

## Filial belief and parent–child conflict

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This study examines the relation between filial belief and the frequency, origins, and solutions to parent–child conflict using an indigenous Chinese perspective. The Dual Filial Piety model is employed to categorize the four types of filial belief: nonfilial, authoritarian, reciprocal, and absolute. Questionnaires were completed by 773 junior and senior high school students from around Taiwan for the study. Results provided support for the indigenous Chinese notion that a child’s filial beliefs relate to the level of parent–child conflict. The results go beyond this common conception to highlight that filial beliefs may have a particular role in decreasing self-centred but not inappropriate conflict between parents and children, and that reciprocal filial beliefs may have a more important role in decreasing conflict than authoritarian filial beliefs. Clear differences were identified in the reported origins of conflict (Demands Conflict with Desire, Unreasonable Behaviour, Demand Exceeds Ability, Role Conflict, Interparental Dispute, Immoral Demands) and solutions to conflict (self-sacrifice, compromise, reframing, ego-centred, escape) among the four filial types. Parent demands conflicting with the child’s desire was the greatest source of conflict for each of the four filial types. Nonfilial types reported significantly more conflict than absolute types for four of the six origins of conflict examined. Low incidence of conflict may explain why the filial types did not differ for the remaining two origins. Overall, the four filial types reported self-sacrifice as their least used solution to parent–child conflict, and nonfilials reported significantly less use of this solution than the other three filial types. Absolutes and reciprocals reported significantly more use of reframing than the other two filial types. Results of this study provide the first empirical support for the Dual Filial Piety model and constitute a foundation for continued indigenous research on parent–child relations in Chinese culture. It is expected that an indigenous theory of parent–child relations incorporating the Dual Filial Piety model can eventually be integrated into a global psychology.

Cette étude examine la relation entre la croyance filiale et la fréquence, les origines et les solutions relatives aux conflits parent-enfant, par l’entremise d’une perspective indigène chinoise. Le modèle de Piété filiale double est employé pour catégoriser les quatre types de croyances filiales: non filiales, autoritaires, réciproques et absolues. Un échantillon de 773 étudiants du secondaire provenant des environs de Taïwan a complété divers questionnaires. Les résultats soutiennent la notion chinoise indigène selon laquelle les croyances filiales de l’enfant sont reliées au niveau de conflit parent-enfant. Les résultats surpassent cette conception commune en soulignant que les croyances filiales peuvent avoir un rôle particulier dans la diminution des conflits parent-enfant centrés sur la personne mais non inadéquats. En outre, il apparaît que les croyances filiales réciproques peuvent avoir un rôle plus important dans la diminution des conflits comparativement aux croyances filiales autoritaires. Des différences claires entre les quatre types filiaux furent identifiées quant à l’origine rapportée des conflits (demandes des parents en conflit avec besoins des enfants, conduites inadéquates, demandes excédant les habiletés, conflits de rôle, disputes interparentales, demandes immorales) et par rapport aux solutions pour résoudre ces conflits (auto-sacrifice, compromis, recadrage, concentration sur soi, fuite). La source principale de conflits dans chacun des quatre groupes est relative aux demandes parentales qui entrent en conflit avec les désirs de l’enfant. Les types non filiaux présentent significativement plus de conflits que les types absolus pour quatre des six origines de conflit examinées. La faible incidence de conflit peut expliquer pourquoi les quatre groupes ne diffèrent pas sur le plan des deux autres origines. De façon générale, pour les quatre groupes, le sacrifice de soi représente la solution la moins utilisée pour résoudre les conflits parent-enfant, avec les types

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non filiaux qui expriment significativement moins l'utilisation de cette solution comparativement aux trois autres groupes. Les types absolus et réciproques montrent une utilisation significativement plus grande du recadrage que les deux autres groupes. Les résultats de cette étude fournissent un premier soutien empirique au modèle de Piété filiale double et constituent une fondation pour les recherches futures s'intéressant aux relations parent-enfant dans la culture chinoise. Il est attendu qu'une théorie indigène des relations parent-enfant incorporant le modèle de Piété filiale double puisse éventuellement être intégrée à la psychologie globale.

*E*ste estudio examina la relación entre creencia filial y frecuencia, origen y soluciones de los conflictos padres-hijos mediante una perspectiva indígena china. Se empleó el Modelo Dual de Piedad Filial para categorizar cuatro tipos de creencia filial: no-filial, autoritaria, recíproca y absoluta. 773 estudiantes de secundaria de Taiwán completaron los cuestionarios del estudio. Los resultados apoyan la noción indígena china de que las creencias filiales del hijo se relacionan con el nivel de conflicto entre padres e hijos. Los resultados van aún más allá e indican que las creencias filiales podrían desempeñar un papel en la disminución del conflicto entre padres e hijos centrado en la persona, pero no en el inapropiado, y que las creencias filiales recíprocas podrían participar en mayor medida que las autoritarias en la disminución del conflicto. Se encontró que hubo diferencias entre los cuatro tipos filiales en cuanto al origen del conflicto (exigencias de los padres en conflicto con los deseos de los hijos, conducta inapropiada, la exigencia excede a la habilidad, conflicto de roles, disputa entre los padres, exigencias inmorales) y a las soluciones a éste (autosacrificio, concesiones, replanteamiento, centrado en el ego, escape). Las exigencias de los padres en conflicto con los deseos de los hijos fue la fuente más importante de conflicto para cada uno de los cuatro tipos filiales. Los tipos no-filiales informaron significativamente más conflicto que los absolutos para cuatro de los seis orígenes de conflicto examinados. La baja incidencia de conflicto podría explicar por qué los tipos filiales no difirieron con respecto a los dos orígenes restantes. En general, los cuatro tipos filiales informaron que el autosacrificio era la solución que menos usaban ante el conflicto padres-hijos, y los no-filiales informaron significativamente menos empleo de esta solución que el resto de los tipos filiales. Los absolutos y los recíprocos refirieron de manera importante que usaban más el replanteamiento que los otros dos tipos filiales. Los resultados de este estudio proporcionan por primera vez datos que apoyan el Modelo Dual de Piedad Filial y constituyen una base para la investigación subsiguiente sobre relaciones padres-hijos en la cultura china. Se espera que la teoría indígena sobre relaciones padres-hijos que incorpora el Modelo Dual de Piedad Filial pueda, con el paso del tiempo, integrarse a la psicología global.

## INTRODUCTION

Parents are responsible for correcting and guiding their children's behaviour, but the older children get, the more they strive for autonomy and release from their parents' control as they begin to establish an identity beyond the family. Parents may not fully understand these developmental changes, and may respond with strict discipline. Potential for conflict exists in parent-child relations, and when parents and children hold different goals, actual conflict may arise (Foster & Robin, 1997; Osborne & Fincham, 1994; Smetana, 1995).

When considering why potential parent-child conflict erupts into actual conflict, researchers in the West generally examine parent-related factors such as parenting style, parenting cognitions, or marital conflict (e.g., Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Crockenberg, 1987; Noller, Freeney, Sheehan, & Peterson, 2000; Patterson, 1982; Shagle & Barber, 1993). It is understood that parents play the most important role in determining whether parent-child conflict occurs because they have superiority before their children become adults. Western values also recognize the rights of the children as the central consideration of both parents' duties toward children, and children's duties to parents (Cheng, 1986).

In a Chinese cultural context, by contrast, once a child is considered old enough to understand filial obligations, any parent-child conflict issues are discussed in terms of the child's degree of filial piety; that is, the more the child accepts and emphasizes filial piety, the less likely it is that conflict will occur. Children are understood to play the most important role in determining whether parent-child conflict occurs because they have the filial obligations of complete obedience to their parents, attendance to parental needs, and respect for their parents (Cheng, 1986). Confucian values in Chinese culture emphasize the duties that children have to their parents, as opposed to the rights of children, as in Western culture.

Western researchers are likely to point out that parenting style determines whether or how well filial piety is instilled in the child, turning the focus back to the parents. From a Chinese cultural perspective, there are two important responses to this observation. First, it is not only parents who instil filial piety in their children. Nearly every aspect of society a child comes into contact with emphasizes the values of filial piety: TV programmes, advertising, relatives, friends, and teachers all contribute to socializing children with the norms of filial piety. For example, teachers may motivate children to

behave and to study hard so that they will not cause their parents to lose face, which would be a violation of filial piety. Students socialize each other with peer pressure, harshly judging those who fail to live up to filial norms. In short, children who are nonfilial may well feel wider social repercussions, even if their parents do not condemn them. This is not to say that parents have an unimportant role in instilling filial values in their children; rather, parents are not the only source of filial values.

Second, in a Chinese cultural context, no matter what the parents' behaviour, it is the child's responsibility to avoid conflict. Children are expected not to act against their parents' wishes, even when the parent's behaviour is inappropriate or immoral. The only acceptable response on the part of the child is forbearance. There is a sense in which it does not matter if the parent has taught filial values or not. Children are still expected to exhibit them.

As it is unlikely that the unique aspects of this unidirectional obligation of children to their parents could be understood with studies based solely on Western theoretical constructs, it is important to undertake studies that examine the particulars of a culture from an indigenous perspective. The indigenous aspects can then be integrated into a greater theoretical framework that may have universal application. Although some studies have examined the effects of parenting style on child outcomes (the Western perspective) with Chinese American (e.g., Chao, 2001; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) and Hong Kong Chinese families (e.g., Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998), almost none have specifically examined parent-child conflict using an indigenous perspective.

### **Filial belief**

Research on filial piety in the context of modern Confucian societies has led to conflicting findings reflecting either one or the other of these two sets of values and has generated debate as to whether filial piety has an overall helpful (e.g., Cheung, Lee, & Chan, 1994; Lawrence, Bennett, & Markides, 1992; Ng, 2001) or harmful (e.g., Boey, 1976; Ho, 1994) impact on individual psychological development. Yeh (1997a) used confirmatory factor analysis of a previous filial scale (Yang, Yeh, & Hwang, 1989) to identify two factors corresponding to the

two stages of historical development of the concept: reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety.

Yeh's Dual Filial Piety model (Yeh, 1997b, 2003; Yeh & Bedford, 2003) resolves the helpful/harmful debate by maintaining that the modern concept of filial piety can be best understood in terms of these two independent factors. Reciprocal filial piety is focused on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships with close relations out of affection and gratitude. Positive implications include better intergenerational relationships (Lawrence et al., 1992), lower levels of parent-child conflict (Yeh, 1999), and greater financial, physical, and emotional support for parents (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997). Authoritarian filial piety accentuates hierarchy and submission, and has been associated with emphasis on obedience, indebtedness to parents, impulse control, proper conduct, and inhibition of self-expression (Ho, 1994). Yeh's model enables separate examination of the two filial piety factors, each of which emphasizes different values that may be important in reducing conflict. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is: The higher the degree of either reciprocal or authoritarian filial belief of the child, the lower the level of parent-child conflict.

Because individuals may differ in terms of the extent to which they subscribe to reciprocal or authoritarian beliefs, four main filial types are possible. A person with high levels of both reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety may be categorized as an absolute filial type. A person with low levels of both is categorized into the nonfilial type. Reciprocal types have high reciprocal filial piety, but low authoritarian filial piety. Authoritarian types have a high level of authoritarian filial piety, but low reciprocal filial piety. Hypotheses 2 is as follows: There are differences among the four types of filial belief in their corresponding frequency of parent-child conflict, with absolute, reciprocal, authoritarian, and nonfilial types corresponding to successively greater conflict frequencies.

### **Parent-child conflict**

Although previous studies have examined the effects of parenting style on child outcomes with Chinese American and Hong Kong Chinese families, none have taken a child-centred perspective. Yeh's (1995, 1997a) research on the origins of parent-child conflict and the solutions children employ to avoid and resolve conflict is a notable exception.

## Origins

Yeh identified six types of origins of parent-child conflict from the child's perspective: (1) *Demands Conflict with Desire*: Compliance with parents' requirements necessitates giving up a personal desire. Examples include a difference in opinion over which subject to major in at college or the selection of career. (2) *Demands Exceed Ability*: Parents expect children to achieve ideals that they are not capable of attaining, or may make financial demands that adult children cannot meet. Children may encounter conflict in letting their parents know that they unable to meet the expectation. (3) *Filial Duties Conflict with Other Obligations*: Children's filial duties and their other role obligations may conflict, such as when a son's mother and wife disagree on some issue. (4) *Unreasonable Parental Behaviour*: This behaviour may result in conflict if the child resists or complains. Examples include garrulousness, stubbornness, and unfair treatment of children. (5) *Immoral Parental Demands*: If parents make unethical demands, conflict may arise over the appropriateness of the demand. (6) *Interparental Dispute*: When parents disagree on an issue, conflict may result with children when they decide which parent's direction to accept.

In Yeh's study, over 98% of the respondents indicated they had experienced conflict falling into the Demand Conflicts with Desire category, and this accounted for 60% of all conflict reported. This finding echoes research by Western scholars, suggesting that everyday issues (like household chores and appearance) appear to be the greatest source of conflict with parents from the child's perspective (Barber, 1994; Galambos & Almeida, 1992).

Sixty per cent of Yeh's respondents reported conflict in the Unreasonable Parent Behaviour category, accounting for 20% of the total conflict reported, and 47% reported Interparental Dispute as an origin of conflict, but it only accounted for around 7% of the total conflict reported. The remaining three categories accounted for less than 10% of the reported conflict.

The origins of parent-child conflict from the child's perspective are explored with the following hypotheses. Hypothesis 3: The origin giving rise to the greatest amount of conflict for all four filial types is Parent Demand Conflicts with my Desires. Hypothesis 4: The effects of reciprocal and authoritarian filial belief in reducing conflict from each origin are additive. That is, nonfilials report the most conflict in each category of origin and absolutes report the least, with reciprocals and authoritarians in the middle.

## Solutions

Finding effective strategies to resolve conflict is crucial to maintaining a filial relationship with parents. To date, only Yeh's (1995, 1997a) studies provide insight into the types of solution strategies employed by Chinese children to resolve conflict with their parents. Yeh's framework of five solution strategies was derived from analysis of sequential in-depth interviews: *Self-sacrifice* requires children to give in to parental demands whenever conflict with parents arises. If the conflict refers to the benefit of parents or a third party (e.g., spouse, society, or country), children should carry out all duties to their parents first. *Egocentrism* is the direct opposite of self-sacrifice. Filial virtues and duties are not the primary guides to behaviour. Instead, children attempt to obtain the most advantages or least harm to themselves in the solution process. *Reframing* can be used to recast conflict situations into a new context such that both sides attain their goals and neither party need sacrifice any demands. Reframing is particularly difficult to attain, and requires sophisticated experience, ability, and wisdom. *Escape* involves the child's attempt to either escape from the current conflict or to do nothing because of a lack of ideas about how to resolve conflict. Sometimes escape is a temporary strategy when the conflict situation is not so serious as to require an immediate solution. It may also be used when the child does not fully understand the parent's request. When the time comes that the issue must be resolved, the escape strategy will be forcefully transformed to one of the other four solution types. In *compromise* the child works to find a middle ground where both sides make some sacrifice in order to resolve conflict. Compromise may involve discussion or solving a conflict step by step or by first satisfying one side's needs, and then the other's.

The difference between these five solutions lies in the degree of emphasis on each of two aspects: satisfaction of parental demands (or filial values) and achievement of personal goals. Those who adopt self-sacrifice care particularly for parental needs, while those adopting an egocentric strategy emphasize achievement of their own desires. Those who apply reframing or compromise treat both personal desires and parental needs as important. People who adopt the escape strategy may either care little for personal desires and satisfying parental needs, or they may care about both so equally that no action can be taken and paralysis results.

These strategies are similar to previous classifications for handling interpersonal conflict. For instance, Follet (1940) identified five main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise, integration, avoidance, and suppression. Blake and Mouton (1964) also presented a conceptual scheme of five solution types for handling interpersonal conflict: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving. Thomas (1976) reinterpreted this scheme into another five-category framework by considering the dimensions of cooperativeness and assertiveness. Rahim's (1985) five-type classification system along the dimensions of concern for self and concern for others is most similar to the framework presented above, although it differs in depth.

Differences among the four filial types in the solution strategies employed to resolve or avoid parent-child conflict are expected in Hypothesis 5: Nonfilials rely less on self-sacrifice solutions; and Hypothesis 6: They rely more on egocentric solutions than on the other three types. Hypothesis 7: Reciprocals and absolutes make greater use of reframing; and Hypothesis 8: They rely more on compromise than the other two types.

## METHOD

### Participants

Junior and senior high school students were selected as participants in this study as they are generally believed to be old enough to understand and fulfil their filial obligations responsibly. Participants were recruited by classes as a unit and groups of them filled out the questionnaires.

### Procedure

Participants were told the study was a survey of their opinions and feelings about family issues. On average it took 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After eliminating questionnaires that were incomplete or incorrectly filled out (8.2%), data from a total of 773 participants from around Taiwan remained (male 343, female 430; junior high school 347, high school 426). The age of the participants ranged from 13 to 19 ( $M = 15.32$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ). Male and female participants differed significantly in age ( $M$  male age = 15.56,  $SD = 1.69$ ,  $M$  female age = 15.13,  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $t$ -value = 3.57,  $SED = .43$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but both had a mean age between 15 and 16 years old. As this difference is small, and as gender difference issues

are not a focus of this study, data for males and females were combined for analysis.

## Measures

Instruments constructed from the child's perspective were used to assess both the level of the child's filial belief (the Filial Piety Scale, FPS) and the level of conflict in parent-child interaction (Parent-child Interaction Scale, PIS). Adolescent reports of parenting constructs such as parent-child conflict have been confirmed as stable over time, with good convergent and discriminative validity (Metzler, Biglan, Ary, & Li, 1998).

### Filial Piety Scale

The FPS measures reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. The FPS used in this study consisted of the short-form Filial Piety Scale (Yeh, 1997b) (9 items) plus 7 additional items from the original scale (Yang et al., 1989). The items were added to better represent the two aspects of filial piety because the 9-item short-form scale was constructed before the Dual Filial Piety model was developed. Items were also added to enlarge the variance of the scores. The instructions and item statements were modified slightly as the original form was developed for use with adult respondents and was not suitable for use with students. Participants indicated their agreement with the items on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  is .90 for the reciprocal FPS (8 items) and .79 for the authoritarian scale (8 items), with a correlation between the scales of .17 (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Those scoring above the mean (12.8) on the authoritarian scale were grouped as high in authoritarian filial piety. Those scoring below the mean were grouped as low on authoritarian filial piety. Scores on reciprocal filial piety ( $M = 25.4$ ) were grouped in a similar manner. Those participants scoring high on both filial piety measures were then designated as absolute filial types. Those scoring high on authoritarian and low on reciprocal filial piety were designated as authoritarian types. Those scoring high on reciprocal and low on authoritarian filial piety were designated as reciprocal types, and those scoring below the mean on both measures were designated nonfilial types.

### Parent-child Interaction Scale

The PIS (Yeh, 1999) measures the frequency, origin, and solutions strategies to parent-child

conflict from the child's perspective with three subscales. Some participants completed only the "mother" (212) or "father" (220) version of the scale and answered all items with respect to that parent according to their recollection of actual interactions over the past 6 months. Reasons participants filled out only one version of the scale included: time constraints, the participant only lived with one parent, or one of their two scales was incomplete or erroneously filled out. The remaining participants (341) completed both versions for a total of 1114 completed PIS scales. Because the goal of this study is to examine overall levels of conflict, and the gender of the parent is not a major concern of the study, data for the father and mother versions of the scale were not analysed separately.

The frequency subscale contains 38 items describing some sort of concrete parental behaviour or belief that may potentially be a source of parent-child conflict. These items were conceptually derived from qualitative interviews conducted in a previous study (Yeh, 1995). Examples include "Parent asks me to lie for him," and "Parent has plans about my future that differ from mine." Participants made two responses to each item. First, they indicated (from *always* to *never* on a 5-point Likert scale) how often their parent had displayed the given behaviour (hereafter referred to as *incidence of behaviour*). Responses to these items represent the level of potential conflict. Second, they made a separate indication for each item on another Likert scale as to the frequency of conflict with the parent over that behavior (labelled *frequency of conflict*). Responses to these items represent the level of actual conflict.

Factor analysis of the data collected on the frequency subscale in this study suggested division of the items into two types of parental behaviour. From the perspective of the child, conflict can arise with a parent for two main reasons: (1) Parents are conducting themselves in a manner that does not conform to the role expectations that the child has for the parent (labelled *inappropriate parental behaviour*). That is, the child believes the parent's behaviour is outside the bounds of what would normally be expected of a parent. (2) The parent is overly strict or focused mainly on the their own needs (*self-centred parental behaviour*). An example of inappropriate parental behaviour is "Parent has unstable mood swings," and of a self-centred item is "Parent sets the time I have to be home after school." The Cronbach  $\alpha$ s for each of the factor subscales were

.92 and .87 for the father version of the inappropriate and self-centred behaviour scales respectively, and .90 and .86 for the mother version.

The origin subscale reflects the six types of origins of parent-child conflict described above. It consists of 12 items, with each of the origin types represented by two items. For example, items include "Parent's behaviour and attitudes are unacceptable," and "Parent does not get along well with spouse." Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* as to whether the described reason had aroused conflict.

The third subscale measures the solutions children tend to rely on to resolve conflict with parents with 10 items. Each of the five solution types described earlier is represented by two items; for example, one of the items representing the self-sacrifice solution type is "I try to see my parent's perspective and do my best to satisfy his/her requirements." Participants indicated on a 5-point Likert scale from *always* to *never* how often they had used each of the strategies listed.

## RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 explored whether or not the degree of a child's belief in filial piety is related to the frequency of parent-child conflict. Results indicated that greater belief in either type of filial piety is associated with reduced frequency of conflict over both types of parental behaviour,  $r(986) = -.41$  and  $r(993) = -.19$  for reciprocal filial belief and inappropriate and self-centred conflict, respectively, and  $r(988) = -.22$  and  $r(999) = -.12$  for authoritarian filial belief and inappropriate and self-centred conflict respectively, with all  $p < .001$ .

It is possible that the reduced frequency of conflict with greater filial belief is related to a lower incidence of potential conflict behaviour on the part of the parents; with less opportunity for conflict, less conflict can arise. To investigate this possibility, the relationship between filial belief and incidence of parental behaviour was examined. While greater filial belief did correspond to a reduced incidence of inappropriate behaviour,  $r(996) = -.43$  and  $r(1000) = -.22$  for reciprocal and authoritarian filial belief, respectively, with both two-tailed  $p < .001$ , there was no relation between filial belief and incidence of self-centred behaviour,  $r(1013) = -.05$  and  $r(1018) = -.03$  for reciprocal and authoritarian filial belief, respectively, with both two-tailed  $p > .05$ .

Next, the relation between degree of filial belief and frequency of conflict was examined while partialling out the incidence of parental behaviour. The significant inverse relationship between degree of filial belief and frequency of inappropriate conflict identified earlier became insignificant both for reciprocal filial belief,  $r(963) = -.05$ , two-tailed  $p > .05$ , and authoritarian filial belief,  $r(963) = -.02$ , two-tailed  $p > .05$ . However, the inverse relationship between filial belief and frequency of self-centred conflict did maintain a significant inverse relationship with both types of filial belief, and in fact appeared to be strengthened,  $r(977) = -.25$  and  $r(977) = -.15$ , with two-tailed  $p < .001$ , for reciprocal and authoritarian filial belief, respectively. Reciprocal filial belief was also more strongly related to the reduced frequency of self-centred conflict than authoritarian filial belief, Fisher's  $Z = -2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ . In sum, greater filial belief is related to reduced frequency of conflict. When the incidence of parental behaviour is partialled out, only the frequency of self-centred conflict is related to the degree of filial belief. Hypothesis 1 is supported for self-centred, but not inappropriate, conflict.

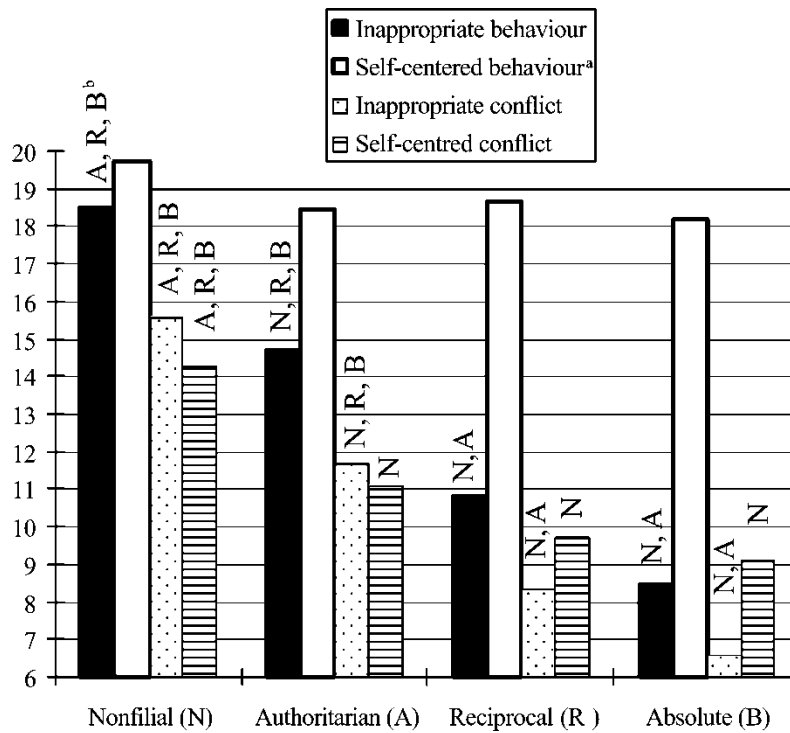
Hypothesis 2 explored the relation between the type of filial belief and the frequency of parent-child conflict. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the average rating of conflict frequency did differ significantly among the filial types for both kinds of parent-child conflict:  $F(3, 972) = 41.21$ ,  $MSE = 111.68$ , for inappropriate conflict; and  $F(3, 981) = 13.11$ ,  $MSE = 118.45$ , for self-centred conflict, both  $p < .001$ . According to a Scheffé post hoc test, nonfilial types had significantly more inappropriate conflict than authoritarian types, who reported significantly more inappropriate conflict than reciprocal and absolute types, who did not differ significantly from each other in level of inappropriate conflict. Nonfilial types also reported significantly more self-centred conflict than did the other three types, who did not differ significantly from one another. For both types of conflict, a clear trend of decreasing conflict is evident among the four types, with nonfilials having the most conflict, followed by authoritarians, and then reciprocals, with absolutes reporting the least conflict.

Next, the relation between type of filial belief and incidence of behaviour was addressed. The average rating of incidence of behaviour did differ significantly among the filial belief types for inappropriate,  $F(3, 983) = 46.22$ ,  $MSE = 5746.87$ ,  $p < .001$ , but not self-centred behaviour,  $F(3, 1000) = 1.34$ ,  $MSE = 189.13$ ,  $p > .05$ . According

to a Scheffé post hoc test, nonfilial types reported a significantly higher incidence of inappropriate behaviour than each of the other types. Authoritarians had a significantly higher incidence of inappropriate behaviour than the reciprocal and absolute types. The reciprocal and absolute types did not differ significantly from each other, although the trend suggests that absolutes reported lower scores (see Figure 1).

The extent to which potential conflict is converted into actual conflict was examined next. For each filial type, the regression equation of frequency of conflict by incidence of behaviour was calculated to find the regression coefficient (indicating the extent to which potential conflict is converted into actual conflict) and standard error of regression coefficient. *T*-tests were used to determine whether the difference between each pair of regression coefficients reached a significant level. As with the results of the analysis for Hypothesis 1, filial belief made a difference in the extent to which self-centred behaviour was transformed into conflict; the nonfilial group had a regression coefficient ( $B = .84$ ,  $SE = .03$ ) significantly greater than those of the other three groups (authoritarian  $B = 0.72$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $t = 2.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ; reciprocal  $B = .67$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $t = 3.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ; absolute  $B = .65$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = 4.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The regression coefficients of the three filial types did not differ from each other. In the inappropriate condition, the regression coefficient of the reciprocal group ( $B = .78$ ,  $SE = .03$ ) was significantly less than those of the other three groups (nonfilial  $B = .88$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $t = 2.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ; authoritarian  $B = 0.89$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = 2.56$ ,  $p < .05$ ; absolute  $B = .87$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = -2.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which did not differ from each other. Hypothesis 2 is partially supported: Nonfilial types reported higher levels of conflict and absolute types reported less conflict than other types.

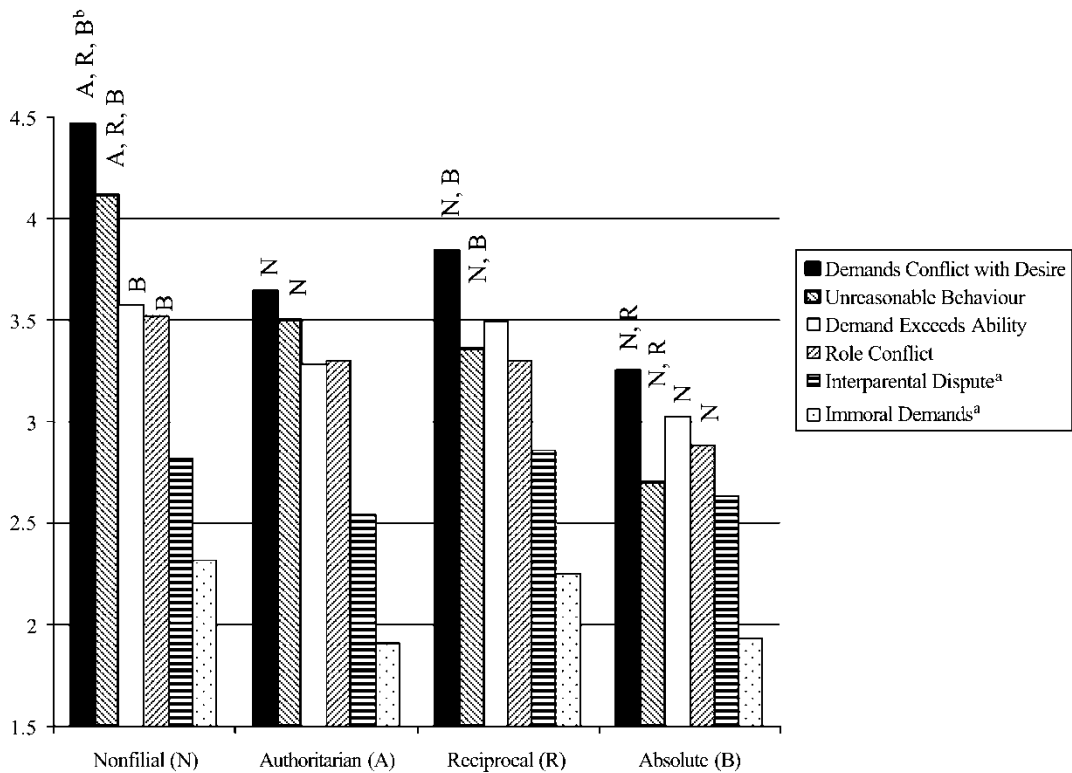
Hypotheses 3 and 4 examined the relation of the type of filial belief to participants' perceptions of the origins of parent-child conflict. The origin receiving the highest average score was Demand Conflicts with Desires ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 2.35$ ), followed by Unreasonable Behaviour ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 2.51$ ), Demand Exceeds Ability ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 2.52$ ), Role Conflict ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 2.43$ ), Interparental Dispute ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 2.64$ ), and Immoral Demands ( $M = 2.10$ ,  $SD = 2.47$ ). For each filial type, the mean score of the Demands Conflict with Desire origin was significantly larger than the mean score on each of the other origins ( $t$  values for nonfilials ranged from 2.06 to 15.89,



**Figure 1.** Average frequency of inappropriate and self-centred behaviour and inappropriate and self-centred conflict by type of filial belief.

<sup>a</sup>No significant differences among filial types for this origin according to ANOVA.

<sup>b</sup>Letters (A, R, etc.) indicate which other types the score is significantly different from according to Scheffé post hoc tests.



**Figure 2.** Mean score of each filial type on each origin of conflict.

<sup>a</sup>No significant differences among filial types for this origin according to ANOVA.

<sup>b</sup>Letters (A, R, etc.) indicate which other types the score is significantly different from according to Scheffé post hoc tests.



authoritarians from 2.24 to 9.74, reciprocals from 2.28 to 8.54, and absolutes from 2.73 to 11.19, with all  $p < .05$ ). Hypothesis 3 is supported.

ANOVAs revealed clear differences among the four types of filial belief on only four of the six origins of conflict: Demands Conflict with Desire,  $F(3, 1031) = 16.22$ ,  $MSE = 85.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Demand Exceeds Ability,  $F(3, 1029) = 3.34$ ,  $MSE = 21.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Role Conflict,  $F(3, 1024) = 4.32$ ,  $MSE = 25.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Unreasonable Behaviour,  $F(3, 1031) = 21.73$ ,  $MSE = 128.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Interparental Dispute,  $F(3, 1027) = 0.51$ ,  $MSE = 3.53$ ,  $p > .05$ ; Immoral Demands:  $F(3, 1026) = 1.79$ ,  $MSE = 10.98$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Scheffé post hoc tests indicated that in the Demands Conflict with Desire and Unreasonable Behaviour categories, nonfilial types reported significantly more conflict than each of the other three filial types, authoritarians and reciprocals did not differ in level of conflict, and

reciprocals reported significantly more conflict than absolute types. In the Demand Exceeds Ability and Role Conflict categories, only nonfilials and absolutes scored significantly differently from each other, with nonfilials reporting higher levels of conflict. Hypothesis 4, that nonfilials report the most conflict and absolutes the least, is supported for the four origins on which the filial types responded differently (see Figure 2).

Hypotheses 5 through 8 explored the solutions employed by participants to resolve conflict with their parents. The reframing solution received the highest average ( $M = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ), followed by compromise ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ), ego-centred ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ), escape ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ), and self-sacrifice ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ). ANOVAs indicated a significant difference in responses among the four belief types for all five types of solutions: self-sacrifice,  $F(3, 1024) = 32.6$ ,  $MSE = 100.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ; ego-centred:  $F(3, 1017) = 4.47$ ,

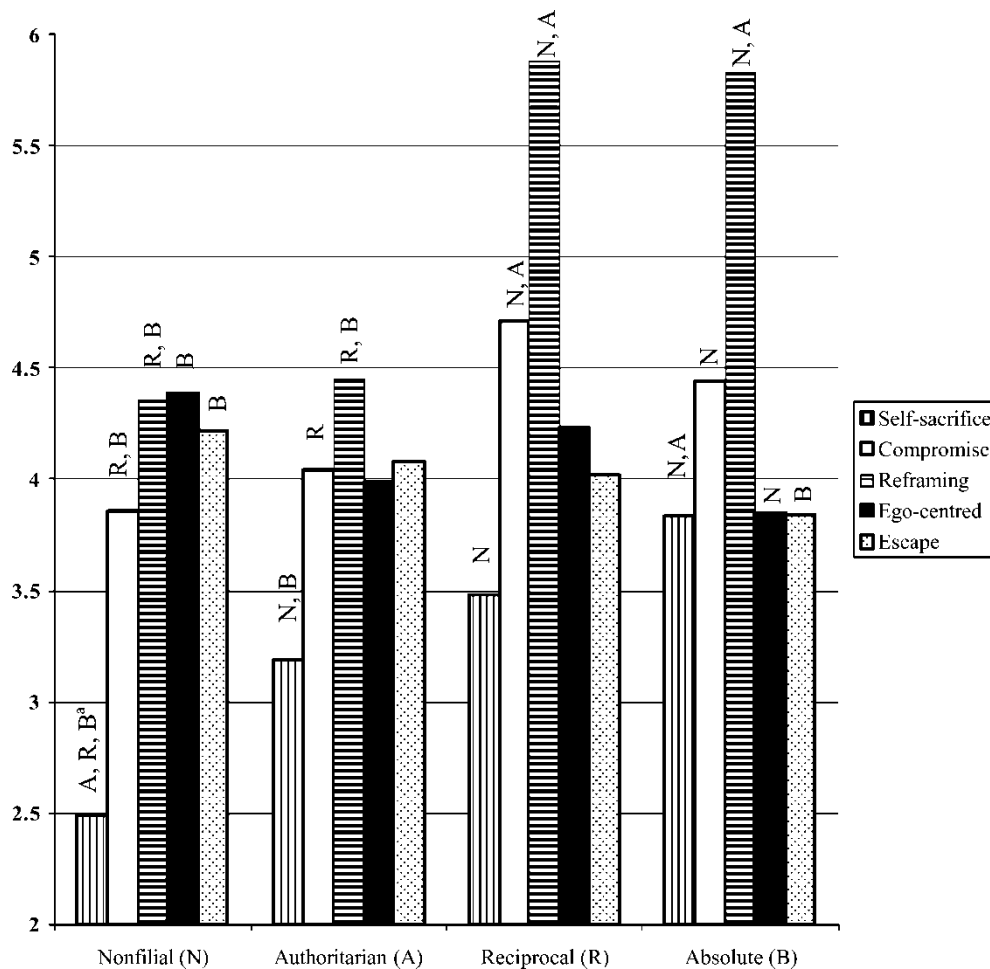


Figure 3. Mean score on each solution strategy by type of filial belief.

<sup>a</sup>Letters (A, R, etc.) indicate which other types the score is significantly different from according to Scheffé post hoc tests.

$MSE=17.42$ ,  $p<.01$ ; reframing:  $F(3, 1028)=50.07$ ,  $MSE=181.71$ ,  $p<.001$ ; compromise:  $F(3, 1029)=9.71$ ,  $MSE=35.56$ ,  $p<.001$ ; escape:  $F(3, 1030)=2.9$ ,  $MSE=10.02$ ,  $p<.05$ .

Scheffé post hoc tests clearly indicated that nonfilials relied less on self-sacrifice than each of the other three filial types, supporting Hypothesis 5. Nonfilials reported significantly more use of ego-centred solutions than absolutes, but they did not differ significantly from the other two types. However, reciprocals and authoritarians did not score significantly differently from absolutes. Hypothesis 6 is partially supported (see Figure 3).

With respect to the use of reframing solutions, reciprocals and absolutes scored similarly, and both reported significantly more use of this solution than the nonfilial and authoritarian types, who also scored similarly. Hypothesis 7 is supported. Results for the compromise solution were comparable. Reciprocals and absolutes scored similarly, and higher than nonfilials and authoritarians, who also scored similarly. However, unlike the reframing solutions, absolutes and authoritarians did not score significantly differently. Hypothesis 8 is supported.

## DISCUSSION

There is a clear trend in the relation between filial belief and parent-child conflict: While high belief in either type of filial piety alone is related to reduced conflict, high belief in both has an even stronger relation to it. A corresponding observation is the trend for reciprocal filial belief to have a stronger relation to reduced conflict than authoritarian belief. Further, those with high reciprocal belief have a lower rate of conversion of inappropriate behaviour into inappropriate conflict than those without it. Why might this be?

Belief in reciprocal filial piety is based on the idea that children should repay their parents for their lives, and the expense and trouble of raising them. No matter what kind of conflict or what level of parental behaviour, children are morally required to voluntarily defer to their parents in repayment of this debt. The fact of the debt can never be in question, so the existence of the obligation is likewise unquestionable.

In contrast, authoritarian filial piety is based on the Confucian principle of respecting the superior, which implies that children should defer to their parents because of role obligations and hierarchy. If their parents do not fulfil their parental roles responsibly (as when they are perceived by their children as exhibiting high levels of inappropriate

parental behaviour), children may not feel required to carry out filial obligations. Although a high level of self-centred parental behaviour is not an optimal situation for parent-child interaction, parents are still perceived by their children as being responsible in their duties as parents, and so authoritarian filial piety is still a key factor in reducing self-centred conflict with parents.

This discussion leads to the second observation evident from Figure 1. While the lower levels of inappropriate conflict reported by those with greater filial belief may be in part related to the lower incidence of inappropriate parental behaviour, the same is not true for self-centred conflict. All filial types reported a similar incidence of self-centred behaviour on the part of their parents, and yet those with greater filial belief reported lower frequencies of conflict over such behaviour. But what is the direction of causality? Among Chinese people, the common assumption is that greater filial belief on the part of the child produces reduced parent-child conflict. While our results may conform to this belief with respect to self-centred conflict, as the self-centred conflict levels were reduced with greater filial belief, independent of the incidence of self-centred parental behaviour, the results concerning inappropriate conflict are not so clear.

Although it is possible that greater filial belief causes a reduction in conflict frequency by reducing the incidence of inappropriate parental behaviour, an alternative explanation seems more likely. Parents who exhibit less inappropriate parental behaviour (behaviour that does not conform to the child's prototype for proper parental behaviour) may inspire greater filial piety in their children. Children may find it easier to cultivate filial piety when they perceive their parents as fulfilling parental roles. They may feel a greater desire and obligation to reciprocate by fulfilling their own filial roles when they perceive their parents as meeting their role expectations. Having developed this sense of filial piety, children might then draw on those beliefs to reduce conflict over self-centred parental behaviour, as suggested by the significant relation between filial belief and frequency of self-centred conflict independent of the incidence of self-centred behaviour. Thus, the level of inappropriate parental behaviour may itself influence the development of the child's filial beliefs, especially given the high correlation,  $r(1003)=.91$ ,  $p<.001$ , between incidence of inappropriate parental behaviour and inappropriate conflict frequency. An alternative explanation would be that the

differences in conflict levels and variation in filial belief are both due to some other variable not measured here.

Differences in the scores of the four filial types occurred in four of the six origins of conflict. It is possible that no differences were found in the other two origins (Interparental Dispute and Immoral Demands) simply because not enough conflict occurs in these categories to reflect a difference among the types. Yeh's (1995) study also found that little conflict is reported as being due to these origins. In fact, two origins accounted for around 80% of the conflict incidents reported in Yeh's (1995) study: Demands Conflict with Desire and Unreasonable Behaviour. The current study supports the 1995 result.

As an overall trend, for origins in which there were differences in responses among the types, nonfilials responded with the highest average ratings across the six origins, and absolutes responded with the lowest. This result may be a function of the higher overall level of conflict in the families of nonfilials as compared to those of absolutes. It may have been that conflict was more salient to the nonfilials, and so they gave higher ratings. It may also be that those with absolute belief are better able to avoid conflict before it occurs by using the combined strategies of both authoritarian and reciprocal filial beliefs. Perhaps the lower incidence of conflict made it harder to think of conflict situations, resulting in the lower scores.

Overall, the four filial types differed in terms of the solution strategies used to resolve conflict with parents. Looking at Figure 3, the result that stands out most is the response to the reframing solution. All filial types gave this solution the highest average score, and even the nonfilials rated it nearly as highly as their top solution, egocentrism. While those with high reciprocal beliefs were expected to make greater use of this solution than the other two types, it was not expected to be the most endorsed solution type. Past research suggests that reframing is a difficult and thus uncommon strategy to apply, although it confers the greatest benefit to both parties (Yeh, 1995, 1997a). It may be possible that participants reported greater use of this strategy for social approval reasons. Another possibility is that participants actually used another strategy such as self-sacrifice at the time, but by the time they responded to the questionnaire, they had reframed their past actions in their minds to feel that had not self-sacrificed, but acted

according to their own desire or best interest. Cognitive dissonance might also be an explanation for the overall high responses to the reframing solution.

This study employs an indigenous construct (filial piety) to examine an indigenous belief (greater filial belief on the part of the child is related to a lower frequency of parent-child conflict) maintaining an indigenous perspective (children's unidirectional obligation to avoid conflict with their parents). As pointed out by K. S. Yang (2000), indigenous research developed specifically for a particular culture has two major functions. It "provides indigenous knowledge for native psychologists to understand, explain, and predict their people's behavior better and to prevent and vitiate their society's social problems more efficiently" (p.260). Collectively, it also serves "the higher purpose of development of a genuine global psychology" (p.260). Results of this study fulfil both of these functions by underscoring the complexity of the filial concept, which has sometimes been obscured in research examining the concept without an indigenous perspective. For example, some researchers have been tempted to view filial piety as the common-sense notion that children who respect and obey their parents are less likely to have arguments with them. From this study it is evident that "respecting and obeying" reflect only the authoritarian aspect of the filial concept. Thus, this study provides the first empirical evidence of differences among filial types, supporting the Dual Filial model, which provides an important theoretical advance in the understanding of filial piety in Chinese societies.

A second implication of this study is that it highlights a special role of reciprocal filial beliefs in the parent-child relationship with respect to what the child perceives as inappropriate or unreasonable parental behaviour. Although all four types generally rated the origins of conflict in the same way, there was a difference in the way they rated the Unreasonable Behaviour origin. Those with low reciprocal beliefs made a similar pattern of responses, while the pattern of responses provided by those with high reciprocal beliefs was also similar. It appears that reciprocal beliefs may have a relation to the perceived importance of Unreasonable Behaviour as an origin of conflict. With respect to the solutions to parent-child conflict, only high reciprocal beliefs corresponded to differences in use of reframing and compromise solution strategies. A follow-up study to this one might include closer examination

of the relation of reciprocal filial beliefs and inappropriate parent behaviour.

Another important area for future research is whether or not the origins of or solutions to conflict vary with respect to the gender of the parent. It would be reasonable to expect the origins and particularly frequency of conflict to differ between the two parents, particularly as the mother is likely to spend more time with the children. In merging the data, some differences among the types, such as in the Role Conflict origin, may have been lost. Examination of the differences in conflict frequency, origins, and solutions to conflict with respect to each parent may also lead to greater insight into the ways parenting styles influence child development. Conflict levels may be a consequence of bidirectional interaction, or even a product of the whole family system. Continued exploration of filial belief is needed for development of a theory of parent-child conflict integrating findings from Western research and indigenous Chinese concepts of parent-child relations. It is expected that insights gained from examination of the relation of filial belief and parent-child conflict from the child's perspective will contribute to the eventual development of a more widely focused bidirectional theory of relevance to Chinese culture.

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