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Catherine McBride-Chang & Lei Chang

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Adolescent-Parent Relations in Hong Kong: Parenting Styles, Emotional Autonomy, and School Achievement

CATHERINE MCBRIDE-CHANG

*Department of Psychology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

LEI CHANG

*Department of Educational Psychology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

ABSTRACT. This 4-phase study of Hong Kong Chinese adolescent-parent relationships (906 adolescents and 1,091 parents) revealed the following: (a) Adolescents and their parents differ in their perceptions of parenting style. (b) Autonomy is negatively associated with parents' perceived authoritative parenting style and school achievement. (c) Neither parenting style nor measures of parents' beliefs in training their children (R. Chao, 1994) are associated with self-reports of school achievement. However, (d) parents of students from the highest (Band 1) academically oriented schools in Hong Kong rated themselves as higher in authoritativeness and lower in authoritarianism than parents of adolescents from the lowest academically oriented (Band 5) schools. Findings are discussed in relation to posited differences in adolescent-parent relationships in Western and Chinese cultures.

CHINESE ADOLESCENT-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS may be of particular interest to developmental psychologists for at least two reasons (Lau & Yeung, 1996). First, Chinese and other Asian students tend to outperform their Western peers, particularly in mathematics (e.g., Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996; Stevenson et al., 1990). Asian students in the United States are also the highest achieving ethnic group (e.g., Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Psychologists, therefore, wish to understand what factors contribute to the overwhelming success of Chinese and other Asian students. Second, Chinese represent a majority of the world population. Because most modern psychological research on development is based on Western psychologists' models of Western children and adolescents, more stud-

Address correspondence to Catherine McBride-Chang, Department of Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N. T., Hong Kong.

ies with Chinese samples are essential to understand which developmental principles are universal and which are culture-specific.

What role do Chinese parents play in the lives of their adolescents? This seemingly straightforward question has generated relatively strong controversy in the developmental literature (e.g., Chao & Sue, 1996). In the present study, we examined three aspects of Hong Kong adolescent–parent relationships: (a) agreement between parents and adolescents about parenting styles within the family, (b) the extent to which adolescents' perceptions of their parents' styles of parenting influence their own attitudes about autonomy, and (c) associations between perceived parenting style and adolescents' school achievement.

American Conceptualizations of Parenting Styles

The concept of parenting style was initially popularized in the germinal work of Baumrind (1971, 1978) in the United States. Her work suggested that reciprocal-type parenting, or authoritative parenting, is more successful than authoritarian or permissive parenting in promoting adolescents' psychological health in Western cultures (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Academic achievement also tends to be highest in those who characterize their parents' styles as authoritative (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). Authoritative parenting emphasizes firm discipline, warmth, and compromise. In this tradition, parents consider their adolescents' opinions and respect their wishes. However, parents also maintain firm overall guidelines for adolescents' behaviors. Permissive parenting, in contrast, is too lax an approach to disciplining children. Authoritarian parenting, which emphasizes obedience without explanation or warmth, is too hostile and undemocratic to promote optimal development in children from a Western culture, which values individualism.

Western adolescents and parents tend to differ in their conceptions of parenting style within the household. Adolescents tend to view their parents as more permissive and more authoritarian, whereas parents tend to view themselves as more authoritative than their children do (Smetana, 1995).

The relation of parenting style to autonomy is unclear. Authoritative parenting, as rated by both adolescents and their parents, is negatively associated with adolescent autonomy development (Smetana, 1995). This finding suggests that emotional autonomy reflects detachment rather than healthy separation from parents (Smetana, 1995).

Outcomes of Parenting Style Measures in Chinese Samples

Adolescent–parent relations and their associations with achievement and social outcomes among Chinese families are complex (e.g., Chao & Sue, 1996). Chinese parents have been described as controlling and even hostile (see Chao,

1994, for a review). In a U.S. sample, Asian adolescents rated their parents as highest on the authoritarian dimension of parenting (Dornbusch et al., 1987) relative to other ethnic groups. At the same time, Chinese adolescents are among the highest achievers in school and demonstrate relatively low levels of psychological problems (e.g., Lau & Yeung, 1996).

These findings have prompted some to argue that Asian American students' success in school is attributable to their high reliance on peers and their greater fear (relative to other ethnic groups) that performing poorly in school will have very negative consequences in the future. Indeed, in one U.S. study of different groups, Asian parents were found to be the least involved in their children's schoolwork (Steinberg et al., 1991).

However, other researchers (for a review, see Chao & Sue, 1996) have noted an extremely high degree of involvement of Chinese parents in their children's schoolwork. For example, Chinese parents are vigilant about homework and structure their children's after-school activities to concentrate on academically valued activities. In another study (Man, 1991), Hong Kong adolescents who were highly parent-oriented tended to score highest in life satisfaction; relatively peer-oriented adolescents tended to be less satisfied overall with their lives. Thus, it seems likely that parenting, in some capacity, is related to outcomes for Chinese adolescents.

Critiques of Western Parenting Notions for Chinese Adolescents

Chao and Sue (1996) offered several explanations for the apparently anomalous results obtained by different researchers on the relation of parenting to Chinese children's achievement. First, survey questions on parenting style may be interpreted differently, depending on cultural background. For example, respect for elders is stronger in Chinese culture than in Western culture. A question regarding a parent's requirement of strict obedience, which might seem controlling and dictatorial to a Westerner, might seem much more caring and in the spirit of "training" to a Chinese person.

Chao (1994; Chao & Sue, 1996) believed strongly in the notion of *guan*, or training, in relation to achievement outcomes of Chinese children. This idea, she argued, is much more culturally appropriate within Chinese society than are notions of authoritarian or authoritative parenting. In Chinese culture, control, care, and concern are virtually synonymous. The notion of *guan* encompasses a controlling parenting style as well as a high degree of mother-child interaction and physical proximity. These concepts are largely absent from Western culture.

Second, examining authoritarian parenting style with regard to school achievement only may be a mistake. Results of such studies may reflect primarily the extreme importance placed on academic achievement in Chinese society, rather than a global, controlling style of parenting. For example, Chao (1996) found that Chinese mothers, compared with European American mothers, placed

much more emphasis on the importance of education and on direct intervention in their children's academic learning.

Third, differences in parenting style indicated in various studies may reflect differences in development. For example, Chinese parents might be expected to be most involved in their children's school work in the early grades and less involved later on, when a pattern of expectations of high achievement has already been established. In contrast, Western parents may be more involved with children's achievement relatively later in their development.

The strict testing sequence in Hong Kong, compared with the relatively lax sequence in the United States, may cause Chinese parents to be more concerned with their children's school achievement early. In Hong Kong, at the equivalent of Grade 7 in the United States, children are assigned to one of five levels of schools, from academically highest achieving (Band 1) to lowest (Band 5). This placement is extremely important to parents and students alike. Further streaming of students to schooling tracks (science, which is valued, vs. arts, which are less valued) occurs around Grade 10 (U.S.). In contrast, there is much less explicit streaming of students in U.S. schools until students begin to consider whether to go on to college.

Parenting Outcomes and Expectations of Hong Kong Adolescents

Research findings on adolescent-parent relations in Hong Kong are mixed. For example, compared with U.S. and Australian adolescents, Hong Kong adolescents have characterized their parents as less accepting-engaged and more demanding (Feldman & Rosenthal, 1991; Feldman, Rosenthal, Mont-Reynaud, Leung, & Lau, 1991). Compared with adults in Taiwan and mainland China, Hong Kong adults characterized their own parents as less warm and more controlling (Berndt, Cheung, Lau, Hau, & Lew, 1993). On the other hand, in a recent government survey (Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1996), relatively few problems were reported by either young adults (ages 15-29) or parents regarding the parent-youth bond. In another study (Yau & Smetana, 1996) focusing primarily on lower class and lower middle-class adolescents, conflicts between adolescents and their parents tended to occur fairly regularly and to be of moderate intensity. Conflicts tended to occur more frequently and to be more intense for adolescents who perceived their parents as relatively less warm and more controlling.

Although we found several studies documenting perceptions of parenting in Hong Kong (Berndt et al., 1993; Feldman & Rosenthal, 1991; Feldman et al., 1991; Yau & Smetana, 1996), we know of no studies in which the relations between adolescent and parental perceptions of parenting style were examined. On the basis of previous research on Westerners (Smetana, 1995), we expected Hong Kong adolescents to view their own parents as less warm and more controlling than the parents themselves would view their parenting. On the other

hand, because Chinese society tends to value strict control over children more than does Western society, we also entertained the possibility that parenting perceptions could be equivalent in adolescents and their parents.

Autonomy in Hong Kong adolescents may be differently associated with parenting style than is autonomy in U.S. adolescents. Feldman and Rosenthal (1991) found that their measure of autocratic parenting, which was similar to authoritarianism, was negatively associated with age expectations of autonomy. In other words, those who perceived their parents as relatively more controlling tended to perceive themselves as becoming autonomous later than others. For Feldman and Rosenthal's Australian and U.S. counterparts, there was no relation between age expectations of autonomy and parenting. This result also differs from those of Smetana (1995), who found that authoritative parenting style was negatively associated with autonomy in U.S. adolescents.

Part of the difference between the results of these studies may be in the measures used. Feldman and Rosenthal (1991) conceptualized autonomy as relatively unidimensional, consisting primarily of age expectations for enjoying various freedoms. Smetana (1995) relied on a multidimensional measure of autonomy from Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), who conceptualized autonomy as consisting of (a) nondependency on parents and individuation from parents (both more affective conceptualizations of autonomy from parents), and (b) parental deidealization and the perception of parents as people (both conceptualized as relatively cognitive ideas of autonomy from parents). In the present study, on the basis of the work of Smetana (1995), we expected autonomy to be negatively associated with authoritative parenting, as has been found in Western adolescents. We also examined the extent to which Chao's (1994) concept of training is associated with autonomy for Hong Kong adolescents.

The question of whether parenting style is associated with academic achievement in Hong Kong students is still under debate. It is possible that academic achievement cannot be predicted from measures of parenting style, as has been found in Asian American students (Dornbusch et al., 1987) or, alternatively, that in a wide-ranging sample of Hong Kong adolescents there may still be some differentiation of school grades based on parenting style. We also examined Chao's (1994; Chao & Sue, 1996) notion that training is positively associated with school achievement in this context. To summarize, we tested the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Hong Kong parents and adolescents differ in their ratings of parenting style, and adolescents view their parents as more authoritarian and less authoritative than parents rate themselves.

Hypothesis 2. Autonomy ratings are negatively associated with authoritative parenting style ratings (Smetana, 1995).

Hypothesis 3. Parenting style is weakly associated with academic achievement, and authoritative and training ratings of parenting are related to higher academic achievement.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited in four phases for the present study. In each phase, independent samples were recruited. In the first phase, associations between adolescents' and parents' ratings of parenting style were examined. The participants, all from Hong Kong, were 180 adolescents, 12 to 20 years old ($M = 15.8$, $SD = 1.9$), and 1 of their parents; 107 of the adolescents were girls, and 73 were boys. Of the parents who responded, 57 were fathers, 111 were mothers, and on 2 of the questionnaires, this information was not specified. These students were in Forms 2 through 7, approximately equivalent to Grades 7 through 12 as well as 1st-year college in the United States.

In the second phase of the study, adolescents were asked to fill out a questionnaire on emotional autonomy, and 1 of their parents was again recruited to rate his or her own parenting style. The participants were 283 adolescents (179 girls) and 266 parents (98 fathers). Seventeen students' parents did not respond. The students were in Forms 2 through 7.

In the third phase of the study, in which the students rated themselves on the autonomy scale, 463 students and 1 of their parents participated (266 girls and 197 boys); 251 mothers and 187 fathers responded to Chao's (1994) measure of training. In addition, school achievement self-reports were obtained for 302 students. Students were 12 to 20 years old ($M = 16.1$, $SD = 2.0$) and were in Forms 1 through 7 in Hong Kong public schools.

The fourth phase of the study involved 60 fathers and 122 mothers of 82 boys and 97 girls (and 3 for whom gender was not specified). The adolescents were 96 students from Band 1 and 84 students from Band 5 (and 2 for whom band was not specified) in two Hong Kong schools. Parents' ratings of parenting styles in relation to students' school band (1 = academically very good; 5 = academically very poor) were the measures of interest in this phase. The participants were recruited by their classroom teachers, and they were assured that their ratings would be kept strictly confidential. All questionnaires were administered at school.

Instruments

All of the questionnaires were translated into Chinese prior to administration. Two native Chinese translators independently translated each item and then compared translations together to resolve any disagreements.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) consists of 30 items, 10 each measuring permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles. Items are rated on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The higher the obtained score for each parenting dimen-

sion, the closer to that parenting prototype the individual is assumed to be. The questionnaire can be used for ratings of both mothers and fathers. Reported internal consistency reliabilities for each of the parenting dimensions have ranged from .74 to .87 for children rating their own parents (Buri, 1991). The same instrument was reworded for parents to rate themselves on each dimension.

The Emotional Autonomy Scale (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), a 20-item scale, has a reported internal consistency reliability of .75 (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) and consists of subscales measuring individuation from parents, non-dependency on parents, perception of parents as people, and deidealization of parents. Items are presented on 4-point Likert-type scales ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

Items on the instrument that measured training were taken directly from Chao (1994) and were presented on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

The measure of school achievement was based on students' self-reports of their standardized test scores from the previous year's exams in Chinese, English, and mathematics.

Results

Agreement Among Students and Parents on Parenting Styles

In the first phase of the study, 180 students and their parents rated parenting styles. The obtained internal consistency reliabilities for Buri's (1991) three dimensions of parenting were .64 for the permissive dimension, .78 for the authoritarian dimension, and .88 for the authoritative dimension.

Following Smetana (1995), we first examined the extent to which the parents and their adolescents could be classified as permissive, authoritarian, or authoritative, based on the criteria that, to fit a particular category, a score on a parenting subscale must be above the standardized mean and at least .5 standard deviations above the scores on the other two subscales. For example, to be classified as authoritarian, a parent had to be above the standardized mean on authoritarianism, and his or her scores on permissiveness and authoritativeness had to be at least .5 standard deviations below the score obtained for authoritarianism.

Although this classification worked well for Smetana's (1995) adolescents and their parents, only 16% of whom could not be classified as permissive, authoritarian, or authoritative (and thus were classified as "undifferentiated"), the same pattern did not hold for the Hong Kong parents and adolescents. In our classification, almost half of the adolescents and parents were classified as undifferentiated. Within the sample, 87 of the parents' and 79 of the adolescents' responses were classified as undifferentiated; 30 of the parents' and 35 of the adolescents' responses were classified as permissive; authoritative responses were obtained from 30 of the parents and 26 of the adolescents; and authoritarian responses were

obtained from 33 of the parents and 40 of the adolescents. A chi-square test of the difference in classification between parents and adolescents produced non-significant results. However, because so many responses were undifferentiated, we examined ratings on each of the three subscales separately.

Paired *t* tests revealed that the students ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .43$) rated their parents as significantly more permissive than did the parents themselves ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .47$), $t(159) = -3.08$, $p < .01$. Parents were rated by adolescents ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .59$) as significantly less authoritarian than parents rated themselves ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .52$), $t(167) = 2.62$, $p < .05$. Finally, the students ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .66$) rated their parents as significantly more authoritative than did the parents themselves ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .57$), $t(153) = -2.56$, $p < .05$. The parents did not rate their parenting styles differently depending on the sex of their adolescent.

Parenting Style in Relation to Adolescents' Autonomy and School Achievement

Parents' perceptions of their own parenting were examined in relation to emotional autonomy and school achievement in the second phase of the study. Obtained internal consistency reliabilities for the Emotional Autonomy Scale were somewhat lower than those reported by Steinberg and Silverberg (1986): .42 for deindividuation, .59 for deidealization of parents, .52 for nondependency on parents, and .46 for the perception of parents as people. However, the overall internal consistency reliability for this measure was .72, very similar to that obtained by Steinberg and Silverberg (1986). Among the four concepts assessed within the emotional autonomy scale, only individuation revealed significant differences between females ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .53$) and males ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .60$), $t(461) = 2.48$, $p < .02$. Autonomy also tended to increase with age. Because there were approximately equal numbers of adolescents from Forms 3 ($n = 77$), 4 ($n = 80$), and 5 ($n = 77$), we examined differences across these three groups only, using one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Table 1 contains mean ratings across Forms 3 (equivalent to U.S. Grade 9), 4 (equivalent to Grade 10), and 5 (equivalent to Grade 11) for these students.

Two particularly interesting results emerged from this analysis. First, the strongest relation among forms was in the individuation subscale, $F(2, 231) = 7.11$, $p < .01$. Second, the significant developmental pattern in the subscale Perception of Parents as People, $F(2, 231) = 3.05$, $p < .05$, was exactly the opposite of what was predicted. In this case, the students in the higher grades tended to perceive their parents less as individuals. Autonomy was correlated significantly ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$) with the overall authoritative parenting style.

Next, associations of the Emotional Autonomy Scale and parenting styles were correlated with student reports of their previous year's standardized achievement scores in Chinese, English, and mathematics. Self-reports of these achievement scores were moderately associated: Chinese and mathematics, $r = .52$; Chinese and English, $r = .61$; and mathematics and English, $r = .48$ ($p < .01$).

TABLE 1
Mean Autonomy Scores for Forms 3, 4, and 5

Emotional Autonomy subscale	Form 3		Form 4		Form 5	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Individuation	3.63	.72	3.85	.59	3.97	.56
Parental Deidealization	3.60	.62	3.72	.51	3.86	.58
Nondependency on Parents	3.72	.57	3.93	.67	3.95	.57
Perception of Parents as People	3.48	.53	3.31	.47	3.29	.59

Note. *N*s were 77 for Form 3, 80 for Form 4, and 77 for Form 5. All *F* values were significant ($p < .05$): $F(2, 231) = 7.11$ for Individuation, 3.58 for Parental Deidealization, 3.90 for Nondependency on Parents, and 3.27 for Perception of Parents as People.

Autonomy was negatively associated with Chinese, $r = -.20$; English, $r = -.13$; and mathematics, $r = -.13$, $p < .05$, though the latter two associations were non-significant. The student's age was negatively correlated with school achievement. Age and Chinese scores were negatively associated, $r = -.31$, $p < .01$; age and mathematics were correlated, $r = -.16$, $p < .05$; and age and English were correlated, $r = -.37$, $p < .01$. In regression equations with age as an initial predictor for each of the three test scores, the autonomy variable did not contribute additional variance to the equation, a finding that suggests that autonomy in school achievement may be indirectly associated with its association with age. None of the three parenting style subscales were significantly associated with school achievement.

Chao's (1994) Training in Relation to Autonomy and School Achievement

Because Chao (1994; Chao & Sue, 1996) argued previously that her construct of training might be a better index of students' school achievement, we focused on the training construct in relation to self-reports of school achievement and autonomy. Although Chao (1994) did not report an internal consistency reliability for her 12-item scale, the obtained internal consistency for this measure in the present study was .72. As in Phase 2 of this study, self-reports of school achievement in the three subjects were moderately associated: Chinese and mathematics, $r = .44$; Chinese and English, $r = .61$; and mathematics and English, $r = .52$ (for all, $p < .01$). Also similar to the previous study, there was a very slight trend for autonomy to be negatively associated with school achievement. The correlation of autonomy to Chinese was $-.06$, to English it was $-.12$, and to mathematics it was $-.16$; only the last was significant ($p < .05$). Also as in the previous study, age was significantly negatively associated with Chinese ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$), mathematics ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$), and English ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$).

.01). Training ratings did not differ between mothers ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .46$) and fathers ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .52$).

Contrary to expectation, training was not associated with school achievement. Furthermore, it was not significantly associated with autonomy ($r = -.09$). Training was significantly associated ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$) with the parental deidealization subscale of the autonomy scale.

Parenting Style in Relation to School Level

We focused the fourth phase of the study on school academic ranking in relation to parenting style. Because training did not appear to be associated with school achievement, for this final phase we retained Buri's (1991) parenting style questionnaire, which reflects three dimensions of parenting. Because Hong Kong schools are organized in more or less of a hierarchy of academic achievement for adolescents, it was possible to examine parenting style in relation to school type only. We selected the extremes within the Hong Kong hierarchy—Bands 1 (academically highest) and 5 (academically lowest). Parents were asked to rate their parenting styles. We reasoned that if parenting style is at all associated with academic achievement, that association should be reflected in these schools from the extremes of the academic achievement continuum.

The parents of students from Bands 1 and 5 schools did not differ in their ratings of permissiveness (Band 1: $M = 3.37$, $SD = .39$; Band 5: $M = 3.34$, $SD = .45$). However, the parents from Band 1 schools rated themselves as significantly lower ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .38$) in authoritarian parenting style than did the parents from Band 5 schools ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .40$), $t(178) = -2.98$, $p < .01$. The parents from Band 1 schools also rated themselves as significantly higher ($M = 4.79$, $SD = .50$) than the parents from Band 5 schools ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .70$), $t(175) = 2.53$, $p < .05$, in authoritative parenting style.

Discussion

The present study elucidates several aspects of parenting styles in relation to autonomy and school achievement of adolescents in Hong Kong. Some of these findings are similar to those obtained in Western populations, and others are surprisingly different.

First, categorizing parenting styles as authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive may not be a culturally relevant dimension of socialization in Hong Kong adolescents. Unlike the Western teenagers in Smetana's (1995) study, the Hong Kong adolescents and parents in the present study were largely unclassifiable in these parenting style dimensions. Others researchers (e.g., Berndt et al., 1993; Chao, 1994) have focused on alternative ways to conceptualize parenting in Chinese society. These approaches are appropriate in light of the difficulties we encountered in considering the unique styles of parents of Chinese adolescents.

Nevertheless, the Hong Kong adolescents' perceptions of their parents' styles of parenting did differ slightly from those of their parents, according to questionnaire items. This general finding was obtained in Smetana's (1995) study on U.S. adolescents as well. However, in the present study, the ways in which Hong Kong adolescents and their parents disagreed on parenting styles differed from the results obtained by Smetana (1995). In the present study, the students rated their parents as more permissive and authoritative than their parents rated themselves; they also saw their parents as less authoritarian than the parents themselves did. In Smetana's (1995) study, adolescents also tended to rate their parents as more permissive than their parents saw themselves. However, U.S. adolescents rated their parents as more authoritarian and less authoritative than their parents rated themselves. It is possible that this result is attributable to belief system differences between the two cultures. It may be that, during the periods of extreme change of the teenage years, adolescents across cultures tend to perceive parenting goals differently than parents perceive these goals (Smetana, 1995).

In Chinese society, control and restrictiveness may be highly valued (Chao & Sue, 1996) and perceived by Chinese adolescents as lacking in their parents. Control is one dimension of authoritativeness and the major dimension of authoritarianism. An alternative interpretation for these results is that the adolescents viewed their parents as relatively warm, whereas the parents were more centered on the controlling, disciplining aspects of their parenting.

The second phase of the study focused on emotional autonomy. The autonomy scale appeared to have similar psychometric properties when administered to a Chinese sample, as shown previously in U.S. adolescents (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). For example, mean subscale scores within the autonomy scale were higher for those in higher grades for three of the four subscales. For the fourth subscale, measuring perceptions of parents as people, the opposite pattern emerged. Students were less likely to endorse these items at the higher grades.

This result may indicate a cultural difference in Hong Kong students relative to U.S. adolescents. Items that are used to measure this construct include "I have often wondered how my parents act when I'm not around," "I might be surprised to see how my parents act at a party," and "My parents probably talk about different things when I am around from what they talk about when I'm not." It may be that in Chinese society, parents and adolescents act toward each other as adults earlier in development. Parental supervision of homework and other school-related performance has been posited to come at an earlier age for Chinese than for Western students (Chao & Sue, 1996), so that when their children reach adolescence, Chinese parents' roles in helping their children with school work may be diminished relative to Western parents' roles. In this context, by adolescence, Chinese students may actually be more independent and adult in their approach to school work than are Western students. Therefore, the notion that individuals have different characters in different contexts may not be as relevant for Hong Kong adolescents as for Westerners.

There is some evidence in the present study that autonomy is associated with parenting style. A negative association between autonomy and authoritative parenting was obtained, similar to the results of Smetana's (1995) study of Western adolescents. The magnitudes of the associations obtained by Smetana ($r = -.28$) and the one obtained in the present study ($r = -.20$) were similar. Smetana's interpretation of this result was that autonomy may reflect a detachment from the family, rather than a healthy separation. She also pointed out that parenting perceptions may depend on context. That is, parenting may be perceived differently in relation to different domains, such as those perceived as prudential, moral, or conventional issues. Chao's (1994) measure of training, which has items related to both warmth and control, was not associated with autonomy in the present study. Thus, it appears that for this sample, parenting style is minimally associated with autonomy. These results again argue for alternative conceptualizations of parenting of adolescents in Chinese society.

Autonomy was slightly negatively associated with school achievement in the present study. This result is contrary to those obtained in Western samples, which indicate that autonomy may promote academic achievement in students (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). It is possible that in Chinese society, early feelings of separateness from parents can foster lower academic achievement.

However, the results are also linked to the negative associations between age and school achievement obtained in Phases 2 and 3 of the present study: With development, adolescents' school test scores tended to decline as their autonomy increased. These results are similar to those of Eccles et al. (1993), who noted that, among U.S. adolescents, grades tended to decline in the transition to junior high school, although standardized achievement test scores tended to remain the same during this transition, suggesting that the decline in grades is attributable to differences in teachers' assessments rather than to actual learning or performance in school. This trend among adolescents is accompanied by a tendency to perceive oneself as more autonomous in junior high school.

We had no independent measures of ability level for these Hong Kong students. However, these preliminary results suggest a pattern of student assessment similar to that in the United States. Future researchers might consider the relation of autonomy development to both ability level (using Hong Kong standardized tests) and grades Hong Kong students receive from their teachers in the secondary schools.

Finally, in contrast to results obtained in previous studies in the West (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1991), there was very little association between parenting style, as measured either by Buri's (1991) measure or by Chao's (1994) training concept, and academic achievement. The lack of association observed in the present study may be attributable to the advanced ages of the students (all equivalent to Grades 7 and higher in the United States). As suggested by Chao and Sue (1996), parenting style may matter most for academic

achievement of Chinese students in the early years, when Chinese parents may be more likely to be establishing school-achievement socialization patterns for subsequent years.

The results from the last phase of the study, that both parents and students independently rated parenting styles, as conceptualized by Western researchers, differently when the adolescents were in different academic-level schools, indicate that parenting style may, indeed, still have a subtle association with school achievement. The parents of those from the most academically competitive schools tended to perceive themselves as more authoritative and less authoritarian than those from the least academically competitive schools. These results suggest that abandoning parenting style as a possibly important factor in predicting school achievement for Chinese students may be premature (Chao & Sue, 1996). However, in future research, multiple dimensions of parenting should be considered in relation to students' development, beginning with young children.

This study has two limitations. First, all measures were questionnaires. These questionnaires may have been susceptible to various biasing effects. Observations of behavior or direct measures of school achievement would be better indicators of patterns of socialization and achievement. Second, we did not control for effects of socioeconomic status. It is possible that socioeconomic status was confounded with academic achievement for some of the students.

Nevertheless, this study has several strengths. Data from over 900 Hong Kong adolescents and over 1,000 Hong Kong parents were compiled. With these samples, it was possible to discern basic patterns of association that might not have been clear in smaller samples. Second, our study is unique in its direct assessment by parents of parenting styles. Previous studies (Berndt et al., 1993; Feldman & Rosenthal, 1991; Feldman et al., 1991; Yau & Smetana, 1996) have focused exclusively on Hong Kong adolescents themselves. Third, our measure of autonomy was a different, perhaps broader conception than that used by Feldman et al. (1991), yielding more individualized information regarding subscale interpretations in Hong Kong students.

The students and parents surveyed in this research were representative of Hong Kong secondary school students and their parents generally. All were from Hong Kong public schools and represented a range of academic abilities, from excellent (Band 1) to fairly poor (Band 5) in school level. The extent to which these results reflect general trends in the larger Chinese society is unclear, however. The Hong Kong educational system is quite different from those in Taiwan or Mainland China in terms of the emphasis placed on spoken and written English proficiency and the system of rating students' academic performance. Others (e.g., Berndt et al., 1993) have found major differences across the three societies in perceptions of parenting; Hong Kong parents are perceived as more controlling and less warm than parents from Mainland China or Taiwan. Nevertheless, the sample included in the present study is reflective of the larger Hong Kong society.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study is that it suggests several directions for future research with Hong Kong students. First, parenting style should be considered in relation to behaviors and achievements of children and adolescents across several domains. Although there may be some utility to conceptualizing parenting as permissive, authoritative, or authoritarian, these conceptions are less relevant for Chinese families than for those in the West. Second, autonomy should be considered in relation to school achievement of Chinese students, so that researchers can assess whether autonomy has the same meaning for those in the East as it does for those in the West. Is emotional autonomy detrimental to school achievement of Chinese adolescents? Developmental studies that consider the effects of autonomy across several age groups will best settle this question.

Third, future studies might address the extent to which Hong Kong adolescents' grades decline with age and whether declining grades are justified relative to these students' basic levels of knowledge and achievement (as assessed on a standardized measure of achievement across grade levels). The research of Eccles et al. (1993) shows that early adolescents' declining grades may account for additional stress in U.S. teenagers. Our results on scores declining with age may have been attributable to a large number of unmeasured variables, such as age differences in ability level or school level. Nevertheless, the fact that the results were consistent across two separate samples of adolescents suggests that these results are fairly stable. Future researchers could attempt to replicate these findings while controlling for ability level.

In this study, we considered emotional autonomy, parenting style, and school achievement in a large number of Hong Kong adolescents. Results from this study are intended mainly as an impetus for additional research on development of Chinese adolescents. Such research may improve our understanding of which factors contribute to development across cultures and which factors are culture-specific.

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