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## **Socialization and Parenting in Chinese Cultural Context**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper describes the parenting characteristics and behaviour among Chinese families. Specifically it explores some alternative parenting concepts which may be culturally more accurate in describing the non-western parenting behaviour among Chinese parents and children. It outlines key research literature on Chinese parenting in relations to 1) parenting goals and beliefs among Chinese parents and, 2) the notion of Guan and 'training' as a parenting dimension in Chinese families. This paper concludes that a further exploration on non-western parenting is warranted for future family research and thus its findings are deemed to be resourceful for multicultural societies.*

### **ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini menghuraikan karakter dan tingkahlaku keibubapaan keluarga Cina. Secara khususnya artikel ini meneroka beberapa konsep keibubapaan dalam menggambarkan tingkahlaku bukan kebaratan di kalangan ibubapa dan kanak-kanak Cina. Artikel ini mengemukakan penyelidikan literatur tentang keibubapaan Cina dari segi hubungan 1) matlamat dan kepercayaan keibubapaan di kalangan ibubapa Cina, dan 2) fahaman Guan dan latihan sebagai dimensi keibubapaan di dalam keluarga Cina. Artikel ini merumuskan penerokaan selanjutnya mengenai keibubapaan bukan kebaratan perlu dijalankan dalam penyelidikan keluarga pada masa depan dan dari itu penemuannya adalah dianggap boleh dijadikan sumber kepada masyarakat pelbagai budaya.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parenting is often acquired through a social and cultural belief system (Lerner, Castellino, Terry, Villarruel, & Mckinney, 2002), which means that how parents treat or socialize their children is deliberately learned and shaped by their cultural context. In essence, parenting practice is linked to the values, beliefs, motives and skills which are deemed as culturally appropriate and acceptable within the society and, the larger ecological context. Therefore, it is imperative for

Distinctive culture heritage is often manifested through parental ideas concerning the needs of children, socialization goals, relationships within the family and the obligations of parents (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). In fact, these distinctions are more apparent in parent's behaviour and approaches in child-rearing such as parental emphasis, the purpose and method of child socialization. Comparative studies on Chinese and Western parenting have revealed distinctive differences in their parenting behaviour (Chao, 1994, 2001; Stewart et al., 1998). For example, Chao (1994; 1995; 2000; 2001) who has conducted a series of studies using Chinese-American and White-American samples found that the parents of Chinese and White-American background exhibited different parenting behaviour. Generally, the Chinese parents focus on a relationship-oriented parenting approach; they emphasize harmonious relationships with other individuals, and the child is trained to recognize a parent's wishes as a form of obligation. On the other hand, White-American parents have a more developmental-oriented parenting approach, which place emphasis on the child's psychological development (Chao, 1994; Greenfield, 1994). White-American parents when compared to Asian parents stress on creating an environment which enriches the child's learning, exploration and creativity rather than exerting control over the child's environment. In addition, White-American parents value individualism and thus aim to promote the child's confidence, assertiveness and self-actualization. This further distinguishes them from Chinese parents who believe in harmonious interrelatedness between the child and other individuals, especially those who are family members.

Looking at the socialization goals among parents, LeVine (1988) has identified a list of 'universal parental goals vis-a-vis children' which motivates and guides the parent's behaviour towards the child development outcome. Previous studies have found that even though, the Chinese and White-American parents share similar universal parenting goals, they tend to have different methods of attainment and serve different purpose in parent-child relationship (Chao, 1995). For instance, both parents stress that the child's emotional needs (i.e. provision of love) is the most prominent goal in socialization. However, the Chinese parents believe that loving the child requires high investment, sacrifice and devotion to the child. This includes high involvement in the child's life, the provision of good education and constant monitoring of the child's behaviour. White-American parents, however, believe in the importance of providing the child with love, consistency and secure environment for their development. Based on Chao's study (1995), for the White-American parents, loving the child is demonstrated in different way such as making the child feel loved, being there for him/her and letting the child knows that he/she is important in parent's lives.' In addition, the White-American mothers emphasized on providing consistency in the child's life in term of parental care, discipline and

researchers to seriously take into consideration the cultural context of specific parenting behaviours. With the growing cultural diversity in world population, an understanding of different cultural norms has therefore become increasingly important.

Evidence from the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities in Britain has showed that ethnic minority groups have different norms, practices and values which guide their family life when compared to the majority White British population (Modood, Beishon, & Virdee, 1994). Specifically, there are differences in various family aspects such as the forms of relationships, family networking, parenthood/motherhood and homemaking. In addition, it is notable that there are distinct differences in relations to people's attitudes, the way of life and the way of behaviour in the family of those with Asian backgrounds. This may imply that although many British born Asians have acculturated to the dominant Western culture, as LeVine (1988) notes, traditional values and practice in family socialization often persist within a family. Furthermore, parents in Chinese families often attempt to preserve traditional and strong values within the family (Wu, 1996). Thus, it is important to identify the distinctive cultural and family values among Chinese families and also to examine the contrasting concepts which tend to be indigenous for Chinese family socialization and parenting, which may be different from the Western society. Furthermore, this notion is strongly supported by previous studies which examine the parenting in a specific cultural context and acknowledge the importance of recognizing the cultural meaning of certain parenting dimension (Chao, 1994; Stewart & Bond, 2002a; Super & Harkness, 1986).

In general, the literature on family research has concentrated on Western cultural practices. Family socialization and child development among non-Western families, specifically the Chinese, are relatively less explored. However, family scholars studying Chinese family socialization has showed that Chinese families have several characteristics that distinguished them from Western culture (Chao, 1994; Chao & Tzeng, 2002; Gorman, 1998; Ho, 1989). Thus, the question is "What are the values and goals which guide parenting among Chinese parents and to what extent are they different from those in the mainstream literature?" This paper highlights some available literature on Chinese family socialization. Specifically, the objectives of the paper are to explore: 1) Parental beliefs and goals in the parenting of Chinese parents and 2) the Notion of '*Guan*' and 'Training' as a parenting dimension. The paper begins with a discussion of parental goals and beliefs among Chinese parents. In the following part, the paper presents an explanation of the notion of '*Guan*' and follows by a discussion of the concept of 'training' as a specific dimension of parenting among Chinese families. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the issues related to Chinese parenting and suggesting areas for future research direction.

#### **PARENTAL GOALS AND BELIEFS AMONG CHINESE FAMILIES**

In particular, Wu and colleagues (2002) have conducted a comparative study to examine the Chinese culturally-derived parenting constructs (modesty, directiveness, protection, shaming/love withdrawal, maternal involvement) in conjunction to the Western literature-derived parenting stylistics (authoritative and authoritative). It has been concluded that even though all these concepts are applicable for parents in both Chinese and White samples nonetheless, significant cultural differences existed between the two cultural groups. In addition, there are certain parenting behaviour which receives more emphasis because of differing cultural norms and the goals toward which children are socialized. For instance, Chinese parents were found to focus more on modesty and cooperation among young children, exhibit more directiveness and protective parenting behaviour compared to White parents. These findings are coherent with several other studies which concluded that parental behaviour towards the child does not necessarily 'mean' the same thing across different cultural groups' (Chao, 1994; Chiu, 1987; Gorman, 1998; Jose et al., 2000; Supple, Peterson, & Bush, 2004). For example, Jose and colleagues (2000) reveal that even though Chinese parents are more controlling over their children, they are also equally as warm to their children when compared to White-American parents. The literature also shows that Asian parents have different connotations for parental control over child's behaviour (Chao, 1994; Fowler, 2002; Gorman, 1998; Supple et al., 2004; Wu, 1996). Rohner and Pettengill (1985), for example, found that Asian adolescents who experienced higher level of parental control also perceived higher level of parental acceptance and lower level of parental negligence. Thus, as argued by Wu (1996), the parental control among Chinese families has very positive connotation for a child's behaviour and is not merely a punitive and domineering feature as often described in 'authoritarian' parenting.

In general, comparative studies on parenting behaviour among Chinese and Western parents demonstrate significant differences on parental emphasis, purposes and method of parenting. It has been shown that Chinese parents are motivated towards relational goals which focus on a harmonious relationship with other individuals (i.e. especially parents) while Western parents are motivated towards individual goals which emphasize self-development (Chao, 1995; Chao & Tzeng, 2002, Bornstein et al., 1990). As for parenting approach, Chinese parents are more 'directive' towards a child's behaviour, while Western parents are more 'facilitative' when it comes to parenting (Chao, 1996a). In addition, Chinese and Western parents tend to have different ideas for parental behaviour, especially with regards to parental control and warmth. Thus, it can be concluded that Chinese and Western parenting are shaped by different cultural emphases; this has considerably influenced the underlying motivations of child socialization and parenting.

#### **NOTION OF 'GUAN' IN CHINESE FAMILIES**

expectations on child behaviour.

Following from that, the parental behaviour of Chinese and White-American parents tends to support different purposes; the Chinese parents aimed at fostering a close parent-child relationship, while the ultimate purpose of White-American parents is building the child's self-esteem. As for skill-building for the child's success, the Chinese parent feels that good education is the essential key to success and often education achievement is the measurement of success. However, the White-American parents believe in the importance of self-esteem as the 'foundation' to a child's success and place more emphasis on social skills more than on academic performance (Chao, 1994, 1996a).

The parental role is another important determining aspect of parenting; how a parent perceived its role and responsibility in child development has considerable influence on how the parent treat their child. Chao (1994; 1995) indicates that Chinese and White-American parents have distinct perspectives regarding their role as parents. In general, Asian parents assume the role of 'protector' and 'caretaker' who are responsible for the child's needs, ensuring a safe environment and fostering child's dependency on adults for their needs (Gorman, 1998). This behaviour reflects the Chinese cultural beliefs that young children are 'incapable of understanding and making decision that are in their best interest' (Ho & Kang, 1984). Thus, parents are obliged to provide direction and guidance for the child's conduct.

In addition, previous studies also reveal that Chinese parents tend to practice a more 'directive' approach in parenting (Chao, 1995; Jose, Huntsinger, & Liaw, 2000), especially with regards to the regulation of child's behaviour and academic performance (Wu et al., 2002). This directive approach reflects the value placed by Chinese parents on obedience, and they tend to parent with a code of conduct for regulating a child's behaviour and are more directive in parent-child interaction. As for the parental role among Western families, Western parents tend to assume the 'facilitative' role in parenting, which includes providing a stimulating environment and, helping the child to experience their feelings and articulate their needs to others (Chao, 1994). The Western parents also tend to view the child as an individual, thus they promote a child's independence and separateness from the parents, both in action and thoughts. In particular, the Western parenting behaviour aim to promote more child autonomy and to help the child to pursue their own ideas by providing an environment conducive for child development and confidence building (Chao, 1994, 2000).

The investigation of culture meaning for parenting across Chinese and Western families is also extended in several other studies which have supported the notion that Chinese and Western families have distinctive cultural norms and emphases in parenting their children (Lin & Fu, 1990; Wu et al., 2002).

a manifestation of protectiveness and physical caring (Ho, 1986). In addition, parents' continuous monitoring and guidance also serves to restrict exposure to undesirable behaviour and prevent potential misbehaviour from becoming serious (Chao, 2000; Tobin et al., 1987). In Jose and colleagues' (2000) study, the parenting approach among Asian parents is perceived as an integration of firm-control and high levels of parental warmth. In addition, the overlapping nature of parental control and warmth among the Asian sample is also supported by findings in numerous studies (Jose et al., 2000; Rohner & Kim, 2002; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985; Stewart et al., 1999; 1998). In addition, research has showed that Chinese parents tend to channel their care and concern through different parenting dimensions (i.e. parental control and monitoring) (Chao, 1994; Nomura, Noguichi, Saito, & Tezuka, 1995; Stewart et al., 1998) rather than openly expressing their affection (i.e. praising, hugging, kissing and physical demonstrativeness) (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Lin & Fu, 1990). In addition to that, parental control among Chinese parents has a functional aspect; it is aimed for the order-maintenance and coordination of children in family, rather than at restrictive control or interfering with the children's behaviour (Lau & Cheung, 1987). For example, even though the 'training' dimension encompasses a set of conducts, the motivation behind this concept is not to dominate the child but rather to assure 'familial goals of harmonious relationships with others and the integrity of the family unit' (Chao, 1995; Lau & Cheung, 1987). Thus, the training implies a functional aspect of parental control and contributes to healthy family interactions (Cheung & Lau, 1985; Forman & Forman, 1981).

Following from the elucidation of the notion of 'Guan', research on Chinese family has utilized 'training' as an alternative dimension to assess Chinese parenting (Chao, 1994; Wu, 1996). This 'training' dimension in parenting, as suggested by Stewart and colleagues (2002a; 2002b), may represent the authoritative parenting in a Chinese context. These arguments are not only supported by the distinctive characteristics of parental training (Chao, 1994; 1996a; 2000; Lau & Cheung, 1987) but also by empirical findings (Chao, 1994; Lau & Cheung, 1987; Stewart et al., 1999; 1998). In reviewing the differences between the concept of 'training' and the Baumrind's typology of parenting, Chao (2000) has noted the distinct conceptualizations of the two main constructs, namely the 'control' and 'warmth', which characterized 'training', authoritative and authoritarian parenting. As asserted by Chao (1994), parental control in the 'training' dimension involves parent's close monitoring and provision of guidance which is intended to prevent any undesirable behaviour of the child from worsening. However, Baumrind's (1971) definition of parental control involves restrictiveness or domination of the child which aims for child's compliance. As for the warmth dimension, the previous section has shown that the demonstration of love/concern in Chinese culture is more subtle and lacks expressiveness compared to Western culture; and more importantly the affection

Numerous studies have supported the culturally based argument that the parenting concepts found in the Western literature may not accurately reflect the underlying parenting ideologies of Chinese parents (Chao & Tzeng, 2002; Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Rohner & Kim, 2002; 1999; Stewart et al., 1998; Trommsdorff & Iwawaki, 1989). Thus, this highlights the question on the universality of the existing parenting concepts for other ethnic groups. In response to this, Chao (1994) proposes the notion of *Guan* for describing Asian parenting in its cultural specificity. The notion of *Guan* can be translated literally as 'training' and in Chinese it also means 'to care for', 'to govern' and 'to involve'. It is notable that *guan*/training is often used synonymously with child-rearing among Chinese families. For example, the notion of *Guan* in Chinese socio-cultural context contains the idea of educating the child in an expected mode of behaviour (Ho & Kang, 1984) as soon as the child begins to understand (Wu, 1996). It is noted that parents are the first teachers of the child and, thus they have the primary responsibility to train the young child (Beishon, Modood, & Virdee, 1998; Luo, 1987). Furthermore, the control and governance of the child's behaviour are regarded as being the obligation of 'good' and 'responsible' parents' (Ho, 1986; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1987).

It is found that the 'training' of Chinese children tends to start at early age through parental guidance (Ho, 1986; Wu, 1996). In the Chinese cultural context, it is believed that a 'young child is like a white piece of paper' and he/she is deemed to be naturally good (Chao & Tzeng, 2002). Thus, it is the parent's role to start the child off in the 'correct' direction and to foster the child's development when the child is still young (Chen, 1996). It is assumed that when a child is trained to recognize the adult's commands and to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at a young age, then corporal punishment will not be necessary when the child grows older (Ho, 1996). In addition to parental guidance, child training practices may include exposing the child to explicit examples of proper behaviour, where young children are expected to participate in the family, social and ceremonial functions in order to be exposed and learn the culturally acceptable behaviour (Hsu, 1981).

In addition, 'training' parenting behaviour also incorporates close parental involvement and continuous monitoring of the child's behaviour (Chao, 1994). This is a distinguishing feature of training/*Guan* for describing Chinese parenting, which incorporates the immense involvement of parental care and concern for children, in addition to parental control and directiveness (Chao, 1994; Jose et al., 2000; Stewart et al., 1998). For example, Gorman (1998) found that Chinese parents placed emphasis on constant guidance and governance of child's conduct which were grounded in genuine care and concern for their children's future. In addition, Chinese mothers tend to keep the child physically close and to constantly observe the child's whereabouts as

In addition, a series of studies has examined the contrasting effects of parental 'training' in different cultural group (mostly between Chinese and White-Americans) in order to test its validity and coherence in Western culture (Chao, 1994, 1995; Stewart et al., 2000; Stewart et al., 2002b). Findings on Chinese and White-American samples show significant differences in their perception of parental 'training' which in turn relate to different effects on child development. Specifically, Chao (1994) has found that even after accounting for parental control, authoritative parenting and educational level, Chinese parents still have a significantly higher score on parental 'training' measure when compared to White-American parents. As a result of cultural variation, both the Chinese and White-American parents may have different definitions for the concept of 'training'. White-American parents tend to relate training with a more regimented connotation, while Chinese parents relate 'training' with the idea of 'love, caring and governing' (Chao, 1994). In addition, other studies reveal that parental 'training' is significantly correlated with adolescent's adjustment for Chinese sample but weakly correlated in Western sample (Stewart et al., 2002b; Stewart et al., 1998). This may be explained by the fact that 'parental training' evolves from a socio-cultural tradition that is shaped by Chinese child-rearing ideologies which may not necessarily be shared by parents from a Western cultural background. This further supports the notion that 'training' as the alternative parenting dimension is deemed to be culturally sensitive and aimed at measuring the distinctiveness in Chinese parenting ideologies. Therefore, the literature indicates that the 'training' parenting dimension offers an 'indigenous' concept which is more suitable for assessing parenting among Chinese parents.

In summary, these findings imply that parenting in Chinese cultural context tends to be qualitatively different from those described in Western culture; its culturally-specific features appear to be more relevant to the notion of *Guan*. Generally, Chinese parents who have distinctive social, cultural and historical perspectives express different conception of family socialization, especially in relation to the purpose and method of parenting. Thus, it appears that the notion of *Guan* reflects the Chinese parenting principles where constant supervision of the child, directiveness and order for maintaining control in the family is equated to parental care and concern for the child (Chao, 1994; Wu et al., 2002). In other words, the more indigenous notion of *Guan* has provided a more accurate description of Chinese parenting and provides plausible elaboration on the relationships between parenting behaviour and child development in Chinese families.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the available literature, it can be concluded that encouraging progress



of Chinese parents is demonstrated through means which are different to those characterized in Western literature (Chao, 1994; Ho, 1986; 1996; Wu & Tseng, 1985). For example, in the 'training' dimension, parental warmth is reflected in items more relevant to Chinese parenting practice such as involvement in child's education, constant monitoring of child's behaviour and emphasis on hard work and self-discipline (Chao, 1994; Chao & Sue, 1996a). While in the classification of authoritative and authoritarian parenting, Baumrind (1967) and Rohner (1985) defined parental warmth based on the emotional and physical demonstrativeness of affection. It is assumed that parents who display a lack of warmth tend to express hostility and aggression and, neglect the needs of the child. In this sense, Chao (1994) argues that demonstration of affection using emotional and physical expressiveness as described in Western literature may not capture the features of parental warmth among Chinese parents. This implies that there are qualitative distinctions between how parental control and warmth are defined in these parenting concepts. Thus, the distinctive cultural meanings for parental control and warmth have shed lights on the existent of differing cultural norms and emphases on parenting and child development for Chinese and Western parents.

As for the implication on child development, it has been suggested that the concept of 'training' is more relevant not only to the understanding of parenting but also child adjustments among Chinese families (Stewart et al., 2002b). In addition, studies also show that Chinese children perceive their parents' control as being very positive and necessary, which lead to positive childrens' psychological adjustment (Lau & Cheung, 1987; Ong, 2000; Trommsdorff & Iwawaki, 1989). For instance, Trommdroff (1989) noted that Asian adolescents may feel 'rejected' by their parents if they experience a lack of control and greater autonomy from their parents. ' In particular, previous studies reveal that the concept of 'training' is predictive of positive psychological development among Asian children (Stewart, Bond, Abdullah, & Ma, 2000; Stewart et al., 1999; 1998). For instance, Stewart and colleagues (1998) found that Chinese adolescents who experienced a higher level of parental 'training' tend to be well-adjusted in several aspects of psychosocial development such as perceived health and life satisfaction. These positive implications on child development may be explained by the positive relationship between the concept of 'training' and parental warmth'(Chao, 2000; Stewart & Bond, 2002a; 2002b; 1999; 1998). Previous study has documented that the 'training' characteristics in parenting are significantly related to parental warmth for both Chinese fathers and mothers but that, no significant relationship was found between the concept of 'training' and 'restrictive control'(Stewart et al., 1998). In other words, the 'training' dimension of parenting is perceived positively by Chinese parents and their children; it tends to reflect the warmth and affection a parent has towards the children within a Chinese context.

In summary, this literature review on Chinese family socialization and parenting has some implications on the current research milieu. The parenting constructs emphasized and derived from Western culture may not have accurately characterize Chinese parenting, because parenting and socialization do not take place in a cultural vacuum but rather it is contextually circumscribed. In addition, research which imposed Westerns constructs and frameworks into non-western sample may be the at-risk of missing the key relationships in non-Western cultures (Stewart et al., 2000; Wu et al., 2002). Thus, it is important to note that parenting behaviour and child socialization is guided by cultural context, and recognition of culturally valued goals are important when examining socialization processes within specific cultures. Therefore, utilizing the constructs, derived from Chinese cultural notions, could be empirically and contextually more relevant when analyzing Chinese parenting. Given this situation, more significant development on Chinese parenting and family socialization research can be expected in the following decades.

#### **SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

By reviewing the available studies on Chinese parenting, the reviewer attempts to suggest a possible course for future research in Asian cultural context. The emerging theme on the appreciation of Chinese/non-Western parental beliefs and goals, and the culturally specific parenting concepts warrant further exploration. Future studies should take into account the specific culture values when defining different aspects of parenting behaviour (i.e. parental involvement, parent-child interaction, parent-child relationship) and explore ways of conceptualizing and measuring these values which are embedded in parenting. Wu and colleagues (2002) note that by studying specific parenting practices and existing 'stylistic dimension', culture-specific patterns may emerge. Thus, it should be informative for future study to examine the comparison between the concept of 'training', authoritative and authoritarian parenting with different parenting aspects emphasized in Non-Western and Western culture. This will further elaborate the underlying child socialization philosophies that may differentiate ways that parenting constructs are endorsed in diverse cultural settings (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002).

In addition, future studies should investigate further how the notion of *Guan* relates to specific child developmental outcomes and build upon works that has already been conducted regarding the 'training' parenting dimension' (Chao, 1994; 2000; Stewart et al., 2000; 1999; 1998). In addition to the Chinese sample, future studies should expand the endorsement of 'training' parenting dimension to other Asian sample such as South Asians and South East Asians. This will enable the generalization of 'training' parenting dimension to include larger

has been made on the research of Chinese family socialization and parenting practice. It is notable that scholars of family research are increasingly concerned with the implication of cultural contexts and also are more attentive to the culturally distinctive ideologies/parenting dimensions which differ from those described in the Western literature. In general, the literature has raised the question of the universality of the existing parenting concepts and highlighted the importance of cultural implications on child-rearing. In this sense, the emerging theme is the importance of considering parenting constructs which may have different relevance to different cultures. In particular, the different emphasis placed by Chinese families in response to cultural goals and beliefs implies a different parenting approach (i.e. directive vs. facilitative) and promotes a different method of parenting when compared to Western families. In addition, their different cultural roots also inculcate different connotations for the concept of 'control' and 'warmth' in parenting and thus their consequences for child development are unlikely to be similar for parents and children of other cultural backgrounds (i.e. White-American families). Thus, this implies that parenting concepts and its implications are indeed dependent on the cultural definition and social behaviour valued by the specific community.

For Chinese child-rearing ideology, an important theme emerging from the literature is the notion of *Guan*, which endorses high parental control integrated with highly involved parental caring (Chao, 1994; Ho & Kang, 1984). This notion assumes that parental control among Chinese parents is typically 'equated with parental caring, concern and involvement' (Chao, 1994, 1995; Gorman, 1998; Stewart et al., 1998). Thus, the notion of *Guan* has a very positive connotation among Chinese families: it serves as a manifestation of a caring parental role in Chinese child-rearing ideologies and implies a functional aspect of order-maintenance in the family. It is also noted to be qualitatively different from the parenting concepts described in Western literature. In addition, a new culturally-constructed parenting dimension has emerged from the literature, namely the training dimension. This alternative dimension includes the different emphasis in parenting among Chinese parents such as a parent's primary concern about child's needs, emphasis on child's education, early training, self-discipline and organization. The literature shows that the concept of 'training' tends to be more relevant to Chinese parenting attitudes and more predictive of the child's adjustment among those of Chinese cultural backgrounds when compared to the general dimensions (i.e. authoritarian and authoritative) which are more congruent with Western phenomenon. Available literature also indicates the distinct conceptualization for parental control and warmth in the 'training' dimension and its contrasting effect among Western cultural group. Thus, the 'training' dimension, which derives specifically from Chinese child-rearing beliefs, has been proven to capture the cultural distinctiveness of Chinese parenting and endorses the parenting attitudes which are more appreciated in a Chinese context.

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Asian populations. Notably, parenting behaviour tend to change according to the child's age or developmental stage. Since most of the previous research sample was taken from young adult group (Gorman, 1998; Stewart et al., 2000; 1999; 1998), it will be useful to examine the 'training' parenting concept among children from different age groups and compare the results across the groups. As for methodology, future studies should utilize a multi-method assessment that incorporates both self-rated report and observational methodologies. Parents may rate their own parenting more in accordance with culturally influenced norms than in accordance with their actual behaviour (Wu et al., 2002). In addition, it will also be useful to include both parents (father and mothers) and the child in the same research for comparing their perceptions on parenting behaviour and also to cross-reference the findings. Research also has shown that the parenting behaviour of Asian fathers and mothers tend to be different (Shek, 1998). These multi-method and multi-response assessments will be helpful to validate the findings.

This paper draws from the available literature on the emerging themes in research on family socialization and parenting behaviour in a Chinese cultural context. Previous researchers note that culturally-specific parenting concepts are indeed necessary to explain the nexus between family socialization ideologies and culture in a non-Western context. As noted in the introduction, the growing population of ethnic minorities, especially the Asian families in Western countries has indicated the need for different approaches and culturally specific frameworks when examining social issues regarding families of Asian background. This paper has highlighted some issues regarding non-Western family socialization and parenting which may be constructive towards promoting reflection on cultural diversity in a multicultural setting. Thus, this review of literature may have useful implications for cultural awareness in our increasing culturally diversified society. In addition to that, the authors acknowledge the limitation of this paper; it is noted that the paper lacks in the discussion on distinctive quality of Chinese parenting in relations to the parenting behaviour of parents from other parts of Asia such as Japan, Korea, South Asia and South East Asia (i.e. Malaysia, Vietnam and Philippines). In addition, the paper does not discuss any literature on parenting behaviour among parents in China where some interesting transformations may be expected as a result of the advent of the one child per couple policy. It will undoubtedly provide some valuable insights into the parenting of Chinese parents in China in comparison to those in other parts of the world. Besides that, it will be useful not only to review the findings but also detailed the emerging methodological issues in the studies in order to assess and understand the limitations in terms of their internal or external validity. Discussion inclusive of these additional topics will provide a more comprehensive overview of the research on Chinese parenting and its relevance to Asian parenting in the broader cultural perspective.

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