Conduct study with a longitudinal design. **(3)** Develop measures that can adequately capture Asian immigrant parenting.