

Filial Piety, Authoritarian Moralism, and Cognitive Conservatism in Chinese Societies

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ABSTRACT. In the present study, I examined the role of Confucian filial piety in relation to parental attitudes, the function of personality, and social cognition, using data assembled from 11 samples of adults and students in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Results showed that (a) filial attitudes tend to be moderately associated with parental attitudes and child training that emphasize obedience and indebtedness to one's parents, impulse control, and proper conduct; (b) people endorsing traditional filial and/or child-training attitudes tend to be poorer in verbal fluency, to adopt a passive, uncritical, and uncreative orientation toward learning, to hold fatalistic, superstitious, and stereotypic beliefs, and to be authoritarian, dogmatic, and conformist; and (c) parents' attitudes rooted in filial piety tend to result in high rigidity and low cognitive complexity in their children. The results support the contention that filial piety underlies both authoritarian moralism and cognitive conservatism.

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, because of their central significance to cultural transmission, constitute an especially important subset of interpersonal relationships. They may, however, be defined very differently in different cultures. Cultural definition imposes a limit on the individual's freedom of action, that is, on variations in behavior caused by personality and situation. Therefore, an adequate analysis of intergenerational interaction requires a cross-cultural perspective.

Confucian filial piety is an example of a culturally defined intergenerational relationship, although components of filial piety (e.g., obedience) are shared by other cultures. But filial piety probably surpasses all other ethics in terms of its

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historical continuity, the portion of humanity under its governance, and the encompassing and imperative nature of its precepts. The attributes of intergenerational relationships governed by filial piety are structural, enduring, and invariant across situations within Chinese culture. They generalize to authority relationships beyond the family and are thus potent determinants of not only intergenerational but also superior-subordinate interactions.

For centuries, filial piety has served as a guiding principle governing Chinese patterns of socialization (Ho, 1986, 1989; Ho & Kang, 1984). As a cornerstone of the Confucian ethic, it goes far beyond the demand of simply obeying and honoring one's parents. It makes other demands that are no less stringent: providing for the material and mental well-being of one's aged parents, performing ceremonial duties of ancestral worship, taking care to avoid harm to one's own body, ensuring the continuity of the family line, and in general to conduct oneself so as to bring honor and not disgrace to the family name.

Filial piety prescribes how children should behave toward their parents, living or dead, as well as toward their ancestors. It justifies absolute parental authority over children and, by extension, the authority of those senior in generational rank over those junior in rank. The veneration of the aged, for which Chinese society has long been renowned, also owes its ethical basis to filial piety. Among the social obligations of the individual, those pertaining to filial piety are of overriding importance. Filial obligations, both material and spiritual, are rigidly prescribed and are binding from the time one is considered old enough to be disciplined to the end of one's life.

Confucian classics, however, do not advocate *yuxiao* (foolish filial piety), such as blind obedience to parents. On the contrary, it is a filial obligation to remonstrate with them, with unflinching patience, when questions of unrighteous conduct on the part of parents arise. Nevertheless, rebellion or outright defiance of parental authority, except under the most unusual circumstances, can in no way be condoned. In real life, the pressure to submit to parental demands, backed by the weight of cultural tradition reinforced for centuries, typically leaves one with little choice but to accede.

In an early study, Ho and Lee (1974) found a moderate correlation (.50) between attitudes toward filial piety and authoritarianism. This result is not surprising, in view of the common component ideas that filial piety shares with authoritarianism, particularly authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism. The study established a relationship linking two conceptually distinct variables, one being a cornerstone of ethical values in Chinese culture and the other purporting to measure a dimension of personality. It also provided a measuring instrument, the Filial Piety (FP) scale, for research. Modified versions of this scale have been used in subsequent studies (Boey, 1976; Ho & Kang, 1984).

Ho and Lee (1974) suggest that, as the precepts of filial piety are internalized by the individual, an authoritarian personality is formed, but further research is

needed to clarify the results of filial piety. However, Ho and Lee did find that it is in the family that the origin of authoritarianism must be sought. From a psychological perspective, tracing this origin brings one to investigate personality formation and social cognition. Here, conceptual linkages are needed to relate two domains, culture and psychological functioning.

Two constructs, *authoritarian moralism* and *cognitive conservatism*, serve as linkages between filial piety as a Confucian value external to the individual and the corresponding psychological functioning internal to the individual. Ho (1989) introduced the construct of authoritarian moralism to characterize Chinese patterns of socialization. It embodies two salient features of Confucian heritage: (a) hierarchical authority ranking in the family as well as in educational and sociopolitical institutions and (b) the pervasiveness of applying moral precepts as the primary standard against which people are judged.

The absolute authority of parents and teachers is both a symptom and a cause of authoritarianism. Moralism puts overriding emphasis on the development of moral character through education. It predisposes parents to be moralistic rather than psychologically oriented: to treat their children in terms of whether their conduct meets some external moral criteria rather than in terms of sensitivity to their internal needs, feelings, and aspirations. Children are to be transformed into adults who exercise impulse control, behave properly, and fulfill their obligations—above all, filial obligations (Ho, 1986).

Cognitive conservatism refers to a disposition to preserve existing knowledge structures described by Greenwald (1980). He argued for a conception of the ego as an organization of knowledge, characterized by three cognitive biases: egocentricity (self as the focus of knowledge), beneffectance (perception of responsibility for desired, but not undesired, outcomes), and cognitive conservatism (resistance to cognitive change). His psychological portrait of what he calls the totalitarian ego bears a striking resemblance to the portrayal of totalitarian political systems by political scientists.

Linkages between Confucianism and cognitive socialization may be conceived in two ways. The first concerns the usual interest in the child's learning experiences; the second involves the representation of reality transmitted to, and subsequently experienced and internalized by, the child. Confucian thinking on morality and, by extension, knowledge in general, assumes a fundamental distinction between right and wrong, one that cannot be disputed, because it is an extension of the cosmic principle into the realm of knowledge. Human beings are capable of discerning this distinction, and the function of education is to enforce making it. Children must be taught, therefore, correct knowledge, not to question it. This knowledge is contained in the teachings of sages in the classics. The written word is sacred and comes to be identified with truth. Confucianism thus sets the stage for cognitive socialization through inculcating into the child's mind its representation of reality; the learning experiences that follow conform to this representation.

In a review of the literature on Chinese patterns of socialization, Ho (1986, p. 32) concluded that most empirical findings conform to the general expectation that positive parental attitudes (e.g., to be loving, concerned, and undemanding) enhance cognitive abilities and academic achievement, and that negative parental attitudes (e.g., to be rejecting, neglecting, and punitive) retard them. The present study was an attempt to contribute to the knowledge regarding culturally defined intergenerational relationships. I examined the role that filial piety plays in parental attitudes, the functioning of personality, and the nature of cognitive biases, particularly cognitive conservatism, in Chinese societies. I addressed the following questions:

1. How does filial piety exert its influence on parental attitudes and child training?
2. What personality characteristics and cognitive biases are manifest in individuals who subscribe to traditional filial and/or child-training attitudes?
3. Do parental attitudes predict children's personality characteristics such as authoritarianism, cognitive complexity, and rigidity?

To answer these questions, I first assembled data collected over the years on traditional filial piety and child training and their attitudinal, motivational, and personality correlates (Ho, 1990). Additional data were compiled from published (Ho & Kang, 1984; Ho & Lee, 1974) as well as unpublished (Boey, 1976) studies. All the data were collected in Hong Kong and/or Taiwan.

Data on mainland China were unavailable, because opportunities to conduct psychological research by foreign researchers in the mainland had been extremely limited. This restriction represents a serious lacunae in the body of knowledge on filial piety and a challenge to future research. It would be most interesting to investigate, for instance, the impact of socialist ideology on filial attitudes (Ho, 1989).

Method

Samples

Except for the published and unpublished studies referred to above, the data were collected by me. There were 11 samples, each comprising subjects from Hong Kong and/or Taiwan. Sample 1 was the largest, consisting of subjects from both Hong Kong and Taiwan. The majority may be described as urban middle-class or upper middle class individuals with a senior middle school level of education and engaged in nonmanual occupations. Sample 2 was a subsample of Sample 1.

Samples 3, 4, 5, and 6 consisted of university or secondary school students. Sample 7 consisted of convicted young men serving their sentences in a correctional institution in Hong Kong. Sample 8 consisted of Hong Kong male university students and both of their parents, a family unit rather than an individual, as

in the study by Ho and Kang (1984). Sample 8 made it possible to study both within-generation (e.g., father–mother) and between-generation (e.g., father–student and mother–student) relations.

Quantified sample characteristics (Table 1) show considerable variation in age and educational level. Age was coded according to the Western custom (i.e., number of full years since birth); the means ranged from 16.27 (Sample 5) to 66.55 (grandfathers in Sample 10) across samples. Level of education was coded on the following 7-point scale: illiterate (1); 1 to 3 years of education (2); 3 to 6 years of education (3); junior middle school (4); senior middle school (5); post-secondary, including technical training (6); and college/university graduate or above (7). The means ranged from 2.14 (Sample 8) to 6.00.

Instruments

Most of the instruments have been described in the studies already cited (see also Ho, 1977); only a brief explanation of the more pertinent ones is given here. All the instruments except two were written in or were translated from English into Chinese. The two exceptions were Paternal Discipline and the F Scale used for Sample 5; these were in English.

Examples of scale items in Chinese were translated into English. The instruments were scored in the direction of the construct stated. Thus, for example, scales measuring traditional values and attitudes were scored in the direction of traditionalism; the higher the score, the more traditional values or attitudes were endorsed. Reliabilities were satisfactory in the majority of instances (Table 2).

Attitudes toward Confucian filial piety were measured by the Filial Piety (FP) scale, originally developed by Ho and Lee (1974). Several versions of the FP scale were used, differing in length, the wording of some items, and the ratio of positive to negative items (Ho, 1990). Each item pertains to some aspect of filial piety, material or spiritual; collectively, they encompass the essential aspects of filial piety, such as obedience, respect, ancestral worship, providing for one's aged parents, and ensuring the continuity of the family line. For this study, items were scored on a 6-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1), to *strongly agree* (6). Negative items were scored in the opposite direction.

FP reliabilities ranged from .45 to .84 (Table 1), and may be considered adequate (reliabilities based on correlating positive and negative items were underestimated). The English translation of the final version, comprising 22 items (11 negative), is given in the Appendix. Examples of items are: "If there is a quarrel between one's wife and one's mother, the husband should advise his wife to listen to his mother"; "To worship their ancestors regularly on the proper occasions is the primary duty of sons and daughters."

The Child Training (CT) scale consists of 15 items (10 negative) representative of traditional child-training attitudes and practices or, in the case of negative

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics and Filial Piety Means and Standard Deviations

Sample ^a	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	Age <i>M/SD</i>	Ed <i>M/SD</i>	FP <i>M/SD</i>
666 (334 + 332) Hong Kong and Taiwan subjects	17(9)	.69	31.21 16.14	5.11 1.20	3.81 0.65
52 (26 + 26) Hong Kong	17(9)	.48	—	6.00	3.49
116 (52 + 64) Hong Kong university students	27(11)	.45 ^d	—	6.00 0.00	3.44 0.59
28 (13 + 15) Taipei university students ^b	24(4)	.83 ^c	—	6.00 0.00	4.78 0.88
132 (69 + 63) Hong Kong technical school students	27(11)	.84	16.27 0.88	5.00 0.00	3.82 0.71
33 (15 + 18) Hong Kong secondary evening school students	28(11)	.59 ^d	—	5.00 0.00	4.10 0.58
100 Hong Kong convicted male offenders	28(11)	.71 ^d	19.03 1.30	3.06 0.67	4.44 0.78
72 (36 + 36) fathers and mothers of Hong Kong male university students	22(11)	.83	—	2.14 1.09	3.90 0.75
135 (59 + 76) Taipei primary school teachers (Ho & Lee, 1974) ^b	28(6)	.81 ^c	—	6.00 0.00	4.97 0.56
40 Hong Kong grandfathers and fathers (Ho & Kang, 1982)	10(4)	.67	50.46 6.42	4.13 1.66	4.19 0.86
20 grandfathers	10(4)	—	66.55 6.44	3.50 1.86	4.62 0.62
20 fathers	10(4)	—	34.37 6.39	4.75 1.45	3.75 0.86
83 Hong Kong college students (Boey, 1976)	22(11)	.77 ^c	—	6.00 0.00	— —

Note. *N* = number of items used (numbers within parentheses refer to the number of negative items) in the FP scale; *r* = reliability (coefficient alpha reported, unless indicated otherwise); Ed = level of education; FP = Filial Piety; *M* = mean (for FP, mean per item; upper row); *SD* = standard deviation (lower row).

^aNumbers within parentheses refer to males and females, respectively. ^bA 5-point scale was used; FP scores were transformed to a 7-point scale to facilitate comparisons. ^cOdd-even estimate. ^dEstimate based on correlating positive with negative items.

items, those departing from or alien to the traditional pattern (see Ho & Kang, 1984, Study 2). Examples are: "To prevent wrongful influence, parents can't allow children to choose their own books to read"; "In teaching children, attention should be paid to cultivating their creativity" (negative). Reliabilities (coefficient alphas) range from .68 to .80, and may be considered adequate.

The Paternal Discipline questionnaire (Ho, 1990) consists of self-report items on strict, controlling, or punitive discipline by one's father. Examples are: "My father constantly urged me to study harder"; "My father let me solve my own problems in difficult situations" (negative). Subjects are asked to respond *true* or *false* to each item. The score is the sum of *true* responses to positive items and *false* responses to negative items. The Father's Discipline and Mother's Discipline questionnaires were adapted for parents from the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire originally developed by Roe and Siegelman (1963) and revised for use with Chinese children by Chu (1975).

The three paternal attitude factors (Overcontrol and Harshness, Rigid Orientation and Discouragement of Contradicting Opinions, and Emphasis on Hardship and Repayment of Parent's Kindness) and the two maternal attitude factors (Harshness and Discouragement of Contradicting Opinions, and Overprotection and Overcontrol) were extracted in principal-component analyses of the Parental Attitude Scale developed by Boey (1976) to measure Chinese parental attitudes, particularly authoritarian control.

The Study Orientation scale (Ho & Spinks, 1985) measures the "compulsive" orientation in studying: stressing belief in what the book says; the hardship of learning; and the need for memorization, compulsion, and punishment in the learning process. An example is: "The best method of studying is to memorize the books by heart." Three other measures of traditional Chinese values pertaining to learning and achievement were constructed, based on Sample 1 (see Ho, 1990). The first, Attitudes Toward Learning, measures traditional attitudes toward learning, particularly the authority status of teachers, scholars, and sages. Examples are: "In China, one who has not studied the sacred books cannot be regarded as a scholar"; "It is not a matter of losing face for teachers to let their students know that they do not have the answer to some questions" (negative).

The second, Individual Achievement, measures attitudes pertaining to diligence, initiative, and determinants of success or failure. Examples are: "To be rich or poor, to succeed or fail, to gain or lose—all are predetermined by fate"; "Sometimes it does not matter to dare to do things that have never been done before" (negative). The third, Family-Oriented Achievement, measures the interdependence between one's fame, prosperity, and interests and those of one's family or clan. An example is: "When someone with the same surname as ours receives honor, we would also feel that we share a part of the glory."

Results

Correlates of Filial Piety

To facilitate presentation, I rearranged the correlations between filial piety, child training, and other variables and grouped these variables by measures rather than by sample (Table 2). Some general patterns emerged.

TABLE 2
Correlations of Filial Piety and Child Training With Attitudinal, Personality,
Motivational, and Intelligence Variables

Variable ^a	<i>r</i> ^b	Sample ^c	<i>r</i> ^d	<i>r</i> ^e
<i>Parental attitudes and child training</i>				
Child training (15/10)	.68	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.37*	—
Child training (15/10)	.80	40 HK grandfathers/fathers (10)	.61*	—
Child training (15/10)	.80	20 HK grandfathers (10)	.59*	—
Child training (15/10)	.80	20 HK fathers (10)	.45*	—
Paternal discipline (13/4)	.60	132 HK TS students (5)	.06	—
Father's discipline (15)	.80	36 HK fathers (8)	.13	—
Mother's discipline (15)	.69	36 HK mothers (8)	-.06	—
Overcontrol and harshness (paternal)	—	21 HK fathers (11)	.66*	—
		24 HK mothers (11)	.52*	—
Rigid orientation and discouragement of contradicting opinions (paternal)	—	21 HK fathers (11)	.34	—
		24 HK mothers (11)	.21	—
Hardship and repayment of parent's kindness (paternal)	—	21 HK fathers (11)	.61*	—
		24 HK mothers (11)	.63*	—
Harshness and discouragement of contradicting opinions (maternal)	—	21 HK fathers (11)	.44*	—
		24 HK mothers (11)	.59*	—
Overprotection and overcontrol (maternal)	—	21 HK fathers (11)	.59*	—
		24 HK mothers (11)	.70*	—
<i>Traditional Chinese values and beliefs</i>				
Traditional values (89/39)	.77 ^g	33 HK SS students (6)	.44*	—
Traditionalism—culturocentrism (13/6)	.58	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.53*	.41*
Traditionalism—culturocentrism (21/10)	.79	49 HK U students (2)	.48*	.15
Fatalism—superstition (6/3)	.66	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.20*	.32*
Fatalism—superstition (14/8)	.85	48 HK U students (2)	-.03	.32*
<i>Personality</i>				
Authoritarianism				
F Scale (29)	.74 ^f	135 T school teachers (9)	.50*	—
F Scale (29)	—	28 T U students (4)	.61*	—
F Scale (15)	.59 ^f	50 HK U students (2)	-.02	-.03
F Scale (30)	.77	132 HK TS students (5)	.05	—
Belief stereotypy				
BS Scale 1 (20)	—	116 HK U students (3)	.39*	—

(table continues)

TABLE 2 (continued)

Variable ^a	r^b	Sample ^c	r^d	r^e
BS Scale 1 (20)	.86 ^f	49 HK U students (2)	.44*	.06
BS Scale 2 (11)	.69 ^f	46 HK U students (2)	.41*	.22
Rigidity (10)	.59 ^f	48 HK U students (2)	-.01	-.04
Dogmatism 1 (6/1)	.43	46 HK U students (2)	.53*	.22
Dogmatism 2 (14)	.68 ^f	45 HK U students (2)	.03	.16
Conformity (16/5)	.56	49 HK U students (2)	.36*	-.04
Depression (MMPI items)	—	100 HK convicted males (7)	.05	—
<i>Learning and achievement motivation</i>				
Study orientation (6/3)	.56	49 HK U students (2)	.22	.40*
Attitudes toward learning (11/5)	.51	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.35*	.47*
Individual achievement (11/5)	.54	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.35*	.35*
Family-oriented achievement (6)	.59	666 T and HK subjects (1)	.42*	.29*
<i>Verbal intelligence and fluency</i>				
Idioms test	.89	52 HK U students (2)	.05	-.12
Proverbs test	.80 ^f	52 HK U students (2)	.16	.06
Verbal fluency 1	—	43 HK U students (2)	.00	-.42*
Verbal fluency 2	—	43 HK U students (2)	.05	-.41*
<i>Within-generation correlation</i>				
Filial piety (22/11)	.83	36 HK father–mother pairs (8)	.44*	—
Filial piety (22/11)	.77 ^f	21 HK father–mother pairs (11)	.80*	—
<i>Between-generations correlation</i>				
Filial piety (22/11)	.77 ^f	21 HK fathers–C students (11)	.36	—
Filial piety (22/11)	.77 ^f	24 HK mothers–C students (11)	.33	—
Filial piety (10/4)	.67	20 HK grandfathers–fathers (10)	-.12	.24 ^h
Child training (15/10)	.80	20 HK grandfathers–fathers (10)	.42 ⁱ	.34
Authoritarianism				
F Scale (30)	.80	36 HK fathers–U students (8)	-.01 ^j	—
F Scale (30)	.80	36 HK mothers–U students (8)	.02 ^j	—

^aNumbers within parentheses refer to the total and, if present, the negative items, respectively. ^bReliability (coefficient alpha, unless indicated otherwise). ^cThe number within parentheses refers to the sample used; the sample size may have been slightly reduced due to pairwise deletion of missing data. T = Taiwan; HK = Hong Kong; U = university; SS = secondary school; TS = technical school; C = college. ^dCorrelation with FP scale. ^eCorrelation with CT scale. ^fOdd–even estimate. ^gOdd–even estimate computed for positive items. ^hBetween grandfathers' FP scores and fathers' CT scores. ⁱBetween grandfathers' CT scores and fathers' FP scores. ^jBetween parents' FP scores and sons' F Scale scores.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed.

Attitudes toward filial piety tended to be moderately associated with traditional parental attitudes and child training: overcontrol, overprotection, and harshness; placing the emphasis on proper behavior; and neglecting, even inhibiting, the expression of opinions, independence, self-mastery, creativity, and all-round personal development. However, the lack of correlation between the FP scale and Father's Discipline or Mother's Discipline (Sample 8) suggests that attitudes toward filial piety had no bearing on the techniques of discipline per se.

Not surprisingly, both filial piety and child-training attitudes tended to be moderately associated with traditional Chinese values and beliefs. Of particular significance was that individuals endorsing traditional filial piety, and especially child-training attitudes, were more likely to hold fatalistic and superstitious beliefs.

Traditional attitudes toward child training did not seem to be associated with the personality variables. However, filial piety tended to be moderately associated with authoritarianism, belief stereotypy, dogmatism, and conformity.

The relationship between filial piety and authoritarianism deserves special attention. Substantial correlations (.61 and .50) were obtained for Taiwanese subjects (Samples 4 and 9, respectively), whereas near-zero correlations were obtained for Hong Kong subjects (Samples 2 and 5). This discrepancy raises the question of whether or not filial piety has different psychological correlates, depending on subcultural contexts; further study of this question is indicated. The lack of between-generation correlations (Sample 8) suggests that, at least among male university students, parental attitudes toward filial piety were not predictive of authoritarianism.

Both filial piety and child-training attitudes tended to be moderately associated with the learning and achievement measures. Filial piety was correlated with both individual (.35) and family-oriented achievement (.42). The difference between the two correlations was not significant, $t(663) = 1.79, p < .05$. Individual achievement and family-oriented achievement were correlated, $r(664) = .39, p < .05$. However, they appeared to be largely independent components of achievement motivation, as the magnitude of the correlation was not high.

Attitudes toward filial piety were not associated with verbal intelligence or fluency. However, individuals holding traditional attitudes toward child training appeared to be poorer in verbal fluency.

The within- and between-generation correlations were computed from scores of pairs of individuals. The within-generation correlations obtained between fathers' and mothers' attitudes toward filial piety (Samples 8 and 11) pointed to a similarity in attitudes between spouses. The lack of between-generation correlations (Samples 10 and 11; see also Table 3) suggests that parental attitudes were not predictive of their children's attitudes toward filial piety or child training. Also, the lack of correlation between Paternal Discipline and the FP scale (Sample 5) suggests that paternal discipline had no bearing on the formation of the subjects' attitudes toward filial piety.

Cognitive Complexity and Rigidity

Boey (1976) investigated cognitive complexity and rigidity in three domains—interpersonal, physical, and numerical. For Boey, cognitive complexity referred to the number of different dimensions a person employs in perceiving objects in a given domain. Rigidity was defined as the persistence of a response or response set when the demands of the situation have changed. Cognitive complexity was conceived as a determinant of rigidity; that is, cognitively complex people tend to be less rigid, and cognitively simple people tend to be more rigid.

Boey (1976) administered a battery of tests (some devised specifically for his investigation) to college students in Hong Kong. In the interpersonal domain, cognitive complexity was measured by the grid form of the role construct repertory test; rigidity was measured by a test assessing the extent to which impression formation was dominated by information presented early (I1) versus that presented late (I2) in a message describing a target person.

In the physical domain, cognitive complexity was measured by a test requiring the subject to compare geometric figures; rigidity was measured by a card-sorting test that yielded two scores: the number of persevering responses (P1) and the number of trials needed to reach a defined criterion (P2). In the numerical domain, cognitive complexity was measured by a test requiring the subject to group digits together; rigidity was measured by the well-known water jar test, which consists of a series of problems that are rather simple in terms of the arithmetic computations required. Two scores were obtained: the ratio of time required for solving a problem requiring a new solution compared with that required for solving a preceding problem (N1), and the number of times a subject used a previously learned solution, more complicated than necessary, to solve a new problem (N2). Boey (1976) reported results supporting the contention that, within each domain, cognitive complexity is inversely related to rigidity.

Boey's (1976) main results pertaining to parental influence on cognitive development showed that the students' own attitudes toward filial piety were not significantly correlated with any of the cognitive complexity or rigidity tests (Table 3). However, fathers' attitudes toward filial piety were positively correlated with some of the tests of rigidity, and both fathers' and mothers' attitudes toward filial piety were negatively correlated with some of the tests of cognitive complexity.

The parental attitude factors were all positively correlated with measures of rigidity; and all of the correlations between parental attitude factors and measures of cognitive complexity that reached statistical significance were negative. The negative influence of parental attitudes appears to have been particularly strong on cognitive complexity in the interpersonal domain. The magnitude of correlations with paternal variables tended to be higher than that with maternal variables, suggesting that fathers exerted a stronger influence than mothers on cognitive development.

TABLE 3
Parental Attitudes and Cognitive Measures: Between-Generation Correlations

Paternal attitudes	FP	Complexity				Rigidity							
		I	P	N	II ^a	I2	P1	P2	N1	N2			
Filial piety													
Father	.36	-.53*	-.65*	-.41	.18	.15	.48*	.49*	.24	.30			
Mother	.33	-.54*	-.19	-.42*	.26	.20	.33	.37	.20	.14			
Parental attitude factors													
Overcontrol and Harshness	.14	-.66*	.13	.29	.44	.36	.36	.37	.14	.03			
Rigid Orientation and Discouragement of Contradicting Opinions	-.06	-.24	-.54*	.17	.61*	.37	.40	.52*	.17	.30			
Hardship and Repayment of Parent's Kindness	.03	-.41	.11	.15	.51	.40	.02	.25	.07	.13			
Maternal attitude factors													
Harshness and Discouragement of Contradicting Opinions	.20	-.25	.23	.13	.46	.18	.10	.20	.20	.45			
Overprotection and Overcontrol	.18	-.53*	.05	.07	.18	.29	.23	.29	.05	.18			

Note. Compiled from Boey (1976). *N* = 21 father- and 24 mother-subject pairs. Pearson correlations were computed, except for the Spearman rank-order correlations computed between parental factors and II. FP = filial piety. I = interpersonal; P = physical; N = numerical.

^a*n* = 12 father- and 13 mother-subject pairs.

**p* < .05, two-tailed.

Discussion

Results based on multiple measures involving a variety of samples from Taiwan and Hong Kong illustrate the pervasive influence that traditional parental attitudes and child training, rooted in filial piety, exert on personality functioning and social cognition. The influence of filial piety on cognitive socialization is seen in the definition of parent-child, teacher-student, and, more generally, authority relationships; and in the shaping of attitudes toward learning and achievement motivation as well as the cognitive aspects of personality functioning.

Results of this study provide some answers to the questions raised here. The first concerns the influence of filial piety on parental attitudes and child training. The data support the view that filial piety underlies parental attitudes and child training characterized by an accent on obedience and indebtedness to one's parents, not self-fulfillment; on impulse control, not self-expression; and on moral correctness, not psychological sensitivity. The constellation of these attitudes points to authoritarian moralism, which embodies the twin features that have characterized traditional Chinese patterns of socialization: absolute parental authority and the imperative nature of moral upbringing.

Ideologically, authoritarian moralism is rooted in filial piety. The Confucian educator philosophers have always been explicit in defining what they regard as the ideal end products of socialization: filial sons and daughters. One must not fail as a filial son or daughter, even if one were to fail in every other aspect in life. On such an imperative hinges virtually all intergenerational considerations: Children are to obey their parents, and parents are to bring up their children to be morally acceptable adults. Without question, disobeying one's parents is unfilial. And so is the failure to bring up one's children morally, because it would bring social disapproval and disgrace to the family name and would therefore amount to a failure to meet filial obligations.

The second question concerns the connection between filial piety and child-training attitudes on the one hand and personality and social cognition on the other. The evidence here shows that people holding traditional attitudes toward filial piety and/or child training tended to be poorer in verbal fluency; to adopt a passive, uncritical, and uncreative orientation toward learning; to hold fatalistic, superstitious, and stereotypic beliefs; and to be authoritarian, dogmatic, and conformist. Such a constellation of personal attributes points to cognitive conservatism, a disposition to preserve existing knowledge structures described by Greenwald (1980).

An individual endorsing traditional filial attitudes tends to be an authoritarian social conformist who subscribes to conventional, stereotyped beliefs in an unquestioning manner. Change, novelty, and ambiguity are likely to be distasteful and to present difficulties to such a person. The image that emerges bears a striking resemblance to that of one high in belief stereotypy, described by Ho (1977, p. 286) as an "unquestioning and noncreative social conformer who subscribes to

conventional and authoritarian values and believes in the unchanging order of things." The results support the contention that filial piety forms an important ideological base for cognitive conservatism.

The third question concerns the connection between parental attitudes and children's cognitive development, the between-generation correlations. The correlational evidence referred to earlier does not imply causation. In contrast, the between-generation correlations have causal implications and thus are of particular significance. They provide direct evidence concerning the impact of parental attitudes characterized by authoritarian moralism on cognitive development. It is reasonable to assume that parents are instrumental to the development of their children rather than the other way around.

Despite the small sample sizes in Boey's (1976) study, the influence of traditional parental attitudes on cognitive aspects of personality functioning was demonstrated: a tendency toward high rigidity and low cognitive complexity. Furthermore, this influence is not confined to the interpersonal domain; what is noteworthy is that authoritarian parental attitudes, which would be located in the interpersonal domain, have negative consequences for cognitive functioning in the physical and numerical domains as well.

The causal sequence through which Chinese culture exerts its influence on individual cognition appears to be as follows. Filial piety forms the ideological basis for parental attitudes, which translate into child-training practices and, more generally, into socialization patterns characterized by authoritarian moralism; in turn, these patterns exert their influence on cognitive development.

The results appear to be predominantly and consistently negative from a contemporary psychological perspective on human development. Yet, a different picture emerges when results pertaining to achievement motivation are examined. Yu (1974) found that filial piety was correlated with verbal statements on achievement, but was uncorrelated with achievement motivation as measured by Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) stimuli. In the present study, filial piety as well as child training were correlated with achievement measures, individual or family oriented, suggesting that Chinese socialization is conducive to the development of high achievement motivation. Thus the high value Chinese people place on academic achievement may be traced, at least in part, to filial piety.

Taken together, the evidence converges to conclude that Chinese patterns of socialization are biased toward the development of cognitive conservatism and high achievement motivation. Of importance is the linkage established between external cultural knowledge and internal individual cognition: Cognitive conservatism, operating within the individual, mirrors the ideological conservatism of Confucianism governing human relationships as well as educational and socio-political institutions.

In reviewing the literature on socialization in contemporary mainland China, Ho (1989) stated:

Authoritarian moralism (vs. democratic-psychological orientation) and collectivism (vs. individualism) capture succinctly the distinctive character of Chinese socialization patterns. The former entails impulse control (vs. expression); the latter entails interdependence (vs. autonomy) and conformism (vs. unique individuation). Authoritarian moralism and collectivism underlie both the traditional and the contemporary ideologies governing socialization, and thus preserve its continuity. (p. 144)

Results of the present study support the contention that the roots of authoritarian moralism and of collectivism may be traced to the Confucian ethic of filial piety. Authoritarian moralism sets the stage not only for impulse control but also for cognitive conservatism; it exerts a powerful inhibitory effect on the development of critical thinking and creativity. Collectivism links individual achievement to family-oriented achievement.

A composite picture of Chinese cognitive socialization emerges. Children are socialized to respect, not to question, the authority of parents and teachers; to regard the written word as the authoritative source of knowledge and wisdom; to stress the need for memorization and repeated practice in the learning process; to believe that diligence holds the key to good academic performance—a route to personal success, which would, in turn, bring glory to the family name. In short, the motto is: Study hard and be rewarded in the future.

The end result is cognitive conservatism, coupled with high achievement motivation. Traditionally, great emphasis has been placed on successful academic performance. The cultivation of creativity, in the spirit of scientific doubt and tolerance of challenges to authority, now demands our attention.

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APPENDIX

Filial Piety (FP) Scale

The following items are concerned with filial piety. We would like to know what your opinions are on these items. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. So please respond according to your own personal opinions.

For each item, select only one of the following six alternatives:

- strongly disagree
- disagree
- mildly disagree
- mildly agree
- agree
- strongly agree

Please do not skip any item.

1. Sons and daughters may protest against being unreasonably scolded by their parents. (N)
2. There is no place under the sun for both oneself and the enemy of one’s father.
3. If there is a reason for doing so, one may rely on an old people’s home to provide for one’s aged parents. (N)
4. Any sacrifice is worthwhile for the sake of filial piety.
5. Sons and daughters should not go to faraway places while their parents are still living.
6. In choosing a spouse, sons and daughters need not follow “the parents’ command.” (N)
7. The main reason for sons and daughters not to do dangerous things is to avoid getting their parents worried.
8. Parents should not interfere with their children’s freedom to choose a vocation. (N)
9. The great debt that you have to repay your parents is as boundless as the sky.
10. “Rearing sons to provide for oneself in one’s old age” should no longer be the main purpose of raising children. (N)
11. No matter how their parents conduct themselves, sons and daughters must respect them.
12. After the father has passed away, sons and daughters must conduct themselves according to the principles and attitudes he followed while he was still living.
13. If there is a quarrel between one’s wife and one’s mother, the husband should advise his wife to listen to his mother.

14. After their parents have passed away, sons and daughters do not necessarily have to finish the business left unfinished by their parents. (N)
15. "Spreading one's fame to glorify one's parents" should not be the most important reason for getting ahead. (N)
16. To worship their ancestors regularly on the proper occasions is the primary duty of sons and daughters.
17. To continue the family line is not the primary purpose of marriage. (N)
18. Sons and daughters do not necessarily have to seek parental advice and may make their own decisions. (N)
19. Sons and daughters do not necessarily have to respect the people respected and loved by their parents. (N)
20. After children have grown up, all the money they earn through their own labor belongs to themselves, even though their parents are still living. (N)
21. "There is no crime worse than being unfilial."
22. As a son or daughter, one must obey one's parents no matter what.

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