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“Tiger Mom, Panda Dad”:

A Preliminary Study of Contemporary Chinese Parenting Profiles

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#### **AUTHOR NOTE**

This is the preliminary study of a larger PhD study to be conducted by the first author. The authors would like to thank all the Chinese parents who participated in the study and teachers who facilitated data collection in the kindergarten in Shenzhen, China. The authors also thank Ms. Lin Xunyi for statistical assistance.

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### SYNOPSIS

**Objective.** The goal of this study was to explore the inter-parental differences and the major clusters of Chinese parenting profile in a sample of preschoolers’ fathers and mothers in urban China. **Design.** Eighty-six Chinese couples in Shenzhen completed the Parenting Style and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, and Hart (1995) and Chao (1994), and four couples were interviewed to triangulate the survey data. A paired *t*-test was used to find inter-parental differences and cluster analysis was used to find major clusters of parenting profiles. **Results.** Mothers were less authoritative and more authoritarian than fathers. Three major clusters of parenting profiles were found: easygoing parenting, followed by tiger parenting and supportive parenting. **Conclusions.** Inter-parental differences existed among these couples, and “tiger moms” and “panda dads” were common in these Chinese families.

## INTRODUCTION

Chinese parenting has generated immense interest and controversy, since Amy Chua published her controversial book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, in 2011. This tiger mother advocated traditional Chinese parenting practices in her book, such as having high academic expectations and restricting children from choosing their own extracurricular activities. The term “tiger mom”, coined by Chua to refer to a strict, demanding mother with high expectations for her children’s academic success, has also generated strong negative reactions, particularly towards Chua’s argument that Chinese mothers are superior to Western mothers. Some studies have found that Chinese parents were more authoritarian and less authoritative than Western parents (Chen et al., 1998; Chen & Luster, 2002), and some have acknowledged that the Western conceptualization of parenting style might not be culturally appropriate to describe the contemporary Chinese parenting style (Lau & Yeung, 1996; Liu, Ng, Weatherall, & Loong, 2000; Quoss & Zhao, 1995). Later studies paid more attention to the crafting of parenting profiles of Chinese parents, especially those of Chinese American parents, with multiple dimensions and perspectives (Chan, Bowes, & Wyer, 2009; Kim, Wang, Orozco-Lapray, Shen, & Murtuza, 2013; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carrole, 2011; Xu et al., 2005). Few, however, have studied maternal and paternal parenting separately and fewer have studied the inter-parental differences. Even Chua (2011) did not underline the inter-parental differences in her family. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the inter-parental differences and to craft parenting profiles in a contemporary Chinese city, Shenzhen, one of the most developed and globalized cities in China.

Western Conceptualization of Parenting Style

Baumrind's (1971) fundamental study established a typology of parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parents have high expectations for their children while giving appropriate autonomy support and emotional support. Authoritarian parents hold a set of standards whereby children are shaped, controlled and evaluated in a directive way. Permissive parents make few demands on children and have few expectations for them. Based on Baumrind's conceptualization, Maccoby and Martin (1983) developed a two-dimensional framework of parenting style: Parental demandingness (control, supervision, and maturity demands); and responsiveness (warmth, acceptance, and involvement). Baumrind (1991) subsequently refined her model of parenting style based on two dimensions. The four parenting styles are (1) authoritative: high in demandingness and responsiveness, (2) authoritarian: high in demandingness but low in responsiveness, (3) indulgent: low in demandingness but high in responsiveness, and (4) neglectful: low in demandingness and responsiveness. This framework has been widely used in studies on European-American parents in the past two decades (Casa et al., 2006; Coley, Lewin-Bizan, & Carrano, 2011; Rivers, Mullis, Fortner, & Mullis, 2012).

#### Chinese Parenting Dimensions and Profiles

To understand the Chinese parenting, Lim and Lim (2004) identified two important aspects: The dynamic nature of culture and the need for a balanced perspective and approach. Empirical studies have found that the Western conceptualization of parenting dimensions and profiles was not culturally appropriate for Chinese parents (Lau & Yeung, 1996; Liu et al., 2000; Quoss & Zhao, 1995). McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) found that Chinese parents in Hong Kong could

not be classified into the three typologies, and thus recommended multiple dimensions within each parenting style in the study of parent-child relationships.

Accordingly, Chao (1994, 2000) proposed a new parenting dimension, which she termed “training”, or *chiao shun* (教訓), as culturally specific to Asian American parents. Whereas “authoritarian” or “restrictive” reflects Western implication of parental hostility, aggression, mistrust, and dominance, “training” encompasses the Chinese indigenous concept of loving, caring and involvement through governing and controlling, and emphasizes hard work and self-discipline. Findings of Chao’s (2001) study indicated that the Chinese American parents scored significantly higher than their European-American counterparts both on the standard measures for parental control and authoritarian parenting style, and on the child-rearing ideologies described by the concept of “training”. However, Chao’s (2001) study was based on Chinese Americans, whose parenting style might be affected by acculturation (Ho, 2014), which needed further study to examine the appropriateness of the training parenting style for parents in China.

More recent studies have recognized the importance of adding caveats to the classic dimensions and using multiple dimensions in both positive and negative ways to craft parenting profiles (Chan et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2005). These multiple dimensions include: parental warmth versus hostility, democratic parenting versus psychological control, parental monitoring versus punitive parenting, and inductive reasoning versus shaming. Based on these dimensions, culturally specific parenting profiles have emerged. For example, “tiger” parenting, a culturally unique parenting among Asian parents, was characterized as both highly authoritative and highly authoritarian (Kim et al., 2013). “Supportive” parenting was characterized as similar to the classic authoritativeness, scoring high on

positive measures and low on negative measures; “harsh” parenting was characterized as similar to classic authoritarianism, scoring low on positive measures and high on negative measures; and “easygoing” was characterized as similar to classic negligent and/or permissive parenting, scoring low on both positive and negative measures. A three-wave longitudinal study of 444 Chinese American families spanning 8 years found that supportive parenting was most prevalent among these families and was associated with the best developmental outcomes, followed by easygoing parenting, tiger parenting, and harsh parenting (Kim et al., 2013).

#### The Differentiated Maternal and Paternal Parenting

Another gap in the literature is that very few studies have differentiated between maternal and paternal parenting. Previous research has focused mainly on maternal parenting, with the assumption that paternal and maternal parenting might share the same typology (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Tamis-LeMonda, Catherine, & Cabrera, 2002). However, the traditional Chinese notion of “stern father and compassionate mother (嚴父慈母)” depicts the long-assumed differences between the two parents. Traditionally, the “stern father” is considered to be master of the family (一家之主), who maintains order within the big family and exercises well-reasoned authority, and who takes on disciplinary responsibilities and decision making with the children (Chang, Chen, & Ji, 2011; Chen et al., 2015). What’s more, the word “stern” implies the detachment and distance that fathers maintain from other members of the family (Ho, 1987). On the other hand, the “compassionate mother” is expected to manage household affairs, follow her husband’s decisions and to be responsible for the children’s daily well-being and education (Wilson, 1974). The word “compassionate” depicts the caring and protective nature of mothers. Among the few studies that have compared Chinese

maternal and paternal parenting, Chen et al.'s (2001) study of 68 families with 4-year-olds in Beijing found that Chinese mothers resorted to higher levels of warmth and guidance than fathers, but the difference in power assertion was not significant.

Social-cultural changes in China, however, have reduced inter-parental differences among Chinese parents, who have experienced huge social transformations: economic reform, which has led to a redistribution of resources and wealth, the *One-Child Policy*, which has changed family structure, and more investment in education, which has increased the education attainment of the whole population. Recent reports and studies have confirmed such a reduction in parental role differentiation as prescribed by social norms. Chuang and Su (2009) found that Chinese fathers were actively engaged in what traditionally considered as mothers' responsibilities, such as feeding and bathing babies. A national survey in 2001 also found that 77% of fathers reported sharing domestic chores and taking care of the children with the mothers, a lesser gender role boundary in child rearing (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011, as quoted in Chang et al., 2011). In a study of 4-6 year-olds and their parents from Beijing, the Chinese fathers were found to be less authoritarian and authoritative than the mothers in their parenting of daughters (Porter et al., 2005). Is it common to have "one family, two parenting profiles" in Chinese families? The present study addressed this question with empirical evidence. Specifically, the study was targeted at exploring the differentiated maternal and paternal parenting styles and the major clusters and combinations of parenting profiles in contemporary Chinese families. The following questions guided this study:

1. Are there any inter-parental differences in parenting styles and dimensions in Shenzhen families?

2. What are the major clusters of parenting profile in Shenzhen parents? What are the major combinations of maternal and paternal parenting profile?

The hypotheses for the research were:

H1: There are significant differences between father and mother's parenting styles and dimensions.

H2: Supportive parenting is the most popular profile, followed by easygoing and tiger parenting profiles.

## METHOD

The study used a sequential mixed-methods approach to bridge the quantitative survey study (Study 1) and the qualitative interview study (Study 2). In Study 1, participants were surveyed to determine their parenting styles and profiles, while in Study 2, chosen participants were interviewed to verify the findings of Study 1.

### Participants

Shenzhen is China's first and most successful special economic zone, developed following the economic reform in the 1980s. With a total area of 1997 km<sup>2</sup>, it had a population of 10.77 million by the end of 2014 (released by the Shenzhen Statistics Bureau). In terms of GDP, Shenzhen has experienced a period of high economic growth, with a GDP rising from RMB\$17 billion in 1990 to RMB\$1750 billion in 2015. Shenzhen is a "migrant city", with more than half of its population consisting of migrants from all over China. It is also a city of traditional Chinese culture, although having been influenced by Western culture since the reform and opening policy took place three decades ago. As such, it is representative of China.

A public kindergarten (KG L) serving local residents in the CBD area was selected for the study. Due to the existence of a high quality primary school and a junior high school in that area, the housing prices are relatively high. Consequently,



families living in that area are either residents who have lived in the same area for more than 20 years or second-hand house buyers who wanted quality education for their children. The children in KG L are mostly from families of high and middle SES, while some are from low SES families. KG L provides a full day program and a typical classroom consists of 40 children. Due to government requirements, school fees for KG L are RMB\$970 per month, including tuition fees and cost of meals. The annual report by the Bureau of Statistics of Shenzhen (2016) showed that the annual per capita disposal income of residents in Shenzhen in 2015 was RMB\$ 44633.30. Accordingly, the monthly family incomes of the participants in the current study were classified into three categories: less than RMB10,000 per month, less than RMB\$25,000 but higher than RMB\$10,000 per month, and more than RMB\$25,000 per month.

A total of 98 father-mother dyads in KG L participated in this study voluntarily. All couples were parents of children aged 5-6 years. Families who failed to respond to more than 90% of the questionnaire items were excluded from data analyses. The remaining sample consisted of 86 father-mother dyads (47 pairs of parents of boys and 39 of girls). In terms of family SES, 86% of families reported a household monthly income of more than RMB\$10,000, indicating that the majority were middle-class families. Based on the survey results, 4 representative pairs of parents were selected for parent interview.

#### Procedures

The parents of the K-3 cohorts (aged 5-6) received a consent letter sent out by class teachers. For those who returned informed consent forms agreeing to participate in the study, their children were asked to take home an envelope that contained a series of questionnaires. The parenting style questionnaires were clearly labeled as

maternal or paternal version. In the introductory section, parents were instructed to complete their questionnaires independently. After completion, the questionnaires were returned in enclosed envelope to their children's class teachers.

After completion of Study 1, survey data were entered and analyzed. Based on the results of the survey data analysis, four types of spouses were targeted for further study: all three types of combination with inter-parental agreement (easygoing-easygoing, supportive-supportive, tiger-tiger) and the most popular type of combination with inter-parental disagreement (tiger-easygoing). Three families in each of the four groups (a total of twelve families) were randomly selected, and invited orally by class teachers to participate in in-home interviews. The first family in each group to agree to participate was selected for the interview. Informed consent was obtained before home visits. Both the interviewer and the interviewee spoke mandarin Chinese during the whole interview process. Based on the answers to semi-structured questions, the interviewer asked for clarification and follow-up questions as well as other relevant emerging questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

### Measures

*Parenting Style Questionnaire (PSQ)*. The questionnaire was derived from the Parenting Style and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, and Hart (1995) in the North American context, and the training scale developed by Chao (1994), which captured the Chinese-specific parenting of caring, involvement and governing. Authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were measured by a 32-item PSDQ (e.g., "Gives comfort and understanding when child is upset."). A review of this measure by Locke and Prinz (2002) recognized it as psychometrically justifiable in assessing child rearing and disciplining practices. It was also found to be age-appropriate for parents of preschoolers and school-age

children, exhibiting an internal consistency reliability when measuring parents of preschoolers in the United States (Robinson et al., 1995) and in China (Fu et al., 2013). What's more, the measure was found to be reliable for maternal and paternal self-reported parenting styles of Chinese and Chinese immigrant parents (Chen et al., 2015), with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .59 to .72. The training scale developed by Chao (1994) had a Cronbach alpha of 0.75 and included 14 items (e.g., "Children can improve in almost anything if they work hard."). The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*) to elicit parents' perceptions of the frequency with which they engaged in this behavior as they perceived. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese, and then translated back into English by a native Chinese researcher specialized in English Literature. A third person majored in early childhood education was consulted to settle any disagreement between the back translation and the original version.

*Demographic data.* Along with the PSQ was a questionnaire of background information of participating families intended to elicit demographic factors that might affect parenting style, including child gender, marital status, fathers' and mothers' education as well as employment, and family income. As all participating couple's children were aged from 5 to 6 years old, children's age was not included in the analysis.

*Semi-structured interview protocol.* Four pairs of parents agreed to attend the thirty-minute parent interview, which confirmed and further probed the appropriateness of the conceptualization of parenting style. Semi-structured interview protocols were developed using the responses to questionnaire items in the survey study to elicit parents' thinking. The whole process of home visits was audiotaped for later data analysis.

### Analytic Strategy

*Survey data.* Demographic variables (i.e., child gender, parent education, family income) were included as they have been found to be affecting parenting style in previous studies. SPSS 22.0 was used to perform the data analysis. First, a paired *t*-test was conducted to identify maternal and paternal differences in all parenting dimensions: authoritative, authoritarian, and training. Second, two sets of one-way ANOVAs, with family income and parent education as the independent variables respectively, were applied to examine the influences of different demographic factors on maternal and paternal parenting styles respectively. Third, two sets of MANOVA were conducted with children's gender as the independent variable, and with scores in the three parenting styles as the dependent variables for mothers and fathers respectively. Fourth, cluster analysis was conducted to find the major parenting profiles, following the method reported by McKinney and Renk (2008). Each parent's parenting style was entered as a case, resulting in 172 cases in total. Hierarchical cluster analysis was first conducted to find the patterns of parenting profiles, which produced an agglomeration schedule that suggested values to determine the distinctness of groups. A series of *k* means cluster analyses, or quick cluster analyses, were conducted to investigate the suitable number of clusters. The quick cluster analysis used the specific number of clusters as initial centers where cases were assigned to the nearest cluster center. The final cluster centers were determined through an iterative partitioning method that formed clusters with maximized intragroup similarities as well as intergroup differences.

*Interview data.* Audiotaped interview data were transcribed and translated from Chinese into English. First, the researchers conducted microanalysis to make meaning of the data and to find concepts that expressed that meaning (Corbin &

Strauss, 2014). The interview data were studied line-by-line and reduced inductively to find important and interesting information emerging from the text (Seidman, 2013, p. 141). Next, the researchers marked individual passages, grouped them into categories, and then examined the categories for thematic connections. The semi-structured questions served as references for possible themes. Finally, interpretations were made to further understand parents' parenting profiles.

## RESULTS

### Parenting Styles and Dimensions: Mother Versus Father

Results from the paired *t*-test indicated that fathers and mothers differed significantly in the authoritarian parenting style,  $t(86) = 2.34, p = .022, d = 0.22$ , with the maternal authoritarian parenting style ( $M = 2.87, SD = 0.41$ ) significantly higher than the paternal authoritarian parenting style ( $M = 2.74, SD = 0.54$ ). This may be due to the fact that fathers spend relatively little time with their children and therefore would be less likely to use a high power parenting style towards their children. What's more, mothers tend to discipline their children more often than fathers and are therefore more likely to use more authoritarian parenting. A closer examination of the different parenting dimensions showed that, maternal and paternal parenting differed in the dimensions of regulation,  $t(86) = -3.35, p = .001, d = 0.52$ , autonomy,  $t(86) = 4.12, p < .001, d = 0.20$ , and non-reasoning or punitive,  $t(86) = 3.08, p = .003, d = 0.32$ . Specifically, mothers ( $M = 3.05, SD = 0.50$ ) were lower in regulation than fathers ( $M = 3.23, SD = 0.71$ ), but higher in autonomy and punitive dimensions (See Table 1). Cronbach's alphas for PSQ were .72 and .62 for mothers and fathers, respectively. On the other hand, mothers and fathers were not significantly different in the authoritative and training parenting styles.

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Insert Table 1 here

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#### Demographic Factors and Parenting Style

*Family income.* In the first two sets of analyses, family income was entered as the independent variables, and the three maternal or paternal parenting styles were the dependent variables. Results showed that the maternal and paternal authoritative parenting styles differed as a function of family income ( $p < .05$ ). Results from Post Hoc Bonferroni tests showed that among the three groups of families (“less than RMB\$10,000 per month”, “less than RMB\$25,000 but higher than RMB\$10,000 per month”, and “more than RMB\$25,000 per month”), both the mothers and the fathers from the “less than RMB\$10,000 per month” group were significantly lower in the authoritative parenting style ( $p < .05$ ) than parents from the “more than RMB\$25,000 per month” group. Additionally, fathers from the “less than RMB\$25,000 but higher than RMB\$10,000 per month” group were also significantly lower in authoritative parenting style ( $p < .05$ ) than fathers from the “more than RMB\$25,000 per month” group (see Table 2). This result indicated that father’s authoritativeness was positively related to family income.

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Insert Table 2 here

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*Parent education.* In the two sets of analyses, parent education was entered as the independent variables, and the three parenting styles were the dependent variables for mothers and fathers respectively. Results showed that, although neither parenting style differed as a function of parent education ( $p > .05$ ), the figures of the means plots showed some trends: Maternal authoritativeness increased with the year of

education, maternal authoritarianism decreased with the year of education, and paternal authoritarianism increased with the year of education.

*Child gender and parenting style.* Two sets of MANOVA were conducted with children's gender (2) as the independent variable and the three parenting styles as the dependent variables for mothers and fathers respectively. Results showed a significant main effect of child gender on both paternal parenting style ( $F(1, 83) = 100.76, p < 0.001$ ) and maternal parenting style ( $F(1, 83) = 131.57, p < 0.001$ ) (see Figures 1 & 2).

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Insert Figure 1 here

Insert Figure 2 here  
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#### Major Patterns of Parenting Profiles

Results from the hierarchical cluster analysis suggested that a cluster solution of 2 to 5 was appropriate. Both Johnson et al. (1991) and McKinney and Renk (2008) found four clusters. Four sets of quick cluster analysis were conducted with cluster numbers of 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The number of cases found in each cluster showed that a three-cluster solution was appropriate. To further confirm the appropriateness of such a solution, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with cluster number as the independent variable and 6 types of maternal and paternal parenting styles as the dependent variables (see Table 3). Results showed that all the 6 types of parenting styles differed as a function of cluster number, confirming the fitness of the 3-cluster solution.

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Insert Table 3 here

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*Cluster 1.* This cluster consisted of 76 parents, representing 42% of the total sample, among which 41 were mothers and 35 were fathers. These parents were “easygoing” parents, who engaged in relatively low power parenting, scoring the lowest in authoritativeness and training as well as second lowest in authoritarianism, compared to parents from other clusters.

*Cluster 2.* This cluster consisted of 32 parents, representing 19% of the total sample, among which 11 were mothers and 21 were fathers. These parents were “supportive parents”, scoring lowest in authoritarianism and relatively high in authoritativeness.

*Cluster 3.* This cluster consisted of 64 parents, representing 39% of the total sample, among which 34 were mothers and 30 were fathers. These parents were “tiger” parents, who resorted to relatively high power parenting, scoring highest in authoritarianism and training.

The combination of maternal and paternal parenting in each family is displayed in Table 4. A total of 40 families showed inter-parental agreement, with 18 easygoing couples, 5 supportive couples, and 17 tiger couples. There were also a large number of families with only one tiger parent, with 11 pairs of tiger mother-easygoing father and 12 pairs of easygoing mother-tiger father.

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Insert Table 4 here

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#### Interview Data

Table 5 shows the demographic description and parenting style of the eight participating parents interviewed in Study 2.



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Insert Table 5 here  
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*Self-perceived parenting styles.* Of the eight participating parents, six scored highest on the “authoritative” style; one scored highest on the “authoritarian” style; and one scored highest on the “training” style. However, when asked about their self-perceived parenting styles in the interviews, three parents perceived themselves as having a “training” style, and two parents perceived themselves as having more than one style –“authoritative and training” and “authoritative and authoritarian”.

*Inter-parental differences.* Parents’ self-perceived differences were generated from their self-perceived parenting as well as their spouse-perceived parenting. Three pairs of parents displayed different degrees of differences, ranging from a large to a moderate degree of difference to a small degree of difference. Two pairs of spouses showed consistency between coparenting differences, as indicated in the questionnaire and in the interviews. One category emerging from the interview was the aspect of inter-parental differences: adherence to principle and response to the child’s interests. One spouse would express discontent with the other spouse’s strong adherence to certain principles when it concerned the child. Another aspect was the difference in how parents responded to the child’s choice of extracurricular classes and in their attitudes towards these classes. One spouse would adopt a more laissez-faire attitude towards the child than the other.

*Parenting profiles.* Except for one mother who claimed during the interview that she was not classifiable into any pattern, the parents’ perceived parenting profiles were consistent with the results from cluster analysis. However, that singled-out

parent's responses implied that her parenting profile fit into the category of "tiger" parent, which was the same as the result of the cluster analysis.

## DISCUSSION

Previous studies have either assumed that mothers and fathers shared the same parenting profiles or have used Chinese American parents as the target sample when studying the Chinese parenting. The present study extended current knowledge concerning the differences in parenting styles and dimensions between the two parents as well as the major parenting profiles among contemporary Chinese parents. Results indicated that mothers were more authoritarian than fathers and that children's gender differences were also significant for both parents. It was also found that easygoing parenting and tiger parenting were prevalent among Chinese parents and that "one family, two parenting profiles" in Chinese families did exist. Possible reasons for these differences are now discussed, with reference to the socio-economic, contextual, and even cultural changes observed in China during the past decades. Examination of the educational implications then follows.

### The Prevailing Authoritative Parenting

Findings of previous studies showed that Chinese parents were usually authoritarian parents, who had high demands and were less responsive to children (Chen et al., 1998; Chen & Luster, 2002). More recent studies have found that contemporary Chinese parents tend to be more authoritative, especially in urban China (Chang et al., 2011; Lu & Chang, 2013; Xu et al., 2005). The findings of the present study support these more recent findings and suggest that contemporary Chinese parenting styles in Shenzhen are mostly authoritative or training: Seventy-two mothers (84%) and seventy-two fathers (84%) scored highest in authoritative parenting style; thirteen mothers (15%) and thirteen fathers (15%) scored highest in

training parenting style; whereas only one mother (1%) and one father (1%) scored highest in the authoritarian parenting style.

First, the relatively high SES and high educational profile of these parents might explain such a high proportion of the authoritative parenting style. Results of the survey study indicated the tendency for mother's education to be positively related to authoritativeness and negatively related to authoritarianism, as has been found in previous studies (Xu et al., 2005). Family SES was another demographic factor shaping parenting style. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory proposes that parent-child interaction is influenced by the intertwining ecological systems. According to this theory, parents with higher living standards tend to have fewer life stressors and are more attentive to children's needs, resulting in a high proportion of authoritativeness among participating parents (Chen et al., 2000; Chen & Luster, 2002; Xu et al., 2005). Most of the participants in this study were from high SES families, as the Kindergarten L is located in the CBD of Shenzhen, the most developed city in China. Therefore, their parenting profiles tend to be more authoritative. In other undeveloped cities of China, however, the situation might not be the same.

Second, the training parenting style found in this study captures the Chinese culture-specific aspects of parental control and involvement, which depicts high expectations for children's academic achievement (Chao, 1994). Previous studies have found that the social changes in China brought about by the market economy have changed the values that parents place in their children's traits (Chen & Chen, 2010). The results of the survey in the present study support this finding in that some parents tended to endorse a training parenting style in the social context of increased competition. This was also reflected during the interviews with Mother A and Mother C. However, the relatively low proportion of parents endorsing the training parenting

style, which has traditionally characterized Chinese families, might be explained by the negative recollections these parents had of their parents, who exercised a high degree of control over them, and from whom they received little family warmth (Lau, Lew, Hau, Cheung, & Berndt, 1990). These intergenerational differences in Chinese parenting styles deserve further studies.

#### One Family, Two Parenting Profiles

Fathers have been less explored in past studies, and should be included in parenting studies, as highlighted by some researchers (Chuang & Su, 2009; Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Recent parenting studies targeting both fathers and mothers have found mixed results in inter-parental agreement and disagreement, challenging the traditional notion of “stern father and compassionate mother” (Chang et al., 2011; Chuang & Su, 2009). Previous studies showed that Chinese fathers scored higher than mothers on authoritativeness and lower on authoritarianism (Chang, Chen, & Ji, 2011; Chuang & Su, 2009). Survey results in the present study also indicated that fathers’ scores on authoritarianism were significantly lower than mothers’ scores. Differences in some dimensions of authoritativeness were also significant, with fathers’ scores higher on the dimension of regulation but lower on the dimension of autonomy than mothers’ scores.

First, the lack of coparenting differences in the authoritative parenting might have been due to the effect of sociocultural changes, which influence Chinese parents to embrace the parenting practices of their Western counterparts. The lack of differences in the training parenting might be explained by the shared parenting goal that parents hold for their children, in the context of mass social changes and a competitive environment. In Shenzhen where this study was conducted, for instance, it has become very popular that both mother and father take care of young children at

home. Some fathers have even chosen to be a ‘stay-at-home dad’ to support their working wife’s better career. ...any references?

Second, this divergence from the traditional “stern father and compassionate mother” could also be largely explained by sociocultural changes in Mainland China. Fathers in previous generations used to be distant from their children emotionally and physically, serving as strict disciplinarians. Contemporary fathers, however, are closer to their children and play with their children (Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Therefore, the disciplinary duties are left to mothers, who resort to widely accepted practices of scolding, shaming and physical punishment.

Third, child gender is explored as a moderating factor between parenting profile and children’s outcome. Past studies have established that the four dyads (mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son) should be examined separately, and that same-sex versus cross-sex relationships may yield varied patterns of child outcomes (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Liu, 2002; Synder, 1998). A review of Chinese culture and empirical studies suggested that fathers used higher power parenting towards their sons than towards their daughters (Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, & McBride-Chang, 2003; Ho, 1986; Porter et al., 2005). Results of the present study also supported such a conclusion, with fathers being more authoritarian towards their sons than towards their daughters. Furthermore, both fathers and mothers were more authoritative and adopted more of a training parenting style with their daughters than with their sons, whereas mothers were more authoritarian towards their daughters than towards their sons. This gender effect, however, deserves a larger scale study in Chinese population.

Tiger Mother Versus Panda Father

Researchers used to adopt a variable-centered approach to study parenting, with each parenting dimension examined in isolation. An improved approach was to create parenting profiles using arbitrary cutoffs or a median split approach using two dimensions. For example, Chao (2001) and Chen et al. (1997) rated participants as high or low on two dimensions and then classified them into a four-tier parenting system (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful). However, more recent studies have suggested that multiple dimensions should be used to describe parenting profiles, and that a person-centered approach is more appropriate (Frijns, Keijsers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010; Kerr, Stattin, & Ozdemir, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2011). One reason for using this approach is that other important dimensions used to craft parenting profiles - such as autonomy and psychological control - can be included (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Ho, 1986). Another reason is that parenting profile is multifaceted and that the effect of individual parenting dimensions might differ depending on the specific parenting profile, which are composed of multiple dimensions (Kerr et al., 2012). Therefore, the current study employed three dimensions to find the major clusters of parenting profiles in the sample.

Supportive parenting was defined as high on all positive parenting dimensions and low on negative parenting dimensions, similar to the classic Western conceptualization of authoritative parenting. It has been found to be most common among Chinese American parents of adolescents, followed by easygoing parenting, tiger parenting and harsh parenting (Kim et al., 2013). However, results from the present study showed that the major clusters of parenting profiles among the Shenzhen parents were easygoing parenting (42%, of which 54% were mothers), followed by tiger parenting (39%, of which 53% were mothers) and supportive

parenting (19%, of which 34% were mothers). The Chinese fathers significantly outnumbered mothers in the supportive parenting profile. Therefore, *panda father*, or *xiong mao ba* (熊猫爸), is an appropriate term to describe these fathers, contrasting with the well-known *tiger mother*. These panda fathers, unlike the tiger mothers described by Chua (2011), were highly responsive to their children's needs and gave autonomy support to their children. The interview with Father B revealed a father who was emotionally close to and highly supportive of his daughter.

The popularity of easygoing and tiger parenting among the parents in the present study might be explained by two reasons. The first might be related to the age differences between participating children in the present study and those in Kim et al.'s (2013) study. Parents' parenting profile might change across time, since parenting practices are influenced by what parents deemed most appropriate for their children's developmental needs at different ages (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Mothers might be tiger parents during the earlier years, when children's socialization was the mothers' major responsibility. Fathers, however, might be tiger parents to adolescents who have gained more autonomy and independence (Kim et al., 2013). The interviews with Father B and Father C also revealed a similar trend in that they admitted that they were stricter with children during transition to primary school compared to earlier years; and the interview with Mother D showed her to be more supportive and responsive to Child D's interests during the current school term. The second reason for the prevalence of support parenting in Kim et al.'s (2013) study might be associated with the acculturation that influenced the participating parents. Most of these Chinese American parents (75%) have resided in the U.S. for at least 12 years, whom may

tend to adopt parenting styles and practices closer to that of their Western counterparts.

Parent combinations, however, showed that the number of spouses with inter-parental agreement (40 pairs) was comparable to that of spouses with inter-parental disagreement (46 pairs). The major kinds of combinations were tiger-easygoing (or easygoing-tiger) parenting (23 pairs), easygoing-easygoing parenting (18 pairs), and tiger-tiger parenting (17 pairs). Families with one tiger parent and one easygoing parent were found to be most common, similar to the traditional notion of “stern father and compassionate mother”, yet showing some contemporary characteristics brought about by sociocultural changes. In particular, the families with tiger dads and easygoing moms (12 pairs) were more traditional families, whereas the families with tiger moms and easygoing dads (Panda Dad) (11 pairs) demonstrated a shift of role from fathers to mothers, who tended to be strict disciplinarians with their children. One important reason for the emergence of this new “Tiger Mom, Panda Dad” pattern might be that fathers have less time with their children and thus tend to demand less of the child. Mothers, on the contrary, still carry on more responsibilities of disciplining their children at home. Therefore, this new pattern is a compromise between the traditional Chinese culture and new sociocultural changes. Further studies, however, are needed to explore these inter-parental differences in contemporary Chinese families.

#### Self-Perceived Versus Questionnaire-Indicated Parenting

First, moderate discrepancies between parents’ self-perceived and questionnaire-indicated parenting styles were found in the analysis of the interview data. More parents would perceive themselves as “training” parents, which is more culturally appropriate than the Western conceptualization of parenting styles:



Authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and indulgent (Chao, 1994, 2000). However, these perceptions were based on terminology or labeling. A closer examination of their reported parenting practices showed that these parents were adopting practices closer to that of authoritative style than to that of the training style, as implied by the parent interviews. Therefore, even the parenting dimension of “training”, which is more culturally specific, failed to reveal the parenting style and practices of these Chinese parents. This result indicates that a more culturally appropriate definition of parenting style needs to be explored in future studies, especially when Chinese society is under dramatic social, cultural and economic changes.

Second, few consistency was found between parents’ perceptions of parenting profiles with the results of cluster analysis. Seven of the eight parents perceived themselves as having the same profile as indicated by the cluster analysis. What’s more, when asked about their self-perceived parenting styles, two parents responded that they were not classifiable into just one style but were “both authoritative and training” or “both authoritative and authoritarian”. This implied the appropriateness of using multiple dimensions in both positive and negative ways to craft parenting profiles. The limitation of the present study, however, was that three dimensions were used to study the parenting profiles; more dimensions should be included in future studies.

Third, a moderate discrepancy between questionnaire and interview results on inter-parental differences was also found. The perceptions of inter-parental differences were based on spouse-perceptions and self-perceptions of parenting. However, the questionnaire did not test spouse-perceptions of parenting, and it is possible that this moderate discrepancy stemmed from the lack of appropriateness of

using the traditional typology of parenting styles. Again, more studies should be conducted to validate this source of discrepancy.

The most critical limitation is that this is just a preliminary study for a large-scale Ph.D. research project. Consequently, the sample size was not satisfactory. All the participating parents came from only one kindergarten, and they might share similar parenting beliefs and practices due to the parent education they received from KG L. Future studies are needed to include parents from diversified background so as to provide more understanding of the contemporary Chinese parents.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Style and Dimensions*

	Mother	Father	<i>t</i> test
<b>Authoritative</b>	3.73 (.33)	3.78 (.38)	-1.15
Connection	3.91 (.39)	3.95 (.43)	-.669
Regulation	3.00 (.50)	3.29 (.71)	-3.346**
Autonomy	4.31 (.41)	4.1 (.46)	4.119***
<b>Authoritarian</b>	2.87 (.41)	2.74 (.54)	2.341*
Physical Coercion	3.00 (.60)	2.86 (.65)	1.867
Verbal Hostility	2.63 (.66)	2.62 (.76)	.066
Non-Reasoning / Punitive	2.99 (.46)	2.74 (.66)	3.083**
<b>Training</b>	3.15 (.41)	3.15 (.49)	.078

*Note.* Values enclosed in parentheses represent standard deviations.

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