

What are Hong Kong Chinese parents' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their children?

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Abstract

Although there are studies on adolescent materialism and egocentrism, most of them are Western studies based on the perspective of adolescents. As parents are significant-others of adolescents, we investigated the perceptions of parents of materialism and egocentrism in their adolescent children as well as Hong Kong adolescents. Response frequency profiles generated from descriptive statistical analyses revealed that some parents perceived their children and adolescents in Hong Kong showing materialistic and egocentric concerns. However, consistent with the self-enhancement perspective, parents perceived their children to be less materialistic and egocentric than did Hong Kong adolescents in general. Several correlates of parents' perceptions of materialism and/or egocentrism in their children and adolescents in Hong Kong, including age, gender, and parental education, were identified in the current study.

Keywords: Chinese parents, materialism, egocentrism, high school students, socio-demographic correlates

Introduction

In different religious belief systems such as Christianity and Catholicism, the focus is on spiritual values such as faith, hope, and love instead of secular values such as hedonism and materialism. A similar focus on spiritual values is also found in other religious belief systems such as Buddhism and Taoism. However, with the rise of capitalism and consumerism in the past centuries, people begin to attach great importance to material possession and money. The tendency to focus on material possession is commonly referred to as materialism. According to Belk (1), materialism refers to the importance of "worldly possessions" (p. 291) to an individual which is characterized by three maladaptive features, including tendency to possess (i.e., possessiveness),

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lack of generosity (i.e., non-generosity) and envy of the possessions of others. Similarly, Richins (2) defined materialism as “the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving life goals or desired states” (p. 210). From Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (3), while material possession can help an individual to fulfill physical need as well as security need, materialism is not directly related to belongingness need, esteem need, and self-actualization need.

According to Shek and Siu (4), materialism is an unhealthy traditional cultural value in the Chinese culture, as reflected in some cultural beliefs such as “xiao pin bu xiao chang” (it is more shameful about being poor than being a prostitute), “you qian neng shi gui tui mo” (money makes the devil push the millstone), “ren qiong zhi duan” (poverty stifles ambition), and “pin ju nao shi wu ren wen, fu zai shen shan you yuan qin” (no one cares about a poor man even if he lives downtown, while distant relatives visit a rich man even if he lives in a remote mountain). In contemporary Hong Kong, as it is an international financial center, money and material possession are commonly regarded as legitimate life goals chased by people. Obviously, over-emphasis on materialism can be regarded as a risk factor which would impair the development of Chinese adolescents.

Empirically, studies showed that adolescents held materialistic beliefs. Based on the responses of 1,658 high school students, Shek, Ma, and Lin (5) showed that high proportions of the respondents agreed that “I believe that money is everything,” “my life goal is to earn as much money as possible,” “the amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one’s success,” and “I believe that money makes the mare go.” Similarly, in the studies of Shek and Lin (6) and Shek and other colleagues (7) that examined materialism in 2,474 Chinese high school students based on the perspective of adolescents, they found that high proportions of respondents regarded that “money is everything,” “possessing money or consumer goods would make one happy,” and “one’s life goal is to earn as much money as possible.” However, adolescents perceived their materialism to be lower than that of Hong Kong adolescents in general. Similarly, based on the perceptions of 568 teachers, many teachers agreed that their students and adolescents in Hong Kong regarded earning

money was more important than other things (8, 9). Interestingly, teachers saw their students to be less materialistic than adolescents in the general population.

Developmentally, over-emphasis on materialism in adolescence has two negative consequences. First, this would lead to unbalanced and distorted adolescent development with darkening of spiritual values. For example, when adolescents place important emphasis on material possession, they would not regard voluntary service to be important. Adolescents would also place instrumental value on interpersonal relationship. Actually, in many adolescent developmental models and personality theories, the focus on youth development is commonly placed on virtues and non-material developmental goals (10, 11, 12, 13, 14). Second, materialism leads to heightened stress in adolescents who are struggling for upward social mobility and survival. There are findings showing that while materialism is positively related to egocentrism, materialistic beliefs are negatively related to morality, spirituality, and empathy (5).

According to Shek and Siu (4), another unhealthy value faced by adolescents in Hong Kong is egocentrism. According to Elkind (15), egocentrism is a natural developmental phenomenon. With cognitive maturity (i.e., reaching formal operation stage in Piagetian theory, [16]), self-consciousness in adolescents increases but differentiation between oneself and others is lacking where adolescent egocentrism is characterized by focus on self, belief that other people also focus on themselves, perception that one is unique, and belief that one’s views and experience are superior than others (17, 18). Egocentrism in Hong Kong young people is shaped by traditional Chinese cultural beliefs, such as the popular saying of “ren bu wei ji, tian zhu di mie” (Heaven destroys those who do not look out for themselves). It is also influenced by contemporary Hong Kong culture, exemplified by the cultural saying of “ni you ni yao qiu, wo you wo gan shou” (you have your own requests and I have my own experiences). Empirically, there are research findings showing that egocentrism impairs adolescent developmental outcomes. In Shek, Yu, and Siu’s (18) study, they showed that adolescent egocentrism was positively related to materialism but negatively related to morality and empathy.

In the study based on the responses of 1,658 high school students, findings showed that many students showed signs of egocentrism: around nine-tenth of the students felt that their experiences are different from others, more than half of the respondents believed that their views are better than those of others, and roughly one-third believed that their benefits are more important than others (18). In another study based on the responses of 2,474 high school students, students perceived that themselves and adolescents in Hong Kong in general showed signs of egocentrism: roughly one-fifth of junior high school students perceived themselves as always finding excuses for their behavior; roughly one-quarter of senior high school students perceived that they could always find excuses for their behavior. The students also saw themselves as less egocentric than adolescents in Hong Kong in general (6). Shek and colleagues (9) also conducted another study examining teachers' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in adolescents in Hong Kong. Based on the responses of 568 teachers, findings showed that the respondents generally saw that their students showed signs of egocentrism: around 84% of their students believed that their experiences are more important than others; around 46% of their students believed that others' criticism of their behavior is groundless; 77% of the students believed that their experience is more important than others. Similarly, very high proportions of the teachers perceived that adolescents in Hong Kong showed egocentrism: around 90% of young people believed that their experiences are more important than the experience of others; 87.4% of adolescents in Hong Kong believed that their benefits are more important than benefits of other people; 87% of the adolescents in Hong Kong can always find excuses for their behavior. However, teachers perceived that materialism and egocentrism in their students were lower than those of Hong Kong adolescents.

As far as data collection is concerned, most of the existing studies are based on adolescents' perspective. This is not desirable because social desirability effect is intrinsic to self-report amongst adolescents. For example, in the studies of Shek and colleagues (7) and Shek and Ma (8), results showed that adolescents saw themselves and Hong Kong adolescents to be less materialistic and egocentric compared to teachers'

perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their students and adolescents in Hong Kong. Obviously, understanding how other people look at materialism and egocentrism in adolescents would be of paramount importance to triangulate the findings based on adolescents alone.

Besides teachers, it would be desirable to understand the perceptions of parents on materialism and egocentrism in adolescents in Hong Kong. There are two reasons why we should understand parents' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their children and adolescents in general. First, as significant-others of their adolescent children, parents spend much time with them. As such, parents may have an in-depth understanding of materialism and egocentrism in their children. Such an understanding may also help parents to have good knowledge of adolescents in Hong Kong. Second, compared with adolescents, parents may have more skills in understanding and analyzing the behavior of their children and adolescents. Third, there are numerous studies showing that parents exert a strong influence on adolescent development (19, 20). Hence, it would be theoretically and practically important to understand parents' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their adolescent children and adolescents in general.

In view of the importance of understanding materialism, egocentrism, and psychosocial development in Hong Kong adolescents, a series of studies were conducted with the support of Wofoo Foundation (6, 8, 21, 22, 23). To understand the related phenomena in a holistic manner, we collected data from adolescents, teachers, and parents to triangulate the findings. Besides the studies based on adolescents (7) and teachers (9), we also conducted a study looking at materialism and egocentrism based on the perceptions of parents (21).

In this paper, we present findings on parents' perceptions of adolescent materialism and egocentrism with reference to several objectives. First, we investigated Chinese parents' perceptions of materialistic and egocentric characteristics of high school students and adolescents in Hong Kong. By looking at the profiles of responses, we can understand the materialistic and egocentric issues in young people in Hong Kong from the perspective of parents. Second, we addressed the research

question of whether parental perceptions of materialism and egocentrism differed between their children and adolescents in general in Hong Kong. Based on the literature on social psychology, it was hypothesized that compared to adolescents in general, adolescent children would be seen by their parents as less materialistic and egocentric. Third, as previous studies showed that there are socio-demographic correlates of students' and teachers' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in high school students and adolescents (7, 9), we also investigated whether there are socio-demographic correlates of parents' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their children and adolescents in general.

Methods

To examine the views of parents on adolescent materialism and egocentrism, we recruited 431 parents (mean age = 44.57) from nine secondary schools in Hong Kong. As it is not easy to engage parents in surveys, the number of parents participating in this study can be regarded as respectable. The parents were invited to complete a self-report questionnaire which covers different aspects of psychosocial development of their adolescent children and adolescents in Hong Kong, including materialism, egocentrism, moral character, and other social behavior. For each parent randomly selected from a family, a self-report questionnaire was sent to the parent who completed the questionnaire in a self-administered manner. The completed questionnaire was then put in a sealed envelope in an anonymous manner and returned to the school. Approval from the University Institutional Review Board was obtained before the commencement of the study. School consent as well as parental consent were obtained before data collection.

Instruments

Parents' Perception of Adolescent Materialism: Based on the abridged 5-item Chinese Adolescent Materialism Scale (5), we developed a scale to assess parents' perception of materialistic beliefs in Chinese

adolescents. These items included: a) "my children believe that making money is more important than any other things"; b) "My children believe that money is everything"; c) "My children believe that the rich can get respect from others"; d) "My children would abandon some principles for the sake of money"; and e) "My children believe that the amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's success." For each item, there are six response options, including "strongly disagree," "disagree," "slightly disagree," "slightly agree," "agree," and "strongly agree," with higher scores indicating higher levels of materialism in their adolescent children.

The five items used in Shek, Ma, and Lin (5) were used to assess parents' perceptions of materialistic beliefs amongst Hong Kong adolescents in general. The items included: a) "Hong Kong adolescents think that making money is more important than any other things"; b) "Hong Kong adolescents believe that money is everything"; c) "Hong Kong adolescents think that the rich can get respect from others"; d) "Hong Kong adolescents would abandon some principles for the sake of money"; and e) "Hong Kong adolescents believe that the amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's success." These items are measured on a 6-point scale, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of perceived materialism in Hong Kong adolescents.

Parents' Perception of Adolescent Egocentrism: We used the simplified 5-item Chinese Adolescent Egocentrism Scale (18) to assess parental perceptions of egocentrism in their children and Hong Kong adolescents. These items included: a) "My children regard their experiences are more important than those of others"; b) "My children think that their interests are more important than those of others"; c) "My children always find justifications for their behavior"; d) "most of the time, my children think that other people's criticisms about them do not make sense"; e) "even if they make other people are unhappy, my children are true to their experience." A 6-point scale, with "strongly disagree," "disagree," "slightly disagree," "slightly agree," "agree," and "strongly agree" as the response options were used. Higher scale scores suggest higher levels of egocentrism.

For parents' perceptions of adolescent egocentrism, we used the abridged 5-item Chinese Adolescent Egocentrism Scale (6, 18). These items included: a) "Hong Kong adolescents regard that their experiences are more important than those of others"; b) "Hong Kong adolescents think that their interests are more important than those of others"; c) "Hong Kong adolescents always find justifications for their behavior"; d) "most of the time, Hong Kong adolescents think that other people's criticisms about them do not make sense"; e) "even if they make other people are unhappy, Hong Kong adolescents are true to their experiences." There are six response options in each item, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived egocentrism among adolescents in Hong Kong.

Data analyses

With respect to the objectives of the study, several lines of analyses were performed. First, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to examine the response profiles of the parents to the different scales. By focusing on the percentage findings, we can understand the concerns of materialism and egocentrism in parents' adolescent children and Chinese adolescents. Second, we examined parents' perceptions of egocentrism and egocentrism in their children and saw whether they differed from the related responses based on Hong Kong adolescents. Based on the previous findings (6, 9), we expected that parents would see their children to be less materialistic and egocentric than adolescents in general. Third, we conducted analyses to examine the related socio-demographic correlates. Several general expectations were put forward. First, as older people are more traditional and conservative, they might see adolescents to be more materialistic and egocentric. Second, as females are more accommodating and tolerant, they would see adolescents to be less materialistic and egocentric. Third, as parents with more education know young people more, they would see adolescents to be more materialistic and egocentric.

Results

Based on the percentage findings, we could examine the response profiles of parents' views of materialism and egocentrism in their adolescent children and adolescents in Hong Kong. The related findings are outlined in Table 1 to Table 4. First, some parents perceived their adolescent children to be materialistic: roughly one-fifth of the parents believed that "my children believe making money is more important than any other things" and "my children believe that there is no dignity if there no money". Second, many parents perceived that Hong Kong adolescents showed signs of materialism: nearly 45% of the parents perceived that "adolescents in Hong Kong believed that there is no dignity if there is no money"; roughly 42% of the parents perceived that "adolescents in Hong Kong believed the amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's success." Third, many parents perceived their children to be egocentric: 47% of the parents saw that "my children believe their feelings are more important than the feelings of other people; roughly 54% of the parents believed that "my children believe that no matter what happens, they can always justify their behavior". Fourth, a majority of the parents perceived that Hong Kong adolescents in general showed signs of egocentrism: "adolescents in Hong Kong believed their feelings are more important than the feelings of other people" (66.7%); "adolescents in Hong Kong believed that no matter what happens, they can always justify their behaviors" (71.8%); "adolescents in Hong Kong are loyal to their own feelings even if this may upset other people" (61.7%).

To compare perceived materialism in parents' children and adolescents in Hong Kong, several independent t-tests were conducted. Findings showed that the parents saw their children to be less materialistic than adolescents in Hong Kong on the individual items and composite scores (Table 5). Similarly, we compared perceived egocentrism in the respondents' children and youths in Hong Kong. Again, findings showed that parents' perception of egocentrism in adolescents in Hong Kong was higher than did parents' own adolescent children (Table 6).

Table 1. Parent perception of materialistic beliefs in their own children

Items	1	2	1+2	3	4	5	4+5	Mean	n
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
1. My children believe making money is more important than any other things.	87 (20.2%)	151 (35.1%)	238 (55.3%)	107 (24.9%)	77 (17.9%)	8 (1.9%)	85 (19.8%)	2.46	430
2. My children believe "Money is everything."	138 (32.3%)	162 (37.9%)	300 (70.3%)	69 (16.2%)	53 (12.4%)	5 (1.2%)	58 (13.6%)	2.12	427
3. My children believe "No money, no dignity."	128 (30.1%)	127 (29.9%)	255 (60.0%)	87 (20.5%)	73 (17.2%)	10 (2.4%)	83 (19.6%)	2.32	425
4. My children believe they would abandon some principles for the sake of money.	244 (57.4%)	115 (27.1%)	359 (84.5%)	42 (9.9%)	22 (5.2%)	2 (0.5%)	24 (5.6%)	1.64	425
5. My children believe "The amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's "success."	118 (27.7%)	138 (32.4%)	256 (60.1%)	93 (21.8%)	66 (15.5%)	11 (2.6%)	77 (18.1%)	2.33	426

Table 2. Parent perception of materialistic beliefs in Hong Kong adolescents

Items	1	2	1+2	3	4	5	4+5	Mean	n
	n	n	n	N	n	n	n		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
1. Adolescents in HK believe making money is more important than any other things.	38 (8.9%)	113 (26.5%)	151 (35.4%)	114 (26.7%)	142 (33.3%)	20 (4.7%)	162 (38.0%)	2.98	427
2. Adolescents in HK believe "Money is everything."	55 (12.9%)	111 (26.0%)	166 (38.9%)	109 (25.5%)	124 (29.0%)	28 (6.6%)	152 (35.6%)	2.90	427
3. Adolescents in HK believe "No money, no dignity."	42 (9.9%)	94 (22.2%)	136 (32.1%)	98 (23.1%)	148 (34.9%)	42 (9.9%)	190 (44.8%)	3.13	424
4. Adolescents in HK believe they would abandon some principles for the sake of money.	88 (20.8%)	103 (24.3%)	191 (45.0%)	123 (29.0%)	95 (22.4%)	15 (3.5%)	110 (25.9%)	2.64	424
5. Adolescents in HK believe "The amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's "success."	37 (8.6%)	87 (20.3%)	124 (29.0%)	123 (28.7%)	143 (33.4%)	38 (8.9%)	181 (42.3%)	3.14	428

Table 3. Parent perception of egocentrism in their own children

Items	1	2	1+2	3	4	5	4+5	Mean	n
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
1. My children believe their feelings are more important than the feelings of other people.	33 (7.7%)	97 (22.6%)	130 (30.2%)	98 (22.8%)	155 (36.0%)	47 (10.9%)	202 (47.0%)	3.20	430
2. My children believe their own benefits are more important than the benefits of other people.	62 (14.5%)	137 (32.1%)	199 (46.6%)	116 (27.2%)	102 (23.9%)	10 (2.3%)	112 (26.2%)	2.67	427
3. My children believe that no matter what happens, they can always justify their behaviors.	38 (8.9%)	65 (15.3%)	103 (24.2%)	95 (22.3%)	171 (40.1%)	57 (13.4%)	228 (53.5%)	3.34	426
4. My children believe the criticisms on them are usually groundless.	36 (8.5%)	130 (30.6%)	166 (39.1%)	133 (31.3%)	104 (24.5%)	22 (5.2%)	126 (29.6%)	2.87	425
5. My children are loyal to their own feelings even if this may upset other people.	48 (11.2%)	108 (25.1%)	156 (36.3%)	117 (27.2%)	124 (28.8%)	33 (7.7%)	157 (36.5%)	2.97	430

Table 4. Parent perception of egocentrism in Hong Kong adolescents

Items	1	2	1+2	3	4	5	4+5	Mean	n
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
1. Adolescents in HK believe their feelings are more important than the feelings of other people.	15 (3.5%)	55 (12.9%)	70 (16.4%)	72 (16.9%)	202 (47.3%)	83 (19.4%)	285 (66.7%)	3.66	427
2. Adolescents in HK believe their own benefits are more important than the benefits of other people.	22 (5.2%)	49 (11.5%)	71 (16.6%)	101 (23.7%)	189 (44.3%)	66 (15.5%)	255 (59.7%)	3.53	427
3. Adolescents in HK believe that no matter what happens, they can always justify their behaviors.	12 (2.8%)	45 (10.6%)	57 (13.5%)	65 (15.3%)	205 (48.2%)	98 (23.1%)	303 (71.8%)	3.78	425
4. Adolescents in HK believe the criticisms on them are usually groundless.	14 (3.3%)	67 (15.8%)	81 (19.1%)	107 (25.2%)	181 (42.7%)	55 (13.0%)	236 (55.7%)	3.46	424
5. Adolescents in HK are loyal to their own feelings even if this may upset other people.	15 (3.5%)	57 (13.4%)	72 (16.9%)	91 (21.4%)	179 (42.0%)	84 (19.7%)	263 (61.7%)	3.61	426

Table 5. Differences in materialistic beliefs between own children and HK adolescents perceived by parents

	Children	HK Adolescents	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
My children/HK adolescents believe that...	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>		
1. Making money is more important than any other things	2.46	2.98	-8.64	.000
2. Money is everything.	2.12	2.90	-12.41	.000
3. No money, no dignity.	2.32	3.13	-13.51	.000
4. They would abandon some principles for the sake of money.	1.64	2.64	-16.86	.000
5. The amount of money one makes is a fundamental indicator of one's "success."	2.33	3.14	-13.94	.000
Composite score	2.18	2.96	-17.29	.000

Note. $p < .05$; The result is significant; The performance of own children is better than HK adolescents perceived by parents.

Table 6. Differences in egocentrism between own children and HK adolescents perceived by parents

	Children	HK Adolescents	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
My children/HK adolescents believe that...	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>		
1. Their feelings are more important than the feelings of other people.	3.20	3.66	-8.31	.000
2. Their own benefits are more important than the benefits of other people.	2.67	3.53	-15.95	.000
3. Not matter what happens, they can always justify their behaviors.	3.34	3.78	-8.26	.000
4. The criticisms on them are usually groundless.	2.87	3.46	-11.25	.000
5. They are loyal to their own feelings even if this may upset other people.	2.97	3.61	-11.21	.000
Composite score	3.01	3.61	-15.04	.000

Note. $p < .05$; The result is significant; The performance of own children is better than HK adolescents perceived by parents.

Pearson correlation analyses showed that parental age was positively related to materialism in their own children and egocentrism in Hong Kong adolescents. Mothers also saw their children and Hong Kong adolescents to be less materialistic. Parental education was also positively related to materialism in Hong

Kong adolescents and egocentrism in their children and adolescents in Hong Kong (see Table 7). Regression analyses were also conducted to identify the predictors of perceived materialism in their children.

Table 7. Correlation among variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Age	-			
2. Gender ^a	-0.184***	-		
3. CSSA ^b	0.028	-0.010	-	
4. Parental education ^c	0.074	-0.104*	0.125**	-
5. Materialism in own children	0.100*	-0.130**	-0.070	0.076
6. Materialism in HK adolescents	0.073	-0.096*	0.069	0.243***
7. Egocentrism in own children	-0.001	-0.016	0.020	0.092*
8. Egocentrism in HK adolescents	0.107*	-0.039	0.008	0.260***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$;

^aMale = 1, Female = 2; ^bReceiving CSSA = 1, Not receiving CSSA = 2;

^cPrimary and below = 1, Secondary = 2, Above secondary = 3.

Table 8. Predicting effects of demographic factors on parent perceived materialism in their own children

Predictors	Materialism in Own Children			
	β	t	F	R^2
Age	0.082	1.672	2.794	0.007
Gender ^a	-0.120	-2.486*	6.180*	0.014
CSSA ^b	-0.078	-1.609	2.589	0.006
Parental education ^c	0.053	1.103	1.217	0.003

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$;

^aMale = 1, Female = 2; ^bReceiving CSSA = 1, Not receiving CSSA = 2;

^cPrimary and below = 1, Secondary = 2, Above secondary = 3.

Table 9. Predicting effects of demographic factors on parent perceived materialism in HK adolescents

Predictors	Materialism in HK Adolescents			
	β	t	F	R^2
Age	0.062	1.276	1.629	0.004
Gender ^a	-0.100	-2.073*	4.298*	0.010
CSSA ^b	0.060	1.231	1.515	0.004
Parental education ^c	0.239	5.068***	25.683***	0.057

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$;

^aMale = 1, Female = 2; ^bReceiving CSSA = 1, Not receiving CSSA = 2;

^cPrimary and below = 1, Secondary = 2, Above secondary = 3.

Table 10. Predicting effects of demographic factors on parent perceived egocentrism in their own children

Predictors	Egocentrism in Own Children			
	β	t	F	R^2
Age	0.000	-0.004	0.000	0.000
Gender ^a	-0.022	-0.448	0.201	0.000
CSSA ^b	0.020	0.419	0.176	0.000
Parental education ^c	0.076	1.577	2.486	0.006

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$;

^aMale = 1, Female = 2; ^bReceiving CSSA = 1, Not receiving CSSA = 2;

^cPrimary and below = 1, Secondary = 2, Above secondary = 3.

Compared with fathers, mothers perceived their children to be less materialistic (Table 8). Regarding perceived materialism in Hong Kong adolescents, parental gender and parental education were significant predictors. Compared to fathers, mothers saw adolescents in Hong Kong to be less materialistic; parents with lower educational attainment also saw

Hong Kong adolescents to be less materialistic (Table 9). For perceived egocentrism in the children, there was no significant predictor (Table 10). In contrast, age and parental education were positively related to perceived egocentrism in adolescents in Hong Kong (Table 11).

Table 11. Predicting effects of demographic factors on parent perceived egocentrism in Hong Kong adolescents

Predictors	Egocentrism in HK Adolescents			
	β	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Age	0.103	2.105*	4.430*	0.011
Gender ^a	-0.500	-1.030	1.061	0.003
CSSA ^b	0.014	0.278	0.078	0.000
Parental education ^c	0.260	5.543***	30.722***	0.068

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$;

^aMale = 1, Female = 2; ^bReceiving CSSA = 1, Not receiving CSSA = 2;

^cPrimary and below = 1, Secondary = 2, Above secondary = 3.

Discussion

The present study examined parents' perceptions of materialism and egocentrism in their adolescent children and adolescents in Hong Kong. There are three unique features of this study. First, as most of the studies have been based on self-report from adolescents, the employment of parents as respondents in this study is a pioneer in the field. Second, we examined parents' perceptions of their children and Hong Kong adolescents in general which can give a more dynamic picture about materialism and egocentrism in young people in Hong Kong. Third, we attempted to identify the socio-demographic correlates of perceived materialism and egocentrism amongst adolescent children and Hong Kong adolescents in general in Hong Kong which have not been explored in previous studies.

Regarding the response profiles of the respondents, two phenomena were observed. First, while some parents perceived their children as materialistic, many more parents perceived that Hong Kong adolescents were materialistic. Second, many parents perceived their children and adolescents in Hong Kong to be egocentric. These observations are consistent with those reported previously based on the perspective of adolescents (6, 9) and teachers (8, 9).

Consistent with our expectation, parents perceived that their children were less materialistic than

did Hong Kong adolescents in general. Similarly, parents perceived their children to be less egocentric as compared to Hong Kong adolescents in general. These observations are in line with the previous findings in the social psychological literature on self-enhancement that people tend to see themselves (or people related to themselves) to be more favorable than people in the outgroup (24).

Several observations can be highlighted from the findings based on the regression analyses on the socio-demographic correlates of perceived materialism and egocentrism beliefs in Chinese adolescents. First, compared with fathers, mothers perceived a lower level of materialism in their children as well as adolescents in Hong Kong. This may be explained by the fact that mothers are more accommodating and tolerant than fathers. Parental education was also found to be a significant predictor of perceived materialism in Hong Kong adolescents. This may be explained in terms of the exposure of the parents where those with higher education would have a better understanding of adolescents in Hong Kong. For perceived adolescent egocentrism, there was no significant socio-demographic correlate of perceived egocentrism in their own children. However, age and parental education were positively associated with perceived egocentrism in adolescents in Hong Kong. As people with higher age might be more traditional and conservative, they would see adolescents in Hong

Kong as more egocentric. Again, those with higher education attainment may have a better understanding of adolescents in Hong Kong, hence having a more negative view of egocentrism in adolescents.

As no study has been conducted to understand materialism and egocentrism in adolescents based on the perspective of parents, the present findings are pioneer in nature. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there are several limitations of the present study. First, the sample was based on convenience sampling method only. Hence, we have to replicate the findings and use random samples in future. Second, there are five items in the assessment of materialism and five items in the assessment of egocentrism. As such, employment of longer scales assessing different aspects of these two aspects would be helpful. Third, the findings on the socio-demographic correlates are tentative only. Therefore, further refinement and strengthening of the conceptual bases of the hypotheses would be helpful. Finally, as parents play an important role in the socialization of materialism in adolescents (25-29), it would be helpful to examine parental influences further. It would also be theoretically and practically important to understand how parents contribute to the development of materialism and egocentrism in adolescents in future studies.

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