

Asian-American Parents: Are They Really Different?¹

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Abstract

Using the base year data of parent interviews (n=15,376) conducted by the U. S. Department of Education for the national Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), this study examined patterns of parenting style of Asian-American parents (n=536) in six domains. Descriptive and ANOVA analyses revealed significant differences between Asian-American parents and parents in European-American, African-American, and Hispanic groups in their expectations of child's education attainment and expression of affection to children. More similarities than differences among the four ethnic groups were found in parental attitudes towards child's areas of development in kindergarten, parental school involvement, parental involvement with child at home, and parent disciplinary style.

The Asian-American parents were further divided into three subgroups to examine possible within group differences. The three groups were: (1) Two parents, both parents are Asian-American (n=343), (2) Asian-American single parents (n=45), and (3) two parents with one parent being Asian-American (n=31). Results showed that although the three subgroups of parents differ in social economical status and education level, there were very few significant differences in all six domains of parenting across these three subgroups. This finding suggests that Asian parenting style is prominent in families as long as one parent is Asian-American. Policy and educational implications were discussed. Future directions of study are also suggested.

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Introduction

Cultural variations in parenting have been well documented in recent years (e.g., Chao, 2001; Cheah & Rubin, 2003; , Chen, Wu, Chen, Wang, & Cen, 2001; Coll, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver, DiMartino, & Chin, 2002; Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk, 2000; Huntsinger, Jose, & Shari, 1998; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Kwok, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Tamis-LeMonda, Wang, Koutsouvanou, & Albright, 2002; and so on). Many cross-cultural research studies were conducted within the framework of the ecological perspective developed by Bronfenbrenner (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). According to the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1978), human development can be best understood and explained within their social/cultural contexts, which include the family, the school, the community, the society, the value and belief system of a given culture, as well as the interactions among these immediate and larger social contexts. Family, as one of the smallest units in the society, is at the center of this ecological system. Consequently, aspects of the larger social/cultural context directly or indirectly affect the everyday experiences of individuals within a family (Harrison, et al., 1990).

Multiple research findings indicate that parents of Asian descent have distinctive patterns of belief, attitude, and style in parenting as compared with other ethnical groups (Chao, 2001, 2002; Coll, et al., 2002; Julian, McKenry & McKelvey, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990; Papps, et al., 1994; Tamis-LeMonda, et al., 2002). For example, Asian, especially Chinese, parents were often found to be more authoritarian, directive, or controlling than their western counterparts (Cheah & Rubin, 2003; Chen, et al., 2001; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Lin & Fu, 1990; Ran, 2001), with a few exceptions such as the one identified in one Asian sub-cultural group of Vietnamese parents (Papps, et al., 1994). In addition, Asian parents were seen as less involved in children's education

at school (Coll, et al., 2002), were less expressive of their affection to children (Chen, et al., 2001; Hsu, 1981), believed more in “training” their children (Chao, 2001; Cheah & Rubin, 2003; Lin & Fu, 1990), held higher expectations of their children in academics (Ran, 2001; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990; Tamis-LeMonda, et al., 2002), and expected obedience from their children more (Tamis-LeMonda, et al., 2002). Researchers attributed this pattern of parenting to the traditional principles of Confucian (Chao, 2002; Cheah & Rubin, 2003; Chen, et al., 2001; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Lin & Fu, 1990) or Buddhism (Chao, 2002; Coll, et al., 2002), among which filial piety and collectivist orientation are strongly emphasized (Chao, 1996; Chen et al., 2001).

Bornstein and Cote asserted (2004) that, regardless of cultures of origin and cultures of destination, families tended to withhold the conventions and beliefs of their original culture. Therefore, in a multicultural society such as the United States, variation in cultural conventions and beliefs should be expected among families of different ethnic/cultural groups. Moreover, since these cultural conventions and beliefs had been established with well-developed schemas in the original culture, they could withstand transformation. Childrearing and socialization within the family were considered among “the most resistant to change” (Bornstein & Cote, 2004).

This concept proposed by Bornstein and Cote (2004) implies that the Confucian or Buddhist principles will impact everyday lives of the families within the Asian culture, regardless of whether the families reside in their culture of origin or culture of destination. Some research findings seemed to support this notion. Asian-American immigrant families came to the United States for various reasons at various times in history (Cimmarusti, 1996; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). Many families arrived in the new continent with little but rich cultural heritage. Family values and family-oriented childrearing practices allowed these families to remain intact,

strong, and in many cases, successful. As Julian, McKenry & McKelvey (1994) pointed out, to Asian-American families, some values “seem to remain important regardless of the (sub)group or its degree of assimilation into the majority culture” in the U.S. Nevertheless, as some cross-culture researchers cautioned, some compound variables such as family SES and level of parental education must also be taken into account when interpreting findings in cross-cultural differences (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, 2001). In addition, differences among sub-cultural groups of Asian-Americans should also be recognized and acknowledged (Coll, et al., 2002).

Inconsistent findings on cultural or ethnic differences in parenting, however, cannot fully confirm the claims made by Bornstein & Cote (2004). For example, in the U.S. mainstream educational system, parental involvement with children at home and at school is considered one of the key factors for children to succeed. There is a stereotype in the general public’s view regarding Asian-American parents’ lack of participation in their children’s formal education (Coll, et al., 2002). Some associated this “tendency” to Asian culture’s respect for authority figure in the society, including teachers (Coll, et al., 2002; Hwa-Froelick & Westby, 2003; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994); others interpreted it within the general context of immigrants’ lack of means of communication because of the language barriers (Coll, et al., 2002; Harrison, et al., 1990); yet some others also assumed that lack of resources or understanding of the school culture (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Ran, 2001) might be the cause behind the un-involvement of ethnically minority groups, including the Asians. However, using the data from the National Survey of Families and Households collected in 1987 and 1988, Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey (1994) had different findings regarding the Asian-American parents’ involvement. After comparing parental involvement across four ethnic groups, they concluded that “Asian-Americans

were more involved in helping with reading and homework” at home as compared to other ethnic groups such as Hispanic parents. Leung, Lau & Lam (1998) called this type of involvement “academic authoritativeness.” In their study, however, they found that Chinese parents were less authoritative in both general and academic domains than European-American parents.

One investigation may help explain the inconsistency found in different studies. In their study of comparing childrearing practice among Chinese, immigrant Chinese, and European-American parents, Lin and Fu (1990) found that the two groups of Chinese parents were both rated high in parental control than European-American parents. However, they noticed that the Chinese parents were rated the highest, European-American parents the lowest, with the immigrant Chinese parents placed in the middle. Lin and Fu suggested that this deviation of the immigrant Chinese parents’ childrearing practice from the Chinese parents could be an indicator of “acculturation” effect. The immigrant Chinese parents, they asserted, were perhaps “in the process of adjusting and accommodating to the values and practices of the United States” (1990). Should this theory is true it would challenge Bornstein and Cote’s claim that childrearing and socialization within the family were “the most resistant to change” (2004). In other words, we would expect to see more similarities in parenting style among parents of different ethnic groups in the United States. This assumption could be further supported by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective (1978).

Traditionally, cross-cultural studies conduct comparisons between the European-American and a minority group such as that of Hispanic, African, or Asian cultural origin (Chao, 1996, 2001; Chea & Rubin, 2003; Hantinger, Jose, & Larson 1998; Knight, Tein, Shell, & Rossa, 1992; Knight, Viridin, & Roosa, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990) or across more ethnic groups (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk, 2000; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). Comparisons across nations, such as

between parents in the U.S. and in Mainland China (Bornstein & Cote, 2004; Cheah and Rubin, 2003; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998), between parents in the U.S. and in Japan (Nomura, Noguchi, Saito, & Tezuka, 1995), among various groups of immigrants in the U.S. (Coll, 2002) or in other nations such as Australia (Papps, et al., 1994) and the United Kingdom (Ran, 2001), can also be found in the literature. However, few studies (Chao, 2000, Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, 2001) looked into each ethnic group to identify potential factors that may contribute to within-group differences. Among those which did, the most common variables investigated include SES, parental education level, child's gender, or differences between fathers and mothers (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, 2001).

In this report, using a nationally representative sample from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Base Year data, we intend to answer this research question: are Asian-American parents really different from parents in the other ethnic groups in the United States? We will compare Asian-American parents with parents of European, African, and Hispanic descent on six dimensions of parenting: parental expectation of the child, parental attitudes towards areas of child development in kindergarten, parental affection towards child, parental involvement in school events, parental involvement with child at home, and parenting disciplinary styles. The main focus of our analyses in this report is to find similarities and differences between Asian-American parents and parents in the other ethnic groups. In addition to the cross-ethnic comparisons, potential within-group differences among Asian-American parents will also be examined.

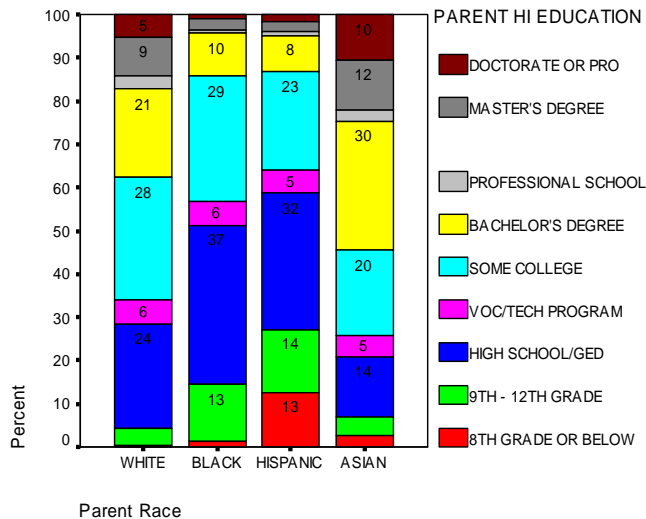
Method

Samples

Samples of the present study were drawn from the base year data of parent interviews (n=14,655 valid cases) conducted by the U. S. Department of Education for the national Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K). Family data were obtained through telephone interview with one parent or guardian of the household who received the phone call. By design, the data represents national distribution of ethnic groups in the population, in which 60.1% (n=8,807) were European-Americans, 19.6% (n=2,877) Hispanic, 16.6% (n=2,435) African-Americans, and 3.7% (n=536) Asian-Americans. Ethnicity was identified by self-report of the respondents. Children of these parents were enrolled in kindergarten at the time of interview with a mean age of five years and 4 months.

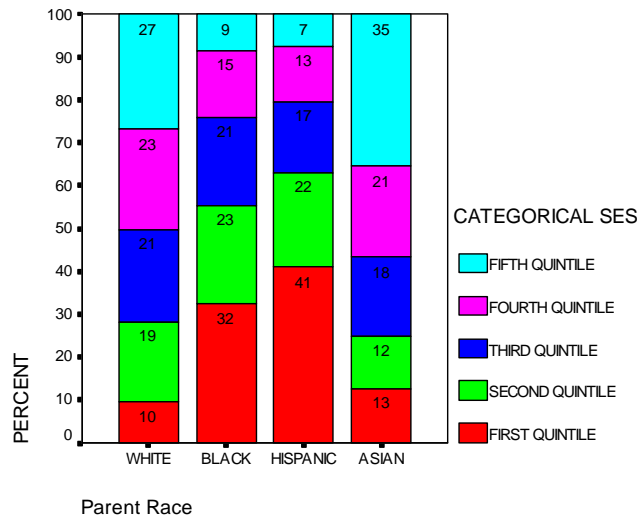
Compared to other ethnic groups, Asian-American group has significantly higher level of parental education. As seen in Figure 1 below, over 52% of Asian-American parents being interviewed have post secondary degrees, as compared to 35% in European-American, 13.5% in Hispanic, and 13% in African-American groups.

Figure 1. Parent education level by ethnicity.



Family SES is closely related to parent education level. In this study, SES was determined by the annual income of the household, which was further divided into five categories, where the top 20 percentile was considered the highest SES, and the bottom 20 percentile the lowest. Figure 2 below indicates that, compared to families in other ethnic groups, significantly more Asian-American families (56%) are at or above the top 40 percentile, as compared to European-Americans (50%), Hispanics (20%), and African-Americans (24%).

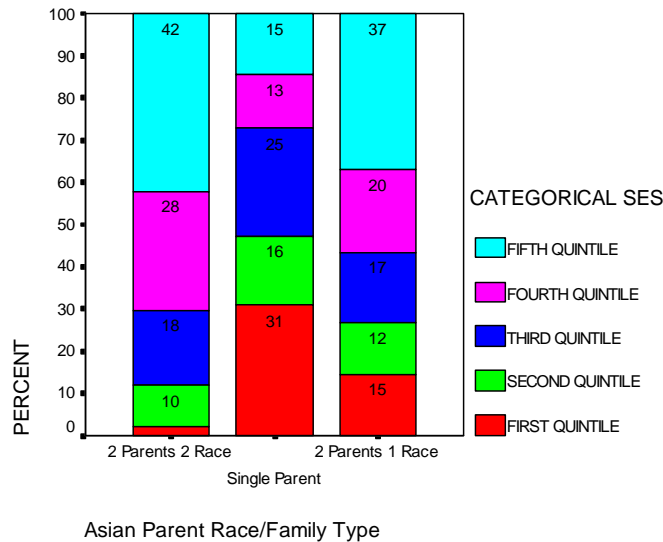
Figure 2. Family SES by ethnicity.



In addition, family structure and ethnic composition of the Asian-American families were analyzed. Among the 438 valid cases of Asian-American families, the overwhelming majority of them (81.7%, n=342) were two-parent, same-ethnicity families, 10.9% (n=44) were single parent families, with an additional 7.4% (n=32) of two-parent, bi-ethnicity ones. Among the three subgroups of Asian-American families, only 25% of the single parents held post-secondary degrees, as compared to the two-parent families which both had more than 50% of parents held post-secondary degrees, although the two-parent, same-ethnicity Asian families had a slightly higher percentage (57.6%) than the two-parent, bi-ethnicity ones (51%). Differences were also found in socioeconomic status among the three subgroups of Asian-American families. As Figure

3 below indicates, nearly half of the single-parent families (47%) were on or below the bottom 40 percentiles as compared to 12% for two-parent, same-ethnicity families and 27% for two-parent, two-ethnicity families.

Figure 3. Asian-American family type by SES.



Measurements

Six dimensions of parenting styles were examined in this study. Those included parental expectation of highest degree of the child, parental attitudes towards areas of child development in kindergarten, parental affection towards child, parental involvement in school events, parental involvement with child at home, and parenting disciplinary styles.

Parental expectations of the child. In this study, parental expectations of the child consisted of two questions. The first question was parent’s expectation of the highest degree for the child to attain in future; the second was the frequency parent expected the child to do household chores. Response to the first question was multiple-choice selections ranging from “less than high school” to “Ph.D., MD or other higher degree”. Response to the second question was frequency of household chores the child was expected to do at home. A four-level scale

ranging from “not at all,” “once or twice a week,” “three to six times a week,” to “everyday” was used to measure this aspect of parental expectation.

Parental attitudes towards child’s areas of development in kindergarten. Parents were asked to rate the importance as they perceived of their child’s areas of development in kindergarten. Six interview questions touched upon three areas including school readiness (“can count to 20 or more,” “sits still and pay attention,” “is able to use pencils and paint brushes,” and “knows most of the letters of the alphabet”), social development (“take turns and share”), and language ability (“communicates needs, wants and thoughts verbally in his/her primary language”). A five-point scale ranging from “not important,” “not very important,” “somewhat important,” “very important,” to “essential” was used to measure this dimension of parenting.

Parental affection towards child. Five variables were selected to investigate in this dimension of parenting. They were “always show child love,” “it’s hard to be warm to child,” “express affection to child,” “sacrifice to meet child’s needs,” and “often feel angry with child.” Each of these variables were rated by parents on a four-point scale (“completely true,” “mostly true,” “somewhat true,” and “not at all true”).

Parental involvement in child’s school events. Parental participation and involvement in child’s school activities were measured by frequency of participation in seven activities including “attended open house,” “attended PTA/PTO meetings,” “attended parent-teacher conferences,” “attended parent advisory board meetings,” “attended school events,” “volunteered at child’s school,” and “attended fundraising events” in the school year.

Parental involvement with child at home. Measures of this dimension of parenting included parents’ time spent with child at home in various activities such as “read to child,” “tell stories,” “sign songs,” “do sports,” “do arts,” “play games,” “build together,” and “teach child

nature.” Again, a four-level scale (“not at all,” “once or twice a week,” “three to six times a week,” or “everyday”) was used.

Parental disciplinary styles. Measures of parental disciplinary styles consist of 11 items. They were “spank child,” “have child take a time out,” “hit child,” “discuss what child did wrong,” “ignore it,” “make child do chores,” “make fun of child,” “make child apologize,” “take away privileges,” “give child a warning,” and “yell at child.” These were all “yes” or “no” questions.

Descriptive analyses were conducted across the all four ethnic groups of parents with a focus on identifying any distinctive patterns of parenting in Asian-American parents on these variables. Within-group analyses were also conducted to rule out any potential impact of family ethnic composition, parental education, or SES on Asian-American parents’ parenting styles.

Results

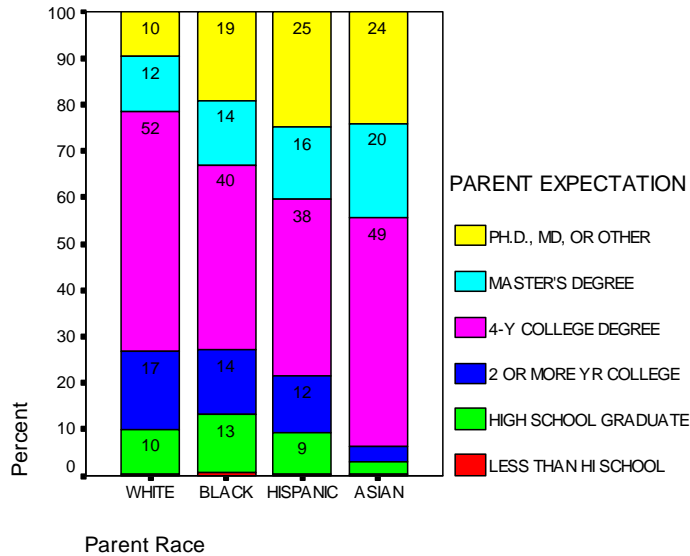
Almost all variables except in one dimension (i.e., parental involvement in school events) included in the statistical analyses are categorical variables. Descriptive analyses and Pearson Chi-Square tests were conducted to analyze the data. Due to such a large weighted sample of 15,376 cases, all statistical tests were significant. Therefore, we must look into more details of each variable in order to fully understand the practical meanings of these results. Again, although all four ethnic groups were included in the analyses, the main focus of this study is to explore any distinctive patterns in domains of parenting as related to the Asian-American parents.

Parental expectations of the child

As Figure 4 shows, significantly more Asian-American parents being interviewed (93%) expected their children to at least obtain a 4-year college degree in future, as compared to European-American (74%); Hispanic (73%), and African-American (79%) parents. Apparently,

high school or 2-year college was not considered an option for most of the Asian-American parents.

Figure 4. Parental expectations of child’s education attainment.



An interesting trend was found when we conducted a correlation analyses between parent education and parental expectation of their children’s highest education level. Our assumption was that parents who have received higher education degrees would be more likely to expect their children to attain a higher education degree as well. Given that education is highly valued in Asian culture, we expected that this correlation should be extremely high for the Asian group. Results showed that indeed the correlation coefficients are high for all ethnic groups ($r=.227, p<.00$ for the entire sample, $r=.197$ for Asian-American, $r=.338$ for European-American, $r=.137$ for Hispanic, and $r=.303$ for African-American parents). However, the correlation coefficient for the Asian group is not the highest among the four groups. When took a closer look we found that this relatively lower correlation coefficient is largely due to a small variance within this group. In fact, regardless of the Asian-American parents’ own education level, they all expect their children to

attain a higher education degree. (See Figure 5 below.) This trend is especially clear when compared with parents from the European-American group (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Asian-American parents' education level and expectations of children's highest degree.

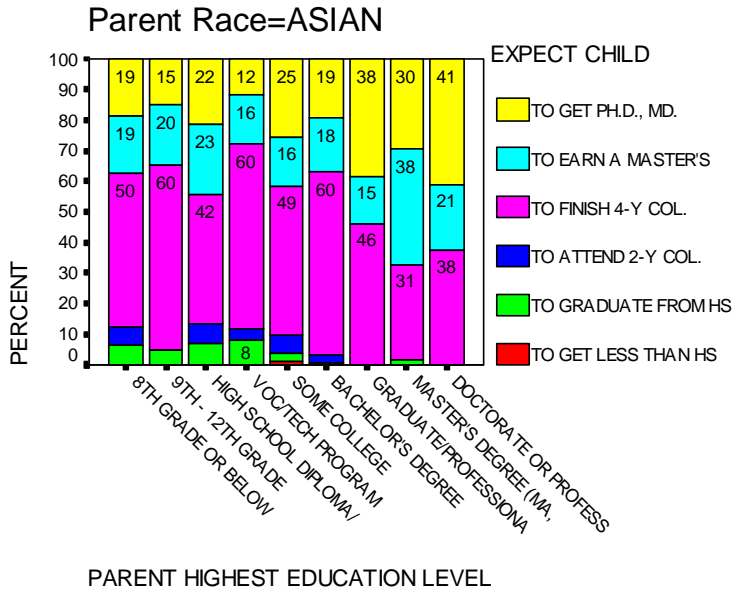
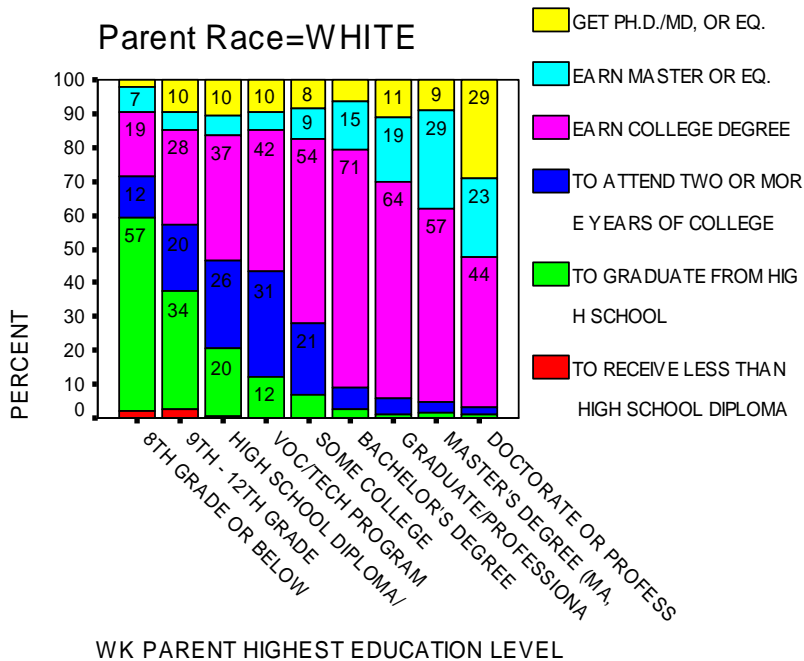


Figure 6. European-American parents' education level and expectations of children's highest degree.



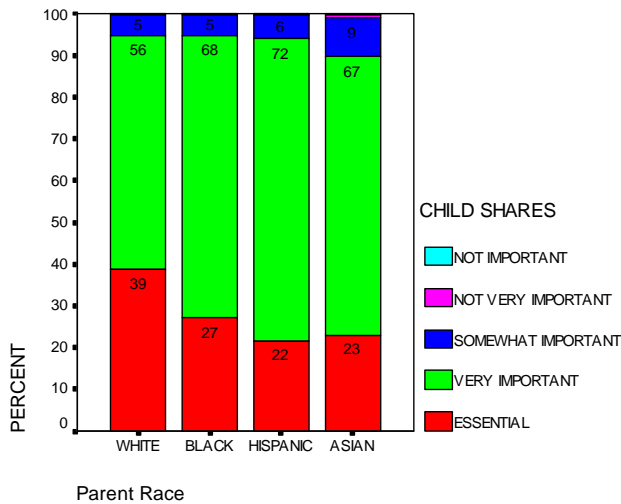
Contrast to parents' high expectations of child's education attainment, Asian-American parents had a very different expectation of their children to help with household chores. Among the four ethnic groups, only 41% of Asian-American parents expected their children to do household chores on a daily basis, whereas 9% of these parents did not expect their children to do chores at all, as compared to European-American (53% daily vs. 2% none), Hispanic (59% daily vs. 4% none), and African-American (49% daily vs. 8% none) groups. Commonly held view in the Asian community is that parents who want their children to succeed tend to spare their children from activities that are unrelated to curricula. We suspected that this low parental expectation of children doing house chores might correlate positively with Asian-American parents' expectation of child highest educational attainment. Correlation analyses, however, failed to support this assumption. Again, this low correlation between Asian-American parents' expectations of their children's educational attainment and doing household chores could be due to the limited range of within-group variation. Such a correlation could not be found in other ethnic groups either.

Parental attitudes towards child's areas of development in kindergarten. When parents were asked to rate how important it was to them regarding what the child could do in kindergarten, significant differences were found across the four ethnic groups. However, a closer look at the statistical results of the variables reveals more similarities than cross-cultural differences. For example, an overwhelming majority of parents, regardless of ethnicity, believed that it was "very important" or "essential" for the child to be able to share with others, with only slight deviation in the Asian-American group (see Figure 7 on page 14). Apparently, all parents participated in the survey believed that social skills were important to children at a very early age.

Similar patterns were found across the four ethnic groups in variables such as child "can count to 20 or more," "sits still and pay attention," "is able to use pencils and paint brushes," in

which the Asian-American group differed slightly from the Hispanic and African-American groups but was almost identical to the European-American group who believed these aspects were very important or essential to the child.

Figure 7. Parental attitude toward child sharing by ethnicity.



A striking difference was found when parents were asked about the importance for the child to know “most of the letters of the alphabet” in kindergarten. Contrary to the common belief that Asian-American parents emphasize learning and academics more than other ethnic groups, in our analysis it was the African-American group which stood out to be very different. Over 86% of African-American parents responded “very important” or “essential” to the question “how important is it for the child to know the alphabet,” as compared to 77% of Hispanic, 73% of Asian-American, and 61% of European-American parents. (See Table 1 on page 15.)

Regarding to child’s language ability (“child communicates needs, wants, and thoughts verbally in his/her primary language”), Asian-American parents deviated from the other three ethnic groups significantly. About 13% of Asian-American parents believed that being able to communicate well is somewhat or not very important, as compared to the other three groups with less than 6% of parents who believed so. This finding could be a reflection of a commonly held

belief that as a culture, people of Asian descent do not emphasize self-expressions. They tend to withhold personal feelings, avoid challenging authority, and emphasize strong self-control (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994).

Table 1. Parental attitudes towards child's areas of development in kindergarten by ethnicity.

Parental Attitude	Asian-American %	European-American %	Hispanic %	African-American %
<u>Child counts</u>				
Essential	18.2	16.7	16.6	21.4
Very Important	51.1	35.6	56.3	58.1
Somewhat important	23.0	37.0	22.0	17.6
Not very important	6.2	8.8	4.1	2.5
Not important	1.5	1.9	1.0	0.5
<u>Child shares</u>				
Essential	23.0	38.6	21.6	27.0
Very Important	66.7	56.2	72.3	67.7
Somewhat important	9.2	5.0	5.7	4.9
Not very important	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.3
Not important	0.2	0	0	0
<u>Child knows alphabets</u>				
Essential	18.9	19.3	17.0	20.1
Very Important	54.5	42.3	60.2	60.8
Somewhat important	21.5	31.5	19.3	12.8
Not very important	4.5	5.8	2.7	1.2
Not important	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.1
<u>Child draws</u>				
Essential	16.9	24.5	17.0	20.8
Very Important	56.1	46.1	61.4	58.4
Somewhat important	22.7	26.5	19.1	19.2
Not very important	3.9	2.5	2.2	1.5
Not important	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2
<u>Child is calm</u>				
Essential	20.4	26.1	20.9	25.9
Very Important	60.4	54.3	68.4	64.0
Somewhat important	17.4	18.3	9.8	9.4
Not very important	1.7	1.1	0.8	0.5
Not important	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
<u>Child communicates well</u>				
Essential	25.6	39.9	26.9	30.2
Very Important	61.4	54.2	68.4	65.1
Somewhat important	11.5	5.6	4.5	4.6
Not very important	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Not important	0.4	0.1	0	0

Parental affection towards child. Pearson Chi-Square analyses revealed significant differences among the four ethnic groups on the five variables in this dimension of parenting. Asian-American parents, as found in other studies, indeed were less affectionate toward their children than parents in other groups. For example, as Table 2 indicates, more than 20% of Asian-American parents thought it was somewhat true or not at all true for them to always show

child love, as compared to about 12-15% of parents in other groups who felt the same. Also, about 81% of Asian-American parents agreed that they always expressed affection toward their children, whereas nearly or over 90% of parents in other groups agreed so. In addition, there were more Asian-American parents (15.5%) who felt that it was hard to be warm to child than all the other three groups, although Hispanic parents indicated a similar tendency (13.6%) as the Asian group. All these items have shown that indeed Asian-American parents were less expressive of their affection to their children.

Table 2. Parental affection towards child by ethnicity.

Parental Attitude	Asian-American %	European-American %	Hispanic %	African-American %
<u>Always show child love</u>				
Completely true	57.7	54.4	66.1	69.1
Mostly true	26.0	32.8	19.2	18.8
Somewhat true	17.5	11.8	11.7	10.0
Not at all true	2.7	1.0	3.0	2.1
<u>Hard to be warm to child</u>				
Completely true	7.6	0.9	6.9	3.7
Mostly true	7.9	2.7	6.7	3.7
Somewhat true	23.4	17.9	18.5	14.6
Not at all true	61.1	78.5	67.9	78.0
<u>Express affection toward child</u>				
Completely true	81.0	92.4	89.4	91.1
Mostly true	13.3	6.1	6.5	6.2
Somewhat true	4.4	1.2	3.3	1.9
Not at all true	1.3	0.3	0.8	0.8
<u>Sacrifice to meet child's needs</u>				
Completely true	19.2	14.3	20.4	24.0
Mostly true	13.2	8.0	10.3	9.0
Somewhat true	25.2	27.6	22.3	20.6
Not at all true	42.4	50.0	47.0	46.4
<u>Often feel angry with child</u>				
Completely true	0.8	0.2	1.1	0.8
Mostly true	1.3	0.6	1.8	1.0
Somewhat true	26.8	25.9	19.0	18.9
Not at all true	71.0	73.2	78.1	79.3

Parental involvement in school events. Variables in this domain are continuous variables.

Parents were asked to estimate number of times they participated in various school events and activities. Perhaps due to the large sample, ANOVA analyses revealed significant differences in all variables ($p < .05$) among the four ethnic groups in parental involvement (See Table on page 17).

However, post hoc multiple comparisons tests (Tukey HSD) indicated that there were only several significant differences between the Asian-American group and the other three ethnic groups of parents in selected variables. As Table 4 shows, Asian-American parents were similar to European-American on all but one variable (“attend PTA/PTO meeting”). Asian parents attended less often school open house events and parent-teacher conferences than the Hispanic and African-American groups. In addition, they were less likely to attend PTA meeting as compared with European-American parents. Finally, they were more likely to volunteer in school than the African-American parents.

Table 3. Multivariate analyses of parental school involvement by ethnicity.

Table 3. Multivariate analyses of parental

school involvement by ethnicity.		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
How often attend open house	Between Groups	137.435	3	45.812	38.937	.000
	Within Groups	12465.561	10595	1.177		
	Total	12602.996	10598			
How often attend PTA/PTO meeting	Between Groups	218.036	3	72.679	13.621	.000
	Within Groups	25836.227	4842	5.336		
	Total	26054.263	4845			
How often attend parent advisory meeting	Between Groups	163.832	3	54.611	3.975	.008
	Within Groups	16761.509	1220	13.739		
	Total	16925.342	1223			
How often attend parent-teacher conference	Between Groups	236.101	3	78.700	41.374	.000
	Within Groups	23436.398	12321	1.902		
	Total	23672.499	12324			
How often attend school events	Between Groups	580.452	3	193.484	17.500	.000
	Within Groups	105577.668	9549	11.056		
	Total	106158.120	9552			
How often volunteered	Between Groups	10821.299	3	3607.100	29.028	.000
	Within Groups	840264.788	6762	124.263		
	Total	851086.088	6765			
How often participate in fundraising events	Between Groups	186.235	3	62.078	8.555	.000
	Within Groups	61634.619	8494	7.256		
	Total	61820.854	8497			

Table 4. Comparisons between Asian-American and other ethnic groups on parental school involvement.

Parental School Involvement	<u>European-American</u> <i>Mean difference</i>	<u>Hispanic</u> <i>Mean difference</i>	<u>African-American</u> <i>Mean difference</i>
<u>Asian-American group</u>			
How often attend school open house	.01	-.26*	-.21*
How often attend PTA/PTO meeting	-.70*	-.34	-.27
How often attend parent advisory meeting	-1.09	-.47	-.26
How often attend parent-teacher conference	.06	-.26*	-.22*
How often attend school events	-.49	.01	.07
How often volunteered	-1.00	.05	3.12*
How often participate in fundraising events	.03	.26	.43

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Our conclusion is that ANOVA revealed more similarities than differences between the Asian-American group and the other three ethnic groups in parental involvement in school events. The significant overall between-group differences might be attributable to the African-American group, which stood out to be very different from the other ethnic groups, more than the Asian group did.

Parental involvement in child's activities at home. Although Pearson Chi-Square tests of the eight variables (read to child, tell stories, sign songs, do sports, do arts, play games, build together, and teach child nature) were all significant, patterns of variation among ethnic groups again revealed more similarities than differences. For example, more than 50% of parents in all four ethnic groups tell stories to their children at least 3 to 6 times a week, with a slightly higher percentage (3%) of Asian-American parents tell stories to children everyday. Similar trend was also found in variables such as building things together with child, play games with child, and teach child nature, in which patterns of Asian-American parents' involvement in these activities were nearly identical to all the other three ethnic groups (build things) or to Hispanic and African-American groups (play games and teach nature).

Some noticeable group differences were found in variables such as “read to child”, “sing songs”, “do sports”, and “do arts with child”. Compared to other ethnic groups, only 57% of Asian-American parents sang songs to their children at least 3 to 6 times a week, whereas 73% European-, 76% African-, and 65% Hispanic-American parents sang songs almost equally often to their children. In addition, over 56% of Asian-American parents did arts at least 3 to 6 times a week with children, which was almost identical to European-American parents (55%). But only 49% of Hispanic and 46% of African-American parents involved in arts with children with equal amount of time weekly. Also, more Asian- (78%) and European-American (86%) parents read to their children at least 3 to 6 times a week than Hispanic (70%) and African-American (68%) parents did. When it comes to sports, more than half of the European- (57%) and African-American (56%) parents participated with their children at least 3 to 6 times a week, whereas only 44% of Asian-American and 46% of Hispanic parents spent equal amount of time in sports with their children. (See Table 5 on page 21.)

Table 5. Parental involvement with child at home by ethnicity.

Parental Attitude	Asian-American %	European-American %	Hispanic %	African-American %
<u>How often do you read to child</u>				
Not at all	0.0	1.0	3.0	2.0
Once of twice a week	22.0	13.0	27.0	30.0
Three to six times a week	31.0	37.0	31.0	33.0
Every day	47.0	49.0	39.0	35.0
<u>How often do you tell story to child</u>				
Not at all	8.1	7.3	8.5	9.3
Once of twice a week	34.8	34.9	39.4	39.2
Three to six times a week	29.4	32.7	26.9	26.8
Everyday	27.7	25.1	25.2	24.6
<u>How often do you do art with child</u>				
Not at all	8.0	4.9	13.2	10.5
Once of twice a week	35.5	40.0	40.7	40.0
Three to six times a week	30.3	35.9	26.3	26.1
Every day	26.2	19.2	19.9	23.4
<u>How often do you build with child</u>				
Not at all	17.2	15.2	23.6	21.6
Once of twice a week	46.5	44.8	41.6	41.9
Three to six times a week	22.0	26.9	21.7	19.8
Every day	14.4	13.3	13.1	16.7
<u>How often do you play games with child</u>				
Not at all	5.4	2.7	8.8	5.6
Once of twice a week	37.6	33.6	38.7	34.6
Three to six times a week	33.6	43.2	30.1	31.1
Every day	23.4	20.5	28.7	28.7
<u>How often do you teach nature to child</u>				
Not at all	27.3	16.0	30.9	29.8
Once of twice a week	48.5	49.2	44.3	45.5
Three to six times a week	17.2	24.1	17.0	15.1
Every day	6.9	10.7	7.7	9.5
<u>How often do you play sports with child</u>				
Not at all	11.8	7.6	15.6	11.4
Once of twice a week	43.9	35.6	37.6	33.8
Three to six times a week	26.9	36.3	26.3	26.0
Every day	17.4	20.5	20.4	28.8

Parental disciplinary styles. Pearson Chi-square tests revealed significant group difference in all but one variable (“yell at child”). Contrary to the stereotypical view of Asian-American parents being more authoritarian, Table 5 shows they are more likely to use

constructive approach such as discussing what was wrong with child (81%) or give child warning (18%), less likely to use physical punishment (10%) or take away child’s privileges (27%) as compared to the other ethnic groups. In general, however, Asian-American parents’ disciplinary styles differ only with a small margin from parents of the other ethnic groups.

Items	Asian-American		European-American		Hispanic		African-American	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
Spank Child	10	90	16	84	17	83	57	59
Take time out	55	45	74	26	48	52	46	54
Hit child	2	98	2	98	3	97	7	93
Discuss what’s wrong	81	19	76	24	65	35	69	31
Ignore it	3	97	1	99	1	99	1	99
Make child do chores	8	92	7	93	8	92	10	90
Make fun of child	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
Make child apologize	41	59	38	62	24	76	30	70
Take away privileges	27	73	33	67	39	61	36	64
Give child warning	18	82	14	86	11	89	14	86
Yell at child	7	93	7	93	3	97	4	96

Table 6. Percentage of parent disciplinary styles by ethnicity.

Within-group comparisons among three subgroups of Asian-American parents. Three subgroups within the Asian-American parents were identified to investigate any within-group differences. Families in all subgroups have at least one parent being Asian. The three subgroups are: (1) families with two Asian parents; (2) single parent of Asian descent; and (3) two parents of different ethnicity, one Asian and one other. Interestingly, no significant difference was found among these three groups in any of the six dimensions of parenting as discussed in the above, despite the fact that single Asian parents were in a somewhat lower social economical status and low education level than the other two groups. These results suggest that, although Asian-American parents are not always as different as people tend to believe, whenever there is a

difference in parenting style, it is prominent as long as there is one Asian-American parent in the family.

Conclusion

The findings of our research displayed a different picture from that of some other studies. In general, we found more similarities than differences between the Asian-American parents and parents in other ethnic groups. As our results showed, Asian-American parents were not more likely to resume negative disciplinary strategies than parents in other ethnic groups as had been commonly believed, and they were similarly involved in their children's school activities. When difference were found in a dimension of parenting, for example, parental involvement with their children at home, it was clear that Asian parents were involved with their children in different ways rather than uninvolved. Asian parents seemed to do more quiet activities such as read books, tell stories, or do arts with their children, whereas parents in other ethnicities, especially the European- and African-American parents, involved more in singing or sports with children.

On the other hand, some commonly held notions about Asian-American as a group were further confirmed in our study. As a group, Asian-American parents were indeed less expressive of their affections to their children. They held high expectations of their children's educational attainment regardless of parental education level, family SES, or ethnic composition of the family. It is especially worth mentioning that within-group analyses indicated that Asian parenting style remains prominent in families as long as one parent was of Asian descent.

Discussion

Finding Asian-American parents as more similar than different to parents in other ethnic groups is no surprise to us. In fact, numerous casual observations we've made in Asian communities also provide strong evidence to support this finding. As Asian-American immigrants

establish and maintain a cultural network in order to preserve their original culture heritage, they also put into efforts to adapt to the mainstream society in the United States. It is conceivable that a “hybrid culture” from both Asian and other cultures is the best way to survive and succeed in a multicultural society such as the United States.

As Asians ourselves, we also like to point out that some stereotypical view of the Asian people may not be entirely unfounded. For example, Asians were seen as being more quiet and passive, less outgoing, less expressive of one’s feelings and opinions, and lack of participation in public affairs etc. These characteristics seemed all reflected in the results of this study although on a smaller and more personal scale. We still don’t know yet whether, and how, these characteristics will affect the lives of Asian-American people. Further investigations may help to answer this question.

This study is our first attempt to understand the characteristics of Asian-American group in the United States by using the national ECLS-K data. The results of this study painted a general picture of how Asian parents raise their children in a multicultural environment such as the U.S. We all understand that parenting practice is directly related to child outcomes. Therefore, an important question remains to be answered: how different parenting styles affect Asian-American children’s development? Fortunately, the ECLS-K will provide rich information for further investigations in this direction. The longitudinal design of the ECLS-K will allow us to follow the sample to their late school years. Our immediate next step will be to investigate the dynamic changes in Asian-American children’s families, their parents, and themselves. We will especially concentrate on these children’s adaptation in the first grade in relation to the way their parents prepared them.

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