The Influence of Parental Expectations and Parental Control on Adolescent Well-being in Poor Chinese Families

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Conflict of Interest: The first author declares that she has no conflict of interest. For the second author, as he is the Editor in Chief of ARQOL, an editorial board member has been invited to be the Action Editor.

Ethical standard: The author declares that all procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of Human Subjects Ethics Sub-committee of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Abstract

Based on a sample of 275 Chinese poor families in Hong Kong, the influence of parental expectations of children's future and adolescents' perceived parental control on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity were examined. Consistent with our hypotheses, the results indicated that parental expectations of children's future and adolescents' perceived parental control directly influenced adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities. Furthermore, adolescent perceived maternal control moderated the influence of paternal expectations on self-identity and problem-solving capacities among Chinese adolescents. Simple slope analyses showed that paternal expectations influenced adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities when adolescents perceived low levels of maternal control than did high levels of perceived maternal control. The present study underscores the dynamic nature of the influence of parental expectations and perceived parental control on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities in poor Chinese families. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings in the context of poverty are discussed.

Keywords: self-identity, problem-solving capacities, parental expectations, parental control, poverty, moderation

Introduction

The book "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother" (Chua, 2011) reveals the significance of parental expectations and parental control in the Chinese socialization process. Parents expect their children to have good prospects in the future, and closely monitor their children to perform well and comply with the standards. This implies special meanings to the Chinese families experiencing economic disadvantage. On the one hand, parents expect their children to have a bright future so that they can escape from the shadow of intergenerational poverty. On the other hand, they may have difficulties in monitoring their children due to the long and unstandardized working hours, economic strains and parental distress (Conger & Conger, 2008). Hence, it is essential to examine the roles of parental expectations and parental control in adolescent well-being in poor Chinese families.

Parental expectations of children's future are important child-specific beliefs that represent parental aspirations of their children's development and these become the standards of their children's performance (Boocock, 1972; Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). In the Chinese culture, parental expectations encompass both practical and cultural ideals (Leung & Shek, 2011a). While the practical ideals comprise high academic accomplishments and good future prospect, the cultural ideals consist of parental expectations of their children's attitudes and values, such as family obligations and reservation of cultural values (Leung & Shek, 2011a; Li, 2004). This echoes Chao and Sue's suggestions (1996) that parental expectations embrace two principle values originated from the Chinese culture: building reputations of the family name, and achieving success in the future. Generally speaking, Chinese parents have high expectations of their children (Blair & Qian, 1998; Goyette & Xie, 1999). There is a Chinese saying of "*wang zi cheng long*" (wishing the son to perform like a dragon), which accurately describes the core value of parental expectations, with the dragon representing "supremacy" in the Chinese culture.

Based on the expectancy-value theory on motivation (Eccles et al., 2006; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998), parental expectations influence adolescents' life goals as well as self-appraisal of one's own competencies. Parental expectations set high standards for adolescents to follow and motivate them to attain achievements (Boocock, 1972). There is empirical support that parental expectations influence adolescents' learning motivation, academic success and psychological well-being (Davis-Kean, 2005; Leung, 2016; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007; Vartanian et al., 2007). In families experiencing economic disadvantage, parents tend to expect their children to have a bright future so as to escape from intergenerational poverty (Leung & Shek, 2011a; 2015). Unfortunately, there is also evidence showing that poor parents are less optimistic about their adolescents' educational opportunities (Crosnoe, Mistry & Elder, 2002).

Rooted in the Confucian thought, patriarchal hierarchy is observed in the family system (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Fathers, as the heads of the family, have the decision-making power in the families. Hence, Chinese fathers were more influential in the family, making their adolescents become more observant to their fathers' expectations. Furthermore, the concept of familism develops along the male lineage in the Chinese culture (Ting & Chiu, 2002). The Chinese saying of "*guang zong yao zu*" (bring the glory to the clans and ancestors) refers to the descendant's responsibility to bring family honor to the father's lineage. As such, paternal expectations is

Another important socialization practice embedded in the Chinese culture is parental control. Smetana and Daddis (2002) defined parental control as "rules, regulations and restrictions that parents have for their children" (p. 563). Unlike disciplinary parenting, parental control entails the indigenous meanings of "*jiao xun*" (to train) and "*guan*" (to govern; Chao, 1994). While "*jiao xun*" refers to "teaching" of moral behaviors and ethical conduct, "*guan*" means "monitoring" of their children to abide by the rules and standards as

approved by the parents, community and society. As the Chinese meanings of parental control encompass the concepts of "training", "governing" and "monitoring", and different strategies such as conformity training, modesty and self-suppression induction, shame strategy, parent-centeredness are used (Yang, 1981), there is a blurred differentiation of behavioral and psychological control embedded in the Chinese culture (Wang, Pomerantz & Chen, 2007). Besides, Shek (2006) argued that the concepts of parental control are different across cultures and one should take an "emic" rather than "etic" concept to understand Chinese parental control. He identified three key features of Chinese parental control. First, Chinese parents exercise absolute authority to enforce the rules and standards. Second, parental control comprises both behavioral control and psychological control in administering the authority. Third, high moral standards are set up to protect family reputations (Shek, 2007b).

In general, previous studies revealed that parental control positively influenced adolescent psychosocial well-being and school performance (Leung & Shek, 2013a, b; Leung, 2016; Leung, Lau & Lam, 1998; Wang et al., 2007) in the Chinese communities. However, some studies showed that parental control did not have any effects on adolescent psychological well-being and academic performance (Chen, Liu & Li, 2000; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998). Hence, it is essential to explore the conditions and mechanisms in which parental control influences adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities.

Even though parental expectations of their children's future set out the standards and parental demands that motivate their adolescents for better achievements and development, (Boocock, 1972; Eccles et al., 2006), appropriate parenting strategies and techniques are important to provide a suitable environment for the influence to take place. In principle, parental control provides a structural environment of parental supervision and consistent guidance (Wang et al., 2007) that facilitates parents to "work out" their expectations. However, based on the separation-individuation theory (Daniels, 1990), adolescents may

strive for greater autonomy and independence during the individuation process in the stage of adolescence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Adolescents may perceive parental control as parental surveillance and intrusion that restrict their pursuit of autonomy and sense of self-determination (Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994; Hasebe, Nucci & Nucci, 2004), which may reduce the influence of family expectations of adolescent development. Besides, adolescents may perceive parental control as mistrust from their parents on their competence, which may affect parent-child relationship that hinders the impacts of parental expectations on adolescent development (Leung & Shek, 2014). Hence, it is illuminating to examine whether parental control matters in the relationship between parental expectations and adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities in poor Chinese families.

Though fathers have decision-making power in the family (Chao & Tseng, 2002), they are less involved in parenting (Leung & Shek, 2012; Parke et al., 2005). There is evidence showing that mothers exercised more supervision and monitoring roles on their children than did the fathers (Leung & Shek, 2012; Shek, 2008). This is especially salient in poor families because fathers usually engage in those labour-intensive jobs that require long hours of work, which creates practical barriers for them to exercise paternal control (Leung & Shek, 2012). On the contrary, mothers are more involved in taking care of the family members, and may have more time supervising and monitoring their children's behaviours.

Based on the family systems perspective (Minuchin, 1974), fathers, mothers and adolescents influence each other directly and indirectly (Cox & Paley, 1997; Sameroff, 1994). It is possible that adolescent perceived paternal control not only moderates the influence of the paternal expectations on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities, but also moderates the influence of maternal expectations on the adolescents' developmental outcomes. Similar propositions may also happen in considering maternal control as a moderator in the influence of paternal and maternal expectations on adolescent self-identity

and problem-solving capacities. In the Chinese culture where patriarchal hierarchy is observed in the Chinese families (Chao & Tseng, 2002), paternal expectations were more influential to adolescent development. However, mothers spent more time in exercising control over their children's behaviours (Leung & Shek, 2012; Shek, 2008). As such, it was deemed that maternal control formed the contextual platform for paternal expectations in shaping adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities. It was expected when maternal control was at higher levels, paternal expectations would not predict adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities as adolescents might perceive maternal surveillance and intrusion as a sense of mistrust and restrictions that prohibited them from autonomy and independence. On the contrary, when maternal control was at lower levels, parental expectations became important to lay down family expectations and standards of adolescents, which might enhance adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities.

In this study, self-identity and problem-solving capacities were considered as the outcome variables. Self-identity is one's concept of self-worthiness, which is the building block of identity formation and self-acceptance (Stryker, 1980; Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012). Problem-solving capacities are the abilities of an individual to resolve ones' problems experienced in one's daily life (D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-Olivares, 1996). These involve the cognitive components of problem identification, attributions of the causes, impact appraisals, goal-setting, expectancies, commitment, strategies and techniques of problem-solving (Siu & Shek, 2005). These developmental attributes were outcome variables of the study as they were the essential components for adolescents experiencing economic disadvantage to meet the challenges arising from poverty, and constitute to their better wellbeing (Siu & Shek, 2010).

Against this background, the study attempted to examine the predictive effects of parental expectations of their children's future and adolescent perceived parental control on

adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities. Furthermore, the roles of adolescent perceived parental control in the relationship between parental expectations of their children's future and adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities in poor Chinese families in Hong Kong were also investigated. Three research questions were addressed in this study as follows:

Research Question 1: Do parental expectations of the children's future predict self-identity and problem-solving capacities of adolescents in poor Chinese families? Based on the expectancy-value theory on motivation (Eccles et al., 2006; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998), as well as dominant roles of fathers in the family systems (Chao & Tseng, 2002), it was hypothesized that higher paternal expectations would predict more self-identity and problem-solving capacities among poor Chinese adolescents (Hypotheses 1a and 1b).

Research Question 2: Does perceived parental control predict self-identity and problem-solving capacities of poor Chinese adolescents? Based on the Chinese socialization that parental control entails parental training, monitoring and commitment on adolescent development (Chao, 1994; Stewart et al., 1998) and maternal involvement in exercising control and monitoring of adolescent development (Leung & Shek, 2013a, b) it was hypothesized that higher levels of perceived parental control would predict higher levels of self-identity and problem-solving capacities among poor Chinese adolescents (Hypotheses 2a and 2b).

Research Question 3: Does parental control interact with parental expectations to influence self-identity and problem-solving capacities of poor Chinese adolescents? Though mothers take up more monitoring role in supervising their adolescents (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Leung & Shek, 2012), higher levels of maternal control perceived by adolescents may be regarded as family surveillance and mistrust that prohibit their search for autonomy and independence, which may affect the relationship between paternal expectations and

adolescent development. Hence, it was hypothesized that adolescent perceived maternal control would moderate the influence of paternal sacrifice on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities. Specifically, under high maternal control, paternal expectations would not have positive influence on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities In contrast, if maternal control is low, paternal expectation would have influence on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving.

Method

Participants and Procedures

The data were collected from the Chinese intact families living in poverty in Hong Kong. In view of a lack of complete list of poor intact families in Hong Kong, purposeful sampling was adopted in the present research. Different non-governmental organizations were invited to participate in the study. A total of 24 social service centers across Hong Kong joined the study finally. Social workers from the participating centers were given training in identifying respondents and collecting the data. Intact Chinese families with at least one child at the age between 11 and 17 living under the poverty line were invited to participate in the study. The 50% of the median monthly domestic household income was regarded as the poverty threshold in accordance to the official poverty line set up by the Hong Kong Government. Finally, 275 poor intact Chinese families participated in the study.

Data were collected either in the social service centers or at the respondents' homes, subject to the preference of the respondent families. Written informed consent was obtained from each family member. Fathers and mothers were invited to complete an identical measure of paternal and maternal expectations of children's future respectively, and adolescents were invited to complete the measures of paternal and maternal control, cognitive competence and positive self-identity. Each participant filled out the questionnaires in a self-administered

format separately so as to maintain strict confidentiality. Researcher or trained social workers would read out the items in case the respondents had difficulties in comprehending the measures. The study was approved and monitored by the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee of an internationally recognized university.

Instruments

Parental expectations

Chinese Paternal/Maternal Expectations of Children's Future Scale (PECF/MECF). Based on a survey of related literature (e.g. Shek & Chan, 1999) and the qualitative findings of focus groups of Chinese parents and adolescents, a 17-item indigenous PECF/MECF was developed with five dimensions: educational attainment, self-reliance, career aspirations, family obligations and ethical conduct (Leung & Shek, 2011a). A sample item of PECF/MECF is "I expect my child to have a good salary in the future". The respondents are required to rate each item on a 6-point Likert scale from "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "6 = Strongly Agree". The measurement showed good reliability and validity in the previous studies (Leung & Shek, 2011b). Higher scores of PECF/MECF indicate higher paternal or maternal expectations of children's future respectively. Both PECF and MECF showed good internal consistencies in this study (PECF: $\alpha = 0.883$; MECF: $\alpha = 0.879$).

Parental control

Chinese Paternal/Maternal Control Scale (APCS/AMCS). Based on a survey of Chinese literature on parental control, Shek (2005, 2007b) developed a 12-item indigenous APCS/AMCS to assess paternal/maternal control. Each item is assessed on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 4 = "Strongly Agree". A sample item is "My father is very harsh in my discipline". APCS/AMCS showed good reliability and validity in a

validation study in Hong Kong (Shek, 2007b). Higher scores of APCS/AMCS indicate higher levels of paternal or maternal control perceived by adolescents respectively. Both APCS and AMCS showed good reliability in the study (APCS: α = 0.870; AMCS: α = 0.876).

Adolescent self-identity

Clear and Positive Identity Subscale (CPI) of Chinese Positive Youth Development Scale (CPYDS). CPI is another subscale of CPYDS developed from a survey of related literature on self-identity (e.g. Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003). A short form of three items was used in the study. A sample of CPI is "I am a confident person". Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 6 = "Strongly Agree". A higher score of CPI indicates more positive self-identity. CPI showed acceptable internal consistency in this study (α = 0.772).

Adolescent problem-solving capacities

Social Problem-Solving Inventory (SPSI-R). CPYDS is a 90-item Chinese psychosocial measurement tool developed by Shek, Siu & Lee (2007) based on the conceptualization framework of Catalano et al. (2002). The CPYDS showed good reliability and validity in the previous study (Shek et al. 2007). CC is a subscale of CPYDS modelling after the Chinese version of the Social Problem-Solving Inventory (Siu & Shek, 2005) to assess cognitive competence of adolescents. A short form of three items was used. A sample item is "I know how to see things from different angles". Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 6 = "Strongly Agree". A higher score of CC indicate higher cognitive competence. CC demonstrated good internal consistency in this study (α = 0.826).

Data Analyses

Based on the procedures suggested by Aiken and West (1991), hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the additive and interactive effects of perceived paternal/maternal control and paternal/maternal expectations in predicting adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity. In the multiple regression analyses, all continuous-level predictors (i.e., scores of paternal and maternal expectations, and perceived paternal and maternal control) were mean-centered. In Step 1, mean-centered covariates were included in the multiple regression model. There was evidence showing that gender and age of adolescents accounted for parenting attributes and adolescent psychosocial competence, with the influence of parenting practice on adolescent psychosocial competence to be stronger in adolescent girls than in boys (Shek, 1999), and in young adolescents than in the older ones (Abar et al., 2015). Hence, gender and age of adolescents were regarded as covariates in the regression models. In Step 2, paternal and maternal expectations of the children's future were added to the hierarchical multiple regression model. In Step 3, the moderators, i.e., adolescent perceived paternal and maternal control, were added to the multiple regression analyses. In Step 4, four interaction terms, namely "paternal expectations X paternal control", "paternal expectations X maternal control", "maternal expectations X paternal control", and "maternal expectations X maternal control", were constructed and added to the multiple regression model. In case the interaction terms significantly predicted the adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity, the moderation effects were supported in the analyses.

Simple slope analyses (Cohen et al., 2003) were performed to interpret the influence of parental expectations on adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity at high (1 *SD* higher than the mean) and low levels (1 *SD* lower than the mean) of perceived parental control in each model (Cohen et al., 2003) respectively. Plotted graphs of the predicted outcome values were used in the interpretations of the results in each model.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1. It was found that the poor intact families resembled the characteristics of poor families in Hong Kong, and the ratio of adolescent boys and girls was similar with the gender distribution of the Hong Kong population. Correlational analyses showed that adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity were positively related to paternal and maternal expectations, and perceived paternal and maternal control (Table 2). Besides, paternal expectations were related to perceived maternal control, but maternal expectations did not relate to either perceived paternal or maternal control (Table 2).

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the predictors of adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity. On top of the main effects of parental expectations and parental control, we also tested the moderation effects of adolescents' perceived parental control on the influence of parental expectations on adolescent cognitive competence and positive self-identity. Regarding cognitive competence, adolescent gender and age did not predict cognitive competence. When paternal and maternal expectations were added into the regression in Step 2, it was found that paternal and maternal expectations predicted cognitive competence, with $b = 0.376$, $SE = 0.161$, $p < 0.05$, and $b = 0.469$, $SE = 0.162$, $p < 0.01$, respectively (Table 3). Change of R^2 was 0.062. Hypotheses 1a were supported. When adolescents' perceived paternal and maternal control was added in Step 3, change of R^2 was 0.056. Adolescents' perceived paternal control positively predicted cognitive competence, with $b = 0.443$, $SE = 0.185$ ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). Hypotheses 2a were partially supported.

Finally, the interaction terms were added to the regression model in Step 4. The interaction term of "paternal expectations X maternal control" negatively predicted

adolescent cognitive competence, with b = -0.399, SE = 0.172 ($p < 0.05$). Change of R^2 was 0.039 (Table 3). Hypothesis 3a was supported. Simple slope analyses showed that the positive association between paternal expectations and adolescent cognitive competence was stronger when adolescents' perceived maternal control was at a low level (b = 1.015, SE = 0.242, $p < 0.001$; Table 4). Under high levels of perceived maternal control, the prediction of paternal expectations on adolescent cognitive competence became non-significant (b = -0.085, SE = 0.204, $p > 0.05$; Table 4). Figure 1 plots the regression lines of paternal expectations on adolescent cognitive competence at low and high levels of adolescents' perceived maternal control.

As for adolescent self-identity, it was found that paternal expectations predicted positive self-identity, with b = 0.483, SE = 0.177 ($p < 0.01$) in Step 2 (Table 3). Change of R^2 was 0.043. Hypotheses 1b were partially supported. When adolescents' perceived paternal and maternal control was added in Step 3, change of R^2 was 0.099. Adolescents' perceived maternal control positively predicted adolescent positive self-identity, with b = 0.720, SE = 0.200 ($p < 0.001$) (Table 3). Hypotheses 2b were partially supported. Finally, the analyses based on the interaction effects showed that the interaction term of "paternal expectations X maternal control" negatively predicted adolescent positive self-identity (b = -0.409, SE = 0.185, $p < 0.05$). Change of R^2 was 0.037 (Table 3). Hypotheses 3b was supported. Simple slope analyses showed that the positive association between paternal expectations and adolescent positive self-identity was stronger when adolescents' perceived maternal control was at low levels (b = 1.023, SE = 0.256, $p < 0.001$; Table 4) than at the high levels (b = -0.095, SE = 0.215, $p > 0.05$; Table 4). Figure 2 plots the regression lines of paternal expectations on adolescent self-identity at low and high levels of adolescents' perceived maternal control.

Discussion

The study attempted to examine the additive and interactive effects of parental expectations of children's future and adolescents' perceived parental control on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity among poor Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. The study shares some unique features. First, the study targeted poor intact Chinese families as the respondents of the study. This target group is usually hidden due to social stigmatization, especially in the Chinese context that poverty may imply "losing face" or "bringing disgrace on the family". Second, as research on parental beliefs and indigenous parenting practice was scarce in Chinese communities (Leung, 1996; Shek, 2006), the study was a pioneer in the social science literature. Third, fathers, mothers and adolescents participated in the study. This is an advancement because majority of the studies invited either caregivers (who were mostly mothers) or adolescents as the respondents (Pettit et al., 2001; Wood, Kaplan & McLoyd, 2007), and the involvement of fathers was grossly neglected in scientific family studies.

This study showed some support of the expectancy-value theory on motivation (Eccles et al., 2006; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998) that parental expectations positively predicted adolescent development. This is especially important for poor Chinese families, when parents expect that their children can escape from the shadow of intergenerational poverty. It was apparent that both paternal and maternal expectations positively predicted adolescents' cognitive competence as poor adolescents pay more effort in fulfilling parental expectations.

However, it was found that paternal expectations predicted adolescents' self-identity, but maternal expectations did not. Fathers, as the head of the family, were influential in laying down the family values as well as the expectations of their children to build up family pride. As pointed out by de Vos (1998), the concept of "self" in the Chinese culture is

"interactional and transactional" (p.333), and therefore adolescents developed their self-identity by fulfilling their fathers' expectations.

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that perceived parental control positively influenced cognitive competence and self-identity of poor Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. This echoes Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen's (2007) suggestions that parental monitoring and their consistent guidance served as a favorable condition for adolescents to develop healthily and positively. While paternal control influenced adolescents' cognitive competence, maternal control influenced adolescents' positive self-identity. Based on the sex-role theory (Bem, 1974) that masculinity symbolizes instrumentality while femininity reflects expressiveness (Spence, 1993), fathers adopt a more goal-oriented style in parenting whereas mothers adopt an affective parenting style (Russell et al., 1998). Hence, fathers have more influence on goal-setting and problem-solving abilities of adolescents, and mothers have more influence on relationship building and affective development. It is apparent that perceived paternal control predicted cognitive competence whereas perceived maternal control influenced self-identity of adolescents.

However, the present findings show that the relationships amongst the different variables are beyond the simple addictive effect. The results indicated that adolescents' perceived maternal control moderated the prediction of parental expectations of children's future on adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity in poor Chinese families respectively. When fathers have lower expectations of the future of their children, adolescents' cognitive competence were at the lowest level when adolescents perceived the lowest level of maternal control. When maternal control increased, adolescents' cognitive competence also increased. However, when maternal control was at high levels, the scores of adolescents' cognitive competence remained at higher levels regardless of the levels of paternal expectations of children's future. Similar findings were identified for adolescents'

self-identity. It is insightful to identify that the predictions of paternal expectations of children's future on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity were significant only when adolescents' perceived maternal control was at low levels. When adolescents' perceived maternal control was at high levels, the influence of paternal expectations on adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity became non-significant.

However, although paternal expectation is important, it may not have a strong impact on children because fathers are not heavily involved in the socialization process. Instead, as mothers have a closer relationship with their children, their control would be of paramount importance. Specifically, under high maternal control, paternal expectations would not have positive influence on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities because maternal control sets the sufficient scene for adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities. In contrast, if maternal control is low, paternal expectation would have influence on adolescent self-identity and problem-solving capacities because fathers are rarely involved in the socialization process.

Interestingly, the findings that maternal control moderated the influences of paternal expectations on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity deviate from the interpretation that maternal control is regarded as parental surveillance and intrusion (Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994; Hasebe, Nucci & Nucci, 2004) that hampered the influence of parental expectations on adolescent development. On the contrary, maternal control represents the enforcement of family rules and standards (Chao, 1994; Shek, 2007b) and consistent guidance offered by mothers (Wang, Pomerantz & Chen, 2007) in influencing adolescent development. When adolescents perceived low levels of maternal control, they would be lost or confused about the standards that guided their behaviors. At this point, paternal expectations of children's future served as the booster and benchmark that laid down the requirements and standards of fathers on their adolescents to observe, which positively

influenced adolescent development. In contrast, when adolescents' perceived maternal control was at a high level, adolescents learnt the rules and standards requested by their mothers and regulated their behaviors, which influenced their cognitive competence and self-identity. Moreover, the Chinese connotation of "*guan*" (i.e., monitoring) contains strong sentiments of parental commitment and involvement for the benefits of the children and the family as a whole (Chao, 1994; Stewart et al., 1998). Hence, adolescents were more acceptable to maternal supervision and monitoring rather than perceiving as surveillance and mistrust from mothers. Paternal expectations became less important in influencing adolescent development in the situations that adolescents perceived a high level of maternal control.

It is noteworthy that maternal control rather than paternal control moderated the influence of paternal expectations on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity. It is evident that mothers exercised more control and monitoring over their children than did fathers in recent studies (Leung & Shek, 2012; Shek, 2008). Particularly, as more poor fathers were engaged in the physically demanding jobs with long and unstandardized working hours whereas a high proportion of mothers were housewives, maternal control rather than paternal control mattered in the moderation of the relationship between paternal expectations and adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity.

There are several theoretical and practical implementations of the study. Theoretically, the study examined the moderation effects of adolescents' perceived parental control on the influence of parental expectations and adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity in the poor Chinese families, which is a pioneer in the social science literature. The results indicated that adolescents' perceived maternal control moderated the prediction of paternal expectations on adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity, which provide rich information on understanding the interdependent relationships within the Chinese family system. This helps the construction of the family process model applicable to the Chinese

communities.

Second, the study identified that maternal control is a protective factor in enhancing adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity when fathers had low expectations of their children's future. This brings an important insight on building the family resilience models in the face of adversity and economic hardship. Third, the findings indicated that there was parent gender differentiation on the influence of parental expectations of the children's future and parental control on adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity, which allows the researchers and family theorists to have more ideas on the parent gender roles in the Chinese families and how these roles influence the adolescents in different aspects.

Practically, the findings showed that when paternal expectations were at low levels, maternal control served as a protective factor in enhancing adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity in the poor Chinese families (i.e., mothers mattered more than fathers). In reality, poor fathers may experience learned helplessness and "cognitive interference" (i.e., difficulties to learn that action can produce positive outcomes) in their struggle of economic hardship (Kane, 1987), making them less optimistic about the future and their children's development. In this case, maternal control would be important to help adolescents develop positively and competently. It is evident that in single-parent families the children excel themselves when their mothers function well (Leung, 2016). Family practitioners and youth counselors may need to help the mothers exercise their supervision and guidance to their adolescents. On the other hand, poverty may bring maternal depression which restricts the mothers to effective parenting (Conger & Conger, 2008). Paternal expectations are a protective factor to build up adolescents' competence. The family practitioners and youth practitioners should be sensitive to the complementary roles of fathers and mothers and provide support in their socialization of their children. In addition, most of the anti-poverty measures in Hong Kong focus on financial assistance and employment

support, with less emphasis on enhancing the family values and parenting strategies of poor families. This study shows the importance of parental expectations and parental control in enhancing adolescent cognitive competence and self-identity, and there is interdependence across parent gender in the moderation effects. Hence, the anti-poverty measures should include family life education and family enhancement programs so that the parents can contribute more effectively to help their adolescents to overcome adversities.

There are several limitations of the study. First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design which did not allow causal inference to be tested. Longitudinal research design is recommended to increase the vigor of the research. Second, non-random sampling strategy was used in the current study, bringing the limitations on generalizability of the research results. Third, as the study was conducted among a sample of Chinese families experiencing economic disadvantage in Hong Kong, it is advisable to conduct more studies to generalize the findings in different Chinese communities, such as the Chinese families in mainland China and those who live in the non-Chinese communities (e.g., Chinese-Americans).

Despite the limitations, the study provided important cues for the social science theorists and researchers to understand the predictive and interactive effects of parental expectations and adolescents' perceived parental control on adolescents' cognitive competence and self-identity in poor Chinese families. The current findings contribute to the development of effective intervention programs and policy measures that help adolescents and their families overcome the challenges of poverty.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the sample's charateristics (N = 275)

Respondent	Demographic information	N	Percentage (%)
Father	Age	Mean = 49.95 (SD = 9.28) (years)	
	Educational level (missing case = 1)		
	Illiterate	4	1.5
	Primary 1 to 6 (Grade 1 to 6)	84	30.5
	Secondary 1 to 3 (Grade 7 to 9)	117	42.5
	Secondary 4 to 7 (Grade 10 to 13)	57	20.7
	College and unviersity graduates	12	4.4
	Occupation (missing case = 1)		
	Unskilled workers	86	31.3
	Skilled workers	98	35.6
	Unemployed	30	10.9
	Retired	26	9.5
	Others	34	12.4
Mother	Age	Mean = 42.18 (SD = 4.97) (years)	
	Educational level		
	Illiterate	6	2.2
	Primary 1 to 6 (Grade 1 to 6)	62	22.5
	Secondary 1 to 3 (Grade 7 to 9)	136	49.5
	Secondary 4 to 7 (Grade 10 to 13)	70	25.5
	College and unviersity graduates	1	0.4
	Occupation (missing cases = 3)		
	Unskilled workers	39	14.2
	Skilled workers	7	2.5
	Clerk	7	2.5
	Unemployed	7	2.5
	Housewife	199	72.4
	Others	13	4.7
Adolescent	Gender		
	Male	134	48.7
	Female	141	51.3
	Age	Mean = 13.6 (SD = 1.54) (years)	
	Educational level		
	Primary 6 or below (Grade 6 or below)	65	23.6
	Secondary 1 to 3 (Grade 7 to 9)	151	54.9
	Secondary 4 or above (Grade 10 or above)	59	21.5
Family	CSSA recipients		
	Yes	96	34.9
	No	179	65.1
	Monthly household income (missing cases = 5)		
	HK$5,000 or below	25	9.1
	HK$5,001 – HK$10,000	161	58.5
	HK$10,001 – HK$20,000	81	29.5
	HK$20,001 or above	3	1.1
	No. of Children		
	1	34	12.4
	2	151	54.9
	3	61	22.2
	4 or above	29	10.5

Note: CSSA denotes Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

Table 2: Correlations of the variables

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Gender of adolescents (Boy = 1, Girl = 2)	1.513	0.501	1.000							
2.	Age of adolescents	13.560	1.540	0.100	1.000						
3.	Paternal expectations of children's future	86.942	10.374	0.001	-0.072	1.000					
4.	Maternal expectations of children's future	88.542	8.976	0.065	-0.004	0.226***	1.000				
5.	Adolescents' perceived paternal control	36.444	5.862	-0.135*	-0.180**	0.113	0.025	1.000			
6.	Adolescents' perceived maternal control	38.418	5.782	-0.021	-0.164**	0.205**	0.099	0.551***	1.000		
7.	Cognitive competence	13.527	2.659	-0.067	-0.043	0.183**	0.203**	0.248***	0.239***	1.000	
8.	Positive self-identity	12.629	2.904	-0.054	-0.097	0.193**	0.127*	0.276***	0.347***	0.553***	1.000

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

Table 3: Regression of adolescent developmental attributes by parental expectations in the context of parental control

	Cognitive competence					Positive self-identity				
	b	*SE*	*β*	R^2	ΔR^2	*b*	*SE*	*β*	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				0.006					0.011	
Gender of adolescents	0.167	0.161	0.063			0.131	0.176	0.045		
Age of adolescents	-0.980	0.162	-0.037			-0.269	0.176	-0.093		
Step 2				0.068	0.062				0.054	0.043
Paternal expectations of children's future	0.376	0.161	0.141*			0.483	0.177	0.166**		
Maternal expectations of children's future	0.469	0.162	0.176**			0.268	0.177	0.092		
Step 3				0.124	0.056				0.134	0.099
Adolescents' perceived paternal control	0.443	0.185	0.167*			0.336	0.199	0.116		
Adolescents' perceived maternal control	0.295	0.186	0.111			0.720	0.200	0.248***		
Step 4				0.131	0.039				0.159	0.037
Paternal expectations X paternal control	0.240	0.155	0.093			-0.070	0.166	-0.025		
Paternal expectations X maternal control	-0.399	0.172	-0.147*			-0.409	0.185	-0.138*		
Maternal expectations X paternal control	-0.258	0.195	-0.090			-0.236	0.210	-0.076		
Maternal expectations X maternal control	-0.080	0.199	-0.028			-0.110	0.213	-0.036		

*$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4. Simple slope analyses of prediction of parental expectations on adolescent developmental attributes having adolescents' perceived parental control as a moderator

		Cognitive competence			Positive self-identity		
Moderator	Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*	*β*
Higher level of maternal control (+1 SD)	Paternal expectations of children's future	-0.085	0.204	-0.032	-0.095	0.215	-0.033
Lower level of maternal control (-1 SD)	Paternal expectations of children's future	1.015	0.242	0.382***	1.023	0.256	0.352***

Figure 1: Regression of adolescent cognitive competence by paternal expectations of children's future in high and low levels of adolescents' perceived maternal control

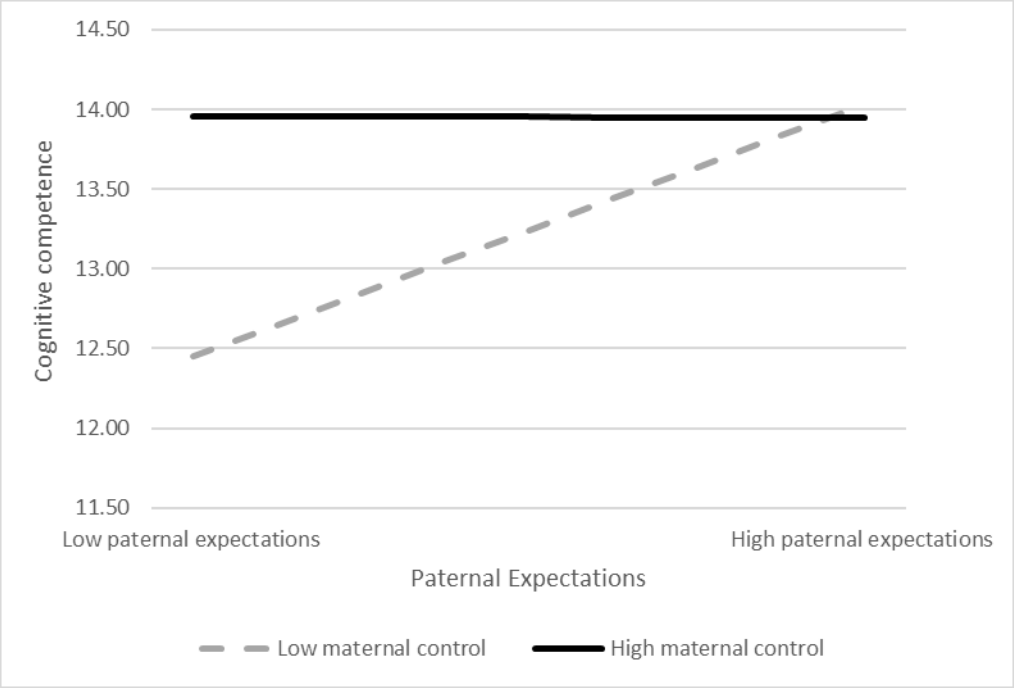

Figure 2: Regression of adolescent self-identity by paternal expectations of children's future in high and low levels of adolescents' perceived maternal control