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Lixin Ren

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lixin.ren@huskers.unl.edu

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PARENTING YOUNG CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE SOCIETY:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

by

Lixin Ren

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Psychology

Under the Supervision of Professor Carolyn Pope Edwards

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2015

PARENTING YOUNG CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE SOCIETY:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Lixin Ren, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Advisor: Carolyn Pope Edwards

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine contemporary Chinese parents' childrearing expectations, goals, and practices for their preschool-aged children. Participants included 154 parents with preschool-aged children (children's mean age was 52.48 months with a standard deviation of 6.84) and 27 teachers recruited from seven preschools located in three small cities in northeastern China. In the quantitative phase, parents completed questionnaires measuring parental expectations (social-emotional and academic expectations), parenting styles, child social competence, and child pre-academic performance. The head teacher of each target child reported the child's social competence and pre-academic performance. It was hypothesized that parental expectations would relate to child outcomes through parenting styles. Path analyses were conducted, and the results showed that parents with earlier expectations for children's development of social skills reported higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, which, in turn, related to higher parent-reported child social competence. Similarly, parents who placed more value on social skills reported higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, and they reported children having higher social competence. However, parents' academic expectations did not relate to child pre-academic performance through parenting styles. One aspect of parents' academic expectations – the amount of value parents placed on academic achievement – had

marginal moderation effect on parenting styles in predicting parent-reported child pre-academic performance. In the qualitative phase, ten mothers were selected from the 154 parents to participate in a semi-structured interview on parenting ideologies and practices. Thematic analyses of the interviews indicated that mothers valued their child's psychological health, social skills, and emotional wellbeing more than academic performance, and mothers tended to use reasoning to discipline their child. Mothers explained their rationales behind their preference and choice. Finally, conflicts in parenting with grandparents posed challenges to mothers; however, despite the challenges, mothers actively reflected on their parenting and reached out for various resources, in hopes of becoming a better parent. Quantitative results and qualitative findings were synthesized. The qualitative findings helped interpret and explain the quantitative results. Findings of this study highlight the changes in Chinese childrearing ideologies and practices as a function of the social, political, and economic transition underway in China.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my primary advisor, Dr. Carolyn Pope Edwards. I thank Dr. Edwards for accepting me as her graduate student and offering me such a wonderful opportunity to pursue a doctorate degree in a different culture. This experience has made me grow tremendously as a scholar and as a person. I thank Dr. Edwards for her wise mentorship, encouragement, constant support, trust, and generosity during the past five years. I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to be her student. I would also like to express my gratitude to my supervisory committee members, Dr. Lisa Knoche, Dr. Lisa J. Crockett, and Dr. Anne Schutte who have provided me with guidance and support. They have helped me to develop as a scholar. I would like to acknowledge the Primarily Math Research Team, especially Dr. Jim Lewis for his financial support and Dr. Wendy Smith for her wise supervision. I really appreciate that Dr. Smith has granted me a lot of autonomy in my work. I thank Dr. Smith for her trust and patient guidance.

I am appreciative of the many others who have provided support in a number of ways. I thank Dr. Jim Lewis for providing me the opportunity to work for his projects. I thank Dr. Traci Kutaka, Dr. Gaoyan Su, Dr. Xiao Zhang, Dr. Liangjing Guo, and Marcus Meade for providing me with help and support at different stages of my dissertation. I thank the NebraskaMATH team and the Getting Ready team for your partnership and support. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and families for your generous emotional support. I thank Feiyu Li, Hazel Rosa Delgado, Alex Davis, and Michele Mulholland for being my dear friends. You are my families in the US, and thank you for always being there for me. I am grateful to my families for their unconditional love.

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Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

This mixed methods study addresses the need to better understand contemporary Chinese parenting of young children by investigating contemporary Chinese parents' childrearing expectations, goals, and practices for their preschool-aged children. Parents' childrearing expectations and socialization goals are important components of parents' ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996), and they "shape the choices that parents make in relation to the settings that their children inhabit and the competencies they acquire" (Harkness et al., 2010, p. 68).

This study utilized a mixed methods approach. First, the researcher quantitatively examined the relationships among Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children, their parenting styles, and their children's developmental outcomes in the social-emotional and academic domains. Understanding how parents' expectations and parenting styles are related to children's development provides researchers and practitioners with ideas about important factors to consider when designing intervention and prevention programs that are intended to enhance parenting and children's development.

Second, the researcher qualitatively investigated meanings, rationales, and motives behind parents' childrearing expectations, goals, and strategies, as well as other relevant issues that were not measured in the quantitative phase. The qualitative inquiry of parents' expectations, goals, and parenting strategies helps to contextualize the relationships discovered in the quantitative phase. It also results in a deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese parenting of young children in the context of rapid social, economic, and political changes.

This chapter contains three sections. The first section reviews some issues associated with research on Chinese parenting. The second section describes the researcher's philosophical worldview and how the philosophical stance informs the methods the researcher uses to gather, analyze, and interpret data. The third section introduces the purpose, research questions, and research hypotheses of the current study.

Section I: Issues of Research on Chinese Parenting

Amy Chua's (2011) book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* provoked heated discussion regarding the "Chinese way" of parenting. Her book has heightened the widespread impression that Chinese parenting is characterized by high parental expectations for children's efforts and academic achievement, frequent use of control and shaming, and excessive focus on children's success.

However, as demonstrated by some empirical studies on contemporary Chinese parenting of adolescent children (Fong, 2007a; Way et al., 2013), Chua's description of her own Chinese parenting seems to be a far cry from the actual parenting ideologies and practices of many Chinese parents nowadays. Thus, it is necessary to review literature on traditional and contemporary Chinese parenting to demonstrate the variations and perhaps changes that have emerged.

Traditional Chinese Parenting

Chua's description of Chinese parenting may be consistent with many people's perceptions of traditional Chinese parenting (Way et al., 2013). Past research on Chinese parenting has mainly focused on cross-cultural comparisons between Chinese (or Asian American) and Western parenting (e.g., Chao, 1994; Wu et al., 2002). According to this literature, Chinese and/or Asian American parents are more authoritarian and less

authoritative, and they are also more likely to adopt punishment and coercive strategies to discipline children, compared to their North American counterparts (Chao, 1994; Wu et al., 2002). This authority-oriented type of parenting serves to fulfill a primary socialization goal of traditional Chinese society – the promotion of relatedness and interdependence (Tamis-LeMonda, Way, Hughes, Yoshikawa, Kalman, & Niwa, 2008). In addition, the traditional Chinese society is patriarchal, meaning that the oldest male in the family is seen as the authority and responsible for all aspects of the family, and this authority-oriented type of parenting helps to preserve the hierarchical order in the extended family (Hamilton, 1990).

In addition, as one of the Confucian heritage cultures, Chinese traditional culture places high value on educational achievement (Ho, 1994). In China, education has long been deemed a very important means of personal advancement. For over a thousand years, performance on examinations was used as the sole criterion in selecting civil service officials, and thus, examinations were the primary path to upward mobility. Chinese parents have been found to value education more, set higher standards, and help their children with homework more often than American parents (Chen & Uttal, 1988).

Social Change and Contemporary Chinese Parenting

However, parenting ideologies and values are not static, rather they are affected by the social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chen, Bian, Xin, Wang, & Silbereisen, 2010; Edwards, Ren, & Brown, 2014). Living in one of the world's fastest changing societies, Chinese parents' childrearing ideologies and practices have been undergoing dramatic shifts under the pressure of rapid social changes. In general, social and cultural changes influence children's development through shaping their parents' socialization

goals, beliefs, and childrearing practices (Chen et al., 2010). For instance, Kagitcibasi and Ataca (2005) found that Turkish parents (from Istanbul and villages in Southwestern and Southeastern Turkey) in 2003, especially parents from high-SES families, were more likely to value independence/self-reliance and affective parent-child interactions than did parents studied in 1975. These shifts in Turkish parents' socialization goals and attitudes can be attributed to the decline in the utilitarian value of the child (e.g., financial assistance) and the increase in children's psychological and emotional values (e.g., emotional closeness between generations) as a function of urbanization and socioeconomic development.

Rapid social, economic, and political changes have taken place in China over the past three decades. The Chinese government started implementing reform and "opening-up" policies in 1978, and these policies have led to unprecedented changes in economic and social structures (Chen & Chen, 2010). Policymakers and educators believe that the new global economy requires individuals to be socially competent, creative, active, adaptive, assertive, and competitive (Chen & Chen, 2010; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). However, traditional Chinese beliefs and norms appear to be incompatible with these new needs (Tobin et al., 2009). In addition to the new challenges emerging as a result of economic growth, the implementation of one-child policy has created a nontraditional social environment in which a single child is the center of concentrated attention. The economic growth and one-child policy have reconfigured family life dramatically, resulting in large, rapid transformation in many contemporary Chinese parents' childrearing attitudes, beliefs, and/or practices.

Some Chinese educators and professionals have encouraged parents to attend to social and behavioral qualities in their children that are required to adapt to the changing society such as self-expression and self-initiative (Chen & Chen, 2010; Tobin, et al., 2009). Contemporary Chinese parenting seems to be departing from traditional Chinese parenting, and it has manifested some characteristics of Western parenting. For example, Liu et al. (2005) found that mothers from Beijing, P.R. China endorsed encouragement of autonomy more than encouragement of relatedness, although when compared to mothers from Southern Ontario, Canada, Beijing mothers displayed higher levels of encouragement of connectedness and lower levels of encouragement of autonomy. A study on parenting of two cohorts of Shanghai parents (1998 and 2002) showed that there was an increase in parental warmth and autonomy support and a decrease in power assertion from 1998 to 2002, while both cohorts highly valued academic achievement (Chen & Chen, 2010).

Contemporary Chinese parenting seems to be “a combination of traditional Chinese and Western ideologies and practices” (Way et al., 2013, p. 62). Based on data collected from parents of preschool-aged children in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Lieber, Fung, and Leung (2006) identified four key dimensions of Chinese childrearing beliefs: *training*, *shame*, *authoritative*, and *autonomy*. The first two dimensions seem to reflect indigenous Chinese childrearing ideologies of training and shaming to induce social sensibilities in children, while the latter two appear to be consistent with Western constructs that emphasize autonomy, self-esteem, and self exploration and expression.

Struggles Contemporary Chinese Parents Face

The co-existence of indigenous and imported values has likely brought about uncertainties and anxieties among parents. Fong's (2007a) ethnographic study on Chinese parenting of adolescents showed that parents struggled to instill simultaneously the values of excellence, independence, obedience, and care/sociableness in their children. These values often felt mutually contradictory. Parents had difficulty in teaching children how to exercise different values in different contexts (e.g., when to express own thoughts and when to obey adults without questioning), and children were often confused by parents' mixed messages. Parents felt that they were unable to keep pace with their "rapidly developing children in a rapidly changing world" (p. 85).

A study by Way et al. (2013) sheds more light on the insecurity and frustrations that parents experience. Way and colleagues analyzed narratives of mothers of middle-school-aged children from Nanjing, China. The mothers recognized that their children were facing a very different future from past days. However, they lacked the knowledge about what was best for their children and how to help them. Many children felt that their parents' knowledge in parenting was outdated, and moreover, many mothers also perceived their knowledge about the world to be outdated. The mothers expressed insecurity, uncertainty, and frustration in their parenting and the ever-changing context. For example, one mother expressed her insecurity and confusion about parenting her son, "If we set our feet in, he thinks we are annoying. If we leave him alone, he becomes mad, too; I do not know what he is thinking. We really have no idea what kids of today are thinking about" (Way et al., 2013, p. 68).

Summary

Societal changes have evoked transformation in parenting as well as anxieties and struggles among Chinese parents. Research on contemporary Chinese parenting is in urgent need. However,

... the extant literature on Chinese parenting is still largely dominated by studies that repeat old world notions of Chinese parenting and, furthermore, investigate the parenting of young children exclusively using a cross-cultural comparative paradigm contrasting Chinese American and European American parents or Chinese and American parents (Way et al., 2013, p. 62-63).

The few exceptions include Fong's (2007a) study and the study by Way et al. (2013) reviewed previously. However, both studies focus on parenting adolescents, and little is known about how contemporary Chinese parents parent their preschool-aged children in the context of social change underway in China.

In addition, utilizing multiple research methodologies will inform a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Chinese parenting. Researchers have increasingly recognized the advantages of mixed methods in parenting research. Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, and Way (2008) encourage researchers to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. "Examining behavior and belief systems requires both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research: quantitative methods to understand the prevalence of particular practices, behaviors, and beliefs, and qualitative methods to understand meanings, functions, goals, and intentions" (Yoshikawa, et al., 2008, p. 346).

In sum, there is an urgent need to better understand contemporary Chinese parenting of young children. It is necessary to consider using mixed methods in studying contemporary Chinese parenting in order to obtain a more nuanced and contextualized portrait of contemporary Chinese parents. Parenting becomes a continuously changing subject in a rapidly changing society, and new ideas and concepts constantly emerge. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods will enable researchers to better capture emerging ideas and concepts in parenting.

Section II: Philosophical Worldviews

Philosophical worldviews are defined as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), worldviews represent a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds. There are four main types of worldviews, including *postpositivism*, *constructivism*, *advocacy/participatory*, and *pragmatism*. Worldviews held by researchers often lead to embracing a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach in research. For instance, researchers who embrace the postpositivism worldview tend to focus on identifying and measuring the causes that influence outcomes, and they intend to reduce the ideas into small, discrete ideas that can be tested. Thus, postpositivists often develop numeric measures to study human behaviors.

The researcher adopts *pragmatism* as an overarching worldview. This worldview focuses on the research problem and emphasizes the importance for using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem. Researchers who adopt *pragmatism* as a worldview often use all approaches available to understand the research problem

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Thus, different types of data and analytical tools can be used simultaneously to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem.

Section III: Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine contemporary Chinese parenting of preschool-aged children using a mixed methods approach. Specifically, this study focused on Chinese parents' developmental expectations, socialization goals, and parenting practices for their preschool-aged children. What socialization goals and developmental expectations do contemporary Chinese parents have for their preschool-aged children? How do they parent their young children to inculcate those goals and expectations? How do parents view the relative importance of social-emotional development and academic achievement?

There are various types of mixed methods designs. In this study, a two-phase, explanatory sequential design was adopted, in which qualitative findings were used to help interpret and contextualize quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the first, quantitative phase of the study, survey data on Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children, their parenting styles, and child social competence and pre-academic performance were collected. This phase of the study focused on examining the complex relationships among parents' expectations, parenting styles, and child outcomes. In the second, qualitative phase of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted and analyzed, in order to reveal meanings, functions, and intentions of parents' developmental expectations, socialization goals, and parenting practices.

Research Questions

This mixed methods study addresses three main research questions through two phases of inquiry. In the quantitative phase, the *central research question* is: What are the relationships among Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children, their parenting styles, and their children's social competence and pre-academic performance? This central research question encompasses the following two specific questions: (1) To what extent do Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children in the social-emotional and academic domains relate to children's social competence and pre-academic performance? (2) Do parents' developmental expectations relate to child outcomes indirectly through parenting styles? ¹

In the qualitative phase, the *central research question* is: What are the parenting ideologies and practices of contemporary Chinese parents with preschool-aged children? This central research question encompasses the following three specific questions: (1) What socialization goals do Chinese parents have for their preschool-aged children? (2) Which developmental domain do parents value more, children's social-emotional development or academic performance? What are the rationales behind their preference? (3) What disciplinary strategies do parents adopt to align with their goals and expectations? What are the rationales behind their choice of certain disciplinary strategies?

Finally, *the mixed methods research question* is: How do the interview data on Chinese parents' parenting ideologies and practices help to interpret or explain the

¹ Many researchers use the term "mediate" to describe this indirect effect. However, according to Dr. Rex Kline (2014, November), "mediation" requires time precedence, but data from the current study were collected concurrently. Thus, terms such as "indirect effects" were used instead of "mediate" or "mediation" in the current study.

quantitative results about the relationships among Chinese parents' developmental expectations, their parenting styles, and their children's developmental outcomes?

Research Hypotheses

The quantitative phase intends to test the following research hypotheses:

- (1) ***Comparisons of parental expectations for different developmental domains:*** Parents will place more value on social-emotional skills than on academic skills. Parents will have earlier expectations for children's mastery of social-emotional skills than for mastery of academic skills.
- (2) ***Relationships between parental expectations and child social competence:*** Earlier expectations for children's development of social-emotional skills will relate to better child social competence. The degree to which parents value the development of social-emotional skills will be positively related to child social competence.
- (3) ***Relationships between parental expectations and child pre-academic performance:*** Earlier expectations for children's development of academic skills will relate to better child pre-academic performance. The degree to which parents value the development of academic skills will be positively related to child pre-academic performance.
- (4) ***Indirect effects of parenting styles on child social competence:*** Parents with earlier social-emotional expectations will report higher levels of authoritative parenting, but lower levels of authoritarian parenting, and subsequently, children will have better social competence. Similarly, parents who place more value on the

development of social-emotional skills will report higher levels of authoritative parenting, but lower levels of authoritarian parenting, and children will have better social competence.

It is worth noting that no specific hypotheses were made regarding the effects of parenting styles on the relationships between parents' academic expectations and children's pre-academic performance; the relationship among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and children's academic achievement is unclear according to literature. For example, Davis-Kean (2005) found that parents' educational expectations were related indirectly to 8-12-year-old children's academic achievement through parents' specific parental behaviors, including reading, play, and warmth. Similarly, Englund, Luckner, Whaley and Egeland (2004) found that among parents with early elementary children, parents' educational expectations had a direct effect on parents' involvement with school, and parental involvement had a direct effect on child academic achievement. Thus, it is hypothesized that Chinese parents' academic expectations for their children may have an indirect effect on child pre-academic achievement through parenting styles. The indirect effects of parents' academic expectations on children's pre-academic performance through parenting styles would be examined.

Unlike the studies by Davis-Kean and Englund et al., the current study did not focus on specific parenting behaviors, but on parenting styles, a global measure of parenting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting styles can be thought of as the general atmosphere in which parent-child interactions take place. The general atmosphere may strengthen or undermine the effect of parents' academic expectations on children's

academic performance. Thus, parenting styles and parents' academic expectations may interact with one another to affect children's pre-academic performance.

Parents with high academic expectations may adopt very different parenting styles. For instance, in one possible case, a parent who has high academic expectations for his/her child might adopt authoritarian and controlling parenting to "push" the child to succeed academically; while in another possible case, a parent with high academic expectations might be sensitive to the child's needs, authoritative, and supportive to promote children's development in the academic domain. Thus, it is possible that parenting styles moderate the relationships between parents' academic expectations and children's pre-academic performance. As a result, the moderation effects of parenting styles on the relationships between parents' academic expectations and children's pre-academic performance are also examined in the current study.

In addition, researchers increasingly acknowledge that children's social-emotional development serves as the foundation for cognitive development during early childhood (Seifert, 2006; Denham, 2006). Thus, parents' social-emotional expectations may relate to children's pre-academic performance through parenting styles and children's social competence. Relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations, parenting styles, child social competence, and children's pre-academic performance are examined. It is hypothesized that parents' earlier social-emotional expectations will indirectly relate to better child pre-academic performance through its effects on parenting styles and child social competence. Similarly, it is also hypothesized that higher levels of value that parents place on social-emotional expectations will indirectly relate to better child pre-

academic performance through its effects on parenting styles and child social competence.

Finally, no specific research hypothesis has been generated for the qualitative phase due to the nature of qualitative research. Qualitative research is designed for an in-depth understanding of the complexity of human behaviors rather than for hypothesis testing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Themes emerge from the qualitative data. This phase, instead, is driven by questions. Qualitative interview questions are focused on mothers' views on her child's characteristics and on the child's development in social-emotional and academic domains; it is intended to elicit goals and expectations for the child, the role of parents in supporting the child's development, and disciplinary strategies.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate the parenting ideologies and practices of contemporary Chinese parents with preschool-aged children through two phases of inquiry. The purpose of the quantitative phase was to examine the relationships among Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children, their parenting styles, and child social competence and pre-academic performance. The qualitative phase was designed to reveal meanings, functions, and intentions of parents' developmental expectations, socialization goals, and parenting practices. This chapter provides a review of literature related to parental expectations and parenting styles, as well as a review of several qualitative studies on contemporary Chinese parenting. Finally, the theoretical framework of the current study is described.

Cross-cultural Comparisons of Parental Expectations

Expectations people bring to social interactions are critical to organizing behaviors. Expectations parents have for their children's development help organize their behaviors and psychological functioning toward their children, which directly influence children's growth and development (Coplan, Hastings, Lagacé-Séguin, & Moulton, 2002; Dix, 1992). Although researchers have defined "parental expectations" in various ways (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994; Glick & White, 2004; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001), parental expectations are basically "beliefs or judgments that parents have about their children's future achievement" (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010, p. 191). Parental expectations are parents' predictions of how a child should perform relative to a goal. Parents may have relatively high or low expectations, and parental expectations can also be relatively early or late. Expectations parents hold

set the context of children's early socialization because expectations parents bring to the interactions with their child help organize and shape their parenting practices (Coplan et al., 2002; Dix, 1992).

Parental expectations are important elements of parental ethnotheories, which are culturally derived cognitive models, beliefs, and theories that parents hold regarding children (e.g. children's developmental stages), families (e.g. family dynamics), and themselves as parents (e.g. effective parenting strategies; Harkness & Super, 1996). Parental ethnotheories "shape the choices that parents make in relation to the settings that their children inhabit and the competencies they acquire" (Harkness et al., 2010, p. 68).

Previous research on parental expectations has mainly focused on cross-cultural comparisons of parents' expectations about the timing of developmental skills, including comparisons across countries and comparisons across subcultural groups within one country (e.g., at what age a parent expects his/her child to master a certain developmental skill, such as writing one's own name) (e.g., Edwards, Gandini, & Giovaninni, 1996; Goodnow, Cashmore, Cotton, & Knight, 1984; Hess, Kashiwagi, Azuma, Price, & Dickson, 1980; Willemsen & van de Vijver, 1997; Williams, Williams, Lopez, & Tayko, 2000).

Hess et al. (1980) compared American mothers' and Japanese mothers' expectations about the timing of developmental skills for their young children. The 38-item Developmental Expectations Questionnaire was developed to measure maternal expectations in the study. Several categories of behavior were captured, including *emotional maturity, compliance, politeness, independence, school-related skills, social skills, and verbal assertiveness*. Each item was written on an index card, and mothers

were asked to place each item in one of the three age categories: “mastery expected before age 4”; “mastery expected between ages 4 and 6”; and “mastery expected after age 6”. The results showed that Japanese mothers from the Tokyo metropolitan area and Sapporo were likely to have earlier expectations in three areas: emotional maturity, compliance, and social courtesy; American mothers from the San Francisco Bay Area tended to expect earlier mastery in verbal assertiveness and social skills with peers. Mothers’ developmental timetables might be most influenced by their cultural background. Mothers tend to have early expectations for developmental skills that are stressed by their culture (Edwards et al., 1996).

Using the Developmental Expectations Questionnaire developed by Hess et al. (1980), Goodnow et al. (1984) compared the developmental timetables of two groups of Australian mothers: Australian-born and Lebanese-born Australian mothers living in areas of Sydney. Goodnow and colleagues added eight school-related items into the questionnaire (e.g., “Knows shape names”; “Writes own name”). The results showed that Australian-born mothers had earlier expectations for children’s mastery of social skills, verbal assertiveness, and school-related skills compared to Lebanese-born Australian mothers.

Edwards, Gandini, and Giovaninni (1996) used the Developmental Expectations Questionnaire to investigate the developmental timetables of parents and preschool teachers in two cultural communities: Amherst (the United States) and Pistoia (Italy). Amherst parents had earlier expectations for most of the developmental skills than did Pistoia parents. However, it is noteworthy that the Amherst parents were found to have the earliest developmental expectations among all the groups that had been studied using

the Developmental Expectations Questionnaire, whereas the Pistoia parents fell in the middle range of all the groups that had been studied. These two groups differed sharply on social skills with peers and verbal assertiveness, while they differed the least in areas such as school-related skills and compliance. One striking finding was that Amherst parents had earlier expectations than did preschool teachers in the community, whereas parents had later expectations than did preschool teachers in Pistoia. Amherst and Pistoia teachers had more similar developmental timetables compared to parents from these two communities. According to Edwards and colleagues (1996), teachers interacted with many more children for a longer period of time than parents, so teachers might have more accurate developmental timetables than did parents.

Although cross-cultural differences in parents' developmental expectations have been well documented, variations in developmental expectations among parents from the same cultural context have less been exhaustively explored. Cross-cultural psychologists have well recognized the variations of human behaviors among cultures as well as within a single culture and proposed to "distinguish between the population level and individual level of analysis" (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2006, p. 12). Both levels of analysis are necessary to achieve a more complete picture of variations in human behaviors. Thus, it is important to investigate how micro-variations in parental expectations are related to parenting practices and children's developmental outcomes within one cultural context beyond well-studied macro-differences.

Parental Expectations and Children's Development

Several studies have focused on the relationships between parents' developmental expectations and children's developmental outcomes. Hess and colleagues (1980) found

that mothers' expectations about the timing of developmental skills were related to child cognitive outcomes. Specifically, in both Japanese and the U. S. samples, overall earlier developmental expectations were related to better cognitive development as measured by a block sort task, child school aptitude, and child IQ at age six. In both national samples, early expectation of verbal assertiveness was the strongest predictor of child cognitive competence among the seven categories of developmental expectations mentioned previously (i.e., *emotional maturity, compliance, politeness, independence, school-related skills, social skills, and verbal assertiveness*). Early expectations of social skills and school-related skills were also positively related to child cognitive competence. However, it is noteworthy that family's socioeconomic status (SES) was related to mothers' developmental expectations. Specifically, Japanese mothers from higher SES backgrounds tended to have earlier overall developmental expectations, but the relationship was not significant among American mothers. When examining the correlations between SES and individual areas of developmental expectations for each country, SES was related to early expectations of school-related skills in both countries, to social skills in Japan only, and to verbal assertiveness in the U.S. only.

Similarly, Holloway and Reichart-Erickson (1989) also found that mothers' earlier expectations for social and intellectual skills were related to higher child social competence. However, we cannot conclude that early developmental expectations directly contribute to child outcomes. Holloway and Reichart-Erickson (1989) hypothesized that parental expectations might influence child development through parenting practices. The researchers found that parents who held earlier expectations for development tended to send their children to early childhood programs with higher

quality staff, which indicated that mothers might select programs that complemented and reinforced their childrearing values and goals.

In another study, Pearson and Rao (2003) did not find significant correlations between parental expectations and child social competence. Pearson and Rao investigated Hong Kong and English parents' socialization goals, child-rearing practices and child social competence during the preschool years. Their conceptualization of parental socialization goals is similar to the concept of parental expectations in the current study. Pearson and Rao defined socialization goals as goals parents have to raise their children to have qualities that are valued in the society in which they live. However, instead of measuring the timing of developmental expectations, they assessed how much parents valued each socialization goal. Among both Hong Kong and English parents, valuing the socialization goals of children's social-emotional development was found to be unrelated to child social competence, measured using a peer nomination procedure. The results seemed unexpected, but Pearson and Rao did not explain potential reasons for the lack of relationship.

The timing of parents' developmental expectations and the degree to which parents value those developmental skills seem to be two facets of parental expectations. Are these two facets associated with each other? For instance, do parents who value children's development of prosocial skills also have early expectations for the mastery of prosocial skills, so that children will have a head start? Or do parents tend to have later expectations when they value the socialization of certain development skills in order to allow children sufficient time to reach a higher level of development of those skills? To the researcher's knowledge, no previous research has addressed these two aspects of

parental expectations simultaneously. In the present study, both aspects of parental expectations – timing and value – are examined to reveal the relationships between the two.

Finally, the relationships between parental expectations and children's academic achievement have been studied extensively among school-aged children and youths. It has been commonly found that children and youths with parents who hold high academic expectations tend to receive higher grades, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, and have higher educational attainment, compared to those whose parents have relatively low expectations (Davis-Kean, 2005; Pearce, 2006; Vartanian, Karen, Buck, & Cadge, 2007). Parental expectations are also found to be positively associated with students' motivation to achieve in school and aspirations to attend college (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Peng & Wright, 1994).

However, it is worth noting that most of these studies have been conducted in the U. S. and other Western countries. The relationships between parents' expectations and child academic achievement may not hold for native Chinese parents and children or those from other societies. Furthermore, most studies have been focused on school-aged children and youths and their parents, and the relationships between parental expectations and preschool-aged children's pre-academic performance have not been investigated as thoroughly. Thus, this study adds to the literature regarding the relationships between parents' expectations for preschool-aged children and child pre-academic performance.

Examining the relationships between Chinese parents' expectations and their preschool-aged children's pre-academic performance will inform us about the following: (1) whether there is a relationship between parental expectations and child pre-academic

performance among Chinese young children, and (2) if there is a relationship between the two, what kind of relationship it is (e.g., positive association, negative association, a relationships that is moderated by a third factor). If the role of parental expectations on child academic outcomes manifests as early as preschool, intervention and prevention programs designed to improve children's academic development need to take into account parents' expectations.

Parenting Styles and Children's Development

Parenting styles of Chinese parents initially attracted many researchers' interest as a result of increasing recognition that Asian-American children often have superior academic achievement (Stewart, Rao, Bond, MaBride-Chang, Fielding, & Kennard, 1998). In contrast to domain-specific parenting practices, parenting style is a global measure of parenting practices (Baumrind, 1989). Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined parenting styles as "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (p. 493).

Baumrind (1967, 1991, 1996) described parenting styles using two dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. Parental responsiveness refers to "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). Parental demandingness is defined as "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts, and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1991, pp. 61-62).

Under this conceptualization, four types of parenting styles have been identified, including *authoritative*, *authoritarian*, *permissive*, and *neglecting* parenting (Baumrind, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). However, research on Chinese parenting has mainly focused on authoritative and authoritarian parenting, which may be due to researchers' interests in comparing Chinese parents to parents from Western cultures (Chan, Bowes, & Wyver, 2009). Another possible reason for excluding neglecting and permissive parenting styles is the difficulty of measuring them. Neglecting parenting is usually rare (Holden, 1997) and has often been excluded in many measures of parenting styles. The Permissive Parenting Scale from the widely used Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995) has been found to have low reliability among Chinese parents (Xu, 2007).

Authoritative parents show high levels of warmth and responsiveness to the child, while at the same time, they hold high expectations of maturity. Similar to authoritative parents, permissive parents are often warm and responsive to their children, but they have few behavioral expectations of maturity, exert little control, and often fail to monitor children's activities. In contrast, authoritarian parenting involves a combination of low responsiveness and coercive control. Authoritarian parents show low warmth and acceptance, restrain the child's autonomy, and frequently use coercive disciplinary strategies, such as physical punishment, verbal hostility, and non-reasoning (Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Neglectful parents are low in both responsiveness and demandingness.

The relationships between parenting styles and children's developmental outcomes have been well documented (e.g., Baumrind, 1991; Chen, Dong, & Zhou,

1997). Children with authoritative parents tend to have higher levels of social competence and academic achievement as well as lower levels of adjustment problems, whereas opposite relationships have been found for authoritarian parenting (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992). Children with permissive parents are likely to act out behaviorally (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), display low self-reliance and self-control competence (Baumrind, 1989), and have low levels of academic achievement (Cohen & Rice, 1997).

These findings are mostly based on Western samples from the U. S., Canada, and several European countries. Studies involving non-Western samples have indicated that the relationships between parenting styles and child developmental outcomes vary across social-cultural contexts (Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Chao, 1994). Evidence has suggested that Chinese parents whether living in China or abroad tend to be more controlling and authoritarian than their European-American counterparts (Chao, 1994; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987).

Ruth Chao (1994) proposed the indigenous concept of *training* to capture Chinese parental control that is distinct from the type of control that features the authoritarian parenting style. Baumrind's (1971) original conceptions of the authoritarian parenting style differs from the conceptions of *training* in the following ways. According to Baumrind's (1971) typology of parenting styles, authoritarian parenting style emphasizes a standard set of conduct that is often enforced upon children by parents without explaining, listening, or providing emotional support. Although *training* also emphasizes a set standard of conduct, "the motivation or intentions for imposing these standards are

not to dominate the child, but rather to assure the familial and societal goals of harmonious relations with others and the integrity of the family unit” (Chao, 1994, p. 1113). In addition, among Chinese families, the notion of *training* implies involved care and concern for children. However, authoritarian parenting style does not imply the same meaning, and to the contrary, the concept of authoritarian parenting is often related to “hostile, rejecting, and somewhat uninvolved parental behaviors toward the child” (Chao, 1994, p. 1113). Parents endorsing *training* are usually highly involved in children’s social and academic development, and they emphasize the importance of hard work, self-discipline, and obedience for children to achieve filial as well as societal expectations. *Training* was found to relate to both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles among Chinese-American mothers (Chao, 2000) and Chinese mothers (Pearson & Rao, 2003; Wu et al., 2002).

Recent studies focusing on within-cultural differences in Chinese parents’ parenting styles and young children’s social and cognitive outcomes have shown similar patterns of relationships as those discovered among Western samples (Chen et al., 1997; Chen, Liu, Li, Cen, Chen, & Wang, 2000; Zhou, Eisenberg, Wang, & Reiser, 2004). For instance, Chen et al. (1997) found that authoritarian parenting among Chinese parents was positively related to aggression and negatively related to peer acceptance and academic achievement for their elementary school-aged children, while authoritative parenting was associated positively with children’s social and school adjustment and negatively with adjustment problems. However, the results need to be explained in the context of the Chinese culture of *training* as *training* was found to be associated with

both authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles (Pearson & Rao, 2003; Wu et al., 2002).

Parental Expectations, Parenting Styles, and Children's Development

As reviewed previously, some studies focused on the relationships between parental expectations and children's developmental outcomes. However, few studies have focused on understanding the mechanisms through which parental expectations are linked to children's developmental outcomes. Holloway and Reichhart-Erickson (1989) hypothesized that parental expectations might influence child development through parenting practices; they found that parents who held earlier developmental expectations tended to send their children to early childhood programs with higher quality staff, suggesting that mothers might select programs that complemented their child-rearing beliefs.

As reviewed earlier, Goodnow et al. (1984) found that Australian-born Australian mothers living in areas of Sydney expected their children to master some school-related skills earlier than Lebanese-born Australian mothers living in the same areas. Interestingly, Australian-born Australian mothers were more likely to report teaching their children those school-related skills at home before children started school than their Lebanese-born counterparts, which was consistent with their earlier expectations for school-related skills. Mothers' early expectations for children's mastery of school-related skills might motivate parents to teach those school-related skills actively at home.

According to some developmentalists (e.g., Dix, 1992; Goodnow et al., 1984; Hess et al., 1980; Holloway & Reichhart-Erickson, 1989), parents' expectations help organize parents' childrearing practices, and parents tend to display parenting practices

that align with their expectations, which suggests that parents' expectations may affect children's development through their influence on parents' parenting practices. In other words, parenting practices may mediate the relationship between parents' expectations and child developmental outcomes. However, the mediation role of parenting practices has not been exhaustively examined.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) proposed an integrative model encompassing three important aspects of parenting: parental goals and values, parenting practices, and parenting styles. In this model, the values and goals parents hold for children's socialization are critical determinants of parenting behaviors, including at least two attributes of parenting: domain-specific parenting practices, and parenting styles. Parental expectations are an important component of parental goals and values. Thus, parenting style may be an important element of parenting that mediates the influence of parental expectations on child developmental outcomes.

For instance, parents with earlier expectations for their child's mastery of social-emotional skills may be sensitive to the child's feelings and needs, supportive, and affectionate toward the child as this type of parenting has been found to be associated with children's social-emotional development (e.g., Ainsworth, 1989; Sroufe, 1996). When children experience sensitive caregiving from their parents, they tend to have more behavioral and emotional regulation (Davidov & Grusec, 2006), greater peer acceptance (Davidov & Grusec, 2006), less externalizing (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) and internalizing (Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Hammen, Shih, & Brennan, 2004) problems. In the current study, parenting styles are examined as potential mechanisms through which parents' social-emotional expectations impact child social competence.

Parental warmth and sensitivity are also positively related to child cognitive (Carlson, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1995; Egeland, Pianta, & O'Brien, 1993) and language outcomes (Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Thus, parents who have high academic expectations (e.g., having earlier expectations and emphasizing the importance of academic achievement) may be sensitive to children's needs in order to better help children succeed in school. Therefore, parenting styles may serve as potential mechanisms through which parents' academic expectations influence child academic performance. However, previous research has shown that the relationship between parenting styles and child academic achievement is not clear among Chinese or Chinese American school-aged children (Chao, 1994), suggesting that Chinese parents with high academic expectations for their children may adopt a variety of parenting practices to support children's performance at school. In this sense, parenting styles, as an overall emotional climate in which parents' behaviors are expressed (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), may interact with parents' academic expectations in influencing children's academic performance.

In this study, specific parenting practices, such as specific behaviors that parents display when interacting with their child, are not examined. In the planning phase of the study, the researcher proposed to collect observational data on parent-child interactions, in hopes of examining both parenting styles and specific parenting practices as well as how they are related to parental expectations and child development. The researcher collected videotaped data on parent-child interactions during which the parent and the child played with toys for at least 15 minutes and read a book together for five to ten minutes. Unfortunately, there is no coding scheme available that is developed among

Chinese or adapted for use among Chinese families. Thus, specific parenting practices are not examined in the current study due to the difficulty of coding parent-child interactions.

Qualitative Research on Contemporary Chinese Parenting

As reviewed earlier, researchers have relied heavily on the cross-cultural comparative paradigm to study Chinese parenting. Cross-cultural comparisons are necessary, but researchers need to take a closer look at parenting in specific contexts, taking into consideration the details of the cultural locality in which parenting takes place. Parenting becomes a continuously changing subject in a rapidly changing society, and new ideas and concepts constantly emerge. It is necessary to employ qualitative methods in addition to traditional quantitative methods, in order to obtain a more nuanced and contextualized portrait of contemporary Chinese parents. However, only a few qualitative studies on contemporary Chinese parenting have been found. These qualitative studies are reviewed in the following section.

Fong (2007a) analyzed longitudinal case studies of five Chinese families to examine the values that Chinese parents hoped to cultivate in their adolescent children. Fong found that parents struggled to instill simultaneously the values of excellence, independence, obedience, and care/sociableness in their children. These values were often felt to be mutually contradictory. Parents had difficulty in teaching children how to exercise different values in different contexts. For instance, parents wanted children to have and express their independent thoughts, but at the same time, they hoped children to obey adults without questioning under some circumstances. The constantly changing family situations and social changes underway in China made it difficult for parents to figure out what optimal guidelines were. Thus, parents were often unable to recognize

and articulate context-sensitive metastrategies to help children understand and internalize those metastrategies, and children were often confused by parents' frequent mixed messages.

Fong's findings challenged the widespread Chinese discourse that it was the singleton status that caused the undesirable personalities and behaviors of children born under China's one-child policy. According to Fong (2007a), Chinese adolescents' inability to meet their parents' expectations could be "seen not only as a result of their singleton status but also as a result of their status (shared with many other children worldwide) as a rapidly developing children in a rapidly changing world" (p.116). Similarly, parents' dissatisfaction with their children could be attributed to parents' inability to keep pace with their "rapidly developing children in a rapidly changing world" (p. 85).

Way et al. (2013) also investigated contemporary Chinese parents' socialization goals for their adolescent children and the insecurity and frustrations that parents experienced. Way and colleagues analyzed narratives of mothers of middle-school-aged children from Nanjing, China, and found that the mothers' primary socialization goals were social and emotional competence, happiness, and independence. Although the mothers wanted their children to attain good grades, most of them placed equal or greater emphasis on children's social and emotional development. Most of the mothers believed that children would not thrive in school if they were not socially and emotionally adjusted.

The mothers also stressed that they tried to make their children happy by fostering autonomy and not forcing children to do things. It is interesting that many mothers

seemed to be very permissive in their parenting. Some mothers claimed that their permissive parenting practices were intended to cultivate individual autonomy and foster children's wellbeing, while other mothers adopted permissive parenting practices, in hopes to avoid conflicts with their only child. However, mothers expressed their frustration at such lax parenting styles. Many mothers said that enforcing rules about studying, daily routine, or other activities was not useful at all because their children would not listen.

In addition, the mothers recognized that their children were facing a very different future from past days. However, they felt they lacked the knowledge about what was best for their children and how to help them. Many mothers perceived their knowledge about parenting and about the world as "outdated" because the societal context nowadays was strikingly different from the context in which they were brought up. Mothers expressed insecurity, uncertainty, and frustration in their parenting and the ever-changing context. Nevertheless, mothers seemed to be trying their best to raise their child in an ideal way.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is grounded in the developmental niche framework formulated by Sara Harkness and Charles Super (Super & Harkness, 1986). The developmental niche framework is "a theoretical framework for studying cultural regulation of the micro-environment of the child, and it attempts to describe this environment from the point view of the child in order to understand processes of development and acquisition of culture" (Super & Harkness, 1986, p. 552). This framework enables us to see how the cultural environments of a particular child are organized and presented to the child (Super & Harkness, 1994).

The developmental niche framework is one of the many eco-cultural models or theories derived from the Whiting model for psychocultural research (Whiting, 1977). In the Whiting model, environment and history interact and shape a society's maintenance system, which in turn defines the child's learning environment, which in turn predicts adult psychology and behavior, and finally, these adult psychobehavioral patterns influence cultural projective-expressive systems that "compose the cultural core of distributed practices, values, beliefs, and meaning" (Worthman, 2010, p. 547), such as ritual and ceremony, games and play, religion, and art and recreation (Edwards & Bloch, 2010; Worthman, 2010). The developmental niche framework expanded the Whiting model by focusing on the dynamics that create the experiences that a child actually encounters during the course of his development (Worthman, 2010).

The developmental niche includes three major subsystems that interact with one another to create the experiences that a child actually encounters while growing up (see Figure 1): (1) the physical and social settings in which the child lives; (2) culturally regulated customs of child care and child rearing; (3) psychology of the caregivers (e.g., beliefs, goals, feelings) (Super & Harkness, 1986). The developmental niche is produced by the interactions among these three subsystems. The interface between the child and the developmental niche creates individual experience and constitutes the micro-environment for the child (Worthman, 2010). These three subsystems serve a common function – mediating the individual's developmental experience within the larger culture. The three components compose the cultural context of child development (Super & Harkness, 1986). These components are described below.

The physical and social settings that a child lives in refer to elements such as the size and composition of the household, daily routines of members in the household, and what affordances are provided by the physical space (Harkness & Super, 1996). The settings a child frequents determine the kind of interactions that the child has opportunity and the need to practice. As Beatrice Whiting (1980) has pointed out, one of the most powerful ways in which culture influences child development is through providing the settings of daily life.

Many aspects of the physical and social settings of children are organized by customary practices of child care and child rearing such as sleeping arrangements. According to Super and Harkness (1986), virtually all aspects of a child's physical and social settings are mediated by cultural adaptations in child care practices. Customs are normative practices that are commonly used by members of a community (Super & Harkness, 1994). Members of the community often do not give customs conscious thought since customs are so thoroughly integrated into the larger culture that they are often seen as the only reasonable and natural way to do things (Super & Harkness, 1986). Customs of child care and child rearing can be seen as behavioral strategies that caregivers use to deal with children of particular ages, given particular environmental constraints (Super & Harkness, 1986).

Customs of child care and child rearing are often accompanied by specific beliefs and emotions held by parents and other caregivers. The psychology of the caregivers, the third component of the developmental niche, includes ethnotheories of child development as well as affective orientations parents bring to their experience of parenting (Super & Harkness, 1986). Most important among parental ethnotheories are beliefs concerning the

nature and needs of children, parental goals for children, and parental beliefs regarding effective rearing techniques. The psychology of caregivers organizes child rearing practices within the constraints created by the physical settings and customs of child rearing.

Figure 1 illustrates the three components of the developmental niche and the relationships among them (Worthman, 2010). The three components influence each other, as represented by the double-headed arrows. The developmental niche operates as an open system with the child at the center as an active agency of development.

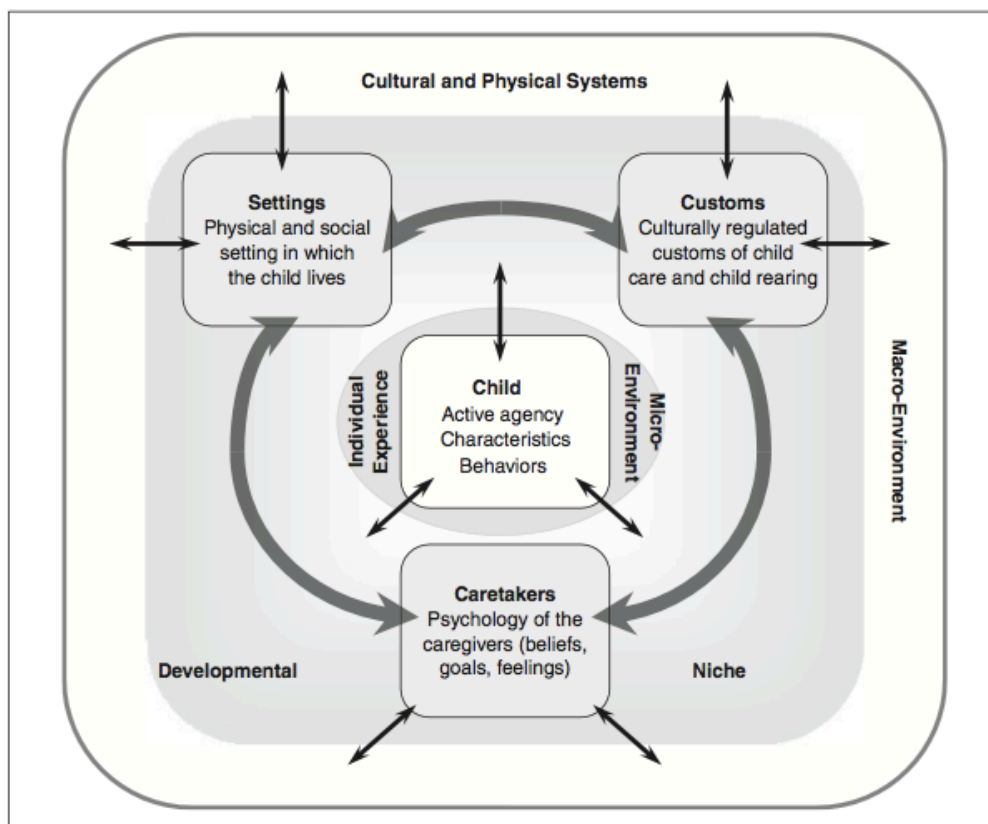


Figure 1. The developmental niche framework formulated by Harkness and Super. The figure is from “The Ecology of Human Development: Evolving Models for Cultural Psychology” by Worthman (2010)².

Note from Worthman (2010, p. 552): Black arrows indicate interactions. Wide grey arrows indicate systems dynamics among components of the developmental niche. The oval area (center) delineates the zone of proximal development, including the child’s individual experience and micro environment. Note the focus on household as the locus of developmental niche.

In this study, Chinese culture and the physical environment serve as the macro-environment which embeds the developmental niche for children. Parents’ expectations are important components of parental ethnotheories. Parents’ expectations for their child’s development reflect parents’ beliefs about what kind of skills the child should

² Consent to reprint this figure has been obtained from the author.

develop to become a competent individual in the society in which the child lives in. It is speculated that child development, as the center of the developmental niche, is influenced by parents' developmental expectations for children.

Parents' expectations are influenced and constrained by physical and social settings as well as customs of child care and child rearing. Although parents in the study are all from three small-sized cities in northeastern China, parents' expectations for their child are expected to differ to some extent among parents. Many factors may shape parents' expectations for their child's development, such as parents' own childhood experience, the socioeconomic status of the family, and the size of the household (e.g., whether it is a three-generation household or a nuclear family). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to discover the contextual factors that may influence the expectations parents have for their children and parents' choices of certain types of parenting practices to achieve their expectations for children.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter includes three sections. The first section justifies the use of a mixed methods design in the current study. The second section describes the participants and instruments of the quantitative phase. The third section provides a description of the selection of participants and interview protocol used in the qualitative phase of the study.

Section 1: Rationales for a Mixed Methods Design

This mixed methods study intends to deepen understanding of contemporary Chinese parenting ideologies and practices of Chinese parents with preschool-aged children. Previous research has primarily used a cross-cultural comparative paradigm contrasting Chinese or Chinese American parenting and European American parenting (Way, et al., 2013). As a consequence, the literature is largely dominated by studies that “repeat old world notions of Chinese parenting” (Way et al., 2013, p. 62).

Chinese society has been undergoing dramatic social, economic, and political changes in the last three decades, empirical evidence has shown that Chinese parenting ideologies and practices have been undergoing transition in reaction to societal changes (e.g., Chen et al., 2010; Fong, 2007a; Tobin et al., 2009; Way et al., 2013). To capture the shifts in parenting ideologies and practices, the traditional cross-cultural comparative paradigm seems to be insufficient for the following three reasons.

First, cross-cultural comparisons may not fully take into consideration aspects of parenting that are specific or salient to a certain culture (e.g., the notion of “*guan*” in Chinese culture). Researchers often focus on aspects of parenting that are common in the cultures under investigation, and as a result, facets of parenting that are culturally unique or salient may be less explored.

Second, parenting is susceptible to societal change (Edwards, et al., 2014). New ideas and concepts constantly emerge as a function of social changes. There may not exist any established measurement to assess those newly emerged ideas and concepts. Researchers are not likely to be able to quantitatively compare parenting across cultures if there is no established measurement. As evidenced by some qualitative research (e.g., Fong, 2007a; Tobin, et al., 2009; Way et al., 2013), there seems to be a discrepancy between the widespread perceptions of Chinese parenting and the reality of contemporary Chinese parenting. Thus, flexibility in use of other research methods or paradigms may help reveal changes emerged in parenting in the context of rapid social changes.

Third, cross-cultural comparisons often focus on examining the prevalence of particular parenting practices, behaviors, or beliefs that parents hold. However, it is also necessary to understand meanings, functions, goals, and intentions of parenting behaviors and belief systems, which requires qualitative methods (Yoshikawa, et al., 2008). Yoshikawa et al. (2008) advocated the use of mixed methods in parenting research to better understand the dynamic, transactional process of development.

Thus, the current study utilizes a mixed methods approach to address the limitations of the traditional cross-cultural comparative paradigm. This study was intended to enrich people's understanding of contemporary Chinese parenting ideologies and practices through the use of mixed methods.

Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study. Many definitions have emerged for mixed methods. Creswell and Plano

Clark (2011) relied on a definition of core characteristics of mixed methods research. In mixed methods research, the researcher undertakes the following:

- collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both quantitative and qualitative data (based on the research questions);
- mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);
- uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study;
- frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and
- combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study (p. 5).

There are many types of mixed methods research designs. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) identified four key decisions that researchers need to consider when choosing an appropriate mixed methods research design. The four decisions include:

- “the level of interaction between strands³;
- the relative priority of the strands;
- the timing of the strands;

³ The word “strand” means the phase of a study. The strands of a research design are typically either quantitative or qualitative. Here “strand” means the quantitative or qualitative phase of a mixed methods study.

- the procedures for mixing the strands” (p. 64).

In the current study, an explanatory sequential design was used.

The Explanatory Sequential Design

The explanatory sequential design begins with the quantitative phase. In this phase, quantitative data are collected and analyzed. The quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase, in which qualitative data are collected and analyzed. Finally, the researcher interprets how qualitative findings help explain the quantitative results.

In the current study, quantitative data were first collected. However, due to time constraint, quantitative data were not exhaustively analyzed before the collection of qualitative data. Descriptive analyses were conducted, and descriptive information was used to select participants for the qualitative phase (see the next section for detailed description regarding selection of participants). Although qualitative interview questions were not created based on quantitative results, interview questions were created in attempt to align with the focus of the quantitative phase, in hopes that qualitative findings would help explain quantitative results. Table 1 presents the steps, procedures, and timeline for each step of the study.

Table 1

Steps, procedures, and timeline of the study

Steps	Procedure	Timeline
1. Quantitative Data Collection	Collecting quantitative data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent-reported data on: family demographics, parental expectations, parenting styles, child social competence and pre-academic performance. (N=154) Teacher-reported data on: child social competence and child pre-academic performance. 	August-November 2013
2. Initial Quantitative Data Analysis	Analyzing data using SAS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Univariate analysis: descriptive statistics 	November 2013
<u>3. Purposive Sampling</u>	Selecting parents for qualitative interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten parents were selected based on parental expectations, city, and child gender to maximize the variation of the sample. 	November 2013
4. Qualitative Data Collection	Conducting qualitative interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual interviews were conducted with selected parents (lasted 0.5~1.5 hours). 	December 2013
5. Quantitative Data Analysis	Analyzing data using Mplus and SAS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmatory factor analyses, exploratory factor analyses, and reliability analyses Descriptive analyses Correlation analyses Path analyses 	February-August 2014
6. Qualitative Data Analysis	Analyzing data using MAXQDA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coding and thematic analysis 	June-September 2014
<u>7. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Results</u>	Integrating two phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Qualitative results to explain Quantitative results. 	October-November 2014

Note. Step 3 and 7 are underlined to indicate the connections between the quantitative and qualitative phase in these two steps.

There are many advantages to the explanatory sequential design. These advantages include the following:

- This design appeals to quantitative researchers, because it often begins with a strong quantitative orientation.
- Its two-phase structure makes it straightforward to implement, because the research conducts the two methods in separate phases and collects only one type of data at a time.
- The final report can be written with a quantitative section followed by a qualitative section, making it straightforward to write and providing a clear delineation for readers.
- This design lends itself to emergent approaches where the second phase can be designed based on what is learned from the initial quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 83).

Procedure of the Current study

First, an application for the use of human subjects was submitted for review to the University Institution Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Revisions were made to the application based on requests from the IRB, and approval was granted under expedited review. In China, people are often reluctant to sign on paperwork, and they are very cautious about giving out signature. Due to this cultural difference, verbal consents were collected from participants instead of collecting signed consent forms, which is a very common practice in the United States.

Parents were recruited through preschools that their children were attending. A total of seven preschools were involved in this study. The researcher utilized two recruitment strategies. First, the researcher approached the directors of three preschools, and introduced the project to them. The directors of all three preschools granted

permission for recruitment at their schools. Recruitment was conducted at the beginning of the school year when parent-teacher conferences were usually held. The researcher talked to parents about the project and distributed flyers about the project at parent-teacher conferences. Parents were asked to leave their contact information if they were interested in participating. The research followed up with those parents to confirm participation. Second, the researcher recruited parents in the other four preschools through the help of a professor working in the field of early childhood education. The professor had connections with all four preschools, and she referred the researcher to the preschools. Classroom teachers in the four preschools told parents about the project and encouraged parents to participate. The researcher obtained a list of parents who were interested in participating from classroom teachers.

Upon parents' agreement to participate, they were asked to complete a set of questionnaires, including questionnaires measuring demographic information, parental expectations, parenting styles, children's social competence, and children's pre-academic performance. Classroom teachers helped to send the questionnaires home, and they also helped to collect the questionnaires from parents. To maintain confidentiality, each questionnaire was placed in an envelope when it was sent back home, so that parents could seal the envelope if they wanted to when they returned the questionnaire to teachers or the researcher.

Then, all questionnaire data were entered, and ten mothers (five with female children and five with male children) were selected from the sample on the basis of dispersion across their responses to the Parental Expectations Questionnaire and home city. Detailed information regarding selection is provided in the Methods of the

Qualitative Phase section (Section 3 of this chapter). Selected mothers were contacted about conducting interviews, and all ten mothers agreed to participate. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with mothers took place either in their homes or at their child's preschool. The researcher conducted all the interviews. Interviews lasted from half an hour to one and a half hours. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Both the quantitative part and the qualitative part of the data collection were conducted in Mandarin (standard Chinese).

Section 2: Methods of the Quantitative Phase

The current study began with the quantitative phase. This section provides a detailed description of the participants in the quantitative phase, as well as measurements used to assess variables of interest.

Participants

A total of 154 Chinese parents (133 mothers, 21 fathers) with preschool-aged children participated in the study. Children's ages ranged from three to six years with a mean age of 52.48 months (with a standard deviation of 6.84), and 47.4% of the children were girls. Parents were recruited from seven preschools located in three cities in northeastern China. Unlike many studies on Chinese parenting that were conducted in big urban cities, all three cities involved in the current study are small-sized cities with a population ranging from half a million to a little bit over one million. One of the cities (LC) is located in Shangdong Province, and the other two cities (JN and JR) are located in an adjacent province, Jiangsu Province. Both provinces are on the northeastern coast of China, and they are located on the North China Plain, but all three cities are inland cities. LC is about 470 miles away from JN and JR. JN and JR are 25 miles apart. The three

cities are similar in terms of economic development; they are either below or about average among all cities in China.

In the planning phase of the study, the researcher only planned to collect data from LC. However, due to difficulties of recruiting families, the researcher decided to recruit families in cities that have similar demographic and economic characteristics as LC, so that the samples from different cities would be similar to each other. As described previously, the researcher recruited families from JN and JR through the help of a professor working in the field of early childhood education. The professor worked in the capital city of Jiangsu Province, Nanjing. The researcher discussed the characteristics of LC with the professor, and the professor thought that JN and JR were similar to LC. Thus, recruitment took place in JN and JR.

Three preschools (55 families) from LC, two preschools (61 families) from JN, and two preschools (38 families) from JR were involved in this study. Parents reported their own as well their spouses' age, education level, and occupation (Table 2). Parents from the three cities were similar in terms of age (both fathers' and mothers' age), fathers' education, and family income, except that families from JN had slightly higher family income than those from LC and JR, and mothers from LC and JN had two more years of education on average than mothers from JR. Thus, regardless of some small differences, families from the three cities can be considered as comparable.

In these participating families, most parents were in their early thirties in age. In terms of education, 31% of the mothers and 44% of the fathers from the participating families had obtained a bachelor's or higher degree. Parental education was coded from 1 to 6 and used as a continuous variable in further analysis (Table 2). Adopting

classifications used in Xu's (2006) study, parents' occupation was classified into five categories. About 38% of the mothers and 10% of the fathers from the participating families were not employed outside of the home (e.g., stay-at-home parent) or worked as non-technical or semi-technical workers, such as farmers, factory workers, and waiters or waitresses. About 16% of the mothers and 18% of the fathers were technical workers (e.g., salesmen, owners of small stores, drivers, and mechanics). About 22% of the mothers and 26% of the fathers were semi-professionals and public servants, such as bankers, policemen, elementary teachers, owners of small business, and secretaries. About 20% of the mothers and 42% of the fathers worked as professionals and officers (e.g., accountants, doctors, engineers, lawyers, middle- and high-school teachers, middle-rank government officials, and departmental managers). Finally, about 3% of the mothers as well as fathers were high-level professionals and administrators, such as university faculty, chief executive officers, and high-rank government officials (e.g. governors, ministers). Parental occupation was coded from 1 to 5 and used as a continuous variable in further analysis.

The seven preschools involved in this study are considered as "good" or at least "average" schools in terms of the quality of teachers and school facilities. As shown in Table 2, most participating parents were from middle-class families. Thus, this sample may be representative of middle-class families from small-sized cities in China. Findings from the current study should not be generalized to low-income or affluent families in small-sized cities, nor should the findings be generalized to Chinese families from urban cities or rural areas.

A total of 37 classrooms were involved in this study. In one preschool, all

classrooms participated; in four preschools, only *zhong ban*⁴ classrooms (classrooms with four-year-old children) participated in the study; in the other two preschools, only one or two *zhong ban* classrooms participated in the study. Principles of the preschools recommended classrooms to participate taking into account of teachers' willingness to participate, time constraints, and space constraints (since videotaped data on parent-child interactions were also collected in the larger project, but the data were not analyzed in this study). In 15 classrooms, two families participated in the study; in 12 classrooms, five families participated; in five classrooms, four families participated; in two classrooms, 13 families participated; in one classroom, 11 families participated; in one classroom, six families participated; and in one classroom, one family participated. Head teachers of the target children were recruited to complete questionnaires measuring the target children's social competence and pre-academic performance. Teachers reported their years of experience, and other teacher demographic information was not collected.

⁴ Chinese preschool system is different from that of the United States. Chinese preschools usually include three grade levels: *xiao ban* (lower grade for three- to four-year-old children), *zhong ban* (middle grade for four- to five-year-old children), and *da ban* (upper grade for five- to six-year-old children).

Table 2

Parental age, education, and occupation

	Mother (N = 154)	Father (N = 154)
Age (years)	31.93	33.83
	(24 to 43)	(27 to 54)
Education:		
1 = Middle school or lower	15.03%	11.26%
2 = High school	18.95%	15.23%
3 = Associate degree	34.64%	29.8%
4 = Bachelor's degree	27.45%	35.76%
5 = Master's degree	3.92%	7.28%
6 = Doctoral degree	0	.66%
Occupation:		
1 = Non-technical or semi-technical worker (e.g., stay-at-home parents, farmers, factory workers)	38.16%	10.39%
2 = Technical worker (e.g., salesmen, drivers, mechanics)	15.79%	18.18%
3 = Semi-professional and public servant (e.g., bankers, policemen, secretaries)	22.37%	25.97%
4 = Professional and officer (e.g., doctors, accountants, managers)	20.39%	42.21%
5 = High-level professional and administrator (e.g., university faculty, CEOs, governors)	3.29%	3.25%

Measures

Several survey measures were used to assess variables of interest, including measures assessing families' demographic characteristics, parental expectations, parenting styles, and teacher- and parent-reported child social competence and pre-academic performance. Table 3 summarizes all survey measures used in the quantitative phase. Detailed information regarding each instrument is described in the following paragraphs.

Table 3

A summary of the survey measures used in the study

Measurement	Description
Demographic Questionnaire	The <i>Family Demographic Questionnaire</i> developed by Xu (2007) was used. It measures family demographic characteristics such as family type, income, and parental education and occupation. Participating parents completed this questionnaire.
Parental Expectations Questionnaire	The <i>Parental Expectations Questionnaire</i> was used to assess parents' expectations. The researcher developed this questionnaire based on two previous measurements on parental expectations. This questionnaire was used to assess parental expectations for children's social-emotional and academic development. Participating parents completed this questionnaire.
Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire	The <i>Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire</i> was used to assess parenting styles. It includes three scales: Authoritative Parenting (27 items), Authoritarian Parenting (20 items), and Permissive Parenting (15 items). Participating parents completed this questionnaire.
Social Competence Subscale	Both teachers and parents completed the Social Competence Subscale of the <i>Early School Behavior Rating Scale</i> . The Social Competence Subscale measures children's social competence. The parent version includes 16 items, while the teacher version includes 14 items. Most items from the parent version and the teacher version overlap.

Kindergarten Readiness Checklist	Both parents and teachers completed the adapted <i>Kindergarten Readiness Checklist</i> . This checklist was used to assess children's pre-academic performance. It includes items on children's cognitive, language, reading, writing, and math development.
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Family Demographic Questionnaire. Parents reported family demographic characteristics using the *Family Demographic Questionnaire* developed by Xu (2007). The questionnaire covers various demographic characteristics, such as family type (e.g., two-parent family, single-parent family), parental education and occupation, and family income.

Hollingshead (1975) used four factors to index social status, including education, occupation, sex, and marital status. In this sample, more than 95% of the parents reported their family as a two-parent family (other response options are “single-parent family”, “remarried family”, and “other”), and thus, marital status may not differentiate well the social status among these participating families. As a result, parental education and occupation were used as indicators of family social status in further analysis. Parents reported their own as well as their spouses' education level using six response options (1 = “middle school or lower”; 6 = “doctorate degree”). Xu (2007) customized five job categories to the Chinese population, ranging from “non-technical or semi-technical worker” to “high-level professional and administrators” (see Appendix A). See Table 2 for demographic information of the study sample.

Parental Expectations Questionnaire. Parental expectations were measured using the *Parental Expectations Questionnaire* (PEQ). The PEQ was adapted by the researcher from the widely used *Developmental Expectations Questionnaire* (DEQ; Hess et al., 1980) and the *Developmental Skills Instrument* (DSI; Willemsen & van de Vijver,

1997). No measure of Chinese parents' developmental expectations was found, so items were selected from the widely used DEQ developed among American and Japanese parents, and the DSI. Selected items were revised and adapted to Chinese culture. A few more items were created and added to better measure parents' expectations.

Each item describes a skill that parents might expect their children to master in early childhood. The PEQ includes two scales: the Social-Emotional Expectations scale and the Academic Expectations scale. Items from the Social-Emotional Expectations scale were further grouped into three subscales: Emotional Competence Skills, Social Skills, and Compliance (S. Denham, personal communication, March 7, 2013). The Emotional Competence Skills subscale depicts children's ability to manage emotions (7 items; e.g., "Stand disappointment without crying"). The Social Skills subscale captures children's relational skills and skills to make responsible decisions, including initiating and maintaining conversations, cooperating, taking turns, resolving social problems using effective methods, and prosocial behaviors (13 items; e.g., "Share his/her toys with other children"). The Compliance subscale measures children's ability to obey and comply (4 items; e.g., "Stop misbehaving when told"). The Academic Expectations scale contains 17 items capturing parents' expectations for children's development in reading, writing, math, and science (e.g., "Tells what season it is"; "Recognizes numbers from 1 to 10").

Parents first rated at what age they expected their child to master each skill (1 = "two years or younger"; 2 = "three years"; 3 = "four years"; 4 = "five years"; 5 = "six years or older"). They then rated how important each skill was for their child during preschool years using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = "not important"; 5 = "extremely important").

The researcher, whose native language is Chinese, translated the PEQ into Chinese. An expert in child development from the Hong Kong Institute of Education provided thorough feedback on the translation; the researcher revised the translation based on feedback provided. It took several iterations before the translation was finalized.

Since the scale has never been used among Chinese parents, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Mplus 7.0 to validate its use among Chinese parents. CFA was performed separately for the “age” and “importance” ratings. For the “age” ratings of Academic Expectations items, CFA results suggested that the items did not measure a single latent trait as indicated by poor model fit. Correlations among items showed that some items did not correlate with others. The lack of correlations may be due to the fact that some items are about skills that are relatively easy for preschool-aged children (e.g., “Count to 10”), while others are skills that are quite difficult for preschoolers (e.g., “Read 10 English words”). Schools did not require or teach children to master those difficult skills. Parents might have gauged their developmental expectations according to the school curriculum. Thus, the “age” ratings of the Academic Expectations scale were abandoned from further analyses.

The “age” and “importance” ratings of emotional competence, social skills, and compliance, as well as the “importance” ratings of academic skills all obtained acceptable model fit according to one or more model fit indices such as CFI (the comparative fit index), RMSEA (the root mean square error of approximation), and SRMR (the standardized root mean square residual). Table 4 reports the model fit information, including chi-square (the absolute model fit index), CFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and the range

of standardized factor loadings. All items achieved significant factor loadings. Table 5 reports the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each subscale/scale.

Table 4
Model fit information for the Parental Expectations Questionnaire subscales based on the confirmatory factor analysis

Subscale	Number of Items	χ^2 (p-value)	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	Standardized Factor Loadings
Emotional Competence-Age	7	24.96 (.04)	.95	.07 (.02 – .12)	.05	.30 – .83
Emotional Competence-Importance	7	26.97 (.02)	.94	.08 (.03 – .12)	.05	.36 – .77
Social Skills-Age	13	157.00 (<.01)	.87	.10 (.08 – .12)	.07	.53 – .73
Social Skills-Importance	13	190.40 (<.01)	.82	.11 (.09 – .13)	.07	.48 – .75
Compliance-Age	4	3.12 (.21)	.99	.06 (.00 – .19)	.03	.36 – .89
Compliance-Importance	4	.23 (.89)	1.00	.00 (.00 – .07)	.01	.38 – .86
Academic Skills-Importance	17	327.87 (<.01)	.83	.11 (.09 – .12)	.07	.47 – .79

Table 5

Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the Parental Expectations Questionnaire subscales

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (Raw)
Emotional Competence-Age	7	.790
Emotional Competence-Importance	7	.771
Social Skills-Age	13	.897
Social Skills-Importance	13	.891
Compliance-Age	4	.780
Compliance-Importance	4	.765
Academic Skills-Importance	17	.935

Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire. The *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSDQ; Robinson et al., 1995) was used to measure parenting styles. The PSDQ has been widely used among Western parents as well as among Chinese parents. The PSDQ includes three scales: Authoritative Parenting (27 items), Authoritarian Parenting (20 items), and Permissive Parenting (15 items). For each of the 62 items, parents were asked to rate how often they exhibited the behavior described in the item using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = “never”; 2 = “once in a while”; 3 = “about half of the time”; 4 = “very often”; 5 = “always”).

The Authoritative Parenting Scale contains four factors: (a) warmth and involvement (11 items; e.g., “I express affection by hugging, kissing, etc.”); (b) reasoning and induction (7 items; e.g., “I give child reasons why rules should be obeyed”); (c) democratic participation (5 items; e.g., “I take into account child’s preferences in making

plans for the family”); and (d) good nature/easygoing (5 items; e.g., “I am easygoing and relaxed with my child”). The Authoritarian Parenting Scale also includes four factors: (a) verbal hostility (4 items; e.g., “I yell or shout when child misbehaves”); (b) corporal punishment (6 items; e.g., “I grab child when the child misbehaves”); (c) non-reasoning/punitive strategies (6 items; e.g., “I punish by taking privileges away from child with little if any explanation”); and (d) directiveness (6 items; “I tell child what to do”). The Permissive Parenting Scale contains three factors, including (a) lack of follow through (6 items; e.g., “I bribe child with rewards to bring about compliance”); (b) ignoring misbehavior (4 items; e.g., “I allow child to annoy someone else”); and (c) lack of self-confidence (5 items; e.g., “I appear unsure on how to solve child’s misbehavior”). Robinson and colleagues (1995) initially tested the validity and reliability of the PSDQ among a sample of parents from the United States. The results indicated satisfactory factorial validity and reliability, and the Cronbach’s alphas were .91, .86, and .75 for the Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive Parenting Scale, respectively.

The PSDQ has been widely used among Chinese parents from big urban cities (e.g., Chen et al., 1997; Wu et al., 2002; Zhou et al., 2004). The Chinese version of the PSDQ was obtained from Robinson, the first author of the original questionnaire, and it was used without modification. Although the PSDQ has been used among Chinese parents from big urban cities, it has rarely been used among parents from small cities in China. Families’ lives in big cities and small cities can differ in many aspects, such as family income, access to public facilities and social services, stress, and social support. Thus, parents in small cities may display different patterns of parenting compared to parents in big cities. To ensure the usability of the questionnaire among this sample of

parents, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted first. Confirmatory factor analyses are often used to examine whether indicators (i.e., items) measure a common latent factor. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted with each factor separately, and the factors were identified by Robinson et al. (1995). According to the CFA results, all four Authoritative factors obtained acceptable model fits. Two Authoritarian factors (“Verbal Hostility” and “Corporal Punishment”) had acceptable model fits, while the other two Authoritarian factors (“Nonreasoning, Punitive Strategies” and “Directiveness”) did not obtain acceptable model fits. Finally, the three Permissive factors did not obtain a good model fit.

The CFA results suggested that the factor structures emerged among American parents might not be appropriate for contemporary Chinese parents, and different factor structures might work better for this sample of Chinese parents. Thus, exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were conducted next to explore what factors would emerge for this sample of Chinese parents. EFA were conducted with all 62 items to examine which factors would emerge among this sample of parents.

According to EFA findings, the factor loadings for most items from the Permissive Parenting Scale were low. Thus, the Permissive scale was not used in the study, which is consistent with previous studies among Chinese parents (e.g., Chan et al., 2009; Xu, 2007; Zhou et al., 2004). For instance, Xu (2007) found that the Permissive Parenting Scale had low reliability, and Xu argued that continuing efforts were needed to search for the indigenous Chinese parenting dimensions.

Based on the EFA results, one item from the Authoritative Parenting Scale and four items from the Authoritarian Parenting Scale were eliminated due to low factor

loadings. The researcher conducted a CFA again to further validate the factor structure of each factor after removing those five items, and an acceptable global model fit (e.g., CFI, RMSEA) and local fit (e.g., significant factor loadings, small normalized residuals) were obtained.

Interestingly, according to the EFA results, two items from the Authoritarian Parenting Scale and one item from the Permissive Parenting Scale loaded on the Authoritative factor: “Tells child what to do”, “Demands that child does/do things”, and “Sets strict well-established rules for child”. These three items seem to measure parents’ controlling behaviors in Western contexts. However, as Chen et al. (1997) described, “parents in China are often encouraged to be controlling based on affectionate attitudes towards the child” (p. 857), which is similar to the notion of *guan* (‘to govern’) proposed by Chao (1994). The notion of *guan* implies involved care, concern, and love for the child in addition to governing the child. The purpose of *guan* is not to dominate the child or override the child’s will, but rather to assure “the familial and societal goals of harmonious relations with others and the integrity of the family unit” (Chao, 1994, p. 1113). The researcher conducted a CFA on the three items, and factor loadings were constrained to be equal to assess the model fit since there were only three items. Results suggested that the three items measured a single construct, as indicated by both good global model fit and local fit. This factor was named “Clear Guidance” instead of “Directiveness” or “Parental Control” to align with the positive connotation of *guan* in Chinese culture. The “Clear Guidance” factor was grouped with the four original Authoritative factors, and the scale was labeled as the Authoritative/Clear Guidance Scale to indicate the changes.

Additionally, four items from the Permissive Parenting Scale loaded on the Authoritarian factor based on the EFA findings. The four items are all from the lack of self-confidence factor, and they measure parents' confidence in their parenting (e.g., "Is afraid that disciplining child for misbehavior will cause the child to not like his/her parents"). The CFA results showed that the four items measured a single construct. The construct was named as "Insecure Guidance", and this factor was grouped with the four original Authoritarian factors. This scale was labeled as the Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance Scale to reflect the changes.

The five factors of the Authoritative/Clear Guidance Scale were positively correlated with each other, with correlation coefficients ranging from .33 to .70; the correlation coefficients of the five Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance factors ranged from .15 to .48 (Table 6). Thus, items from each scale were combined and average scores were created, resulting in two composites – authoritative/clear Guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting. The Cronbach's alpha is .90 for the Authoritarian/ Clear Guidance Scale (29 items) and is .81 for the Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance Scale (20 items). The use of EFA proved to be advantageous in this study as EFA indicated slightly different factor structures that made sense for this sample of parents.

Table 6

Correlations among Authoritative/Clear Guidance Scale factors and those among

Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance Scale factors

	1	2	3	4	5
Authoritative/Clear Guidance					
1. Warmth & Involvement	–	.67***	.70***	.55***	.35***
2. Reasoning/Induction		–	.69***	.56***	.50***
3. Democratic Participation			–	.53***	.41***
4. Good Nature/Easy Going				–	.33***
5. Clear Guidance					–
Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance					
1. Verbal Hostility	–	.48***	.32***	.32***	.41***
2. Corporal Punishment		–	.46***	.31***	.42***
3. Non-reasoning			–	.35***	.29***
4. Directiveness				–	.15
5. Insecure Guidance					–

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

Social Competence subscale of the Early School Behavior Rating Scale.

Researchers have acknowledged that using multiple informants contributes valuable information to the examination of child functioning (e.g., Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Renk & Phares, 2004). Therefore, in this study, both parents and classroom teachers reported children's social competence independently.

Parents rated their child's social competence using the parent version of the Social Competence subscale of the *Early School Behavior Rating Scale*, and teachers used the teacher version (Caldwell & Pianta, 1991). This subscale was selected for two reasons.

First, it is short and easy for parents and teachers to fill out for parents and teachers. Second, it was used among Chinese parents and teachers in a recent study by Zhang (2011). The parent version consists of 16 items assessing a parent's perception of his or her child's social competence (e.g., "Plays well with other children"). The teacher version contains 14 items. Most of the items from the parent version and the teacher version overlap. Parents and teachers used four response alternatives (1 = "hardly ever"; 4 = "almost always") to rate how well each behavior listed in the scale described the child. Zhang (2011) translated the subscale into Chinese and reported Cronbach's alphas of .87 and .80 for Hong Kong mothers' and teachers' reports, respectively. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha was .79 for parents' reports, and it was .91 for teachers' reports. Parent- and teacher-reported child social competence did not correlate significantly, $r = .151$, $p = .072$, which might be due to that children behaved differently in the contexts of school and home. Thus, parent-reported and teacher-reported child social competence were analyzed separately in all the further analyses.

Kindergarten Readiness Checklist. Parents and teachers rated children's pre-academic performance using an adapted version of the *Kindergarten Readiness Checklist* ("Kindergarten Readiness Checklist," n. d.). The *Kindergarten Readiness Checklist* includes subscales measuring children's pre-academic development, social and emotional development, and physical development. There are five subscales on children's pre-academic development, and the five subscales were selected for use in the study, including the Cognitive (8 items; e.g., "State age and birthday"), Language (16 items; e.g., "Listen with interest to a short story [10 minutes or more]"), Reading (4 items; e.g., "Recognize print in everyday situation and recognize some everyday [sight] words"),

Writing (8 items; e.g., “Trace or draw a line with control”), and Math Development (7 items; e.g., “Make comparisons using words such as longer, shorter, larger, heavier”) subscale. Each item describes skills or knowledge that children may master in early childhood, and parents and teachers were asked to evaluate what the target child could do using four response options (1 = “not yet”; 2 = “almost always”). The “don’t know” option was also provided.

The five subscales were adapted to accommodate the Chinese culture. Items that are not appropriate for Chinese children were removed (e.g., “Identify letters [capital and small]”). Some items were revised in accommodation to the Chinese context. For example, the item “orally identify and recognize letters in name” was changed into “orally identify and recognize characters in name.” The researcher translated the adapted English version into Chinese. A Chinese expert on early childhood education who was a visiting scholar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln back-translated the Chinese version into English. Comparisons were carefully made between the original English version and the back-translated English version, and further revisions were made to address some minor differences.

A CFA was conducted separately for each subscale. Problematic items that caused model misfit were removed based on CFA results, reliability results, and descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation). All subscales achieved acceptable global model fit and local fit eventually. Eight items were removed from the parent version as well as from the teacher version. However, it is worth noting that five out of the eight removed items were common items in the parent and teacher versions. Table 7 reports the model fit information, including chi-square, CFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and the range of

standardized factor loadings. Table 8 presents the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each subscale.

Table 7

Model fit information for the Kindergarten Readiness Checklist subscales based on the confirmatory factor analysis

Subscale	Number of Items	χ^2 (p-value)	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	Standardized Factor Loadings
Parent-reported:						
Cognitive	7	19.83 (.14)	.95	.05 (.00 – .10)	.05	.40 – .63
Language	11	84.02 (<.01)	.91	.08 (.05 – .10)	.05	.35 – .80
Reading	4	1.09 (.58)	1.00	.00 (.00 – .13)	.02	.62 – .84
Writing	7	20.33 (.12)	.98	.05 (.00 – .10)	.03	.38 – .80
Math	6	8.64 (.47)	1.00	.00 (.00 – .09)	.04	.59 – .66
Teacher-reported:						
Cognitive	5	18.61 (<.01)	.94	.14 (.07 – .20)	.04	.49 – .89
Language	11	90.97 (<.01)	.92	.08 (.06 – .11)	.05	.54 – .85
Reading	4	1.27 (.53)	1.00	.00 (.00 – .14)	.02	.29 – .82
Writing	8	73.83 (<.01)	.89	.13 (.10 – .17)	.06	.61 – .83
Math	7	41.54 (<.01)	.91	.12 (.08 – .16)	.06	.50 – .83

Table 8

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each subscale from the Kindergarten Readiness

Checklist

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (Raw)
Parent-reported:		
Cognitive	7	.683
Language	11	.845
Reading	4	.745
Writing	7	.844
Math	6	.740
Teacher-reported:		
Cognitive	5	.807
Language	11	.891
Reading	4	.792
Writing	8	.918
Math	7	.898

The five subscales of the parents' reports were positively correlated with each other, and the correlation coefficients ranged from .39 to .74, and all the correlation coefficients were statistically significant. For teachers' reports, the correlation coefficients of the five subscales ranged from .49 to .75, and all correlation coefficients were statistically significant. Thus, items from all the subscales were combined and average scores were created, resulting in two composites – parent-reported child pre-academic performance and teacher-reported child pre-academic performance. The Cronbach's alphas for the parent version (35 items) and the teacher version (35 items)

were .91 and .96, respectively. Parent-reported child pre-academic performance was significantly correlated with teacher reports of child pre-academic performance ($r = .39, p < .001$).

Section 3: Methods of the Qualitative Phase

The purpose of the qualitative phase was to help interpret and explain results from the quantitative phase. Specifically, the qualitative phase was intended to help the researcher understand meanings and functions of parents' expectations, parents' rationales for placing a differential amount of value on different developmental domains, and reasons that parents preferred certain disciplinary strategies to others. Additionally, due to its open-ended nature, the qualitative phase also allowed parents to bring up issues that were not measured in the quantitative phase but had significance for parents. The following section describes the selection of participants and the qualitative interview.

Participants

Rich qualitative data were collected from a subset of the parents in the quantitative sample. Ten mothers were selected on the basis of dispersion across their responses to the Parental Expectations Questionnaire, child gender, and city. Parents were first assigned into four groups with two dimensions: parents' rated importance of social-emotional skills and academic skills as measured using the Parental Expectations Questionnaire. A mean-split method was used to create the four groups: Low Social-Emotional – Low Academic, Low Social-Emotional – High Academic, High Social-Emotional – Low Academic, and High Social-Emotional – High Academic.

Then two to three parents were selected from each group. To maximize variability and at the same time to avoid picking extreme cases, parents with scores about half to one

standard deviation away from the mean were selected, and a few parents had scores around the mean. In addition, about three to four parents were selected from each city. Five parents had female children, while the other five had male children. Although these criteria may introduce some selection bias, these ten parents are otherwise representative of the study sample in terms of child gender, city, and parental expectations. No father participated in the interview due to the small number of fathers in the study and time constraints on the part of the fathers.

Qualitative interview

As mentioned earlier, due to time constraints, qualitative data were collected before extensive data analyses were conducted on the quantitative data. Thus, the interview protocol was not developed based on results discovered in the quantitative phase. However, the purpose of the qualitative phase was to help explain quantitative results. To address this issue, interview questions were created to align with variables of interest in the quantitative phase. The interview questions focused on the mother's views on her child's development in social-emotional and academic domains; it was intended to elicit goals and expectations for the child, the role of parents in supporting the child's development, and disciplinary strategies (See Appendix B for the interview template).

In the quantitative phase, parental expectations were the focus of investigation. The researcher wanted to find out whether parents valued social-emotional skills equally as academic skills. As a result, one interview question was created to elicit parents' responses regarding whether they cared about children's social-emotional wellbeing and academic achievement equally, and parents were also encouraged to discuss their rationales and reasoning behind their responses. Parents were asked: "One mom told me

that she doesn't care a lot about her child's academic achievement, but she cares a lot about whether her child gets along well with people or regulates his/her emotions well.

How do you think about that?"

The quantitative phase was also focused on parenting styles. The way parents discipline a child is an important characteristic of parenting styles. Thus, a question on disciplining was created: "All parents have to use some kind of discipline/guidance about their children. How do you go about that? Give me some examples."

Other major questions include:

Do you think your child is developing well? How would you tell whether your child is developing well?

- Do you think your child is getting along well with peers? How about people in your family? Did it [paraphrasing parents' responses here] just happen by itself, or as a mother, what is your role in that? What have you done about that? How do you encourage that?
- Do you think your child is learning well? Did it just happen by itself, or as a mother, what is your role in that? What have you done about that? How do you encourage that?

Chapter 4: Quantitative Results

This chapter reports the quantitative findings. Four sets of analyses were conducted to answer the central research question: What are the relationships among Chinese parents' developmental expectations for their preschool-aged children, their parenting styles, and their children's social competence and pre-academic performance?

The purpose of the first set of analyses was to test Research Hypothesis 1: Parents will place more value on social-emotional skills than on academic skills; parents will have earlier expectations for children's mastery of social-emotional skills than for mastery of academic skills. To test this hypothesis, parents' ratings on emotional competence, social skills, compliance, and academic skills were compared against each other.

The second set of analyses focused on the relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations for their child, parenting styles, and child social competence. This set of analyses was conducted to test Research Hypothesis 2 and 4. A correlational analysis was conducted to test Research Hypothesis 2: Earlier expectations for children's development of social-emotional skills will relate to better child social competence; the degree to which parents value the development of social-emotional skills will be positively related to child social competence. Path analyses were conducted to test Research Hypothesis 4: Parents with earlier social-emotional expectations will report higher levels of authoritative parenting, but lower levels of authoritarian parenting, and subsequently, children will have better social competence; parents who place more value on the development of social-emotional skills will report higher levels of authoritative

parenting, but lower levels of authoritarian parenting, and children will have better social competence.

The third set of analyses concentrated on the relationships among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and child pre-academic performance. As explained in Chapter 1, no specific research hypothesis was made since the relationship among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and children's academic achievement is unclear according to literature. Both indirect effects and moderation effects of parenting styles were examined.

In the fourth set of analyses, the relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations, parenting styles, child social competence, and child pre-academic performance were explored. According to the literature, children's social-emotional functioning serves as the foundation for cognitive development in early childhood years (e.g., Denham, Bassett, Thayer, Mincic, Sirotkin, & Zinsler, 2012; Seifert, 2006). Thus, this set of analyses was intended to test whether parents' social-emotional expectations had indirect effects on children's pre-academic performance through parenting styles and child social competence.

Descriptive statistics of Chinese parents' expectations, parenting styles, and parent-reported as well as teacher-reported child social competence and pre-academic performance are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive statistics of parental expectations, parenting styles, child social competence, and child pre-academic performance (n = 154)

	Mean	Std	Min	Max
Parental Expectations:				
Emotional Competence-Age	3.00	.65	1.50	4.43
Emotional Competence-Importance	3.28	.62	1.67	5.00
Social Skills-Age	3.19	.63	1.64	4.54
Social Skills-Importance	3.35	.61	1.75	4.85
Compliance-Age	3.11	.80	1.25	4.75
Compliance-Importance	3.17	.71	1.25	5.00
Academic-Importance	2.64	.69	1.12	4.76
Parenting Styles:				
Authoritative/Clear Guidance	3.75	.49	2.45	4.86
Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance	2.13	.38	1.35	3.40
Child Social Competence:				
Parent-Reported Social Competence	2.67	.37	1.80	3.73
Teacher-Reported Social Competence	2.88	.57	1.64	3.86
Child Pre-academic Performance:				
Parent-Reported Pre-academic Performance	3.03	.50	1.72	3.92
Teacher-Reported Pre-academic Performance	2.96	.59	1.31	3.98

Note. The “age” ratings of parental expectations were on a 1 to 5 scale. The “importance” ratings of parental expectations were on a 1 to 5 scale. Parenting styles were measured using a 5-point scale. Child social competence was measured using a 4-point scale. Child pre-academic performance was measured using a 4-point scale.

First Set: Parental Expectations for Different Developmental Areas

Parents reported that they expected their child to master those social-emotional skills listed in the *Parental Expectations Questionnaire* around 4 years of age on average, and they perceived those skills as moderately important on average (see Table 9). It is worth noting that parents' "age" ratings and "importance" ratings were not significantly correlated, $r(154) = -.02, p = .82$, $r(154) = -.06, p = .47$, and $r(154) = -.15, p = .08$, for *emotional competence*, *social skills*, and *compliance*, respectively. The results suggested that a parent who had earlier expectations for his/her child's mastery of emotional competence skills, social skills, and compliance skills did not necessarily perceive those skills as more important for the child during the preschool years.

Parents' rated importance of social skills for their child during the preschool years was positively correlated with parental education and occupation (see Table 10). Parents with higher education and higher levels of occupation tended to value social skills more. Parents' rated importance of emotional competence was positively correlated with maternal education. Parents' rated expected age of social skills was negatively correlated with fathers' education, which suggests that when fathers in the families have higher education, parents tend to have earlier developmental expectations for child social skills (see Table 10).

The findings were consistent with Melvin Kohn's (1969) findings that middle-class American parents tended to value children's self-direction more than did working-class parents (e.g., valuing children's internal standards for managing the relationships with other people and one's self). However, compliance did not correlate with parental education or occupation, which was inconsistent with Kohn's finding that working-class

parents were more likely to value obedience than were middle-class parents (Kohn, 1969). This might be due to the fact that most families in this sample were middle-class, and it was not possible to detect such a relationship due to the lack of variability. Another potential explanation is that compliance may be valued differently in the Chinese context from in the U.S. context.

For parents' academic expectations, parental education and occupation were not related to parents' rated importance of academic skills for their child during preschool years. It seems that parents valued academic achievement equally regardless of their socio-economic status. This finding seems to differ from that of the study conducted by Hess et al. (1980). Hess et al. (1980) found that SES was related to early expectations of school-related skills among both Japanese and American parents.

Table 10

Correlations between parental expectations as measured by the Parental Expectations Questionnaire and parents' education and occupation levels

	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Father's Job	Mother's Job
Emotional Competence-Age	.11	.07	-.08	.11
Emotional Competence-Importance	.06	.17**	.06	.08
Social Skills-Age	-.003	-.07	-.21**	-.03
Social Skills-Importance	.22**	.29***	.15*	.17**
Compliance-Age	.02	.02	-.12	.03
Compliance-Importance	.03	.09	.05	-.01
Academic-Importance	-.04	-.03	-.11	-.12

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

Regarding parents' "age" ratings on emotional competence, social skills, and compliance, paired t-tests suggest that parents had earlier expectations for emotional competence than for social skills, $t(150) = 4.28, p < .001$, (Cohen's) $d = .35$, and compliance, $t(148) = 2.03, p = .044, d = .17$. There was no significant difference between expected ages for mastering social skills and compliance, $t(148) = 1.77, p = .079, d = .15$.

In terms of "importance" ratings, paired t-tests indicate that parents valued emotional competence, social skills, and compliance more than academic skills, $t(151) = 10.21, p < .001, d = .83$ (for emotional competence); $t(151) = 12.80, p < .001, d = 1.04$ (for social skills); and $t(148) = 10.23, p < .001, d = .84$ (for compliance). They valued emotional competence and social skills more than compliance, $t(148) = 2.26, p = .025, d = .19$, and $t(148) = 4.14, p < .001, d = .34$, respectively. Parents valued emotional competence and social skills equally, $t(151) = 1.66, p = .099, d = .13$.

Second Set: Social-Emotional Expectations, Parenting Styles, and Child Social Competence

Social-emotional expectations and child social competence. Parents' rated expected age for the mastery of emotional competence skills, social skills, and compliance skills was negatively correlated with parent-reported child social competence (see Table 11). The results indicate that if a parent has earlier expectations for his/her child's social-emotional development, the parent tends to perceive that the child has better social competence. It is also plausible that parents adjusted their expectations based on their perceptions of their child's development. For instance, parents might raise their

expectations if they perceived that their child had high social competence, as they believed that the child was able to and ready to develop more advanced social-emotional skills. In addition, parents' rated importance of social skills was positively correlated with child social competence (see Table 11). Specifically, parents tended to perceive their child having better social competence when they valued social skills more. Parents' rated importance of emotional competence and compliance was not associated with child social competence. Additionally, teacher-reported child social competence was not correlated with any of the parental expectations variables.

Parenting styles and child social competence. Paired sample t-tests suggested that parents reported higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting than authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, $t(153) = 29.60, p < .001, d = 2.39$. Authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting were negatively correlated, $r(154) = -.23, p = .005$.

Consistent with previous findings discovered among Chinese parents and children (e.g., Chen et al., 1997), authoritative/clear guidance parenting was positively related to parent-reported child social competence, $r(154) = .47, p < .001$, and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting was negatively associated with parent-reported child social competence, $r(154) = -.23, p = .005$ (see Table 11). However, teacher-reported child social competence was not correlated with parenting styles.

Social-emotional expectations and parenting styles. Parents' expected age for the mastery of social skills was negatively correlated with authoritative/clear guidance parenting, $r(154) = -.26, p = .001$, and a similar relationship was found between expected age of compliance and authoritative/clear guidance parenting, $r(154) = -.24, p = .004$.

When parents had earlier expectations for their children's mastery of social skills or compliance, they were more likely to adopt authoritative/clear guidance parenting. However, expected age for the mastery of emotional competence, social skills, or compliance was not related to authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting (see Table 11).

Parents' rated importance of social skills was positively related to authoritative/clear guidance parenting, $r(154) = .31, p < .001$, whereas there was no significant relationship between rated importance of social skills and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting (see Table 11). When parents placed more importance on children's development of social skills during the preschool years, they were more likely to adopt authoritative/clear guidance parenting.

Table 11

Correlations among parents' expectations, parenting styles, and parent-reported and teacher-reported child social competence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Emotional Competence-Age	-	-.02	.65***	-.11	.61***	-.10	-.11	-.04	-.27***	.10
2. Emotional Competence-Importance		-	-.05	.62***	-.10	.45***	.10	-.05	.13	.06
3. Social Skills-Age			-	-.06	.75***	-.13	-.27***	.09	-.36***	.01
4. Social Skills-Importance				-	-.10	.59***	.31***	-.13	.22**	.08
5. Compliance-Age					-	-.14	-.24**	.11	-.28***	.00
6. Compliance-Importance						-	.10	-.06	.05	.00
7. Authoritative/Clear Guidance							-	-.23**	.47***	.10
8. Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance								-	-.23**	-.11
9. Parent-reported Social Competence									-	.15
10. Teacher-reported Social Competence										-

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

Social-emotional expectations, parenting styles and child social competence.

It was hypothesized that parents' social-emotional expectations would have indirect effects on children's social competence through parenting styles. To test this hypothesis, path analyses were conducted using Mplus 7.0 under maximum likelihood estimation. Path analyses were conducted for parent-reported child social competence, but not for teacher-reported child social competence, because teacher-reported child social competence was not related to any of the parental expectations or parenting styles variables.

In the first path model for parent-reported child social competence, the six social-emotional expectations variables (i.e., "age" and "importance" of emotional competence, social skills, and compliance) were treated as predictor variables, while parent-reported child social competence was the dependent variable. Authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance were entered in the model as the middle variables linking parental expectations and child social competence. Authoritative/insecure guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting variables were allowed to be correlated as they were significantly correlated according to the correlational analysis (see Table 11), and moreover, the model fit was not acceptable without correlating the two variables. Child age was also entered as a predictor variable to control for the effect of age on child social competence since age was positively correlated with parent-reported child social competence, $r(154) = .17, p = .042$. Additionally, age was also entered to predict authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting to control for the effects of age on parenting styles. Child gender was not included in the model, because child gender was not correlated with any variable in the model. This model was a

perfect model, which means that all possible paths were identified and there was no degree of freedom left. As a result, the model fit was perfect, and thus, the strength of the paths (i.e., standardized factor loadings) was the main focus. Table 12 presents the unstandardized and standardized coefficients of all the indirect effects of social-emotional expectations on parent-reported child social competence through parenting styles in the full model.

According to this full model, parental expectations for emotional competence or compliance (both “age” and “importance” ratings) had no significant direct or indirect effect on parent-reported child social competence. Thus, rated age and importance of emotional competence and compliance were removed from the full model. Furthermore, authoritarian/insecure guidance did not significantly account for any relationship between parental expectations and parent-reported child social competence, so authoritarian/insecure guidance was removed from the full model. In addition, child age did not significantly relate to authoritative/clear guidance parenting, so the path from child age to authoritative/clear guidance parenting was also removed. A more parsimonious model was examined next (the second model, see Figure 2).

The model fit for the more parsimonious model was acceptable, $\chi^2(1) = 4.30, p = .04$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .15, and SRMR = .04. In Figure 2, standardized regression coefficients are presented. Standardized regression coefficients indicate the amount of change in the predicted variable with one unit of change in the predictor variable. The model shows that parents’ earlier expectations for children’s mastery of social skills were related to higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, which, in turn, was related to better child social competence. The indirect effect of expected age of social

skills on children's social competence through authoritative/clear guidance parenting was significant with a standardized estimate of $-.09$, $p = .005$. It is worth noting that even after controlling for the effect of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, expected age for the mastery of social skills was still significantly related to child social competence. Thus, the relationship between expected age for the mastery of social skills and children's social competence was partially accounted for by authoritative/clear guidance parenting.

Similarly, parents' rated importance of social skills was significantly related to the adoption of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, which, in turn, was related to better children's social competence. The indirect effect of rated importance of social skills on children's social competence through authoritative/clear guidance parenting was significant with a standardized estimate of $.10$, $p = .003$. Nevertheless, after controlling for the effect of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, parents' rated importance of social skills was no longer significantly related to children's social competence, which suggests that the relationship between the amount of importance parents placed on social skills and children's social competence was fully accounted for by authoritative/clear guidance parenting. The results suggest that authoritative/clear guidance parenting was an important intermediate variable to consider in terms of the relations between the degree to which parents value social skills and children's social competence.

Table 12

Indirect effects of parents' expectations for emotional competence, social skills, and compliance on parent-reported child social competence through parenting styles in the full (perfect) model

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	P-value (for Standardized coefficients)
Though Authoritative/Clear Guidance Parenting:			
Emotional Competence-Age	.04	.06	.108
Emotional Competence-Importance	-.04	-.07	.072
Social Skills-Age	-.07	-.12	.013
Social Skills-Importance	.10	.16	.001
Compliance-Age	-.02	-.03	.433
Compliance-Importance	-.02	-.05	.179
Through Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance Parenting:			
Emotional Competence-Age	.01	.02	.238
Emotional Competence-Importance	-.01	-.01	.474
Social Skills-Age	-.01	-.02	.363
Social Skills-Importance	.01	.02	.342
Compliance-Age	-.01	-.02	.310
Compliance-Importance	< .01	< .01	.937

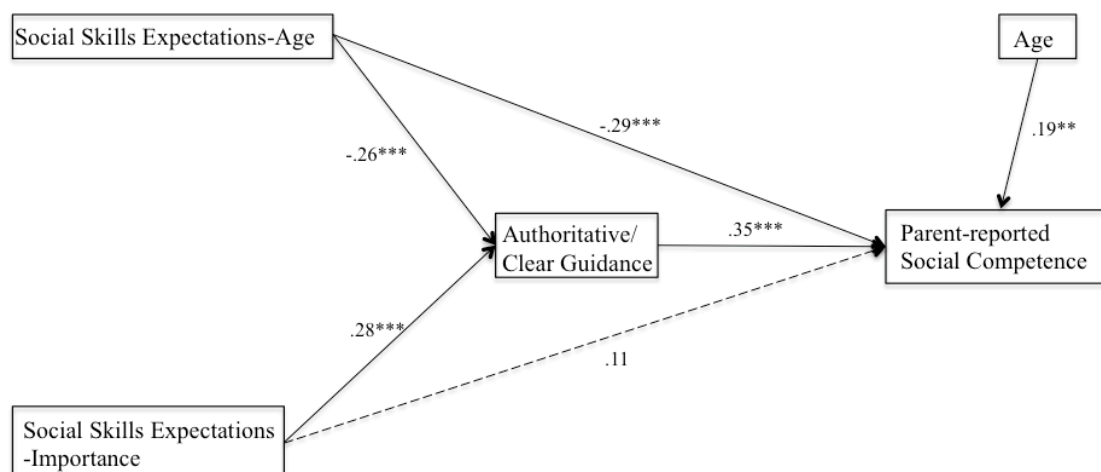


Figure 2. Path model showing the relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations, parenting styles, and parent-reported child social competence. Solid lines are used for significant paths and dashed lines are used for nonsignificant paths (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$).

Third Set: Academic Expectations, Parenting Styles, and Child Pre-academic Performance

Correlational analyses showed that parents' rated importance of academic skills was not associated with either parent-reported or teacher-reported child pre-academic performance (see Table 13). Parents' rated importance of academic skills did not relate to parenting styles.

Consistent with previous findings that children with authoritative parents had higher levels of academic achievement than their counterparts with authoritarian parents (Dornbusch et al., 1987), authoritative/clear guidance parenting was positively correlated with parent-reported child pre-academic performance, $r(154) = .42, p < .001$, whereas an opposite relationship was found for authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, $r(154) = -$

.19, $p < .001$. However, teacher-reported child pre-academic performance did not relate to parenting styles (see Table 13).

Table 13

Correlations among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and child pre-academic performance

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic-Importance	–	.02	-.04	-.03	.03
2. Authoritative/Clear Guidance		–	-.23**	.42***	.15
3. Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance			–	-.19*	-.01
4. Parent-reported Pre-academic Performance				–	.39***
5. Teacher-reported Pre-academic Performance					–

Both indirect effects and moderation effects of parenting styles on the relationships between parents' academic expectations and child pre-academic performance were explored, since the effect of parenting styles on the relationships between the two is unclear based on previous research. Parents with high academic expectations may adopt very different parenting. Previous research suggested that controlling and authoritarian parenting strategies might be valued in the hierarchical collectivistic Chinese society, and it might be associated with adaptive outcomes in Chinese children (e.g., Chiu, 1987). It is plausible that parents with high academic expectations adopt different strategies to promote their child's academic achievement.

For instance, one family may be warm and supportive, while the other family may be authoritarian and controlling to “push” the child to succeed academically.

First, the indirect effects of parenting styles were examined. Due to the lack of relationships between academic expectations and parenting styles, it was predicted that parents’ rated importance of academic skills would not have an indirect effect on child pre-academic performance through parenting styles.

In the full model for parent-reported child pre-academic performance (see Figure 3), parents’ rated importance of academic skills was entered as the predictor variable, and parent-reported child pre-academic performance was the dependent variable.

Authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance were entered in the model as the middle variables linking parents’ academic expectations and parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting variables were allowed to be correlated as they were significantly correlated according to the correlational analysis (see Table 11). Child age was also entered as a predictor variable to control for the effect of age on child pre-academic performance. Additionally, child age was also entered to predict authoritative/clear guidance and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting to control for the effect of child age on parenting styles. Child gender was not included in the model since child gender was not significantly correlated with any variable in the model. Thus, this model was a perfect model, which means that all possible paths were identified and there was no degree of freedom left. As a result, the model fit was perfect, and thus, the strength of the paths (i.e., standardized factor loadings) was the main focus.

In Figure 3, standardized regression coefficients are presented. The model indicates that parents' rated importance of academic skills had no direct effect on parenting styles. In addition, parents' rated importance of academic skills had no significant indirect effect on parent-reported child pre-academic performance through authoritative/clear guidance parenting (the standardized estimate of the indirect effect was .01, $p = .74$), or through authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting (the standardized estimate of the indirect effect was .004, $p = .63$).

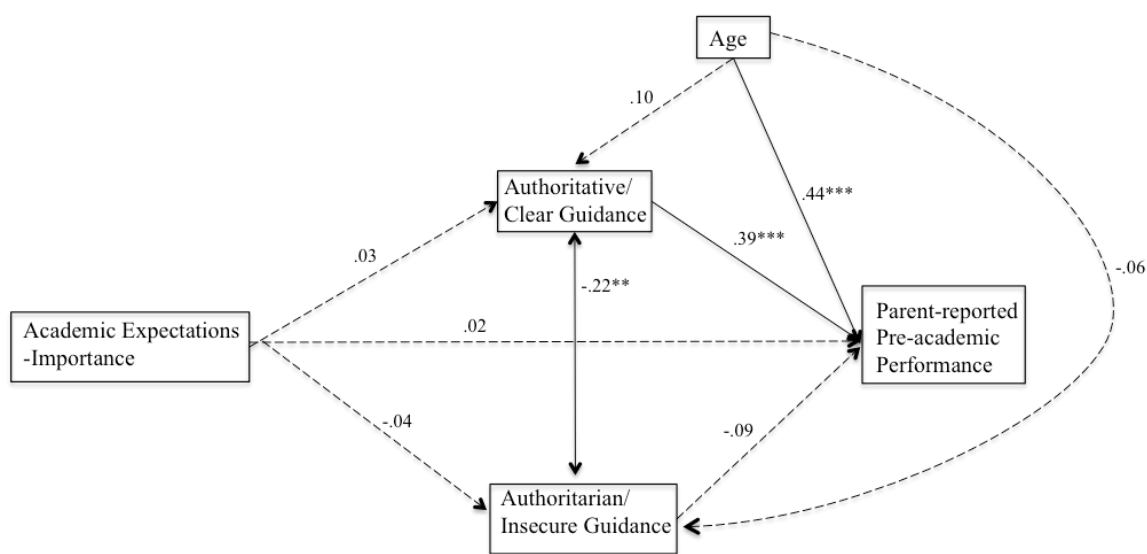


Figure 3. Path model showing the relationships among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Solid lines are used for significant paths and dashed lines are used for nonsignificant paths (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$).

In the full model for teacher-reported child pre-academic performance (see Figure 4), all the variables and paths were the same as the model in Figure 3 except that the dependent variable was teacher-reported child pre-academic performance. In Figure 4, standardized regression coefficients are presented. The model indicates that parents' rated

importance of academic skills had no direct effect on parenting styles. In addition, there was no significant indirect relationship between parents' rated importance of academic skills and teacher-reported child pre-academic performance through authoritative/clear guidance (the standardized estimate of the indirect effect was .003, $p = .75$), or through authoritarian/insecure guidance (the standardized estimate of the indirect effect was -.002, $p = .69$).

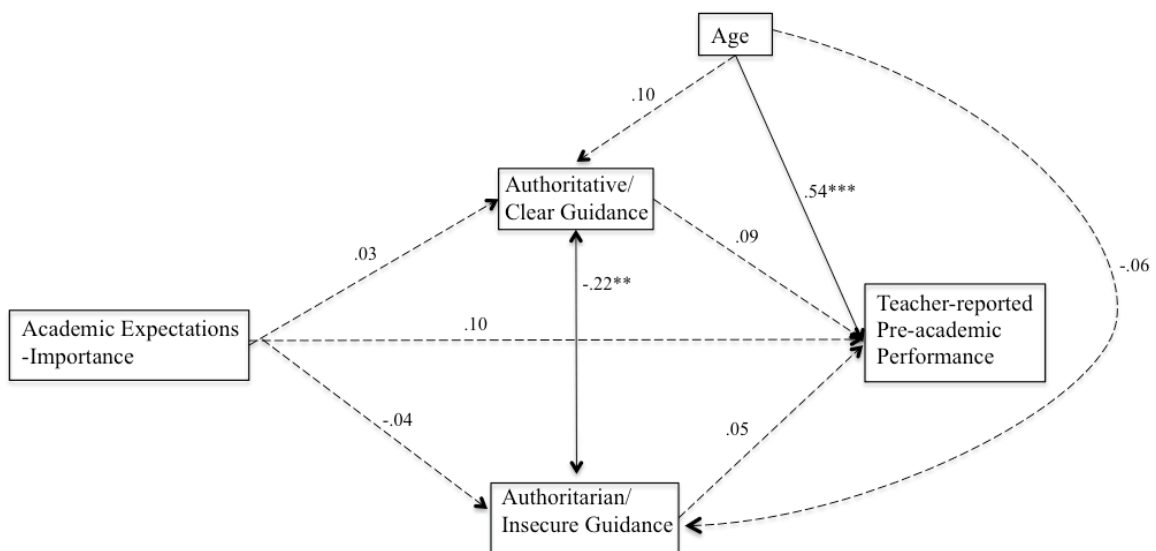


Figure 4. Path model showing the relationships among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and teacher-reported child pre-academic performance. Solid lines are used for significant paths and dashed lines are used for nonsignificant paths (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$).

Then, the moderation effects of parents' rated importance of academic skills on parenting styles in predicting child pre-academic performance were examined. Parenting styles, as the general emotional climate in which specific parenting practices are expressed (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), may strengthen or undermine the influence of parents' academic expectations on child academic achievement. Parents with high

academic expectations may adopt very different parenting styles. For instance, in one possible scenario, a parent who has high academic expectations for the child may believe that strict parenting is the best way to help the child succeed in school, and thus, the parent may be authoritarian and controlling, in order to “push” the child to succeed academically; while in another possible scenario, a parent with high academic expectations may believe that being sensitive to the child’s feelings and needs and being supportive to the child can create a good learning environment for the child, and thus, the parent may be sensitive to the child’s needs, authoritative, and supportive to promote children’s development in the academic domain. Therefore, it is possible that parenting styles moderate the relationships between parents’ academic expectations and children’s pre-academic performance.

In the general linear model for parent-reported child pre-academic performance, parent-reported child pre-academic performance was entered as the dependent variable. In this model, children’s age, parents’ rated importance of academic skills, authoritative/clear guidance parenting, authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, the interaction term between authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parents’ rated importance of academic skills, and the interaction term between authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting and parents’ rated importance of academic skills were entered as predictors. Children’s gender was not included in the model since child gender was not significantly correlated with any variable in the model. The estimates of fixed effects, standard errors of estimates, t-values, and associated p-values are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Estimates of the fixed effects of the general linear models for child pre-academic

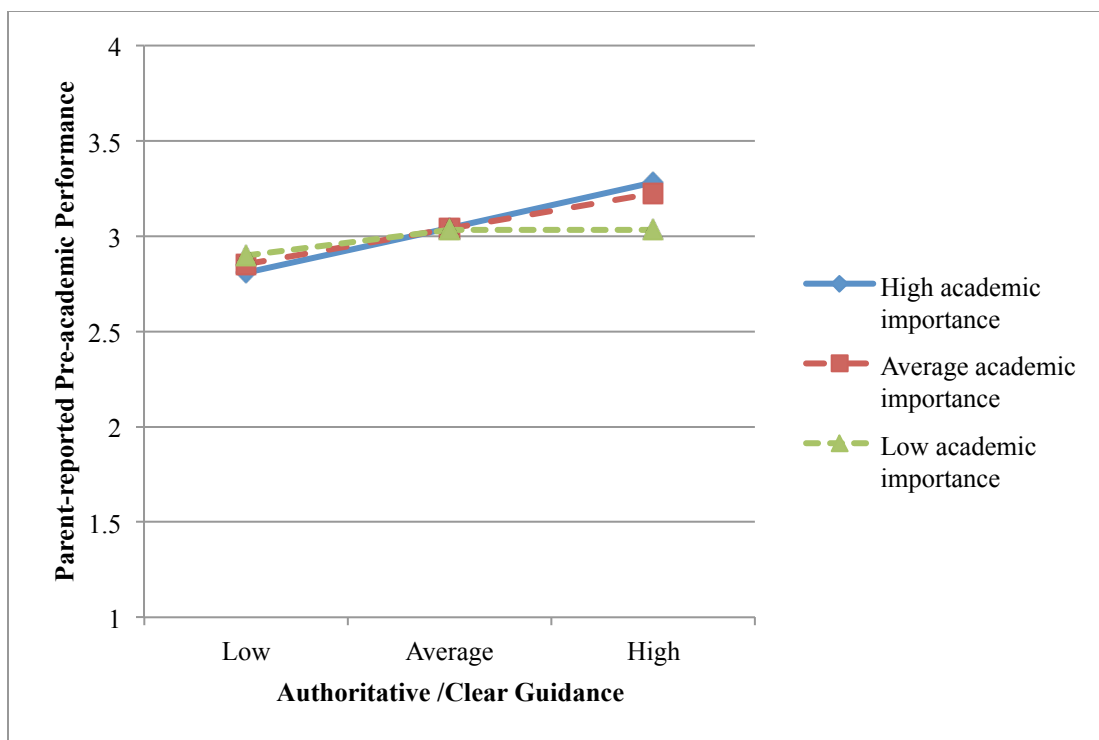
performance (N = 154)

Fixed Effects	Estimate	Standard Error	df	t-value	p-value
Parent-reported child pre-academic performance as the dependent variable:					
Intercept	3.038	.031	141	98.87	<.001
Age	.031	.005	141	6.75	<.001
Academic Importance (AI)	.009	.046	141	.19	.847
Authoritative/Clear Guidance	.378	.065	141	5.79	<.001
Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance	-.139	.083	141	-1.67	.097
AI*Authoritative/Clear Guidance	.151	.088	141	1.72	.088
AI*Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance	.262	.136	141	1.92	.057
Teacher-reported child pre-academic performance as the dependent variable:					
Intercept	2.976	.042	132	71.52	<.001
Age	.047	.006	132	7.64	<.001
Academic Importance (AI)	.104	.062	132	1.69	.093
Authoritative/Clear Guidance	.096	.091	132	1.05	.294
Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance	.059	.111	132	.53	.599
AI*Authoritative/Clear Guidance	-.074	.119	132	-.62	.535
AI*Authoritarian/Insecure Guidance	.294	.184	132	1.60	.111

Note: All variables were centered at its mean. "df" represents "degrees of freedom."

As shown in Table 14, the interaction between parents' rated importance of academic skills and authoritative/clear guidance parenting was marginally significant, so was the interaction between parents' rated importance of academic skills and

authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting. Figure 5 illustrates the moderation effect of academic importance on authoritative/clear guidance parenting (authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting was centered at its mean in this figure). For one unit increase in parents' rated importance of academic skills, the effect of authoritative/clear guidance parenting on child pre-academic performance increases by .151, $p = .088$. As shown in Figure 5, parents who had high levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting and perceived academic skills as important rated their children having high levels of pre-academic performance. However, parents' rated importance of academic skill did not seem to have huge influence on parent-reported child pre-academic performance when parents reported low to average levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, as indicated by the close distance between lines.

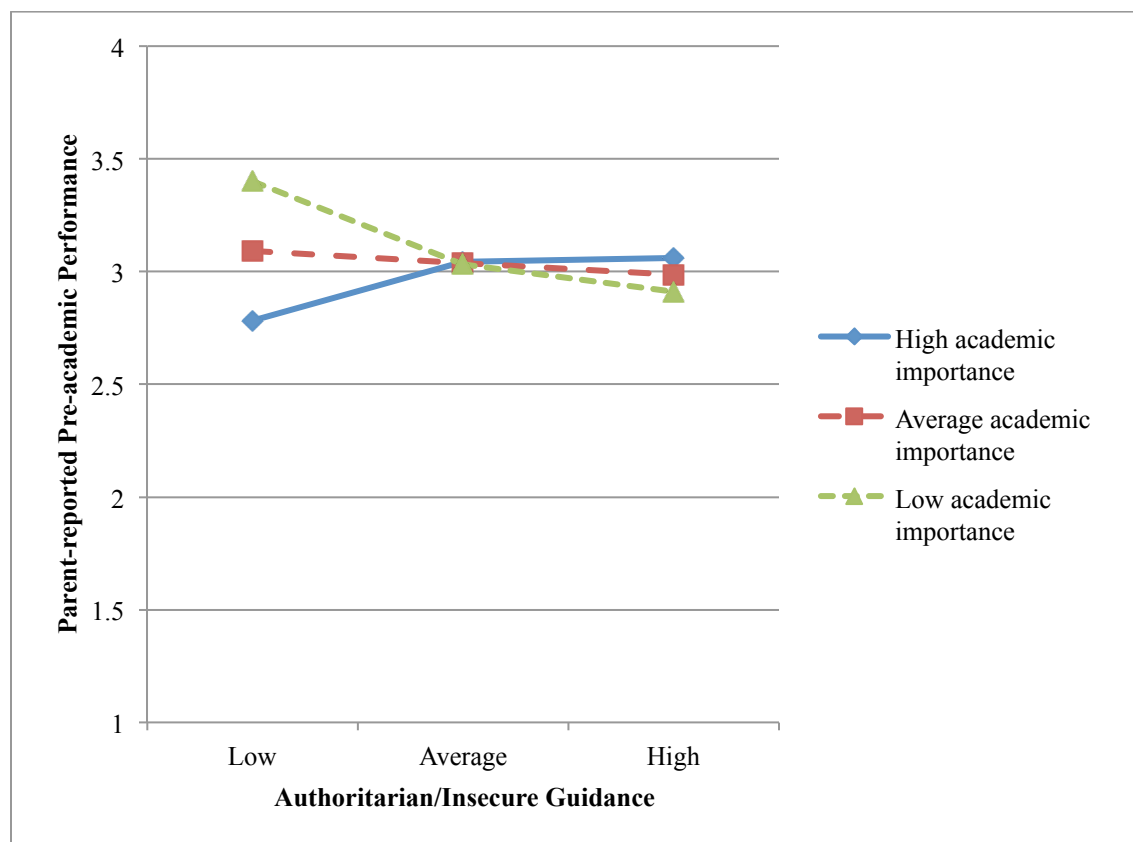


Note. “Low” represents one standard deviation below the mean; “average” represents at the mean; and “high” represents one standard deviation above the mean.

Figure 5. The moderation effect of parents’ rated importance of academic skills on authoritative/clear guidance parenting in predicting parent-reported child pre-academic performance.

Figure 6 illustrates the moderation effect of parents’ rated importance of academic skills on authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting in predicting parent-reported child pre-academic performance. For one unit increase in parents’ rated importance of academic skills, the effect of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting on child pre-academic performance would change by .262, $p = .057$. For parents with low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, children had the best pre-academic performance when their parents reported low importance of the academic skills listed in the Parental Expectations Questionnaire. However, parents’ rated importance of academic skill did not seem to have huge influence on authoritarian/insecure guidance

parenting in predicting parent-reported child pre-academic performance when parents reported average to high levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, as indicated by the close distance between lines.



Note. “Low” represents one standard deviation below the mean; “average” represents at the mean; and “high” represents one standard deviation above the mean.

Figure 6. The moderation effect of parents’ rated importance of academic skills on authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting in predicting parent-reported child pre-academic performance.

In the general linear model for teacher-reported child pre-academic performance, teacher-reported child pre-academic performance was entered as the dependent variable (see Table 14). All the predictor variables were the same as in the general linear model for parent-reported child pre-academic performance. The estimates of fixed effects,

standard errors for estimates, t-values, and associated p-values are presented in Table 14. According to this model, there was no significant interaction between parents' rated importance of academic skills and authoritative/clear guidance parenting in predicting teacher-reported child pre-academic performance. There was no significant interaction between parents' rated importance of academic skills and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, either.

Fourth Set: Social-emotional Expectations, Parenting Styles, Child Social Competence, and Child Pre-academic Performance

A growing body of research has indicated that social-emotional competency is not independent from children's cognitive development; rather, researchers increasingly acknowledge the social-emotional foundations for cognitive development during early childhood (Seifert, 2006). "Schools are social places ... learning is a social process" (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007, 9. 191), and "even preschoolers learn alongside and in collaboration with teachers and peers, and utilize their emotions to facilitate learning" (Denham et al., 2012, p. 247). Thus, the purpose of this set of analyses was to examine whether children's social competence served as a potential mechanism through which children's pre-academic skills developed.

According to the path analyses of the relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations, parenting styles, and child social competence, the final model only included parents' expectations for social skills, authoritative/clear guidance parenting, and parent-reported child social competence. Thus, in the following set of path models, only parents' expectations for social skills, authoritative/clear guidance

parenting, and parent-reported child social competence were included in predicting children's pre-academic performance.

In the first path model (see Figure 7), parent-reported child pre-academic performance was examined. In this model, parents' rated age and importance of social skills were entered as predictor variables, while parent-reported child pre-academic performance was treated as the dependent variable. Authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child social competence variables were entered in the model as the middle variables linking parents' academic expectations and parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Meanwhile, child age was entered as a predictor to control for the effect of children's age on children's social competence and pre-academic performance.

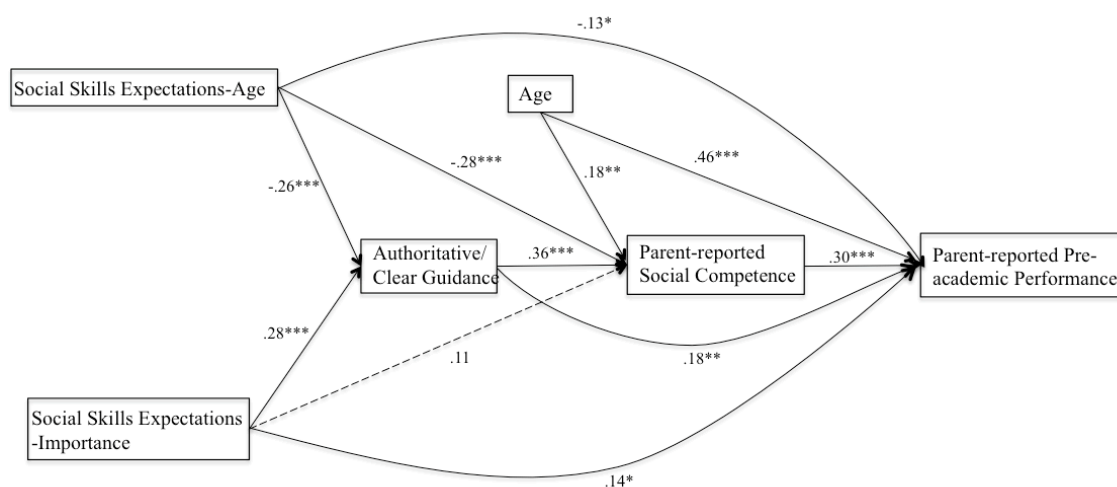


Figure 7. Path model showing the relationships among parents' social-emotional expectations, parenting styles, parent-reported child social competence, and parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Solid lines are used for significant paths and dashed lines are used for nonsignificant paths (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$).

The model fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(1) = 4.30, p = .04, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .15,$

and SRMR = .05. In Figure 7, standardized regression coefficients are presented. Standardized regression coefficients indicate the amount of change in the predicted variable with one unit of change in the predictor variable. The model shows that parents' earlier expectations of children's mastery of social skills was related to higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, which, in turn, was related to better parent-reported child social competence, and was eventually related to better parent-reported child pre-academic performance. It is worth noting that after controlling for the effect of authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child social competence, parents' expected age of social skills still had a significant direct effect on parent-reported child pre-academic performance.

Similarly, parents' rated importance of social skills was significantly related to higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, which, in turn, was related to better child social competence, and was eventually related to better parent-reported child pre-academic performance. It is worth noting that after controlling for the effect of authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child social competence, parents' rated importance of social skills still had a significant direct effect on parent-reported child pre-academic performance.

Finally, after controlling for the effect of parent-reported child social competence, authoritative/clear guidance parenting still had a significant direct effect on parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Thus, parent-reported child social competence only partially accounted for the relationship between authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-report child pre-academic performance.

Table 15 reports all the indirect effects that parents' social skills expectations had

on parent-reported child pre-academic performance, as well as all the indirect effects that authoritative/clear guidance parenting had on parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Parents' rated age and importance of social skills was significantly related to parent-reported child pre-academic performance through their effects on authoritative/clear guidance parenting. Parents' rated age of social skills, but not rated importance, was significantly related to parent-reported child pre-academic performance through its effect on parent-reported child social competence. In addition, authoritative/clear guidance parenting was also significantly related to parent-reported child pre-academic performance through its effect on parent-reported child social competence. Finally, parents' rated age and importance of social skills was significantly related to parent-reported child pre-academic performance through their effects on authoritative/clear guidance parenting and then on parent-reported child social competence.

In the next path model, teacher-reported child pre-academic performance was examined as the dependent variable. This model was exactly the same as the last model (see Figure 7) except that teacher-reported child pre-academic performance was the dependent variable instead of parent-reported child pre-academic performance. The model fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(1) = 4.30, p = .04, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .15,$ and $SRMR = .04$. However, none of the indirect effects was statistically significant.

Table 15

Indirect effect of social skills expectations on parent-reported child pre-academic performance through authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child social competence

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	P-value (for Standardized coefficients)
Through Authoritative Parenting:			
Social Skills-Age	-.04	-.05	.039
Social Skills-Importance	.04	.05	.033
Through Child Social Competence:			
Social Skills-Age	-.06	-.09	.004
Social Skills-Importance	.03	.03	.161
Authoritative Parenting	.11	.11	.002
Through Authoritative Parenting, then Child Social Competence:			
Social Skills-Age	-.02	-.03	.021
Social Skills-Importance	.02	.03	.016

Chapter 5: Qualitative Findings

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted on the verbatim transcripts of the interviews. The author first translated the longest and seemingly richest interview into English. The author and two experts in early childhood development and education independently coded the selected interview and discussed what to code. Then the author coded all the interviews in the original language using a sentence-by-sentence approach. A code was assigned to each sentence or statement identified. More codes were added to the original coding scheme as the coding process unfolded. To search for patterns and themes, an abstraction process was conducted; similar and overlapping codes were first grouped together, and overarching themes were developed to capture the commonality of the codes and to describe the phenomena (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). The author met regularly with one of the experts to have ongoing discussion about the coding process. Member checking was conducted by presenting themes to four of the participating mothers for verification and further explication. All four mothers thought that the themes accurately summarized their own parenting experiences. One mother added that she might pay more attention to her daughter's academic performance when she gets older.

Five major themes were extracted through an iterative coding process. The first three themes were expected since they were the focus of the interview questions, including parents' socialization goals for children, their views on the relative importance of children's social-emotional wellbeing and academic performance, and their use of disciplinary strategies. However, the last two themes (conflicts in parenting, and uncertainty and efforts) were not expected, yet provocative and potentially important.

Although none of the interview questions was focused on conflicts in parenting within the family or parents' uncertainty and efforts to become a good parent, parents spontaneously brought these subjects up in the conversation, suggesting that these were critical issues that parents might have been pondering.

Socialization Goals

Table 16 lists the socialization goals that parents talked about in the interviews, as well as the frequency of each goal. Academic performance is not listed since it will be discussed thoroughly in the following section.

Table 16

Frequency of socialization goals emerged from parent interviews (n = 10)

Socialization goals	Frequency
Psychological health (<i>xin li jian kang</i>)	5/10
Social skills (<i>she jiao</i>)	5/10
Independence (<i>zi zhu</i>)	4/10
Good demeanor (<i>you li mao</i>)	4/10
Emotional control (<i>qing xu kong zhi</i>)	3/10
Happiness (<i>kai xin</i>)	3/10
Self confidence / Self-esteem (<i>zi xin/zi zun</i>)	2/10
Others (e.g., kindness, "acceptable" sexual orientation, good daily living habits, sharing, compliance)	1/10

Half of the parents valued children's psychological health. Although parents did not explicitly define what they meant by "psychological health," it appeared mainly about children's mental health and self-esteem, according to parents' explanations. As

discussed previously, parents were concerned about children's psychological health, especially under excessive academic pressure.

Five parents elaborated on the importance of social skills. However, it is worth noting that although the other five parents did not mention socialization of children's social skills, it was not because they did not value children's social skills but rather because their children did not have trouble socializing with peers, families, or other adults based on parents' observations. Parents focused on different aspects of social skills that they had been striving to cultivate in their child, including assertiveness, social initiation, smooth entry into play activities and other social interactions, appropriate responses to peers' aggressive behaviors, and so forth.

Independence was also a socialization goal emphasized by many parents. However, parents underlined different aspects of independence. One mother purposefully helped her daughter learn to solve problems independently, so that her daughter would become an independent thinker, decision-maker, and problem solver in the future instead of relying on parents to solve problems for her. Another mother was concerned about the emotional independence of her son (not being clingy). Another mother expected her daughter to be self-sufficient in daily life, such as being able to feed herself and sleep in her own bed.

Parents also paid great attention to good demeanor, which is congruent with Chinese cultural values that stress the importance of respecting elders and cherishing the young. The demeanor mentioned included addressing people appropriately, respecting people, and politeness.

Three mothers addressed the importance of emotional control. According to these mothers, their children sometimes had difficulty regulating emotions and/or were very stubborn. Mothers had been trying to help the children develop better abilities to control their emotions and behaviors. Two mothers talked about reading stories that were relevant to emotion regulation, and they employed these stories when children had trouble regulating emotions. One mother said, “I reason with him using stories. . . . He remembers the stories. When I try to tell him what he should do (to regulate his emotions), I pull those stories out from his head.” In addition, three parents explicitly mentioned that they expected their child to become a happy child.

Social-emotional Wellbeing vs. Academic Performance

Parents’ academic expectations varied. One mother explicitly said, “I don’t have high academic expectations for her. . . . I am okay with it as long as she does her homework carefully.” In contrast, the mother with the highest academic expectations among all mothers expected her daughter to be a top-ten student in the class. The remaining eight mothers fell somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, with relatively average/realistic expectations. These findings may seem incongruent with the view that Chinese parents tend to have unreasonably high academic expectations for their children. However, the findings can and should be understood in the light of parents’ justifications for their expectations.

Three rationales for parents’ average academic expectations emerged from the interviews. First of all, most parents were concerned that too much emphasis on academic performance might lead to mental health issues for children, as a result of excessive

academic pressure. A few mothers claimed that they would not pressure their child to be outstanding in school. As one mother said,

It's just like I am setting a higher goal for him. If he can reach the goal, that would be great. If he can't, I won't force him. I have heard a lot of stories that parents had very high expectations, and the children developed mental health problems when they were not able to reach their parents' expectations.

Similar to this mother, a few other mothers were concerned about their child's social-emotional wellbeing (e.g., self-esteem, mental health) under high academic expectations, so they were reluctant to set high academic expectations. Further, three mothers pointed out that unlike years ago, good grades no long guarantee a bright future and a successful life. Good academic performance can set up a "platform" for success, but there are plenty of other avenues to successful careers and good fortune. Finally, one mother believed that speeding up children's learning is not really beneficial for children, because they will lose the advantage of accelerated learning when they reach upper elementary grades. Thus, she mainly concentrated on helping her son develop and acquire abilities to learn rather than on spoon-feeding her son specific academic skills in math or writing.

Parents demonstrated a variety of beliefs about children's learning. Some believed that children have different levels of intelligence or talent in learning, as well as different pace of development. Thus, it more or less depends on the child how far he or she could go in academics. Parents opposed the idea of overly pressuring children. As one mother said,

If a child has not reached a certain point yet, and you force her to do this or that, she may lose interests in learning. . . . Every child has different levels of

intelligence. It is not possible to require every child to reach the same level. It depends on her where she will be at (academically) in the future. I hope she will be well-balanced in different areas such as getting along with people and problem solving. I care more about these aspects. I can't say that I don't care about her academic performance. I sure do, but I won't force her to do this or that. For example, I won't force her to go to afterschool programs when her grades get a little bit worse.

In general, most parents had not intentionally taught their child specific academic content. If a child was interested in school, the parent would encourage and support the child; if not, the parent would not force the child to study. Parents acknowledged the fact that different children might show interests in different areas. According to some mothers, children should be the ones leading their development, and parents are the facilitators and supporters in this process to scaffold learning and development. For example, if a child shows interests in drawing, the child's parents might show support by enrolling him or her into art classes; however, if the child loses interest, parents should not force him or her to continue with the classes. Thus, most parents valued and respected interests displayed by children rather than imposing their own ideas on their child.

Several mothers said they had not spent much time intentionally teaching their children certain subjects, in hopes that their child could fully enjoy preschool life without the added pressure of academic performance. As one mother said,

Children will start their tedious academic life when they enter elementary school. The three years of preschool may be the most carefree time in her life. I don't want to take away her happiness at such a young age. So I haven't intentionally

taught her much during this time. I may teach her more when she wants to learn in the future.

Similarly, another mother said, “During the preschool years, a time that children haven’t been heavily involved in studying textbooks, I want him to enjoy playing to the fullest. I think he can also learn a lot from playing.”

However, as one mother pointed out, there might be discrepancies between ideals and actions. She found herself not able to control her anxiety and anger when her son was unable to write out the Chinese characters she had taught him, although ideally she did not want to force her son to study and stress him out. Three parents commented that it was impossible not to worry about children’s academic achievement because of the “big environment” – children’s academic performance is always a main subject of parents’ conversations with each other; teachers treat high-achieving students better; and testing is a core element of the Chinese educational system. Thus, parents did value and pay attention to children’s academic performance, especially under the pressure from the “big environment.”

In terms of children’s academic development, parents perceived their role as preparing materials (e.g., books), setting up a good physical environment (e.g., bookshelves), helping children to develop good learning habits (e.g., doing homework without being distracted), setting a good example for the child (e.g., habit of reading), encouraging the child (e.g., complimenting the child’s efforts), reading to the child, and providing guidance and help to the child (e.g., checking homework) to support children’s academic development.

Almost all mothers said that children's social-emotional wellbeing was more important than academic performance, except for one mother who believed that they were equally important. As mentioned earlier, parents were concerned about children's social-emotional wellbeing under high academic pressure, which was part of the reason that some parents placed more importance on children's social-emotional than academic development. Parents also realized that socializing with people is "a lifelong matter" that affects the quality of life regardless of what a child will do in the future. One mother repeatedly stressed the importance of academic achievement, but this was based on her belief that poor academic achievement would be detrimental to her son's self-esteem, and eventual happiness.

Reasoning vs. Physical Punishment

Nine out of ten parents used reasoning as the primary disciplinary strategy. Parents said they were very patient and persistent with the use of reasoning even though children did not always listen or fully understand. As one mother said,

Sometimes she doesn't really understand what I said, but I think I should keep on instilling it into her head. . . . As time goes on, I think she will understand, so I just keep "feeding" her. I think it will more or less have some influence on her.

A few mothers found out that reasoning worked better as the child grew older, because children became more capable of understanding reasoning and logic.

Parents usually tried reasoning first and then turned to other strategies if it failed to work. They talked about various types of alternative disciplinary strategies, among which ignoring was the most popular. Seven out of ten parents mentioned disciplining their child by ignoring the child. "Ignoring" did not mean ignoring children's

misbehaviors, but it referred to leaving the child alone, which was helpful to calm the child down, according to parents. The other strategies were mentioned by only one or two parents, including timeout, fear induction, love withdrawal, removing privileges, and using distractions. Parents usually talked things through with their child afterwards to help the child understand what he or she did wrong.

Parents said they rarely used physical punishment to discipline children. Some parents claimed that they had never physically punished their child. Other parents spanked their child, but they had greatly reduced the use of spanking or completely abandoned spanking due to two potential reasons. On the one hand, parents had become more aware of the negative effects of physical punishment. On the other hand, as one mother said, physical punishment helped to discipline the child when the child was too young to understand language and reasoning, but parents shifted to reasoning as children acquired language and the ability to understand reasoning.

According to most parents, physical punishment was not an effective disciplinary strategy. Furthermore, they elaborated on the potential negative effects of physical punishment on children's self-esteem, parent-child relationships, and the emergence of behavioral problems. As one mother explained,

Spanking will not help at all, and he may even become rebellious. He has his own thinking now. If parents spank him, he may not be able to realize what he did wrong. However, he will bear a grudge against parents. . . . This will more or less have some negative influence on mother-child or father-child relationships.

Another mother also said that, "I am worried that spanking her will make her rebellious, and she will act out in protest against my way of parenting."

However, one mother thought that physical punishment was acceptable, but it needed to be coupled with reasoning. As she elaborated,

I think spanking is okay, but of course you need to control how hard you spank, so that the child feels the pain but does not get hurt. However, you need to talk things through with him/her afterwards. . . . If you don't explain to the child why you spank him/her afterwards, the child will think that "My parents can just spank me next time when I make mistakes. They will disregard what I did after spanking me." The child doesn't really realize why parents spank him/her. Then, spanking will not be effective as time goes on. . . . You may as well not spank him/her at all, because the child may resent you. . . . Spanking is just a tool. The child may not realize the severity of the issue if he/she doesn't feel the pain. . . . If I spank her (my daughter), it has to be that she has crossed the bottom line, mistakes that I cannot tolerate at all. Of course, I rarely spank her.

In conclusion, the role of reasoning as a disciplinary strategy was prominent.

Conflicts in Parenting

Many of the families either lived with or lived close by grandparents, and parenting was a joint mission between grandparents and parents in these families. However, parents and grandparents often had conflicting childrearing beliefs and practices, which was the main challenge parents said they faced in parenting. Parents mentioned three aspects of conflicting parenting that worried them.

Many mothers felt that grandparents were too indulgent towards the grandchild, and that spoiling the child seemed to be their way of showing affection. Grandparents often disregarded children's misbehaviors, which upset parents because they wanted to

set rules and help children develop good behavior. One mother talked about an instance where the grandmother permitted her daughter to be rude. The daughter was harshly pulling her aunt's hair, and the grandmother said, "Don't pull your aunt's hair. Pull mine!" Grandparents often gave in to children even when children made unreasonable demands. According to this mother, the grandmother's indulgence might have contributed to her daughter's stubbornness, an issue that she was very concerned about.

In addition, grandparents were overprotective of the grandchildren. For example, they might interfere or "rescue" the children when parents were disciplining them. Children often picked up on this and exploited it to their advantage. One mother wanted her son to eat some meat to get more nutrition, but her son did not like meat. He would eat when the mother was the only one dining with him, but he would refuse to eat any when his grandmother was also around. Another instance happened when the mother wanted her son to put on more clothes. She said, "I don't want you to catch a cold. Mommy doesn't like a sick child." However, her son responded, "It doesn't matter. I still have grandma and grandpa. They love me."

Interestingly, in one of the families where grandparents lived far away and were not really involved in child rearing, the mother also brought up her thoughts on grandparenting. She said,

I feel that when there are grandparents in the family, the child doesn't really care when his parents are angry at him, because grandparents will protect him. He would think that 'I am going to hang out with my grandparents if you are not playing with me.' For my son, his father is not around much, and I am the only one at home. If I am upset with him, then there is no one to play with him, so he

will just come over and apologize. I don't really need any particular strategy to discipline him. Simply leaving him alone for a while works well.

However, it was unclear how she had formed her belief about grandparenting. Did she construct this belief based on stories she heard about, the media, or her observations of other families? Or is it just a widely-held mindset that Chinese have today?

Finally, it was said that grandparents often took over tasks that parents expected their child to perform (e.g., feeding oneself). As a result, children became heavily dependent on grandparents, which was contradictory to parents' socialization goal of cultivating independence in their child. As one mother said,

His grandmother doesn't let him do things that he can do by himself. She is overprotective. For example, if I am very busy this week and haven't spent a lot of time with my son, I can feel that he has become very dependent. He needs me to be around no matter what he does. . . . I think I need to take the time to be with him, and only in this way he will learn to be independent.

Finally, one mother also talked about conflicts in parenting with her husband. They held different parental beliefs: the mother tried to set up rules for her son and stick with those rules, whereas the father thought it was unnecessary to be too strict with young children. As a result, they exhibited different parenting behaviors toward the child. The mother was very concerned about this issue.

Uncertainty and Efforts

In most interviews, parents expressed ambivalence or confusion about some aspects of their parenting. Parents made statements such as "I don't know whether this is a myth," "We (as parents) are also exploring, and I don't know whether this is the right

thing to do,” “I don’t know how to guide her,” and “A lot of our perceptions (about parenting) may be incorrect.” However, despite the ambivalence and confusion parents expressed, they had been making efforts to become a better parent. They described themselves as actively reaching out to access various resources.

Eight parents reflected on some aspect of their childrearing beliefs and practices. Most elaborated on instances where they changed their parenting behaviors based on their reflections. For instance, one mother blamed herself for not creating a good atmosphere for her son to develop the habit of reading. She realized that her son spent most of his time in the living room, but not the study, so she set up a bookshelf in the living room to help her son have better access to books and thereby develop interests in reading. Another mother made great efforts to change family dynamics in order to create a harmonious family environment for her son. She used to fight with her mother-in-law and her husband. However, she started reading books on parenting and realized that relationships among adults in the family can have a huge impact on children’s development, so she learned to resolve conflicts peacefully by talking things through. Her son now gets along very well with peers, families, and others, and she believed that this could be at least partly attributed to the harmonious family atmosphere in which he is now growing up.

Most parents also mentioned seeking help from multiple resources, including communicating with teachers and other parents, seeking help from experts on child development, researching online, participating in parent education programs, and reading books on parenting.

In conclusion, parents endeavored to hone their parenting through self-reflection, adjusting behaviors, and seeking help. As one mother summarized, “Actually, we parents are constantly learning [how to be a parent] throughout the process of being a parent in everyday life. Some of our perceptions may be incorrect. We need to take our time and make the changes accordingly.”

Chapter 6: Discussion

The purpose of the study was to explore contemporary, small-city Chinese parents' childrearing ideologies and practices using a mixed methods approach. The purpose of the quantitative phase was to examine the relationships among parents' expectations for their child's social-emotional and academic development, parenting styles, and children's social competence and pre-academic performance. The purpose of the qualitative phase was to understand meanings of and rationales behind parents' socialization goals, developmental expectations, and parenting practices. Qualitative findings helped explain and contextualize quantitative results; thus, they complemented each other. The study adds to the literature on parenting of contemporary Chinese parents with young children who are faced with new expectations due to the current rapid economic, social, and political changes underway in China.

This chapter includes six sections. In the first two sections, quantitative results and qualitative findings are discussed. The third section concerns mixing quantitative and qualitative findings. The last three sections address the limitations, future directions, and final conclusions.

Section 1: Discussion of Quantitative Results

Two Aspects of Parental Expectations

First of all, two aspects of parental expectations were examined – the timing of parents' expectations and value parents placed on developmental skills during preschool years. It seems counterintuitive that the timing of parents' expectations for children's emotional competence, social skills, and compliance did not relate to the amount of value parents attached to each set of the skills. The findings suggest that a parent may expect

earlier mastery of social-emotional skills for his/her child, but he/she does not necessarily perceive those skills as very important for the child during preschool years. The timing of parents' expectations may depend on parents' knowledge of their child and knowledge of the child's pace, whereas the amount of value parents place on their child's development of social-emotional skills may not be influenced much by parents' knowledge of the child and the child's pace. This may explain the lack of relationships between the timing of parents' expectations and value parents placed on developmental skills during preschool years.

More intriguingly, similar to Holloway and Reichhart-Erickson's (1989) findings, findings from this study showed that parents' earlier expectations for emotional competence, social skills, and compliance were all related to better parent-reported child social competence. In addition, parents' rated importance of social skills was positively associated with children's social competence, as perceived by parents. As a whole, there seem to be multiple pathways through which parental expectations contribute to the development of children's social competence.

As Holloway and Reichhart-Erickson's (1989) proposed, parents may adopt parenting practices that are congruent with their expectations. Thus, parents with earlier expectations for their child's mastery of social-emotional skills may consciously or subconsciously instruct, teach, model for, and correct their children to promote their abilities to regulate their own emotions, obey, interact with others, as well as build and sustain relationships with others. Having one of the two – early expectations or placing value on social-emotional skills – may be motivating enough for parents to adopt parenting practices that promote children's development of social-emotional competence,

but having both may not be necessary.

It is worth noting that only parents' rated importance of social skills, but not emotional competence or compliance, was positively correlated with parent-reported child social competence. It might be because items used to assess children's social competence align well with items used to measure parents' expectations for social skills, but not so well with items used to measure parents' expectations for emotional competence or compliance.

Specifically, most of the items from the Social Competence subscale focus on children's abilities to interact with other people (e.g., "Plays well with other children;" "Shares toys;" and "Is a leader in the group"). Only two items measure children's compliance (i.e., "Follow rules" and "Follow directions"). Only two items from the Social Competence subscale seem to align with items used to measure parents' expectations for emotional competence (i.e., "Accepts correction or criticism" and "Does well when left with a sitter"). Thus, there may be a mismatch between what was measured in the Parental Expectations Questionnaire and what was assessed using the Social Competence subscale. This mismatch may explain why parents' perceived importance of emotional competence and compliance did not relate to parent-reported child social competence.

Regarding parents' rated importance of academic skills, parents' perceived importance of academic skills was not related to parent-reported or teacher-reported child pre-academic performance. Perhaps parents did not intentionally teach their child academic skills listed in the Parental Expectations Questionnaire even though they might think those skills were important. In the qualitative interviews, a few mothers said that

they did value academic achievement, but they wanted their child to have fun during preschool years, so they had not intentionally teach their child much subject matter. For instance, one mother said,

Children will start their tedious academic life when they enter elementary school.

The three years of preschool may be the most carefree time in her life. I don't want to take away her happiness at such a young age. So I haven't intentionally taught her much during this time. I may teach her more when she wants to learn in the future.

Thus, some parents might be reluctant to teach their child reading, writing, or math during preschool years to “protect” their child's childhood. They intentionally put off teaching children academic skills to ensure that their child could “enjoy playing to the fullest” during preschool years. As a result, the relationship between the value parents place on academic skills and child academic performance may not emerge until children reach elementary-school age.

Most of the previous studies examining the relationships between parental expectations and children's academic achievement were conducted among school-aged children and youths. School-aged children and youths tend to receive higher grades, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, and have higher educational attainment when their parents have higher academic expectations (Davis-Kean, 2005; Pearce, 2006; Vartanian, Karen, Buck, & Cadge, 2007). The relationships between Chinese parents' academic expectations and preschool-aged children's academic performance have rarely been explored. More research is needed to reveal these relationships using other measures. The Kindergarten Readiness Checklist was used to measure children's pre-

academic performance in this study, but this instrument is not a widely used measurement of children's pre-academic performance. Children's pre-academic performance is often measured using individually administered assessment, such as PPVT. Individually administered assessment may be more objective than parent- or teacher-reported measures. Thus, other measures should be considered in studying the relationships between the academic expectations of parents with preschool-aged children and preschoolers' pre-academic performance.

Parenting Styles and Child Outcomes

The relationships between parenting styles and children's developmental outcomes were examined. Consistent with previous findings discovered among Chinese samples (e.g., Chen et al., 1997, 2000; Zhou et al., 2004), authoritative/clear guidance parenting was found to be related to better parent-reported child social competence, and the opposite relationship was found for authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting. Similarly, authoritative/clear guidance parenting was related to better parent-reported child pre-academic performance, and the opposite relationship was found for authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting.

It is noteworthy that the effect sizes (correlation coefficients) for authoritative/clear guidance parenting (.47 for parent-reported social competence; .42 for parent-reported pre-academic performance) were larger than those for authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting (-.23 for parent-reported social competence; -.19 for parent-reported pre-academic performance). There was less variability for authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting in the study sample, and moreover, parents in this sample rarely adopted authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting practices according

to their self-reports, which might have undermined the possibility to discover relationships with statistically large effect sizes. About 50% of the parents' mean authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting scores fell below the mean of 2.13, while possible scores ranged from 1 to 5, so the data were positively skewed. Most families in this sample were middle-class families as evidenced by parents' education levels and occupation types presented in Table 2. In addition, the preschools involved in this study are considered as "good" or at least "average" schools in terms of the quality of teachers and school facilities, and accordingly, the amount of fees schools charge is often higher than the average in a particular city. Thus, these preschools may attract parents who value their child's development and who are willing and able to invest in their child. Therefore, parents from more diverse backgrounds may need to be included in order to better detect the relationships between authoritarian parenting and children's developmental outcomes.

Parental Expectations and Parenting Styles

The present study also contributes to parenting research through the exploration of the relationships between parental expectations and parenting styles. Holloway and Reichhart-Erickson (1989) examined how parental expectations were related to specific parenting practices, such as early childhood programs parents chose. Rather than domain-specific parenting behaviors, the present study focused on parenting styles that reflect parenting in a broad manner (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). When parents had earlier expectations for their child's development of social skills, they tended to adopt an authoritative/clear guidance parenting style. Similarly, parents were likely to adopt authoritative/clear guidance parenting if they considered social skills as important for their child during preschool years.

This concurs with findings from two studies among Hong Kong mothers with preschool-aged children (Chan et al., 2009; Pearson & Rao, 2003). Both studies showed that mothers tended to adopt authoritative parenting when they valued the socialization goals for social-emotional development.

However, authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting did not relate to either the timing of parents' expectations or the amount of importance parents attached to social skills, emotional competence, compliance, or academic skills. Although unexpected, this lack of linkage was also found in the two studies among Hong Kong mothers mentioned previously (Chan et al., 2009; Pearson & Rao, 2003): emphasis on the socialization of social-emotional development did not relate to authoritarian parenting. One possible reason for these findings is that parents reported rare use of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting practices, as discussed previously. In the study conducted by Pearson and Rao (2003) and the study conducted by Chan et al. (2009), Hong Kong parents involved in these two studies also reported very low levels of authoritarian parenting.

Another possible reason is the difference between the "authoritarian" dimension discovered in this study and that in previous research. In general, authoritarian parenting is defined as a combination of low responsiveness and high coercive control (Baumrind, 1996); this construct originated in Western culture. Data from this study indicated that items involving low responsiveness and high coercive control also co-varied with items indicating parents' lack of confidence in applying that control. As indicated by the qualitative findings, many mothers expressed their uncertainty and ambivalence toward parenting. Several mothers said that they spanked their child before, but they regretted their behaviors, which suggests that those mothers were aware that spanking was not a

good way to discipline children. Thus, the reason parents used spanking might not be that they considered spanking as an effective way to discipline children. Rather, parents might not know alternative disciplinary strategies, and their lack of knowledge in parenting might contribute to their low confidence and insecurity in parenting.

In addition, parents in this study were from small cities, and they might have less access to resources on parenting (e.g. parent education programs) compared to parents living in big cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. Lack of resources may lead to parents' low confidence and insecurity in their parenting. Perhaps, alternative measures of parental control that are sensitive to Chinese contexts are more useful than the usual measures of authoritarian parenting (Chao, 1994; Pearson & Rao, 2003).

Chao and Sue (1996) argued that the “conceptualization of parental authoritarianism ignores the purpose of parental control and fails to capture the essence of the authoritarian behaviors of Asian parents” (Leung, et al., 1998, p. 158). It would be interesting to include Chao's *Training* measure in future studies among Chinese parents. Further studies are needed to examine the element of parents' insecurity or ambivalence in their parenting that were found in the current study. Different types of parental control exist across cultures and societies and may lead to different outcomes. Some researchers (Lau, Lew, Hau, Cheung, & Berndt, 1990) have distinguished two types of parental control: dysfunctional and functional. Other researchers (e.g., Barber, 1996) have proposed another two dimensions of parental control, including psychological and behavioral control. Examining these different types of parental control and how they are related to parental expectations and children's development may be more fruitful than simply using the construct of authoritarian parenting among Chinese parents.

One interesting finding was that when parents had earlier expectations for their child's development of compliance, they tended to adopt authoritative/clear guidance parenting. Chinese culture values compliance to authority from a very early age (e.g., Chen et al., 2003), which aligns with the Confucian doctrine of "filial piety" that emphasizes children's obedience and reverence to parents (Chao, 1994). Chen et al. (2003) examined the relationships between Chinese parents' parenting behaviors and their toddlers' compliance. Their findings showed that maternal warmth and induction were positively related to toddlers' committed compliance (i.e., children worked willingly, and the work was not dependent on maternal sustained control); maternal punishment orientation was negatively related to committed compliance and positively associated with situational compliance (i.e., children were generally cooperative, but required sustained maternal control to stay on task). Thus, parents in this study might hope to induce committed compliance in their children by employing authoritative/clear guidance parenting practices.

Parental Expectations, Parenting Styles, and Child Social Competence

The present study showed that parenting styles, authoritative/clear guidance parenting in particular, accounted for the indirect relationships between parental expectations for social skills and parent-reported child social competence. Parental expectations help organize parenting behaviors to achieve a certain goal parents have for their children (Dix, 1992; Harkness & Super, 1996). Thus, when parents expect children to acquire social-emotional skills, they may consciously or subconsciously adopt authoritative parenting behaviors that can best lead to higher social competence in children, and as a result, children develop higher social competence.

It is worth noting that authoritative/clear guidance parenting only partially accounted for the indirect relationship between the timing of parents' expectations for children's social skills and parent-reported child social competence, suggesting that the timing of parental expectations may also relate to children's social competence via other pathways than parenting styles, and therefore, future research is needed to explore other potential mechanisms.

In the integrative model proposed by Darling and Steinberg (1993; see Figure 8), in addition to parenting styles, which by definition is independent of specific socialization content, parental goals and values also influence domain-specific parenting practices that directly impact children's specific developmental outcomes. Thus, domain-specific parenting practices can be important potential mechanisms depending on children's developmental domains of interest. For instance, if children's academic achievement is the outcome of interest, specific parenting behaviors, such as helping children with homework, may be an important variable to include in future studies.

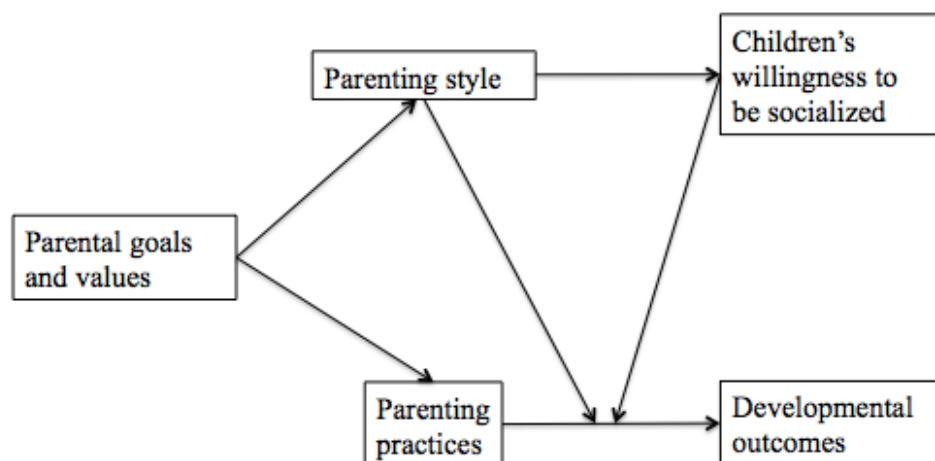


Figure 8. Contextual model of parenting style adapted from “Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model” by Darling and Steinberg (1993).

However, according to the path model, authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting did not significantly account for the indirect relationships between parental expectations and children's social competence or pre-academic performance. As discussed previously, this sample of parents reported low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, which might undermine the ability to examine the effects of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting. Also, as proposed previously, taking into consideration of various types of parental control may be a better approach to disentangle the complex relationships among parental control, parental expectations, and children's development.

Parental Expectations, Parenting Styles, and Child Pre-academic Performance

Path analyses of parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and child pre-academic performance showed that there was no significant indirect relationship between parents' academic expectations and parent-reported or teacher-reported child pre-academic performance through parenting styles. As discussed previously, the lack of relationship may be due to parents' reluctance to teach children academic skills even though they valued the importance of academic skills.

Davis-Kean (2005) found that parents' educational expectations were related indirectly to 8-12-year-old children's academic achievement through parents' specific parental behaviors (i.e., reading, play, and warmth). However, the current study did not focus on specific parenting behaviors, but on parenting styles, "a constellation of attitudes toward the child and create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 493). Parenting styles can be thought of as the general atmosphere in which parent-child interaction takes place. The general atmosphere may strengthen or undermine the effect of parents' academic expectations on children's

academic performance. Thus, parenting styles and parents' academic expectations may interact with one another to affect children's pre-academic performance.

Tests of the interactions between parenting styles and parents' academic expectations indicate that parents' academic expectations (marginally) moderated the effects of parenting styles on parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Specifically, parents' perceived importance of academic skills strengthened the positive relationship between authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child pre-academic performance. Thus, children have the best pre-academic performance when their parents display high levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting and value the importance of academic skills at the same time.

In terms of the interactions between parents' academic expectations and authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting (see Figure 6), for parents with average to high authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, their perceived importance of academic skills did not seem to have much influence on parent-reported child pre-academic performance. However, for parents with relatively low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, parents reported their child having better pre-academic performance when they emphasized the importance of academic skills less. It seems counterintuitive. There are two potential explanations for the unexpected results.

First, it is important to know that low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting do not necessarily mean high levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting, as indicated by the weak correlation between the two ($r = .23$). Authoritarian parenting is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness, so parents with low authoritarian parenting may have low expectations and demandingness. Thus, parents

with low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting might not communicate their expectations and demands to their children often. Thus, if a parent perceives academic skills as important, but he/she does not clearly tell the child his/her expectations and demands, the parent may not actively teach the child. Meanwhile, valuing academic skills may create anxiety or pressure on the child. As a result, the child may feel the pressure, but not know what to do, which leads to poor pre-academic performance.

Second, parents with low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting might not be very involved in children's learning due to low demandingness. Thus, they might not have a clear idea of how well the child performed in areas such as reading and writing. To test this hypothesis, parents were grouped into two categories using a mean-split method: high authoritarian/insecure guidance group (authoritarian/insecure guidance scores above the sample mean, $n = 70$) and low authoritarian/insecure guidance group (scores below the sample mean, $n = 74$). For the high authoritarian/insecure guidance group, the correlation between parent-reported and teacher-reported child pre-academic performance was $r = .51, p < .001$, while the correlation coefficient for the low authoritarian/insecure guidance group was $r = .29, p = .01$. The results indicate that parents' reports of child pre-academic performance were more consistent with teachers' reports for the high authoritarian/insecure guidance group than the low authoritarian/insecure guidance group. Thus, for parents with low levels of authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting, their evaluations of child pre-academic performance might be distorted by their lack of knowledge in their child's learning. They might perceive their child doing well academically if they did not consider those academic skills as very important, and vice versa. These explanations are tentative, and

future research is needed to clarify the relationships among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and child pre-academic performance.

Finally, as the path model in Figure 7 shows, parents' social-emotional expectations had direct, as well as indirect, effects on child pre-academic performance. This finding is consistent with the growing body of literature showing that children's social-emotional functioning serves as the foundation for cognitive development in early childhood years (e.g., Denham, et al., 2012; Seifert, 2006). However, without time precedence in the current study, it is difficult to determine whether children's social competence influences children's pre-academic performance, or children's pre-academic performance influences children's social competence, or the relationship between the two is reciprocal. Longitudinal research is needed to examine causal relationships.

It is interesting that authoritative/clear guidance parenting and parent-reported child social competence did not fully account for the relationships between parents' expectations for social skills and child pre-academic performance. This finding suggests that there may be other underlying mechanisms through which parents' social-emotional expectations affect children's pre-academic development. As the integrative model (see Figure 8) proposed by Darling and Steinberg (1993) suggests, domain-specific parenting practices are important mechanisms linking parental goals and values to children's outcomes. According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), parenting styles affect child development primarily through its moderating influence on the relationship between parenting practices and developmental outcomes. Future research needs to include parenting practices in the model to examine the complex relations between parents' social-emotional expectations and children's pre-academic development.

Lack of Findings for Teacher-reported Social Competence

In this study, parents and teachers reported children's social competence using the Social Competence Subscale of the Early School Behavioral Rating Scale (Caldwell & Pianta, 1991). Teacher-reported child social competence did not significantly correlate with parent-reported child social competence ($r = .151, p = .072$). The lack of correlation may be due to the following reasons.

First, children may behave differently at school from at home. Most of the children in this study come from single-child families; it is highly likely that they are the center of attention at home. However, the school context is vastly different from the home context. There are usually about 30 to 35 children in each classroom in the studied preschools, and children may not get as much individual attention from teachers and/or peers as they do at home from parents and/or grandparents. Different contexts may bring out different behaviors displayed by children. Several teachers and parents in this study pointed out that some children's school behavior differed dramatically from their home behavior. Therefore, teachers may have more opportunities to observe children's behaviors in the context of a large group setting, while parents may have more knowledge of their child's behaviors in the home environment.

Second, it may be challenging for teachers to rate an individual child's social behaviors since there are so many children in each classroom. Evaluating a child's social behaviors requires careful observation of the child in different situations (e.g., playing alone, playing in small groups, playing in large groups). However, the large number of children in the classroom may limit teachers' abilities to observe individual children in all kinds of settings. Thus, teachers' reports might be based on their limited observation and

knowledge of individual children. Research has suggested that parent reports and teacher reports on child social behaviors often only show limited agreement, and some researchers have interpreted informant discrepancies as evidence of unreliability, while others have interpreted them as reflections of variability in children's behavior (Doctoroff & Arnold, 2004).

In addition, teachers might evaluate children's social behaviors in comparison to peers because teachers usually have contact with many more children (Edwards et al., 1996). In contrast, parents may not be able to use peers as a reference point since they may not have much contact with other children. Alternative strategies need to be considered to assess children's social competence in the school context. For example, researchers may consider using comprehensive child social-emotional outcome measures that cover different domains of social-emotional development, or researchers can conduct standardized classroom observations, in order to rate children's social competence more objectively.

In the current study, teacher-reported child social competence was not significantly correlated with parental expectations or parenting styles (see Table 11). First of all, as described previously, parents may not have a lot of knowledge about their child's behaviors in a large group setting since their contact with their child often takes place in the home context. As a result, in terms of children's behaviors in groups (such as the following items in the Parental Expectations Questionnaire: "Cooperates in games", "Takes initiative in playing with others", "Gets own way by persuading friends"), parents may not have a very clear idea of what expectations are appropriate and reasonable for their child at preschool stage. Thus, parents' responses to questionnaire items related to

parents' social-emotional expectations may not align very well with teachers' ratings of children's social competence. This mismatch may at least partly cause the lack of relationships between parental expectations and teacher-reported child social competence.

Furthermore, parents' ratings may be biased. For instance, parents might report their child having high social competence if they rated social skills as important, so that their reports related to children's social-emotional development were consistent with each other. Unfortunately, it is impossible to empirically examine whether parents' reports of their child's social competence are biased or objective. This is a weakness that comes with the use of self-reports. Thus, it is important to use multiple respondents and combine surveys with field observations when assessing children's social competence.

In addition, data analyses did not deal with the fact that children were nested in classrooms. Thirty-seven classrooms participated in the study, and teachers' ratings were treated as independent. However, some teachers may tend to give children relatively high ratings, while others may be likely to assign relatively low ratings to all children in the classroom. Thus, the lack of relationships between teacher-reported child social competence and parental expectations and parenting styles may be partially attributed to the fact that the nesting issue was not taken into account in data analyses. In about half of the classrooms, only two families participated in the study, which makes it difficult to evaluate within-classroom variability. When taking into account the nesting issue, the standard errors coupled with the estimates of fixed effects were huge, suggesting that the estimates of fixed effects were not trustworthy.

Finally, as mentioned previously, teachers' rating may not precisely capture

children's actual social competence due to the challenge that there are a large number of children in one classroom. Further research is needed to examine how teacher-reported child social-emotional outcomes are related to parental expectations and parenting styles. Alternative measures, especially classroom and home observations, should be considered.

Section 2: Discussion of Qualitative Findings

Concerns about Children's Psychological Wellbeing

First, our analysis of the interviews revealed that mothers were concerned about their young children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, although mothers valued children's academic achievement, they emphasized children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing more than academic achievement.

In the interviews, mothers expressed their concerns about children's mental health under excessive academic pressure. They opposed the idea of sacrificing children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing for good grades. These findings seem to differ from the common portrayal of Chinese parents as being concerned primarily about academic achievement. However, they are congruent with recent findings that Chinese parents are worried about their adolescent children's mental health, happiness (Way et al., 2013), independence, and sociableness (Fong, 2007a).

Why did mothers in our study worry so much about children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing? Nine out of the ten families participating in the interviews had only one child. As Fong (2007a) and Way et al. (2013) suggested, the singleton status of the children may have enhanced the mothers' sensitivities to their children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing, and mothers might have come up with

parenting strategies to accommodate to their children's needs and wishes in ways that were previously not emphasized within a traditional Chinese family structure.

Parents' emphasis on children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing also reflects the emergent discourse of "quality" (*suzhi*) in China. The Chinese government began the "education for quality" (*suzhi jiaoyu*) campaign in the early 1990s. Chinese educational officials advocated for "education for quality" as opposed to "education for exam preparation" (*yingshi jiaoyu*), in hopes to "produce well-rounded citizens rather than physically and psychologically 'unhealthy' bookworms who only knew how to memorize texts and answer exam questions" (Fong, 2007b, p. 99). The Chinese society has well recognized the pressing problem that Chinese children and adolescents have experienced many emotional difficulties as a result of excessive academic pressure. Thus, the "education for quality" campaign may be considered as a solution to this problem.

The Chinese government believes that children must develop a diverse set of abilities rather than merely exam-taking skills, in order to be able to compete in the global economy. To this end, the "education for quality" policy emphasizes that schoolchildren should hold a "subject" position (*zhuti diwei*) within the classroom, express their own opinions and views, and become an active agent of their learning experience (Naftali, 2009). The "education for quality" reform plan has resulted in some changes in children's school life, such as decreases in the number of school hours, the duration of each lesson, the number of examinations, and the amount of homework. In addition, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to children's emotional needs in addition to the "knowledge" aspect of learning (Naftali, 2010). As Naftali (2010) pointed

out, the Chinese government had made efforts to increase schools' awareness of children's psychological wellbeing. For instance, the government has planned to install mental health counseling offices in both urban and rural schools nationwide, and moreover, in some big urban cities, schools are required to add psychological training classes into the regular curriculum in order to enhance students' mental health.

Although many parents, students, school administrators, and teachers seem to be skeptical of the effectiveness of the "education for quality" campaign, the campaign and related reform efforts have increased people's awareness of children's individuality and children's unique psychological needs at the national level (Naftali, 2010). Policymakers and educators advise parents to recognize that even young children have their own voice that deserves to be heard and respected. According to Naftali (2009), in some parenting guidebooks and magazines, parents are encouraged not to impose their will on the child, but to create a democratic family environment in which all family members are equal, and each member's interests should be respected.

In sum, parents' increased awareness of children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing under excessive academic pressure may be a result of the changes in the family structure as well as the Chinese government's advocacy of "education for quality."

Disciplinary Strategies

In terms of disciplinary strategies, the qualitative findings showed that parents mainly used reasoning and rarely used physical punishment to discipline children.

Mothers believed that physical punishment would impair children's self-esteem, damage parent-child relationships, and cause behavioral problems.

Parents' views on physical punishment have changed dramatically in the past few decades. Physical punishment was a prevalent practice in the traditional Chinese society many years ago. There are two potential reasons for the prevalence of physical punishment in the "old" Chinese society. First, children used to be viewed as the property of their parents, rather than as individuals, and this notion encouraged "some Chinese parents to treat their child as nothing more than 'a punching bag' or a 'small lackey'" (Naftali, 2009, p. 93).

Further, the Chinese notion of filial piety also contributes to the employment of corporal punishment (Ho, 1986). There is an old Chinese saying that "spare the rod, spoil the child" (literal translation is "filial sons are the product of the rod"). In the traditional Chinese society, the training of children was supposed to be strict. The employment of shaming and physical punishment was considered acceptable, and even necessary (Ho, 1981). Exercising physical punishment was deemed a parental right, and even considered as a parental obligation. Furthermore, the disciplinarian showed little concern over damaging child's sense of self-respect, and "scolding, beating, or shaming were often done in the presence of others, and sometimes deliberately in public as a warning to would-be offenders" (Ho, 1981, p. 88).

However, unlike several decades ago, physical punishment has become much less common among contemporary Chinese parents. The Chinese government has released laws and legislation to protect children from physical abuse. In addition, more and more psychological research has been conducted, showing the negative effects of physical punishment on children's self-esteem, social-emotional development, academic achievement, and so forth. Research findings have shown that physical punishment is

associated with children's aggression, perceptions of parental rejection, psychological maladjustment (Lansford et al., 2005; Nelson, Hart, Yang, Olsen, & Jin, 2006).

Naftali's (2009) study sheds more light on the current finding that mothers preferred reasoning to physical punishment. Naftali interviewed Shanghai parents about their attitudes toward physical punishment. Similar to the findings of the current study, Naftali found that those well-educated Shanghai mothers preferred to reason with their child instead of using physical punishment, and those mothers believed that beating a child would cause rebellious emotions and resentment. Naftali argued that the decreased use of physical punishment was not just a result of the introduction of laws and legislations on the protection of children; it could also be attributed, at least partially, to children's increased abilities to understand reasoning. It is very common to hear Chinese people saying that contemporary children are much smarter and more knowledgeable about the world than people used to be. Like mothers in the current study, informants (parents and grandparents) in Naftali's study said that children could actually understand reasoning, so there was no need to spank children.

Another possible explanation for mothers' preference of reasoning to physically punishment is that mothers might seek advice from childrearing books and magazines regarding how to discipline children. Many mothers in the current study mentioned that they had read books and/or magazines on parenting. As mentioned previously, many parenting guidebooks and magazines emphasize the importance of creating a democratic family environment. Thus, mothers might have learned more about the negative effects of physical punishment and techniques to reason with children through reading childrearing books and magazines.

Most of the mothers who participated in the qualitative interviews of the current study were from middle-class families. Parents from low socioeconomic families may uphold different attitudes toward physical punishment, and they may employ different disciplinary strategies. It is important to acknowledge the hidden motives that drive parents to embrace certain parenting practices but not others. As Naftali (2009) pointed out,

...well-educated, urban Chinese parents may be eager to adopt more “liberal” childrearing strategies out of a desire to link their families with global sources of value, while distancing themselves from the mass of China’s rural backward hinterland. Similarly, it could be argued that the enthusiastic embrace of the discourse of children’s rights on the part of some of my informants, particularly those of a higher education level and white-collar occupation, stemmed from their wish not only to improve family relations or to ensure the child’s healthy development but also to appropriate a childrearing logic associated with a “middle-class”, “modern” parenting style thought to exist elsewhere in the world. (p. 98)

Conflicts in Parenting with Grandparents

Consistent with findings on contemporary Chinese parenting of adolescent children (Fong, 2007a; Way et al., 2013), qualitative data from the current study suggest that mothers felt uncertain about how to best parent their preschool-aged children. Meanwhile, mothers faced many challenges in parenting, among which conflicts in parenting with grandparents were the main challenge. When Chinese parents and grandparents have conflicts in parenting, parents may avoid direct communication with

grandparents, due to the cultural emphasis on maintaining social harmony (Goh, 2006). Moreover, filial piety, as a key virtue in Chinese culture, may also prevent parents from directly telling the older generation what they perceive as inappropriate parenting practices in that such behaviors are considered disrespectful (Goh, 2006).

In the current study, conflicts in parenting with grandparents was not the focus of the study, but many mothers spontaneously brought this issue up, suggesting that this was a critical issue that mothers might have been pondering. Only a few studies on issues related to co-parenting between Chinese parents and grandparents have been found. One of these studies was conducted by Goh and Kuczynski (2010). Findings from their study help to understand the current study's findings.

Goh and Kuczynski (2010) conducted a case study in Xiamen, China, examining issues related to co-parenting between parents and grandparents. Families in their study experienced two main sources of tension: differences in child-rearing philosophies and methods, and difficulties in coordinating disciplinary strategies among the adult caregivers. All parents expressed their frustrations regarding the lack of coordination in managing the child's behavior. Parents' perceived obstacles in communication with grandparents were the main reasons for this lack of coordination. Similarly, in the current study, some mothers also expressed their frustration and helplessness in regard to making grandparents parent the child in their way.

It is worth noting that parents might not have made active efforts in coordinating behavioral management strategies. Instead, they might have just bluntly told the grandparents what should be done, which perhaps elicited grandparents' resistance. Just as one mother in the current study said, "I told her (the grandmother), but I found that it

was just in vain.” Goh and Kuczynski (2010) also noted that none of the families that participated in their study mentioned making active effort in coordinating behavioral management strategies between parents and grandparents. Thus, more research is needed to examine effective strategies that parents and grandparents can use to negotiate and coordinate their parenting philosophies, methods, and behavioral management strategies, so that parents and grandparents are able to co-parent effectively.

Goh and Kuczynski (2010) argued that the study of intergenerational parenting coalition must be situated in the cultural context of contemporary China. Chinese culture is undergoing alteration as a result of the abrupt changes in demographics and intergenerational norms. The broad cultural context “shapes the dynamics and gives cultural meaning to interactions among the relational subsystems of the intergenerational parenting coalition” (Goh & Kuczynski, 2010, p. 228). In the current study, many mothers complained that grandparents spoiled or gave in to the child. According to Goh and Kuczynski (2010), unlike in the “old China” in which elders occupied powerful positions in the family, grandparents’ positions within the contemporary Chinese family have been weakened. Several mothers in the current study talked about grandparents being overprotective of the grandchild, and grandparents were often reluctant to discipline the grandchild. Grandparents’ unwillingness to discipline the child may be due to their fear of upsetting their adult children or grandchildren, which may be signs of the weakened position of the grandparents (Goh & Kuczynski, 2010). Future research is needed to examine grandparents’ perspectives on why they “spoil” or “give in to” the grandchildren. Understanding grandparents’ perspectives may be the key to productive

communication between parents and grandparents, and to eventually reduce intergenerational conflicts on co-parenting.

Finally, it is noteworthy that parents seemed to be trying their best to raise mentally healthy, socially competent, independent, and academically sufficient children. It is surprising that mothers often blamed themselves for not doing their best and they were not afraid of acknowledging their deficiency in parenting, which suggests their strong desires to become a better parent. However, as one mother suggested, actions might not always align with ideals; thus, it is necessary to examine Chinese parenting in action. In addition to parent-reported data and parent interviews, videotaped data of parents playing with toys and reading a book with their child were also collected. Comparing parenting behaviors displayed in parent-child interactions with parents' ideologies will be the next critical task.

Section 3: Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

In this mixed methods study, qualitative findings help explain and contextualize quantitative results. Table 17 summarizes the correspondence between quantitative results and qualitative findings.

First, parents reported higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting than authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting. Consistent with this quantitative finding, in the qualitative interviews, mothers said that they rarely used physical punishment to discipline their child, and reasoning was the main disciplinary strategy. Mothers explained their rationales for not physically punishing their child, which has helped to explain the pattern emerged in the quantitative phase. Mothers were aware of the

potential negative impact of physical punishment on children's self-esteem, parent-child relationships, and the emergence of behavioral problems.

Second, analysis of the interviews revealed that mothers were concerned about their young children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, although mothers valued children's academic achievement, they emphasized children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing more than academic achievement. These findings were consistent with quantitative findings that parents rated emotional competence, social skills, and compliance as more important than academic skills. In the interviews, mothers explained why they were concerned more about children's social-emotional wellbeing. Mothers expressed their concerns about children's mental health under excessive academic pressure. They believed that children needed to have good social skills to be able to function well in the society because socializing with people is a "lifelong matter." In addition, unlike many years ago, good grades do not necessarily guarantee a bright future any more, and there are plenty of alternative avenues to success. Mothers' explanations have helped to understand why parents placed more value on social-emotional skills than academic skills.

Third, the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses with data on parenting styles showed that items from the Permissive Parenting Scale measuring parents' confidence in parenting loaded on the authoritarian factor. As far as I know, this finding has never been reported in previous studies on Chinese parenting, and thus, it is difficult to interpret this finding drawing on previous research. However, the interview data helped to inform the quantitative finding. According to the interviews, many mothers expressed their uncertainty and ambivalence toward parenting, which suggests that

parents' lack of confidence may be a widespread phenomenon in contemporary Chinese society. Furthermore, mothers who had spanked their child before regretted their behaviors, indicating that parents realized that physical punishment was not an effective disciplinary strategy. Parents' use of spanking may be due to their lack of knowledge of alternative disciplinary methods, rather than they actually believed that spanking would promote positive child outcomes. Thus, parents who exercised higher levels of coercive control and physical punishment might be less confident in their abilities to parent.

Finally, the correlational analysis showed that parents' rated importance of academic skills was not associated with child pre-academic performance. As explained in the first section of the chapter, parents might not have taught their child much content knowledge in areas such as reading or writing, although they perceived those academic skills as important. In the interviews, several mothers said that they wanted their children to fully enjoy preschool life without the added pressure of academic performance, and they might teach their children more during elementary years. Parents intentionally chose not to teach their children too much academic content to "protect" their child's childhood. However, as revealed in the interviews, parents may do more intentional teaching when their child gets older.

However, it is worth noting that there are some quantitative results that cannot be explained by the qualitative findings (e.g., the interactions between academic expectations and parenting styles). Thus, in future research, more questions need to be included in parent interviews, and other qualitative data collection methods should be considered. For instance, observations of parent-child real-life interaction can be collected to further understand whether parents' reports using questionnaires actually

reflect their daily practices. Nonetheless, parent interviews enriched the study and informed quantitative results emerged in the quantitative phase.

Table 17

A summary of how qualitative findings help explain quantitative results

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Findings
Parents reported higher levels of authoritative/clear guidance parenting than authoritarian/insecure guidance parenting.	<p>Theme: Reasoning vs. Physical Punishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the interviews, mothers explained the potential negative impact of physical punishment on children's development. • Mothers also thought that children were capable of understanding reasoning.
Parents rated emotional competence, social skills, and compliance as more important than academic skills.	<p>Theme: Social-emotional Wellbeing vs. Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although mothers valued children's academic achievement, they emphasized children's psychological and social-emotional wellbeing more than academic achievement. • Mothers expressed their concerns about children's mental health under excessive academic pressure. • Mothers said that socializing with people is a "lifelong matter." • Mothers said that good grades could no longer guarantee a bright future.
According to exploratory factor analysis, parents' insecure in parenting was related to low responsiveness and high control as measured in the Authoritarian Scale of the PSDQ.	<p>Theme: Uncertainty and Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers felt uncertain about how to best parent their preschool-aged children. • Mothers who had spanked their child regretted their behaviors, and they realized that spanking was not an effective way to discipline the child.
Lack of relationship between parents' perceived importance of academic skills and child pre-academic performance.	<p>Theme: Social-emotional Wellbeing vs. Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several mothers said they had not spent much time intentionally teaching their children certain subjects, in hopes that their child could fully enjoy preschool life without the added pressure of academic performance, although they valued academic achievement.

Section 4: Limitations

This study has a few limitations, including limitations of generalizability, measurements, and data collection. Thus, findings from the current study need to be interpreted with caution.

A major limitation of the study is that findings from the study can only be generalized to the population from which the data came. Most studies on Chinese parenting have been conducted among parents in big Chinese urban cities. The current study was carried out in three small Chinese cities. People's life in big cities and small cities can differ in many aspects, such as income, access to public facilities and social services, stress, and social support. As a result, different findings may emerge among families in big urban cities. Likewise, the findings of this study may not apply to rural population due to massive rural-urban differences.

Another limitation of the study concerns measurements used in the study. First, no indigenous measure of Chinese parenting was used in the study. According to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses with the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire data, the Permissive Parenting Scale did not adequately capture permissive parenting among the study sample of Chinese parents. Chinese permissive parenting may have different behavioral indicators and meanings from American permissive parenting as measured in the Permissive Parenting Scale. Researchers, educators, practitioners, policy-makers, and parents have long been aware of the issue of permissive/indulgent parenting in China, especially after the implementation of the one-child policy (Tobin et al., 2009). However, no widely used measurement has been developed to assess Chinese

permissive/indulgent parenting. Thus, efforts are needed to examine the characteristics, behavioral indicators, and meanings of Chinese permissive/indulgent parenting.

Furthermore, in the qualitative interviews, many mothers discussed their conflicts with grandparents in parenting the child. Grandparents play an important role in young children's socialization and development in Chinese families. However, the current study did not include any measure or interview question on grandparenting. Thus, the findings of the current study may be limited due to the missing piece of grandparenting. For instance, the lack of relationships between some parenting variables and child outcomes may be attributed, at least partly, to grandparenting, because grandparenting may have great influence on child outcomes.

In addition, the adapted *Kindergarten Readiness Checklist* used to assess children's pre-academic performance is not a widely used measure. Parents' and teachers' ratings were not highly correlated, which suggests that the measure may not capture children's pre-academic skills very accurately. Individually administered standardized tests that were developed in or validated for the Chinese culture may be more objective and accurate to assess children's pre-academic performance. Thus, the results related to child pre-academic performance should be interpreted with caution.

Another limitation of the study is that no causal conclusions could be drawn from the study, because all quantitative data were collected concurrently, and there was no time precedence. In the path models, it was hypothesized that parental expectations would influence parenting styles and child outcomes, and thus, the directions of the paths were from parental expectations to parenting styles and child outcomes. However, there may be reciprocal relationships between parental expectations and parenting styles. For

instance, frequently exercising authoritative parenting practices may strengthen parents' beliefs that social-emotional skills are important for children during preschool years. However, without time precedence, no causal relationships could be examined.

Finally, another limitation of the study is that qualitative interviews were conducted before extensive data analyses were performed on quantitative data. As a result, the interview questions were not created based on quantitative results, but on assumptions about what results might emerge and on the central research question of the qualitative phase. In the qualitative interviews, no question was created to address unexpected quantitative results on the interactions between parents' academic expectations and parenting styles. Thus, more research is needed to examine how the relationships between parenting styles and parents' academic expectations affect preschoolers' pre-academic performance.

Section 5: Future Directions

This mixed methods study focused on contemporary Chinese parenting of preschool-aged children. Previous research on Chinese parenting has been heavily relied on a cross-cultural comparative paradigm contrasting Chinese (or Chinese American) parenting and parenting of European American parents. This study, combining surveys and in-depth interviews, adds knowledge to current research on Chinese parenting. Findings from this study have important implications for researchers and practitioners who work with Chinese parents with young children.

First, these findings have some implications for practitioners attempting to promote the development of children's social competence through improving parenting. The findings suggest that parental expectations may be important factors to consider in

designing intervention and prevention programs that are intended to enhance parenting and children's development eventually. In addition, mothers in the interviews said that they primarily used reasoning to discipline their child, and they tried to use reasoning first before turning to other strategies. This study did not focus on how mothers actually used reasoning with their child. Thus, the quality of reasoning, as well as how parents interact with their child during reasoning, is unknown. Future research is needed to examine the process of reasoning. If the quality and effectiveness of reasoning are low, interventions or parent education programs can focus on improving parents' knowledge of reasoning, as well as their capacities to use high-quality reasoning strategies.

Second, as the qualitative findings suggest, contemporary Chinese parents value a wide range of socialization goals. It is critical to acknowledge that contemporary Chinese parents care about a lot more than academic achievement. It is necessary to listen to parents and help parents negotiate and balance different socialization goals. As one mother pointed out, actions and wishes did not always match, suggesting that parents may have trouble enacting their expectations and goals for children in actual parenting behaviors due to various reasons. Researchers need to investigate the reasons behind the mismatch between wishes and actions. Eventually, researchers and practitioners need to design research-based programs that help parents to reflect on their expectations and goals for their children, as well as to learn about appropriate and effective parenting practices to better achieve their expectations and goals.

In addition, Chinese parents nowadays face many challenges in parenting, conflicting parenting with grandparents in particular. There is only limited research on intergenerational parenting in Chinese families. Existing studies on this topic (e.g., Goh,

2006; Goh & Kuczynski, 2010) have shown that there are many conflicts and tensions between parents and grandparents in regard to raising the “precious” grandchildren. Conflicts and tensions may arise from the lack of open communication and coordination between parents and grandparents. Thus, more research is needed to examine effective strategies that parents and grandparents can employ to remove obstacles between them and co-parent in an effective manner. Further, parent education programs should include “how to communicate and coordinate with grandparents effectively” as an important element in the program.

Parents also face other challenges in addition to conflicts in parenting with grandparents. Some mothers in the current study talked about time limitation, lack of social support, anxieties, and other issues. Contemporary Chinese parents with young children are parenting their children in a society that is dramatically different from the society in which they were brought up. These young parents have recognized that they need to raise their children in a quite different way, but they lack knowledge in optimal parenting that leads to positive child development. Parents are raising their children without a sure roadmap, which has posed many challenges to them. Future research is needed to examine all the kinds of challenges contemporary Chinese parents face and potential strategies to overcome those challenges.

This study also has important implications for research on immigrant Chinese families in the United States. Researchers and practitioners should take generational status into account when studying Chinese American parenting. For instance, more recently immigrated Chinese may hold beliefs and values shaped by contemporary social changes underway in China, whereas American-born generations may hold traditional

Chinese cultural values that are considered “outdated” by contemporary Chinese. Furthermore, grandparents may play an important role in Chinese American young children’s life, and it is necessary to add grandparents into the picture when researchers examine family dynamics of Chinese American families with young children. It is important to be aware of the Chinese cultural values of filial piety, which may make parents hesitate to directly communicate with grandparents about parenting.

Finally, researchers should consider using mixed methods in studying Chinese parenting in order to obtain a more nuanced and contextualized portrait of contemporary Chinese parents. Researchers have relied heavily on using survey measures to conduct cross-cultural comparisons of Chinese parenting and Western parenting. Cross-cultural comparisons are necessary, but researchers need to take a closer look at parenting in the context of contemporary Chinese society. Today, parenting becomes a continuously changing subject in a rapidly changing society, and new ideas and concepts constantly emerge. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods will enable researchers to better capture emerging ideas and concepts in parenting.

Section 6: Conclusions

This mixed methods study was designed to understand contemporary Chinese parenting ideologies and practices of parents with preschool-aged children. This study demonstrates that parental expectations were related to parenting styles and child development in social-emotional and academic domains. The findings indicate that parenting styles may be a mechanism through which parental expectations influence children’s social competence. Further research is needed to examine other underlying mechanisms through which parental expectations affect children’s development.

Furthermore, this study shows that the relationships among parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and children's pre-academic performance are unclear. Thus, future research is needed to investigate how parents' academic expectations, parenting styles, and parenting practices operate together to influence children's academic development.

In addition, contradictory to the widespread perception that Chinese parents are solely concerned with children's academic achievement, the present study shows that contemporary Chinese parents care about much more than children's academic achievement. Chinese parents today emphasize their children's psychological health and social-emotional wellbeing. Moreover, this study shows that Chinese parents today tend to be more authoritative than authoritarian, which challenges people's conventional perceptions of Chinese parenting.

This research has significant practical implications. First, parent education programs are in urgent need as many parents expressed their uncertainty and ambivalence regarding how to effectively parent their child in a rapidly changing world. Programs need to take into consideration parents' changing needs in this changing context. Chinese parents today value a variety of socialization goals, and they are trying to balance all these goals and adopt parenting practices that align with these goals. However, they do not necessarily know how to do it without a sure roadmap. Parents are not able to use their childhood experience as a reference point because of the changing context, and thus, they are eager to learn more about parenting. However, there is a huge discrepancy between supply and demand of high-quality parenting education programs. In addition, Chinese educators need to acknowledge that Chinese parents today hope to cultivate a

variety of “qualities” (*suzhi*) in their children, not just academic achievement. Educators need to build partnerships with families to promote children’s development in various domains.

To conclude, Chinese parents’ parenting ideologies and practices are in constant flux in responding to the changing circumstances. Although adapting to the rapidly globalized society has posed many challenges to Chinese parents, the changing society has also made parents more aware of and reflective in their parenting attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

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Appendix A.

Demographic Questionnaire (Translated into English from the Chinese Version)

Family Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: The information in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. The investigator will use the provided data only in group comparisons. The study will not hurt you in any way. No others will know your answers. Therefore, please answer the questions honestly.

1. Today's Date: Month _____ Day _____, 2013
2. Child Name: _____
3. Child Sex:(circle one): Male Female
4. Child's Birthday: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____
5. Child's Ethnicity: _____
6. Your Relationship to the Child: _____
7. Child's School: _____
8. Family Type (circle one):
 - Two-parent family Single-parent family Remarried family
 - Others (Please explain) _____
 - Except for parents, any other adult family members living in the household?
(Please circle) (1) Yes (2) No
 - If yes, who are they (example, grandparents)? _____
9. Father's age: ____ (2) Mother's age: ____
10. Father's education: _____ years (Example: 9=junior middle school, 12=high school, 14=Associate degree, 16=Bachelor's degree, 19=Master's degree, 22=Doctoral degree)
11. Mother's education: _____ years (Example: 9=junior middle school, 12=high school, 14=Associate degree, 16=Bachelor's degree, 19=Master's degree, 22=Doctoral degree)
12. Parent's Education Level(Please check the appropriate level)

Father:

- _____ Uneducated
- _____ Graduated from elementary school
- _____ Graduated from Middle school, high school, or senior vocational school

_____ Graduated from a university or college

_____ Graduated from graduate school

Mother:

_____ Uneducated

_____ Graduated from elementary school

_____ Graduated from Middle school, high school, or senior vocational school

_____ Graduated from a university or college

_____ Graduated from graduate school

13. Father's Occupation: _____ (Please write down father's occupation and check an appropriate category)

_____ **Non-technical or semi-technical worker:** such as housewife, peasant, worker, vendor, fisherman, seaman, waiter, servant, soldier, and unemployed.

_____ **Technical worker:** such as electrician, salesman, driver, tailor, beauty-specialist, barber, chef, and postman, and junior military officer.

_____ **Semi-professional and public servant:** such as cadres at the community level, technician, Cashier, general public servant, policeman, elementary school teacher, and owner of small business.

_____ **Professional and officer:** such as accountant, medical doctor, judge, lawyer, engineer, architect, middle level administrator, secondary school teacher, principal, and owner or manger of middle-size business.

_____ **High-level professional and administrator:** medical doctor with an advanced title, legislator, central representative, senior government officer, college or university teacher, military general, senior executive official of a company

14. Mother's Occupation: _____ (Please write down mother's occupation and check an appropriate category)

_____ **Non-technical or semi-technical worker:** such as housewife, peasant, worker, vendor, fisherman, seaman, waiter, servant, soldier, and unemployed.

_____ **Technical worker:** such as electrician, salesman, driver, tailor, beauty-specialist, barber, chef, and postman, and junior military officer.

_____ **Semi-professional and public servant:** such as cadres at the community level, technician, Cashier, general public servant, policeman, elementary school teacher, and

owner of small business.

____ **Professional and officer:** such as accountant, medical doctor, judge, lawyer, engineer, architect, middle level administrator, secondary school teacher, principal, and owner or manger of middle-size business.

____ **High-level professional and administrator:** medical doctor with an advanced title, legislator, central representative, senior government officer, college or university teacher, military general, senior executive official of a company

15. Does the father work full time or half time (Please circle): Half-time Full-time

16. Number of hours that the father works every week: _____ hours

17. Does the mother work full time or half time (Please circle): Half-time Full-time

18. Number of hours that the mother works every week: _____ hours

19. Total family income per year (Please circle):

- less than 1500 Yuan 1,500-3,600 Yuan 3,600-7,200 Yuan
 7,200-18,000 Yuan 18,000-40,000 Yuan 40,000-100,000 Yuan
 More than 100000 Yuan

20. If you have any question or feedback about this questionnaire, please write your notes here:

Appendix B.

Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

The purpose of this project is to investigate expectations of parents for their preschool-aged children in [NAME OF THE CITY], China. Specifically, I want to understand parents' expectations for children's development, especially in the areas of academic and social-emotional development, as well as the role of parents in how they support their children to achieve those developmental goals.

Questions:

1. Could you please describe your child?

2. Do you think your child is developing well? How would you tell whether your child is developing well?
 - a. Do you think your child is getting along well with peers? How about people in your family? Did it [paraphrasing parents' responses here] just happen by itself, or as a mother, what is your role in that? What have you done about that? How are you encouraging that?

 - b. Do you think your child is learning well? Did it [paraphrasing parents' responses here] just happen by itself, or as a mother, what is your role in that? What have you done about that? How are you encouraging that?

3. One mom told me that she doesn't care a lot about her child's academic achievement, but she cares a lot about whether her child gets along well with peers. How do you think about that?

4. What kinds of things worry you regarding your child's development?

5. Do you have any concern about when your child goes to elementary school? (Do you have any concern about his/her development in academic area? What about in social area?)

6. All children misbehave sometimes. Can you tell me what kind of situations that come up for you? What do you do when that happens? When do you think your child can outgrow that?

7. All parents have to use some kind of discipline/guidance about their children. How do you go about that? Give me some examples. (How do you explain things? Do you have ever had to use any kind of punishment?)

Thanks for scarifying your precious time! Your participation is really important for me and for people who wants to know more about children's math learning.