Chinese kindergarten teacher beliefs, attitudes, and
responses towards social behaviours in the classroom:
Examining social withdrawal and social engagement

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine Chinese teachers' beliefs, attitudes and responses towards social withdrawal (shyness and unsociability) and social engagement (exuberance and prosocial behaviour) within the classroom context. The sample included $N=672$ (in-service) Chinese kindergarten teachers from Shanghai and surrounding areas. Teachers were presented with a series of vignettes depicting hypothetical children displaying shy, unsociable, exuberant, and prosocial behaviours. Following each vignettes, teachers responded to a series of questions assessing their responses (e.g., intervene), emotional reactions (e.g., worry, anger), attitudes (e.g., tolerance), and beliefs (e.g., perceived social and academic implications). In general, teachers appeared to be more concerned towards shy and exuberant behaviours as compared to unsociable and prosocial behaviours across a variety of response items. Further, teachers made distinctions among the subtypes of social withdrawal and social engagement. Results are discussed in terms of implications for the classroom, cultural differences, and suggestions for future research.

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Chinese Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs, Attitudes and Responses towards Social Behaviours in the Classroom: Examining Social Withdrawal and Social Engagement

Teachers play an important and unique role in children's lives. Teachers may be one of the first important non-family adults in a child's life (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009), and function as educators as well as caregivers. Literature on early school transition highlights the critical role that teachers play in shaping a child's school adjustment and socialization (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Further, teachers are determinants of classroom decisions and management strategies (Fang, 1996; Isenberg, 1990; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Yonemura, 1986), and therefore have a large impact on students in their classrooms. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards children's social behaviours can have direct and indirect influences on their academic and social development (Fang, 1996; Vartuli, 1999). Thus, increasing our understanding of teachers' beliefs, attitudes and responses to social behaviours in the classroom is essential, and will assist in understanding the potential effects that teachers' beliefs systems can have on young children in the classroom context.

Cultural differences can play a substantive role in shaping individuals beliefs and attitudes. For example, researchers who have investigated preschool teachers' goals and beliefs regarding preschoolers' problem behaviours have found both universal and culturally specific characteristics (Chen, Zappulla, Coco, Schneider, Kaspar, & DeOliveira et al., 2004; Killen, Ardila-Rey, Barakkatz, & Wang, 2000; Kistner, Metzler, Gatlin, & Risi, 1993; LaFreniere, Masataka, Butovskaya, Chen, Dessen, Atwanger et al., 2002; Mendez, McDermott, & Fantuzzo, 2002; Mpofu, Thomas, & Chan, 2004; Smith, 2001; Tudge, Hogan, Lee, Tammeveski, Meltsas, Kulakova et al., 1999). However, to

date we know little about teacher beliefs regarding children's *specific* social behaviours in non Western cultures. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the novel topic of Chinese teachers' beliefs, attitudes and responses to a variety of social behaviours in the classroom.

In the following sections, an overview of teachers' belief formations and implications for students is presented. The various social behaviours relevant to this study are then briefly reviewed. Followed by this, relevant studies pertaining to Chinese culture, beliefs and implications for these social behaviours in China are discussed. This provides background and further insight to the current study.

Overview of Teacher Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs represent their general knowledge and feelings of objects, people, and events that affect their general planning, interactive thoughts, and decisions (Nisbett & Ross, 1980), as well as their classroom planning (Fang, 1996). Teachers' attitudes can support or diminish the effectiveness of teachers as classroom leaders, by influencing their beliefs about themselves, the students, and the classroom environment (Kilgore, Ross, & Zbikowski, 1990). It is important from a developmental perspective to assess these beliefs, as they can have serious academic and developmental implications for the students in the classroom (e.g., Coplan et al., 2011; Fang, 1996; Vartuli, 1999).

A wide variety of teachers' beliefs have been studied, including beliefs about teachers' own self-efficacy (Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002), how teachers' beliefs effect their practice (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009; Fang, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman, Saywer, Pianta, & LaFaro, 2006; Vartuli, 1999), and teachers' beliefs regarding socio-cultural differences and children's school competence (Han, 2010). The

focus of this study was on teachers' beliefs about children's classroom social behaviours (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Chang, 2001; Coplan et al., 2011, Coplan et al., 2014; Dellamattera, 2011; Farmer et al., 2011).

Importance of teacher beliefs. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes and responses to various child social behaviours are increasingly important to understand, as teachers are major determinants of classroom decisions and classroom management strategies (Fang, 1996; Isenberg, 1990; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Yonemura, 1986). It is essential to know more about teachers' beliefs in the classroom, as researchers have found that teachers present their beliefs in their classroom by "teaching what they are" and "what they believe" (Howard, 2006; Irvine, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Teachers are extremely important in the lives of children, as they have the authority to set the rules and parameters of acceptable social behaviours in the school setting, to facilitate opportunities and activities for social interaction, and to scaffold and shape the types of social experiences that students have with their peers (Farmer et al., 2011). Further, teachers may function as both a caregiver and educator, as they can provide students with emotional warmth and guidance, as well as educational experiences. These actions can provide a foundation for children's future academic and socio-emotional development.

Formation of teacher beliefs. Teachers' beliefs are built off a variety of educational decisions and past experiences. For example, Rimm-Kaufman et al., (2006) asserts that: (1) beliefs may be based on judgment that guides teachers' thinking and decision making, which in turn reflects their behaviour in the classroom; (2) beliefs may be unconscious, such that teachers may be unaware of where their beliefs originated; (3) teachers' beliefs may be built on a foundation of both their professional and personal

lives; (4) beliefs may potentially become more personalized as classroom experience grows, which may impede efforts to alter classroom practices; and (5) beliefs are potentially valuable in the way they guide thinking and influence the actions of the teacher. The formation of teachers' beliefs has been examined by a number of other studies that support these above assertions (Borg, 2001; Evans, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 2002; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Romanowski, 1998).

It has also been proposed that teachers' beliefs are shaped by influences of discipline (e.g. undergraduate degree), subculture and professional development (Bean & Zulich, 1992). For example, there is evidence to suggest that teacher beliefs may be impacted by the quality of a Bachelor of Education program (e.g. courses required, placements provided) (Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009), and the opportunity for reflection on their teaching experiences (Brousseau, Book & Byers, 1988; Cherland, 1989; Richards, Gipe & Thompson, 1987). Different types of teacher beliefs can result from these influences and life experiences, as they have the potential to shape who teachers are, and what guides their beliefs and attitudes. Beliefs can thus be "built into" teachers' expectations of their students' performance – both academically and socially. Regardless of the form that teacher beliefs take, they can affect both the teaching and the learning of students in the classroom (Fang, 1996), as well as the student's social and academic adjustment in the classroom (Evans, 1996; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Teacher beliefs and child outcomes. Teachers' beliefs about child development may influence their classroom decisions (Fang, 1996; Vartuli, 1999), responses to specific child behaviours (Abelson, 1979; Cunningham & Sugawara, 1988), overall

teaching style (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & Hernandez, 1991), and ultimately the social and academic wellbeing of children in the classroom. Teachers' specific perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the characteristics and social behaviours of individual students in their classrooms appear to influence important child outcomes, including peer relationships and the formation of teacher-child relationships (e.g., Evans, 1996; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Saft & Pianta, 2001). Moreover, teachers' beliefs about children's social characteristics may influence their inferences about other child traits, such as intelligence and academic skills, which is be expanded upon in future sections (e.g., Coplan et al., 2011; Gordon & Thomas, 1967).

Teacher beliefs contribute to children's classroom learning experience, provides rules and classroom regulations, and directly influences children's behaviours towards peers in the classroom (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). Teacher beliefs and perceptions of problem behaviours are significantly related to commands given to students in the classroom. For example, Dobbs and Arnold (2009) observed that teachers gave more pre-emptive verbal commands (as opposed to pre-emptive praise) to students who they perceive as having problem behaviours.

Moreover, teachers may also have differing beliefs and perceptions regarding classroom management (Jones, 1996; Prawat & Nickerson, 1985) and prefer different types of student behaviours. This may in turn may have an impact on intervention styles and tolerances for various social behaviours (Brophy & Evertson, 1981; Wentzel, 1991, 2002). For example, Wenzel (2002) found that teachers who have higher expectations of their students and valued maturity consistently predicted more positive goals and academic interest in their students. In comparison, teachers who more strongly valued

negative feedback tended to predict more negative academic performance and poor social behaviour in their students. Thus, teachers' beliefs and attitudes appears to affect the actions and outcomes of their students. Indeed, these differences in teachers' beliefs are often accurately perceived by the students in their classroom (Marshall & Weinstein, 1984), and the students' academic and social behaviours may be further impacted (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Therefore, it is important to research the area of teacher beliefs to provide conclusive findings towards a variety of social behaviours. Further, it is also fundamental that teachers understand the impact that their beliefs may have on the children in their classroom, as their beliefs can affect the academic and developmental outcomes of their students.

Teachers and socialization in early childhood. The research literature on early school transitions highlights the role of social relationships (with parents, teachers, and peers) as contributors that help to shape children's school-related competencies and adjustment trajectories in early elementary school (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Social relationships are presumed to play a critical regulatory function as children negotiate the adaptive challenges of the transition to school (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). In previous literature, it has been suggested that teachers' beliefs are at the heart of the socialization process in educational settings, as children's early experiences in the classroom provide them with rules and expectations of schooling, and serve to be a solid foundation for learning (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Apple & King, 1977). This is particularly evident at the kindergarten level. For example, it has been found that kindergarten teachers focus on socializing children to school and children's general behaviour, whereas first grade teachers focus on children's skill-based

learning (Spodek, 1988). Therefore, given their strong focus on the socialization of young children in the classroom, it would seem particularly important to examine the beliefs of *kindergarten* teachers towards children's social behaviours.

It is not surprising that teachers are essential to the socialization process in the classroom, particularly in the early years of a child's education (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). Brophy and Good (1974) suggest that teachers, as socializing agents of the classroom, influence students' behaviours through their interpretation of institutional values and personal expectations. Teachers are in a position to develop and guide the classroom as a society by simultaneously directing the values of their institution, while also providing students with opportunities to collectively construct their own peer culture (Farmer et al., 2011) and to socially adapt. Children's social adaption in the classroom requires them to not only negotiate with their peers, but also to understand and recognize the expectations of the classroom teacher, and that of the institution (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Individual teacher beliefs may differ (Fang, 1996), which may cause confusion among children in the classroom, and therefore social adaption in the classroom is pivotal to students' social and academic development.

Teachers can also be viewed as social leaders of the classroom and provide students with a social system in the classroom context (Farmer, 2000). Accordingly, teachers have the unique opportunity to shape the general peer culture by discreetly managing classroom interaction patterns and activities, and by promoting the productive engagement of all students (Baker, Clark, Crowl & Carlson, 2009). Thus, teachers can help socially struggling students to develop new social roles and identities that can enhance how they are perceived by their classroom peers (Cairns & Cairns, 1994;

Farmer, Stuart, Lorch, & Fields, 1993; Wentzel, 2003). This is particularly important to children who display *atypical* classroom behaviours, as they are often in need of teacher intervention. As previously mentioned, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards social behaviours can drive the teacher to intervene in various child scenarios. For example, Coplan and colleagues (2011) found that whereas teachers reported that they would encourage shy children to become involved in social situations with peers, they also indicated that they would intervene the least in response to prosocial behaviours.

When students are aggregated together within a social unit such as a classroom, their interpersonal activities and social behaviours tend to be guided by two distinct processes (Farmer & Xie, 2007). On one hand, behavioural expectations and social opportunities are primarily directed by adults in the classroom environment (such as teachers). On the other hand, children must also coordinate their actions and activities with their peers, which is often under the influence of teachers' belief systems. In general, it appears that effective teaching involves organizing the overall structure of student interaction and activities in the classroom, while utilizing knowledge about social processes to promote the educational and social engagement of children (Baker, Clark, Maier, & Viger, 2008; Wentzel, 2002). Teachers are in a position to develop, guide, and direct the classroom as a society. Society in this context refers to a "social unit" which includes a defined set of individuals (from the classroom environment), with predefined and evolving rules, and a set of norms provided primarily by the culture of the school and classroom teacher (Durkheim, 1933; Erikson, 1966; Giddens, 1985). Therefore, teachers' beliefs are essential to understand as they have a clear impact on the class as a "social unit".

Farmer and colleagues (2011) characterize the classroom from a social dynamic perspective, as teachers are situated to manage peer interaction in the classroom context. They suggest that teachers can set the tone for the social climate by establishing appropriate social rules and guidelines among children in the classroom. Further, they speculate that teachers are in a unique position to foster social opportunities and productive peer cultures, to establish new social competencies and skills, and to manage classroom social structures (Farmer et al., 2011). As the attitudes and beliefs of individual teachers differ, teachers may impact the classroom in substantially distinctive ways. Thus, it is imperative to further understand the underlying beliefs and attitudes of teachers, as they can directly influence children and their educational environment.

Taken together, there is significant evidence that teachers can have a substantive impact on the future outcomes of the children under their purview. Farmer and colleagues (2011) found that beliefs and reactions of teachers towards students in the classroom affect peers attitudes towards their classmates. For example, if teachers tend to discipline certain students more often than others, peers in the class may react in similar ways (Farmer et al., 2011), which may negatively impact a child's social status. Investigating the determinants of teachers' attitudes and beliefs and their relative importance is crucial for improving teaching practices, quality of teacher education, and professional development opportunities for effective inclusion of atypical social behaviours that manifest in the classroom (MacFarlane & Woolfosn, 2013).

In the present study, the primary focus was on teachers' beliefs about different types of children's social behaviours. Two categories of behaviours were explored: (1) *social withdrawal* (which includes the subtypes of shyness and unsociability); and (2)

social engagement (which includes the subtypes of exuberance and prosocial behaviours). An overview of each of these behavioural groups is provided in the following sections.

Social Withdrawal in the Classroom

Socially withdrawn children tend to isolate themselves from their peers (i.e., stemming from internal causes), resulting in a child *choosing* to play alone in the presence of available peers (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Because their lack of peer interactions, socially withdrawn children may “miss out” on the substantive and unique benefits of peer relations, and are at increased risk for a wide range of socio-emotional and school adjustment difficulties (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). In terms of teacher responses, teachers tend to tolerate socially immature behaviours (e.g., social withdrawal) more than socially defiant behaviours (e.g., aggression) (Algozzine et al., 1983; Safran & Safran, 1984). Teachers also indicate that they would intervene with socially withdrawn children by directing them to peer groups (Coplan et al., 2011). Furthermore, teachers report that they would respond in more empathetic ways towards socially withdrawn behaviours (Chang, 2001).

Rubin and Coplan (2004) described social withdrawal as an umbrella term, encompassing different forms of social withdrawal stemming from different motivations regarding why children choose to play alone. Two distinct forms of social withdrawal are *shyness* and *unsociability* (Rubin & Coplan, 2004). There is increasing evidence that parents (Coplan, Prakash, O’Neil, & Armer, 2004), teachers (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), and even young children (Coplan, Girardi, Findlay, & Frohlick, 2007) can differentiate between these different forms of social withdrawal.

Shyness. Shyness refers to wariness and anxiety in the face of socially novel situations and perceived social evaluation (Rubin & Coplan, 2004). One of the most frequent descriptions of both shy children and adults is “they do not talk” (Crozier, 1995; Younger, Schneider, & Guirguis-Younger, 2008). According to a conceptual model proposed by Asendorpf (1990), shyness is derived from an internal conflict of approach and avoidance and is manifested in wary vigilant behaviours. Over the last 20 years, shyness has received growing attention from researchers, clinicians, parents and teachers (e.g., Asendorpf, 1990; Buss & Plomin, 1984; Coplan & Armer, 2007; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009).

Shyness is moderately to highly stable from childhood to adolescence (e.g., Asendorpf, 1989), particularly among extreme groups (Kagan, 1997). Further, shyness is associated with a variety of negative adjustment outcomes such as internalizing problems (self-esteem problems, loneliness, anxiety), peer difficulties (including exclusion and rejection), and poor school adjustment (school difficulties and avoidance) (e.g., Coplan, Closson, & Arbeau, 2007; Coplan et al., 2004; Coplan, Gavinsky- Molina, Lagace-Seguin, & Wichmann, 2001; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). For example, although shyness has not been found to associate with scores on IQ tests in children, it is negatively associated with teacher ratings of academic achievement (Hughes & Coplan, 2010). This could be due to shy children’s performance anxiety and tendency to speak less in the classroom (Evans, 1987; Gordan & Thomas, 1967). It is important to note that this is not the case for all shy children. Protective factors such as good language skills (expressive, vocabulary, pragmatics) (Asendorpf, 1994; Coplan & Armer, 2005; Coplan & Weeks, 2009), and high quality friendships may act as a buffer for shy children from possible

negative outcomes (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth- LaForce, & Burgess, 2006).

The transition of young children into the kindergarten classroom may be particularly problematic for shy children, even after the setting becomes familiar (Coplan, Arbeau & Armer, 2008; Evans, 2001; Henderson & Fox, 1998; Rimm-Kaufman & Kagan, 2005). For example, the presence of a large peer group and academic demands pertaining to verbal participation in the classroom may serve to exacerbate shy children's feelings of social fear and self-consciousness (Coplan & Arbeau, 2008). In early education settings, young, shy children rarely initiate conversations or social contacts, instead they tend to hover on the edges of social interactions without joining in, display overt signs of anxiety, and poorer social skills (Asendorpf & Meier, 1993; Bohlin, Hagekull, & Andersson, 2005; Coplan, Debow, Schneider, & Graham, 2009; Coplan, Prakash, et al., 2004; Rimm-Kaufman & Kagan, 2005; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2013). Gazelle (2006) found that anxious solitary children (which is a construct related to shyness) were at increased risk for peer rejection, victimization and symptoms of depression in classrooms with negative emotional climates (e.g., hostile atmosphere, irritable teacher, under managed classrooms). Thus, the classroom and teacher can play a critical role in the social and emotional development of shy children.

It has been suggested that teachers may encourage shy behaviour in the classroom, as it helps maintain a quiet and manageable classroom environment (Evans, 2001; Rubin, 1982), which is extremely important to teachers (Clunies-Ross, Little, Kienhuis, 2007; Ritter & Hancock, 2008). Some researchers have suggested that shy children may become "invisible" to the teacher (Keogh, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman et al.,

2002; Rimm-Kaufman & Kagan, 2005; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). This may not bode well for shy children, as they may withdraw further from classroom socialization and peers. Shy children tend to be overly dependent of teachers (e.g., Ladd & Burgess, 1999). Moreover, evidence suggests that shy children are viewed by teachers as less competent (Evans, 2001) and intelligent in comparison to more talkative peers (Coplan et al., 2011). These results were illustrated through a hypothetical vignette methodology, which has become a common practice in teacher belief research.

Teachers' perceptions of shy children's lower intelligence puts them at risk in creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Coplan et al., 2011). Therefore, teachers' expectations of shy children not to succeed academically may consequently influence shy children's view of themselves, which may cause them to "live down" to these preconceived expectations. This is in line with the Pygmalion Effect (Hauck, Martens & Wetzel, 1986), which asserts that raising or decreasing expectations of students could raise or decrease self-perceived competence and therefore academic ability (Good & Brophy, 2003; Jussim, Smith, Madon & Palumbo, 1998; Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000; Spitz, 1999). For example, Rubie-Davies and colleagues (2006) found that students with high expectation teachers increased in self-perceived academic ability, whereas those students with low expectation teachers decreased dramatically.

However, recent results suggest that kindergarten teachers do view shyness as a problem, and these teachers believe student shyness can result in serious social and academic costs. For example, in response to hypothetical vignettes, teachers indicated that they would intervene and promote social skill acquisition for shy children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Moreover, teachers were found to use intervention methods such as peer

focused strategies (involving encouraging shy children to join in group activities), and were less likely to use high-powered strategies (such as punishment) (Coplan et al., 2011).

There have also been studies suggesting that parents and peers tend to respond more negatively towards shy boys than shy girls (Coplan, 2004; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Rubin, Burgess, & Coplan, 2002; Rubin & Coplan, 2004). However, these gender differences have not been evidenced by teacher responses (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011; Coplan et al., 2014). It has been suggested that perhaps teacher training programs “override” gender stereotypical beliefs regarding children’s social behaviours (Coplan et al., 2014).

Unsociability. Unsociability refers to children withdrawing from peer interaction because of a preference for solitary activities (Coplan et al., 2004). Asendorpf (1990) suggests that unsociable children have low levels of both approach and avoidance in social settings. That is, children may prefer to play alone but do not have difficulties engaging in social situations, such as playing with peers in the classroom or participating in group activities (Coplan et al., 2004). Unsociability may be manifested behaviourally by the quiescent exploration of objects, and/or construction activity while playing alone (Coplan, 2000; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993).

As compared to other forms of social withdrawal, unsociability is thought to be relatively “benign”, particularly in early childhood (Coplan, 2000; Coplan, Rubin, Fox, & Calkins, 2014), and is not concurrently related to psychosocial maladjustment (Coplan et al., 2001; Coplan et al., 2004; Hart et al., 2000; Rubin, 1982). Coplan and Weeks (2010) recently found that unsociable children reported more positive school attitudes than

others. When looking at outcomes related to child unsociability, it has been found to relate to higher attention span and less negative emotionality (Coplan et al., 2004). Further, Rubin (1982) suggested that many solitary activities that are observed in young children are constructive and even educational in nature. This could aid in the academic development of unsociable children. Moreover, unsociability has not been found to relate to anxiety, loneliness, or other indices of internalizing problems in early childhood (Coplan et al., 2004; Harrist et al., 1997). However, Coplan et al., (2007) found that unsociable children (as described with hypothetical vignettes) were seen as less attractive playmates and were liked less than comparison children.

Rubin and Mills (1988) proposed that unsociable children may experience problems when they are older, as non-social behaviours may become increasingly deviant and salient to peers in the classroom and school context (e.g., Younger & Boyko, 1987). However, results from recent studies suggest that unsociability remains a comparatively benign form of social withdrawal in later childhood (Coplan et al., 2013), adolescence (Bowker & Raja, 2011), and even among emerging adults (Nelson, 2013). It has also been suggested that there may be more negative adjustment problems present for boys who engaged in solitary play, compared to solitary play in girls. These adjustment problems may include lower social competence, more academic problems, and more internalizing problems (Coplan et al., 2001). This has not however, been evidenced by teacher beliefs of unsociability and gender in early childhood. For example, Coplan et al. (2014) found no significant gender differences when preschool teachers read hypothetical child vignettes focussing on unsociability in the classroom. This finding is consistent

with the lack of gender differences found in kindergarten teacher responses towards hypothetical vignettes (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007).

As mentioned, in the classroom setting unsociable children do not frequently initiate social interaction with peers (Coplan et al., 2004). Solitary play has even been thought to be encouraged by teachers (Rubin, 1982), which is not surprising given that teachers may have behavioural management demands placed on them. It has been found that teachers do distinguish between shy and unsociable behaviour (Coplan et al., 2004), but aside from this little is known regarding unsociable children in the classroom, and teachers' attitudes, beliefs and responses to unsociable children.

Arbeau and Coplan (2007) presented kindergarten teachers with hypothetical vignettes depicting unsociability and other forms of child classroom behaviours. Among their results, teachers reported that they would tolerate unsociability more than shyness and aggression in students, and perceived less academic costs for unsociable children in comparison. Further, teachers indicated that they would promote social skills, but monitor unsociable children less than shy and aggressive children. It has been speculated that such findings may reflect teachers' acknowledgment that unsociable children generally have adequate social skills to interact with peers in a socially competent manner when they choose to (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2004).

Social Engagement in the Classroom

For comparison purposes, a second broad category of behaviours examined in the present study pertained to *social engagement*, defined as a variety of peer interactive behaviours. Two characteristics of social engagement are shared collaborative actions and social conversations (Bauminger-Zviely, Eden, Weiss, & Gal, 2013). From these

characteristics of social engagement, two subtypes were of interest in the present study: (1) *prosocial* behaviours, which involve shared collaborative actions; and (2) verbal *exuberance*, which involves peer conversations. These social behaviours can be used as a comparison to social withdrawal behaviours, as social engagement is socially motivated and have been found to differ not only in definition, but in findings in the classroom context (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, children's prosocial behaviours tend to be positively viewed by teachers (e.g., Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), whereas more mixed results have been found for exuberant children, as sometimes their talkative nature can be disruptive (Coplan et al., 2011).

Exuberance. Exuberant children are characterized by high levels of positive affect and sociability, a strong tendency towards approach behaviours, and a lack of fear or inhibition towards novel objects or people (Fox, Henderson, Rubin, Calkins, & Schmidt, 2001). Exuberant young children appear to be unable to regulate their emotions (even though they are often positive) and thus may be impulsive, aggressive, and may experience externalizing problems (Oldehinkel, Hartman, de Winter, Veenstra, & Ormel, 2004; Putnam & Stifter, 2005). Notwithstanding, exuberant children also tend to have higher self-esteem, which can benefit them greatly in academic and social development, and in future academic and social relationships (Hay, Ashman, & Van Kraayenoord, 1998).

Characteristics of exuberant children such as socio-communicative behaviours (e.g., verbal participation, social interaction) are generally considered important parts of classroom achievement and learning (Butler, 1999; Daly & Korinek, 1980; Williams, 2006). Indeed, it is not surprising that teachers evaluate exuberant children as having

better verbal skills, being more creative, and more intelligent than their less talkative peers (Bell, 1995; Evans, 1996; Gordon & Thomas, 1967). However, if exuberant young children are unable to competently regulate the expression of their positive emotions, this may come to pose problems in the classroom environment and may lead to more stressful classroom management demands (Kochanska, Murray, & Harlan, 2000; Stifter, Putnam, & Jahromi, 2008).

Teachers tend to respond to disruptive, impulsive and inattentive children with control, restriction, punishment, and other forms of high powered strategies (Coplan et al., 2011; Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Stipek & Miles, 2008; Thijs, Kooman, Jong, van der Leij, & van Leeuwen, 2006). Teachers believe that exuberant children may display greater academic difficulties than their average counterparts (Coplan et al., 2011). Further, preschool teachers indicated that in response to hypothetical exuberant children, they would intervene and exhibit more anger (Coplan et al., 2014). However, preschool teachers also indicated that they would exhibit less worry, and believe exuberant children would face less exclusion than socially withdrawn peers (Coplan et al., 2014).

Prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviours are intended to assist or benefit others (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006), such as comforting a peer, behaving altruistically, or being responsive towards others (Miller & Jansen op de Haar, 1997). Prosocial children tend to have well developed perspective-taking abilities and moral reasoning, and present high empathy (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Miller et al., 1996). Prosocial behaviours are considered relatively stable over time and are associated with a number of positive child characteristics such as social competence, higher IQ and peer acceptance (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Welsh, Parke, Wideman, & O'Neil, 2001).

Prosocial behaviours would likely seem to be highly valued and encouraged in the classroom by teachers. However, there has been limited empirical studies of teachers' beliefs and responses to children's prosocial behaviours. Arbeau and Coplan (2007) found that teachers tolerate prosocial children the most in comparison to socially withdrawn children and aggressive children, and view prosocial children's behaviour as the most stable over time. In comparison to other behaviours, teachers also indicated that they would intervene the least with prosocial children, and monitor prosocial behaviours the least in comparison to other behaviours. This may be attributed to teachers' beliefs that prosocial behaviour is generally positive and helpful in a classroom environment. Unsurprisingly, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards prosocial behaviour in children compared to withdrawn and aggressive behaviour was significantly more positive in nature (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). In the proposed study, this form of social behaviour was included as a "positive" comparison for the socially withdrawn and exuberant behaviours.

The previous literature review of children's social behaviours was based on studies conducted almost exclusively in Western cultures. It is important to note that culture plays a large role in the acceptance of specific behaviours, and as such views of behaviour may vary from culture to culture. Social withdrawal and social engagement attitudes and beliefs have been found to differ from Western culture (e.g. America, Australia) to Asian culture (e.g. East Asia) (Bornstein, 1995; Chen, 2010). Thus, it is important to examine beliefs and attitudes in multiple cultures to understand the cross cultural responses to behaviours. Further, the meanings and implications of these different social behaviours are based on specific cultural values (Chen, 2010). To date,

there have been no previous studies of teachers' beliefs about social withdrawal and social engagement in China.

Teacher Beliefs within Cultural Contexts: The People Republic of China

The meaning of social behaviours may be substantively influenced by cultural values. Therefore, social conventions and cultural influences on children's social functioning should be considered from a cross-cultural developmental perspective (Chen et al., 1995). Indeed, it is now widely accepted that the significance of social functioning may be affected by cultural context. As a result, adaptive and maladaptive behaviours may be defined differently across cultures (Bornstein, 1995; Chen, 2010). There have been some studies on types of social withdrawal and social engagement in China which provides support that these behaviours do indeed exist (Chen & Rubin, 1992; Chen et al., 2005; Liu, Coplan, Chen, Li, Ding & Zhou, 2014), however research on teacher beliefs towards these behaviours remains non-existent.

Hall (1976) first introduced the idea of *high-context* versus and *low-context* cultures, which are based on the amount of information being transmitted, and way that information is being transmitted. For example, in high-context cultures, subtle cues are encouraged, in a compliant and respectful way. In low-context cultures, people are encouraged to use more verbal expression and assertiveness. When researchers investigated preschool teachers' socialization goals and the types of student "behavioural problems" from a cross-cultural perspective, both universal and culturally specific characteristics were found (Chen et al., 2004; Killen, Ardila- Rey, Barakkatz, & Wang, 2000; Kistner, Metzler, Gatlin, & Risi, 1993; LaFreniere et al., 2002; Mendez, McDermott, & Fantuzzo, 2002; Mpofu, Thomas, & Chan, 2004; Smith, 2001; Tudge et

al., 1999).

Although the processes underlying competent behaviour were similar across cultures, the specific behaviours associated with social competence presented cultural differences. For example, in high-context cultures (e.g., Japan, China, Russia, Brazil) social identity and group interest were valued more, whereas individual identity and personal interest were valued more in low-context cultures (e.g., United States, Canada, Australia, Italy) (Chen et al., 2004; Killen et al., 2000; LaFreniere et al., 2002; Trudge et al., 1999). This illustrates the differences that emerge when examining social values across countries, which may differ in the acceptance of displayed behaviours.

Traditional Chinese values. In the current study, the focus was on the cultural context of the People's Republic of China. Traditional Chinese culture endorses behaviours such as social responsibility, self-constraint, collectivism, and obedience, which were still highly emphasized (e.g., Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Ming, 2008; Ying & Zhang, 1995). These values were reflected in the socialization, school education and peer group activities of Chinese children (e.g., Fang, 2000; Li, 2006; Shi & Xu, 2008). Further, group orientation and collectivism were valued, and people were less likely to pursue individual interests (Guo, Yao, & Yang, 2005; Wang, 2003). However, it has been suggested that these values are still endorsed in China (Nelson et al., 2012). Moreover, in traditional China, behavioural restraint and wariness were positively evaluated and encouraged, and thought to indicate social maturity and mastery (Chen, 2010). Furthermore, high values were placed on academic achievement and still are today (e.g., Chen, Yang, & Wang 2013; Price, Richardson, Robinson, Ding, Sun, & Han, 2011). This coincides with an ancient Chinese proverb "A book holds a house of gold".

China's cultural shift. Over the past 30 years, China has experienced an enormous cultural shift towards a market-based economy. It can be suggested that in the view of Hall (1976), China may be moving away from a high-context culture (specifically in the urban areas), as a result of this shift towards a market-based economy, which resulted in a change in some views of socially acceptable behaviours. One outcome of this societal change appears to be a shift in the values and social acceptance of certain social behaviours (Chen, Li, & Chen, 2011). China carried out a reform towards a market economy, which has led to a change in desired behavioural qualities, such as initiative, exploration, and self-expressionism (Chen, Wang, & Cao, 2011; Wang & Huang-pu, 2007). Such behaviours are required for adjustment and success in their environment, especially by the young urban population (Xu & Peng, 2001; Yu, 2002), which may have affected the meanings of acceptable and unacceptable social behaviours. According to Chen and French (2008), peers and adults in different societies or communities (e.g., urban and rural China) may respond and evaluate socio-emotional characteristics differently, and express different attitudes towards children who display these characteristics in social interactions.

The massive social and economic restructuring (such as the opening of stock markets) in China has been most significant in urban cities (Chen et al., 2011). Therefore, families in rural China have lived mostly agricultural lives, and rural children, accounting for over 50% of the children in the country, do not have as much exposure as urban children to the influence of the dramatic social transformation (Huang & Du, 2007; Li, 2006). In most rural areas of China, many behavioural characteristics of traditional Chinese culture continue to be endorsed and accepted. These characteristics include

social responsibility and self-restraint, which are highly emphasized (e.g., Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Ming, 2008; Ying & Zhang, 1995), and are evident in the socialization, school education, and peer group activities of Chinese children and youth (e.g., Fang, 2000; Li, 2006; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007; Shi & Xu, 2008). For example, it has been found that based on teacher evaluations and self-reports, relative to their urban counterparts, rural youth are more likely to display group orientation and self-control and are less likely to pursue individual interests (Guo, Yao, & Yang, 2005; Wang, 2003).

Meaning and Implications of Social Withdrawal and Social Engagement in China

As a result of the cultural shift in China towards a market-based economy, it is increasingly important to examine beliefs and attitudes of social behaviours from a teacher's perspectives. Examining contemporary views of Chinese kindergarten teachers to social withdrawal and social engagement would allow for better understanding of how teachers respond to these behaviours in the classroom. Thus, it would provide insight regarding which behaviours are deemed acceptable and non-acceptable in the classroom environment. As mentioned, academic achievement is extremely highly valued in Chinese culture. As children spend an abundance of time in school and with their teachers, this heightens our need to understand teachers' perspectives on social behaviours in the classroom setting. Indeed, teachers have a big impact on students in their classrooms and have the ability to influence acceptable and unacceptable child behaviour in their students. Behaviours that will be looked at from kindergarten Chinese teachers' perspectives are social withdrawal (shyness and unsociability) and social engagement (exuberance and prosocial behaviour).

Shyness. In traditional Chinese culture, shyness has been found to be quite positively evaluated. Shy behaviours have been considered to reflect social maturity, mastery and understanding in China (e.g., X. Chen et al., 1992; Ho, 1986; King & Bond, 1985). It has been suggested that shy behaviours may be encouraged in Chinese culture as reflecting characteristics of the soft-spoken, well-mannered, school-achieving child (Ho, 1986; King & Bond, 1985). Thus, results from early studies of shyness in China found contrary findings in comparison to Western samples. Shyness was found to be associated with positive peer relationships, school competence, and psychological well-being in China (Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992). Further, shy behaviours were found to be associated with well-adjusted children, and not associated with depression or loneliness, and do not develop negative perceptions of their competence (Chen et al., 1995; Chen et al., 2004). Chen, Li and Rubin (1995) found that shyness-sensitivity was positively correlated and concurrently associated with peer acceptance, teacher-assessed competence, leadership, and academic achievement at ages 8-10 in Chinese children. The social and psychological adjustment of shy children at the time of these studies may reflect traditional Chinese values, where wariness and behavioural restraint are positively viewed.

As previously mentioned, China has carried out a reform towards a market economy, which has led to a change in desired behavioural qualities. Behaviours that are now valued in urban China are initiative, exploration, and self-expression (Chen et al., 2011). As such, there has been a recent emergence of *negative* characteristics related to shyness, which may reflect the declining influence of adult social standards and the increased expectation for independence and autonomy in children's social judgments and

evaluations (Youniss, 1980). This may result from the notion that during late childhood, assertiveness and intimate disclosure during communications are required to maintain adequate social interactions (Chen et al., 1990; Rotenberg & Sliz, 1988). It appears that the adaptive value of shyness has been declining in the urban parts of China, as shy children are starting to experience various adjustment problems (e.g., Chen, Cen, Li, & He, 2005; Chen, Wang, & Wang, 2009).

For example, Chen et al. (2005) examined cohort effects in the links between shyness and outcomes in samples of same-aged children collected in 1990, 1998, and 2002. Shyness was positively associated with social and academic achievement in the 1990 cohort, with the associations becoming weaker or non-significant in the 1998 cohort, and then shyness being found to be associated with peer rejection, school problems and depression in the 2002 cohort. These results were found using the same measures in each cohort (peer assessment of social functioning (RCP), teacher ratings, leadership, academic achievement, depression), strengthening the argument that the shift in Chinese culture is dramatically affecting the views and implications of social behaviours. Other recent studies continue to reflect this change. For example, Liu et al (2014) reported that shyness in Chinese elementary school children was negatively related to peer preference, self-perceptions, and academic achievement, and positively related to victimization, loneliness, and depressive symptoms. This exemplifies the dramatic shift of the value of shyness declining in urban areas of China (Ding, Liu, Coplan, Chen, Li & Sang, 2014).

It is also important to consider that Chen and colleagues (2005) used the RCP (revised class play), whereby children nominated peers that display specific behavioural

characteristics. This measure is used to assess child behaviours from perspectives of peers, as well to “tap” into internal states of others, as it asks for children to nominate up to three peers who fit a behavioural description (“gets upset easily”, “blushes easily”). This allows peers to use behavioural descriptors that match to children’s internal states as well as behavioural qualities. Chen and colleagues (2005) further explored the links with shyness and outcomes over time that not only measures the external behaviours of shy children, but explores the internal feelings of children through inventories such as reports of depression and other internalizing problems. Therefore, this study serves as strong foundation as it evidences the change in correlates of shyness longitudinally.

Unsociability. Less is known about unsociability in China. It has been suggested that regardless of the state of cultural change, unsociability may be related to negative peer and adult attitudes in China (Chen, 2008). Chinese society has traditionally been collectivist, emphasizing interdependence and group affiliation (Greenfield, Suzuki, & Rothenstein-Fisch, 2006). During socialization, children are encouraged to develop a sense of social belonging and integration, concern for others, and commitment to the group. There may be pressure put upon children to identify with the group, function in a group context, and contribute to collective well-being (Chen & French, 2008; Sharabany, 2006). A preference for solitude may be perceived as being in conflict with such group orientation (Ho, 1986), and children who prefer aloneness and distance themselves from the group may be viewed as anti-collective, selfish and deviant (Chen, 2008). As a result, unsociability in China may be more strongly associated with peer rejection and indices of socio-emotional maladjustment.

There are some recent results to support these assertions. For example, Nelson, Hart, Wang, Wu, and Jin (2012) explored links between different forms of non-social play and indices of socio-emotional functioning in urban Chinese preschoolers. Among their results, solitary-passive play (i.e., quietly playing alone in the presence of peers – a potential behavioural index of unsociability) was positively related to ratings of non-conformance and indices of internalizing problems. Liu et al (2014) reported that unsociability among urban Chinese elementary school students was negatively related to peer preference, self-conceptions and academic achievement, and positively related to victimization, loneliness and depressive symptoms. These results are consistent with results from rural Chinese children (Chen, Wang et al., 2011). Thus, despite the influence of Western values, the traditional behaviours of group connectedness are still highly valued in both urban and rural China (Chen, Li et al., 2011; Greenfield, Suzuki & Rothstein-Fisch, 2006; Ming, 2008). There also appears to be gender differences present for unsociability in China. Unsociability in boys tends to lead to higher peer victimization rates, more loneliness, lower scores of academic achievement and peer preference than do girls in urban China samples (Liu et al., 2014).

Exuberance. Studies examining exuberance in children in the Chinese culture appears to be very limited. However, it can be hypothesized that exuberance may not be valued in the Chinese culture. Sometimes, exuberant children are unable to regulate the expression of positive emotions, which can pose problems in relationships and in the classroom (Kochanska et al., 2000; Stifter et al., 2008). Exuberance can lead to possible child impulsivity, inattention, and other externalizing problems (Pelletier, Collett, Gimpel, & Crowley, 2006; Sandler, Hooper, Watson, & Coleman, 1993; Stifter et al.,

2008), which, similar to aggression, is negatively perceived and prohibited in Chinese culture (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995). Furthermore, exuberant children may not always be cooperative. That is to say, these children may speak out in socially unacceptable ways, which is not a characteristic of value in China (Chen & Rubin, 1992; Chen et al., 1992). Recent results also suggest that young Chinese males who speak out in perceived rude ways, are viewed negatively by their elders (Hei, 2011). This may not bode well for exuberant children and adolescents in China, as their talkative nature may be viewed negatively by authority figures, which may lead to negative future outcomes.

Prosocial behaviours. Unlike the social differences found in China and Western cultures pertaining to behaviours such as unsociability, attitudes towards prosocial behaviours have been found to be consistent across cultures (Ho, 1986; King & Bond, 1985; Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977). Thus, it has been suggested that, in both Western and Chinese cultures, sociability and cooperation in children are positively valued. These arguments have received empirical support in a series of cross-cultural studies (Chen & Rubin, 1992; Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992). For example, Chen, Li and Rubin (1995) reported that among Chinese children, sociability-leadership (two items associated with prosocial behaviour) are predictive of positive adjustment, positive peer relationships and positively associated with good outcomes in all aspects of school-related competence. As expected, sociability-leadership were found to predict later social and school adjustment. Similarly, Chen et al., (2005) found that sociability-cooperation is associated with peer acceptance. This is not surprising given the social expectations of the Chinese culture. The prosocial vignettes that were presented to the Chinese kindergarten teachers featured a child inviting a classmate to join a group. This would

likely be seen as extremely positive in the Chinese culture, as group affiliation and collectivism are highly valued characteristics, and central facets in their culture (Greenfield, Suzuki, & Rothenstein-Fisch, 2006).

Previous Studies of Teacher Beliefs in China

Previous Empirical studies of teacher beliefs, attitudes, and responses towards child behaviours in Asian cultures have been somewhat limited (e.g., Killen, Ardila- Rey, Barakkatz, & Wang, 2000; Pochtar & Delvechio, 2014). Indeed, no previous studies found in this literature review specifically examined teacher beliefs, attitudes or responses towards shyness, unsociability, exuberance, or prosocial behaviours in China. Studies examining Chinese teacher beliefs have focused primary on teacher beliefs about self-efficacy (Chan, 2008; Lee et al., 2011) and how it is related to a variety of student outcome measures, including achievement, (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross 1992), motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), and students' own sense of efficacy (Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988). For example, Lee et al., (2011) examined Chinese teacher beliefs of self-efficacy and how it can be increased through professional development programs.

Further studies on Chinese teacher beliefs relate to student suicide (Chan, 2002), divorce (Fong, 2005), causes of student difficulties (Hui. 2001), and professional development (Lau, 2011). For example, when examining teachers' perceptions of students' concerns, teachers felt that students' number one concern pertained to their educational future, above all social and emotional concerns (Hui, 2001). Moreover, Chinese teachers appear to have extremely positive views on professional development if they feel it can help students' academic success (Lau, 2011).

These studies emphasize the cultural importance of academic achievement in China (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009), and general conclusions can be drawn on the value that teachers place on academic success of their students. Further, it can be hypothesized that due to the emphasis placed on academic achievement by society in general, teachers are likely “tough” on their students in hopes of increasing academic achievement in their classrooms. It is imperative to examine teacher beliefs towards a variety of social behaviours and teachers’ corresponding beliefs regarding social and academic development.

The Current Study

The primary goal of the present study was to examine Chinese kindergarten teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and responses towards children’s social behaviours in the classroom. Kindergarten teachers are of particular interest in the present study, as it has been found that they focus more on socializing children to school and children’s general social behaviour, compared to academic development (Spodek, 1988). Thus, kindergarten teachers may provide good insight into belief systems of teachers with regards to social behaviours of their students.

Teachers were presented with a series of hypothetical vignettes depicting children displaying shy, unsociable, exuberant, and prosocial behaviours. Behaviours of social withdrawal (shy, unsociable) were chosen as limited research has been conducted in China on these social behaviours. For comparison purposes social engagement behaviours (exuberant, prosocial) were examined as they are behaviours that differ substantially from socially withdrawn behaviours. Further, no research has been conducted on teachers beliefs towards any of the above behaviours.

After each vignette was presented, the participants responded to a series of questions regarding their responses, attitudes/beliefs, and emotional reactions. Specifically, variables assessed following each depicted behaviour included teachers': (1) intended responses (e.g., intervention); (2) tolerance; (3) emotional reactions (e.g., anger, worry); (4) perceived implications for children's development (e.g., academic, social); (5) perceived implications among peers (e.g., exclusion, ignored, disliked); and (6) feelings of preparedness.

Hypotheses. Drawing upon the previously described extant literature, the following hypotheses were forwarded. First, overall, teachers were expected to report the most positive views and beliefs towards children's *prosocial behaviour*. As prosocial behaviours are viewed positively in China and other cultures, Chinese teachers were expected to respond most positively to this form of behaviour (e.g., intervene the least, tolerate the most, react with the least negative emotions, and anticipate the most positive academic and social outcomes). In contrast, due to the high value placed on behavioural control in China, *exuberant* behaviours were anticipated to be viewed most negatively by teachers (e.g., intervene the most, least tolerated, react with the most negative emotions, expected most significant academic/peer problems). Finally, in terms of teacher preparedness, it was expected that because teachers have been trained to effectively handle this type of behaviour – they may feel quite prepared for exuberant behaviours.

In terms of the two forms of socially withdrawn behaviours (shy, unsociable), teachers were expected to have less negative views of socially withdrawn behaviours, overall, compared to exuberance, but more negative views compared to prosocial behaviour. However, it was expected that *unsociable* behaviours would be viewed by

teachers more negatively than *shy* behaviours, because of its anti-collectivistic nature, and tendency for unsociable children to be considered as selfish and deviant in Chinese culture. Although unsociable behaviours are not disruptive in the classroom, teachers were expected to report more intervention and less tolerance towards these behaviours as compared to shyness, as well as to react more negatively and to expect more negative social and academic developmental implications. However, due to the recent emergence of negative characteristics related to shyness, teachers may feel less prepared to effectively handle this behaviour as compared to unsociability.

Finally, some exploratory hypotheses were tentatively forwarded regarding child gender. Gender differences have not typically been reported in previous studies of teacher beliefs regarding hypothetical behaviours in children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011). However, it has been suggested that gender stereotypes may be more pronounced in China (e.g., Chang, 1999; Chen et al., 2004) and therefore some gender differences were expected to emerge. For example, overall, teachers were expected to rate hypothetical boys as having more negative peer experiences than girls (e.g., less likeability, more exclusion). This postulation was derived from a previous peer nomination research suggesting that girls tend to be liked more than boys overall, and experience less exclusion than boys (Chen & Chang, 2002). Given previous evidence that gender plays a role in the peer acceptance of socially withdrawal children (including shyness and unsociability) in both Western cultures and in China (see Doey, Coplan & Kingsbury, 2014 for a recent review), it was further speculated that teachers would anticipate more negative outcomes for both hypothetical shy and unsociable boys as compared to girls.

In research conducted in Western culture, teachers' beliefs did not differ between girls and boys for prosocial children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), and similar results were expected to be found in this study. Further, teachers might respond to exuberant behaviours more harshly when displayed by boys as compared to girls, as this response has been found with "problem behaviours" in previous research (Stipek & Sanborn, 1985; Wittmer & Honig, 1988). As exuberance may be viewed as a problem behaviour in China, similar results were expected. Notwithstanding, for the present study, hypotheses regarding gender differences were considered exploratory in nature.

Method

Procedure

This research was conducted as part of an ongoing collaboration with researchers at Shanghai Normal University. Ethical clearance from participating universities and schools in Shanghai and surrounding areas has been received, and research assistants gathered data from administered questionnaires that each participant responded to. Collaborators are from the Department of Early Childhood Education, at Shanghai Normal University, and therefore have connections and access to a substantial number of kindergartens in Shanghai and surrounding areas. Research assistants from Shanghai Normal University collected the data from individual participants and inputted responses into statistical software programs. Participants were rendered anonymous. The data being used for this study was part of a larger study on Chinese teacher beliefs and attitudes towards various behaviours in the classroom. With regards to the larger study, teachers responded to eight vignettes in total. The eight vignettes collected in the larger study

featured children engaging in shy behaviour, unsociable behaviour, relational aggression, physical aggression, rough-and-tumble play, exuberant behaviour, and two types of prosocial behaviour (inviting a child to join in to activities, and empathetic behaviour). Vignettes of social withdrawal (shyness and unsociability) were chosen for the current study. Vignettes of social withdrawal were chosen as relatively little is known about social withdrawal in China. For comparison purposes, two social engagement behaviours (exuberance and invitation prosocial) were chosen as they contrast social withdrawal in unique ways.

Participants

Responses were received from an original sample of $N=1029$ Chinese kindergarten teachers in Shanghai and surrounding areas (97.4% female and 2.6% male). Kindergarten teachers were examined as it has been found that they focus more on the social development of children, compared to their academic development. Pre-service teachers were removed from the data to focus solely on in-service teachers. Thus, participants for the present study were $N = 672$ (649 female, 19 male, 4 unidentified) in-service teachers from public kindergartens in Shanghai, P.R. China. Teachers were of varied age (approximately 27% aged 21-25 years; 32% aged 26-30; 16% aged 31-35; and 25% aged 36 or older), and had a wide range of teaching experience (approximately 28% two years or less; 43% 3-10 years; 16% 11-20 years; and 16% with more than 20 years of experience). The consent rate was just over 84%.

Measures

Demographics. Questionnaire packets included a demographics questionnaire (e.g., teacher age/gender, years teaching, training, etc.).

Child Behaviour Vignettes. The primary measure of interest was a series of hypothetical vignettes depicting children displaying a number of different social behaviours (see Appendix A). In previous studies of teacher beliefs towards young children, similar hypothetical vignettes have been used to assess teacher beliefs, tolerances and perceptions of different social behaviours in children in the classroom setting (e.g., Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011, Coplan et al., 2014). These vignettes were adapted from measures previously used in Western culture (e.g., Coplan & Arbeau, 2007; Coplan, Bullock, Archbell, & Bosacki, 2014; Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011; Hastings & Rubin, 1999). English versions on the vignettes were translated to Mandarin Chinese, and then back-translated. Any discrepancies were resolved with discussion to ensure the vignettes were as similar as they could be to previously used vignettes in Western culture. Teachers were randomly assigned to receive vignettes depicting the various behaviours as being displayed by hypothetical boys (45.7%) or girls (54.3%) (i.e., child gender functioned as a between-subjects variable).

As part of a larger study, teachers viewed vignettes depicting 8 different child behaviours. For the present study, the specific scenarios of interest described children engaging in: (1) shy/quiet; (2) unsociable; (3) exuberant/talkative; and (4) prosocial/positive behaviours. The order of the vignettes were randomized across participants.

The wording of these vignettes were derived conceptualizations of these different social behaviours in the extant literature (e.g. Fox et al., 2001; Rubin et al., 2009) and previous vignette measures employed in relevant studies of teacher and parent

attitudes/beliefs (e.g. Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2002; Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011). The psychometric properties, reliability, and validity of these protocols have been well-established (e.g., Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011; Coplan et al., 2014; Hastings & Coplan, 1999). For example, Coplan and colleagues created a series of empirically substantiated aggregate variables of teachers responses and belief patterns to hypothetical vignettes (e.g., shy, exuberant). These variables presented high factor loadings and acceptable internal reliability. Further, Arbeau and Coplan (2007) reported a pattern of conceptually consistent associations among teachers' reported behavioural responses and beliefs (collapsed across several vignettes of children displaying different social behaviours). For example, they found a negative correlation between likelihood of intervening and likelihood of tolerating the same behaviour.

Follow up items. After reading each scenario (vignette), teachers were asked to rate their attitudes, beliefs, and emotional responses. These questions were derived from other vignettes that have been used to assess teacher beliefs, attitudes and responses towards social behaviours in the classroom (e.g. Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2011).

The first question examined teachers' likelihood of *behavioural intervention* ("intervene to stop the behaviour") on a 5-point scale (1=not likely at all, 5=very likely) in response to each behaviour. The next question pertained to teachers' overall *tolerance* towards (1=not at all, 5=very) each hypothetical child. The next questions assessed *negative emotional reactions* (i.e., "angry", "worried") about the situation (1=not at all and 5=very strongly).

Two questions then focused on teachers' beliefs about the *implications* of each behaviour, including expected effects on the child's "social development" and "academic development" (1=very negatively and 5=very positively). The next three questions pertained to the *perceived peer responses* of each child, with teachers asked if the child would be "excluded by peers", "ignored by peers", "disliked by peers" (1=not at all likely and 5=very likely). Finally, teacher beliefs reported how "prepared" they would feel to effectively handle each of the behaviours presented (1=not at all likely, 5=very likely).

The larger study included follow up items not assessed in the current study. Other follow up items from the larger study assessed teachers' tendency to do "nothing" or "praise" the behaviour presented, "encourage" the behaviour, respond as "happy" to the behaviour, if the child would "do well academically in their class", and if the child would be "well-liked" by their peers.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Results from a series of ANOVAs indicated significant main effects of teacher age for several study variables. Accordingly, teachers' age was initially included as a covariate in subsequent analyses. However, since the inclusion of age did not alter any of the main effects or interactions reported in the following sections – findings are presented *without* the inclusion of teachers' age. Of note, some significant interaction effects between teachers' age and other variables included in the analyses (e.g., child gender, emotional reactions) were also observed. However, there are conceptual difficulties in interpreting these findings (i.e., teachers age is confounded with both

teaching experience and historical time). Accordingly, teachers' age was not included as a variable in the main analyses. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of the Discussion.

There was no missing data for the individual items of the teachers' responses to the four vignettes. Outlier analyses were conducted to determine if there were any cases that needed to be removed or replaced due to data distortion. As a result of examining plots, leverage, discrepancy and influence (global and local), no outliers were found to have a significant impact on the data. This is likely a result of the 1-5 likert scale that was in the teacher survey to assess teacher beliefs and attitudes towards child social behaviours. Further, no data points were more than 3 standard deviations away from the mean for each vignette question.

Examination of the normality plots and the normality statistic indicated that the assumption of *normality* for the sample was violated. However, this was not considered a substantive issue due to the robustness of the sample size ($n = 672$) and because mixed repeated measures ANOVA analyses were used (Schmider, Ziegler, Danay, Beyer, & Buhner, 2010). Further analyses indicated that homogeneity of variance was also violated (i.e., Levene's test was significant at $p < .05$). However, mixed repeated measures ANOVAs are also considered quite robust with regard to violations of homogeneity of variance (Schmider et al., 2010). Finally, the sphericity of the sample was also violated. Accordingly, the Greenhouse-Geisser within subject values were employed in subsequent analyses to assess the results of the mixed repeated measures ANOVA (which allows for the violation of sphericity).

Main Analyses

The central goal of these analyses was to explore whether Chinese teacher beliefs differed in attitudes, beliefs, and reactions towards hypothetical children described as displaying different types of classroom behaviours. In addition, it was of interest to explore whether child gender moderated these differences. Accordingly, a series of Mixed Repeated Measures ANOVAs and MANOVAs was performed. For constructs assessed with a single response item (i.e., intervene, tolerance), Child Behaviour (i.e., shy, unsociable, exuberant, and prosocial) served as the within-subject variable and Child Gender served as a between-subjects variable. For constructs assessed with two items (i.e., emotional reaction, perceived implications, perceived peer response), both Child Behaviour and the relevant two-item construct (e.g., *anger* and *worry*, for negative emotional reaction) served as within-subject variables and Child Gender served as a between-subjects variable.

Intervention. For the reported likelihood of *intervening* to stop the behaviour depicted in the vignette, results indicated a significant main effect of Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 583.787, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .475$, but not for Child Gender ($F(1, 644) = 2.943$ *ns*, partial $\eta^2 = .005$). There was also a significant Child Behaviour X Child Gender interaction, $F(3, 642) = 2.782, p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .004$.

Relevant means and standard deviations for all main effects of Child Behaviour are displayed in Table 1. Results from follow up post hoc analyses (paired *t*-tests with Bonferroni correction) indicated significant differences between all Child Behaviours. Teachers reported that they would be most likely to intervene in response to exuberant behaviour, followed by shy, unsocial, and then prosocial behaviour.

In terms of the Child Behaviour X Child Gender interaction, a significant gender difference was found (using one-sample *t*-tests) in teachers' tendencies to intervene to girls versus boys only in terms of exuberant behaviour. Teachers' indicated that they would intervene with exuberant behaviour for boys ($M=4.22$, $SD=.990$) more than for girls ($M=3.96$, $SD= 1.169$) (see Figure 1).

Tolerance. For the *tolerance* of the described behaviour, results indicated a significant main effect of Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 322.556$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2=.334$, but no significant main effect of Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = .159$, *ns*, partial $\eta^2=.001$. Further, no significant interaction effect of Child Behaviour X Child Gender was present, $F(3, 642) = 1.766$, *ns*, partial $\eta^2=.003$. As indicated in Table 1, results from follow up post hoc analyses indicated that teachers

Table 1 Means (Standard Deviations) for Kindergarten Teachers' Responses to Child Behaviour

Teachers' Responses	Child Behaviour			
	<i>Shy</i>	<i>Prosocial</i>	<i>Exuberant</i>	<i>Unsocial</i>
Intervene	2.49 _b (1.269)	1.77 _c (1.058)	4.07 _a (1.106)	1.93 _d (1.046)
Tolerance	4.05 _b (1.075)	4.27 _c (1.052)	2.76 _a (1.224)	4.17 _c (1.016)
Negative Emotional Reaction	2.83 _b (.8081)	1.83 _d (.9438)	3.26 _a (.9170)	2.33 _c (.9263)
Anger	2.17 _b (1.002)	1.73 _c (1.001)	3.18 _a (1.104)	2.05 _b (1.037)
Worry	3.57 _a (1.140)	1.93 _d (1.094)	3.34 _b (1.102)	2.64 _c (1.201)
Development	2.32 _a (.9635)	3.87 _d (.8489)	2.64 _b (.9526)	3.00 _c (.8654)
Social	2.17 _a (1.363)	4.13 _d (1.053)	2.56 _b (1.202)	2.73 _c (1.145)
Academic	2.50 _a (.9233)	3.60 _c (.9159)	2.72 _b (1.069)	3.26 _c (.8856)
Perceived Peer Reactions	3.39 _a (.8793)	1.98 _d (.8761)	2.81 _c (.8914)	2.97 _b (.8868)
Excluded by Peers	3.06 ^a (1.009)	2.09 _b (1.008)	3.00 _b (1.005)	2.67 _a (1.005)
Ignored by Peers	3.74 _a (1.096)	1.89 _d (1.016)	2.61 _c (1.080)	3.26 _b (1.139)
Disliked by Peers	3.33 _a (1.064)	2.36 _d (1.064)	3.09 _b (1.020)	2.79 _c (.995)
Preparedness	3.91 _a (.951)	4.28 _c (.893)	4.13 _b (.933)	4.25 _c (.900)

Figure 1: Mean scores of teachers indicating to *intervene* in vignette behaviours across child genders

would tolerate exuberant behaviour the least, followed by shyness, and then unsocial and prosocial behaviours (which did not differ significantly from each other).

Negative emotional reactions. For *negative emotional reactions* (anger vs. worry – as an additional within-subjects variable), results from a MANOVA indicated significant main effects for Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 360.723, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .359$, and Emotional Reaction, $F(3, 642) = 497.733, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .436$, but no significant main effect of Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = .778, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$. Further, there was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .930, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$, or Emotional Reaction X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .886, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$. Main effects were superseded by a significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Emotional Reaction, $F(3, 642) = 169.273, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .208$. There was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Emotional Reaction X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = 2.502, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$.

Overall, teachers reported most negative emotions in response to exuberance, followed by shyness, unsociability, and lastly prosocial behaviour (see Table 1). In terms of the main effect of Negative Emotional Reactions – teachers tended to report significantly more worry ($M=2.267, SD=.621$) than anger ($M=2.858, SD=.666$).

Results from post-hoc analyses revealed that when examining *anger* and *worry* within Child Behaviour, teachers' reported feeling significantly more worried ($M=2.867, SD=.665$) than angry ($M=2.266, SD=.621$) in all child behaviour depictions presented. However, when examining *anger* across Child Behaviours, it was found that teachers' were most angry regarding exuberant behaviour, followed by shy behaviour and unsocial behaviour (which did not differ significantly from one another), and lastly prosocial

behaviour. A different pattern of results emerged when investigating teachers' emotional reactions of *worry*. Teachers' reported that they would be most worried with shy behaviour, followed by exuberant behaviour, then unsocial behaviour and lastly prosocial behaviour.

Implications for children's development. For teachers' beliefs regarding child development (social vs. academic - as an additional within-subjects variable), results from a MANOVA indicated significant main effects for Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 360.794, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .359$, and Development, $F(3, 642) = 23.045, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .035$, but no significant main effect of Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = .972, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$. Further, there was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .275, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$, or Development X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .865, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$. Main effects were superseded by a significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Development, $F(3, 642) = 106.654, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .142$. There was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Development X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = 1.011, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$.

Overall, teachers reported children's development would be most negatively affected by shy behaviours, followed by exuberant behaviour, unsocial, and lastly prosocial behaviours (see Table 1). In terms of the main effect of development – teachers tended to report that these behaviours would have more negative effects on children's social development ($M=2.89, SD=.685$) as compared to academic development ($M=3.022, SD=.502$).

Relevant means for Child Behaviour X Development interaction are presented in Table 1. When examining differences between *social development* and *academic*

development within each vignette, teachers indicated that for the depictions of the shy, unsociable and exuberant child, social development would be significantly more affected than academic development. However, for the prosocial child, teachers' believed that the impact for social development would be significantly more positive than academic development.

When examining *social development* across child behaviours, there were significant differences between all Child Behaviours. Teachers' believed that the most negative social impact would be for shy behaviour, followed by exuberant behaviour and unsocial behaviour. The most positive effect would be for children displaying prosocial behaviour. When examining *academic development* across child behaviours, teachers' indicated that shy behaviour would most negatively affect academic development, followed by exuberant behaviour, and then unsocial behaviour and prosocial behaviour (which did not differ significantly from each other).

Perceived negative peer reactions. For teachers' beliefs regarding child perceived negative peer reactions (excluded vs. ignored – as an additional within-subjects variable), MANOVA results indicated significant main effects for Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 267.970, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .556$, and Negative Peer Reactions, $F(1, 644) = 76.883, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .107$, and a significant main effect of Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = 13.676, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .021$. Further, there was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .889, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$, or Negative Peer Reactions X Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = 1.02, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$. The main effects of Child Behaviour and Negative Peer Reactions were superseded by a significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Negative Peer Reaction, $F(3, 642) = 144.747, p < .001$,

partial $\eta^2=.184$. There was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Negative Peer Reaction X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .551, ns$, partial $\eta^2=.001$.

Overall, teachers expected the most negative peer reactions towards shy children, followed by unsocial, exuberant, and lastly prosocial (all significantly differing from one another – see Table 1). In terms of the main effect of perceived negative peer reactions – teachers reported that children would be more likely to be ignored ($M=2.868, SD=.5531$) than excluded ($M=2.701, SD=.5815$) overall. For the main effects for Child Gender, it was found that teachers' believed that girls ($M=2.851, SD=.4768$) would experience more negative peer reactions than boys ($M=2.701, SD=.5464$). As seen in figure 2, teachers' believed that girls ($M=2.7832, SD=.56283$) tend to be *excluded* significantly more than boys ($M=2.5910, SD=.60090$). Further, girls ($M=2.9191, SD=.51733$) tend to be *ignored* significantly more than boys ($M=2.8116, SD=.60338$).

Relevant means for Child Behaviour X Negative Peer Reaction interaction are presented in Table 1. When examining differences between being *ignored* and *excluded* within each behavioural depiction it was found that teachers believed that peers would be more likely to ignore than exclude both shy and unsociable children. In contrast, exuberant children were anticipated to be more excluded than ignored. Finally, teachers believed prosocial behaviours would likely elicit more exclusion than being ignored (though neither was rated as very likely).

When examining teacher responses to *excluded by peers*, teachers' indicated that they believed shy children and exuberant children (no significant difference between the two) would be excluded more than unsocial, and lastly prosocial children. When examining significant differences in teachers' beliefs towards *ignored by peers*, teachers'

indicated that they believe children with shy behaviour would be ignored more than all other behaviours, followed by unsocial behaviour, exuberant behaviour, and lastly prosocial behaviour.

Disliked. For teachers' beliefs of peer dislike, results indicated significant main effects for Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 103.160, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .138$, but no significant main effects of Child Gender $F(1, 644) = 2.675, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$. Further, there was no significant interaction of Child Behaviour X Child Gender, $F(3, 642) = .1236, ns$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$.

Means are presented in Table 1, and indicate significant differences in perceived peer dislike across all four behaviours. Teachers indicated that they believe that shy children would be disliked the most, followed by exuberant, unsocial and lastly prosocial children.

Preparedness. Finally, for the reported teacher preparedness to effectively handle each of the child behaviours, results indicated a significant main effect for Child Behaviour, $F(3, 642) = 39.982, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .058$, and for Child Gender, $F(1, 644) = 11.442, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$. There was no significant Child Behaviour X Child Gender interaction, $F(3, 642) = .975, p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .001$.

As indicated in Table 1, follow up post-hoc tests revealed that teachers felt most prepared to handle prosocial and unsocial behaviours (which did not differ significantly from each other), followed by exuberant behaviour, and lastly shy behaviour. In terms of the Child Gender main effect, teachers' indicated that they would feel more prepared to deal with boys' behaviours ($M = 4.2535, SD = .65189$) as compared to girls ($M = 4.0608, SD = .75076$).

Figure 2: Mean scores of teachers perceiving *negative peer reactions* towards all behaviours aggregated together.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine Chinese kindergarten teacher beliefs, attitudes, and responses towards hypothetical vignettes depicting children displaying socially withdrawn and socially engaged behaviours. It was hypothesised that teachers would view exuberant depictions the most negatively overall, followed by unsociable and shy depictions. Although it was expected that teachers would view both unsociable and shy behaviour negatively, unsociable behaviour was postulated to be viewed more negatively than shy behaviour. Further, it was expected that teachers would view prosocial depictions the most favourably, as prosocial children are beneficial to the classroom environment and display positive characteristics.

Overall, Chinese teachers appeared to demonstrate knowledge of these different child behaviours, as their responses differed among subtypes of social withdrawal and social engagement. Further, teachers responses differed with regards to the implications for children displaying prosocial, exuberant, unsociable and shy behaviours.

Notwithstanding, some results did deviate from hypotheses. For example, although it was expected that exuberance would elicit the most negative teacher beliefs, this was only the case among some items assessed (e.g. intervene, tolerate). Teachers also displayed more negative views towards shyness than anticipated in some cases (e.g., implications for development, perceived negative peer problems), and a generally more positive view than expected towards unsociability. As expected, prosocial behaviour was viewed most positively among all items assessed. Details of teacher responses towards each vignette are discussed in turn in subsequent sections.

Some main effects of gender were also observed. For example, teachers indicated that they believed girls would be excluded and ignored more than boys overall, which was contrary to predictions based off previous research (Chen & Chang, 2002). This result was a main effect, and therefore examined by looking at teacher responses to all behaviours presented. Further, teachers felt more prepared to handle behaviours of boys compared to girls. Though both of these results are curious, it could possibly be due to preparation for boy behaviours more than girl behaviours in teacher training programs (Grey & Leith, 2004). Further, as gender stereotypes are more pronounced in China, girls may be expected to be quieter and less obvious in the classroom environment (e.g., Chang, 1999; Chen et al., 2004). Thus, presenting Chinese teachers with vignettes *featuring* girls may arouse more pronounced main effects of gender on some items. However, due to the tentative interpretation of these findings, future research should be conducted to determine teachers' firm beliefs and attitudes regarding boys versus girls across items.

Teacher Beliefs about Social Engagement

Two vignettes presented children displaying different types of social engagement; prosociability and exuberance. In the present study, Chinese kindergarten teachers appeared to make distinctions between exuberant and prosocial behaviours as depicted in the vignettes. This is not surprising as these types of social engagement may manifest differently, especially with regard to behavioural traits, associated characteristics, and future outcomes. As expected, the pattern of results suggested that teachers believed exuberance poses much more of a problem in the classroom and have more negative implications than prosocial behaviour, which was viewed favourably by teachers. These

findings are consistent with research in Western cultures evidencing that prosocial behaviour is positively viewed by teachers, while teachers have mixed views towards exuberance.

Prosocial behaviour. In the current study, teachers viewed a vignette depicting a child displaying a particular type of prosocial behaviour, namely inviting another child to join a group and play. Not surprisingly (and consistent with predictions) teachers responded the most positively towards prosocial behaviour compared to all other behaviours presented across all items. For example, teachers indicated that they would be least likely to intervene and most likely to tolerate prosocial behaviours, would express the least negative emotional reactions, perceive the least negative social and academic implications, and perceive the least negative peer reactions towards children depicted in the prosocial vignette. These results were hardly surprising, as prosocial behaviours are viewed quite positively in China, as well as many other countries (Kochanska et al., 2000; Stifter et al., 2008).

Moreover, teachers' indications that prosocial behaviour would positively impact children's academic development provides insight into the type of behaviour that would best serve the academic demands of China (Kochansk et al., 2000; Stifter et al., 2008). Further, this also supports research in Western cultures linking prosocial behaviour to academic success (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Welsh, et al., 2001). Therefore, it can be postulated that this type of prosocial behaviour may be amongst the most adaptable behaviour for children in the classroom environment, specifically due to the qualities presented in the vignette (inviting someone to join in an activity). Inviting a peer to join a group activity follows the collectivistic norms of China, and encourages group harmony

(Nelson et al., 2012). More speculatively, this type of behaviour can also be conceptualized as a display of *initiative*, a characteristics that appears to be growing in its value in Chinese culture in recent years (Chen et al., 2011).

Although Chinese teachers feel confident in effectively handling this behaviour in children, literature in this area of research can benefit from understanding how teachers further respond to prosocial children (e.g. encourage, praise). This is important, as children often display similar behaviour to their peers who receive positive reinforcement from their teachers (Marshall & Weistein, 1984). If children who are prosocial receive positive reinforcement, other children in the class may make an effort to act in a similar manner. It is important to note that this vignette only examined one type of prosocial behaviour, and other types should be examined to entertain stronger claims. For example, prosocial vignettes including children displaying sharing qualities or empathy should be included in future studies to broaden empirical findings on prosocial behaviour. This will also allow for understanding regarding what specific prosocial behaviour is the most adaptive in the classroom environment.

Exuberance. A second vignette depicted children displaying exuberant behaviours, such as speaking out and behaving in an overly excited fashion. Results from previous research in Western cultures have shown that teachers tend to have a somewhat mixed response to exuberant behaviours in their classrooms (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011). For example, Coplan and colleagues (2011) found that teachers indicated they would intervene in situations where exuberance was displayed, but exuberant children may have less academic difficulties than other vignettes presented (e.g., shyness). Further, Coplan and colleagues (2014) found that preschool teachers reported

that they would intervene in exuberant behaviour, however they would be less worried and believe there to be less negative implication on their academic and social abilities (specifically as compared to shyness). Similar results were found in the present study.

Due to previous research suggesting that self-control (e.g., not speaking out) is one of the qualities needed to successfully adapt to Chinese culture (Hei, 2011; Ho, 1986), it was expected that exuberant behaviour would be viewed *most* negatively by teachers as compared to all behaviours presented. Several results supported this supposition. For example, as compared to other behaviours, teachers indicated that they would be most likely to intervene and respond with anger, and least likely to tolerate exuberant behaviours. These findings were consistent with the notion that controlled behaviours are viewed positively in China. Given the strong focus on academics in China, any behaviour that may disrupt the classroom environment is likely to be viewed quite negatively (Kochanska et al., 2000; Stifter et al, 2008). Teachers' beliefs across these three items support the claim that exuberant behaviour may negatively effect the learning environment for both the teacher as well as other students in the classroom. Moreover, it can be suggested that exuberant behaviour may place some additional stress on the teacher as it likely increases classroom management demands (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

Of note, teachers also indicated that they would be more likely to intervene in response to exuberant behaviour when exhibited by boys compared to girls. Previous research and assertions indicate that exuberant behaviour and characteristics associated with exuberance are accepted more in boys compared to girls (Chen et al., 2002). Further, it has been found that externalizing behaviours are more common in boys compared to

girls (Hammarberg & Hagekull, 2006). Therefore, teachers may be quicker to intervene in exuberant behaviour displayed by boys, as they may witness boys engaging in this behaviour more in the classroom environment more frequently. Further, as exuberant behaviour may escalate to other inappropriate behaviour (Putnam & Stifter, 2005), teachers may be concerned that exuberant boy behaviour may escalate to behaviours such as aggression – which is more common in boys compared to girls (Chen et al., 2002).

Surprisingly, teachers did not indicate the *most* negative responses and beliefs towards exuberance on all items – despite the emphasis placed on self-regulation in China, and previous research suggesting negative beliefs towards related characteristics such as speaking out, impulsivity, and over-excitement (Chen, & Rubin, 1995; Chen et al., 1992; Hei, 2011; Ho, 1986). For example, teachers did not believe (of the behaviours presented) that exuberant behaviour would result in the most negative implications to children's development (social and academic), the most negative perceived peer implications (being ignored or disliked), nor did they feel the least prepared to effectively handle exuberant behaviour.

Shyness was reported to pose more of a problem in the development and peer domain (specifically being disliked and ignored more) as compared to exuberance. However, teachers did not indicate a difference in exuberance and shyness with regards to being excluded by peers. These potentially “less negative” teacher views towards exuberance may coincide with the recent emergence of values associated behaviours such as initiative, exploration, and self expressionism (Chen et al., 2011). Accordingly, teachers may not feel exuberant children may suffer the most academically or socially, as behaviours such as self-expressionism (which may be associated with exuberance) is now

suggested to be adaptive (Chen et al., 2011). Perhaps due to the rapidly changing desired behaviours in China, teachers do not feel as confident to handle behaviours such as exuberance, where children speak out and appear more “hyper” (Putnam & Stifter, 2005). It appears that teacher beliefs towards exuberant behaviour are becoming more closely aligned with Western teacher views, which are similarly mixed (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011). From current and past results, it can be speculated that teachers believe exuberant behaviours distract from the academic development of children, but aid in the social development of children (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011). Further research should be conducted to explicitly understand what exact characteristics associated with exuberance are deemed most negative, and which are viewed as neutral or positive.

Teacher Beliefs about Social Withdrawal

The other two vignettes presented children displaying different types of socially withdrawn behaviours, shyness and unsociability. Results from previous studies in Western cultures suggest that teachers make distinctions between these two subtypes (e.g., Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2014). In the present study, Chinese kindergarten teachers also appeared to display a differential set of beliefs and reactions in response to the display of shy and unsociable behaviours as depicted in the vignettes. However, unexpectedly, the pattern of results suggested that teachers believed that shyness poses more of a problem in the classroom and has more negative implications than unsociability. Indeed, unsociability appeared to be viewed (comparatively) as quite positive in the classroom. These findings are consistent with research in China suggesting that shyness is becoming increasingly viewed as maladaptive (Chen et al., 2005).

However, this is not consistent with previous theoretical postulations and recent empirical results suggesting that unsociable behaviours may be particularly problematic among Chinese children (specifically older children) (Liu et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2012).

There were no specific gender effects found in teacher beliefs towards socially withdrawn behaviours, consistent with other cultures (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011). Further, consistent with the lack of gender beliefs found in previous research of teacher beliefs in Western cultures (e.g., Coplan et al., 2014), it has been suggested that teacher training may eliminate some gender biases (Coplan et al., 2014).

Shyness. Overall, Chinese teachers displayed fairly negative views towards hypothetical shy children in the present study. To begin with, teachers indicated that they would intervene more, and tolerate shy behaviour less as compared to all other forms of behaviours except exuberance. It was expected that teachers would not believe shyness to pose as much of a problem as exuberance due to the suggestion that shyness helps maintain a quiet and manageable classroom environment (Evans, 2001; Rubin, 1982), thus supporting the postulation in the hypotheses presented. Therefore, although teachers do view shyness as problematic, it can be suggested that shy behaviour requires less intervention than outwardly disrupting behaviours such as exuberance. Although shyness is not viewed as favourably by teachers as prosocial and unsocial behaviours, shy behaviour may not negatively impact the learning environment as much as externalizing behaviours.

Moreover (and contrary to predictions) teachers also indicated that they would worry significantly more about shy behaviour as compared to all other behaviours presented. Thus, teachers are clearly concerned about shy children in their classrooms. Of

note, teachers were less likely to respond to shyness with anger as compared to worry, perhaps due to the lessened classroom management demands of shy children (Evans, 2001; Rubin, 1982). Teachers' emotional response of worry appears to underscore their fear of the negative future ramifications for shy children: Teachers further indicated that shyness would most negatively impact on the children's social development as compared to all other assessed behaviours.

It is believed that the present study was the first to directly assess teachers' beliefs about the social implications of children's shyness. Consistent with teachers' anticipated negative social implications for shy children, teachers also believed that shy children will face peer exclusion, isolation (being ignored), and dislike. This is consistent with previous teacher belief research from Western cultures (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011) and peer nomination research in China (Chen et al., 2005) indicating that shy behaviour may lead to peer problems. This result is particularly indicative of the potential accuracy of teachers' beliefs with relation to child outcomes. For example, teachers reported that children who exhibit shy behaviour will experience peer difficulties, which has been empirically substantiated by other research examining not only peer nominations, but self reports of shy children (Chen et al., 2005). As teachers tend to act on their beliefs (Abelson, 1979; Cunningham & Sugawara, 1988), they may serve to buffer negative peer experiences for shy children by encouraging them to engage in social behaviour. However, it is not surprising that teachers perceive shy children to be ignored more than excluded, due to their reticent and on-looking behaviour (Rubin & Coplan, 2004).

Finally, teachers indicate that among all behaviours presented, they believe peers would dislike shy children the most. This does not bode well for shy children, as shyness is associated with indices of internalizing problems and lower self-esteem (Chen et al., 2005). Therefore, experiencing dislike from peers could exacerbate these already existing problems. In kindergarten, if shy children are disliked significantly more than other children, this could increase potentially problematic future outcomes. In Western cultures, teachers indicate they intervene with peer directed strategies (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), which could be beneficial to Chinese teachers as well, and may even buffer these negative peer outcomes.

Finally, teachers indicated that they felt the *least* prepared to effectively handle shy behaviours (as compared to all others). It can be postulated that teachers may not feel overly prepared to handle shy behaviours as a function of its changing (i.e., decreasing) value in contemporary Chinese society (Chen et al., 2005). For example, it can be speculated that the emerging negative consequences of shyness (Liu et al., 2014) may contribute to confusion and uncertainty for teachers in managing shy behaviours in the classroom environment. Notwithstanding, although it seems clear that teachers are becoming aware of the possible detrimental effects of shy behaviour on the development of children in a variety of domains (e.g. development, peer relationships), they may be less knowledgeable regarding appropriate strategies for assisting shy children. In this regard, teachers may benefit from increased training in this area, particularly in terms of how to effectively intervene and manage situations where children display extreme shyness.

Overall, the results from this study further support the notion that the adaptive value of shyness is continuing to decline in contemporary China (Chen et al., 2005). Across all teacher responses, teachers appear to believe that the “adaptive value” of shyness has largely disappeared. It is important for teachers to consider different interventions that may be helpful in the classroom, such as social skills training which has proven to be successful in previous research (Coplan et al., 2010). Future research should be conducted to examine the impact that interventions can have on shy children with regards to their future social success. Further, this finding supports the changing in desired behaviours on successful social adaptation in China. Thus, it can be suggested that shy behaviour is indeed salient in the classroom environment, and teachers appear aware of the myriad of negative consequences that can arise from shy behaviour. This further supports the cultural shift decreasing the adaptive values of the characteristics associated with shyness (Chen et al., 2005).

Unsociability. Overall, results indicated that teachers appeared to hold less negative views towards unsociability as compared to other behaviours presented (with the exception of prosocial behaviour). These results were somewhat surprising, as it has been suggested that adults and peers might be expected to have more negative attitudes towards unsociable behaviour, given the collectivistic nature of China and the emphasis on group affiliation (Chen, 2010). For example, Coplan and colleagues (2012) presented vignettes of unsociable behaviours to children, and found that children believed unsociable behaviours would “cause more problems” than other behaviours presented. Further, Nelson and colleagues (2012) found that non-social play, a behavioural index of unsociability, was positively related to non-conformance and indices of internalizing

problems. Moreover, it has been found that unsociability in older children is viewed negatively in China, and is concurrently related to indices of depression and loneliness, lower academic achievement, and problems in the peer domain (Chen et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2014).

Although teachers perceived some negative peer implications for unsociable behaviour, they tended to tolerate unsociability, report that they would intervene less, and perceive less developmental problems (both social and academic). This is consistent with research conducted in Western cultures (Coplan et al., 2014), where unsociability appears to be relatively benign in early childhood, aside from some potential peer problems (Coplan et al., 2004; Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Bowker and Raja (2011) suggest that unsociable children in Western cultures may perform adequately in school even though they interact with peers less, because they are not actively avoiding social interaction. In this vein, because unsociable children do not present as anxious and will participate when called upon, teachers may not believe that unsociable behaviour is problematic in the classroom.

Unsociable behaviours may also not be salient in the early childhood classroom, since solitary play is quite normative at this age (Coplan & Ooi, 2014). There could be various reasons why teachers may not view unsociability as problematic at the kindergarten level. For example, it has been suggested that unsociable children may partake in solitary activities that are constructive, and therefore could benefit their academic outcomes (Rubin, 1982). Unsociable children may also be perceived by teachers as partaking in on-task behaviours which may be positively viewed from an academic standpoint.

Although teachers' beliefs were generally positive towards depictions of unsociable behaviour in the present study, teachers did perceive the unsociable child to have some problems with peers (i.e., being ignored). This is similar with previous findings in China indicating that unsociable behaviour is positively related to lower peer preference (Liu et al., 2014). Teachers indicated that unsociable children may be ignored more than other child depictions, which has been found in Western cultures as well (Coplan et al., 2014). As unsociable children prefer to play alone, they may be seen as undesirable playmates by their peers. Indeed, this is in harmony with research that has shown that older children who present as unsociable have been found to have problems in the peer domain (Liu et al., 2014).

However, teachers also indicated that unsociable children would likely be ignored and they would be disliked by peers less than shy and exuberant children. Consequently, if teacher beliefs concerning likeability of unsociable children are accurate, teacher engagement in peer directed intervention may buffer these children from further negative peer implications. For example, if teachers were to encourage unsociable children to play with others in the classroom (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), peers may willingly accept them to join in with activities, therefore lessening peer problems (e.g., being excluded and ignored).

Finally, teachers also indicated that they felt more prepared to effectively handle unsociable behaviour compared to shy and exuberant behaviour. This adds to the evidence that teachers do not perceive unsociable behaviour in kindergarten children to be overly problematic. Teachers may feel they can effectively handle unsociable behaviours, as unsociable children are willing to join in group activities when required

(Coplan et al., 2004). Further, unsociable children may add to a controlled classroom environment, as they are happy to play alone and therefore may alleviate teacher stress (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Thus, there are many possible reasons why teachers may feel more prepared to handle this type of behaviour, as it may be beneficial to the classroom environment.

As evidenced in the current study, unsociability appears to be relatively benign in kindergarten, with the exception of the peer domain. However, there are future correlates of depression, peer problems, and low academic achievement with unsociable children (Liu et al., 2014). Thus, teachers need to be aware of the possible negative future outcomes associated with unsociability in China. Consequently, professional development should be implemented to allow teachers a better understanding of future correlates of unsociability and strategies to encourage children to join in group activities. Further, as group orientation and collectivism is emphasized in China (Chen, 2010), it can be suggested that teachers incorporate group activities and additional cooperative learning techniques into the classroom environment (Abbott, O'Donnell, Hawkins, Hill, Kosterman, & Catalano, 1998). This may potentially encourage the culturally expected collectivistic attitude from a young age. Moreover, there is a need for more research on beliefs towards unsociability in China to understand what specific characteristics of this trait might be more positively or negatively valued. This is necessary in order to determine which characteristics are needed for successful adjustment in young Chinese children.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study examined Chinese kindergarten teachers' views of social behaviours in the classroom. Strengths of this study include the assessment of a wide range of teacher attitudes, beliefs, and emotional reactions across vignettes depicting various forms of both social engagement and social withdrawal. Further, the focus of this study was on the previously understudied area of Chinese teacher beliefs towards child social behaviours. Results suggested that Chinese kindergarten teachers distinguished among children displaying behaviours depicting subtypes of social withdrawal. This bodes well for children, as teachers appear to understand differences between shyness and unsociability in the classroom, and implications for development of children displaying these behaviours. Overall findings show that Chinese kindergarten teachers perceive shyness and exuberance as the most problematic across many domains, followed by unsociability, and then (unsurprisingly) prosocial behaviour.

Teacher awareness and understanding of outcomes that may emerge from certain behaviours is extremely prudent, as teachers are able to incorporate materials in their classroom that can help provide emotional support and foster emotional growth of children. To facilitate emotional understanding and perspective taking in the classroom for all children, teachers could implement reading materials and activities to assist socially withdrawn children (Coplan et al., 2010). Moreover, teachers can encourage socially engaged children to promote social skills in socially withdrawn children by modelling appropriate behaviour (specifically prosocial children). Finally, this study shows a need for further professional development for teachers to allow for understanding and intervention techniques to help children with varying behaviours.

Specifically, increased awareness and guidance pertaining to shy children is required for children to successfully adapt to an environment that is rapidly changing with regards to expectations of children and youth.

Notwithstanding, some caveats should be considered in the interpretation of results. Specifically, results are based only on teacher beliefs towards depicted behaviours. It is difficult to assess teachers' beliefs without relying on self-reports, which is a notable disadvantage to this study. Although this may be viewed as a shortcoming of the current research, hypothetical vignettes depicting child behaviour are becoming increasingly common in this regard (e.g., Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011; Hurd & Gettinger, 2011). Teachers responded to brief descriptions of children's behaviours in a single instance. Although it was intended to elicit teachers' typical responses towards behaviours, more detailed assessments would strengthen results (e.g. across time and contexts). More in-depth assessments could provide nuanced description of teachers' attitudes and beliefs. For example, Bosacki and colleagues (e.g., Bosacki, Rose-Krasnor, & Coplan, 2014; Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011; Dewar, Servos, Bosacki, & Coplan, 2013) conducted extensive interviews with preschool and elementary school teachers to explore attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding children's classroom behaviours, gender, and culture. Similar methods could add to the evidence of teacher beliefs towards classroom behaviours presented, and positively supplement findings.

There has been some debate as to whether teachers' beliefs represent their actions in the classroom. For example, although it has been suggested that there is a strong link between teachers' beliefs and behaviours (Feeney & Chun, 1985; Fang, 1996; File, 1994;

Stipek & Byler, 1997), research has shown that teachers may not always act on their belief systems and implement their beliefs into the classroom setting (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). For example, Wilcox-Herzog (2002) examined teacher beliefs regarding beneficial play style in children, frequency of teacher verbalization, teacher sensitivity to children, and teacher involvement in the classroom, and found only a weak link between teacher beliefs towards these constructs and teacher actions in the classroom. This disconnect between teacher beliefs and behaviours in the classroom could be a result of many factors, such as stress levels of teachers and classroom management demands (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). It may be difficult to implement what teachers believe when they are in a situation with a large class size, and the numerous restrictions placed on them. Accordingly, teachers' beliefs should also be examined by observing their actual responses to child behaviours in the classroom (e.g., Roorda et al., 2013).

The difficulty of culturally based research should be noted (Mishra, 1999), as measures were adapted from English versions of hypothetical vignettes into Mandarin. Although there were many precautions taken (face validity, issues resolved with discussion), it is important to recognize the *meaning* of behaviours within different cultural context (definitions and associations of behaviours may differ from culture to culture) (Bornstein, 1995; Chen, 2010). For example, characteristics associated with shyness were viewed as positive in the past in China (Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992) and now are evidenced to be maladaptive (Chen et al., 2005), showing that meaning of behaviour may not only change from culture to culture, but even over time within the *same* culture. Every effort was made to remain consistent in the vignettes with the descriptions presented. This study cited research conducted from various cultures,

primarily Western and Asian, to explain characteristics associated with each child behaviour discussed. Discussion of Western samples to the current study are used for comparison purposes, and to emphasize the shift in cultural values of China becoming more “Westernized”. Accordingly, results should be interpreted with caution, keeping in mind the translation/adaptation of the measure and that this study was conducted in China, not Western culture. Nevertheless, results provide new research on the beliefs of Chinese kindergarten teachers towards child behaviours, substantiate a need for further teacher training on children’s behaviour, and supports the current literature examining the shift of values in Chinese culture.

Consistent with previous studies using vignette methodologies, relatively few results emerge as a function of gender (Coplan et al., 2014; Coplan et al., 2011) with regards to specific behaviours (aside from teachers indicating they would intervene in exuberant boys more than girls). When examining all behaviours, teachers indicated more peer problems for girls, compared to boys, and felt less prepared to handle girl behaviours. As this result was found when examining all behaviours aggregated together, there is difficulty speculating *why* this gender difference emerged. Therefore further examination is needed to understand this result, as it deviates from similar research (Chen & Chang, 2002). It has been suggested that teacher training may “trump” gender-stereotypical beliefs, or that the gender-stereotypes are not as evident in the individual vignettes presented (Coplan et al., 2014). Further, vignettes depict only same-sex interactions, which are predominant among kindergarten children (e.g., Jacklin & Maccoby, 1978; Martin & Fabes, 2001). However, responses may have differed if vignettes depicted mixed-sex peers playing. Moreover, most of the participants in this

study were female. Future studies should examine mixed-gender vignettes, and include significantly more male teachers in the sample to gain better understanding of possible gender differences that may emerge.

Overall, the findings from this study may also offer some potential insight into the effects of the ongoing cultural shift in China. For example, the present findings can be interpreted as support for the notion that contemporary values regarding social behaviours in Chinese youth and children may manifest not only at the “societal level”, but also in their everyday life in the classroom setting. In this regard, teacher attitudes and beliefs towards child social behaviours may be viewed as a reflection of the changing desired behavioural qualities in China. As such, teachers’ beliefs towards child behaviours appear to be harmonious to the newly desired behavioural qualities in Chinese children that has erupted over the past 30 years (e.g. initiative, self-expressionism, outgoing). Future studies should include vignettes depicting children with behavioural qualities of the newly valued characteristics in China, to further examine the impact that the shift has made on perceptions of positive behavioural qualities in the classroom context. Professional development should be implemented to assist teachers in increasing knowledge and awareness of intervention strategies that can be used in different types of child behaviours, such as social skills training to assist socially withdrawn children (Coplan et al., 2010).

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Appendix A**English Text for Vignettes (boys version)**

Shyness: ____ is hovering near some other children who are playing a game. He appears somewhat anxious. He inches closer to the other children, but does not try to join in.

Unsociability: ____ is playing quietly away from the other children. He does not appear anxious or upset and if left undisturbed, would seem likely to happily continue playing on his own.

Exuberance: During circle time, ____ blurts out answers and frequently interrupts other children. He cannot contain his exuberance and tends to speak too loudly and too often.

Prosocial: A group of children are playing a game, and ____ seems to be one of the leaders. Two other boys are nearby but not joining in, and ____ invites them to join in the game.

Appendix B**English Text for Vignettes (girls version)**

Shyness: ____ is hovering near some other children who are playing a game. She appears somewhat anxious. She inches closer to the other children, but does not try to join in.

Unsociability: ____ is playing quietly away from the other children. She does not appear anxious or upset and if left undisturbed, would seem likely to happily continue playing on her own.

Exuberance: During circle time, ____ blurts out answers and frequently interrupts other children. She cannot contain her exuberance and tends to speak too loudly and too often.

Prosocial: A group of children are playing a game, and ____ seems to be one of the leaders. Two other girls are nearby but not joining in, and ____ invites them to join in the game.