

Title: A Cross-Cultural Study of Emotions Experienced by Parents of Preschoolers
Researcher: Dr. Hui-Chin Hsu, Associate Professor Child and Family Development
Anticipated duration of project: August 2010-August 2011

Research suggests that people in different cultures show differences in how they experience, express, and regulate emotions. These cultural differences are largely attributed to the different belief systems, particularly views about self and others. People in independent cultures such as the United States place an emphasis on individuality; thus, an autonomous sense of self guides emotional experience, expression, and regulation. By contrast, in interdependent cultures such as China and Taiwan, self is defined by people's social role and status in the family and community; thus, a relational sense of self motivates people to attend to information about others. As a result, others are used as a referent for emotional experience, expression, and regulation.

People in both independent and dependent cultures consider the emotion of joy as positive and anger as negative. Although both joy and anger are socially engaging emotions, the emotion of anger is expressed more openly by individuals in independent cultures than those in interdependent cultures. Moreover, the emotion of joy is more likely to be shared by people in the interdependent cultures with others in in-group circles than those in the independent cultures.

Emotions such as pride and guilt center on the self. People in both independent and interdependent cultures experience pride as a positive, but socially disengaging emotion. By contrast, guilt is experienced as negative, but socially engaging emotion. Nonetheless, the emotion of pride is more likely to be encouraged in independent cultures than interdependent cultures. Moreover, the emotion of guilt is more salient to individuals in independent cultures than those in interdependent cultures.

The way people experience emotions that are evaluated as positive or negative or as socially engaging or disengaging may have an influence on their behaviors as parents. The current research project is a cross-cultural study designed to examine emotional experience in parents of normally developing preschool-aged children (ages 2 to 5) in three different cultures—China, Taiwan, and the United States. This study is an attempt to understand (1) when, where, and why American, Chinese, and Taiwanese parents experience the emotion of pride, guilt, joy, and anger in childrearing, (2) whether parents' emotions may be related to their parenting practices and stress, and (3) whether two parents in the same family differ in their emotional experience. Investigation of cultural variations in parents' experience, expression, and regulation of emotions in childrearing will inform us about different pathways to social and emotional development in early childhood.

Title: Rough and Tumble Play at the Child Development Lab
Researcher: Brandi Bocker, CFD Undergraduate under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Melissa Landers-Potts, CFD Faculty
Anticipated duration of project: August 2010-December 2010

This study will be used to determine the social, emotional and physical benefits for children engaging in rough and tumble play. The purpose of this study is to gather information that supports the developmental appropriateness and the teacher's role in children's rough and tumble play. The study will encompass observations of the children in the Preschool I and Preschool II classrooms at the Child Development Lab at the McPhaul Center. Parents and teachers of these children will also be interviewed.

The findings from this project may provide information on the positive benefits of allowing your child to engage in rough and tumble play, how you can facilitate it in an appropriate manner and how you can provide them with a safe and supportive environment for this type of play.

Title of Study: Improving Prekindergarten Children's Comprehension of Storybooks
Researchers: William Mira, Master's Student in Educational Psychology, Applied Cognition and Development & Stephanie Lai, Doctoral Student Principal Investigator: Dr. Paula J. Schwanenflugel
Anticipated duration of project: August 2010-December 2011

Study Synopsis: The purpose of the study is to evaluate two potential ways of improving the comprehension of stories in young children: prosody and perspective taking. Prosody (the expressive aspect of language) is supposed to help listeners, including young children, parse the auditory input of speakers and assist their understanding, but currently there is no direct evidence of the practical impact of this for young children listening to stories. One of the factors that this study will manipulate is the presentation of expressive versus less expressive readings of stories on children's understanding of story content, including new vocabulary, story details, and inferencing. Another factor that influences young children's story understanding is the need to infer the motivations and mental states of characters that cause subsequent events in stories. Typically, causal inferences like this are lacking both in young children's recall and narrations of stories, yet they are present in their own stories about events from their own personal lives. Consequently, in this study, we will try to improve children's causal inference taking by asking children to take a first-person perspective of the main character