Development and Validation of the Chinese Sources of Parental Meaning Questionnaire

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Education Policy Studies Series

Education embraces aspirations of individuals and society. It is a means of strengthening human resources, sustaining competitiveness of society, enhancing mobility of the underprivileged, and assimilating newcomers to the mainstream of society. It is also a means of creating a free, prosperous, and harmonious environment for the populace.

Education is an endeavor that has far-reaching influences, for it embodies development and justness. Its development needs enormous support from society as well as the guidance of policies that serve the imperatives of economic development and social justice. Policymakers in education, as those in other public sectors, can neither rely on their own visions nor depend on the simple tabulation of financial cost and benefit to arrive at decisions that will affect the pursuit of the common good. Democratization warrants public discourse on vital matters that affect all of us. Democratization also dictates transparency in the policymaking process. Administrative orders disguised as policies have a very small audience indeed. The public expects well-informed policy decisions, which are based on in-depth analyses and careful deliberation. Like the policymakers, the public and professionals in education require a wealth of easily accessible facts and views so that they can contribute constructively to the public discourse.

To facilitate rational discourse on important educational matters, the Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research of The Chinese University of Hong Kong organizes from time to time "Education Policy Seminars" to address critical issues in educational development of Hong Kong and other Chinese societies. These academic gatherings have been attended by stakeholders, practitioners, researchers and parents. The bulk of this series of

occasional papers are the fruit of labor of some of the speakers at the seminars. Others are written specifically as contributions to the series.

The aim of this *Education Policy Studies Series* is to present the views of selected persons who have new ideas to share and to engage all stakeholders in education in an on-going discussion on educational matters that will shape the future of our society.

Development and Validation of the Chinese Sources of Parental Meaning Questionnaire

Abstract

This research aimed to develop and validate a quantitative measure for the assessment of sources of parental meaning. A sample of 1,557 parents from 24 schools and three social welfare agencies in Hong Kong were recruited to fill out a questionnaire comprising 27 items about different aspects of sources of parental meaning and other validation measures. An exploratory factor analysis on 799 randomly selected parents yielded a fourfold factor structure with 22 items. A confirmatory factor analysis on the remaining 758 parents demonstrated a good model fit. The factors revealed four categories of Chinese sources of parental meaning, including: (1) the degree to which parents emphasize the nurturing of their children's psychosocial growth (Child Nurturing); (2) the degree to which parents affirm the social values of being parents (Instrumental Consideration); (3) the degree to which parents attach importance to the strengthening of the couple relationship (Marital Relationship); and (4) the degree to which parents underline their positive personal development through childrearing (Self-enhancement). The findings show that these four factors were negatively associated with parental discontent and positively associated with parental efficacy. This scale can open up new directions for theory development, practice, and research.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, parenting cognitions and parenting practices have been two interrelated foci for studies on parenting (Bornstein, Hahn, & Haynes, 2011). In response to the transformation

of the family structure in modern societies and the surge of unforeseeable new parental choices and experiences, recent research has addressed questions about changes of parental cognitions in terms of parental attitude (Holden & Buck, 2002), beliefs (Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002), goals (S. M. Chan, Bowes, & Wyver, 2009), styles (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), attributions (Bugental & Happaney, 2002), and self-esteem (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Nevertheless, among various aspects of parental cognitions, parental meaning is a crucial but relatively underexplored issue in parenting research. This is a notable omission because making sense of what parenting means in the context of parenthood can provide a parent with a framework from which to view his/her life, a sense of purpose that can guide his/her actions, and a sense of coherence across time and situations (Park, 2010). It can also facilitate a parent to pursue worthwhile goals and experience an accompanying sense of fulfillment in parenting (Hannush, 2002; To, So, & Chan, 2014).

The findings of accumulated research have demonstrated the importance of the pursuit of meaning in life among human beings. A summary of these findings suggests that people possess orienting systems that provide them with cognitive frameworks with which to interpret their lived experiences and to set their life goals (Park, 2010; Reker, 2000). People tend to perceive their lives as related to or fulfilling these orienting systems and experience this fulfillment as a feeling of significance (Debats, 1999; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). These orienting systems also support the belief that the person has control over life outcomes and direct him/her to appropriate reactions and responsible actions (Park, 2010; Schnell, 2009). In applying these findings on meaning in life to parental meaning, identifying the sources of parental meaning is essential because parents' lifelong commitment in parenting primarily depends on realizing their life goals as derived from these sources

of meaning. Furthermore, the pursuit of parental meaning can help parents develop perspectives in understanding their identity, roles, and functions, and therefore find the direction of future parenting practices (To & Chan, 2013; Tsushima & Burke, 1999).

Until now, the quantitative measure of parental meaning has garnered only limited attention in parenting research. Most of the relevant studies used qualitative methods, which focused on investigating the various content areas or personal themes from which parents derive a sense of purpose or meaning in parenthood (e.g., Gillies, 2007; Miller, 2005, 2011; Palkovitz, 2002). Although more empirical works have been done on examining how parents subjectively view their parental experiences, and how such an interpretation affects their outcomes of parenting, very few quantitative measurements have targeted the construct of parental meaning. Along with a growing interest in the exploration and ascription of meaning to parenthood, there is a pressing need to develop an assessment tool on parental meaning. However, a review of the literature reveals that psychometrically valid and reliable tools for measuring the meanings given by parents in the course of childrearing are still not available.

In studying personal meaning, Prager, Savaya, and Bar-Tur (2000) stressed the importance of creating culturally specific instruments that take into account the values and belief systems of the population under study. Lam and Chan-So (2013) and Shek (2002) also called for the development of indigenous and culturally sensitive measures of family assessment in response to a severe lack of objective measures of individual and family functioning in Chinese contexts. In this regard, we aimed to develop a specific instrument for the assessment of sources of parental meaning from the perspectives of Hong Kong Chinese parents. Specifically, we tried to construct

and validate the Chinese Sources of Parental Meaning Questionnaire (CSPMQ) and examine its psychometric properties in terms of factor structure, validity, and reliability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With reference to the research on sources of life meaning in adulthood (e.g., Debats, 1999; O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Prager, 1996; Schnell, 2009), we define sources of parental meaning as the content areas or personal themes from which meaning of parenting or parenthood is derived. According to Miller (2005), parenting refers to the personal experiences that parents have in meeting the needs of and being responsible for their children, while parenthood refers to the context and path in which parenting is experienced. In fact, one's sense of parental meaning constantly and closely reflects one's experiences of parenting in the context and path of parenthood.

There has been a growing awareness that an individual parent is inextricably situated in the marital and parent-child subsystems, the family system as a whole, and the larger socio-cultural environment. As such, one's interpretation of one's parental experience should be understood from one's individual development, marital and parent-child relationships, family system, and social and cultural ties of one's family (Cox & Paley, 1997; Lam & Chan-So, 2013). By emphasizing the multilevel dimensions of meaning making in parenthood, the family systems perspective can offer a theoretical scheme for exploring the sources of parental meaning. An examination of the relevant literature similarly reveals that there are four main sources of parental meaning: the self, the child, the marital relationship, and the family system in the Chinese cultural context. Each of these four sources can represent a distinct and relatively well-defined perspective on how a parent ascribes meaning to

parenthood. However, these sources of parental meaning have often been investigated as separate entities in previous research.

Prior research indicated that becoming a parent affects a person's life in many ways. After having children, parents undergo tremendous changes in their sense of self in marriage, parenting, relationships with their own parents, lifestyles, and so on (Cowan & Cowan, 1999; Miller, 2005, 2011). All these exert profound influences on one's identity formation in adulthood and parenthood simultaneously (Palkovitz, 2002). A rich area of study has developed around how individuals become more mature and adult-like and experience self-enhancement through involvement in childrearing (e.g., Gillies, 2007; Palkovitz, 2002). Such a new self-definition can enrich parents' life experience and enable them to cope with challenges at home and in the workplace (Gillies, 2007). Being more responsible and having engendered powerful new commitments in themselves, parents might subordinate their own needs in the service of the family and the larger community (Gallagher & Gerstel, 2001; Palkovitz, 2002). This is particularly true for Chinese parents because parenthood is perceived as both a state of attainment and a process of becoming in terms of maturity and morality (Lam, 2005b).

With regard to the sources of parental meaning, most parents attach the highest importance to child nurturing (Hoghughi, 2004). The word "parenting," with its root being understood as purposive activities aiming at ensuring the survival and development of children (Hoghughi, 2004), can well illustrate such a consideration. In Chinese culture, parents place great emphasis on nurturing children so that they can become well-functioning members of society (Chao, 1994; Wang & Chang, 2010). Both quantitative and qualitative findings support that "being a good person," which means a person with a good self-regulation ability, strong moral character,

outstanding academic performance, and proper social conduct, is the most desirable outcome for child development in Chinese culture (Lam, 2005a; Shek & Chan, 1999). Nevertheless, in today's Chinese societies, a clear intermingling of Western and Eastern cultures is predictable. In addition to Chinese cultural values, Chinese parents are also likely to endorse individualistic traits such as independence, autonomy, creativity, and self-direction (Chen, Bian, Xin, Wang, & Silbereisen, 2010; Chuang & Su, 2009). In other words, regardless of the types of social and behavioral qualities children possess, children's positive developments are valuable rewards that motivate Chinese parents to contribute a great deal to their care, both physically and psychologically.

Previous studies also indicated that many people make sense of parental meaning in connection with their spouse (Kwok, Cheng, Chow, & Ling, 2013). On the one hand, raising children could help couples communicate more openly and directly with one another, become more empathetic with their partners, and achieve better balance between individuation and mutuality in marriage (Miller, 2005; Palkovitz, 2002). On the other hand, nurturing children could negatively affect the couple's relationship because of the mounted strains on intimacy after giving birth and dissatisfaction derived from an unequal division of labor and lack of support from each other (Cowan & Cowan, 1999; Kwok, Cheng, et al., 2013). In Chinese culture, the avowed importance of the parent-child relationship was found to be much higher than that of the spousal relationship because lineage prolongation and the expansion of family are considered the ultimate purpose of marriage (Chang, Lansford, Schwartz, & Farver, 2004). It can be interpreted that having a child seems to represent a major task accomplishment of the spousal relationship; it can also be said that the primary focus of Chinese couples shifts from marriage to parenting after the birth of a baby.

While parental meaning is fundamentally personally created, it is also interpersonally constructed and broadly constituted by the ideology of the wider socio-cultural environment (To, Iu Kan, Tsoi, & Chan, 2013). The ascription to parental meaning is a social process relating to one's past experiences with socialization and in the social groups and structures with which they were affiliated (Miller, 2011). Some scholars suggested that being a parent carried the following significant social meanings in Chinese culture, namely: (a) having no heir is a sign of incompleteness and immaturity as adults; (b) continuing the family line is a mandatory responsibility; (c) raising children can ensure care and security in old age; and (d) having more children, especially boys, represents family prosperity and enhances family reputation (Lam, 2005a, Lee & Kuo, 2000). Under the influence of Chinese familism, how to maintain one's self-image and show filial piety becomes an important consideration in the search for parental meaning.

As we adopted a "bottom-up" approach to collecting Hong Kong Chinese parents' accounts of sources of parental meaning, our review of the literature provides a heuristic tool to facilitate us to understand and categorize their accounts, which help construct the items of the instrument and explore its factor structure. However, there is no intention to predict the extent to which the aforementioned sources of parental meaning could be found in the accounts of the research participants. It is also believed that a parent will experience parental meaning from various valued sources, which do not appear to be reducible to one basic meaning system (Debats, 1999).

Furthermore, we do not intend to "romanticize" parenting. In fact, it is well recognized in the accumulated literature that parenting is a stressful experience for both mothers and fathers (Cowan & Cowan, 1999; Miller, 2005, 2011). A review of the previous research

reveals that parental stress is affected by structural and socio-demographic factors, parents' psychosocial states, quality of marital relationships, and child characteristics (Chang et al., 2004; Gillies, 2007; Hansen, 2012; Pollmann-Schult, 2014). However, a notable amount of research also indicates that the level of parental stress is affected by the way in which parents ascribe meaning to parenthood. If parents who encounter stress in parenting reassert the importance of an indispensable natural bonding with their children, or interpret such challenges as occasions for personal growth, their motivation and confidence in childrearing will be rediscovered, and their parental stress may then be outweighed (Hansen, 2012; Palkovitz, 2002). Therefore, the attachment of meaning to parenting and the experience of negative emotions in parenting are not mutually exclusive. Rather, there may be reciprocal relationships between parental meaning and parent well-being.

Empirical supports for the relationships between presence of meaning in life and psychological well-being are abundant. For instance, presence of meaning has been discovered to be positively associated with positive personality traits (Steger, Frazier, et al., 2006), satisfaction with self (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008), and satisfaction with life (Schnell, 2009). It was also found to be inversely related to negative affect (Schnell, 2009; Steger, Kashdan, et al., 2008). Inspired by these findings, it is logical to predict that a substantial relationship can be found between sources of parental meaning and both positive and negative measures of parent well-being such as parental satisfaction, parental efficacy, parental strain, and parental discontent (Berry & Jones, 1995; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan, Leung, & Johnston, 2000). From an existential perspective, when a greater understanding and ownership of existence is assured, parents may find it easier to accept the frustrations and anxieties in parenting (Hannush, 2002; To & Chan, 2013). As such,

the constructs in relation to parent well-being can be adopted to test the construct validity of a scale on sources of parental meaning. Specifically, the construct validity was assessed by examining the associations between the CSPMQ and theoretically related measures, including the Parental Strain Subscale and the Parental Discontent Subscale of the Chinese version of Parental Stress Scale (C-PSS) (Cheung, 2000), and the Parental Efficacy Subscale and the Parental Satisfaction Subscale of the Chinese version of Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (C-PSOC) (Ngai, Chan, & Holroyd, 2007).

A notable amount of research has demonstrated a link between sense of meaninglessness and experience of psychological distress (Schnell, 2009; Steger, Kashdan, et al., 2008), while measures of meaning in life are found to be able to strongly discriminate between distressed and non-distressed subjects (Debats, 1996). Following this proposition, it can be argued that when parents affirm their parental meaning, they will have higher levels of parental satisfaction, a higher level of efficacy in childrearing, and a lower level of parental stress. On the contrary, when parents experience a lack of meaning in childrearing, they may negatively evaluate their performance and have a greater tendency to feel frustrated, anxious, and poorly motivated. In this regard, the use of a clinical group (individuals who are clinically presenting) and a non-clinical group (individuals who present no psychological distress) can help test the discriminant validity of a scale on sources of parenting meaning.

Until now, no systematic research has been conducted on gender differences in Chinese mothers' and fathers' perceptions of parental meaning. Under the dominant ideology of parenthood in Chinese culture, although fathers are assigned a more powerful position in the family than mothers (Chuang & Su, 2009), fathers are found to be much less involved than their spouse in their children's affairs

(S. M. Chan et al., 2009; Chao, 1994). The traditional division of labor in family affairs adopted by most Chinese may partly explain the low participation of adult males in parenting, as most fathers concentrate their efforts on earning a living and thus pass the responsibility of child nurturing to their spouses (Chao, 1994). Although it should not be concluded that Chinese fathers have a lower level of perceived sources of parental meaning when compared with Chinese mothers (Kwok, Ling, Leung, & Li, 2013), it is worthwhile to examine the possible differences between Chinese mothers and fathers in their ascription to parental meaning, which can be used to assess the discriminant validity of the proposed scale.

METHODS

Phase 1: Scale Development

Adopting a "bottom-up" approach to scale development, we constructed the CSPMQ in six steps. In the first step, we conducted a literature review to identify the possible content areas or personal themes from which the meaning of parenthood is experienced. In the second step, we sent invitation letters to all primary schools and kindergartens in Hong Kong to solicit their support for this research. Seven primary schools and 27 kindergartens responded to the invitation and agreed to join the research. A total of 182 Hong Kong Chinese parents who had at least one child under the age of 12 were then openly recruited from these schools. They were invited to respond to the following open-ended question: "From your own experience, what is/are the source(s) of parental meaning?" We collected 173 statements written in Chinese, which provided specific information about the content areas or personal themes related to the meaning of parenthood as perceived by local parents. In the third step, a panel of four researchers with expertise in parenting and parent education coded and categorized the answers separately.

After drawing references from the literature and deleting the unclearly written statements, we extracted and edited 73 items and categorized them into four categories tentatively titled Instrumental Consideration, Child Nurturing, Marital and Family Relationship, and Self-Enhancement. The average inter-coder reliability (two or more researchers agreed on the categorization of that item) was 72.6%. In the fourth step, we tested a 73-item preliminary questionnaire with the same sample of 182 Hong Kong parents. We revised the questionnaire based on the feedback of the respondents and the results of the item and reliability analyses, which led to the deletion of 27 ambiguous or poorly written items and items with low reliability. We thus developed a 46-item questionnaire and then tested it in the pilot study.

In the fifth step, we conducted a pilot study to examine the initial validity and reliability of the 46-item questionnaire. The sample used in the pilot study was comprised of 639 Hong Kong Chinese parents who had at least one child under 12 years old at the time of data collection. They were openly recruited from the seven primary schools and 27 kindergartens that have joined this research. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine the underlying factor structure of the scale in the pilot study. We used the common factor analysis with principal axis factoring with the assumption that each item was composed of both random and systematic measurement errors (Stevens, 2009). We employed the direct oblimin rotation procedure because we expected that the factors would be correlated (Stevens, 2009). Principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation of all 46 items produced six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0; however, we deleted 19 items due to weak (< .40) or double loadings (Stevens, 2009). Then, we performed the principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation again on the remaining 27 items, yielding four factors

with eigenvalues exceeding unity and explaining 61.06% of the total variance. Factor I accounted for 38.06% of the variance and contained 9 items related to child nurturing. Factor II accounted for 13.45% of the variance and contained 7 items related to instrumental consideration. Factor III accounted for 4.95% and contained 6 items in relation to self-enhancement. Factor IV accounted for 4.60% and contain 5 items in relation to the enrichment of marital relationship. Reliability analyses using Cronbach's alpha show that the internal consistency of the 27-item scale was .93, while the Cronbach's alpha of the four factors (namely instrumental consideration, child nurturing, self-enhancement, and marital relationship) were .88, .91, .85, and .87 respectively. In the sixth step, the first author translated the Chinese items into English. A panel formed by four researchers then reviewed the translation and gave feedback. After that, the English version of the scales was back-translated into Chinese by a professional translator and reviewed by the panel.

Phase 2: Scale Validation

Based on the results of the pilot study, we undertook a large-scale cross-sectional survey to further analyze the factor structure and psychometric properties of the CSPMQ. We sent invitation letters to kindergartens and primary schools in Hong Kong to solicit support from the school principals to recruit the parents of their pupils to join the validation study. A sample of 1,328 Hong Kong Chinese parents from 21 kindergartens and three primary schools was then surveyed. In order to recruit more clinical group participants (they are defined as individual parents who were receiving regular counseling service within the period of data collection), three social welfare agencies providing family counseling services agreed to invite their clients to join the study. As a result, another sample of 229 Hong Kong Chinese parents was surveyed. All clinical and non-clinical

participants had at least one child aged 12 or below. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of all participants.

Prior to the study, we obtained the ethical approval from the Survey and Behavioral Research Ethics Committee of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Then, we arranged a parent education talk for each school in order to gather the participants and ensure a higher response rate. Our research assistant collected the self-administered and anonymous questionnaires before the talk. We also obtained informed written consent from the parents prior to their participation in the survey. Each participant filled out a structured paper-and-pencil questionnaire, which was collected immediately on completion. For the sample from the social welfare agencies, the social workers dispatched self-administered and anonymous questionnaires to the participants. The participants then returned the completed questionnaires with consent forms to the social workers in sealed envelopes.

MEASURES

Chinese Sources of Parental Meaning Questionnaire (CSPMQ)

Research participants were asked to rate the importance of the 27 perceived meanings of parenthood. All 27 items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (extremely unimportant) to 6 (extremely important). A six-point scale was used in consideration of the high central tendency bias observed among parent participants, which has been found to reduce reliability (Cheung, 2000; Liss, Schiffrin, Mackintosh, Miles-McLean, & Erchull, 2013). A higher total subscale score reflects a greater agreement with the importance of a particular source of parental meaning.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample

Variable	Percentage (%)
Sex	
Male	23.1
Female	76.9
Age	
21–30	11.0
31–40	62.0
41–50	23.3
51 or above	3.7
Religion	
Yes	37.9
No	62.1
Educational level completed	
Elementary school or below	3.0
Middle school	15.1
High school	36.6
College/University	34.9
Postgraduate	10.4
Employment status	
Employer/Self-employed	6.8
Full-time employee	43.2
Part-time employee	5.9
Homemakers	40.0
Unemployed/Others	4.1
Marital status	
Married	93.6
Cohabitated	0.5
Separated/Divorced	3.7
Widowed/Others	2.2
Monthly family income in HKD	
$10,000 or below	7.4
$10,001–20,000	18.9
$20,001–30,000	19.9
$30,001–40,000	11.1
$40,001–50,000	14.4
$50,001 or above	25.3
On social assistance/Others	3.0
Number of sons	
1	76.1
2	22.1
3 or above	1.8
Number of daughters	
1	75.5
2	22.8
3 or above	1.7

Chinese Version of Parental Stress Scale (C-PSS)

The Parental Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Berry and Jones (1995) and translated by Cheung (2000), was adopted to measure the participants' perception of parental stress. The C-PSS comprises 17 items, made up of the Parental Strain Subscale (10 items) and the Parental Discontent Subscale (7 items) (Cheung, 2000). A sample item of the Parental Strain Subscale includes: "I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent." A sample item of the Parental Discontent Subscale includes: "I do not feel close to my child(ren)." All 17 items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (disagree very much) to 6 (agree very much). For each subscale, the scores of the items are summed as the subscale score, resulting in a score range of 10 to 60 for the Parental Strain Subscale and 7 to 42 for the Parental Discontent Subscale. A higher total subscale score indicates a higher level of parental strain or parental discontent. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of both the Parental Strain Subscale and the Parental Discontent Subscale were the same ($\alpha = .86$) in this study.

Chinese Version of Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (C-PSOC)

The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) contains 17 items, nine of which were designed to assess perceived satisfaction in parenthood and eight to assess perceived efficacy in parenting. This scale has been translated into Chinese (C-PSOC) (Ngai et al., 2007). All 17 items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For each subscale, the scores of the items are summed to form the subscale score, resulting in a score range of 9 to 54 for the Parental Satisfaction Subscale and 8 to 48 for the Parental Efficacy Subscale. A sample item of the Parental Satisfaction Subscale includes: "Sometimes I feel like I'm

not getting anything done." A sample item of the Parental Efficacy Subscale includes: "Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved." A higher total subscale score indicates a higher level of parental satisfaction or parental efficacy. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the Parental Satisfaction Subscale ($\alpha = .85$) and the Parental Efficacy Subscale ($\alpha = .79$) were found to be acceptable in this study.

Socio-demographic Variables

Based on a review of the relevant literature, the influences of key socio-demographic variables on parents' psychological well-being and the perceived cost of having children were controlled during an examination of the validity of the CSPMQ in view of the possible influences of those variables on the associations between the CSPMQ and the C-PSS, as well as the C-PSOC. These variables comprise the participants' gender, age, religion, educational level, employment status, marital status, number of children, and family financial status (Cheung, 2000; Hansen, 2012; Hoghughi, 2004; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Pollmann-Schult, 2014).

Data Analysis and Results

Using the split sample procedure in scale validation (Liss et al., 2013; Merrell, Felver-Gant, & Tom, 2011), the sample of 1,557 parents were divided by random sampling into two groups of equal size to perform both the EFA and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). At the same time, we used the whole sample of 1,557 parents to run a series of EFAs to examine the stability of the factors extracted from different subgroups and to test the reliability and validity of the scale.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Based on the split sample of 799 parents, an EFA was conducted

to examine the underlying factor structure of the scale. The results indicated that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .93. A principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation of all 27 items resulted in the elimination of 5 items due to factor loadings less than .40 and the extraction of four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Stevens, 2009). A fourfold factor structure with 22 items was finally generated. Factor I accounted for 34.00% of variance and contained 6 items in relation to self-enhancement. Factor II accounted for 11.42% of variance and contained 6 items related to child nurturing. Factor III accounted for 5.67% of variance and contained 5 items related to marital relationship. Factor IV accounted for 4.90% of variance and contained 5 items in relation to instrumental considerations. The final solution, consisting of 22 items, can explain 55.99% of the total variance (see Table 2).

Using the whole sample of 1,557 parents, further EFAs were conducted to examine the stability of the factors extracted from different subgroups, which include: (a) a clinical group ($n = 310$) and a non-clinical group ($n = 1,142$); (b) a father group ($n = 351$) and a mother group ($n = 1,156$); (c) a younger parent group (aged below 40, $n = 1,120$) and an older parent group (aged above 40, $n = 416$); (d) a less educated group (high school level or below, $n = 831$) and a more educated group (college level or above, $n = 695$); and (e) parents with lower family income (using the median monthly domestic household income in 2013 to be the dividing line; below the median monthly domestic household income at the time of data collection, $n = 409$) and parents with higher family income (above the median monthly domestic household income, $n = 1,088$). There was a discrepancy between the total sample size of the study and the sum of the numbers of various subgroups because of the existence of some missing socio-demographic data. The results indicated that the same fourfold factor structure with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 could

Table 2. **Results of Factor Loading of the CSPMQ: Four-Factor Solution ($n = 799$)**

Item	Factor loading			
	1	2	3	4
For copyright concern, the questionnaire items in this table were not disclosed in this Web version. If you want to know the details of the questionnaire items, please contact the authors.	**.77**	−.02	−.06	−.04
	.72	.00	.01	−.04
	.65	−.08	−.02	.16
	.62	.01	−.19	−.02
	.56	.20	−.08	−.01
	.49	.07	−.01	.23
	.38	.24	−.01	.04
	.36	.07	−.21	.19
	.26	.01	−.09	.25
	.02	**.82**	.02	.02
	−.04	**.70**	−.03	−.00
	.10	**.59**	−.10	−.08
	.02	**.56**	−.02	.00
	.05	**.48**	.03	.08
	.01	**.44**	−.04	−.04
	−.06	.01	**−.96**	−.05
	−.06	−.00	**−.86**	.04

Table 2 (Cont'd)

Item	Factor loading			
	1	2	3	4
For copyright concern, the questionnaire items in this table were not disclosed in this Web version. If you want to know the details of the questionnaire items, please contact the authors.	.10	−.03	**−.78**	.02
	.06	.01	**−.77**	−.02
	.10	.03	**−.56**	.15
	.19	.24	−.33	.09
	.10	−.01	.03	**.76**
	.05	−.03	−.01	**.76**
	.05	−.08	−.01	**.73**
	.06	.02	−.02	**.67**
	.08	−.01	−.07	**.61**
	−.03	.01	−.02	.13

Note: Figures in bold indicate final assigned factor for each item.

be generated in all subgroups. The percentage of the total variance accounted for by the fourfold factor structure ranged from 59.60% (parents with lower education levels) to 64.38% (older parent group). The results of factor loadings of the CSPMQ for different subsamples have not been reported in this paper. Readers who are interested in these findings can contact the author for further information.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To verify the fit of the four-factor solution model derived from the EFA, we conducted a CFA using the AMOS Software Version 17 on the second half of the random sample of 758 participants. We assessed goodness-of-fit with a variety of fit indices including the
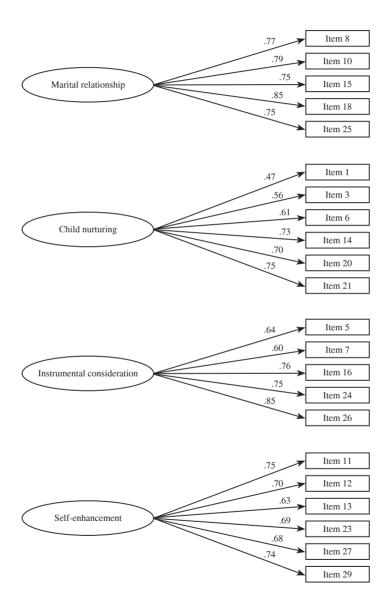
chi-square statistics (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fix index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Factor loadings for this model are provided in Figure 1.

The goodness-of-fit indices of the tested model were found to be acceptable (χ^2 = 583.28, df = 196, $p < .01$; CFI = .95; NFI = .93; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .05). Although the chi-square statistics were found to be significant, the model should not be rejected because it is common for a significant chi-square value to be obtained with large sample sizes (Merrell et al., 2011). The relative chi-square (chi-square/degrees-of-freedom) was 2.98, which met the recommended criteria of below 3 (Munro, 2005). The CFI, NFI, and TLI were found with values greater than .90, which are considered to be a good model (Stevens, 2009). The TLI was included because it provides an estimate of model fit that is especially robust for large sample sizes (Merrell et al., 2011). Both the RMSEA and SRMR were .05, which are considered to indicate a reasonable model fit (Stevens, 2009).

Item Analysis and Reliability

In view of the visual inspection of the plotted total score and the low values of skewness (–.26) and kurtosis (.05), it can be argued that the data were normally distributed. The average of inter-item correlation was .30. As argued by Ferketich (1991), an average inter-item correlation of .20 is acceptable if the scale has a length of 10 or more items and it can achieve an alpha of .71. The factor-whole scale correlations and inter-correlations among the four factors were examined. Although the factor-whole scale correlations were moderate to high, ranging from .47 to .86, we do not recommend

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Four-Factor Model of the CSPMQ

using the total scale score because the scales have different relationships with the validity constructs, which will be reported subsequently. The results also indicated that almost all factors have moderate positive correlations (r ranging from .31 to .64, $p < .001$), while the correlation between child nurturing and instrumental consideration was an exception ($r = .06$, $p < .05$). The moderate or even weak inter-correlations suggest that the four factors represent separate but related constructs of sources of parental meaning. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the four factors are presented in Table 3.

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability for each of the four subscales: marital relationship = .90, child nurturing = .79, instrumental consideration = .86, and self-enhancement = .85. Reliability analyses using Cronbach's alpha were also conducted for the different subgroups of the sample to assess the representative reliability. The results indicated that the reliability alpha coefficients of the four subscales of the CSPMQ ranged from .76 to .91, which means that all of the subscales have a high degree of internal consistency among the different subgroups (please contact the author for further information). Test-retest reliability was assessed

Table 3. **Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the CSPMQ Subscales**

	Marital relationship	Child nurturing	Instrumental consideration	M	SD	No. of Items	Score range
Marital relationship				22.38	4.85	5	5–30
Child nurturing	.31***			33.61	2.67	6	6–36
Instrumental consideration	.51***	.06*		16.11	5.45	5	5–30
Self-enhancement	.64***	.40***	.49***	27.71	4.88	6	6–36

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

over a 2-week period with a sub-group of 67 volunteer parents in order to examine its stability reliability. The results indicated that the CSPMQ was internally consistent between Time 1 and Time 2 because high stability reliabilities were found for all four subscales, namely .86 ($p < .001$) for marital relationship, .73 ($p < .001$) for child nurturing, .78 ($p < .001$) for instrumental consideration, and .73 ($p < .001$) for self-enhancement.

Construct Validity

We assessed the construct validity by performing hierarchical regression analyses to examine the associations between the CSPMQ subscales (marital relationship, child nurturing, instrumental consideration, and self-enhancement), the Parental Strain Subscale and Parental Discontent Subscale of the C-PSS, and the Parental Efficacy Subscale and Parental Satisfaction Subscale of the C-PSOC (see Tables 4 and 5). After ruling out the influence of key socio-demographic variables on the relationships between the predictor (each CSPMQ subscale) and criterion variables (parental discontent and parental strain), the findings provided empirical support for the negative associations between parental discontent and parental meaning in terms of marital relationship ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, $\beta = -.31$, $t = -11.70$, $p < .001$), child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .25$, $\beta = -.51$, $t = -21.51$, $p < .001$), instrumental consideration ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = -.14$, $t = -4.84$, $p < .001$), and self-enhancement ($\Delta R^2 = .13$, $\beta = -.38$, $t = -14.56$, $p < .001$). The findings also indicated negative associations between parental strain and parental meaning in terms of child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = -.08$, $t = -2.93$, $p < .01$). However, positive associations between parental strain and parental meaning in terms of instrumental consideration ($\Delta R^2 = .05$, $\beta = .22$, $t = 8.04$, $p < .001$) and self-enhancement ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\beta = .07$, $t = 2.54$, $p < .05$) were found.

Table 4. **Prediction of Parental Discontent and Parental Strain From the CSPMQ Subscales of Marital Relationship, Child Nurturing, Instrumental Consideration, and Self-enhancement**

Variables	Parental discontent ΔR^2 (β)	Parental strain ΔR^2 (β)
Control of socio-demographic variables	.05***	.05***
Marital relationship	.09*** (−.31)	.00 (.02)
R^2	.14	.05
Control of socio-demographic variables	.05***	.05***
Child nurturing	.25*** (−.51)	.01** (−.08)
R^2	.30	.06
Control of socio-demographic variables	.05***	.05***
Instrumental consideration	.01*** (−.14)	.05*** (.22)
R^2	.06	.10
Control of socio-demographic variables	.05***	.05***
Self-enhancement	.13*** (−.38)	.02* (.07)
R^2	.18	.07

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

Table 5. **Prediction of Parental Satisfaction and Parental Efficacy From the CSPMQ Subscales of Marital Relationship, Child Nurturing, Instrumental Consideration, and Self-enhancement**

Variables	Parental satisfaction ΔR^2 (β)	Parental efficacy ΔR^2 (β)
Control of socio-demographic variables	.10***	.03***
Marital relationship	.00 (−.01)	.04*** (.22)
R^2	.10	.07
Control of socio-demographic variables	.10***	.03***
Child nurturing	.01*** (.13)	.08*** (.29)
R^2	.11	.11
Control of socio-demographic variables	.10***	.03***
Instrumental consideration	.02*** (−.16)	.03*** (.19)
R^2	.12	.06
Control of socio-demographic variables	.10***	.03***
Self-enhancement	.00 (−.04)	.07*** (.28)
R^2	.10	.10

*** $p < .001$

Regarding the associations between different types of sources of parental meaning, parental satisfaction, and parental efficacy, the findings indicated positive associations between parental efficacy and sources of parental meaning in terms of marital relationship ($\Delta R^2 = .04$, $\beta = .22$, $t = 7.97$, $p < .001$), child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, $\beta = .29$, $t = 10.64$, $p < .001$), instrumental consideration ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\beta = .19$, $t = 6.76$, $p < .001$), and self-enhancement ($\Delta R^2 = .07$, $\beta = .28$, $t = 10.23$, $p < .001$). The findings also showed a positive association between parental satisfaction and child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = .13$, $t = 4.99$, $p < .001$). However, a negative association between parental satisfaction and instrumental consideration was discovered ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\beta = -.16$, $t = -5.89$, $p < .001$).

Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the differences between a clinical group and a non-clinical group and the differences between a mother group and a father group (see Table 6). After controlling the socio-demographic variables, the results of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated a negative association between the clinical/non-clinical group and the subscale of child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = -.07$, $t = -2.23$, $p < .05$) and a positive association between the clinical/non-clinical group and the subscale of instrumental consideration ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = .09$, $t = 3.20$, $p < .01$). Nevertheless, the findings did not show any significant association between the clinical/non-clinical group and the subscales of marital relationship and self-enhancement. Specifically, the clinical group had a significantly lower mean score in the domain of child nurturing ($M = 33.24$, $SD = 2.91$) than that of the non-clinical group ($M = 33.69$, $SD = 2.61$). The clinical group was also found to have a significantly higher mean score in the domain of instrumental consideration ($M = 17.69$, $SD = 5.51$) than that of the non-clinical group ($M = 15.55$, $SD = 5.33$).

**Table 6. Prediction of the CSPMQ Subscales From the Clinical/
Non-clinical Group and Gender**

Variables	Child nurturing ΔR^2 (β)	Instrumental consideration ΔR^2 (β)	Self-enhancement ΔR^2 (β)
Control of socio-demographic variables	.06***	.10***	—
Clinical/non-clinical group	.01* (−.07)	.01** (.09)	—
R^2	.07	.11	
Control of socio-demographic variables	.03***	.09***	.06***
Gender	.03*** (−.19)	.01* (−.06)	.02*** (−.17)
R^2	.06	.10	.08

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Regarding the differences between a mother group and a father group, the results of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated negative associations between gender and the subscales of child nurturing ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\beta = -.19$, $t = -6.33$, $p < .001$), instrumental consideration ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\beta = -.06$, $t = -2.03$, $p < .05$), and self-enhancement ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\beta = -.17$, $t = -5.57$, $p < .001$). It can be concluded that the father group had significantly lower mean scores for the CSPMQ subscales of child nurturing ($M = 32.79$, $SD = 3.20$), instrumental consideration ($M = 14.78$, $SD = 5.09$), and self-enhancement ($M = 25.72$, $SD = 4.94$) than those of the mother group (child nurturing: $M = 33.88$, $SD = 2.40$; instrumental consideration: $M = 16.45$, $SD = 5.49$; self-enhancement: $M = 28.26$, $SD = 4.72$).

DISCUSSION

In general, the present research indicates that the CSPMQ possesses satisfactory psychometric properties. The results from both the EFA and CFA suggest that there are four stable components intrinsic to the CSPMQ, and the same fourfold factor structure could be generated in all subsamples. Moreover, the CSPMQ demonstrates good internal consistency for the whole sample and across all subsamples. It is also found to be stable across time. Furthermore, evidence of construct

validity is provided by the findings that all of the CSPMQ subscales are negatively associated with parental discontent and positively associated with parental efficacy. The results of the hierarchical regression analyses also indicate that the CSPMQ subscales of child nurturing, instrumental consideration, and self-enhancement appear to discriminate between the father group and the mother group, while the subscales of child nurturing and instrumental consideration are able to discriminate the clinical group from the non-clinical group. It can thus be concluded that the CSPMQ has acceptable construct validity.

Regarding the factor structure of the CSPMQ, the present study reveals four categories of sources of parental meaning among Hong Kong Chinese parents. The first category, child nurturing, reflects the degree to which parents emphasize the cultivation of a deep relational connection with their children and the facilitation of their psychosocial growth. The second category, instrumental consideration, reflects the degree to which parents affirm the security, posterity, and social values of being parents. The third category, marital relationship, reflects the degree to which parents regard the perpetuation and strengthening of the spousal love and couple relationship as a result of jointly sharing parenting roles and duties. The fourth category, self-enhancement, reflects the degree to which parents accentuate the growth momentum embedded in parenthood and the effects of positive personal development through childrearing. These four factors are found to contain four essential features of existential meaning, namely sources of meaning, breath of meaning, depth of meaning, and structural components of meaning (Prager et al., 2000; Reker, 2000). First, even though the four subscales are inter-correlated, their moderate correlations suggest that they represent distinct and different sources of parental meaning. Second, these four subscales were found to have differential patterns and relationships with the measures of parental strain, parental

discontent, parental satisfaction, and parental efficacy; thus, they support the diversity with which meaning is experienced (breath of meaning) (Debats, 1999; Reker, 2000; Schnell, 2009). Third, the mean scores of each subscale ranged from 16.11 out of 30 (instrumental consideration) to 33.61 out of 36 (child nurturing), which demonstrate different levels of parents' experience of meaning from various sources (depth of meaning). Fourth, the items of the CSPMQ show the structural components of each source of parental meaning (Reker, 2000). For example, in the subscale of self-enhancement, item 23 "becoming a more mature person" illustrates the motivational component (pursuit of a life goal in parenting); item 29 "having a deeper self-understanding" reflects the cognitive component (understanding one's identity in parenting); and item 12 "helping me to have a deeper experience of love and being loved" reflects the affective component (the feeling of love in parenting). All these features correspond to the four dimensions of existential meaning (Prager et al., 2000; Reker, 2000).

Even though this study's construct validity is supported by the anticipated directions of associations between sources of parental meaning, parental discontent, and parental efficacy, the findings also indicate an unexpected negative association between sources of parental meaning and parental satisfaction as well as an unexpected positive association between sources of parental meaning and parental strain. These results seem to contradict the previous findings, which show that when parents can affirm their parental goals and meaning, they will have a greater chance of experiencing a higher level of parental satisfaction and a lower level of parental stress (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan et al., 2000). This can be understood as reflecting the phenomenon of "the parenthood paradox" coined by Baumeister (1991). He argued that while it is well recognized that parenting is a stressful experience, people keep having children even when doing

so reduces happiness (Hansen, 2012). It is because on the one hand, the wearisome duties and daunting challenges of childrearing bring about worries and frustrations; on the other hand, parenting provides an enduring, fruitful experience that could not be obtained in other spheres of life. This can explain the coexistence of the positive associations of sources of parental meaning with both parental strain and parental efficacy, as well as the negative associations of sources of parental meaning with both parental discontent and parental satisfaction. These findings remind us that the construct of sources of parental meaning is distinct from the constructs of value of children and rewards of childrearing (e.g., Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), as the latter focus more on what parents can get from parenting, while the former places more emphasis on the life purpose of being a parent. They also remind us that the blessings and struggles in parenting are not mutually exclusive; their co-existence can offer insights into a deeper understanding of parents' ascription of meaning to parenthood.

Although the results indicate unexpected associations between sources of parental meaning, parental satisfaction, and parental strain, the subscale of child nurturing is found to be consistent with all the predicted directions of associations: it is negatively associated with parental strain and parental discontent and positively associated with parental satisfaction and parental efficacy. The findings show that Hong Kong Chinese parents attach great importance regarding the meaning of parenting to fostering the growth of their children and to cultivating a deep relational connection with their children. This source of parental meaning can energize parents to cope with parental stress and affirm their pleasure and capability in childrearing. It is also interesting to find that in the process of scale development and validation, some items that were regarded as reflecting Chinese parents' perception of ideal child development, such as

helping children to succeed in the academic sphere and enhance competitiveness, could not be extracted in factor analysis. These results support previous findings that the facilitation of children's self-cultivation to become a good person is the main goal of child socialization in Chinese culture (Lam, 2005a; Shek & Chan, 1999). In other words, the quality of person that their children will become is of greater significance in the eyes of the research participants than the concrete achievement of their children. When parents assume such a crucial role in guiding their children, they can experience an enhancement in their own psychological well-being (Hannush, 2002).

The present study indicates that the clinical group and non-clinical group of parents differed significantly in terms of child nurturing and instrumental consideration. Specifically, the clinical group had a significantly lower mean score on the subscale of child nurturing and a significantly higher mean score on the subscale of instrumental consideration than the non-clinical group. Regarding the domain of child nurturing, the current results are remarkable and correspond with earlier findings, which show that parents' psychosocial well-being is closely related to their perceived meaning in childrearing. When parents encounter personal, child, marital or family problems, they have a greater tendency to experience a weaker sense of direction, purpose, enjoyment, and ability in carrying out child-nurturing functions (Cheung, 2000; Ohan et al., 2000). At the same time, for the parents who suffer from psychosocial distress, the findings suggest that they would attach more importance to the instrumental meaning of parenting because they might hope that having children could secure their future lives and help them attain a higher level of family status and social identity. These findings reflect the potentially stronger belief of this group of parents that the

social benefits of having children can help satisfy their needs. They may also regard rearing a child as satisfying external expectations.

This study also indicates the existence of both cultural continuation and cultural change in the perceived sources of parental meaning among Hong Kong Chinese parents. Regarding cultural continuation, although more Chinese couples recognize the significance of fathers' involvement in parenting (Kwok, Ling, et al., 2013), women are still generally expected to take more responsibility in childrearing. As argued by Chao (1994), child care and nurturing take place in the context of a close, supportive, and highly involved mother-child relationship in Chinese culture. It is thus understandable that mothers are found to have a higher level of perceived sources of parental meaning than fathers in this study. As far as cultural change is concerned, the current findings show that today's Hong Kong Chinese parents ascribe a lower level of parental meaning to instrumental consideration. It is thus important to note that the Chinese traditional cultural influences on Hong Kong parents should not be over-generalized (Wang & Chang, 2010). Hong Kong is a postcolonial society under the hybridity of both Western and Chinese cultural influences. It is observed that many Hong Kong Chinese parents hold Westernized values and beliefs in parenting. In fact, in the present globalized world, accumulated research findings show similar parenting goals and styles in Chinese and Western societies (Chen et al., 2010; Chuang & Su, 2009; Shek, 2002; Wang & Chang, 2010). Nevertheless, sufficient attention should be paid to the contextual variability in Chinese societies (To & Chan, 2013). For instance, the one-child policy in the Chinese mainland may direct parents to acquire a different set of values and beliefs. This research should thus be extended to other Chinese societies in order to examine the applicability of the CSPMQ.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this study fills a part of the present knowledge gap, there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, while this research has invited 1,557 parents from 24 schools and three social welfare agencies to participate via open recruitment, the generalizability of the findings should still be subject to scrutiny without a randomized representative sample. Second, the method of self-reported cross-sectional survey was used in this study, which means a portion of the variability of the CSPMQ scores may be affected by the social desirability factor. Third, the current questionnaire was developed and validated only with parents of children aged 12 or below. Parents of older children should be approached in future studies in order to extend the applicability of the scale to a wider parent population.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

The significance of this study for theory development should be highlighted. In recent years, the exploration of meaning in parenthood has received renewed attention, perhaps in response to a growing awareness of the considerable changes of the family system (e.g., Miller, 2005, 2011) and the emergence of studies on family stress and family resilience (e.g., Boss, 2002; Walsh, 2003). As suggested by the family stress theory and family resilience theory (Boss, 2002; Walsh, 2003), a positive appraisal of parenting can help parents transcend their worries and stresses in childrearing because such an appraisal enables parents to perceive the difficult tasks in parenting from a perspective that provides meaning and purposes. According to the meaning-making model in the context of stress and coping proposed by Park and Folkman (1997; see also Park, 2010), there are two representative and interrelated levels of meaning, which include global meaning and situational meaning. On the one hand, people

possess perceived sources of meaning (global meaning) that provide them with some frameworks from which to view their lives and interpret their experiences. On the other hand, their lived experiences are also affected by the occurrence of potentially stressful events or situations that may challenge their global meaning system. When this happens, they will go through the process of situational meaning making, which refers to their assignment of meaning to the event or situation that can help reduce the discrepancy with global meaning. This process, when successful, will bring about better coping with stress. In the existing family stress and resilience theories, more emphasis has been placed on the meaning the family gives to the stressful event (situational meaning) (e.g., Boss, 2002), but little attempt has been made to assess the discrepancy between situational and global meaning.

Although some theorists have underlined the significance of global meaning in encountering family stress (Patterson & Garwick, 1994; Walsh, 2003), it was commented that global meaning is very abstract and most families probably would not be able to describe their global meaning (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Clearly, this research demonstrates that it is possible and practicable to explore the global meaning held by parents. Acknowledging that the understanding of parents' meaning-making process will be limited if the focus is solely on parents' appraisal of situational meaning to stressful events in parenting, this research developed an assessment tool to help elicit empirical findings on the global meaning of parenting, which can fill part of the knowledge gap in examining the different levels of meaning in family stress and resilience theories. For instance, the discourse of globalization urges many Hong Kong Chinese parents to accept the idea that a competitive life is essential for their children to survive in a globalized society. Those parents may suffer from high anxiety levels and hence put great pressure

and place heavy demands on their children in order to guarantee satisfactory examination results. Through the exploration of their perceived global meaning in parenting (sources of parental meaning), they may have the opportunity to figure out what is truly important in their lives and modify their situational-appraised meaning of child development so that it can become more consistent with their perceived global meaning in parenting.

This study has important practice implications as well. Undoubtedly, the family system has been experiencing a rapid and profound transformation in both Chinese societies and overseas countries. Over the past three decades, Hong Kong society has witnessed the growing trend toward postponement, minimization, or even total rejection of parenthood. While the existing parent education programs are found to be effective in enhancing parental competence, reducing parental stress, improving parent-child relationships, and tackling child behavior problems, the exploration of parental meaning is seldom treated as the central focus in parent education activities (To & Chan, 2013; To, Iu Kan, et al., 2013; To, So, et al., 2014). This is unsatisfactory as accumulated research findings have shown that making sense of what parenting means can help construct parents' sense of self and their roles as parents, as well as shaping parenting practices and facilitating organization and coherence to the tasks of parenting (Bornstein et al., 2011). As argued by To and Chan (2013), if addressing parents' perceived sources of parental meaning is beneficial to the design and provision of parent education, a scale measuring this construct should be developed and validated to make up one of the quantitative measures for the assessment of the effectiveness of parent education programs. Specifically, the changes in the pretest-posttest scores of the CSPMQ during a parent education program can be interpreted in the following two ways. First, the pretest-posttest increase in the mean score of

a subscale of the CSPMQ may indicate that the participants have a deeper level of experience of parental meaning from that particular source after the program. Second, the pretest-posttest increases in the mean scores of the subscales of child nurturing, marital relationship, and self-enhancement of the CSPMQ may reflect that the participants can derive parental meaning from a variety of intrinsic values (the desire to fulfill emotional and developmental needs in childrearing) after the program, which will lead to a greater sense of fulfillment in parenting (Deci & Ryan, 2008; To & Chan, 2013).

The findings of this study also remind practitioners to shift their focus from the predicaments faced by parents to the opportunities embedded in parenthood for enhancing life advancement, marital relationship, and commitment in child nurturing (To, So, et al., 2014). Moreover, as the findings indicate that mothers have a higher level of perceived sources of parental meaning than fathers, more parent education programs should thus be provided for fathers to facilitate them to reinterpret their fathering experiences and strengthen their perceived sources of parental meaning (T. S. Chan, 2000).

The present study offers significant insights into future research in the following two areas. First, while meaning in life has been regarded as one of the crucial dimensions in measuring psychological well-being (Steger, Frazier, et al., 2006), a review and analysis of the relevant research indicates that parent well-being is mainly assessed by parental attitude (Holden & Buck, 2002), beliefs (Chuang & Su, 2009), goals (S. M. Chan et al., 2009), styles (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), attributions (Bugental & Happaney, 2002), senses of satisfaction and efficacy (Johnston & Mash, 1989), and stress level (Cheung, 2000). In light of the findings of this research, sources of parental meaning can be regarded as components of the structure of parent well-being that are essential but previously neglected. This

scale can thus be used in conjunction with other scales to develop a comprehensive composite measure of parent well-being for the purpose of research, assessment, and evaluation. Even though the current scale cannot embrace all aspects of parental meaning, it can provide an entry point for initiating future research on the sense of meaningfulness in parenting, appraised meaning in parenting, how parental meaning develops, and the interrelationships among these meaning-related variables.

Second, subtle differences in understanding and emphasis of various sources of parental meaning are expected and unavoidable in different societies and cultures. Just as a Western scale may ignore contextual factors and omit indigenous items in non-Western societies (Lam & Chan-So, 2013; Shek, 2002), a Chinese scale may also not be relevant to people of other cultures. Having adopted a "bottom-up" approach to the development of this scale and having articulated detailed descriptions about the validation process of the CSPMQ, we recommend that this study can be replicated or extended to other samples in different Chinese communities (such as Taiwan, Macau, and the Chinese mainland), Chinese parents living in non-Chinese contexts, and then parents of other cultural backgrounds. Intellectuals from other countries can also use the "bottom-up" approach to develop other versions of sources of parental meaning questionnaires. As pointed out by Prager et al. (2000), it is more worthwhile to study what sources of meaning are generated by specific cultures rather than comparing the respondents of different cultures on an item-by-item basis. However, in spite of the significance of developing a culturally sensitive scale for measuring sources of parental meaning, one should not rule out the possibility that the present questionnaire can be translated and adapted, since accumulated research findings have provided supporting evidence on a substantial convergence of parenting experiences across different

societies and cultures (Shek, 2002; Wang & Chang, 2010). Cross-cultural research and instrument formulation regarding the ascription of meaning to parenthood can therefore be regarded as an important future research direction.

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中國親職意義來源量表：發展和驗證

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摘 要

本研究旨在發展和驗證一份評估親職意義來源的量表，招募了1,557位來自香港24所學校及3所社會福利機構的家長參與，他們填答了一份包含27項不同親職意義來源及其他驗證效度量表的問卷。針對隨機抽取799位家長樣本所進行的探索性因素分析，結果得出含有22項親職意義來源的四層因素結構。另外，透過抽取剩餘758位家長樣本所進行的驗證性因素分析，結果顯示為良好的模式。這四層因素呈現了親職意義來源的四大範疇，包括：（1）父母着眼於培育子女全人成長的程度（培育子女）；（2）父母肯定身為家長的社會價值之程度（工具性考慮）；（3）父母重視強化婚姻關係的程度（婚姻關係）；及（4）父母確認藉由育兒而達致個人成長的程度（個人提升）。研究發現，這四層因素與親職不滿有負關係，並與親職效能有正關係。這量表能為理論發展、實務及研究帶來新方向。