Primary Headteachers' Perspectives on the Emotional Geographies of Parent Participation in Schooling in Taiwan

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Through the lens of Andy Hargreaves's theoretical framework of emotional geographies, this article endeavors to investigate headteachers' perspectives of their interactions with parents in Taiwan. By employing qualitative interviews with primary headteachers, the research found that headteachers' emotional distances from parents were related to parents' sociocultural backgrounds, headteachers' sense of moral purposes, headteachers' concepts of professionalism, headteachers' behavior of political pretense, and the frequency to interact with parents. Five themes that emerged in the data were examined: (a) perceptions of headteachers toward parent backgrounds that were socioculturally stereotyped; (b) headteachers' viewpoints of moral purpose and their perspectives of caring for children that influenced how they interacted with parents and interpreted these interactions; (c) headteachers' sense of professionalism that was essentially influenced by parents' viewpoints of professional identity; (d) emotional masking for headteachers that was adopted to face parents' criticism or unreasonable requirements; (e) parents' willingness and abilities to participate in and around the school that could get physical closeness with headteachers. The article provides suggestions for practice.

Keywords: emotional geographies; parent participation; professionalism; moral purpose; emotional masking

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Introduction

This article explores the relationship between schools and families, and particularly concentrated on how headteachers perceive parents who participate in schools in terms of emotional geographies. Inspired by the cross-disciplinary field known as emotional geographies, this article examines how emotional dynamics are related to both people's conscious and unconscious behaviors in the places where they live (Bondi et al., 2007; Hallman & Benbow, 2007). This article particularly adopts A. Hargreaves's (2001) framework of emotional geographies. The framework helps us analyze the complexity of emotional bonds and understandings of schooling that further examine various forms of distance and closeness in people's interactions (A. Hargreaves, 2000).

Recently, educational reform efforts have reshaped power relations between schools and families, especially empowering parents to participate in decision-making within schools (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Helsby, 1999; Ingersoll, 2003; Wood & Su, 2019). Therefore, the issue of parent participation in schooling has become a flaming agenda. In particular, schools and families should create mutual collaborative relationships for children's education (Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). When parents participate in their children's education appropriately, children's academic achievement improves. In addition, parents actively participating in children's learning could reveal positive outcomes, such as regular attendance, good behavior, and improved teacher efficacy (Jeynes, 2005; Lawson, 2003; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Reynolds & Clements, 2005).

Nevertheless, building strong partnerships between schools and families is a complex task. While a few positive partnerships between schools and families exist in practice, conflict and estranged interactions are pervasive (Lasky, 2000). Around 90 years ago, Waller (1932) in his work *The Sociology of Teaching* described that:

> in fact, parents and teachers usually live in conditions of mutual distrust and enmity. Both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arise over it. The fact seems to be that parents and teachers are natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfort of the other. (p. 68)

In spite of recent educational reform endowing parents with influence over school decision-making and participation in school activities and management (Fatayan et al., 2020; Ng, 2007; Stefanski et al., 2016), both schools and families may lack sufficient and mutual understanding to facilitate family-school partnerships (Galindo & Pucino, 2012). Parent

participation in school management is probably deemed to result in uncertainty into teachers' teaching and to propose questions about their control over teachers' professional performance.

On the other hand, teachers and headteachers still have "classical" beliefs of professionalism under the circumstance of school-family relations (Evans, 2008; A. Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Sachs, 2016). To put it differently, beliefs in "teacher-as-expert" that reside in educational practitioners create a hierarchy of knowledge, value, and status that has an impact on teachers' unwillingness to regard parents as equals.

While the issue of parent participation in schooling is not a new topic, few empirical studies employ the framework of emotional geographies to examine how headteachers perceive their interactions with parents. In particular, educational reforms and policies nowadays pay much attention to accountability practices that trigger parents to exert pressure on headteachers in school governance. For headteachers, they may feel respected when some parents appreciate their leadership for the school and their children, but may feel frustrated while some bothersome parents yell unreasonable demands.

Literature Review

Emotional Understanding vs. Emotional Misunderstanding

Emotions are usually acknowledged and discussed within the literature of educational change and reform as they help administrators, reformers, and headteachers set the climate in which strategic planning can take place. As discussed above, educational reform initiatives empowering parents to actively participate in schooling do not just affect headteachers' knowledge, skill, and problem-solving capacity, but also affect a whole web of significant and meaningful relationships at the very heart of the headship process. Educational change efforts affect headteachers' relationships with their students, teachers, and the parents. Headteachers make heavy emotional investments in these relationships. This article specifically pays close attention to one of the most significant aspects of headship — the emotional relationships that headteachers have with the parents. The argumentation above has stressed the concern of headteachers' emotional burden with parent relationships. Therefore, this study would concentrate on the headteachers' perspectives on parent participation in schooling.

As far as headship is concerned, it does not only deal with management, but also *emotional practice* (A. Hargreaves, 1998). In the words of Denzin (1984), headship, like

teaching or many kinds of working, is not just a technical or cognitive practice, but also an emotional one. Denzin argued that an emotional practice is:

> an embedded practice that produces for the person, an expected or unexpected emotional alteration in the inner and outer streams of experience … The emotional practice radiates through the person's body and streams of experience, giving emotional culmination to thoughts, feelings and actions. (p. 89)

Likewise, headship as an emotional practice, colors and stimulates headteachers' own feelings, and the actions in which those feelings are embedded (i.e., headteachers' inner steams of experience). On the other hand, as an emotional practice, headship affects the feelings and actions of others with whom headteachers work and form relationships (i.e., headteachers' outer steams of experience). The emotional aspect of headship is always present in how headteachers concern about their work, people around them (e.g., their colleagues, parents, and students), or their own effectiveness (A. Hargreaves, 2004). Headship is always an emotional practice that evokes the feelings and actions of headteachers and those around them.

Headship as an emotional practice also necessarily involves extensive degrees of *emotional understanding*. According to Denzin (1984), emotional understanding:

> is an intersubjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experiences experienced by another. The subject interpretation of another's emotional experience from one's own standpoint is center to emotional understanding. Shared and sharable emotionality lie at the core of what it means to understand and meaningfully enter into the emotional experiences of another. (p. 137)

Emotional understanding, as Denzin (1984) argued, can be achieved when we listen to our own feelings and past emotional experiences to respond to someone else's. Emotional understanding helps us recognize the emotions being either justified or misinterpreted in the context, and it helps us to respond consequently (Rejeki et al., 2018).

On the contrary, without relationships of emotional understanding, headteachers or parents are inclined to experience emotional misunderstanding where they "mistake their feelings for the feelings of others" (Denzin, 1984, p. 134). Particularly, emotional misunderstanding occurs not simply because of personal insufficiencies in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Rather, it does exist in everyday interactions where human

engagements are not based on the kind of shared experiences that can make emotional understanding possible.

Parent participation in education may draw upon emotional understating as parents, teachers, administrators, and headteachers reach into what parent participation would/should be. Parent participation in education is multifaceted that may allow emotional understanding to occur among parents, teachers, administrators, and headteachers. Importantly, emotional understanding requires strong, enduring relationships between headteachers and parents so that they learn to understand each other over time. If people misunderstand how parents are responding, they misunderstand how parents participate in education. Misunderstanding can cause various negative emotions, from self and others (Liu, 2016). Successful parent participation in education therefore depends on establishing close bonds with parents, for teachers and headteachers, in order to foster mutual understanding and good relationships. Yet, a large amount of previous parent participation makes achieving such understanding difficult or impossible.

As stated above, mutual understanding could shorten emotional distance and build up closer relationships. Mutual understanding can be seen as an essential channel to positively strengthen emotional intensity (Bailen et al., 2019). Similarly, the results of experiments conducted by Van Boven et al. (2010) indicate that emotional intensity reduces perceived psychological distance. They further comment that emotional understanding is important that construct positively "psychological reality." Specifically, emotional understanding can facilitate empathy that promote altruistic and cooperative willingness and actions among members in the organization (Balconi & Canavesio, 2013; Chen & Li, 2018).

Emotional Geographies of Parent Participation in Schooling

In order to explore headteachers' socioculturally embedded emotions in connection with parent participation in schooling, the theoretical framework of the article is mainly according to A. Hargreaves's (2001) idea of the emotional geographies of human interaction, consisting of:

> the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and color the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other. (p. 1061)

This theoretical framework could offer an analytic lens of illustrating the supports for and threats to the basic emotional bonds and understandings of headteacher-parent relationships. Specifically, the portray of emotional geographies between headteachers and parents can be constructed by the forms of closeness or distance in headteacher-parent interactions. In other words, what helps not only to identify the "negative" emotions from headteachers toward headteacher-parent relations, but also to configure "positive" emotions?

Therefore, this article uses A. Hargreaves's (2001) theoretical framework of emotional geographies to examine headteachers' responses to headteacher-parent interactions. According to A. Hargreaves, the five dimensions of emotional geographies of human interactions are not merely physical aspects, but also interconnected with sociocultural, professional, political dimensions and headteachers' moral purposes.

Firstly, *sociocultural geographies*. Teachers and headteachers often consider that two-parent, middle-class nuclear family structures provide the "normal" conditions for children's education. A. Hargreaves (2001) commented that differences of ethno-culture, gender and class between teachers or headteachers and parents can bring about sociocultural distance and usually lead them to be treated as stereotypes. Such social stereotypes construct a sense of "otherness" or "difference" (e.g., Parr, 2005; Sibley, 1995) which could further distance headteachers themselves from specific "other" parents. In short, sociocultural geographies relate to the closeness or distance between headteacher and parents primarily based on parents' sociocultural backgrounds.

Secondly, *moral geographies*. Emotions are involved with purposes, such as being a teacher or a headteacher. For teachers and headteachers, the feeling of positive emotions may occur when they receive gratitude, appreciation, agreement, and support from parents (see also Wang & Degol, 2016). On the contrary, negative emotions may occur when teachers and headteachers feel their purposes as educational practitioners being threatened by parents' misunderstanding, disagreement, or criticism (see also Dowling, 2008). In short, moral geographies involve the closeness or estrangement between the headteachers' moral purposes (e.g., their pedagogical and ideological philosophies) and those of parents in relation to children' education.

Thirdly, *professional geographies*. Teachers and headteachers often consider themselves as educational professionals who are experts in teaching and school management. The notion of "expert vs. layman" viewed as "classical" model of professionalism is based on the traditionally male preserves of being professionals who should prevent emotional

entanglements from their clients' (or parents') problems and maintain professional distance from them (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019; A. Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Sachs, 1997).

On the other hand, the issue of social accountability has challenged the certainty of professional autonomy (Forrester, 2000; Locke, 2001), which is the key standpoint of "classical" model of professionalism. Much discussion of the new model of professionalism, or so called "new professionalism" coined by D. H. Hargreaves (1994), should be accountable to the wider community, mainly referring to parents in the present study (Torres & Weiner, 2018). In other words, requests and pressures from parents are increasingly dropped on teachers and headteachers. In short, professional geographies concentrate on the ideological conflict between competing forms of professionalism (i.e., classical or new model).

Fourthly, *political geographies*. For the past few years, power relations between headteachers and parents are changing. Specifically, with the increase of "parent power" during the latest decade (Francis & Hutchings, 2013), in spite of parents investing more and more resources and money into schooling, headteachers face plenty of pressures from parent demands, and this seems to bring about enlarged political distance between headteachers and parents. Moreover, sometimes headteachers could really do with managing or even masking their emotions while interacting with parents. According to Hochschild (1983), through emotional masking, headteachers present the "right" emotional appearance to parents and then could "buy" support from parents (see also Bryson, 2008, p. 344). Despite emotional masking and management seen as emotional competence or intelligence (Goleman, 1995), A. Hargreaves (2000) argues that such emotional masking could increase political distance between stakeholders. In short, political geographies concern the power relations between headteachers and parents.

Finally, *physical geographies*. If communication between headteachers and parents would be infrequent and non-face-to-face, this could expand the emotional distance. Instead, intensive and frequent interactions between headteachers and parents would trigger the establishment of emotional bonds. Headteacher-parent communication and interactions may occur either formally or informally. Formal occasions consist of prepared or scheduled meetings (e.g., parents' days or parents' nights in the United Kingdom, or sports day). Informal ones may happen in unexpected, infrequent, or inconsecutive interactions (e.g., picking children up at the school gate). In particular, less communication could lead to emotional misunderstanding. To be brief, physical geographies involve physical interfaces whereby better relationships between headteachers and parents may be enhanced in case of

frequent and continuous interactions, or worse relationships may be generated due to strings of episodic interactions (Albin-Clark, 2020).

Methodology

Research Participants

During the latest decade, primary education in Taiwan was undergoing multidimensional reforms, particularly in terms of home-school relations, including: (a) institutionalizing parent visit day or so called Parents' Day — that is, one day arranged for parents visiting schools where some formal meetings should be scheduled, such as school-level formal meetings for headteachers and parents; (b) new accountability systems, referring to the involvement of parent being consulted about school-level affairs, particularly empowering parents' role in exercising influence, typically through decision-making mechanisms. Being a member of global village and unavoidable to be influenced by globalization in educational reform, Taiwan has borrowed from European and American educational reform, adopting the school-based management model that enhances greater degree of parent authority and influence in decision-making forums in schools.

The data of this article were partially drawn from a study of the emotional fluctuation of educational reform, funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Taiwanese government, aiming to explore the emotional practices of parents' interactions with teachers and headteachers over two years. The sample was distributed across three varied schools of different sizes and serving different kinds of communities (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural areas).

The respondents in this study were one female and two male headteachers (45 to 60 years old). All three headteachers, Adam, Ben and Eva (all anonyms), in three varied schools were chosen as research participants. They all graduated from teacher training colleges, which provided them with much pedagogic knowledge and practical experiences in primary education. In addition, they all had a master's degree in education. All participants used to be class teachers and directors (according to the personnel structure in Taiwanese educational system, directors being below the headteacher but higher than teachers,). Due to their high positions, they had more frequent and significant interactions with parents than teachers. The study, then, spotlighted a particular, homogenous, and highly educated group of headteachers.

The schools that the three headteachers led were located in different areas: one with pupils less than 50 and some as minority children situated in a disadvantaged rural village; one with pupils more than 200 situated in suburban area; and the other with pupils more than 500 with some of their parents regarded as middle class (e.g., business owners or managers, doctors, or university teachers) in an urban city.

By choosing this extraordinary sample, the study highlighted headteacher-parent relations as perceived by headteachers who are professional with some interactions with parents. They all believed that teachers and headteachers are professionals with expert knowledge in schooling and children education. Additionally, in spite of empathy toward some minority parents (e.g., aboriginal parents or parents with low income), they admitted that they possessed some stereotypes on these minority parents. They regarded some parents as "normality" while others as "problematic." Owing to these sociocultural stereotypes and professional ideology mentioned above, the research findings revealed similar viewpoints toward parent participation in schooling.

Data Collection and Analysis

The three headteachers were asked to write down their "emotional diaries" and then were interviewed. Emotional diaries provided headteachers to reflect when or how they interacted with parents. Specifically, headteachers were required to focus on critical incidents. According to Woods (1996), "critical incidents are … exceptional kinds of activity that occur from time to time in the school … (which would be) representing major media of expression" (pp. 118–119). Critical incidents in this study included formal and informal locales and activities, such as the Parents' Day, the meetings of Parents' Association, and informal headteacher-parent meetings where the researcher observed how the three headteachers interacted with parents.

Interviews may serve as the most effective method of data collection in qualitative educational research. As Fontana and Frey (2000) argued, interviews are seen to give greater depth of understanding than other research techniques because they are based on a sustained relationship between the informant and the researcher for creating shared experiences. Interviews with the headteachers were semi-structured and iterative. They were conducted over a period of several months to accommodate headteachers' interactions with parents. Each interview lasted for around 1.5 hours and particularly concentrated on eliciting headteachers' experiences of their emotional relationships with parents participating in

children learning. All three headteachers were each interviewed three times, approximately over 10 hours in total. The first interview for the three headteachers was undertaken based on A. Hargreaves's (2001) theoretical framework to obtain initial pictures of their emotional reflections on headteacher-parent interactions. Then, the summary of the first interview was sent to the headteachers for validation. The second and the third interviews took place in the following months when an early version of qualitative accounts was discussed in detail with the headteachers respectively. Specifically, the purpose of the second and the third interviews was to make up some important information which did not emerge at the first interview. For example, some headteachers did not provide sufficient information related to their views of varied kinds of parent backgrounds (e.g., parents' classes, sexes, and ethnicities). Interviews were conducted in a location chosen by each headteacher, including the headteacher's office, my research office located in a central Taiwanese university, and a coffee shop. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

The interview protocol was developed to analyze how headteachers became aware of parent participation in education. This study adopted Hochschild's (1983) methodological procedures whereby headteachers were inquired about critical incidents in relation to headteacher-parent interactions. These procedures began with an outline of a set of issues in relation to headteacher-parent interactions. Interview questions were:

1. Tell me a bit about parent backgrounds in your school. How do you think about parent backgrounds in connection with parent participation in schooling?

2. What is your primary responsibility as a headteacher? Does recent educational reform regarding parent participation in education affect your purpose as a headteacher?

3. What do you think of the word "professionalism"? How do you regard teachers and headteachers as experts in education?

4. How do you evaluate that the rights of parent participation in schooling are gradually rising? In what circumstances do you hear parent criticism or obtain parent recognition in your headship?

5. How often do you contact with parents? Do you meet some parents on Parents' Day or during the meeting of Parents' Association? Are all parents willing to communicate with you? And why do some parents participate in headteacher-parent meetings?

Interview questions mentioned above were inspired by the theoretical framework of emotional geographies and then related to data analysis. Question one was enlightened by

the notion of sociocultural geographies in relation to parent backgrounds that could be categorized into socio-economic positions, ethnic groups, or marital status emerged from the data collected. Question two corresponded with the idea of moral geographies related to leadership responsibility or purpose as a headteacher. This could be related to the parents' attitudes of caring and support in children's education from headteachers responses. Question three responded to the dimension of professional geographies that analyzed headteachers' perception of the parents' viewpoints of professionalism or expert in education. Question four was related to the construct of political geographies that examined how headteachers thought of parent recognition of criticisms. Question five was related to the notion of physical geographies investigating the frequency and quality of headteacher-parent interactions.

In terms of data analysis, several methods were used, such as coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and memo sorting (Kolb, 2012; Marjan, 2017). The transcription of the first interview was analyzed with initial coding: word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, and segment-by-segment (Charmaz, 2014). Then theoretical coding was used to constantly compare with the codes emerged from interview transcription (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). For example, the code "caring" is regarded as a theoretical concept of moral geographies. Headteacher Ben delivered his comments on whether parents cared for their children's learning, which could be a good example for theoretical coding emerged from interview transcription. In addition, memo writing and memo sorting were important in order to try out codes and cluster of codes (Charmaz, 2014). Triangulation of evidence was used to ensure reliability of qualitative data by comparing headteachers' accounts. For example, the code "caring" was concerned by Headteachers Ben and Adam which could be a good example of data triangulation.

Data saturation is another essential part of consideration for data analysis. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), data saturation occurs "when the complete range of constructs that make up the theory is fully represented by the data" (p. 1375).

The collected qualitative data were sufficient to account for theoretical saturation. In other words, they were classified into five dimensions and more than ten sub-dimensions which could correspond to the theoretical framework of emotional geographies. In addition, the researcher began to hear similar comments from different respondents again and again, and data saturation was being achieved, reaching the time to stop gathering information and start data analysis.

Research Findings and Discussion

Emotional Geographies of Parent Participation in Schooling

This section first outlines the respondent headteachers' perceptions of their interactions with parents in connection with parents' sociocultural status. It then reveals an investigation of headteachers' moral distance from or closeness to parents, aiming at concentrating on headteachers' awareness of educational beliefs that are in line with or inconsistent with parents' viewpoints. Third, it presents headteachers' perception of professional distance or closeness with parents. Fourth, the investigation of headteachers' experiences of political dimension with parents is illustrated. Finally, it focuses on the examination of physical contact between headteachers and parents.

Sociocultural geographies and parent participation

Starting with a look at the sociocultural geographies of parent participation in schooling, this subsection investigates how parents' sociocultural backgrounds affect headteachers' perceptions of parent participation in schooling. The respondents in this study often had assumptions about parent backgrounds that are socioculturally stereotyped, showing their remarks on pupils' family backgrounds that had a critical influence on children's performances, including academic and behavioral aspects. As Headteacher Ben exclaimed:

> Some parents at the community are regarded as "the working class." There are few job opportunities to be offered so they look for jobs away from this rural area to the city. Parents seems incapable of providing the satisfactory environment for their children due to living in the poor community. Their children's academic performance is usually not good enough. What's worse, some pupils from the working class cannot keep pace with those who are from the middle class since their parents do not look after their children in schooling. In order to improve their academic performance and reading ability, my school develops a series of reading programs whereby pupils especially from culturally disadvantaged families could learn a lot. (Headteacher Ben)

Headteacher Adam conveyed similar remarks on his perceptions of parent participation in schooling, illustrating traditional norms of "disadvantaged" families unable to be in favor of supporting their children's education:

On Parents' Day, I expected that all parents from this community could visit the school and exchange some experiences in children's education. Unfortunately, some parents, especially those from low-incoming households, were unable to visit the school and have an opportunity to talk over their children's learning and performance. (Headteacher Adam)

Headteacher Adam's comments on parent participation in schooling seemed to be consistent with the stereotype that parents with middle to high socio-economic status have active participation in formal and informal activities in schools (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Driessen et al., 2005; Lawson, 2003). From Headteacher Adam's responses, parents being incapable of attending meetings or officially organized events were regarded as failure to support their children's education (Hughes et al., 1991). In this respect, it produced a sense of "otherness" toward parents from the working class or low-incoming families which was seen to increase sociocultural distance between headteachers and parents.

Additionally, parents are often classified as normality or abnormality according to their ethnic or racial categories, which is inclined to be viewed as "good" or "bad" related to home-school interactions. Some studies, for instance, have illustrated "black" parents not caring about their children's education (Charles et al., 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). In this study, some aboriginal parents' attitudes toward their children's education seemed to be unconcerned according to Headteacher Eva's comments. As she indicated:

In this community, some aboriginal parents seem not to take children's education carefully. One teacher coming into my office told me that one of his pupils was absent for several days … Later I phoned his aboriginal mother but she did not say anything … I tried to persuade her that she should bring her child to school according to the law, but she failed to do so. I was deeply frustrated by her responses. (Headteacher Eva)

Another aspect of parent backgrounds is related to parents' marital status. The study results are identical to some literatures that single-parent families can be problematic in children's education (Lasky, 2000; Townsend et al., 2008). Headteacher Adam's statement illustrated that single-parent families are usually unable to create a supportive family environment for children's education:

In my school there is a boy called Tom living with his father only. His mother died of a car accident when he was at an early age of around three. His father is often underemployed and pummels Tom frequently … Later Tom has been referred to a local foster home … I sympathize with his misfortunes very much. (Headteacher Adam)

Headteachers' accounts regarding home-school relations displayed their emotional distance from parents or emotional closeness to parents on the basis of parents' sociocultural backgrounds. It seems that the headteachers in this study thought of parents as "the others" by the emergence of certain stereotypes. In this way, it is difficult to generate emotional closeness and will enlarge the emotional distance between headteachers and parents due to parents being seen as "otherness" by the headteachers.

Moral geographies and parent participation

People's value judgment and beliefs are in relation to moral issues. Moral consistency and support may be achieved when people's value judgment and beliefs are identical. In doing so, emotional closeness will be generated among people included. In the study, the headteachers expressed that caring and dedication is the purpose of children's education. In particular, caring for children would be the most important matter for these headteachers who also urged that parents should be concerned:

> Caring for children's behavior and discipline is my most concern in school leadership. I frequently told to our school teachers who should spend time on children's behavior in discipline … Some parents appreciate my influence in teachers' instruction and moral education on children's discipline. (Headteacher Ben)

Certainly, when headteachers gain emotional support from parents regarding moral issue in children's education, they would reinforce their purpose of acting as a school chief leader (see also Wang & Degol, 2016).

However, headteachers may receive negative emotions from parents when parents were not concerned about caring for children's education (A. Hargreaves, 2001). For instance:

> In my view, caring for children's education is my responsibility, and parents' too. Some parents, as far as I know, seem to assume that children's education is not their responsibilities. They often expressed that they were not good at children learning. But I do believe if parents spend more time on caring for their children, children may try to improve their learning performance for their parents in turn. Parents often overlook their children's learning and this make me feel frustrated. (Headteacher Eva)

Headteachers Adam and Ben conveyed similar remarks on parents' uncaring attitudes toward their children's education:

> Some children are slow in learning over a long period of time or their behavior is not good enough. Yet, the real difficulty for me is when I phone their home, I am aware of the unconcerned feedbacks from their parents, illustrating that parents are uncaring to discuss about their children's learning. They have already abandoned their children. I cannot understand why these parents do not care about their children … (Headteacher Adam)

> To care about children's learning and behavior is the most important aspect in education. Some parents in the community have not paid much attention to their children's education … I am very disappointed in parents' mentality. (Headteacher Ben)

Emotional distance may be generated between headteachers and parents when headteachers are aware of parents as "uncaring" or "unresponsible" adults for their children's schooling (see also Maiti, 2017). The sense of demoralization may be perceived by headteachers whose efforts into children's education has been ignored by parents.

Professional geographies and parent participation

In professions such as teaching, the concept of professionalism is the key belief for teachers who have faith that they are specialists in education (Evans, 2008). The concept of "teachers as specialists" usually regarded as "classical professionalism" postulates that teachers should keep professional distance from parents (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019).

In this study, the headteachers became aware of favorable emotions from parents' support and recognition toward their professional leadership in education. When headteachers were showered with compliments on their excellent professional performance, they strengthened their authority and power over parents whereby enlarging emotional distance with parents. For example:

> Students' learning and behavior discipline is my most concern issue as a headteacher. My teachers and parents know my concern above … Some children's learning improved a lot by teachers' efforts and my continuous encouragement to do that … Several parents truly express their gratitude to my professional guidance and leadership in teacher's instruction. (Headteacher Adam)

Headteacher Ben delivered his perceptions of home-school relations under his leadership and management:

The school is located in rural area and most parents are farmers and salary earners … Most children are adorable and innocent. Nevertheless, I usually tell my teachers that we should do our best to improve children's learning capabilities. Education is our mission. Particularly, we should present our profession to children and parents since we are educational professionals. Quite often I meet parents when they pick up their children and present their gratitude for teachers' dedication in their children's education and my headship for the school. Overall, home-school relations are positive and I do enjoy working as a headteacher. (Headteacher Ben)

On the other hand, headteachers may receive parents' criticisms about their professional performance and leadership. Sometimes, parents' immoderate requests regarding their children's learning may provoke headteachers' negative emotions. Occasionally, parents' unreasonable requirements in relation to after-school activities seem to be unpleasant or offensive for the headteachers. For instance:

The school under my headship is situated in the city center. A number of parents are business owners, university professors, doctors, or working as managers. They sometimes accuse me of not taking my leadership seriously enough … In fact, some parents push me to arrange more extracurricular programs for their children. Based on the measurement of the whole school management and development, I do not meet their requirements regarding extracurricular programs. I am not happy with these parents. (Headteacher Adam)

The headteachers demonstrated that parents' needs or agreement with their notion of professionalism may have an impact on their perceptions of professional identity. These respondents seemed to retain the perspective of "classical professionalism" (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019), indicating that parents should respect their professional performance and express their positive support to the headteachers. On the other hand, parents were inclined to possess the notion of "new professionalism" (Torres & Weiner, 2018), demanding headteachers to design some extra curriculum for their children which may bring about headteachers' emotional distance. Headteachers' sense of emotional closeness or distance is significantly affected by parents' definition or redefinition of professionalism.

Political geographies and parent participation

Educational reforms in Taiwan have stressed on the rights of parents who can deliver

their voices and needs for the better quality of education. In Taiwan, the *Education Basic Law* has allowed parents to participate in schooling and to choose what kind of school or educational system suitable for their children's learning. Brown (1997) has coined the term "the ideology of parentocracy," referring to the emergence of parent power in education, including parent involvement and parent choice in education. Under such circumstances, headteachers encounter more and more pressures from parents, which may trigger uncertain emotions for headteachers. Lasky (2005) argued that headteachers and teachers face more requirements and pressures from parents with the emergence of parent power in education.

In order to avoid possible conflict with parents, educational practitioners usually "pretend" their authentic emotions particularly while facing parents' criticisms (e.g., headteachers seem to reveal positive emotions to parents but actually they have negative emotions in mind; this indicates a pretense) (A. Hargreaves, 2001). Such an emotional pretense for educational practitioners accords with what Goleman (1995) coins the term "emotional masking." The following is an example:

> Once a father was indignantly running into my office, complaining that his child was taught by his teacher's inappropriate methods. I attempted to pacify his angry emotions and patiently listened to his complaints … In the end he became fully aware of what he heard was not real and express his apology to me. But you know, I had to "manage" my emotions and tried my best to communicate with this father. (Headteacher Adam)

For Headteacher Adam, he could not help but employ emotional management to reduce disturbed or even conflicting interactions with the parent. Particularly when educational practitioners face conflicting situations with parents, they often will not disclose their real emotions (e.g., uneasy or anxious or even angry emotions) but illustrate cool-headed and positive emotions. In spite of the importance of managing one's emotions to enhance organizational effectiveness argued by Goleman (1998), Boler (1999) criticized that the way of managing emotions could bring about "selling out" the authentic self. On the surface, emotional management could create "nice" relations with the clients (here referring to parents in this study), but it could undermine "real" and "authentic" relations in the long term.

Being an educational practitioner is laborious and needs to be aware of the importance of "professional image" (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2016). For example:

Educational professionals in Eastern societies are usually viewed as educated men who are erudite in the society. Parents often pay respects to teachers and headteachers … In spite of parent power getting higher than ever, we should not be against parents even if they release negative emotions, such as anger or fury, blaming us for "bad" or "wrong" instruction … Gradually we are getting used to pretending our authentic emotions, i.e., masking our real emotions to appease parents' complaint or grievance. Being a "qualified" educational professional is to manage your emotions properly. (Headteacher Eva)

Headteachers or teachers normally pretend or mask their emotions in the face of parents' reproaches or unreasonable demands. According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), the way of masking emotions usually corresponds with the expectations of the role-play. Emotional masking or pretense could decrease the degree of conflict between educational professionals and parents. A. Hargreaves (2000) argued that emotional pretense is regarded as a protective strategy for educational practitioners to ease up parents' hostility or other negative emotions. Headteachers and teachers may maintain political distance with parents due to "pretending" real emotions that could be danger to positive relations in the long run.

Physical geographies and parent participation

Physical geographies are concerned with physical interfaces whereby people can liaise with each other. These physical interfaces consist mainly of face-to-face interactions, meetings, written documents, or even communication software (e.g., Line or Messenger) and so on. People may feel close to ones who live miles away through these physical interfaces. Yet, emotional distance may be generated from other person's unpleasant or opposite attitudes even though communication interfaces have been applied frequently. In this regard, emotions have imaginary geographies among people involved (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Andrew, 2015). In this study, headteacher-parent interactions could be seen in formal and informal contact or communication. Headteacher Eva appreciated that some parents willing to be volunteers helped teachers and children in all respects:

In my school parents set up the volunteering club. Some are assigned as lollipop men who momentarily stop the traffic flow whereby students can pass through the junction. Some work as story-tellers when homeroom teachers participate in the faculty meeting. Some are dedicated to other works, such as being assistants in the school library, or cashier in the school co-op. (Headteacher Eva)

Headteacher Eva continued to convey her gratitude to parents being volunteers as below:

> Most parents acting as volunteers in my school are housekeepers or business owners. Free time is available for them to work as volunteers … I often express my thanks to their selfless and enthusiastic dedication whenever I meet them. In my view, school-community relations would be better with their help and assistance. (Headteacher Eva)

The comments above by Headteacher Eva indicate that physical closeness has been connected between headteachers and parents coming from parents willing to be volunteers in the school (see also Knudson, 2016). Headteachers meet voluntary parents more frequently than other parents; this would generate closer relations. Regular and constant interactions between headteachers and voluntary parents could bring positive emotions for headteachers (Liew, 2014).

On the other hand, in secondary schools, interactions between educational professionals and parents are extremely sporadic and fractionary (Lasky, 2000). In addition, Walker (1998) further maintained that it is difficult to build up physical closeness with regard to home-school relations in secondary education. On the contrary, educational professionals and parents create better mutual interactions due to frequent communications. Likewise, most teacher respondents in A. Hargreaves's (2001) research demonstrate positive emotions with parents involved in informal discussions related to children's learning.

Friendly and satisfactory partnerships have been achieved between headteachers and parents from Eva's statement. Conducting volunteering service for parents in the school may promote positive relations with headteachers who would strongly form physical closeness with parents.

Conclusions and Implications

This study adopts A. Hargreaves's (2001) five dimensions of emotional geographies to investigate how headteacher interviewees' emotions would be affected by their interactions with parents. The dimensions of emotional geographies are used as the analytic framework which is connected with parents' sociocultural backgrounds, headteachers' standpoints of moral purposes and professionalism, headteachers' emotional masking, and physical relations between headteachers and parents. The headteachers' emotional practices involved with parent interactions, according to the qualitative data revealed, could be interrelated to

headteachers' moral purposes, their viewpoints of parents' social backgrounds, the standpoint of professionalism, and their perceptions of parent power connected with participation in schooling.

The data collected illustrated that the respondents perceived headteacher-parent relationships significantly related to parents' sociocultural factors. It revealed that headteachers' emotions were mainly influenced by parents' sociocultural backgrounds, including their occupations or class identity, ethnic groups or marital status. The headteachers appeared to be inevitable to consider that some parents were seen as "the others" according to particular stereotypes. Secondly, if the moral purposes in children's learning were consistent between headteachers and parents, this would elicit headteachers' sense of emotional closeness and vice versa. Particularly when the educational beliefs among headteachers and parents were identical, headteachers would be aware of positive emotions from parents' responses. Thirdly, headteachers still considered themselves as educational specialists and regarded parents as laymen. In this respect, they kept the notion of "classical professionalism" whereby remaining professional distance from parents. Fourthly, when headteachers became aware of parents' criticisms or unreasonable requests, they normally used emotional masking to soften parents' negative attitudes. Lastly, physical interfaces might bring about physical closeness or distance relying on the frequency of headteacher-parent interactions, and parents' willingness to be volunteers in and around the school.

Every study has limitations and boundaries, and the current study is no exception. The findings from this study merely illustrated three headteachers' perspectives on the emotional geographies of parent participation in schooling. Owing to the study focusing on a particular, homogenous, and highly educated group of headteachers (all with a master's degree in education) whose sociocultural stereotypes and professional ideology toward parent participation in schooling revealing similar viewpoints, the study did not explore the differences of perceptions between headteachers from different kinds of school (urban or rural). To some degree, the study corresponds with Lasky's (2000) viewpoints that the headteacher respondents conveyed their personal and cultural beliefs in their interactions with parents, mainly influenced by the professional norm-based discourses and values they possessed within the culture of schooling. In addition, the findings of this study should be considered as local knowledge while not to be generalized to all headteachers serving in all kinds of schools. Nonetheless, the results from this study supplement the body of academic

knowledge on headteacher-parent interactions particularly through the lens of emotional geographies.

Finally, this article suggests that we should be aware of the importance of understanding headteacher's emotional geographies in the new context, especially public concern on educational accountability and parent power in schooling. In spite of educational reform efforts much more empowering parents to participate in school affairs and urging headteachers and teachers to interact with parents more frequently than ever, headteachers in this study still kept their certain emotional distance from parents, largely affected by their professional beliefs and stereotypes. In other words, the educational accountability and emerging parent power has not influenced headteachers' professionalism. Headteachers in this study possessed their "classical" professionalism, regarding themselves as educational specialists as usual. They still believed that parents should show their respect toward headteachers' and teachers' professional decisions and judgments. In order to build up better partnerships between schools and families, headteachers should open their minds, trying to listen to what parents need, and amending their certain stereotypes toward some parents to treat parents equally as much as they can.

Studying emotional geographies can be of great benefit to headteachers and parents. This study of emotional geographies has particular implications for headteacher-parent interactions. Headteachers can promote their relationships with parents by achieving emotional closeness. To do so, headteachers should communicate with parents equally regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds. They should also discuss educational beliefs with parents and redefine their standpoint of professionalism flexibly. In addition, headteachers' effort on reducing parent criticism or unreasonable requirements can improve home-school relations comparatively. Closing the gap between headteachers and parents by considering emotional closeness can facilitate mutual understanding. As long as headteachers and parents could cooperate in terms of authentic participation, children's education and school effectiveness will be enhanced from their partnership.

Acknowledgements

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台灣國小校長對家長參與學校教育之情緒地理觀點

陳幸仁

摘 要

　　本研究以 Andy Hargreaves 的情緒地理理論架構，探究台灣國小校長對家長參與學校教育的觀點。透過與國小校長的質性訪談，本研究發現，校長和家長之間的情緒距離受到家長社會文化地位、校長自身的道德目的、校長所抱持的專業主義立場、校長是否政治偽裝，以及和家長互動的頻率相關。從質性資料中發現五個主題：（1）校長看待家長社會文化背景存在刻板印象；（2）校長的道德目的和對孩童關切的想法會影響與家長的互動關係；（3）校長的專業主義立場同樣影響家長專業認同的看法；（4）當面對家長批評或不合理要求時，校長採取情緒偽裝；（5）家長有意願和有能力參與學校事務，易拉近和校長的物理距離。最後，本文提出一些實務建言。

關鍵詞：情緒地理；家長參與；專業主義；道德目的；情緒偽裝

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