

Parenting in contemporary Hong Kong: Observations and reflections

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Abstract

Parenting in Hong Kong is shaped by traditional Chinese collectivistic values and contemporary Western individualistic influences. In this paper, we focus on parenting phenomena in Hong Kong. While traditional Chinese parenting goals are still dominant, there are gradual changes in parenting in Hong Kong. The traditional pattern of “strict fathers, kind mothers” has changed to “kind fathers, strict mothers” and “detached fathers, involved mothers.” Consistent with the Western literature, parenting is related to different child developmental outcomes, although the influences of paternal and maternal parenting lead to different outcomes. Relative to families without risk, financially poor and non-intact families show poorer parenting quality. Parenting is also related to other family processes, including family functioning and dyadic family processes such as parent-child relational qualities. The unanswered questions and future research directions are also highlighted.

Keywords: Hong Kong, parenting, Chinese culture, family process, developmental outcomes

Introduction

Parenting research is dominated by Western studies. As such, whether Western findings are generalizable to non-Western societies and whether unique parenting phenomena exists in non-Western contexts are questions to be addressed. Against this background, there are two reasons why researchers should understand parenting in Chinese societies. First, as roughly one-fifth of the world’s population are Chinese, generalizability of Western parenting theories and research should be examined in Chinese people (1). Second, parenting is strongly emphasized in traditional Chinese culture, as reflected by the existence of many Chinese family instruction books. Hence, it is theoretically and practically

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interesting to understand Chinese parenting (2). For example, as shown in table 1, traditional Chinese parenting literature emphasizes the importance of self-cultivation, particularly the development of virtues and character of children. Besides, parents should nurture frugality, simple life, as well as gratefulness to nature and other people in their children.

Furthermore, traditional Chinese parenting also emphasizes the role modeling of filial piety. Adults exercise a high level of filial piety to their parents; at the same time, they are the role models of their children. Moreover, one of the major goals of parenting is to maintain family harmony. These emphases are in sharp contrast to the focus of Western parenting literature which highlights the importance of well-being (such as happiness and life satisfaction), holistic development, individual rights, and personal autonomy in children.

Parenting research in Hong Kong is reviewed in current paper. Hong Kong can be regarded as a paradise for parenting research because roughly 92% of the population in Hong Kong are Chinese, where Chinese cultural values, such as filial piety and academic excellence, shape people's parenting practice. Besides, Hong Kong is a melting pot of Chinese and Western parenting beliefs and practice. This review focuses on the following issues: a) parenting phenomena in Hong Kong; b) parenting differences between fathers and mothers; c) parental influences on adolescent development; d) paternal versus maternal influence on adolescent development; e) parenting in high-risk families; f) parenting and other family processes; and g) limitations of the existing scientific literature and future research directions.

Parenting phenomena in Hong Kong

There are several unique parenting features in contemporary Hong Kong. First, Shek (3) found that traditional Chinese socialization goals, such as expectations about maturity, having good virtues and respecting old people, still occupied a strong role in Hong Kong (see table 2). Second, contemporary Chinese parents emphasized on three

socialization goals, which were academic excellence, "obeying" parental instructions and non-engagement of problem behavior (4). Third, Hong Kong parents still strongly emphasized their children's academic excellence and they tended to sacrifice their own interests to facilitate their children's education (5). Fourth, Chinese parents exercised high behavioral control in academic domain but not in peer domain (6). Fifth, some of the traditional features of Chinese parenting have been weakened, such as decline in parental harshness, parental teaching ("jiao xun"), and avoidance of bringing dishonor to the family (Table 2). Sixth, Chinese parents typically exhibited high psychological control, although they also showed concerns about their children (7). In Chan, Leung, Tsang, Lu, and Fok's (8) study on parenting practice in Hong Kong, it was found that parental warmth has increased in the past 15 years.

Finally, Shek and Sun (2) pointed out that there were several worrying parenting phenomena in contemporary Hong Kong, including the lack of time to spend with children, drop in family solidarity, over-reliance on imported domestic helpers, and comparatively poorer parenting attributes as compared to those in other places. In addition, Shek (9) pointed out that the pragmatic emphases, such as the parenting beliefs of "not to lose at the starting line" and "academic excellence is the most important attribute of a good child", are shaping parenting practice in contemporary Hong Kong.

Paternal parenting versus maternal parenting

Differences between fathers and mothers on different parenting measures have been reported. For example, Shek (10) found that fathers were seen as higher in restrictiveness but lower in concern as compared to mothers among high school students. Utilizing longitudinal data collected from adolescents, Shek (11) found that while fathers were seen as less responsive, demanding, concerning, communicative, and being liked by their children as compared to mothers, adolescents perceived paternal harshness to be higher than

maternal harshness. In another three-year longitudinal study, Shek (12) found that paternal knowledge, expectation, monitoring, discipline, responsiveness, demandingness, parental control defined by indigenous Chinese concepts and dyadic relational qualities (mutual trust and communication) were poorer than those of mothers. However, maternal psychological control was higher than paternal psychological control (12). In a recent 6-year longitudinal study (13), perceived maternal behavioral control, knowledge, expectations and monitoring were found to be more positive as compared to perceived paternal behavioral control, knowledge, expectation and monitoring. The study further showed that differential parenting persisted in the senior high school years. Such observation is important because “differences between maternal and paternal parenting styles have received less attention, particularly in the case of late adolescents” (14).

In another study conducted by Chan et al (8), maternal warmth was higher than paternal warmth amongst children aged 9-14 years. However, compared with mothers, fathers showed lower dysfunctional parenting practice, behavioral control, psychological control and Chinese parental control. Similar findings were reported in secondary school students (15). Based on the responses of adolescent children, Leung and Shek (16) reported that fathers were less responsive, demanding, controlling and sacrificial for children’s education than did the mothers, and the differences were triangulated by the findings based on the responses of both parents.

Interestingly, the available research showed that there was a shift in parenting attributes in contemporary fathers and mothers in Hong Kong. Traditional Chinese parenting was commonly conceived in terms of “strict fathers, kind mothers”, where fathers were harsh while mothers were lenient. However, parenting research in Hong Kong suggested that Chinese parenting has been changed to “kind fathers, strict mothers” and “detached fathers, involved mothers”, where mothers are relatively more demanding, controlling and have more monitoring about their children than fathers (12). Besides, as compared to fathers, mothers are

also more involved and show more affection in children’s socialization process.

Parenting influences on adolescent development

Consistent with the Western literature, cross-sectional studies suggested that parenting influences the development of children and adolescents in Hong Kong. Shek (17) found that the parental treatment styles were negatively related to high school students’ psychological symptoms (anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms and general psychological symptoms) and positively related to their positive mental health (purpose in life and ego strength). Based on Chinese high school students, Shek (18) found that while global parenting style and specific parenting behavior were negatively related to general psychological symptoms and hopelessness, these parenting attributes were positively related to purpose in life, life satisfaction, self-esteem, academic achievement and school conduct. Parenting characteristics were also positively related to adolescent developmental outcomes in the general adolescent population (8) and high-risk families (19). McBride and Chang (20) pointed out that while authoritative parenting style was related to autonomy, parenting style was not related to school achievement. Parenting emphasizing autonomy in children also facilitated prosocial behavior (21).

There are not many longitudinal studies examining the impact of parenting on child developmental outcomes in Hong Kong. Shek (22) showed that adolescents who perceived their parents as concerning, restrictive, responsive or demanding had better positive mental health, including purpose in life and life satisfaction. Similarly, those who had a more positive perception of parenting attributes displayed fewer psychological symptoms. In a 6-year longitudinal study in the Project P.A.T.H.S. (13), it was found that higher parental control and better parent-child relationship were related to higher life satisfaction, purpose in life and psychosocial competence (such as emotional competence and resilience), and lower adolescent risk behavior, including hopelessness,

Internet addiction, delinquency, consumption of pornography, self-harm and suicidal behavior. On the other hand, psychological control was negatively related to psychological well-being but positively related to risk behavior (13). Similar findings were observed in high-risk families. Based on two waves of data collected from poor families, Shek (23) showed that more positive parenting attributes were related to better subjective well-being and lower psychological morbidity and hopelessness.

Paternal influence versus maternal influence on child development

Although there are studies examining the influence of parenting on child development, only few studies have examined the relative contribution of fathers and mothers to different aspects of adolescent development. Primarily, there are studies showing the relatively stronger influence of paternal parenting relative to maternal parenting. Based on the responses of high school students to questionnaire measures over two years, Shek (22) showed that parenting styles and parenting behavior were related to psychological symptoms and positive mental health concurrently and over time, and the relationships were reciprocal in nature. Besides, paternal parenting showed stronger influence on adolescent development. Based on the same study, Shek (24) integrated questionnaire (global and specific parenting) and interview measures (feelings about parenting, parent-adolescent communication) to form new measures of "paternal parenting qualities" and "maternal parenting qualities". While maternal parenting qualities did not predict changes in the adolescent developmental outcomes, paternal parenting qualities predicted changes in psychological morbidity indexed by hopelessness, general psychological symptoms, and eudaimonic mental health indexed by life meaning, life satisfaction, and self-esteem.

There are also studies showing that paternal parenting and maternal parenting are both related to different child outcomes, but their effects may differ across genders of adolescents. Shek (23) examined the influence of paternal and maternal parenthood qualities on development of adolescents

from poor families. At a particular time, different parenting factors were correlated with adolescent developmental outcome measured using cross-sectional data. However, there was no strong support for the hypothesis that adolescent developmental outcomes were influenced by parenting over time. Nevertheless, while paternal parenting influenced mental health and problem behavior in adolescent boys, but not in adolescent girls, maternal parenting influenced mental health and problem behavior in adolescent girls, but not in adolescent boys (23). Based on poor Chinese families, Leung and Shek (25) found that while the expectation of fathers on the future of their children predicted perceived maternal control and adolescent development, maternal control mediated the influence of parental beliefs on adolescent psychosocial competences. Ren, Zhang, Yang, and Song (26) also found that supportive parenting and the role of fathers were important in shaping mathematics competence and behavioral problem in young children.

Parenting qualities in high-risk families

Compared with non-vulnerable families, parenting in vulnerable families are relatively poorer. In several cross-sectional studies, compared to intact families (i.e., parents were in their first marriage), parents in non-intact families (i.e., divorced, separated, remarried and other forms of marriages of the parents) showed less concern, responsiveness, knowledge and monitoring to their children, but more and harsher punishment (27). Similar results were reported in the Chan et al. (8) study on parenting in Hong Kong, which indicated that parenting attributes were more positive in intact families than in non-intact families.

The relative poorer parenting attributes in non-intact families were also reported in longitudinal studies. In a 3-year longitudinal study, we found that perceived parental behavioral control, responsiveness, demandingness, and perceived parenting based on indigenous Chinese concepts were comparatively poorer in adolescents from families experiencing parental marital disruption as compared to those from families with no parental marital disruption

(28). In another longitudinal study utilizing six waves of data, adolescents in non-intact families had a less favorable perception of paternal behavior control, including parental knowledge, expectation and monitoring. Similar findings were obtained for maternal behavioral control, maternal knowledge, maternal expectations and monitoring and maternal psychological control in each wave of data (13).

Economic disadvantage is also a risk factor in parenting. In several cross-sectional studies, adolescents from poor families perceived parenting to be less favorable as compared to adolescents from non-poor families (29). Similar findings were revealed in a three-year longitudinal study, which showed that adolescents from poor families perceived parental behavioral control (indexed by Western measures of parental knowledge, expectation, monitoring, discipline, demandingness and indigenous Chinese measure of parental control) to be less favorable than did adolescents from non-poor families. In contrast, adolescents with family economic disadvantage perceived psychological control to be stronger than did adolescents without family economic disadvantage (30). In the 6-wave longitudinal study in the Project P.A.T.H.S., adolescents from poor families perceived parental behavioral control and parent-child relational quality to be lower as compared to adolescents from non-poor families at different time points (13). In addition, relative to adolescents from non-poor families, adolescents from poor families perceived parental psychological control to be higher.

Parenting and other family processes

Research showed that different types and dimensions of parenting were inter-related. With reference to the different components of behavioral control (expectations, discipline, monitoring and knowledge), cross-sectional and longitudinal findings suggested that they were generally related in a positive manner (12). For example, parents who have higher monitoring of their children would have more knowledge about their children. Besides, parental behavioral control (such as monitoring

the whereabouts of children) was negatively associated with psychological control (such as withdrawal of love and inducing guilt in children). Furthermore, Shek (31) showed that different dimensions of global parental treatment styles (concern and harshness) and specific parenting behavior (responsiveness and demandingness) were inter-related. In addition, global parenting was associated with specific parenting. While parental responsiveness was positively related to different measures of parental behavioral control, it was negatively related to parental psychological control (12).

Furthermore, parenting quality is related to other dyadic family processes. Shek (32) showed that higher parental behavioral control and lower parental psychological control were related to higher perceived parental trust of children and children's trust of their parents. Based on two waves of longitudinal data, Shek (33) showed that parenting attributes were related to parent-adolescent conflict at the same time and over time. Besides, findings showed that while parenting influenced parent-adolescent conflict, parent-adolescent conflict also influenced parenting.

Finally, parenting as a dyadic family process is related to systemic family functioning. Shek (34) examined the relationships between dyadic family relationships, which included measures based on parents and adolescent children reports of parenting style and parent-adolescent conflict and systemic family functioning measures. He found that family functioning based on the perspectives of parents and children was related to dyadic family processes, including parenting. Relative to perceived mother-child relationship and marital quality reported by mothers, perceived father-child relationship and marital quality showed stronger influence on systemic family functioning over time. In the six-wave longitudinal study in the Project P.A.T.H.S., while parental behavioral control and parent-child relationship were positively related to family functioning, parental psychological control was negatively related to systemic family functioning (13).

There are also findings showing that parenting mediates the impacts of parental behavior on child developmental outcomes. Based on the data collected

from single-parent families, Leung and Shek (35) found that responsiveness and demandingness of mothers influenced filial piety which in turn affected positive development in adolescents. Filial piety was also identified as a moderator of the influence of maternal control on mother-adolescent relationship (36).

Unanswered questions and future research directions

Based on 90 studies captured by PsycINFO, Fok and Shek (37) highlighted three conceptual limitations of parenting research in Hong Kong. These included paucity of parenting research utilizing indigenous Chinese parenting concepts, inadequate conceptual models examining causes, correlates and consequences of parenting, and failures to consider alternative explanations for the findings for those studies examining relationship between parenting and other constructs. In another paper (38), they further argued that there were eight methodological limitations of parenting research in Hong Kong, including predominant use of translated and non-validated Western measures, lack of longitudinal research studies, infrequent employment of multiple indicators to assess different parenting constructs, over-reliance on convenience sampling, insufficient use of hierarchical linear modeling looking at individual and cluster effects, paucity of qualitative studies of parenting.

With reference to the conceptual and methodological limitations of the field, there are several future research directions. First, with five thousand years' history, research on traditional Chinese parenting is grossly inadequate. It would be helpful to understand indigenous forms of parenting (38). Besides, it would be helpful to understand more on how traditional parenting is related to modern parenting science. In a recent study of Di Zi Gui (39), the author argued that many ideas in traditional parenting are in fact similar to the propositions in modern parenting science. For example, trustworthiness is strongly emphasized in Di Zi Gui, which is consistent

with the emphasis on the importance of gaining trust from others in the literature of positive youth development. Integrating the ideas in traditional Chinese family instruction books with modern parenting science is undoubtedly interesting yet challenging task to be done. Second, there is a need to develop more assessment tools on Chinese parenting based on imported and indigenous Chinese concepts, such as honoring parents and parental sacrifice.

Third, in view of the unique Chinese cultural emphases (such as emphasis on obedience of children) and Hong Kong ideologies (such as emphasis on academic excellence), there is a need to build up Chinese models of parenting, including its antecedents, concomitants and consequences. For example, it would be important to understand how traditional Chinese parenting beliefs (e.g., emphasis on academic excellence) and contemporary Hong Kong parenting beliefs (e.g., striving for achievement) shape the parenting practices in Hong Kong. Fourth, with time and place as the varying dimensions, it would be exciting to examine how parenting across time (e.g., inter-generational differences in parenting beliefs and practices) and places (e.g., Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan and ethnic minority group in China). Comparative studies in different Chinese communities would be important.

Fifth, with long working hours, super-high property price and obsessive emphasis on achievement, there is a great need to understand how parents cope with parental stress in the unique socio-cultural contexts of Hong Kong. In fact, many studies suggest that excessive parenting stress is an emerging family problem in Hong Kong. Sixth, with growing children mental health issues, there is a need to understand the stress and coping of families with children with special needs. Finally, there is a need to step up research to develop parenting education programs in Hong Kong. Although parenting programs flourish in Hong Kong, most of them are not based on well-articulated theoretical models and evaluation is conducted in some isolated programs only (40). Obviously, there is a need to promote evidence-based parenting policies and programs in Hong Kong.

Table 1. Examples of traditional Chinese parenting instructions

<p>《誠子書》——諸葛亮（三國時期）</p> <p>『夫君子之行，靜以修身，儉以養德。非淡泊無以明志，非寧靜無以致遠。』</p> <p>Jie Zi Shu (Admonition to My Son) -- Zhuge Liang (Three Kingdoms Period)</p> <p>“The practice of a cultivated man is to refine himself by quietude and develop virtue by frugality. Without detachment, there is no way to clarify the will; without serenity, there is no way to get far.”</p> <p>Xie, B.K. & Chen, Q.D. (2013). English Bus. Retrieved from: http://www.en84.com/dianji/wenji/201301/00011820.html</p>
<p>《朱子家訓》——朱柏廬（明末清初）</p> <p>『黎明即起，灑掃庭除，要內外整潔；既昏便息，關鎖門戶，必親自檢點。一粥一飯，當思來處不易；半絲半縷，恒念物力維艱。宜未雨而綢繆，毋臨渴而掘井。自奉必須儉約，宴客切勿留連。器具質而潔，瓦缶勝金玉；飲食約而精，園蔬愈珍饈。勿營華屋，勿謀良田。三姑六婆，實淫盜之媒；婢美妾嬌，非閨房之福。童僕勿用俊美，妻妾切忌豔妝。祖宗雖遠，祭祀不可不誠；子孫雖愚，經書不可不讀。居身務期儉約；教子要有義方。莫貪意外之財，莫飲過量之酒。與肩挑貿易，毋佔便宜；見窮苦親鄰，須加溫恤。刻薄成家，理無久享；倫常乖舛，立見消亡。兄弟叔姪，須分多潤寡；長幼內外，宜法肅辭嚴。聽婦言，乖骨肉，豈是丈夫？重貨財，薄父母，不成人子。嫁女擇佳婿，毋索重聘；娶媳求淑女，勿計厚奩。見富貴而生諂容者，最可恥；遇貧窮而作驕態者，賤莫甚。居家戒爭訟，訟則終凶；處世戒多言，言多必失。勿恃勢力而凌逼孤寡；毋貪口腹而恣殺牲禽。乖僻自是，悔誤必多，頹惰自甘，家道難成。狎暱惡少，久必受其累；屈志老成，急則可相依。輕聽發言，安知非人之譖謔？當忍耐三思；因事相爭，焉知非我之不是？須平心再想。施惠無念，受恩莫忘。凡事當留餘地，得意不宜再往。人有喜慶，不可生妒忌心；人有禍患，不可生喜幸心。善欲人見，不是真善；惡恐人知，便是大惡。見色而起淫心，報在妻女；匿怨而用暗箭，禍延子孫。家門和順，雖饗餐不繼，亦有餘歡；國課早完，即囊橐無餘，自得至樂，讀書志在聖賢，非徒科第；為官心存君國，豈計身家？守分安命，順時聽天。為人若此，庶乎近焉。』</p> <p>Master Chu's Homilies for Families – Zhu Bolu (End of Ming Dynasty and Beginning of Qing Dynasty)</p> <p>“Rise up by dawn's early light; clean up, put everything right; keep the home tidy and clean. Go to bed early at night; check that the doors are locked tight; sleep now secure and serene. The growing of rice and of grain. Think on whenever you dine; remember how silk is obtained which keeps you warm and looks fine. In periods of drought wise birds mend their nest so when the clouds burst they snugly may rest; never be the fool who starts to dig a well in the ground when he wants a drink of water and water can't be found. Restrained and frugal be in all your private life; that party quickly flee with drinking and flirting rife. Oh better earthen mugs and plates in household neat and clean than vessels made of gold and jade and suited for the queen; eat good food from garden fresh downed with a cup of tea. Shun exotic, unknown foods from far across the sea. Build not a house too pretentious and grand; never, no never take anyone's land. Matchmaker ladies who wander out and in; don't mediate matches, they mediate sin; a beautiful and lusty young wife may complicate a family's life. A page-boy clever, quick and sharp you should never, never hire; of over made-up, dressed-up wife you certainly will tire. Memorial service for forebears you now and then should hold; to learn from them and show you care, their story should be told. Confucius' classic sayings all children should retain, specially when it's evident they do not have much brain. Honest and righteous be and committed to good deed; your children then will see example they should heed. You can only make a fortune by striving, working hard; no money falls from out the sky on your own backyard. Only drink a small amount of good wine never let yourself across the sober line. Bargain you not with the traveler who vends; share of your wealth with your neighbors and friends. The man who gets rich through his lying and cheating, will find that his joy -- if any -- is fleeting. A person who commits incest ss foul knave whom all detest. When splitting the family fortune be fair so siblings and cousins will each get their share; domestic law rates everyone par no matter how haughty or humble you are. No worthy son his honor stains by giving any credence when wife, in pillow talk, complains about his antecedents. When selfish son for riches seeks neglecting aging parents then all should treat him as a freak, his actions an aberrance. A costly betrothal cannot ensure, that daughter's marriage will always endure. A nice woman with no dowry makes a good wife; a woman with large dowry may bring stress and strife.</p>

(Table 1 continued on next page)

To fawn on the rich detracts from your fame and despising the poor redounds to your shame. Don't take into court your family disputes, unpleasant endings emerge from lawsuits; to comport yourself well in society restrain loose tongue's impropriety. Use not your bow and arrow to bully orphan and widow. Do not dumb animals slaughter at will your appetite greedy to over fulfil. Egocentric people grow, much regret and sorrow; lazy, slothful people sow, poverty tomorrow. He who with crooks his way does wend, into crime will surely drift; rely on honest upright friend, when from plight you need a lift. A remark that's made with seeming candor, could really be malicious slander; so carefully now think it through. And when with friend you've had a fight, consider this: perhaps he's right; it may be that fault is with you. In proclaiming your virtue go slow; and be mindful of mercy you owe. Leave room for retreat when trying new feat. You will try, try in vain to repeat windfall gain. Don't envy other's success; don't gloat o'er other's distress. To brag of the good you have done will never impress anyone. Personal scandals you try hard to hide, will soon be known far and wide. The husband who yields to his lustful desire. By letting his lewd fancies roam, thus forfeits his privilege to hope or aspire, to having a warm, happy home. A stab in the back of a man that you hate, will subject your sons to an even worse fate. The family that lives in love and peace, is garnering joys that never will cease even though your food may decrease. Paying tax early to the state, makes you feel contented and great even though your purse will deflate. Sages and men of good virtue inspire, true scholar's heart with a studious fire. If to high office you truly aspire, you must be loyal to king and empire. You are not far from being a good person, if you abide by the law, believe in destiny, following the trend of the time and adapt to the changes of nature."

Chang, H.T. (1993). Chinese Encyclopedia Internet Institute. Retrieved from:
<http://www.zwbk.org/MyLemmaShow.aspx?zh=zh-tw&lid=4143>

《孝經》——儒家經典(秦、漢時期)

『孝子之事親也，居則致其敬，養則致其樂，病則致其憂，喪則致其哀，祭則致其嚴。五者備矣，然後能事親。』

The Classic of Filial Piety – Confucianism classic (Qin Dynasty and Han Dynasty)

“The service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows: In his general conduct to them, he manifests the utmost reverence. In his nourishing of them, his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure. When they are ill, he feels the greatest anxiety. In mourning for them (dead), he exhibits every demonstration of grief. In sacrificing to them, he displays the utmost solemnity. When a son is complete in these five things, (he may be pronounced) able to serve his parents.” (p. 480)

Legge, J. (1879). *The Sacred Books Of China*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

《孟子》——孟子(戰國時期)

『公孫醜曰：「君子之不教子，何也？」』

孟子曰：「勢不行也。教者必以正；以正不行，繼之以怒；繼之以怒，則反夷矣。『夫子教我以正，夫子未出於正也。』則是父子相夷也。父子相夷，則惡矣。古者易子而教之。父子之間不責善。責善則離，離則不祥莫大焉。』

The Works of Mencius – Mencius (Warring States Period)

“Gong Sun Chou said, ‘Why is it that the superior man does not himself teach his son?’

Mencius replied, ‘The circumstances of the case forbid its being done. The teacher must inculcate what is correct. When he inculcates what is correct, and his lessons are not practised, he follows them up with being angry. When he follows them up with being angry, then, contrary to what should be, he is offended with his son. At the same time, the pupil says, ‘My master inculcates on me what is correct, and he himself does not proceed in a correct path.’ The result of this is, that father and son are offended with each other. When father and son come to be offended with each other, the case is evil. The ancients exchanged sons, and one taught the son of another. Between father and son, there should be no reproving admonitions to what is good. Such reproofs lead to alienation, and than alienation there is nothing more inauspicious.” (p. 308)

Legge, J. (1895). *The Works of Mencius*. Canada and the United Kingdom: General Publishing Company and Constable and Company.

Table 2. Frequency of responses to the items of the Chinese Paternal Control Scale (CPCS) and Chinese Maternal Control Scale (CMCS)

Item	Responses to the Chinese Paternal Control Scale (Grade 7 to Grade 9)	Responses to the Chinese Maternal Control Scale (Grade 7 to Grade 9)
My father/mother expects me to be mature (sheng xing).	Ranged from 86.4% to 91.0%	Ranged from 91.9% to 95.3%
My father/mother expects me to be obedient (“guai” and “ting hua”).	Ranged from 90.0 to 91.9%	Ranged from 94.1% to 96.0%
My father/mother expects me to have good virtues and behavior.	Ranged from 93.4 to 94.5%	Ranged from 94.9% to 96.9%
My father/mother expects me to have good behavior so that I will not bring dishonor to the family (“you ru jia sheng”).	Ranged from 51.1% to 52.0%	Ranged from 53.5% to 54.8%
My father/mother expects me to have good behavior so that he/she will not be criticized by others as having no family teaching (“wu jia jiao”).	Ranged from 47.6% to 58.6%	Ranged from 41.2% to 62.5%
My father/mother expects me to respect him/her.	Ranged from 73.0% to 75.5%	Ranged from 78.6% to 80.0%
My father/mother is very harsh in his/her discipline.	Ranged from 34.3% to 59.7%	Ranged from 40.6% to 47.1%
My father/mother always teaches me about the ways of dealing with one self and others.	Ranged from 72.8% to 74.4%	Ranged from 73.0% to 75.6%
Item	Responses to the Chinese Paternal Control Scale (Grade 7 to Grade 9)	Responses to the Chinese Maternal Control Scale (Grade 7 to Grade 9)
When I do something wrong, my father/mother requires me to have self-reflection.	Ranged from 67.0% to 69.3%	Ranged from 74.7% to 75.3%
When I do something wrong, my father/mother teaches me (“jiao xun”).	Ranged from 58.5% to 59.8%	Ranged from 68.8% to 70.0%
When I don't meet my father's/mother's expectation, he/she urges me (“du cu”) to work hard.	Ranged from 72.6% to 75.5%	Ranged from 83.0% to 85.3%
My father/mother expects me to interact with older people (“zhang bei”) with respect and courtesy.	Ranged from 92.1% to 94.2%	Ranged from 95.1% to 96.9%

Note: Cumulative percentage figure for each grade = sum of the percentage of responses to the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” response options. Re-constructed from Shek (2008).

Ethical compliance

The authors have stated all possible conflicts of interest within this work. The authors have stated all sources of funding for this work. If this work involved human participants, informed consent was received from each individual. If this work involved human participants, it was conducted in accordance with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. If this work involved experiments with humans or animals, it was conducted in accordance with the related institutions' research ethics guidelines.

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