

COLLEGE-AGED CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF
PARENTAL BEHAVIOR AND PARENTAL
EFFECTIVENESS: A CROSS
CULTURAL STUDY

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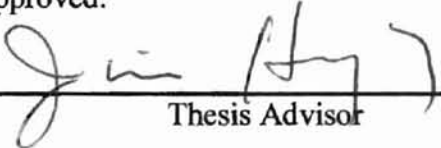
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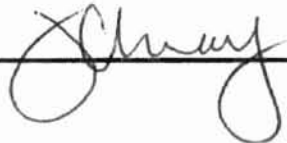
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Thesis Approved:



Thesis Advisor







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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Background

Because one of every four people on the planet is Chinese, it is vital for any global thinker to understand the cultural and social forces that influence this nation. However, Western research has neglected many aspects of Chinese culture, specifically the study of the family.

The parent-child relationship is one of the most vital relationships in a human being's life. Parents are children's initial link to the world, and parents influence children more than any other source. Research has shown that the style of parenting exhibited bears a major impact on the development of a child. The child's academic achievement, social adjustment, physical, emotional and psychological well-being (Shucksmith et al, 1995) are just a few of the outcomes that are linked to parental behaviors. It has become accepted wisdom that parenting practices are cyclically repeated in following generations. Thus, it is imperative for scholars to study the parent-child relationship in depth, so that they can make positive recommendations for improving this vital relationship.

Purpose of the Study

Because there is a need for greater cross-cultural communication, specifically with China, I want to explore the differences in parenting behaviors between the United States and China. The study of parenting styles, which has received a lot of attention in the literature, is useful, but limiting in cross-cultural studies. Therefore, college-aged children were asked to identify specific parenting behaviors that their own parents exhibit, and rate how effective those behaviors are. I hope that this research will lead to a greater understanding of families in both the United States and China.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Parenting Styles and Behaviors

Baumrind (1966) published a seminal work on the classification of parenting styles, and this theory has strongly influenced research on parenting since that time. She identified three basic parenting styles: (a) authoritarian – parents who are more focused on gaining a child's obedience than on responding to the needs and demands of the child; (b) permissive or *laizze`-faire* – parents who are responsive to their children, but do not impose any structure or limits, and (c) authoritative – parents who provide boundaries, while still maintaining a climate of trust and open communication. In later writings, Baumrind (1971) introduced a fourth parenting style; neglectful – parents who are not involved with their children and respond only minimally to the child's needs and the child's behavior.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) added another dimension to this study by differentiating between parenting styles and parenting practices. They defined parenting style as “a stable complex of attitudes and beliefs that form the context in which parenting behavior occurs” (p. 488). Parenting practices, on the other hand, are “specific, goal-directed behaviors through which parents perform their parental duties” (p. 488).

Brenner and Fox (1999) suggest in their research that parenting practices are more relevant to the study of parent-child relationships than parental styles are. The reason for

this is that parenting practices have a stronger effect on a child's life. Parenting practices have immediate consequences on a child, and a direct effect on children's outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Conversely, the role of parenting style is indirect, and at times difficult to articulate. Brenner and Fox (1999) argue further that is impossible to determine parenting styles without focusing primarily (or even completely) on parenting behaviors. All of this is not to say that the study of parenting styles is unnecessary. But, it is important to study parenting behaviors first, and then let the clusters of these behaviors determine parenting styles, instead of starting with parenting style and then moving to parenting behaviors.

Parenting Models

Although Baumrind's model of parenting styles has received wide acceptance, there are other models for identifying parenting style. The first of these is the Nordic model, so named because it was first developed in Norway, and it represents the cultural perspectives of Sweden and Norway. In the Nordic model, children are viewed as "rightfully self-absorbed and self-gratifying" (Baumrind, 1999, p. 419). The most positive style of parenting is seen as the one in which parents comply with the children's needs and make very little attempt to inhibit or constrain them (Baumrind, 1999).

Another parenting model is the "sociological perspective," which is a systems theory that suggests that all parenting behaviors are a response to complex layers of societal influence, culture, history and economics (Abell, 1996). Goodnow (1988) states that in any sociological study "the factors to consider most closely are the cultural constructions and the way ideas and actions fit into or support a social structure" (p. 289).

Proponents of the sociological perspective model claim that Baumrind is taking a much too narrow view by merely focusing on parenting style, without stepping back to look at the environment in which these behavior occur.

Although both of these models have validity, this research will be limited to a comparative study with the Baumrind model. The Nordic model is not commonly accepted in China, and its effectiveness has been called into question in the United States (Baumrind, 1999). The socioeconomic perspective is a better fit for the American portion of the comparative study, but it does not make sense for the Chinese half of the study. There is far less cultural and historical diversity in the Chinese population than there is in the United States. In fact, 97.9% of the population is Han Chinese, and their cultural experience has very little variation. Also, since the Communist government took power in 1949, economic differences have largely leveled out as well. This leveling is especially true among the population of university students, since they are almost exclusively from the common working class. The Baumrind model is the best choice for a comparative study, then, given the differences in the two populations being studied.

Baumrind Model

There is some disagreement among researchers about the best ways to quantify and study the practice of parenthood, but many studies have been based on Baumrind's theory of parenting styles. For example, parenting style has been studied in relationship to a child's social competence (Baumrind, 1991), academic achievement (Lamborn et al., 1991), self-reliance (Steinberg et al., 1991), psychological distress (Steinberg et al., 1991), adolescent drinking and delinquency (Barnes and Farrell, 1992), and peer group

selection (Brown et al., 1993). In all of these studies, authoritative parenting produced the most favorable results, while neglectful parenting produced the least favorable results. The other two parenting styles, authoritarian and indulgent, produced mixed results, some favorable and some unfavorable.

Slicker (1998) notes that there is a strong correlation between healthy patterns of behavior and adjustment in children and the degree to which parents stress “conventional” behavior. There is also a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and conventional behaviors (Jessor et al., 1991). Conventional behavior is defined as “that which gains social approval, is normatively expected and fostered in mature individuals, and is institutionalized as behavior appropriate for socially acceptable youth” (Slicker, 1998, p. 346). In American society, the two conventional behaviors that are most closely adhered to are an academic achievement orientation and a religious orientation. In fact, high academic achievement orientation and high religious orientation in parents is seen as a major indicator of non-problem behavior in children (Slicker, 1999).

The authoritative parenting style also integrates children into the decision making of the family, including long term planning (Gauvin & Heard, 1999). Children as young as three were asked for their opinions when a family decision needed to be made, and children felt free to express their views, even if they differed from their parents.

It is interesting to note that all of the studies mentioned so far were done in the United States. Even Baumrind’s original work was done entirely with Caucasian, middle class American families. So, while these studies are very useful and insightful, it is imperative to keep from applying their results outside of the realm they study. Since this

research is concerned with comparing parenting styles and behaviors in both the United States and China, a closer look needs to be taken at parenting in China.

Parenting in China

In a cross-cultural study, it is important to consider some of the historical aspects that have created a cultural framework. This is especially vital in this study, since the Chinese and American worldview are vastly disparate, specifically in regard to the family. Chinese views about the family are directly linked to the philosopher Confucius and his followers. Confucius lived around 500 BC, and developed a code of behavior that can still be seen in the China of the 20th Century. Confucius stressed the importance of filial piety; respect and worship of one's ancestors. Holzman (1998) writes, "Filial piety in China came to be seen as having absolute value and that the worship of one's parents can be compared to the worship of God in the West" (p. 185). The Chinese tend to be extremely practical and humanistic, so filial piety fit into their worldview. The Chinese had minimal contact with the major monotheistic religions of the time, Judaism and Islam, so the idea of individual's having a direct link to God was foreign to them. Instead, "their natural tendency was to reach out to what was nearest to them, their direct ancestors, and through them attain to the deity" (Holzman, 1998, p. 186). Respect and obedience toward parents, then, was more than a tool to maintain family harmony – it also had consequences in the afterlife.

Another prevalent idea in Chinese culture is harmony, or balance. In every area of life, the Chinese look for proper balance of two opposing forces: the yin and the yang. Confucius taught that the very nature of family created a strong emotional force.

Therefore, there needed to be some force of logic and rationality to bring the emotions of family into balance. This force was called *li* (roughly translated as propriety), and it contained respect, reverence for elders, obedience, and the dominance of the elder generations over the younger. Slote and DeVos (1999) state, "Given a natural abundance of love and affection [in the family], something has to act as a counter-balance. It is for this reason that respect and reverence are emphasized" (p. 150).

In modern China, the ideas of equality and personal liberty are becoming increasingly popular. However, the hierarchical social structure of the Confucian family still remains basically intact. It is necessary to recognize this mindset before delving into studies of the Chinese family.

In 1949, with the ascendancy of Chairman Mao Zedong, new Communist mindsets have affected all aspects of life in China, including parent-child relationships. The government, through the use of propaganda, encouraged Chinese children to transfer their filial piety towards Communist leadership, but this movement had little success (Shen, 1996). Because of revolutionary forces, for the first time in China's history, women and children could win the same rights enjoyed by men and fathers. However, the family, not the individual, was still the basic unit of society, so even though new opportunities were opening up for Chinese young people, the structure of the family remained largely unchanged (Shen, 1996).

Probably the most dramatic change in Chinese familial relationships under Communist rule occurred as a result of the "one child" family planning policy. Starting in 1979, with few exceptions, Chinese couples were only permitted to have one child. There have been many conflicting reports on how parents are relating to this new

generation of only children. Some sociologists report that parents are more likely to use permissive parenting styles, raising up a new generation of self-indulgent youngsters, or "little emperors," as they are commonly called. Other reports show that Chinese parents are still strongly adhering to the strict parenting style of years past, because all the aspirations for the future of the family now rest on one child's shoulders (Shen, 1996). Regardless of which theory is true, recent studies have shown that Chinese families view parent-child communication as the most important predictor of overall family competence (Shek, 1999).

Over the years, many studies have been done on Chinese families, specifically the ethnic Chinese who live in countries other than mainland China (i.e. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore). Since the open-door policy between the United States and China, researchers have been able to observe and study families within mainland China, thus promoting a greater understanding of a formerly closed nation.

In a 1999 study, Shek found the four traits that the Chinese parents in Hong Kong value the most are: obedience, high performance in academics, self-control and maturity. Since these traits are highly desired, the parenting behaviors that are exhibited are those that are perceived as achieving these ends. For example, Chinese parents chose spanking as the most common method of discipline, because spanking is perceived as producing obedience and self-control in the child's future behavior.

In another study by Shek (1998), Chinese adolescents were asked to identify the parenting styles of both their father and their mother. There is a popular Chinese saying, "Strict father, kind mother" and Shek's goal was to determine if this idiom was true. His findings showed that Chinese adolescents perceived their fathers as less responsive to

them, but they also perceive their mothers as more demanding. The majority of Chinese adolescents, 68%, put their mothers and fathers into different parenting style categories. This differs from a similar study in America where 76% of American children identified their mothers and fathers as having the same parenting style (Baumrind, 1991).

Gorman (1998) studied over 1,000 immigrant Chinese mothers who had been in the United States for less than two years to determine their approach to parenting. She determined that Chinese mothers are unlikely to give children verbal feedback regarding their expectations of the child's behavior. The mothers explained that this was because they did not want to "impose rules for fear of blocking communication with our children . . . or pushing them too hard" (p. 75). Gorman also found that Chinese mothers were flexible about most expectations (i.e. household chores, helping care for younger siblings), but these mother's were inflexible when it came to their children's academics. The immigrant mothers defined their main parenting function as helping their children achieve academic success, since in Chinese society, education is believed to be "the avenue of upward social mobility" (Gorman, 1998, p. 73).

Chang and Chang (1998) noted some important connections between parenting styles and the age of the child. In the Chinese educational system, children are tested many times throughout their school career, and only those who score in the top percentages are permitted to continue their education on an academic track (lower scorers are transferred to vocational training). Thus, academic performance and self-discipline in study habits are highly stressed by Chinese parents throughout the child's school life. As a result of this testing system, an interesting distinction is made between school

achievement and intelligence: Chinese parents care more about their child's test performance than their level of intelligence, or the amount of actual learning they retain.

Comparative Studies

Several comparative studies between the United States and China have been done that specifically deal with the area of family life. Chen and Lan (1998) looked at the differences in adolescents' perceptions of their parents' academic expectations. In both cultures, the children showed a high degree of willingness to fulfill their parents' academic expectations. Both groups also perceived their parents as having high academic expectations. The primary difference between the groups was in the children's own aspirations. American children were more likely to express that they had values and aspirations that were not always in accord with their parents' expectations. Lin and Fu (1990) found that another difference between the cultures was that Chinese parents are less likely to encourage independence than American parents.

Quoss and Zhou (1995) compared the parenting styles of the United States and China. Chinese children perceived their parents to be far more authoritarian than their American counterparts did, and the neglectful or *laissez-faire* style of parenting was virtually non-existent in a Chinese setting. American children more frequently identified their parents as authoritative.

Quoss and Zhou believe that it is "likely that Western measures and conceptual frameworks are not fully adequate to explain the Chinese views of parenting" (p. 275). They postulate that in order to accurately study the parenting practices of the Chinese, researchers must consider broader cultural issues, such as the different ways in which

Chinese parents socialize their children, the different perspectives of an individualist versus a collectivist culture, and the norms and goals of parents in Chinese society.

The difficulties in interpreting family behavior in a cross-cultural setting are not new. Waldman (1999) discussed the problems that are inherent in serving as an American social worker with clients from many different cultures. Behavior that is seen as negative, or even abusive, in Western culture (such as hitting or slapping) may be perceived as a positive and necessary parenting practice in another culture. Other problems can arise in the techniques used to solve family problems. In the American social sciences, counseling or therapy sessions are perceived as a healthy way to confront problems and “talk them out” with a trained professional. However, some cultures, specifically those of the Far East, do not value verbal communication, and are prone to see talking to a relative stranger about family problems as “losing face” and bringing disgrace on the family unit.

These concerns apply to cross-cultural research as well. As mentioned previously, Baumrind’s (1966) original parenting style research was done on Caucasian, middle class Americans. As a general rule, this subculture values verbal communication and a strong sense of autonomy. In fact, in Shek’s (1999) study of parental perceptions of the ideal child, American parents chose sense of humor, self-confidence, courage in convictions and independence in thinking as the traits they valued the most. It is not surprising, then, that the authoritative parenting style is seen as the most positive among Euro-Americans because it complements their worldview. On the other hand, Euro-Americans tend to feel negatively about authoritarian parenting because it assumes a

desire to subjugate the child, blocks communication, and indicates a need for parental control.

Other cultures and economic groups do not necessarily share these perceptions. Even in America, minority groups and lower income groups are more likely to use an authoritarian style of parenting. In a study by Julian et al. (1994), African-American families are more likely to exhibit authoritative parenting behaviors than Euro-Americans. However, African-Americans view this stricter approach as positive and necessary, because parents feel one of their primary duties is explicit racial socialization (i.e. giving children coping skills for survival in a racially hostile environment).

In a 1997 study, Hamer contrasted the characteristics of an ideal father from a Euro-American perspective with the characteristics of an ideal father from an African-American perspective. She found that African-American fathers were far more likely to describe the ideal father as one who followed the authoritative pattern: providing discipline and training boys to be men and girls to be ladies. Hamer (1997) concluded that these differences could be attributed to the disparity in historical perspectives between the black and white cultures. Because of slavery, being well-disciplined and able to take on adult tasks at an early age were vital to survival, and this continues to effect parenting practices in the African-American community today.

Other studies have concluded that parenting style is more a function of economic status than ethnicity. Reynolds and Gill (1994) discovered that middle-class parents, regardless of ethnicity, were able to provide more stable and consistent parenting than members of lower economic class. Koblinsky et al (1997) found that parenting behaviors were closely related to economic status. In this study, they determined an inverse

relationship between financial conditions and the likelihood that strict, authoritative parenting behaviors would be exhibited. Hashima and Amato (1994) reported, "Parents at low income levels were especially likely to report behaving in a punitive fashion toward their children" (p. 399).

Bauer et al (1996) completed a study consisting entirely of poverty level Euro-Americans living in the Appalachian region of the United States. They found, "Low income parents are at greater risk for using over-controlling power-assertive discipline, providing less support and exhibiting greater negative effect, responding to difficult children in an abusive manner, and attributing negative intent to children's behavior. Studies of Appalachian families reveal that the cultural variations in parenting are consistent with Baumrind's authoritarian parenting style" (p. 394).

A study done among the Mexican-American population found the strongest link between parenting style and the degree of acculturation into host or majority society (Dumka et al, 1997). Mexican-American parents with a high degree of acculturation were very likely to exhibit authoritative parenting practices, but the lower the degree of acculturation, the more likely the parents were to exhibit an authoritarian style.

Perceptions of the "authoritarian" style are different in Chinese culture, as well. The Chinese concept for parenting is chiao shun, which translates as training (Chao, 1994). Chiao shun has no connotation of a domineering parent or a subjugated child, but instead indicates that strict codes of behavior are a result of parental love, care and concern for their children's well-being and their children's successful adjustment into the adult world. Because the culture that Chinese children grow into is one that is still

heavily influenced by the Confucian mindset, an authoritarian style of parenting is the best way to nurture children into adults that will be productive members of their society.

Critique of Current Research

The current research has established the validity of the Baumrind model for studying parenting styles, and has shown a direct link between parenting styles and parenting behavior. Scholars have also looked at various cultural and economic factors in determining the effectiveness of parenting styles.

There has also been much research on individuals from an ethnic Chinese background, whether in mainland China, surrounding countries, or in the United States. These studies have identified some of the parenting practices and philosophies among the Chinese population.

However, the main limitation in the research so far lies in the fact that it has used the standards of the United States to measure parenting practices that occur in China. The studies have not judged Chinese culture on its own merits.

Description of the Study

My study measures college-aged children's perceptions of their parents' parenting style both in the United States and China. I also measured the perceived effectiveness of parenting behaviors. Measuring effectiveness insures that the results will not be applied out of their cultural context. This dimension is an improvement over the existing research, because no other study has included a way to determine what is considered "effective" parenting in each culture. The purpose of my research is to present a greater

understanding of family relationships in the United States and China in their proper cultural context.

Hypotheses

Because of the cultural differences in the United States and China, college-aged students' perceptions of parenting behaviors should be quite different. Therefore I propose:

H1: Chinese students will perceive their parents as exhibiting "authoritarian" parenting behaviors more than any other style.

H2: American students will perceive their parents as exhibiting "authoritative" parenting behaviors more than any other style.

Because authoritarian parenting makes sense in a Chinese cultural setting, and authoritative parenting makes sense in an American cultural setting, I further propose:

H3: Chinese and American students will both rate the dominant style in each culture as being the most effective.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

In this cross-cultural study, there are two target populations: college students in America and college students in China. I used a sample of students from an introductory speech class at Oklahoma State University. The Chinese students came from a major university in Beijing, China: Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. These students are enrolled in general education English classes.

I used a modified version of the Parental Behavior and Effectiveness Inventory (Schafer, 1965). The PBEI gives a brief description of a parenting behavior (i.e. praises me, wants to control whatever I do, gives me sympathy when I need it), and the respondents were asked how frequently each of their parents exhibited the behavior (never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, always). The final section asked the respondents to rate the effectiveness of the parenting behavior on a five point Likert scale (very ineffective, somewhat effective, neither effective or ineffective, somewhat effective and very effective). See Appendix A for a complete copy of the PBEI used in this survey. The PBEI was modified in order to avoid any culturally inappropriate items. For example, one item on the PBEI stated "Spends time with me doing household chores or yard work". Because it is extremely rare for a Chinese family to have a yard, the item was changed to "Shares activities with me".

Variables

For this research, the independent variables were American and Chinese culture. The dependent variables were the items on the Parental Behavior and Effectiveness Inventory, measured both for frequency and effectiveness. These measurements are determined by totaling the scores of a number of items that are representative of particular parental styles [never=1, rarely=2, etc.]. There are six items on the PBEI to measure each of the four parenting styles. By comparing the totals of each parenting style, researchers can discover which style was exhibited most frequently, and which behaviors are seen as the most effective [totally ineffective=1, somewhat ineffective=2, etc.]. This instrument has been used in past studies (Schaefer, 1965) as a means of identifying behaviors that occur in the home. Good internal consistency alphas have been reported (Fox, 1992) for each subscale: Authoritarian = .97, Authoritative = .91, Permissive = .86, and Neglectful = .82. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the US sample was .86, and the alpha coefficient for the Chinese sample was .79.

Other dependant variables that were measured are gender, race and ethnicity, family composition, and neighborhood. For the American half of the study, socioeconomic status was also be measured. Because the Chinese social structure is relatively flat, I will assume middle class status for the Chinese respondents.

Procedures

For the American half of my study, I gave the CRPBI to college students enrolled in an introductory speech class at Oklahoma State University during Spring, 2000. They

had class time to fill out the survey. I have chosen this group of students because they are a representative sample of students enrolled at OSU in terms of gender, major, and classification, and also because I have easy access to them.

For the Chinese half of my study, the CRPBI was given to college students enrolled in English classes at Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. They also used class time to fill out the surveys. I have chosen this group of students because they are representative of Chinese college students as a whole. Also, they have enough English training to be able to clearly understand the CRPBI without using a translation. Finally, I have chosen them because I have a working relationship with their professors, who have agreed to administer the survey.

One hundred and twenty-five students were surveyed in the US, and 124 were surveyed in China.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Two hundred and forty-nine college-aged students completed the Parental Behaviors and Effectiveness Inventory. One hundred and twenty-five of them were from the United States, and 124 of the students were from China.

Eighty-nine of the students were male (48 from the US, and 41 from China), 153 were female (76 from the US, and 77 from China), with 7 not reporting gender. In the category of race/ethnicity, the US sample reported as follows: 117 Caucasian/White, 2 African-American/Black, 3 Hispanic/Latino, 1 Asian and 2 Native American. In the Chinese sample, 123 reported race/ethnicity as Asian, with 1 not reporting.

In the US sample, 105 students reported being primarily raised by both biological parents, 10 raised by biological mother and stepfather, 3 raised by biological father and stepmother, 4 by biological mother only, 1 by biological father only and 2 by adoptive parents. In the Chinese sample, 100 students reported being primarily raised by both biological parents, 5 raised by biological mother and stepfather, 1 raised by biological father and stepmother, 7 by biological mother only, 6 by biological father only, 3 by other, and 2 not reporting.

In the category of neighborhood of origin, 24 of the US sample reported being raised in an urban environment, 59 in a suburban environment, 41 in a rural environment,

with 1 not reporting. Seventy-two students in the Chinese sample were raised in an urban environment, 28 were raised in a suburban environment, and 21 were raised in a rural environment, with 3 not reporting.

Chi squares were used to determine if the two samples had significant differences in their demographic characteristics. In the area of gender, the two samples were not significantly different [$\chi^2(1, n = 242) = .409, p > .05$]. There were significant differences in race/ethnicity [$\chi^2(4, n = 248) = 244.032, p < .0001$], and in neighborhood of origin [$\chi^2(2, n = 245) = 41.467, p < .0001$]. There were also no significant differences in family structure [$\chi^2(6, n = 247) = 12.144, p > .05$]. See Table 1 for Chi squares of the demographic statistics.

Descriptive statistics were tabulated for father and mother parenting behaviors and perceived parental effectiveness for fathers and mothers. All four of these categories were divided into Baumrind's four parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful. There was a range for each measure, and means and standard deviations for the US, China and combined samples are reported in Table 2.

United States Sample

In the US sample, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine the differences between mothers and fathers in terms of behavior and perceived effectiveness. The Wilks' Lambda, which gives a multivariate *F* value based on a comparison of the error variance/covariance matrix and the effect variance/covariance matrix, shows that there is a significant difference between the scores for fathers and mothers ($\Lambda = .885, df = 8,241, p < .0001$). Subsequent univariate *F*

tests show significant differences between US fathers and mothers for authoritative behavior ($F = 9.212$, $df = 1,124$, $p < .05$) and permissive behavior ($F = 7.238$, $df = 1,124$, $p < .05$). See Table 3 for the MANOVA for the US sample.

The data from the US sample partially supports the first hypothesis, which states that American college students would identify the authoritative style as the most commonly used. The mean score for the authoritative style for fathers is 23.0560 ($SD = .376$) and 24.6800 ($SD = .381$) for mothers. Both of these score represent the highest mean of all four scores. The mean for mother behavior authoritative is significantly higher than all other parenting styles, and the mean for father behavior authoritative is significantly higher than the permissive and neglectful styles.

China Sample

In the Chinese sample, another repeated measure MANOVA was done to find significant differences between fathers and mothers in behavior and perceived effectiveness. The MANOVA showed significant differences between mothers and fathers ($\Lambda = .877$, $df = 8, 239$, $p < .0001$). Univariate F tests found significant differences for authoritarian behavior ($F = 13.545$, $df = 1,123$, $p < .0001$), permissive behavior ($F = 10.782$, $df = 1,123$, $p < .0001$), neglectful behavior ($F = 14.356$, $df = 1,123$, $p < .0001$) and authoritative behavior ($F = 4.620$, $df = 1,123$, $p < .05$). See Table 4 for the MANOVA of the China sample.

The data for the China sample does not support the second hypothesis, which states that Chinese college students would identify the authoritarian parenting style as the most commonly exhibited. In fact, a comparison of the four styles shows that the

authoritarian style ($M = 15.3984$, $SD = .318$) had the lowest mean score for father behavior. The mean score for mother behavior shows that the authoritarian style ($M = 17.1048$, $SD = .341$) had a lower mean score than both authoritative and permissive. See Table 2 for the mean scores of each of the measures.

Comparative Analysis

A MANOVA was done to compare the US and China samples on PBEI measures. Wilks' Lambda identified significant differences between the two samples ($\Lambda = .530$, $df = 16,232$, $p < .0001$). Follow-up univariate F tests found significant differences between the two groups on each measure of parental behavior and effectiveness, with the exception of father behavior authoritarian. See Table 5 for the MANOVA of the comparative model.

Pearson's correlations between the US and China samples indicated that race/ethnicity (compared as Caucasian/White vs. Non-White) is a significant factor in every PBEI measure except father behavior authoritarian. Pearson's correlations also indicated that neighborhood of origin was a significant factor in mother behavior authoritarian [$r(243) = -.171$, $p < .05$], mother behavior neglectful [$r(241) = -.158$, $p < .05$], father effectiveness neglectful [$r(241) = -.258$, $p < .0001$] and mother effectiveness neglectful [$r(243) = -.212$, $p < .001$].

To determine if differences in PBEI scores were present once race/ethnicity and neighborhood of origin were controlled, analysis of covariance was used. Two separate MANCOVAs were conducted: the first covaried race/ethnicity with eleven dependant variables, and the second covaried race/ethnicity and neighborhood with the four

variables identified as significant factors. The results of the first MANCOVA were similar to the MANOVA done on all eleven variables (See Table 7). The second MANCOVA found no significant differences in the four variables identified in the Pearson's correlation once race/ethnicity and neighborhood were controlled ($\Lambda = .983$, $df = 4,239$, $p > .05$). See Table 7 for US-China correlations.

The final hypothesis states both the US and the China samples would identify the parenting style most commonly exhibited through parenting behaviors as the most effective. This hypothesis was partially supported by the data. In the US sample, the authoritative style had the highest mean for father and mother behavior, and for father and mother effectiveness. In the China sample, the authoritative style had the highest mean for father and mother effectiveness, and the highest mean for mother behavior. However, the Chinese students identified the permissive style as the most characteristic of father behavior. See Table 2 for the mean scores of each of the measures.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

United States Sample

In the sample taken from US college students, it was hypothesized that the authoritative parenting style would be chosen as the most common parental behavior and the most effective parenting style. The data supported this hypothesis. Since past research clearly identified the authoritative style as the style that is perceived the most positively in American culture, this result is not surprising.

One aspect of the US sample that is interesting to note is the fact that the students identified their fathers as using the permissive style more frequently than their mothers, and their mothers as using the authoritative style more frequently than their fathers. Both the authoritative and permissive styles are seen as child-centered, but they differ in parental involvement – authoritative is high parental involvement, and permissive is low parental involvement. Assuming that the mother is home with the child more often than the father, these results make sense. Societal conventions and traditional gender roles may put the mother in closer contact with the child, making them more likely to use an authoritative style.

China Sample

The second hypothesis stated the Chinese sample would select the authoritarian style as the most frequently utilized parenting style. This hypothesis was not supported by the data, since the authoritative, permissive and neglectful styles received higher mean scores for father behavior and the authoritative and permissive styles received higher mean scores for mother behavior.

There are several possible explanations for these results. First, as mentioned in the critique of past research, none of the earlier studies was conducted in mainland China. It could be that the national Chinese are intrinsically different in culture and family structure than the ethnic Chinese that were studied in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States.

Another factor that could play a role in the results from the study is the drastic change in Chinese society in recent years. All of the students in this sample were born after the death of Chairman Mao in 1976, and so they grew up under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese Prime Minister who opened China up to Western influence through trade and technology.

The Chinese students in this study identified the authoritative style of parenting as the most effective. This result is surprising, too, but can be accounted for by the previously mentioned factors of national origin and societal changes.

Another consideration is the fact that this sample was taken from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (BeiHang), which is considered a Key 15 university (the equivalent of Ivy League). Students have a greater opportunity to be exposed to Western culture at BeiHang, because the school hires American and British teachers, and gives students easy access to American television and movies. These

Western influences could account for their choice of the authoritative style as the most effective.

The Chinese sample had significant differences between fathers and mothers in terms of parenting behaviors. Chinese fathers scored higher than mothers in permissive and neglectful behaviors, while Chinese mothers scored higher than fathers in authoritarian and authoritative behaviors. Overall, mothers were more likely to exhibit high-involvement parenting styles, and fathers were more likely to exhibit low-involvement parenting styles. These results seem to indicate cultural roles and expectations for parenting in mainland China.

Permissive parenting behavior showed up more than expected in the Chinese sample. This result supports the “little emperor” theory – as a consequence of the one child policy, a nation of only children is growing up with more freedom in the family structure.

Comparative Discussion

The third hypothesis states that both the US and China samples would identify the parenting style most commonly exhibited through parenting behaviors as the most effective. While this hypothesis was supported by the data drawn from the US sample, it was only partially supported by the data from the Chinese sample. The results on Chinese mothers supported the hypothesis, but the results on Chinese fathers did not.

There was great diversity in the responses between the US and China. Of the sixteen dependant variables measured, there were significant differences in eleven of them. The one variable that was not significantly different was father behavior

authoritarian. Since the authoritarian style is the most traditional or “old school” style of parenting in both cultures, it seems that some fathers in both societies are holding on to traditional roles.

It is not surprising that there are so many differences in the results between the US and China, since the cultures and family structures are so different. However, some of the differences are worth noting. For example, the China sample chose the authoritarian parenting style as more effective for both parents than the US sample did. This could be a result of youthful idealism as to how a family should operate. Also, the China sample selected the neglectful parenting style more frequently than the US sample for both parental behavior and parental effectiveness. Because Chinese children start school much younger than American children, and because the government takes more of an active role in child rearing in China, it makes sense for the Chinese to opt for the neglectful style more often. Chinese parents could perceive the neglectful parenting style as surrendering some parental duties to an agency (the government) that is better able to turn their children into productive members of Chinese society.

Further Research

The results of this study have reinforced the differences between the United States and China in parenting style and parenting effectiveness. However, much could be done to further the current study.

One avenue that could be explored is to look at the role birth order plays in parenting style in both the US and China. An American student filling out the PBEI

mentioned to the researcher that he thought his younger brother would respond very differently to the survey than he did, because his parents became more and more permissive with each child. Also, the growing number of only children in China could provide insight into how parenting works in smaller families.

This research could also be expanded by asking whether the respondents' parents stayed at home, or worked outside of the home. It would be interesting, as well as instructive, to see if stay at home parents utilize different parenting strategies than working parents.

Finally, this research could be continued by doing cross-generational or longitudinal studies in both the US and China. By mapping when changes in parenting style occurred, it might be easier to identify what social forces are causing the changes.

Strengths and Limitations

The current research had some limitations in its scope. The US sample was primarily taken from Caucasian students, so it is not representative of US college students as a whole. Also, both samples were taken from single universities. A more complete study would encompass university students from all over the United States and China, instead of being limited to one geographic region in each country. Because of these limitations, caution should be used in generalizing the results.

The research does have several strengths. One of the primary strengths of the study is that it used a sample of national Chinese students, as opposed to ethnic Chinese who do not reside in mainland China.

Another strength of the study is that it measures perceived parental effectiveness in China in addition to parenting behaviors. This added dimension allows for a more complete picture of Chinese cultural perspectives of parenting.

Finally, the study does give insight into the differences between US and Chinese parenting practices, and specifically indicates some changes in family life in China. These results can lead to a greater understanding of Chinese culture and improve cross-cultural communication between the United States and China.

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APPENDIX A

Parental Behavior & Effectiveness Inventory

***Do NOT put your name or any ID number on the answer sheet!

Please rank the following behaviors based on how frequently your parents exhibited these behaviors.

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always

My father displayed this behavior:

1. Allows me to go out as often as I please
2. Acts as though I am in the way
3. Lets me go any place I please without asking
4. Speaks to me in a warm and friendly voice
5. Makes sure I hear about it if I break a rule
6. Seems glad to get away from me for a while
7. Keeps the home in order by having a lot of rules and regulations for me
8. Lets me get away without doing work he's told me to do
9. Praises me
10. Forgets to get me the things I need
11. Gives me sympathy when I need it
12. Tells me exactly how to do my work
13. Wants to control everything I do
14. Listens to my ideas and opinions
15. Excuses my bad conduct
16. Allows me to pick my own friends
17. Cares about how I am dressed
18. Talks to me a lot
19. Keeps reminding me of things I am not allowed to do
20. Lets me decide how to do things we're working on
21. Makes me feel better after talking over my worries with him
22. Is always trying to change me
23. Shares activities with me
24. Gives me the choice of what to do whenever possible

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always

My mother displayed this behavior:

25. Allows me to go out as often as I please
26. Acts as though I am in the way
27. Lets me go any place I please without asking
28. Speaks to me in a warm and friendly voice
29. Makes sure I hear about it if I break a rule
30. Seems glad to get away from me for a while
31. Keeps the home in order by having a lot of rules and regulations for me
32. Lets me get away without doing work she's told me to do
33. Praises me
34. Forgets to get me the things I need
35. Gives me sympathy when I need it
36. Tells me exactly how to do my work
37. Wants to control everything I do
38. Listens to my ideas and opinions
39. Excuses my bad conduct
40. Allows me to pick my own friends
41. Cares how I am dressed
42. Talks to me a lot
43. Keeps reminding me of things I am not allowed to do
44. Lets me decide how to do things we're working on
45. Makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her
46. Is always trying to change me
47. Shares activities with me
48. Gives me the choice of what to do whenever possible

Please rank the following parenting behaviors based on how effective you believe they are in child-rearing (i.e something that a "good parent" would do). Each response will require an answer for both mothers & fathers

A	B	C	D	E
Totally ineffective	Somewhat ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Somewhat effective	Totally effective

Allows me to go out as often as I please

49. Father

50. Mother

Acts as though I am in the way

51. Father

52. Mother

Lets me go any place I please without asking
53. Father
54. Mother
Speaks to me in a warm and friendly voice
55. Father
56. Mother
Makes sure I hear about it if I break a rule
57. Father
58. Mother
Seems glad to get away from me for a while
59. Father
60. Mother
Keeps the home in order by having a lot of rules and regulations for me
61. Father
62. Mother
Lets me get away without doing work s/he's told me to do
63. Father
64. Mother
Praises me
65. Father
66. Mother
Forgets to get me the things I need
67. Father
68. Mother
Gives me sympathy when I need it
69. Father
70. Mother
Tells me exactly how to do my work
71. Father
72. Mother
Wants to control everything I do
73. Father
74. Mother
Listens to my ideas and opinions
75. Father
76. Mother
Excuses my bad conduct
77. Father
78. Mother
Allows me to pick my own friends
79. Father
80. Mother
Seems to care how I am dressed
81. Father
82. Mother
Talks to me a lot

83. Father
 84. Mother
 Keeps reminding me of things I am not allowed to do
 85. Father
 86. Mother
 Lets me decided how to do things we're working on
 87. Father
 88. Mother
 Makes me feel better after talking over my worries with him/her
 89. Father
 90. Mother
 Is always trying to change me
 91. Father
 92. Mother
 Shares activities with me
 93. Father
 94. Mother
 Gives me the choice of what to do whenever possible
 95. Father
 96. Mother

Please provide the following demographic information:

97. Gender A. Male B. Female

98.. Race/Ethnicity A. White/Caucasian
 B. Black/African-American
 C. Hispanic/Latino
 D. Asian/Pacific Islander
 E. Native American

99. Were you primarily raised by:
 A. Both biological parents
 B. Biological mother/stepfather
 C. Biological father/stepmother
 D. Biological mother only
 E. Biological father only
 AB. Adoptive parents
 AC. Other

100. What type of neighborhood were you primarily raised in:
 A. Urban B. Suburban C. Rural

On the answer sheet, please mark the level of education each of your parents has completed. At the top of side two, please write out each of your parents occupation.

101. FATHER
 Occupation _____
 Level of education completed: _____

- A. Some high school
- B. High school graduate
- C. Some college
- D. College graduate
- E. Post-graduate work

102.. MOTHER

Occupation _____

Level of education completed:

- A. Some high school
- B. High school graduate
- C. Some college
- D. College graduate
- E. Post-graduate work

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 4/28/01

Date: Thursday, June 01, 2000

IRB Application No: AS00127

Proposal Title: COLLEGE-AGED CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTING BEHAVIORS AND
PARENTAL EFFECTIVENESS

Principal
Investigator(s):

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Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature:


Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Thursday, June 01, 2000
Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

TABLE 1
CHI SQUARES OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

	United States	China	Total
Male	48	41	89
Female	76	77	153
Total	124	118	242

$$\chi^2(1, n = 242) = .409, p > .05$$

	United States	China	Total
Caucasian/White	117		117
African-American/Black	2		2
Hispanic/Latino	3		3
Asian	1	123	124
Native American	2		2
Total	125	123	248

$$\chi^2(4, n = 248) = 244.032, p < .0001$$

	United States	China	Total
Both Biological parents	105	100	205
Biological mother/Stepfather	10	5	15
Biological father/Stepmother	3	1	4
Biological mother only	4	7	11
Biological father only	1	6	7
Adoptive parents	2		2
Other		3	3
Total	125	122	247

$$\chi^2(6, n = 247) = 12.144, p > .05$$

	United States	China	Total
Urban	24	72	96
Suburban	59	28	87
Rural	41	21	62
Total	124	121	245

$$\chi^2 (2, n = 245) = 41.467, p < .0001$$

TABLE 2
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR PBEI SCORES

	United States	China	Combined
FBAR	15.1680 (.316)	15.3984 (.318)	15.2823 (.224)
FBAV	23.0560 (.375)	20.7642 (.379)	21.9194 (.276)
FBPM	22.2720 (.280)	21.4146 (.322)	21.8468 (.215)
FBNG	12.7760 (.274)	16.1066 (.256)	14.4211 (.215)
MBAR	15.1760 (.416)	17.1048 (.341)	16.1365 (.276)
MBAV	24.6800 (.381)	21.9032 (.361)	23.2972 (.276)
MBPM	21.1200 (.324)	19.9262 (.328)	20.5304 (.233)
MBNG	12.3840 (.304)	14.6721 (.272)	13.5142 (.217)
FEAR	15.9920 (.343)	17.6911 (.386)	16.8347 (.263)
FEAV	27.3548 (.323)	25.0083 (.380)	26.2008 (.259)
FEPM	19.8235 (.327)	21.9344 (.340)	20.8921 (.245)
FENG	12.3952 (.389)	16.8862 (.283)	14.6316 (.280)
MEAR	15.7440 (.335)	18.0650 (.367)	16.8952 (.259)
MEAV	27.5484 (.333)	25.5750 (.329)	26.5779 (.242)
MEPM	20.0661 (.330)	21.7273 (.316)	20.8967 (.234)
MENG	12.5360 (.397)	16.2419 (.291)	14.3815 (.273)

TABLE 3

MANOVA FOR UNITED STATES SAMPLE

Father & Mother Comparison			
Effect	Value	df	F
Wilks' Lambda	.885	8, 241	.885***
Univariate Tests			
PBEI Measure		df	F
Behavior Authoritarian		1,124	.000
Behavior Authoritative		1,124	9.212*
Behavior Permissive		1,124	7.238*
Behavior Neglectful		1,124	.917
Effectiveness Authoritarian		1,124	.267
Effectiveness Authoritative		1,124	.189
Effectiveness Permissive		1,124	.271
Effectiveness Neglectful		1,124	.068

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

TABLE 4

MANOVA FOR CHINA SAMPLE

Father & Mother Comparison			
Effect	Value	df	F
Wilks' Lambda	.877	8, 239	4.184***
Univariate Tests			
PBEI Measure		df	F
Behavior Authoritarian		1,123	13.545***
Behavior Authoritative		1,123	4.620*
Behavior Permissive		1,123	10.782**
Behavior Neglectful		1,123	14.356***
Effectiveness Authoritarian		1,123	.494
Effectiveness Authoritative		1,123	1.581
Effectiveness Permissive		1,123	.697
Effectiveness Neglectful		1,123	2.544

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

TABLE 5

MANOVA FOR COMPARATIVE SAMPLE

US & China Comparison

Effect	Value	df	F
Wilks' Lambda	.530	16, 232	12.848***

Univariate Tests

PBEI Measure	df	F
Father Behavior Authoritarian	1, 248	.259
Father Behavior Authoritative	1, 248	18.275***
Father Behavior Permissive	1, 248	4.028*
Father Behavior Neglectful	1, 248	78.650***
Father Effectiveness Authoritarian	1, 248	10.983**
Father Effectiveness Authoritative	1, 248	23.672***
Father Effectiveness Permissive	1, 248	20.725***
Father Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 248	88.607***
Mother Behavior Authoritarian	1, 248	12.815***
Mother Behavior Authoritative	1, 248	27.987***
Mother Behavior Permissive	1, 248	6.801**
Mother Behavior Neglectful	1, 248	14.356***
Mother Effectiveness Authoritarian	1, 248	22.024***
Mother Effectiveness Authoritative	1, 248	18.298***
Mother Effectiveness Permissive	1, 248	14.161***
Mother Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 248	56.616***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

TABLE 6

MANCOVA FOR COMPARATIVE SAMPLE

Race/Ethnicity as a Covariate			
Effect	Value	df	F
Wilks' Lambda	.533	16, 231	12.646***
Univariate Tests			
PBEI Measure		df	F
Father Behavior Authoritarian		1, 246	.483
Father Behavior Authoritative		1, 246	20.171***
Father Behavior Permissive		1, 246	7.142**
Father Behavior Neglectful		1, 246	69.997***
Father Effectiveness Authoritarian		1, 246	8.504**
Father Effectiveness Authoritative		1, 246	19.620***
Father Effectiveness Permissive		1, 246	18.422***
Mother Behavior Authoritative		1, 246	37.319***
Mother Behavior Permissive		1, 246	12.187**
Mother Effectiveness Authoritarian		1, 246	17.914***
Mother Effectiveness Authoritative		1, 246	16.137***
Mother Effectiveness Permissive		1, 246	14.193***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

TABLE 7

MANCOVA FOR COMPARATIVE SAMPLE

Race/Ethnicity and Neighborhood of Origin as Covariates

Effect	Value	df	F
Wilks' Lambda	.983	4, 239	1.063

Univariate Test Covaried for Race/Ethnicity

PBEI Measure	df	F
Mother Behavior Authoritarian	1, 242	9.690**
Mother Behavior Neglectful	1, 242	23.519***
Father Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 242	56.190***
Mother Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 242	34.963***

Univariate Test Covaried for Race/Ethnicity and Neighborhood of Origin

PBEI Measure	df	F
Mother Behavior Authoritarian	1, 242	.156
Mother Behavior Neglectful	1, 242	.475
Father Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 242	.136
Mother Effectiveness Neglectful	1, 242	.236

** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

VITA

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Master of Arts

Thesis: COLLEGE-AGED CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL
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