

Editorial

“Gender, Family and Parenting in the Chinese Context”

Ching Man Lam^{*,§}

Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

“The family” has long been a focus of cross-party attention. While family is perceived as foundational to society’s success, how parents rear their children is perhaps the most conservative or persistent part of concern. While Chinese immigrant families and Chinese families in Asia – in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, mainland China, and elsewhere – are struggling with a socialization process that has emphasized support for traditional values, they are also simultaneously being confronted by modern ideologies and technologies. Professionals have a growing interest in addressing the culturally diverse needs and the gender issues of Chinese families.

The theme of this issue of The Open Family Studies Journal, then, is “Gender, family and parenting in the Chinese context”. The heart of this special issue lies in a concern for families, in particular for the challenges posed to families and parenting practices in a changing world. The family, like any social group, is a product of history, culture and context. Because of economic and technological changes, and the increasingly pluralistic nature of our society, both gender relations and family structures have undergone tremendous change, and many challenges await elucidation. The seven papers in this special issue thus feature new perspectives on family, gender and parenting issues.

The issue opens with a paper on scale validation. Since intimacy is a construct that has received limited attention in the Chinese context, the first paper, “*Intimacy as a distinct construct: validating the intimacy scale among older adults of residential care homes in Hong Kong*”, aims to develop a valid measurement for the quality of the relationship between older adults and family caregivers in the Hong Kong Chinese context. The study results demonstrate the reliability and validity of the instrument across samples of older adults.

Paper 2 and 3 that follow are qualitative studies adopting cultural perspectives to understand Chinese American immigrant adults and older female survivors of intimate partner violence in Taiwan. In paper 2, “*Understanding family connections and help-seeking behavior in Chinese*

American immigrant adults who attempt suicide”, the authors investigate beliefs, values and norms in the Chinese family culture and examine Chinese cultural influences on attitudes and beliefs about mental health and mental health services in the immigrant context. Paper 3, “*Older female survivors of intimate partner violence in the Taiwanese cultural context*” examines the needs of older female IPV survivors in another Chinese cultural context. The findings of both studies reflect the importance of family and the influence of Chinese family culture; they make it clear that traditional family beliefs are still highly valued and hold a prominent position in Chinese culture. The authors of these two papers question the efficacy of service-delivery models based on Western cultures, and they call for ethnically sensitive intervention approaches that incorporate cultural premises into developing viable options for service recipients.

Paper 4 is titled “*The Macau family-in-transition: the perceived impact of casino employment on family relationships among dealer families*”. This paper draws on findings from a qualitative study to explore the impacts of casino employment on family life and family relationships. The family, like other social group, is a product of culture and context, and the specific socio-economic context of Macau poses challenges to dealer families and casino workers in performing their parental role. The paper sheds much-needed light on our understanding of Macau dealer families.

The final three papers in this special issue all address the issue of parenting. Paper 5, “*Reflective inquiry on professionals’ view on parents and about parenting*”, examines professionals’ views of parents, their attitudes and beliefs about parenting, and the values underpinning their practice. The study’s findings on the theme of parent blaming provide an impetus for professionals to reflect on the attitudes and assumptions they hold, and their impact on parents. The paper calls for reflection on parenting work to recognize the difficulties and challenges faced by contemporary families.

Paper 6, “*Reviving parents’ life momentum: A qualitative evaluation of a parent education program adopting an existential approach*”, reports the results of a qualitative analysis of the participants’ perceptions of a parent-education program. The findings of this study demonstrate that a program of this nature can make parents aware of the existential dimensions of being a parent and help them understand the significance of creating meaning in their

*Address correspondence to this author at the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T. Hong Kong; Tel: (852)-3943-7511; Fax: (852)-2603-5018; E-mail: chingmanlam@cuhk.edu.hk

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parental lives. These findings illustrate how existentialism provides a new frame of reference and new practice directions for conducting parent-education programs.

The final paper titled "*Internet supervision and parenting in the digital age: The case of Shanghai*" echoes the technological advancement and its impact on parenting. In a changing world, and in a society permeated by the Internet and by nearly instantaneous communication, families constantly need to adapt to different and changing ways of parenting. The paper explores the issue of parenting confidence in supervision of children's Internet use in Shanghai, China. Multiple-regression models are used to identify factors affecting parents' confidence about their own parenting. The findings suggest that efforts to assist parents should help them review their attitudes towards the Internet.

In fact, family, parenting and gender are vastly contested terms which encompass a range of topics. The seven varied papers recommended for publication in this special issue reflect the considerable attention that we have placed on family, parenting and gender, and also the vision of this special issue. These papers add to the growing body of research and literature, and they provide both food for thought and a platform for discussion.

In the last, I offer both my sincere thanks to the authors who have contributed to this special issue, and my gratitude to those who have participated as blind peer reviewers. Their thoughtful comments and criticisms have certainly improved the quality of each and every paper in this special issue.

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