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In a cross-cultural comparison of parental beliefs, this study asked a sample of 48 immigrant Chinese and 50 European American mothers of preschool-aged children their perspectives regarding the role of parenting in their children's school success. In their responses, the Chinese mothers conveyed (a) the great degree of value they place on education, (b) the high investment and sacrifice they feel they need to offer, (c) the more direct intervention approach to their children's schooling and learning, and (d) a belief that they can play a significant role in the school success of their children. On the other hand, European American mothers primarily expressed (a) a negation of the importance of academics or academic skills (instead emphasizing the importance of social skills), (b) a less "directive" approach to learning explained under the "facilitative" model, and (c) a concern for building their children's self-esteem.

CHINESE AND EUROPEAN AMERICAN MOTHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF PARENTING IN CHILDREN'S SCHOOL SUCCESS

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A lot of attention has been given to the school success of Asian Americans. A number of studies on Asian Americans have reported higher SAT scores, higher achievement test scores, higher grade point averages in both high school and college, more years of schooling completed, and higher scores on a number of standardized intelligence tests (Cheung, 1982; Kim & Chun, 1994; Sue & Abe, 1988; Suzuki, 1988). In a literature review provided by Cheung (1982), even regardless of social class, Asian Americans were found to have higher grade point averages and more years of schooling than other minority groups and European Americans.

The mass print media such as *Time* magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, and newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post* all have lauded Asian Americans as "the success story." However, these contentions or claims overlook or gloss over the needs of many Asian Americans, primarily because their outstanding educational success often has been achieved at a disproportionate investment and sacrifice from the family.

There have been a number of cross-cultural studies comparing Asian American and European American parental involvement. In these studies, Asian American parents were found to value education very strongly, have high expectations and performance standards for schooling, and believe in the importance of hard work and effort (Campbell & Mandel, 1990; Mordkowitz & Ginsburg, 1987; Pang, 1991; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Yao, 1985). They were also found to have a more "authoritarian" parenting style (Chao, 1994; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Robert, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). In addition, some of these studies have reported on more specific *behavioral* influences and found that Asian American parents are more involved in helping their children with their homework including tutoring them, checking over their work, assigning additional work, and structuring and monitoring their time.

Therefore, it appears that Asian American parents, in comparison to European American parents, play an especially prominent role in ensuring the school success of their children. However, with the exception of Schneider and Lee (1990), these findings are based on either *students'* perceptions of their parents' involvement or *specific areas* preselected by the researchers. Studies must also assess parents' perspectives about the impact of parenting, and this must be done in a much less structured or restricted manner to capture the full range or *nature* of parents' beliefs.

As Goodnow and Collins (1990) have stressed, the study of the nature of parents' ideas or beliefs related to child development may be particularly informative because these ideas are not only about children but also about parents and the relationship of the "family." These ideas encompass a range of concerns about the needs of children, the contributions of heredity, and the way children change over time as well as the joys and difficulties of parenting, the value of advice, the obligations of family members to one another, and the way family members are linked to the community. Thus not only the effects of parents' beliefs but also the exact nature of these beliefs constitute an important influence on parent-child interaction.

Parents may have an important impact on their children's schooling simply because they believe it to be so. McGillicuddy-De Lisi (1985) argues that parental beliefs play a very important role in child outcomes. Too often in understanding the interrelationships among parental beliefs, parental practices, and child outcomes, only the parental practices are regarded as having an affect on the children. McGillicuddy-De Lisi demonstrates that beliefs might also have an effect on child outcomes in addition to their indirect effect of beliefs as translated into parental practices. In particular, McGillicuddy-De Lisi stresses that much of the influence of parental beliefs might not be evidenced in direct observations of parent-child interactions and, in fact,

might be more evident in the organization of the home. Also, for the most part, beliefs often are communicated in a very subtle manner that cannot be directly observed; beliefs have a more *cumulative* effect "over a long history of interactions with the child in countless contexts" (p. 8).

Other researchers (D'Andrade, 1992; Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992; Quinn & Holland, 1987; Strauss, 1992; Valsiner, 1988) have also emphasized the need to address the *source* of parents' beliefs, emphasizing the role of culture, with culture described by Lightfoot and Valsiner (1992) as "a heterogeneous entity that entails a variety of meanings, cultural models, and their encodings in the physical environment" (p. 393). Child development is viewed as a product of what Valsiner (1988) and Lightfoot and Valsiner (1992) label as "societal culture" or "collective culture." Societal or collective culture refers to the structural organization of social norms, rituals, conduct rules, and meaning systems that are shared by individuals belonging to a specific ethnically homogeneous group.

Cross-cultural comparisons of parental beliefs may provide additional insights into the broader cultural norms influencing or driving parents' beliefs. Specifically, their beliefs about the role of parenting in children's school performance may be defined by larger cultural norms for educational achievement and scholarship as well as by educational goals. This study specifically asks both Chinese and European American mothers for their beliefs regarding the contribution of parenting to children's school success.

METHOD

SETTING AND SAMPLE

A total of 48 immigrant Chinese mothers, mostly from Taipei, Taiwan, were recruited from preschools in the greater Los Angeles area. All of the Chinese mothers immigrated to the United States as adults (19 years was the youngest age at immigration). Their reasons for immigration involved one or more of the following: (a) they wanted to attend a bachelor's or graduate degree program, (b) they moved here with their husbands to start their own businesses or for better business opportunities, or (c) they wanted their children to attend school in the United States. There were no mothers who immigrated to the United States for political reasons (i.e., under political duress or persecution). These mothers were also higher in socioeconomic status and fairly well educated with at least a bachelor's degree (the mean number of years of education was 16.58). All of the mothers were English speaking. Their children were preschool aged, ranging from 2 to 5 years with

a mean of 3.72 years, and there were 27 girls and 23 boys. In addition, 67% ($n = 32$) of the families had more than one child.

A total of 50 European American mothers of at least the third generation with preschool-aged children were also recruited from various preschools in the West Los Angeles area. However, their mean number of years of education (17.76) was significantly higher than that for the Chinese mothers ($t[1, 99] = 2.64, p < .01$), although there was no significant difference between both groups on the father's mean number of years of education ($p > .05$). Their children ranged in age from 2 to 5 years with a mean of 3.88 years, not significantly different from those of the Chinese ($p > .365$). The numbers of European American girls and boys (26 and 24, respectively) were very close to those for the Chinese numbers, also a nonsignificant difference ($p > .05$). Also, 70% ($n = 35$) of the families had more than one child.

The ethnic group difference in mothers' number of years of education reflects the fact that this is an immigrant sample; immigrants to the United States typically have lower education levels than do those who are born in the United States. In addition, Chinese males still have higher education levels than do Chinese females, as indicated by the fact that there were no significant ethnic group differences in *fathers'* number of years of education. Thus, among Chinese immigrant women, the mothers in this study were some of the most educated, just as the European American mothers in this study were some of the most educated of nonimmigrant women.

PROCEDURES

All the mothers were interviewed face to face about how they feel their parenting or child rearing affects their children's school achievement. However, the exact wording of this question for the Chinese was slightly different from that for the European Americans. For the Chinese, the opening of this question focused specifically on the Chinese:

Chinese children are performing quite well in school, often above the other ethnic groups. Educators and psychologists are interested in why this is and what child rearing might have to do with it. In your opinion, what do you think is important about Chinese child rearing for promoting children's school success?

On the other hand, the opening for the European American mothers was more general and did not specify any ethnic group:

Some children do better in school and some not quite as well, and educators and psychologists are interested in why this is and what child rearing might have to do with it. In your opinion, what do you think is important about child rearing or parenting for promoting children's school success?

The wording was slightly different for each ethnic group because this question was intended to have mothers respond with respect to their own ethnic group, and, as spelled out later, this researcher felt it was necessary to specify ethnicity for the Chinese but not for the European Americans. For the Chinese, the role of parenting was discussed in light of the educational achievements of their children. Also, not specifying ethnicity for the Chinese might be too ambiguous; they might not end up focusing on comparisons or analyses of *Chinese* per se (i.e., an analysis of their "culture"). On the other hand, a decision was made not to specify ethnicity for the European American sample because (a) it is no longer true that European American students are outperforming all other ethnic groups and (b) it was felt that mentioning ethnicity would cause mothers to focus too extensively on *other* ethnic groups (i.e., comparisons with other minority groups) rather than just discussing their own ethnic group. In effect, they might end up providing explanations for these ethnic group differences, focusing perhaps on socioeconomic distinctions (i.e., the "disadvantaged underclass minorities"). Because all the European American mothers in my study are well educated and reside in a very ethnically diverse metropolitan city, many have very well-formulated ideas about the role of ethnicity in school performance. Without a deliberate distinction of ethnicity, the European American mothers might be able to provide more spontaneous responses representing their *own* view—the European American view—without being conscious of ethnicity per se.

BALANCED REPLICATION OF QUESTION

However, a balanced replication involving the alternative wording was conducted with each ethnic group; Chinese were provided with the general wording not specifying ethnicity, and European Americans were provided with the specific wording "Caucasian children are performing quite well in school . . ." Five immigrant Chinese mothers with similar demographics as the larger Chinese sample were recruited; they had (a) the same education level (four mothers had bachelor's degrees and one had a master's degree); (b) preschool-aged children ($M = 3.72$ years), all with siblings; and (c) immigrated to the United States as adults from Taipei. In addition, five European American mothers were also recruited for this portion of the study, and all had similar education levels (three with bachelor's degrees and two with master's degrees) as the larger European American sample; they also had preschool-aged children ($M = 3.88$ years), all with siblings.

The most striking aspect of the Chinese mothers' responses involved a focus on "individual differences" of each of their children. Four of the five mothers explained how their own involvement with their children's schooling

varied according to each child's "inborn natural ability" or "inborn personality"—referring to the idea that "some children are more active, [whereas] some are quieter and can concentrate better" or to birth-order differences ("the oldest is very strict, very disciplined"). Mothers then discussed the type of involvement that they have started to provide for their children such as reading to them and using flash cards very early on, going over their homework every day, and generally helping them keep pace with every subject in school, particularly English. The only mother that did not provide this individual difference reference instead had trouble with the question itself; she explicitly stated confusion: "I don't know about other kids, and your question is quite broad. Are you referring to second-language kids?" This points to the fact that perhaps, in a larger sample, there might be some mothers who would find this question too ambiguous and would need to clarify or specify some specific group such as immigrants or Chinese. In addition, their responses focused on very specific behaviors—what they are currently doing with each child rather than more global-level responses for assessing overall beliefs or attitudes.

Regarding the European American mothers' responses, two of the five immediately began discussing other minority groups, and interspersed in this discussion were descriptions of European American parents: "Caucasian mothers stay at home more than some of the other minority groups . . . but from what I've heard this [the child's school performance] can level out by the second grade." The same mother then discussed Caucasian children who have been raised by non-English-speaking nannies and how these children have slower language acquisition: "The minorities, who need the most stimulation because their parents are probably both working full-time, unfortunately, probably end up getting in day care situations where the kids are not getting stimulus at all."

The other mother, in discussing minority groups, focused on the socioeconomic implications:

If you are talking about middle- and upper middle-class kids where you're not dealing with some of the enormous pressure of some of the minority groups . . . we have the ability, because of the money, to take care of ourselves better. We can get help in the house. We're not so physically exhausted all the time.

The other three mothers who did not focus on other minority groups or socioeconomic implications mentioned similar things as did the larger European American sample—"a stable background," "self-esteem," "teaching guidelines and limits," "providing a loving structure," and "tons and tons of positive reinforcement."

Then when these three mothers were asked, in a follow-up question, what is particularly important about ethnic group differences in terms of being

Caucasian, the first mother did not feel it was necessarily *true* that Caucasians are performing better and then discussed how well Asians are doing; the second mother said she had "no idea" but that "there are some kids who have language barriers that hold them back"; the third mother discussed the "socioeconomic realities of a lot of minority groups." Thus it appears that there is support for the possibility that specifying ethnicity for European American mothers may invoke "sociological theorizing" that was not the intention or focus of this question.

Thus having identical wording does not imply that the stimulus question will be construed in the same manner across different cultural groups. Often in ethnographic interviewing, there might be a number of different discursive routes for achieving the same information (i.e., the information intended by the interviewer). This replication then demonstrates an important methodological issue that is in direct contradiction to the basic "experimental paradigm" that has dominated much of psychology research.

DATA REDUCTION

Analysis of the content of each mother's response was done so that overall topical themes could be derived for each ethnic group. Thus the researcher had reviewed each mother's response, determining the actual wording used along with how each word was elaborated (i.e., variation or interpretation given to the specific words). Themes were created from either explicit wording or similarities in the interpretation or meaning implied from the wording (i.e., conceptual similarity). At least seven mothers had to use the same wording for such wording to be listed as a wording category and included in each theme. When one mother's response contained content for more than one theme, each theme was counted separately. Thus each percentage entered in Table 1 represents the rate of each theme out of the total number of mothers within each particular ethnic group.

RESULTS

THEMES FOR THE CHINESE MOTHERS

In their responses, the Chinese mothers mentioned the following themes (refer to the left-hand portion of Table 1, with each theme listed in order according to the degree or frequency of occurrence): (1) parents have high expectations; (2) parents are willing to invest everything for their children's educations; (3) children have respect and a regard for the family (parents teach

TABLE 1
Themes for Immigrant Chinese and European American Mothers

Chinese		European American	
Theme	Percentage	Theme	Percentage
(1) High expectations/workload/study	64	(1) Deemphasizing academics and the importance of social development	36
(2) High parental investment/sacrifice	56	(2) Fostering idea that learning is fun	32
(3) Regard for family/more family stability/ the mother as teacher	29	(3) Reading to the child and the importance of books	32
(4) Cultural value for education	27	(4) Building self-esteem	30
(5) Belief that foreigners experience limited opportunities	23	(5) Showing involvement and interest	30
(6) Stressing consequences of getting/ not getting a good education	21	(6) Providing consistency and structure	14
(7) Emphasis on reading and taking child to the library	15	(7) Valuing education	14

their children to have regard for the family, they offer more family stability, and the mother plays a direct role in ensuring success); (4) Chinese culture traditionally has emphasized education and has held great respect for scholars; (5) parents stress to their children both the positive outcomes of getting a good education and warnings about the negative repercussions if they do not; (6) parents convey the idea that they must work harder because they are foreigners or minorities; and (7) parents emphasize reading and taking children to the library to study books.

High expectations, workload, and building study skills. Many Chinese mothers (64%) believed that the reason why Chinese children do so well in school was because Chinese parents expected more from their children. One mother described the strong influence of her mother's expectation for her: "The parent's expectation is a motivation for the student. When I was growing up, my mother never punished me for bad grades but I felt very guilty, and [I felt] very proud for good grades." These Chinese mothers also explained that they believe their children can do the best. They also push them more; they are very impressed by children who show special talent, and they really try to encourage children to develop a talent in a particular area. They train their children to work hard so that they can develop "good study habits" and so that eventually the children can "work well on their own," "concentrate," or "be responsible for their work." As one mother explained,

We expect more from the kids. An example [is] when the kids have a project to do in school. We say to them, "You have lots of time and ability," and American parents say it's too tough for them, too much. This affects their work.

When they do the work, the feelings are different; American kids will think it's too much and Chinese kids [will] not.

Among the Chinese mothers, 48% ($n = 23$) also explained that they have their children do much more work and take extra courses or lessons. These mothers explained that Chinese mothers will assign extra work beyond that which the teacher assigns. They will have their children correct errors in homework and redo them over and over. The children are also not allowed to watch television or to play until their homework is done. The Chinese mothers will hire tutors and have their children attend after-school study groups. The mothers themselves carefully monitor and check their children's work each day by reviewing with them what the teachers had taught.

However, some mothers stated that they would not be quite as extreme in assigning or pushing their children to do so much work. Three mothers also explained that the new generation of mothers is more balanced in terms of not emphasizing homework as much and valuing "human relations" or the ability to socialize and get along with others. Some mothers said they would not have their children involved in so many lessons or push them so hard, at least not until they are older.

High parental investment and sacrifice. Among the Chinese mothers, 58% ($n = 28$) seemed to feel that they invested much more in their children's educations. They explained that Chinese mothers give up everything for their children's educations by taking much more care, investing more attention, and making more sacrifices. Both parents will work so that they can send their children to better schools and so that they will be able to put them through college, including graduate studies or medical school. They tell their children that if they can do well in school, then the parents will do whatever it takes financially to give them these opportunities. In some families, the father will send the mother and children to the United States for the children's schooling while the father is still working in Taiwan. In fact, at least 6 of the Chinese mothers stated that their husbands worked and lived in Taiwan while they were in the United States with their children for their schooling. Parents were also very willing to move to an area (i.e., another school district) where they could have their children attend better schools. Mothers mentioned that, generally, they take their children's schoolwork very seriously.

Some mothers said that their children do well simply because the parents themselves are outstanding; they have worked very hard and become very successful. Many mothers (29%, or $n = 14$) expressed how competitive and difficult school was in Taiwan: "In Taiwan, everything is based on the examination process, and you can't get anywhere unless you do very well. There are just too many kids and so few opportunities."

Regard for the family, more family stability, and the mother as teacher. Among the Chinese mothers, 29% ($n = 14$) also expressed the view that their children succeed in school because of the regard placed on the family. Children work hard to bring honor to the family, and education is regarded as the most important way to bring honor to your ancestors. Mothers explained that Chinese children really want to make their families proud and not "lose face" for their families. As one mother stated,

In Chinese families, the child's personal academic achievement is the value and honor of the whole family. If you fail school, you bring embarrassment to the family and lose face. If you do good, you bring honor to the family and [do] not lose face. A lot of value is placed on the child to do well for the family. It starts from kindergarten.

Mothers also explained that Chinese families stick together more and that there are fewer divorces. They felt that most Chinese families provide a lot of stability for the children. One mother explained, "There is less divorce in families and more stability. If parents have hassles and problems every day, it affects the kids." Also, Chinese mothers were depicted as having a very important role that they take very seriously in terms of being responsible for their children's schoolwork and school performance, as in the following response:

Chinese are more family oriented. Chinese mothers think that helping the child to do better in school is the most important task to her, and in other cultures mothers may stress other tasks like being happy, enjoying life, or learning a trade. Chinese think that the mother needs to play a significant role in the child's education, and mothers from other cultures think they should teach other things.

A few mothers also talked about the importance of the family as a whole working and studying together: "They take them to the library, and they all study together at home, so the kids just follow this and they enjoy it; if not, they accept it."

Cultural value for education. Some Chinese mothers (27%, $n = 13$) also believed that their children do very well in school because Chinese culture has always respected and valued education. Some mothers explained that in the history of China, scholars always have been very respected. As one mother stated, "In Chinese society, there is an invisible caste with scholars on top, farmers second, workers third, and businessmen last. . . . They value education very highly." Mothers also mentioned that Chinese are very impressed by someone who has a Ph.D. or is a doctor and that this has more status or virtue to the Chinese than does money.

Consequences of getting or not getting a good education. Some Chinese mothers (23%, $n = 11$) also explained that Chinese parents often endorse the belief that one cannot succeed unless one has an education; others cited the reverse of this, that is, a good education will lead to future success (23%, $n = 11$): "It is the thinking pattern we have that education is so important to live in society. If you want to have a better life or better future, then you have to get a good education." Many mothers claimed that Chinese parents always warn their children about the repercussions of not getting a good education: "If you do not study, you will have no future; you will not get a good job, and you will not have a good life." Thus a good education is the key to success, and without it you cannot get a good job.

Belief that foreigners experience limited opportunities. Among the Chinese mothers, 21% ($n = 10$) also explained that they need to stress getting a good education and studying hard because "foreigners have less job opportunities." One mother explained this very well: "We work harder because we are foreigners. . . . We work harder than other people in order to be ahead, and also the opportunity structure is not that wide, and so the Chinese people have to be in a special field in order to be successful." Other mothers explained that Chinese immigrants need to be better than the Americans to be hired over the Americans: "We feel, as a new immigrant, you have to work hard and be better than average to get a better chance. . . . I must look better to persuade them [Americans] that I am qualified. I have to do better than what White people could do."

Emphasis on reading and taking children to the library. Another important aspect that some Chinese mothers ($n = 7$) mentioned that cannot easily fit into the other areas involved a heavy emphasis on reading. These mothers talked about how much mothers read to their children—even when they are infants—and especially about how often they take them to the library and how the family as a whole reads together, as mentioned earlier.

DEVIATIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE THEMES

Among the Chinese mothers, 48% ($n = 23$) also included other themes in addition to those already mentioned (refer to italicized "other" themes in Table 2):

1. "start young" (6 mothers [11, 14, 20, 31, 42, 47]): involved the explicit idea that children must begin learning at an "early age";

TABLE 2
Profiles of Chinese Mothers With Deviations
From Original Themes (indicated by "other")

Number	Profile	Number	Profile
2.	<i>Other:</i> obedience but balance/creativity too	22.	(7) library, (1) extra work, (2) involved <i>Other:</i> stop TV
3.	(1) high expectations, (4) value education <i>Other:</i> good mother (communicative, sensitive)	26.	(2) comparison to Taiwan, (1) high expectations, (4) value education, (5) stress rewards <i>Other:</i> study to grow; encourage child's career aspirations
6.	(1) high expectations/expose to other areas <i>Other:</i> control TV	31.	(2) comparison to Taiwan, (1) high expectations/study other areas <i>Other:</i> start young to be organized
7.	(1) high expectations/value special talents/study other areas, (2) involved <i>Other:</i> compare child	33.	(5) stress repercussions, (1) extra work, (3) mother as teacher <i>Other:</i> obey parents/do homework
8.	(1) high expectations/study other things/Chinese serious, (2) involved <i>Other:</i> compare child	35.	(1) high expectation, (3) honor family/family education <i>Other:</i> obey but balance; develop good mind and character; parents consult other authorities for advice
9.	(2) involved, (3) mother as teacher <i>Other:</i> compare child	40.	(3) mother as teacher, (1) extra work, (6) foreigner/struggle <i>Other:</i> Chinese competitive
10.	(1) high expectations, (2) sacrifice, (6) foreigner <i>Other:</i> parent's example	42.	(1) high expectations, (3) stable family <i>Other:</i> start young
11.	(4) value education, (3) family-oriented/mother as teacher, (2) sacrifice <i>Other:</i> start young	43.	(1) high expectations, (4) value education/scholars honored, (3) please mother <i>Other:</i> Chinese competitive
12.	(4) value education <i>Other:</i> encourage kids to do a good job	45.	(2) invested <i>Other:</i> parents enforce rules; caring and loving
14.	(2) involved, (7) read, (1) work hard/not only playing <i>Other:</i> start young	46.	(2) involved/invested, (1) extra work, (6) foreigner <i>Other:</i> no TV
15.	(1) extra work/high expectations, (7) read/library, (2) involved <i>Other:</i> expose to older child; keep them away from bad kids; punishment is okay	47.	(4) value education, (2) invested/invested <i>Other:</i> start young
18.	(3) family education, (2) involved <i>Other:</i> parent's example; parent learns from teacher		

2. "obedience" (3 mothers [2, 33, 35]): involved stressing that children need to be obedient to be "teachable" but that there must be a balance, allowing children some choices or explaining why to them;
3. "compare child" (3 mothers [7, 8, 9]): involved the idea of adults comparing the abilities or talents of others and often stressing to children that they can be just as good as these other "talented" children;

4. "no TV" (3 mothers [5, 22, 46]): involved limiting the amount of television that children were allowed to watch;
5. "parents' example" (2 mothers [10, 18]): involved the belief that parents must set an example for children to work hard; "Chinese competitive" (2 mothers [40, 43]): involved the belief that Chinese people are very competitive and always strive to outdo each other; "good mother"/"loving, caring" (2 mothers [3, 45]): involved an emphasis on mothers providing more sensitivity and love.

THEMES FOR THE EUROPEAN AMERICAN MOTHERS

For European American mothers' perspectives on the impact or influence of parenting on their children's school success, refer to the right-hand portion of Table 1. European American mothers generally emphasized the following themes (with each theme listed in order according to the degree or frequency of occurrence): (1) not wanting to push academics and avoiding what they called "burnout" in young children; (2) fostering the idea that learning is fun, exciting, and interesting; (3) valuing reading in the home; (4) placing importance on their children's self-esteem; (5) showing interest and being involved with the child in general; (6) providing consistency and structure in the home; and (7) valuing education in the home.

Not academics: The importance of social development. Similar to their general child-rearing views, 36% ($n = 18$) of the European American mothers voiced the opinion that stressing academic success is not good for children and should not be the goal of education. Often mothers felt that stressing academics will rob children of their self-motivation. In addition, 6 mothers voiced their concerns over what they had often read in recently published articles discussing "baby burnout," such as the following:

I've been reading articles about baby burnout. All these kids that are forced to excel at these early, early ages are just showing all these symptoms of stress by the time they're 7 or 8 years old. That's awful. Experts change, but it just seems like in educational circles the thing that you read about, like forcing kids to do all these things prior to their developmental stage of readiness, is just not doing them any great favors.

The cause of this burnout then often seemed to involve a developmental interpretation—that children need to be developmentally ready.

Among the European American mothers, 18% ($n = 9$) felt that, rather than stressing academics, their children's social development should be of foremost concern. One mother provided an example of how she had received a "school readiness" checklist from a local school: "You were supposed to check off these list of things, and they were all academic things. I think they

should be in terms of *social* things—like if your child can participate in a group, a group circle.” Another mother talked about “having the sense that children know how to use their words, to resolve conflicts, and to get along in the social type of environment that a school is.”

On the other hand, there were European American mothers (18%) who did feel that some structure, hard work, or discipline was important. One mother emphasized “very hard work and concentrated effort and enjoying the process when it’s possible, and bearing up with it when it’s not.” Some mothers, however, defined structure in terms of teaching a more global learning process, again with a deemphasis on specific *academic* skills.

Fostering idea that learning is fun. Another 32% ($n = 16$) of the European American mothers also believed that parents need to foster the idea that learning is fun, interesting, exciting, and stimulating and that their creativity must be promoted. Often these mothers expressed that learning is fun and enjoyable because it can be related to their children’s everyday experiences. As one mother explained, “Give them excitement about learning by teaching them through everyday experiences and letting it transfer to a school setting. . . . Human beings have an innate sense of wanting to learn, and it does transfer and overflow to the school setting.” Many of these mothers seemed to believe that learning is either an innate process or a self-motivated process within children. A few mothers also included the role of an adult in fostering or developing their children’s interest in learning, such as the following: “showing him, exploring with him different aspects or ideas that will interest him, keep[ing] him stimulated but not overstimulated.” However, as indicated by this mother, the adult’s role was somewhat more peripheral to the child’s own active learning process.

Reading to the child and limiting television. Another aspect that 32% ($n = 16$) of the European American mothers said contributed to their children’s school performance involved the area of reading or the importance of books. Many mothers stressed such things as reading to their children, with the children seeing that the parents themselves read a lot and the parents valuing reading and having a lot of books in the home. This was also something stressed by Chinese mothers, but not to quite the same degree as it was by European American mothers (only 6 Chinese mothers stressed this).

When some European American mothers mentioned the importance of reading or books, they also mentioned the importance of limiting what children watch on television, such as the following: “I read all the time to my children since they were 3 weeks of age. . . . There’s never anything on TV

except PBS or selected videos. . . . We have that many books [pointing to the books in her office]. We go to [the] library twice a week.”

Building self-esteem. At least 30% ($n = 15$) of the European American mothers felt that self-esteem was the foundation for their children’s overall success. Many mothers believed that helping children to have self-esteem or confidence will provide the necessary foundation to do well in their lives in general, including school, and that they will be more confident to try things. Often building self-esteem involved the feeling of security in the family unit: “Self-esteem is so important. . . . If they’re secure in the family structure, they’re more secure in school—a sense of belonging in the family.” Other ways of building children’s self-esteem involved “validating the child’s curiosity,” “encouraging their ideas,” “providing a warm and loving environment,” and “loads of praise and positive reinforcement.”

Showing involvement and interest in the child. Another aspect that 30% ($n = 15$) of the European American mothers felt was important for children to do well in school involved the amount of interest that the parents give to the children. However, very few mothers related the idea of parental involvement or interest specifically to their children’s *schoolwork*; only 3 mothers talked about helping them with their schoolwork, whereas about 20 Chinese mothers stressed this. Some mothers ($n = 5$) stressed the importance of following up on what their children did in school, such as the following:

Kids who do well in school are the ones whose parents take that a step further when their kid brings home whatever they’re studying and says, “That’s exciting. Oh, there’s an art exhibit that has something to do with that. Let’s go see it.” Or, “I know about this extra book that will help you.” . . . It’s follow-up and [is] encouraging. . . . With my husband, the first thing he asks our child every day is “What did you *do* in school today?”—not “What did you *learn* in school today?”

When most mothers mentioned being involved or interested, the majority of them (10 of the total 15) simply mentioned being involved with their children on a more *global* level. These mothers mentioned being interested in what their children are doing, listening to them, being really interested in and encouraging what they are involved in as well as their questions or thoughts.

Providing consistency and structure. Among the European American mothers, 14% ($n = 7$) reiterated that consistency and structure in the home was also important for fostering children’s school success. Mothers often explained that consistency in the home helped children to adapt to other environments outside the home: “It has to do with discipline and consistency

in the home, and by discipline I mean learning your responsibilities. If you have certain responsibilities in the home, then you'll be able to go to school and know you have certain responsibilities as a student." Another mother, who had been an elementary school teacher, expressed this same idea: "Structure must be provided for the child because he [or she] has to learn to operate in real society and the structure of the classroom."

Valuing education. Among the European American mothers, 14% ($n = 7$) specified that the value placed on education was also important for children to do well in school. These mothers believed that if the parents valued education, then their children would too. One mother talked about "the parents valuing education—modeling that, and then the kids pick it up too." Another mother explained that her father was a college professor and then stated, "I was brought up thinking that education was something that was to be aspired to, a worthwhile achievement, and if I feel that way, I'm sure my child does."

DEVIATIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL EUROPEAN AMERICAN THEMES

A large majority (72%, $n = 36$) of the European American mothers had also mentioned additional themes besides those already listed. Most of these themes were mentioned by more than just 1 mother; however, they did not reach the criteria or cutoff of 7 mothers to be included in the original list. A brief summary of the additional themes are listed here with the frequencies:

1. "differences in children's abilities" or "innate abilities" (6 mothers): involved being aware of children's individual differences in abilities or character;
2. "providing lots of materials" (6 mothers): mostly involved art materials and educational toys and games) or exposing children to cultural events such as theater and music for children;
3. "function independently" or "independent thinking" (4 mothers): emphasized that children should learn to do things on their own or to function on their own outside of the home environment;
4. "teach responsibility" (4 mothers): involved the idea that children need to be given some responsibility in the home that will then transfer to the school setting;
5. "allow children to go at their own pace" or "allow children to make mistakes" (4 mothers): emphasized that children should not be rushed and that making mistakes is part of the learning process;
6. "our educational system" (4 mothers): criticisms that "the educational system is overloaded", the school system should not give homework before children are able to complete it on their own because not all children have parents who are able to help them, and "the school system squelches imagination and creativity";

7. "educational television": involved allowing children to watch only "educational" television programs;
8. "teaching creativity" (3 mothers): involved parents nurturing creativity;
9. "sharing your own experiences with the child" (3 mothers): involved the idea of parents sharing their experiences of when they were in school;
10. "importance of the teacher-child relationship" (3 mothers): involved the importance of teachers establishing supportive relationships with the child or of teachers having similar goals as the parents;
11. "respectful of other's feelings" (3 mothers): involved the idea that children must learn to be sensitive to and respectful of other children;
12. "playing on the computer" (2 mothers), "not labeling kids" by placing "stigmatizing labels on them" (2 mothers), and "healthy/stable home environment" (2 mothers): emphasizing the parent's own emotional or mental stability.

CONCLUSIONS

In their responses, European American mothers generally did not accept the content or emphasis of the question itself. That is, in contrast to the Chinese mothers, many European American mothers did not want to stress academic achievement with their children. European American mothers specifically stated that this was not important for their children's overall development and that, therefore, this should not be a central thrust or concern for parenting. Some European American mothers did not want to stress academics because they believed that this would ruin children's appreciation for learning. They wanted their children to feel that learning is fun and exciting, "not something you work at." Only a small handful of European American mothers did believe that schooling and learning involved work and that there was no way around that reality. On the other hand, Chinese mothers were very willing to recognize that learning and schooling definitely involved hard work and effort and were necessary for their children's overall future success, especially in attaining career and social mobility.

European American mothers also did not stress academic skills per se. In fact, they felt that social skills were more important, especially when the child is younger. They also felt that academic skills would not necessarily promote learning in general or the learning process. These mothers emphasized the importance of a more global and well-rounded learning in which the *process* of learning is more important than the *outcome*. On the other hand, Chinese mothers were very concerned with both process and outcome; process was stressed because they recognized that this was vital to the outcome. The outcome or general goal of education and learning was the mastery of specific skills more academically related. Therefore, Chinese mothers wanted more

well-performing children, whereas European American mothers wanted more well-rounded children, stressing both social skills and self-esteem in the children. This was also found by Stevenson and Lee (1990) in their comparisons of American students and their parents to Chinese in Taipei and Japanese in Sendai, Japan: "While some cultures value activities that help a child master prescribed skills, others, such as the United States, value experiences that will make a child more creative and confident" (p. 6).

Also, European American mothers felt that, in general, their children's school performance should not be the focus of their parenting. Some mothers placed so much stress on their children's self-esteem that academic achievement was simply seen as the product of healthy self-esteem. The parents' primary responsibility, then, was to foster or build their children's self-esteem so that they may develop overall self-confidence to do well that will carry over into the area of schooling. Also, these mothers believed that stressing academics could have a negative impact on their children's self-esteem and, therefore, could be more problematic rather than complementary or necessary. For the Chinese mothers, on the other hand, their children's school performance was a central and necessary objective of child rearing. Academic achievement reflected successful parenting. If children were not doing well, this indicated a problem that parents were not doing their job. As one Chinese mother stated, "Academics is a family thing," and this was conveyed in a number of ways. Mothers also have a very significant role in ensuring their children's school success.

Both groups of mothers differed in terms of the contribution they felt that parents could have in fostering schooling and learning in general. European American mothers described their contribution in terms of what Hess and Holloway (1984) described as the "facilitative" model that they claimed comprises the current view of developmental and cognitive psychology. As Hess and Holloway explained, this model involves "providing the raw material of experience so the child's own active learning processes can take over" (p. 194). Many European American mothers stressed "providing a creative environment for the child to explore from," "the right amount of stimulation," "providing the structure," and "a variety of experiences and individuals." Often descriptions of this facilitative approach involved the idea that learning is more of a natural, innate process that is within the child. Because they believed that learning is fostered when children are allowed to just experience their environment, this belief may cause many European American parents to take a less "directive" role in their children's schoolwork and learning. In fact, Hess and Holloway's description of the facilitative model specifically defined "the child as the initiating actor in constructing his or her own cognitive world" (p. 194).

European American mothers also seemed to emphasize other views often held by developmental and cognitive psychologists. According to the review provided by Hess and Holloway (1984), developmental and cognitive psychologists believe that fostering the child's interest and skill in reading is directly related to the value placed on literacy, the availability of reading and writing material, and the tendency of parents to read to their children. The European American mothers reiterated these same points both more explicitly and more often than did the Chinese mothers. In addition, European American mothers' focus on their children's self-esteem reflects another more current developmental psychology movement focused on the child's "self" development. In recent years, developmental psychologists have been quite preoccupied with exploring the development of the child's sense of self or self-identity, with its emergence beginning even in infancy.

On the other hand, the Chinese mothers' view of their contribution to their children's learning involved a more direct approach or intervention; they felt they needed to provide direct teaching or tutoring by checking over their children's homework, having them redo homework, assigning them to extra supplementary work, and hiring tutors or having their children attend study groups or after-school academic programs. This approach, then, seemed to be quite related to the Chinese idea, stressed in the previous paragraph, that learning is achieved through effort and hard work. Also, because Chinese mothers emphasized such objectives as mastery of specific skills and high performance in these academic skills, direct parental involvement may thus be regarded as relevant and perhaps necessary to ensure that these objectives are met. Indeed, although many studies point to parents' high expectations in explaining Chinese children's school success, the Chinese mothers in this study have also revealed the importance of parental involvement and investment. Thus, according to these Chinese mothers, parental involvement and investment are an integral part of their beliefs about why their children are doing so well in school. The Chinese show a willingness to invest and provide a variety of different resources to ensure the school success of their children, and the children probably get this message loud and clear.

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