

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE EXPECTATIONS, PARENTING STYLES AND SELF-CONSTRUAL IN MALAYSIAN AND AUSTRALIAN CAREGIVERS

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The study examined the developmental milestone expectations, parenting styles and self-construal of Malaysian and Anglo-Australian caregivers as determined by questionnaires. Malaysian caregivers scored significantly higher on interdependent self-construal and Authoritarian parenting style than Anglo-Australian caregivers. In terms of developmental milestones, Malaysian caregivers expected a later age of attainment for these milestones than Anglo-Australians for three of the six developmental domains: compliance, peer interaction and verbal skills. Malaysians had later age expectancies for individual competencies than Anglo-Australians for 19 of the 45 competencies. Malaysians had earlier expectations than Anglo-Australians for five of the competencies. These results are congruent with the values associated with individualist cultures, in which high value is placed on independence, autonomy and early mastery of developmental milestones.

Keywords: developmental milestone expectations, parenting style, self-construal, Malaysia, Australia

INTRODUCTION

Cultures differ in the types of competencies that they value and encourage when rearing children and the ages at which they expect children to acquire or achieve these skills or accomplishments (Hess et al., 1980). A technique that has been widely used to gain greater insight into childrearing values and goals is the examination of parental expectations of childhood development across different cultural groups (Goodnow et al., 1984; Hess et al., 1980; Rosenthal and Gold, 1989; Savage and Gauvain, 1998; Miller, 1988). For example, Hess et al. (1980) compared developmental milestones in Japanese and American caregivers and found that Japanese caregivers had earlier age expectations for competencies in the areas of emotional maturity, self-control, and social courtesy, whereas American caregivers expected an earlier age for verbal assertiveness and social

skills with peers. Joshi and Maclean (1997) compared the maternal expectations of Indian, Japanese and English caregivers in the competency domains of education/self-care, compliance, peer interaction, communication, emotional control and environmental independence. They found that Indian caregivers had later expectancies than either Japanese or English caregivers for all domains except environmental independence, for which Indian caregivers were earlier than English mothers but later than Japanese mothers. These studies suggest that different cultures have different developmental milestone expectation profiles, which are shaped by the cultural values held by parents. These parental childrearing goals are generally consistent with the expectations and values held by the parents' culture and the characteristics of children that are valued by that particular society (Harkness and Super, 1992; Harwood et al., 1999; Roer-Strier and Rosenthal, 2001). According to Keller, Voelker and Yovsi (2005: 159), parental ethnotheories can "be conceived as the mediating link between cultural meta-models and behavioural contexts and practices." The aim of the current study is to compare expectations about child development, parenting style and self-construal among Malaysian and Australian caregivers. Surprisingly little research has been conducted on Malaysian parenting and childrearing.

Individuals from different cultures vary in terms of their self-construal, or the degree of connectedness or separateness the individual perceives for him/herself in relation to others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Independent self-construal (associated with Western cultures) reflects uniqueness and separateness from others, whereas interdependent self-construal (typically associated with Asian cultures) reflects connectedness and close relationships with others. Cultural self-construal comprises a key characteristic of the cultural context of childhood and acts as a mediating factor that shapes parenting styles and caregiver-child interactions (Harkness and Super, 1996; Keller, Voelker and Yovsi, 2005; Shweder et al., 1998; Yaman et al., 2010). Self-construal plays a key role in the values and beliefs that are communicated across generations, and it influences the types of skills and attributes that are encouraged and expected in childhood (Harkness and Super, 1996; Hess et al., 1980; Savage and Gauvain, 1998). For example, American caregivers who identify with independent self-construal have been shown to encourage skills related to verbal assertiveness, whereas Japanese caregivers with interdependent self-construal tend to encourage skills related to emotional control and group harmony (Hess et al., 1980).

Baumrind (1967; 1971; 1991) distinguished between three distinctive parenting typologies: Authoritarian, Authoritative and permissive. Authoritarian parenting is strict and rule-based with an expectation of a high level of control and obedience to parental authority (Coplan et al., 2002). The Authoritative parenting style reflects a high degree of warmth and fairness, with consistent rules and explanations to control the child's behaviour. The permissive childrearing style differs from the Authoritative and Authoritarian styles by engaging in minimal control of the child's behaviour, and this style tends to be

uninvolved. Although its approach is warm and accepting, permissive parents have a tendency to allow the child to make decisions that are not age appropriate. Authoritative parenting is more common in Western societies and is aligned with the transmission of individualistic values, such as the pursuit of one's own needs and goals (Rudy and Grusec, 2001). In contrast, collectivist cultures tend to adhere to an Authoritarian parenting style that values respect for authority (Keller et al., 2004; Pearson and Rao, 2003).

Based on research with parents from Western societies, the Authoritative parenting style has been found to be the most beneficial in terms of educational and psychological outcomes (Baumrind, 1971; 1989; 1991; Boon, 2007). However, this is not necessarily the case in other cultures, where positive outcomes have been found to be associated with Authoritarian parenting (Leung, Lau and Lam, 1998; Park and Bauer, 2002; Chao, 1994; 2001). For example, a study on the effects of parenting style in Singapore found that Malay adolescents with Authoritarian mothers tended to have better attitudes toward education and school than adolescents who perceived their mothers to be Authoritative (Rebecca, 2006). The different parenting styles can only be interpreted in the context of a particular culture (Bornstein, 1995). An important consideration is that due to changing economic and cultural factors, childrearing perspectives and parenting styles are changing and becoming Westernised in many cultures (Chao, 2006).

Malaysia is a multicultural and multiracial society consisting of Malays, Chinese, Indians and indigenous peoples. The proportions of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia are 65%, 24.6% and 6.9%, respectively (Keshavarz and Baharudin, 2009). Malaysia is considered to be predominantly a collectivist culture (Burns and Brady, 1992; Bochner, 1994) with an emphasis on values such as harmony, sharing, and caring for others (Keshavarz and Baharudin, 2009). Bochner (1994) used the Twenty Statements Test (TST) to examine self-concept in Malaysian, Australian and British respondents. He found that Malaysians identified with group self-descriptions more than their Western counterparts did. Cooperation, helpfulness, obedience, dependence and interpersonal relationships are emphasised in Malaysian childrearing practices (Kling, 1995). According to Keshavarz and Baharudin (2009), Malaysian caregivers endorse an Authoritarian parenting style. Parents are perceived as authority figures to be obeyed without question. They also play a prominent role in teaching or training children in appropriate cultural, religious and spiritual values and practices.

The aim of the current study is to gain greater insight into parenting and childrearing by Malaysian caregivers in comparison to Anglo-Australian caregivers by examining expectations for developmental milestones, parenting styles and self-construal. Because Malaysia is considered a more collectivist culture than Anglo-Australian culture, it is predicted that Malaysians will score higher on interdependent self-construal than Anglo-Australians, and, in turn, Anglo-Australians will score higher on independent self-construal than

Malaysian respondents. Based on prior research (e.g., Sorkhabi, 2005; Chao, 1994; Rudy and Grusec, 2006; Berger and Thompson, 1995) that finds a positive relationship between independent and Authoritative parenting styles and between collectivist and Authoritarian parenting styles, we can also expect Malaysians to score higher on the Authoritarian parenting style than Anglo-Australians, who, in turn, should score higher on the Authoritative parenting style. We are interested in the comparative profiles of caregivers in the two cultures and the relative emphasis on children's accomplishments and the ages at which children are expected to achieve these competences. In addition to culture-specific profiles, there is a general trend in which caregivers in Western individualist cultures expect children to master developmental milestones across a broad range of tasks earlier than do caregivers in other cultural groups (Wise and Sanson, 2000; Wise and da Silva, 2007).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were invited to complete the online survey via email, various notice boards and mailing lists. They were asked to provide background information to determine eligibility. The participants were required to be the primary caregivers of at least one child between the ages of 0 and 12 years. Caregivers completed a standardised questionnaire containing background information on gender, age, nationality, time in the country, employment status, and level of education. Details were also obtained on the age and gender of the children in the care of the primary caregivers.

The participants were 42 Anglo-Australian parents/caregivers and 42 Malaysian parents/caregivers. Australia is very multicultural. Consequently, in the current study, only participants with Anglo-Australian backgrounds were recruited. All Anglo-Australians and Malaysians were born in Australia or Malaysia, respectively. All of the Malaysians resided in Malaysia. The majority of Malaysian respondents identified as having a Malay background, with only two identifying themselves as with a Chinese background and two with an Indian background. A comparison of the characteristics of the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian respondents' gender, race, employment status, and education level is provided in Table 1. The two cultural groups did not differ significantly in terms of age ($ps > .1$). The Malaysian respondents had a higher education level than the Anglo-Australians.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers

	Anglo-Australian	Malaysian
Gender		
Female	36	33
Male	6	9
Employment status		
Full time	19	39
Part time	12	2
Casual	1	1
Parent or carer	7	0
Student	3	0
Unemployed	0	0
Education level		
Year 9 or below	0	0
Year 10	9	2
Year 12	5	5
Trade cert/Diploma	12	10
Bachelor Degree	12	13
Post Grad Degree	4	12

Materials

All written materials, which were originally developed in English, were translated and back-translated into Malay by trained linguists. Every question was carefully checked to ensure that it had the same meaning in both languages and that the questions were appropriate to each culture. The online survey consisted of three questionnaires to assess developmental milestone expectations, self-construal and parenting styles among English and Malay participants.

Parental milestone expectations were assessed using a questionnaire adapted from Hess et al. (1980) and Joshi and MacLean (1997). Participants were required to respond to statements by indicating the age at which they expected a child to achieve the suggested behaviour or accomplishment. The questions addressed six developmental domains: education/self-care, compliance, peer interaction, communication, emotional control and environmental independence. A total of 45 questions were administered. Cronbach's alpha was .96, suggesting very good internal consistency reliability.

The degree of interdependent and independent self-construal across cultures was assessed using the Self-Construal Scale (SCS) (Singelis, 1994). Participants were asked to respond using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (e.g., "I act the same way no matter

who I am with" or "I feel good when I cooperate with others"). Thirty questions were administered: 15 assessed interdependent self-construal and 15 assessed independent self-construal.

Parenting style was examined using the Parenting Style Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995). Only constructs measuring Authoritarian and Authoritative parenting styles were examined. A total of 26 questions were administered: 13 assessed the Authoritarian parenting style and 13 assessed the Authoritative parenting style. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (7) (e.g., "I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs" or "I yell when I disapprove of my child's behaviour").

RESULTS

To investigate whether there were differences between the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers in terms of self-construal, parenting style and developmental milestone expectations, a series of Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) was conducted. All inferential statistical tests were evaluated against an alpha level of .05.

Parenting Style and Self-Construal

Malaysian primary caregivers scored significantly higher on interdependent self-construal than Anglo-Australian primary caregivers ($F(1, 83) = 12.80, p = .001$) (see Table 2). However, there was no significant difference between Malaysians and Anglo-Australians on independent self-construal ($p > .1$).

In relation to parenting styles, Malaysian primary caregivers scored significantly higher on the Authoritarian parenting style than Anglo-Australian primary caregivers ($F(1, 83) = 37.76, p < .001$) (see Table 2). However, there was no significant difference between the two cultural groups for the Authoritative parenting style ($p > .1$).

To examine the relationship between parenting style and the degree of self-construal, Pearson's bivariate correlations were computed. Independent self-construal was positively correlated with the Authoritative parenting style ($r(82) = .296, p < .001$), and interdependent self-construal was positively correlated with both the Authoritative parenting style ($r(82) = .296, p < .001$) and the Authoritarian parenting style ($r(82) = .488, p < .001$).

Table 2: Mean scores for degree of self-construal and parenting style

	Anglo-Australian	Malaysian	F value
Degree of self-construal			
Independent	4.94	5.23	3.64
Interdependent	4.40	4.92	12.80***
Parenting style			
Authoritative	6.10	5.94	0.69
Authoritarian	2.73	3.80	37.76***

*** $p < .001$

Developmental Milestone Expectations

For the competency domains, the results indicated that Anglo-Australians had earlier developmental expectations than Malaysians for compliance ($F(1, 83) = 5.02, p < .05$), peer interaction ($F(1, 83) = 11.4, p = .001$), and communication ($F(1, 83) = 10.17, p < .01$). However, there were no significant differences between the two cultural groups for education/self-care, emotional control and environmental independence ($ps > .1$).

Further analyses were conducted to compare the two cultural groups on specific competencies within each domain. All mean expected ages for each competency and standard deviations and F values for both cultural groups are displayed in Table 3. The Anglo-Australian group expected a significantly earlier age of mastery for 19 of the 45 competencies, whereas the Malaysians expected a significantly earlier age of mastery in five competencies: writing the alphabet, brushing teeth properly, not laughing when an adult burps, not go on about wanting expensive toys, and staying home alone for one to two hours. For the remaining 21 competencies, there was no significant difference between the two cultural groups.

Education and self-care

In the area of education/self-care, Table 3 shows that Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers had similar expectations for counting to ten, telling time, eating without help, washing hands before a meal, and dressing independently. Interestingly Malaysian caregivers had earlier age expectations for writing the alphabet ($F(1, 83) = 18.94, p < .001$) and brushing teeth properly ($F(1, 83) = 4.81, p < .01$) than Anglo-Australians, whereas Anglo-Australian caregivers had earlier age expectations than Malaysians for using the toilet without help ($F(1, 83) = 34.06, p < .001$).

Table 3: Mean scores for parental age expectations of the competencies for Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers

Milestones	Anglo-Australian	Malaysian	F value
Education/self care			
Count to ten	3.29	3.14	0.28
Write alphabet	5.29	4.19	19.94***
Read the time	6.33	6.10	0.61
Eat without help	3.26	3.83	3.09
Wash hands before meal	2.81	3.07	0.94
Use toilet without help	3.62	4.93	34.06***
Dress alone	4.36	4.69	2.02
Brush teeth properly	6.02	4.81	7.27**
Bathe alone	5.41	4.98	1.30
Compliance			
Come or answer when called	2.43	3.00	4.68*
Stop misbehaving when told	3.79	4.17	3.05
Not do things forbidden by parents	4.88	5.24	0.33
Do something immediately when told	4.83	5.40	1.05
Give up TV when asked	4.52	5.93	7.81**
Keep feet off furniture	4.62	4.71	0.04
Give full attention to adult when they are speaking	5.40	6.24	2.89
Answer phone properly	5.71	5.98	0.44
Be polite to visiting adults	4.26	5.88	16.21***
Not interrupt adults who are talking	5.36	6.71	8.48**
Show interest in wellbeing of relatives	5.31	6.93	9.07**
Peer interaction			
Allow others to play with his/her toys	3.76	4.95	8.67**
Wait for turn when playing	3.98	4.95	7.53**
Be sympathetic to feelings of other children	4.15	6.14	18.80***
Take leadership role when playing	4.68	6.26	17.88***
Get own way by persuading others	5.58	6.24	1.58
Resolve quarrels without fighting	6.71	7.74	3.63
Resolve quarrels without adult help	7.15	8.37	4.81*

(continued on next page)

Table 3: (continued)

Milestones	Anglo-Australian	Malaysian	F value
Communication			
Ask a question clearly	4.60	6.33	15.79***
Ask for explanation when in doubt	4.74	6.40	14.40***
Explain why he or she feels angry	5.50	6.69	5.60*
When asked give own opinions	5.36	6.74	7.79**
Phone by himself or herself	6.64	6.98	0.77
Emotional control			
Not bite or throw something in frustration	4.31	5.81	11.28***
Control anger by self	6.21	7.55	5.76*
Not cry easily	6.40	7.81	6.79**
Not go on about wanting expensive toys	6.85	4.88	11.94***
Stand disappointment without crying	6.71	8.45	9.41**
Not laugh at other child's misfortune	5.64	6.90	4.83**
Not show disappointment with gift	6.64	7.64	2.97
Not laugh when adult burps	8.81	6.83	9.86**
Hide upset at being teased by children	8.98	8.29	1.49
Environmental independence			
Play in street without adult present	9.27	10.26	1.68
Go to school unaccompanied by adult	9.90	10.52	2.24
Stay home alone for one to two hours	11.10	10.31	4.38*
Buy things on his/her own	8.95	9.83	3.63

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Compliance

Anglo-Australians had significantly earlier age expectations than Malaysians for coming or answering when called ($F(1, 83) = 4.68, p < .05$), turning off television when asked ($F(1, 83) = 7.81, p < .01$), being polite to visiting adults ($F(1, 83) = 16.21, p < .001$), not interrupting adults who are talking ($F(1, 83) = 8.48, p < .01$), and showing interest in the wellbeing of relatives ($F(1, 83) = 9.07, p < .01$).

Peer interaction

In relation to peer interaction, in general, Anglo-Australian caregivers had significantly earlier age expectations than Malaysians, with the exception of getting one's own way by persuading others ($F(1, 83) = 1.58, p > .05$) and resolving quarrels without fighting ($F(1, 83) = 3.63, p > .05$), which did not differ significantly between cultures.

Communication

In terms of communication, there were marked differences between the Anglo-Australians and Malaysians. The Anglo-Australian caregivers had earlier age expectations than the Malaysians for all categories except using the phone independently, which did not differ significantly between the two cultural groups. Anglo-Australian caregivers had earlier age expectations than Malaysians for asking a question clearly ($F(1, 83) = 15.79, p < .001$), asking for explanation when in doubt ($F(1, 83) = 14.4, p < .001$), explaining why he or she feels angry ($F(1, 83) = 5.6, p < .05$), and giving own opinions when asked ($F(1, 83) = 7.79, p < .01$).

Emotional control

For emotional control, Anglo-Australians had significantly earlier age expectations than Malaysians, with the exception of not showing disappointment with gifts ($p > .05$). Additionally, Malaysian caregivers had significantly earlier age expectations than Anglo-Australians for not go on about wanting expensive toys ($F(1, 81) = 11.94, p = .001$) and not laughing when an adult burps ($F(1, 83) = 9.86, p < .01$). Anglo-Australian caregivers had significantly earlier age expectations than Malaysians for not biting or throwing things in frustration ($F(1, 83) = 11.28, p = .001$), controlling anger independently ($F(1, 83) = 5.76, p < .05$), not crying easily ($F(1, 83) = 6.79, p < .05$), withstanding disappointment without crying ($F(1, 83) = 9.41, p < .01$), and not laughing at other children's misfortune ($F(1, 83) = 4.83, p < .05$).

Environmental independence

In the area of environmental independence, the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers provided similar responses, with the exception of staying home alone. Malaysian caregivers had a slightly earlier age expectation for staying home alone for one to two hours than Anglo-Australians ($F(1, 83) = 4.38, p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to compare patterns of expectations for developmental milestones, parenting styles (Authoritative or Authoritarian) and self-construal (independent or interdependent) in Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers. Malaysian caregivers exhibited a higher degree of interdependent self-construal than Anglo-Australian caregivers, which is consistent with other cross-cultural studies in which Malaysians have been identified as more interdependent than Australians (Bochner, 1994). However, the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers did not differ significantly on independent self-construal. Malaysian caregivers also scored significantly higher on the Authoritarian parenting style than Australian primary caregivers, but they did not differ significantly from the Anglo-Australian caregivers on the Authoritative parenting style.

In terms of developmental milestones, Anglo-Australian caregivers expected an earlier age of attainment for these milestones than Malaysians in three of the six developmental domains: compliance, peer interaction and communication. For the individual competencies, Anglo-Australian caregivers had earlier age expectations than the Malaysians for 19 of the 45 competencies. The Malaysians had earlier expectations than the Anglo-Australians for five of the competencies. The Malaysian caregivers' more relaxed pattern of developmental expectations is congruent with the more interdependent self-construal scores of Malaysian caregivers in comparison with Anglo-Australian caregivers (Goodnow et al., 1984; Joshi and MacLean, 1997). Parents from a Malaysian background place a strong emphasis on parenting practices connected to family interdependence, cooperation, group harmony and the delay of autonomy in their children (Keshavarz and Baharudin, 2009; Kling, 1995). In contrast, mainstream Australia is considered to be predominantly individualistic, with high value placed on independence and the notion that "earlier is better" with respect to the mastery of milestones (Rogoff, 2003). Parents of Anglo origin typically expect children to master developmental milestones across a broad range of tasks earlier than other cultural groups (Wise and Sanson, 2000; Wise and da Silva, 2007). This expectation is consistent with Keller's (2007) studies suggesting that societies that are predominantly based on independent self-construal focus on children's autonomy, which is congruent with these earlier milestone achievements. Despite the significant differences in caregivers' responses, there were also striking commonalities in the developmental expectations held by parents from the two cultural groups. For 22 of the 47 competencies, there was no significant difference in age expectations between the two cultural groups.

In the education and self-care domain, Malaysian caregivers had significantly earlier age expectations for writing the alphabet than Anglo-Australian caregivers. This is in line with the high value placed on education and early mastery of academic skills by Malaysian parents, and it is particularly

pertinent to the well-educated cohort in the current study. However, for other competencies, there was no significant difference between the educational aspirations of the two cultural groups, such as counting to ten or telling time. Differences in age expectations may emerge in relation to older school-aged children and age-appropriate educational goals and achievements. This finding remains to be investigated in future studies.

In the compliance domain, Anglo-Australians had earlier expectations than Malaysians, which is also consistent with the value placed on autonomy and independence in Western individualist cultures. Although there was a trend for Anglo-Australians to score higher on competencies in this domain, this trend did not necessarily reach significance for all competencies due to individual variation in responses within cultures. In addition, the Anglo-Australians prioritised showing interest in the well being of relatives, which is consistent with interdependent self-construal.

For peer interaction and communication, the Anglo-Australians clearly expected earlier development of these competencies than the Malaysians did. This finding is in line with other cross-cultural studies that have found that Anglo-European caregivers expect an earlier age for verbal skills and social skills with peers in comparison to other cultural groups (Hess et al., 1980; Wise and da Silva, 2007).

In the domain of emotional control, Anglo-Australians expected children to have greater control over their emotions than Malaysians did. Gonzalez-Mena (2001) reports similar findings regarding emotional control among Anglo-American and Canadian parents who expected their children to have the capacity for independent behaviour regulation from a very young age. This expectation contrasted with other cultural groups, in this case, African or Hispanic cultures, in which children's behaviour is managed well into middle childhood. However, Malaysian parents had significantly earlier age expectations for not going on about wanting expensive toys and not laughing when an adult burps. In Malaysia, children are expected to be polite and respectful and to obey their parents and other adults. Furthermore, a child's misbehaviour is considered a reflection on the parenting of the caregivers, so it is considered impolite to laugh at an adult, for example.

As expected, we found that Malaysian caregivers scored significantly higher on the Authoritarian parenting style than Australian primary caregivers. However, Malaysian caregivers did not score significantly lower on the Authoritative parenting style than the Anglo-Australians. This finding provides qualified support for the claims made by Keshavarz and Baharudin (2009) that Malaysian caregivers endorse an Authoritarian parenting style. In the current study, these parents adopted an Authoritative parenting style similar to that of the Anglo-Australians. Moreover, the Anglo-Australian and Malaysian caregivers did not differ significantly on independent self-construal. These similar cross-cultural findings may be explained in terms of the effects of globalisation and

Western cultural influences on Malay traditional views and values (Kling, 1995). The Malaysian cohort was relatively well educated, so we could expect their perspectives on parenting to be influenced by Western cultural goals and values. Kağıtcıbaşı (2007) suggests that there is a close link between increased "modernity" and individualism. We found that independent self-construal positively correlated with the Authoritative parenting style, and interdependent self-construal correlated with the Authoritarian and Authoritative parenting styles. This finding is consistent with previous cross-cultural research that found a positive association between the Authoritative parenting style and cultures that emphasise independence (Sorkhabi, 2005). This result highlights the close interconnection between self-construal and parenting styles across cultures. However, in the current study, the link between interdependent self-construal and Authoritarian parenting is not supported as strongly. Based on this pattern of results, we can see a complex picture emerging of the relationship between self-construal and parenting style in the two cultures.

Developmental milestone expectations provide a lens into parenting and childrearing in different cultures. They reflect the childrearing goals and values held by parents and the parents' culture (Harkness and Super, 1992; Harwood et al., 1999; Roer-Strier and Rosenthal, 2001). Developmental expectations form a mediating link between beliefs and values and the actual childrearing behaviours and interaction patterns characteristic of a particular culture (Keller, 2005). The current study suggests that, in general, Anglo-Australians expect earlier developmental competencies than do Malaysians. However, there are also striking commonalities in the goals and achievements valued by the two cultural groups as well as culture-specific profiles. Anglo-Australians value compliance, relatively early development of verbal skills, social skills with peers and emotional control. Malaysians value educational attainment, interdependence, politeness and respect for adults. Future studies could investigate these childrearing profiles and tendencies in greater depth among respondents from different educational and socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct a larger study to investigate parenting styles and expectations in the various ethnic groups that constitute Malaysian society. This would provide a fuller and more representative understanding of childrearing and parenting in Malaysia. In addition, to gain greater insight into the influences of acculturation on parental expectations, the developmental expectations of Malaysian migrants living in Australia and those living in Malaysia could be compared. This comparison would enable us to examine how age expectations and parenting styles are influenced by the Westernised host culture.

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