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## NYU-ECNU Institute for Social Development at NYU Shanghai Research Fund

### Selected Projects

**PI Name:** Cherng, Hua-Yu Sebastian

**Affiliation:** New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

**Project:** An Empirical and Theoretical Investigation of Parental Schooling Behaviors and Attitudes: A Comparative Study of Rural Migrant and Urban Families in China

**Abstract:**

Recognizing the importance of understanding parenting strategies and the role of social class and gender, this project proposes a set of secondary data analyses that build on a unique dataset of migrant and urban children and families. The 2014 Child Well-Being Study specifically surveys the families and educators of rural migrant youth in Shanghai. This survey project, conducted in Shanghai, China, surveyed 2,282 first-grade students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including children who were born in Shanghai and held urban *hukou*, an internal residency system in China, status as well as children who had rural *hukou* status and were considered rural migrants. Using data from this study, I propose a thorough investigation of parenting behaviors and attitudes toward their children's schooling. I pose three research questions: 1) what is the nature of parents' behavior and attitudes toward their children's schooling among rural migrant and urban families? 2) Are these patterns shaped by school conditions and teacher behavior and attitudes? 3) Do patterns differ by the socioeconomic background of families and the gender of the child?

Results from this study have the potential to further our empirical understanding of parenting strategies of rural migrant families and inform school officials and educators of best practices for engagement. Findings can also further our theoretical knowledge of cultural capital and immigrant optimism theories, and a close examination of gender and social class differences can also inform theoretical work that conceptualizes how these influences shape parental investment in children.



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**PI Name:** Cui, Lixian

**Affiliation:** NYU Shanghai

**Project:** Parenting and Child Adjustment among Different Parent-Child Dyads in Shanghai, China

**Abstract:**

The proposed project will analyze data collected by the NYU-ECNU Institute for Social Development for the 2014 Child Well-Being Study, which surveys the parents and teachers of children in Shanghai, China. This project sampled 2,282 first-grade students from seven districts in Shanghai and various socioeconomic backgrounds. The proposed study will focus on parenting data and child psychological and behavioral wellbeing, and academic achievement data collected in 2014, aiming to investigate parenting style and practice differences among different parent-child dyads (i.e., mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son), and compare the effects of mothering and fathering on child wellbeing across daughters and sons.

Beyond its theoretical and practical contributions, this project offers rich and integrated research and educational opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students at NYU Shanghai and East China Normal University. The training model focuses on knowledge of parenting, emphasizes literature review and data analysis skills. This project also strengthens research partnership between NYU Shanghai and East China Normal University on the platform of the NYU-ECNU Institute for Social Development, and meets the Institute's goal of creating a vibrant and collaborative institute that produces high quality social scientific research as well as scientifically informed research to help shape practice and policy responses that will improve the well-being of our society.



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**PI Name:** Li, Xuan

**Affiliation:** NYU Shanghai

**Project:** Predictors of paternal and maternal parenting practices in urban Chinese families: A mixed-method study

**Abstract:**

The proposed study aims to analyze existing quantitative data of the Child Well-Being Study, which were collected from parents and school teachers of Shanghai first-graders (N = 2,215) in early 2014. In the Child Well-Being Study, parents and teacher completed questionnaire measures on individual characteristics of the focal child, demographic information of parent and the family, parents' marital relationship and parenting behavior, among others. These responses will be analyzed to uncover concurrent associations between parenting behavior and child, parent, family, and contextual characteristics, with particular attention given to similarities and differences of factors that influence fathers and mothers.

This project will be carried out by a strong team of emerging scholars with solid training in quantitative methods from NYU Shanghai and East China Normal University. The research team will be led by a Principle Investigator who is familiar with multi-method, interdisciplinary, and collaborative research on child development and Chinese families and is mentored by senior scholars who are experts in human development in the Chinese context. Significance and impacts. The proposed study will be one of the first systematic investigations of individual, familial and contextual factors related to fathers' and mothers' parenting styles in a culturally distinctive, fast developing economy. It will significantly enrich the empirical evidence and sensitize existing theories regarding the various contexts of child development. Beyond its academic contributions, this project will strengthen the research capacity of the Institute and offer unique educational opportunities for students and junior faculty affiliated with the Institute.



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**PI Name:** Okazaki, Sumie

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Development

**Project:** Hukou, Gender, Family and School Contexts for Understanding Child Well-Being

**Abstract:**

The proposed research project aims to better understand how school and family contexts interact with school children's *hukou* status and gender to shape their academic and socio-emotional well-being. The research aims to take a full advantage of the 2014 Child Well-Being data collected by the Institute on over 2,200 first grade students in Shanghai, and to build on the preliminary findings regarding gender and *hukou* status differences in academic and psychological functioning of the children. *Hukou*, a household registration system that classifies Chinese citizens as urban or rural residents, is a demographic factor that shapes the daily lives of children and adults and remains a primary source of social inequality within contemporary Chinese society. Previous research has documented multiple ways in which Chinese children of migrant families with rural *hukou* living in metropolitan cities (e.g., Beijing and Shanghai) are disadvantaged in all walks of life including poorer health and educational trajectories (Qian & Walker, 2015). The proposed study will be among the first to explore the potential impact of classroom context (majority-migrant or minority-migrant) as a factor in migrant children's well-being. Furthermore, there is little previous work in understanding the intersectionality of gender and *hukou* status on child's well-being. The findings will have practice and policy implications for ways to promote migrant children's learning and adaptation within complex and fast-changing Chinese mega-city of Shanghai.



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**PI Name:** Shibusawa, Tazuko

**Affiliation:** New York University Silver School of Social Work

**Project:** The Impact of Grandparents on Child Well-being in Shanghai, China

**Abstract:**

Although a large number of grandparents care for grandchildren in China, research on the relationship between grandparents and child well-being has been limited. Historically, most families in China lived in multigenerational families consisting of paternal grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. Although there has been a decrease in the number of multigenerational households, the majority of adults 65 and older live with their adult children and grandchildren. In Shanghai, 53 percent of children age three and under were cared for by their grandparents.

In the last decade, the Chinese government has focused on facilitating child development by providing formal childcare programs, which are staffed by trained professionals. As a result, some parents have begun to question the viability of having grandparents care for their children. Yet, existing research in China indicates that grandparents have positive influence on academic outcomes of children. There have been no studies, however, that examine the impact of grandparents on the psychological wellbeing of children.

The proposed research will examine the impact of grandparents on the emotional well-being and academic achievement of young children. Using the Shanghai Child Wellbeing Study, the study will (1) examine the characteristics of multigenerational families with grandparents who co-reside with their adult children and grandchildren to understand how co-residence influences parenting and child well-being and academic achievement; and (2) examine outcomes of children who have been cared for by grandparents prior to enrolling in elementary school.



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**PI Name:** Siegel, Judith

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**Project:** Parenting Stress and Child Well-being in Shanghai Research Proposal Summary

**Abstract:**

The proposed research is based on data collected by the Institute, a study of first-grade children attending public schools in Shanghai, China in Spring 2014. This dataset is well-suited to the research questions proposed here. Specific instruments are included to assess the child's well-being, through measures of internalizing, externalizing and somatic symptoms. The study also not only asked about if the parents or grandparents had been exposed to potentially traumatic events, but also evaluated depression, somatic symptoms, the marital relationship, and the parent-child relationship. Information was also available on parental Hukou status regarding their relocation from non-urban to urban communities.

The proposed research will use the collected data to determine if parents who are in potentially stressful situations such as having relocated to urban cities, having marital distress/conflict, or exposure to a traumatic event, have higher levels of depression and or somatic symptoms than parents who have not been exposed. A second hypothesis will investigate if stress-exposed parents have more problems parenting their children, and higher levels of depression and somatic symptoms. The proposed research will also examine if children of parents who have been exposed to stressful situations have higher levels of externalizing or internalizing symptoms. Finally, the study will use the data to determine what factors distinguish trauma-exposed families whose children are doing well, as this will indicate factors that contribute to resilience.



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**PI Name:** Wang, Yiji

**Affiliation:** East China Normal University School of Psychology and Cognitive Sciences

**Project:** Intergenerational Transmission of Depressive Symptoms in China: Exploring Mechanisms

**Abstract:**

Maternal depression is a well-established risk factor for children's adjustment problems. When mothers' depressive symptoms increase, their children are more likely to develop anxiety, depression, and other psychopathology (Goodman, 2007; Goodman & Tully, 2006). Evidence from the U.S. indicating that among school-aged and adolescent children of depressed mothers, 20 to 41% percent of them suffered from anxiety and depression (Goodman & Tully, 2006). What mechanisms may explain the intergenerational transmission of depressive symptoms? The proposed study will explicitly examine this question with specific focus on contemporary Chinese families. Although a large set of studies have extensively studied the association between maternal depression and children's well-being, relatively few empirical studies have examined this important issue using Chinese sample, this study fills this important knowledge gap.

This study is situated in the integrative model for the transmission of risk to children of depressed mothers, which maintains that mothers' depressive symptoms may be transmitted to their children through genetic factors, stressful environment, and mothers' negative perceptions, affect, and behaviors toward their children (Goodman & Gotlib, 1999). However, extant research has mainly focused on components of mechanisms such as genetic vulnerability and negative affect and behaviors. The roles of other proposed mechanisms, such as environmental stressors and parental negative perceptions, are largely unknown. This study will thus examine whether environmental stressors (e.g. economic stress and lack of social support) and parents' negative perceptions will mediate the associations of depressive symptoms in mothers and their children. This study will also examine whether these relationships of interest will vary by demographic characteristics, including child gender, mothers' level of education, and depressive symptoms.