

Chinese vs. European American Parenting Style on Students' Academic Performance

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### Abstract

Parenting styles not only can influence children's identity, but they can also be a predictor of their academic achievement. Many hold a preconceived notion that one parenting style is better than the others. Chinese American students are usually viewed as the model minority, who often have achieved great success in academics due to being influenced by their authoritarian parents. However, studies have shown that each parenting style has its own positive impact on students' academic achievement due to the quality of the relationship between parents and children, different ethnic backgrounds, perceived socialization goals, and parenting attitudes. The purpose of this literature review examines the effects of European American and Chinese American parenting styles that influence students' academic performance in school. Chao (2001) showed that the quality of the relationship between parents and students does have an impact on school performance, but how parents make their connections with children varies by culture. Moreover, Li (2010) found that parenting style can form a positive association between perceived maternal socialization goals and academic self-efficacy. While Chinese American students perceive more positive effects from filial piety socialization goals (the intention of bringing honor to the family through academic achievement), European American students are more prone to the self-development socialization goals (emphasis on independence and self-esteem, which develops children's interest in learning). In conclusion, not a single parenting style can fit all the children because it depends on a complex interplay of the aforementioned factors.

Nowadays, society continues to emphasize the quality of education, and over the past two centuries, the global literacy rate has continued to increase due to the increasing number of people enrolled in school, which raises more well-educated people. Those people who are well-educated can impact future social capital and economic development. Parenting styles, strategies that parents implement for child-bearing, serve as a major influence of students' academic achievement

in school. There are three different types of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parents care less about children's needs and tend to put more control on the children by giving unquestionable demand and set harsh discipline. Authoritative parents are the opposite, who give reasonable rules, enough attention, and respect to children. Permissive parents give a small amount of care and discipline to children, mostly neglecting their obligation as parents (Baumrind, 1971, 1991). Also, due to socialization goals and cultures, different ethnic groups endorse a different type of parenting style. A good example is the Chinese and European American parenting styles because Chinese American parents are generally more authoritarian, and European parents are more authoritative. Although each of them takes a different way of nurturing their children, they both are trying to bear children in a suitable way that helps them to succeed in school. The purpose of this study to show that each parenting style has its own positive impact on students' academic achievement, and no one parenting style is better than another. And, the way that each parent takes an approach to influence their children's school performance is varied in the quality of the relationship between parents and children, different ethical backgrounds, perceived socialization goals, and parenting attitude.

### **The Influence of the Quality of Parent-Adolescent relationship on Academic Performance**

European American parents are generally more authoritative. They tend to spend more time with their children, which helps them to respond quickly to children's needs, teach their children to understand what is right or wrong. They also give more freedom by allowing more choices to their children for expecting them to become active thinkers, independent. (Hamner & Turner, 1990). They also did not believe in physical punishment (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce 2000). Chao

(2001)'s study of adolescents' perception of parenting style showed an association between parent-adolescent closeness and authoritative parenting style, which has a positive effect on children's school performance, proving by their school grades and effort. This is because that parent-adolescent closeness is an important feature of the authoritative parenting styles that accounted for a third of the effect of this pattern of parenting. However, this type of parent-adolescent closeness does not show a significant effect on Chinese American students, so other qualities should be considered for resulting in their academic performance.

Compared with European American parents, Chinese American parents are more authoritarian, and the use of physical discipline included in this parenting style is normal and often being regarded as parental care in Chinese culture. Moreover, this cultural normativeness leads to a negative association between the commonness of using physical punishment and the negative impact on children. The explanation of this is that since children are living in this culture, they are expected to deal with authoritarian parenting, which lessens the negative impact of it exposed on them (Lansford et al., 2005). Besides the authoritarian parenting style, Chinese American parents also possess an additional parenting style called training. Using this pattern, parents invest time and bring support to the children when they are leading and teaching their children to behave in appropriate manners to pay parental respect. It is also a type of parental responsiveness different from the quality of relationship possessed by European American parents and kids that takes the closeness and emotional intimacy as the measurements. This pattern of parenting style also serves as a major impact of influencing their children's performance in school by emphasizing hard work and self-discipline in school (Chao 1994 & Li 2010). However, the training parenting style does

not bring positive outcomes to European American children because this may hinder their development of independence and self-esteem in academic performance (Li 2010).

### **An Association between Socialization goal and Academic Efficacy**

Socialization goals indicate parents' expectations on ideal child development, varying with their ethnic backgrounds. Two of the socialization goals relating to the Chinese and European American parenting styles are self-development socialization goals and filial socialization goals. While, self-development goals put the focus on developing children's self-autonomy, self-expressiveness, and self-esteem, filial socialization goals emphasize on teaching children to pay respect, be obedient to the elders, and to work hard in school to bring honor to the family (Ho, 1996). Li (2010)'s study found that European American students are more susceptible to self-development goals (emphasis on independence and self-esteem) that influence their academic self-efficacies, leading by their parents under the individualistic culture. Having high self-esteem is important because students with low self-esteem tend to have academic difficulties in school (Love and Thomas, 2014). Moreover, (Li 2010) also found a relationship between self-development goals and the authoritative parenting style. Since self-development goals emphasize the importance of independence and self-esteem that correspond with the features of an authoritative parenting style. This also explains why European American parents would prefer to use an authoritative parenting style to cultivate their children for leading them to achieve the self-independence socialization goal.

On the other hand, Chinese American students are prone to the effect of filial socialization goals under collectivistic culture that positively influence their academic self-efficacy when

combining exposure to authoritative and training parenting. This is because the features of filial piety socialization goal correspond with the belief of collectivistic culture, where individuals emphasize obedience within the group and respect to the elders. The study also explains that parents who endorse filial socialization goals are most likely going to implement training parenting, and this combination leads to a great approach of educating children for performing well in academics. And, authoritarian and training parenting helps to achieve filial piety socialization by emphasizing the parental authority and child obedience, which pressures the children to work hard in school for improvement in academic-self efficacies. However, this concept does not apply and may bring negative outcomes to the European American children because, under an individualistic culture, people emphasize independence and personal potentials, which is the opposite of the intentions of filial socialization goals and training parenting styles (Li 2010). Overall, it shows that European and Chinese American parents both put about the same amount of effort into developing their children to be academically successful, but they have different socialization goals that are suitable for their children under their cultural contexts (Greenfield, 1994).

### **Ethical background Influencing Parenting Attitude**

(Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce 2000) conducted a study on parenting attitudes that provider results for European Americans. They have found out that European American parents tend to show appropriate level in four attitudes: expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, and role reversal. As mentioned, European parents are living in an individualistic culture that emphasizes independence, which correspond to the features of authoritative parenting style. Therefore, it is

not surprising that European Americans' parenting attitudes are all set at an appropriate level. Nevertheless, one of the attitudes, empathy, plays a major role in helping their children as an emerging adult to have better academic adjustment in college. A study that shows that parents still play an important role as assistant children in college. The word to describe the relationship between parents and emerging adults is called a "shared agency" because students' goals are being supported by their parents. And, this study proves that authoritarian parenting style is suitable one for helping to fulfill students' academic satisfaction (Chang, et al, 2010). This shows that parental attitude also plays a role in influencing students' academic performance.

Unlike European American parents, Chinese American parents tend to have higher expectations for their children. This can be explained by one of the adaptive strategies of biculturalism because many of these parents are immigrants from China, who would want their kids to fit into both cultures (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce 2000). Thus, this can be one of the reasons why Chinese American parents would tend to pressure their kids to do well in school in order to be fit within society. In addition, many of the Chinese American parents believe in the traditional Confucianism values. This value correlates with the filial piety socialization goal because it emphasizes parental control and demand for child obedience. Therefore, the combination of educational attainment and the Confucianism value really improved the Chinese American children' academic performance because these children are following their parents expectations by working hard to earn good grades as an honor to their family (Ho, 1986 & Leung et al, 1998).

## **Conclusion**

By examining the quality of the relationship between parents and children, different ethical backgrounds, perceived socialization goals, and parenting attitude, European and Chinese Americans both take a very different approach to influence their children's school performance. Although each of them takes a different way of nurturing their children, they both are trying to bear children in a suitable way that helps them to succeed in school. The purpose of this study to show that each parenting style has its own positive impact on students' academic achievement, and no one parenting style is better than another. However, there may be other factors that have not been included in the analysis. These factors may be the parent's educational level and socioeconomic status.

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