**About Us**

There is rising concern that American children are not achieving at their full potential, which will ultimately undermine the success of the United States in competing with other countries. Effective policies and programs aimed at what has been called America's vanishing potential require a sophisticated understanding of the development of children's motivation over the school years. The mission of the Center for Parent-Child Studies is to conduct systematic research on such development. Our emphasis is on identifying how parents can maximize children's motivation, engagement, and achievement in school, while also supporting their emotional adjustment. To this end, we study children and parents in not only the United States, but also China where children often out achieve their American counterparts.

**Specific Projects**

*The Early Math Learning Project*

The key goal of this project is to identify how to help parents support children’s math learning in the early years of school to set a motivational foundation that will sustain children as they face challenges in math in the later years of school. We are examining parenting practices that may be important to children’s math learning and how to optimize such practices. It is our hope that knowledge from this study may be used by school personnel to easily engage parents in children’s math learning in a constructive manner. This project is funded by the National Institute of Science.

*Parenting in the United States and China Projects*

We have several projects that focus on understanding how parenting and its effects on children converge and diverge in the United States and China, with attention to why. These projects are designed to identify cultural socialization cascades in which the unique cultural orientations and societal structures of the two countries create differences in parents’ goals and beliefs that drive their parenting practices and ultimately shape children’s academic and emotional functioning in the two countries. These projects have received funding from the National Institute of Child Development, National Science Foundation, and Hong Kong Research Council.

*Teen Stereotype Projects*

Much of our research over the years indicates that the early adolescent years in the United States and China are different. For example, American children on average become less engaged in school (e.g., spend less time on it and are less interested in it), whereas this is not the case for Chinese children. The key goal of these projects is to understand why the early adolescent years differ in the two countries. A guiding principle in our work is that culture shapes ideas about adolescence—what might be considered stereotypes about teens—which in turn influence youth both directly and indirectly (e.g., via peers, parents, and teachers). We are examining if supporting children in holding positive teen stereotypes can foster more positive adjustment during adolescence.