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Chen, Min

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Chinese Mothers and Adolescents' Views of Parent-Adolescent Conflict
and the Quality of Their Relationship

---- A study of parent-adolescent relationship in urban and rural China

by

Min Chen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Elliot Turiel, Chair

Professor Susan Holloway

Professor Kaiping Peng

Spring 2010

Abstract

Chinese Mothers and Adolescents' Views of Parent-Adolescent Conflict and the Quality of Their Relationship

---- A study of parent-adolescent relationship in urban and rural China

by

Min Chen

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Elliot Turiel, Chair

This present study examined potential differences between Chinese mothers and their adolescent children, between urban and rural areas, and between single-child and multiple-children families regarding their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. 85 mothers and 85 adolescents (30 dyads from urban single-child families, 27 from urban multiple-children families, and 28 from rural multiple-children families) in China participated this study and were interviewed individually. They described actual parent-adolescent conflicts, rated their frequency and intensity, justified their perspectives on disputes, and described how conflicts were resolved. In addition, adolescent participants listed issues they would or would not discuss with their parents, and mother participants listed issues they thought their children would discuss with them or withhold from them. Finally, each participant rated the sense of closeness regarding parent-adolescent relationship, and described their perspectives on what child and parents should improve for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship.

Altogether 20 categories of actual daily conflicts and 21 categories of quality of parent-children relationship were examined for potential regional, sibling status, and role differences. Major regional differences were found as follows: (1) compared to their rural counterparts, urban adolescents reported a larger number of conflicts, used more moral justifications and fewer personal ones for conflicts; (2) compared to rural mothers, urban mothers reported more conflicts over adolescents' interpersonal relationships, and used more conventional justifications for conflicts.

Major sibling status differences included: (1) children from multiple-children families reported more conflicts over parents' problems than those from single-child families; and (2) when answering in which areas parents should improve, mothers of multiple-children families expressed more concerns in the psychological area than those of single-child families.

As for the role differences, adolescents and mothers in this study differed significantly in almost every aspect of their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts (17 out of 20 categories)

and the quality of their relationship (12 out of 21 categories). Across urban and rural areas, regardless of sibling status, Chinese adolescents desire freedom, independence, and individuality, just as adolescents of diverse ethnicities in the USA (Fuligni, 1998; Smetana, 1996). Moreover, the present study showed that, although Chinese adolescents and mothers differed significantly in viewing parent-child conflicts and the quality of their relationship, they all believed that psychological improvements, mostly pertaining to interpersonal communication (*Goutong*), would be a crucial step for a better parent-child relationship.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine contemporary Chinese adolescents', as well as their mothers', views about parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. More specifically, this study is to compare the different perspectives from adolescents and from mothers regarding their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. In addition, it is also to examine the potential regional differences (i.e. urban area versus rural area) and adolescents' sibling status differences (i.e. being an only child versus having siblings) among adolescents and among mothers.

Since the 1980s China has undergone rapid social and economic changes. Scholars in education and other relevant disciplines have shared their concerns that such changes may undermine the cultural traditions of filial piety, parental authority, and family closeness, and ultimately have new generations with declined morality (Hang & Zhang, 2007; Qu & Chen, 2005; Wu, 2007). Qu & Chen (2005) listed several other reasons for the seemingly eroded traditions among the new generation of Chinese adolescents, including: influence of Western culture and value system that emphasize freedom and individualism, lack of systematic moral education in current schools, unhealthy parenting styles (either too strict or too indulgent), and lack of community activities. Also, Han & Zhang (2007) and Wu (2007) pointed out the inclination towards knowledge over morality in adolescents' value system and advocated the need for education in code of honor and disgrace in adolescents and college students.

To different degrees, researchers in psychology agree that a core value system of one society, as well as its dominant political and economic climate, might affect the nature of the adolescent period (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Modell & Goodman, 1990; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a). Whereas developmental psychologists (e.g., Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a, 2003b) believe it is each individual's inner reflections on authority and personal autonomy, along with specific social cultural practices that set the tone during adolescence, social psychologists (e.g., Modell & Goodman, 1990; Chao & Tseng, 2002) believe it is the value system of one culture and its economic political atmosphere that shapes the adolescents' development. In any case, to study Chinese adolescents' relationships with their parents could be a potentially valuable way to gain insight into the impact of the transition to market economy on family life. Given the fact that the economic changes have been taking place mainly in urban areas in China, whereas families in rural areas live largely agricultural lives and have very limited exposure to the opportunities of the market economy in the cities (Tang & Parish, 2000), a comparison of the family relationships in urban and rural areas could provide an initial glimpse into the impact of economic change on family relationships.

Some studies have been conducted in a comparative form of urban and rural areas to explore the potential variations in the family lives of adolescents in China. Fuligni & Zhang (2004) studied the urban-rural difference in Chinese adolescents' attitudes toward familial support and obligation, and found that the difference depended upon the gender and location of the adolescents. Chinese boys living in an urban center reported the weakest sense of obligation to support and assist their family, whereas urban girls were quite similar to rural boys and girls in their greater sense of familial duty.

Fuligni & Zhang (2004) and their following studies (Zhang & Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006) provide important information about Chinese urban and rural adolescents'

beliefs of family obligation, parental authority, and personal autonomy. However, due to their quantitative-oriented methods, mostly pertaining to questionnaires, many nuances in the adolescents' reasoning on the conflicts with their parents have not been fully explored. Moreover, these studies were all from the adolescent's perspective. What occurs on the parents' side is yet to be examined.

In addition to differences according to location of residence, there may exist variations in Chinese adolescents' views of the parent-child relationship due to their sibling status. Since 1979 when the one-child policy was put into practice nationwide in China, a large proportion of Chinese families have only one child. Children from single-child families have been characterized as "little emperor" who can have anything in the household and can claim family members' attention anytime they want (Feng, 2001; Li, 2000). Concerns have been expressed by observers in China that single children may grow up to be individualistic and selfish. Some studies suggested no difference between only children and those with siblings in China (Zhang & Fuligni, 2006; Rosenberg & Jing, 1996), whereas others found that adolescents from single-child families in China put more emphasis on autonomy and personal choices than those from multiple-children families when reporting their understanding of interpersonal interactions (Feng, 2001; Li, 2000). Most of these studies, implicitly or explicitly, had explained that the effect of children's sibling status could be confounded with the location of their residence, since the one-child family policy has been enforced less stringently in rural areas, resulting in a much greater proportion of only children in urban areas than in rural ones. Therefore, to avoid the possibility that certain variations in adolescents' attitude towards authority and autonomy might be attributable to regional differences, it would be necessary to compare adolescents from different sibling status families within the same location.

In the current study, semi-structured interviews were used to examine urban and rural Chinese adolescents', as well as their mothers', beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy through parent-adolescent daily conflicts, and how these beliefs might be related to the quality of parent-adolescent relationship. In addition, within the urban setting, comparisons were made between single-child families and multiple-children ones. In the following I review the related literature, discuss issues to be further explored, and explain the theoretical framework of this study.

Parent-Adolescent Relationships

In the past two decades, parent-child relationships, especially parent-adolescent relationships, have been receiving great attention in developmental psychology. Research suggests that the transition into adolescence introduces a certain amount of disruption into the relationship between children and their parents (Collins & Russell, 1991; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). There are two major dimensions in the parent-adolescent relationship, namely: parent-adolescent conflict and parent-adolescent cohesion¹, among which the former has been studied extensively, including topics such as the mechanism of conflict's emergence, its characteristics and its effects on adolescents' development (Fuligni, 1998; Montemayor, 1983; Steinberg, 1981; Yau & Smetana, 1993, 1996).

¹ Parent-adolescent cohesion (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni & Zhang, 2004) is also referred to as parent-adolescent relatedness, harmony, connectedness, closeness, or congruence by different researches (Smetana et al., 2004; Ying & Tsai, 2004; Ying & Tracy, 2004)

Parent-adolescent conflicts

When examining the causes of parent-adolescent conflicts, psychologists, to different degrees, have seen the changes in the conflicts as being associated with the critical development of adolescent autonomy. In addition to considerable intra-individual changes, children's development is marked by significant alteration in parent-child relationships, such as a re-negotiation of the boundaries around adolescent independence and parental authority (Smetana, 1995; Steinberg, 1981, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 2003a, 2003b). Still, different schools have given various explanations with regards to the causes, patterns, as well as consequences of the parent-adolescent conflicts.

For instance, Steinberg (1989) and Montemayor (1983), from a biological and evolutionary perspective, viewed parent-adolescent conflicts as an inevitable estrangement during pubertal maturation. According to them, the emergence of parental-adolescent conflicts is due to the biological requirement of adolescents, who want to have more interactions with peers outside of their family than with their parents. As for the consequence of the conflicts, this school argued that these conflicts do not bring significant negative impact on the adolescents' development, since long before puberty, children have established a deep relatedness with their parents. Therefore even if conflicts and distance occur because of pubertal maturation, their intensity will be lessened once adolescents develop into adulthood and are approved of a full sense of autonomy.

Other developmental psychologists (Yau & Smetana, 1993, 1996; Fuligni, 1998) have given a different explanation for the emergence of parent-adolescent conflicts. According to them, parent-adolescent conflicts reflect developmental processes of individuation. Adolescents' appeals to personal jurisdiction reflect the development of autonomy during adolescence. Conflicts are therefore seen to transform the unilateral relations of middle childhood to the more mutual relation² of late adolescence and young adulthood, and to promote the development of adolescent autonomy (Yau & Smetana, 1993). In addition, Smetana (1989) and Yau & Smetana (1996) found that adolescents and their parents reasoned about conflicts in conceptually different ways. Parents typically treated conflicts as issues of social convention (i.e., as behavioral uniformities that structure social interactions within the family social system), whereas children typically treated them as issues of maintaining of personal jurisdiction (i.e., as having consequences pertaining only to the actor and as outside of the realm of societal regulation and moral concern). As for the consequences of the conflicts, developmental psychologists have suggested that moderate levels of adolescent-parent conflict, in the context of warm and accepting relationships with parents, are adaptive for development (Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a, 2003b).

Parent-adolescent cohesion and the quality of their relationship

Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell (1979) were among the first to propose a conceptual definition of family cohesion. According to Olson et al. (1979), parent-adolescent cohesion, as one type of family cohesion³, has two components: the emotional bonding members have with one another and the degree of individual autonomy a person experiences in the family system. At

² In developmental psychology, "unilateral" and "mutual" first appeared in Piaget's works to describe the two types of respect. "Unilateral" is called in the sense that the child respects his parents but they do not respect him, or at least they do not respect him in exactly the same way that he respects them (page 303, Piaget, 1960); by contrast, mutual respect involves reciprocity. Mutual respect grows out of exchanges among individuals who consider one another as equals, which leads to a morality of autonomy and to the elaboration of norms (page 340)

³ In Olson et al. (1979), family cohesion included marital cohesion and parent-child cohesion.

the extreme of high family cohesion, *enmeshment*, there is an over-identification with the family that results in extreme bonding and limited individual autonomy. The low extreme, *disengagement*, is characterized by low bonding and high autonomy from the family. Olson et al. (1979) suggested that a balanced degree of family cohesion is the most conducive to effective family functioning and to optimum individual development.

More recently, researchers have started to pay attention to the concept of parent-adolescent cohesion (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni & Zhang, 2004), which has also been referred to as parent-adolescent relatedness, connectedness, closeness, or congruence by different researchers (Phinney, Kim, Osorio & Vilhjaldsdottir, 2005; Smetana, Metzger & Compione, 2004; Ying, Lee & Tsai, 2004; Ying & Tracy, 2004). In some cases, cohesion has been conceptualized as subjective opinion about closeness in their relationships with parents. The typical questionnaire item was “How close do you feel to your mother/father?” (Richardson, Galambos, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1984); in other studies, “cohesion” has been conceptualized as positive emotions, and analyzed as intimacy (such as self-disclosure), understanding, or family obligation (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Rice & Mulkeen, 1995); still some other studies replaced “cohesion” with some similar terms, such as “relatedness” (Phinney et al, 2005), “closeness” (Smetana, et al., 2004) or “congruence” (Ying, Lee & Tsai, 2004; Ying & Tracy, 2004).

Phinney et al. (2005) examined the way in which young people from diverse American ethnic backgrounds (European American, Mexican American, Armenian American, and Korean American) express autonomy and relatedness in their projected actions and reasons in response to hypothetical disagreements with parents. The relatedness was found in the participants’ compliance with parental wishes, the reasons that they give for their projected actions, and the values they endorse. Furthermore, the study showed that adolescents from non-European backgrounds complied with parents more than did those from European backgrounds. Interestingly, across all four ethnic groups, respondents showed a strong tendency to assert themselves in response to disagreements with parents, which showed the strong tendency to express autonomy exist even among those adolescents who strongly endorse values of family interdependence. They concluded that relatedness coexisted with autonomy in these young people (Phinney et al., 2005).

Smetana et al. (2004) five-year longitudinal study of African American families showed that the transition pattern of parent-adolescent emotional closeness is related to, and also different from, the pattern of parent-adolescent conflicts. Whereas the frequency and intensity of parent-adolescent conflicts might change saliently over adolescence, the parent-adolescent emotional closeness tends to be more stable. Also, adolescents’ sense of closeness could affect, and be affected by, the conflicts with their parents. Therefore, they suggested that to better understand the parent-adolescent relationship, the two dimensions should be given the same attention (Smetana et al., 2004).

Still other researchers investigated another relevant concept *the quality of the parent-child relationship*, especially with regards to the correlations among relationship quality and family processes, and furthermore adolescents’ developmental outcomes (Conger, Ge, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Dekovic, Janssens, & As, 2003; Moore, Guzman, Hair, Lippman, & Garrett, 2004; Wissink, Dekovic & Meijer, 2006). According to Dekovic et al. (2003), the quality of the parent-child relationship is a broader concept, more bidirectional in nature than the parenting behavior concept. Whereas parenting behavior refers to concrete, goal-directed practices of the parents in the interaction with the child, through which parents perform their

parental duties, the quality of the relationship encompasses the behavior of both the parent and the child and reflects a constellation of attitudes regarding each other that originated in the long history of the bond between the parent and the child. As such, Dekovic et al. (2003) showed that, compared to all other examined variables including parenting behavior, the indicators of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (i.e., attachment and disclosures) explained the largest amount of variance in adolescent antisocial behavior. Wissink et al. (2006) further confirmed that for adolescent development, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship could be more important than concrete parenting behaviors. On another note, instead of viewing the quality of the relationship as fundamental to parenting practices, Chao (2001) demonstrated the mediating role of the parent-adolescent relationship quality when accounting for the beneficial effect of authoritative control on adolescents' school performance. According to Chao (2001), in European American families, authoritative parenting style may be more effective for children's school performance because they foster close and mutually satisfying relationship with their children. However, the same parenting style may have less beneficial consequences for adolescents from Asian immigrant families because the effects of relationship closeness may not be as positive for them compared with European Americans.

Parent-adolescent relationships in various cultural settings, especially in China

Researchers who emphasize the cultural origins of parent-adolescents' conflicts hold very different opinions with regards to the emergence and patterns of parent-adolescent relationships. For instance, Markus & Lin (1999) argued that the way individuals raise, negotiate, and resolve conflicts is culturally patterned. Fuligni (1998) also suggested the important cultural basis for parent-child relationships, although meanwhile he considered the changes during adolescence may relate to the development of autonomy. As he wrote, "If these changes are indeed tied to autonomy, then parent-child relationships during adolescence may have an important cultural basis. To the extent that individual autonomy varies as a developmental imperative among cultural groups, the occurrence of parent-adolescent conflict and cohesion may also differ." (Page 782)

Based on this assumption, Fuligni (1998) examined concepts of authority and autonomy of American adolescents from different ethnicities, and how these concepts affected the parent-adolescents relationship. Approximately 1,000 American adolescents from immigrant and native-born families with Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, and European backgrounds reported on their beliefs, expectations, and relationships with parents. This study revealed that, despite holding different beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy, adolescents from all generations and cultural backgrounds reported similar levels of conflict and cohesion with their parents. Fuligni (1998) therefore suggested that cultural beliefs regarding autonomy and authority may play only a minor role in parent-adolescent relationships when those values are not supported by the larger society. He predicted that the influence of cultural beliefs on family relationships may depend on the social settings of everyday life.

To see if Fuligni (1998)'s conclusions could be applied to other cultures, Fuligni and his colleagues carried out similar studies in China (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006; Zhang et al., 2006). Their methods essentially replicated the questionnaires used by Fuligni (1998) as to assess urban or rural adolescents' beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy, as well as aspects of their relationships with their parents. The results

showed that despite social and economic reforms in Chinese society, both urban and rural adolescents continued to report strong endorsement of parental authority and expectations for later personal behavioral autonomy, compared to previous work conducted in the United States. Furthermore, compared with rural adolescents, urban adolescents possessed greater acceptance of open disagreement with parents, expectations for earlier individual autonomy, and their relationships with parents were characterized by more frequent and intense conflicts as well as lower cohesion. Based on these results, Zhang et al. (2006) suggested that the modernization processes taking place in China had a greater impact on urban adolescents than they did on rural adolescents, whereas rural adolescents were more influenced by traditional Chinese norms and values. They also suggested that the associations between Chinese adolescents' beliefs and expectations of parental authority and behavioral autonomy and parent-adolescent relationships appeared somewhat different from the patterns reported among adolescents in western cultures.

Still, other researchers hold different opinions on the extent to which the values, traditions and ideology of one society might influence the parent-adolescent relationships in it. As Turiel (2006) wrote, "..... Opposition and resistance originate in childhood. Children's social development involves a combination of cooperative and oppositional orientations. Evidence of the origins of opposition and resistance in early childhood comes from studies showing that young children do not accept rules or authority dictates that are in contradiction with their judgments of what is morally right or wrong.....These patterns of opposition and resistance are evident in many cultures. The dynamics of relationships between people in different positions on the social hierarchy further demonstrate there is flexibility of thought in reciprocal interactions....." (Turiel, 2006, page 28). Therefore, as suggested, it is important to understand how children come to understand, interpret, accept, and sometimes reject these diverse aspects of the interactions of their parents within the family context.

Research has demonstrated that in non-Western cultures, including China (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a, 2003b), Israel (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998), India (Neff, 2001), Japan (Killen & Sueyoshi, 1995; Yamada, 2004a), children and adolescents have conceptions of personal issues, and are aware of individualistic values such as respect for autonomy, competence and self-development.

Yau & Smetana's (1996, 2003a, 2003b) studies in Hong Kong and Shenzhen (one large city in southern China) have made deep explorations in adolescents' reasoning over the occurrence and solutions of conflicts. By using semi-structured interviews, they found some differences between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, in certain domains. For example, there were more conflicts over chores and interpersonal relationships in Hong Kong than in Shenzhen and more conflicts over school work in Shenzhen than in Hong Kong. According to Yau and Smetana, this could be attributed to the regional differences between these two cities in terms of their historical background and their current political and economic climates. Meanwhile, their studies also showed that, although there were culturally specific expressions among parent-adolescent relationships, the interactions between Chinese youth and their parents, both in Hong Kong and in Shenzhen, still appeared to reflect the development of adolescent autonomy. For example, many adolescents in Shenzhen reported that they were most reluctant to talk with parents about their interpersonal relationships, particularly regarding dating. When it comes to resolving conflicts, adolescents reported that they primarily give in to parents, although adolescents desired more autonomy in decision-making than they reported having. Another interesting finding was the high proportion of pragmatic justifications

adolescents in Shenzhen used to justify their decisions both to do and not to do what their parents wanted, which was interpreted as Chinese adolescents' submission to parental wishes being strategy to obtain future permission for something that they wanted to do or to bring future benefits to themselves.

Issues to be Further Explored

Whose perspective, mother's or adolescent's?

Most of the studies reviewed above were derived from the perspective of the adolescents. However, how parents view and deal with the conflicts also affects children's development. Empirical studies have been conducted in this area among American parents and those in other cultures. For instance, Nucci & Smetana (1996) have studied American parents' views of family conflict regarding hypothetical moral, conventional, personal, multifaceted (e.g., containing conventional and personal components), prudential, and friendship issues, and found that mothers in the United States believed that allowing young children to have some personal discretion was a means of fostering autonomy and competence. Yamada (2004b) replicated the study in Japan and interviewed Japanese mothers of young children. The findings were similar to those from Nucci & Smetana (1996), that mothers experienced conflicts with their children mainly around issues that they allowed their children to determine but they occasionally regulated (e.g., daily routines, recreational activities, things to buy, and food type or amount). In actual daily conflict situations, as observed in Nucci & Weber (1995), Japanese children may treat these issues as entirely personal matter; as a consequence, they may resist parental demands and assert themselves to construct their personal boundaries. One limitation of these studies is that their participants were solely mothers. While they provided important information in mothers' attitude and conceptualizations of parent-child conflict (either hypothetic or real life), these studies did not examine the children's perspectives on the same issue. In all, previous studies have either focused on parents' self reports of their parenting practices and conflicts with their children, or studied adolescents' perceptions of the same issues. However, few studies have compared parents' and adolescents' perception of parent-child conflicts and their relative contribution to adolescent autonomy development. In other words, how adolescents and their mothers view their everyday conflicts within the family, and specifically between the role of mothers and children, is an area yet to be explored.

How much does culture play a role in parent-adolescent relationships?

Another issue that needs further exploration is the degree to which the values, traditions and ideology of a society might influence the parent-adolescent relationships. As reviewed above, groups of researchers have given various explanations due to their different assumptions and methods. For instance, Markus & Lin (1999) and Chao & Tseng (2002) suggested that the way individuals raise, negotiate, and resolve conflicts is culturally patterned, whereas Yau & Smetana (1996, 2003a, 2003b) gave less weight to the impact of one culture on parent-adolescent relationships. They argued that culture might influence the expression of the conflicts and their solutions, but culture is not the fundamental factor that shapes the trajectory of adolescents' increasing request for autonomy in the relationship with their parents.

These disagreements on the degree to which culture matters for parent-adolescent relationships, reflected the long lasting debate between the homogeneous view versus

heterogeneous view regarding the role of social context in thought and behavior in human development. Researchers who hold the former view tend to propose global cultural orientations, including individualism vs. collectivism (Triandis, 1990, 1994), independence vs. interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and egocentricism vs. sociocentricism (Shweder & Bourne, 1982), to explain cultural differences in modes of thinking and patterns of behavior. More particularly, it has been hypothesized that individualism (as well as independence, and egocentricism), has an orientation toward the self and characterizes Western cultures, whereas the other side has orientations toward others, groups, and society and characterizes traditional, non-Western cultures. Such a dichotomous view assumes that cultures constitute homogeneous and internally coherent ways of thoughts and actions. On the other hand, others argue that this homogeneous, dichotomous perspective does not sufficiently capture within-culture diversity or address issues of power and hierarchy and sources of change, either in the political realm (Abu-lughod, 1991; Wikan, 1991), or in school setting or social life (Holloway, 2000; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987; Turiel, 2002; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000). As Turiel et al. (1987) wrote: “..... Societies and their individual members cannot be characterized through the template of a general, homogeneous, or even predominant orientation..... Variations in social judgments and practices are not solely determined by societal differences; they exist within societies and within individuals.....” (Turiel et al., 1987, page 158)

As described earlier, many Chinese scholars have concerns that the rapid social and economic changes in China could undermine cultural traditions of filial piety, parental authority and family closeness. The new generation of adolescents may turn away from traditional values and the whole of society would face moral decline (Hang & Zhang, 2007; Qu & Chen, 2005; Tang & Parish, 2000; Wu, 2007). According to them, China’s socioeconomic changes did or will result in cultural moral decline, which may ultimately produce a new generation with less conventional orientation and more emphasis on individualism. To be sure, there were some major differences in their positions. Yet implicitly or explicitly, they all assumed that thought and action are embedded in contexts of social interaction, and individual members’ thought and action are formed within shared systems of social relations. Therefore, for these scholars, since China as a society changed its economy system to market economy, along with other rapid changes in its ideology, the new generation of Chinese would all tend to endorse individualism and forsake traditional values.

Given the fact that the economic changes have been taking place mainly in urban areas in China, whereas families in rural areas live largely agricultural lives and have very limited exposure to the opportunities of the urban market economy (Tang & Parish, 2000), a comparison of the family relationships in urban and rural areas could provide an initial glimpse into the impact of economic change on family relationships, and help further understand how much culture plays a role in parent-adolescent relationships.

Connections between parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship

As reviewed earlier, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies (Chao, 2001, Chao & Tseng, 2002; Conger, et al., 1994; Dekovic, et al., 2003; Hair, et al., 2008; Moore, et al., 2004; Wissink, et al., 2006) have shown correlations between adolescent developmental outcomes with either familial and parenting practices, or with the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. In other words, most of these studies focused either on parenting behavior or on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship with regards to their influences on adolescent

developmental outcomes. However, how do familial and parenting practices (i.e., parent-adolescent conflicts and cohesion) and the quality of the relationship relate to each other on a daily basis, has rarely been studied.

Accordingly, the current study included both parent-adolescent daily actual conflicts and the quality of their relationship. By doing so, I examined how Chinese adolescents' and their mothers' beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy may be related to the quality of their relationship.

Framework and Hypotheses of the Present Study

The theoretic framework the present study took is the social-cognitive domain model, which posits that individuals construct social concepts and form judgment within distinct structural-developmental systems, or domains, through reciprocal interactions with the social environment (Turiel, 1983, 2002). Social thought is not viewed as globally organized around a single dimension or orientation but as heterogeneous and multifaceted. Individuals are regarded as capable of maintaining and coordinating diverse perspectives when making social judgments. Thus, concerns with justice, welfare and rights (viewed as *moral issues*) coexist with concerns with authority, tradition, and social norms (viewed as *social-conventional issues*) and concerns with privacy, bodily integrity and control, and a delimited set of choices and preferences (described as *personal issues*). Since the initial theoretical formulations (Turiel, 1979; 1983), domain theory has expanded in many different directions, far too many to summarize in this paper. In the following I briefly explain the major distinct domains of social knowledge that have been identified by empirical evidences across various cultures including China, Brazil, India, Israell, Japan and Korea (Killen & Sueyoshi, 1995; Neff, 2001; Tisak, 1995; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998; Yamada, 2004a, 2004b; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a, 2003b).

The moral domain refers to prescriptive judgments regarding how individuals ought to behave toward one another. Events in the moral domain are characterized as unconditionally obligatory, universally applicable across contexts, impersonal, and not contingent upon authority dictates, rules, or consensus. The moral domain comprises concepts of justice, rights, and welfare. Moral transgressions are viewed to be wrong because they have intrinsic effects for others' rights and welfare. Examples of actions viewed as moral concerns include hitting, lying, and stealing.

The social-conventional domain encompasses concepts of social organization and social systems. Conventional issues pertain to behavioral uniformities or regulations that coordinate interactions of individuals within social systems. Conventions are validated and alterable by consensus and thus are relative to the social context to which they belong. The wrongness of a conventional transgression derives from the deviation of an act from a socially determined uniformity. Examples of social conventions include modes of address, dress, and manners.

A great deal of research has revolved around the individual's distinction between the domains of morality and convention (Killen, McGlothlin, & Lee-Kim, 2002; Smetana, 2006). It has been found that children generally are act oriented and focus on the consequences of acts for others when evaluating moral events, whereas they are rule oriented when evaluating social conventional events. Furthermore, children as young as 3 years of age are capable of making rudimentary distinctions between moral and conventional events (Smetana & Braeges, 1990), and young children apply the distinction more for familiar than unfamiliar events (Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983).

Moral and social conventions have been further differentiated from individuals' descriptive understanding of persons as psychological systems, including their understanding and attributions for their own and others' behavior and their knowledge of self, personality, and identity. Psychological knowledge pertains to individuals' attempts to understand psychological causes and to infer meaning that is not given in social interactions. Although the psychological domain is a distinct conceptual and developmental system of social knowledge, it bears on the scope and nature of morality in that the notion of rights is grounded in notions of the self and personal agency (Nucci, 1981, 1996).

Meanwhile, Nucci (1981, 1996) has also proposed that individuals exercise personal agency when asserting control over personal issues. Because personal issues pertain only to the actor and the private aspects of one's life, they are considered to be outside the realm of conventional regulation and moral concern. Examples of actions viewed as personal matters include choice of food, clothes, TV programs, friends, and recreational activities. It has been proposed that children's establishment of an arena of personal control is necessary for the development of a sense of individuality and independence, and that personal control, in turn, contributes to the construction of moral reciprocity and conceptions of rights (Nucci, 1996). Also, studies showed that parents play a critical role in their children's development of personal concepts, since areas of personal jurisdiction are constructed out of social interactions involving negotiations with adult authority (Nucci, 1996; Nucci & Weber, 1995).

The present study was designed to extend previous research on Chinese adolescents' views of conflict and conflict resolutions, by comparing the perspectives of mothers and their adolescent children about conflicts and relatedness, within two geographical and social contexts (Wenzhou representing urban, and Cangnan representing rural areas), and two types of families (single-child families and multiple-children families).

The first major hypothesis was that, regardless of residential locations or adolescents' sibling status, there would be significant differences between Chinese adolescents and mothers with regards to their views of parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship, due to adolescents' autonomy development. From social-cognitive domain perspective, asserting claims to an issue as personal is an important aspect of individuals' developing autonomy or distinctiveness from others. Children and adolescents typically categorize personal issues as up to the individual, based on justifications that the action's consequences only affect the actor or that the acts are personal matters and should be the actor's own business (Nucci, 1981, 1996). In addition, psychological knowledge, pertaining to individuals' attempts to understand psychological causes and to infer meaning that is not given in social interaction, is grounded in notions of the self and personal agency (Nucci, 1981, 1996; Smetana, 2006). Therefore, it was expected that Chinese adolescents would differ from their mothers significantly when viewing parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationships. More specifically, based on findings from Smetana (1989) and Yau & Smetana (1996) that adolescents and their parents reasoned about parent-adolescent relationship in conceptually different ways⁴, the present study expected that (a) adolescents would use more personal choices and psychological concerns to justify for their act permissibility or wrongness regarding parent-adolescent conflicts, whereas mothers would use

⁴ Parents typically emphasize social convention concerns (i.e., as behavioral uniformities that structure social interactions within the family social system), whereas children typically treated them as issues of maintaining of personal jurisdiction (i.e., as having consequences pertaining only to the actor and as outside of the realm of societal regulation and moral concern)

more conventional regulations as their justifications for conflicts; and (b) when considering self and counterpart's for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship, adolescents would put more emphasis on psychological and personal domains, whereas mothers may emphasize more conventional and pragmatic domains. Moreover, Yau & Smetana (2003b) reported Chinese adolescents were most reluctant to talk with their parents about their interpersonal relationships, and suggested that the fact that adolescents chose certain topics to discuss with or withhold from their parents might be related to their behavioral autonomy. Accordingly, the current study expected that (c) adolescents would not discuss all issues with their parents. Rather, they would choose to withhold certain issues from parents.

If autonomy development is an unavoidable developmental process, and using personal concerns as behavior justifications is an important aspect of individuals' developing autonomy, it should be expected that both rural and urban adolescents, and both children from single-child families and those from multiple-children ones, would all emphasize the personal domain when reasoning about parental authority and individual autonomy. Accordingly, the second hypothesis of the present study was, regardless of the resident location or the sibling status, Chinese adolescents would emphasize their personal choices and individualistic values. More particularly, it was hypothesized that (a) Chinese rural adolescents, as well as urban adolescents, should emphasize the personal jurisdiction and their individualistic values when reasoning about parent-adolescent conflicts and reflecting on the quality of parent-adolescent relationship, and (b) Chinese adolescents from multiple-children families would have the same concerns for personal jurisdiction and claims for personal rights as those from single-child families.

As discussed earlier, given the fact that the economic changes have been taking place mainly in urban areas in China, whereas families in rural areas lead largely agricultural lives and have very limited exposure to the opportunities of the urban market economy (Tang & Parish, 2000), a comparison of the family relationships in urban and rural areas could provide a brief view of the impact of economic change on family relationships. Many Chinese scholars had concerns that the rapid social and economic changes in China would undermine cultural traditions of filial piety, parental authority and family closeness, and that the new generation of adolescents may turn away from traditional values and the whole society would face moral decline (Hang & Zhang, 2007; Qu & Chen, 2005; Tang & Parish, 2000; Wu, 2007). In this view, urban adolescents would have less of a conventional orientation and place more emphasis on individualism, compared with rural adolescents. In addition, since 1979 when the one-child policy was put into practice nationwide in China, a large proportion of Chinese families have only one child. Children from single-child families have been characterized as "little emperor" who can have anything in the household and can claim family members' attention anytime they want (Feng, 2001; Li, 2000), and therefore concerns have been expressed by observers in China that single children may grow up to be individualistic and selfish.

From social-cognitive domain perspective, it is expected that within cultures, individuals have a variety of concerns, including concerns with justice, welfare, rights, social conventions, traditions, authority, personal choice, and personal entitlements. These various concerns coexist in individuals' reasoning because they are all aspects of social life within cultures, yet they may be coordinated in various ways depending on individual development, social context, and particular cultural practices. Research has demonstrated that in non-Western cultures, including China (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a, 2003b), Israel (Turiel &

Wainryb, 1998), India (Neff, 2001), Japan (Killen & Sueyoshi, 1995; Yamada, 2004a), children and adolescents have conceptions of personal issues, and are aware of individualistic values such as respect for autonomy, competence and self-development. Therefore, in light of this empirical evidence, it was expected that there would not be significant regional or sibling status differences among Chinese adolescents when viewing parent-adolescents conflicts and the quality of their relationship.

Last but not least, although the second hypothesis was that there would not be major significant regional or sibling status differences among Chinese adolescents when viewing parent-adolescents conflicts and the quality of their relationship, it is expected that the residential locations or sibling status might reveal different expressions in conflicts, their resolutions, and the quality of parent-adolescent relationship among adolescents and their parents. Previous studies (Yau & Smetana, 1993, 1996, 2003a, 2003b) showed that although adolescent-parent conflicts among Chinese youth appear to reflect the development of adolescent autonomy, culturally specific processes influence its expression. For instance, Yau & Smetana (2003b) showed that although Chinese adolescents, both in Hong Kong and in Shenzhen, reported that they desired more autonomy and input into decision-making, outwardly they acted in a very different way. Adolescents in Hong Kong more openly resent strict parental control since they do not always view parents as having the right to control and dominate them, just like their European American counterparts; whereas adolescents in Shenzhen may outwardly conform to their parents' wishes in resolving conflicts. Moreover, Yau & Smetana (2003b) also found there was greater frequency of conflicts over chores in Hong Kong than in Shenzhen, and they suggested that it might be due to the fact that adolescents in Shenzhen were mostly from single-child families, whereas those in Hong Kong were mostly having siblings.

In summary, it was hypothesized that because adolescents' sense of autonomy is due to individual development, there should be few regional differences or sibling status differences among Chinese adolescents, with regards to their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. On the other hand, there should be significant differences between mothers and adolescents when viewing the same issues. In addition, the residential locations or sibling status might reveal different expressions in conflicts, their resolutions, and the quality of parent-adolescent relationship among adolescents and their parents.

Chapter 2 – Method

Locations

The present study was conducted in two distinct areas of China: Wenzhou and Cangnan. Wenzhou is an economically developed mid-sized city in the province of Zhejiang in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In 2007, its population was 1.4 million, and the per capita disposable income (PCDI) was 24,002 yuan⁵. Due to the one-child policy, each household in Wenzhou is only allowed to have one child. However, despite national statistic showing that 82% of adolescents in urban schools have no siblings (Zhang & Fuligni, 2006), in 2007 there were 42% secondary students (7-9th grade) in Wenzhou that reported having siblings⁶.

The reasons for this phenomenon are beyond the scope of this paper, but one major reason is noteworthy: urban households usually obey the one-child policy because, otherwise, they risk losing their jobs in state-owned factories as well as the related governmental benefits package (e.g. the family's medical insurance and the children's education fees). However, Wenzhou has the highest rate of private-owned businesses in China, and the owners of those businesses pay for their own medical insurance, which considerably reduces the fear of losing government benefits. As a result, many families have more than one child and are willing to be "punished" with a high fee (usually 150,000 – 200,000 yuan) as compensation to the government⁷.

Cangnan is a rural county in the same province, and is of similar size as Wenzhou. In 2007, its population was 1.25 million. Its economy is largely agriculture-based (its agricultural population is 1.02 million, which is 81.6% of its whole population), and less developed compared to Wenzhou. In 2007, the per capita disposable income (PCDI) was 8,591 yuan, which was about one third of the PCDI in Wenzhou. Households in Cangnan are allowed to have more than one child. In 2007, 83.3% of households have two or more children⁸.

Participants

The participants in this study were eighth-grade adolescents and their mothers. Given that Wenzhou has almost evenly distributed only-child families and multiple-children ones, whereas 83% of households in Cangnan have more than one child, the author decided to recruit three types of families for the present study, namely, urban only-child family, urban multiple-children families, and rural multiple-children families.

With permission from schools, the author gave out invitation letters to eighth-grade adolescents in both Wenzhou and Cangnan, and asked them to give the letter to their mothers. The letter explained that the present study would study Chinese adolescents and mothers' view of parent-child relationships, and that we would like to interview both mother and child, one by one, on a voluntary basis. Those who showed interest in participating needed to sign their names and provide their contact information, the children's gender and sibling status. Altogether, the author sent out around 300 letters in Wenzhou (three schools) and 200 letters

⁵ <http://www.wenzhou.gov.cn/col/col3583/index.html>, the ratio of "dollar" to "yuan" is about 1:7

⁶ <http://www.wenzhou.gov.cn/col/col4278/index.html>

⁷ <http://www.wenzhou.gov.cn/col/col3583/index.html>

⁸ http://www.cntj.gov.cn/Article_View.asp?id=400

in Cangnan (two schools). One week later, the answering sheets were collected⁹. In all, 157 mothers (115 in Wenzhou and 42 in Cangnan) showed interest. Finally, based on the gender and sibling status of the adolescents, 90 dyads of mothers and their children (60 dyads in Wenzhou and 30 in Cangnan) were invited for the interviews. Of these, 5 families did not show up.

Altogether the participants in this study were eighth-grade adolescents (N=85) and their mothers (N=85), and they were put into the following three groups: Group 1 included 30 dyads of mothers and adolescents (17 female and 13 male) from single-child families in Wenzhou (the urban area); Group 2 included 27 dyads (13 female adolescents and 14 males) from multiple-children families in Wenzhou; and Group 3 included 28 dyads (13 female adolescents and 15 males) from multiple-children families in Cangnan (the rural area).

The average age of the adolescents¹⁰ was 14.15 (SD = .39), and there was no significant difference in their age among the three groups of adolescents, $F(2, 82) = 1.2, p = .3, \eta^2 = .03$ (Ms = 14.07, 14.22, 14.18; SDs = .25, .42, .48, respectively). The average age of the mothers, excluding the missing data, was 37.66 (SD = 3.20), and there was no significant difference among the three groups either, $F(2, 70) = .59, p = .56, \eta^2 = .02$ (Ms = 37.21, 38.17, 37.70; SDs = 2.88, 3.58, 3.21, respectively).

The mothers' educational level was obtained by counting how many years of education they had received, and the average length was 9.62 (SD = 3.13). There were significant differences among the three groups, $F(2, 82) = 31.99, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .44$. Post Hoc tests revealed that the difference between Group 1 and Group 2 was not significant; however, Group 3 differed significantly from Groups 1 and 2, showing that mothers in Wenzhou were significantly more educated than those in Cangnan.

The mothers' occupational/income level was scored on a 5-point scale, with "1" indicating the individual is unemployed (including being a housewife) with zero income, "2" as farmer or employer having income between zero and 8,000 yuan, "3" as farmer or employer having income between 8,000 to 24,000 yuan, "4" as farmer or employer and having income between 24,000 to 50,000 yuan, and "5" indicating a professional or managerial position and having income higher than 50,000 yuan¹¹. The average occupational/income level was 3.05 (SD = 1.34), and there were significant differences among the three groups, $F(2, 82) = 48.39, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .54$. Post Hoc tests showed the difference between Group 1 and Group 3 was significant, as was the difference between Group 2 and Group 3. However, there was no significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2. This indicated that mothers in Wenzhou had higher occupational/income level than those in Cangnan. In all, urban mothers had higher levels of education and were employed in higher income occupations than rural mothers, whereas there was no difference between mothers of single-child families and those of multiple-children families within Wenzhou area. Descriptive statistics of the mothers' educational and occupational levels are presented in Table 1.

⁹ The one-week span was given mostly because a large amount of students in Cangnan live in schools on weekdays due to the relatively long distance from their homes to the school. In Wenzhou, most of the answering forms were collected on the second day, since all the children live with their families.

¹⁰ The age was calculated by the date when they were interviewed.

¹¹ The critical points (eg. 8,000 yuan, or 24,000 yuan) were based on the per capita disposable income (PCDI) of 2007 in both Wenzhou and Cangnan.

Table 1: Mothers' Educational and Occupational Levels ^a

	Urban single- -child families	Urban multiple- -children families	Rural multiple- -children families
Educational level (years of receiving edu)	11.63 (2.59)	10.33 (2.39)	6.79 (2.10)
Occupation/income (5-point scale)	3.93 (0.69)	3.48 (1.19)	1.68 (0.82)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Procedure

Eighty-five dyads of adolescents and their mothers participated in approximately 30-45 minute individual interviews. The meetings were scheduled at the participants' convenience. For each parent-adolescent dyad, interviews were administered in two separate rooms.

Participants were administered semi-structured interviews by the author or another trained interviewer (both are Chinese native speakers) in Chinese. Participants were given an introduction at the beginning that this interview was to understand how people think about the parent-adolescent relationship in China, and that there were no right or wrong answers. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewees, and subsequently transcribed verbatim in Chinese for coding.

Assessments of actual conflicts between parents and adolescents

Based on previous studies (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b), the guiding questions regarding actual daily conflicts between parents and adolescents included three components: descriptive data of daily conflicts (e.g., conflict type, frequency, and intensity), justifications for the act's permissibility or wrongness in each conflict, and the evaluations for conflict resolutions.

First, adolescents and mothers were asked about conflicts they had experienced in the previous two weeks as follows: "Recall the conflicts between your parents and you (your child and you)¹² in the previous two weeks. By conflict, I mean any minor or major disagreement between the two of you. Please be as specific as possible." Also, adolescents were asked to clarify if each conflict was with his/her mother or father, or both. Mothers were told to include the conflicts between her child and her husband, if she knew any.

To estimate the frequency of each conflict, participants were asked to rate its occurrence on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very frequently). To estimate the intensity of each conflict, they were asked to rate it on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (mild) to 5 (very severe).

For each conflict, to assess adolescent's justifications for the act's permissibility or wrongness, adolescent participants were asked: "Why do you think it is OK for you to do (or not to do) XXX?" To assess mother's justifications, mother participants were asked: "Why do you think it is OK for you to let (or not let) your child to do XXX?"

Participants were then asked to recount the resolution of each conflict. First, they were asked how each conflict typically was resolved. To assess the fairness of each resolution, they were asked to rate on a three-point scale ranging from 1 (not fair at all) to 3 (very fair). And finally, they were asked to rate their feelings towards each resolution on a five-point scale

¹² In the script of guiding questions, the words in parentheses were used for interviewing mothers.

ranging from 1 (very negative feelings) to 5 (very positive feelings).

Assessments of the quality of parent-adolescent relationship

Based on previous studies (Dekovic et al., 2003; Fuligni et al., 2006; Olson et al., 1979; Yau & Smetana, 2003b)'s studies, the guiding questions regarding the quality of parent-adolescent relationship included two components: the sense of individual autonomy a person experiences in the family systems and the degree of the emotional bonding members have with each other.

To assess adolescent's sense of individual autonomy, questions were asked about typical topics that adolescents were willing or unwilling to share with their parents. Disclosure has long been conceptualized as an important protective aspect of certain parenting behavior (eg. Monitoring). Stattin and Kerr (2000) further argued that it is not so much the tracking and surveillance behavior of parents that is important but rather the child's free disclosure of information. They suggested that a good and trustworthy relationship with parents makes children be open to their parents about their lives. In this view, instead of being a measure of parenting behavior, disclosure (monitoring) is conceptualized as an indicator of the quality of the parent-child relationships. Moreover, Yau & Smetana (2003b) reported Chinese adolescents were most reluctant to talk with their parents about their interpersonal relationships, and suggested that the fact that adolescents chose certain topics to discuss with or withhold from their parents might be related to their behavioral autonomy. Accordingly, in the current study, questions for adolescent participants regarding disclosure went as follows: "Tell me what are typical topics that you usually share with your parents on a daily basis?" and then they were asked: "What typical topics you would rather not tell them?" In the same way, to assess mothers' awareness of their children's sense of autonomy, mother participants were asked to list topics they thought their children would discuss with them or withhold from them. The questions went as follows: "Tell me what are typical topics that your child usually share with you on a daily basis?" and then, "What typical topics do you think he/she may withhold from you?"

Then, to assess the degree of the emotional bonding members had with each other, participants were asked to rate their sense of the closeness to the other side in the parent-adolescent relationship, and to describe their perspectives on what parents and adolescents should improve for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship. They were first asked to rate the closeness of the relationship on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not close at all) to 5 (very close). Then they were asked: "To have an ideal parent-child relationship, what areas you wish your parents (your child) would improve?" and finally they were asked: "What areas do you think you should improve?"

The author constructed the interview protocol in English and translated it into Mandarin Chinese. After discussion with two psychology-major doctoral students from Peking University who are both Chinese native speakers, the questions were modified to improve clarity and understandability to interviewee. The author translated them back into English, and a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at Berkeley, who is bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English, checked the translations to ensure equivalence in both languages. The interview protocol is presented in full in Appendix 1.

Coding and Reliability

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Chinese and then coded by the author and

another native speaker, trained in the coding scheme. Variables were coded separately to avoid contamination of rating. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using kappa coefficients.

Actual conflicts between parents and adolescents

The conflicts each adolescent or mother generated were summed to obtain a measure of the total number of conflicts. The frequency and the intensity of each conflict were also obtained. Due to the different numbers of conflicts generated by participants, all ratings of conflict frequency and intensity were averaged to obtain a mean frequency and mean intensity variable for each participant.

Based on previous research (Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b), descriptions of conflicts were coded into the following categories: (1) *regulation of adolescents' activities* (e.g., using the computer, watching TV, playing videogame, or bedtimes); (2) *doing chores*; (3) *homework and academic achievement* (e.g., studying and maintaining grades); (4) *interpersonal relationships* (e.g., good relationship with parents or siblings, choice of friends); (5) *parents' own problems* (e.g., parents' negative or annoying habits or character); (6) *health and appearance*; (7) *finances* (e.g., allowances and use of money); (8) *personality/habits/behavioral style* (e.g., being lazy, selfish, or not being honest); and (9) *other*. Based on Yau and Smetana (2003b), *doing chores* and *finances* were coded separately, but they were later collapsed into the *other* category due to low endorsement (<5%). Inter-rater reliability for coding content of conflict categories was .91. To control for the different number of the conflicts generated, scores for types of conflicts were converted to proportions of participants' responses.

Justifications were coded into 17 categories based on previous research (Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b) and then collapsed into 5 superordinate categories, namely, *moral*, *conventional*, *psychological*, *personal*, and *pragmatic*. Justifications that could not be coded in these categories were coded as *other*. The full list of justification categories is presented in Appendix 2. Inter-rater reliability of superordinate justification categories was .79. To control for the different numbers of justifications given, responses were coded as proportions of participants' total justifications for each conflict.

Based on Yau & Smetana (1996, 2003b), resolution responses were coded in one of four binomial categories: (1) *adolescent's point prevails*, (2) *parents' point prevails*, (3) *joint resolution*, or (4) *no resolution*. Inter-rater reliability for resolution codes was .92. Due to the different numbers of conflicts generated by participants, mean ratings of conflict resolution, perceived fairness, and feelings were used as participants' responses.

The quality of parent-adolescent relationship

The coding schemes for the second part of the interview were generated from a subset (30%) of interview protocols equally representing the three demographic groups.

Issues that adolescents would discuss with parents were coded in the following eight categories: (1) *academic related issues* (e.g., homework, academic achievement, decisions about tutoring, decisions about choosing school); (2) *adolescents' interpersonal relationships* (e.g. relationships with classmates, friends, teachers or siblings); (3) *current news in media* (4) *daily domestic activities* (e.g., watching TV, food, travel, shopping, dining out); (5) *adolescents' personal opinions, preferences and confusions*; (6) *adolescents' allowance*; (7) *parents' finances* (e.g. investment, works); (8) *other*. Due to low frequency (<5%), *adolescents' allowance* and *parents' finances* were collapsed into the *other* category. To

control for the different number of issues generated, scores were converted to proportions of participants' total responses. Inter-rater reliability for issues adolescents share with their parents was .84.

Issues that adolescents would not discuss with parents were coded into the following seven categories: (1) *negative academic performance*; (2) *interpersonal relationship* (e.g. positive or common relationships with friends, classmates, or siblings); (3) *negative interpersonal relationships*; (4) *daily activities outside of home* (e.g., watching movies with friends; playing video games); (5) *secret thoughts or private sex-related issues*; (6) *adolescents' usage of allowance*; (7) *other*. The category of *adolescents' usage of allowance* was collapsed into the *other* category due to low frequency (<5%). To control for the different number of issues generated, scores were converted to proportions of participants' responses. Inter-rater reliability for topics adolescents do not share with their parents was .86.

The areas that adolescents (or mothers) wish their mothers (or their children) would improve, as well as the areas that adolescents (or mothers) think they themselves should improve, were coded into 14 categories and then collapsed into 5 superordinate categories, namely, *moral*, *conventional*, *psychological*, *personal*, and *pragmatic*. Areas that could not be coded in these categories were coded as *other*. The full list of categories and the examples is presented in Appendix 3. Inter-rater reliability of superordinate categories regarding areas that adolescents should/would improve was .72. The one for the areas that mothers should/would improve was .73. To control for the different number of improvements participants generated, responses were coded as proportions of their total responses.

Chapter 3 – Results

To compare adolescents' and mothers' responses for each set of questions with regards to parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship, 2 (Role: adolescent or mother) x 2 (Gender: female adolescent or male adolescent) ANOVAs were conducted on the entire dataset. To examine whether there were sibling status differences among adolescents or among mothers, within urban participants (including Group 1 and Group 2), responses for each set of questions were analyzed by employing 2 (Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Sibling Status: single-child family or multiple-children family) ANOVAs. To examine whether there were regional differences among adolescents or among mothers, within multiple-children families (including Group 2 and Group 3), responses for each set of questions were analyzed by employing 2(Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Regions: urban or rural area) ANOVAs.

Actual Daily Conflicts between Parents and Adolescents

Total, frequency, and intensity of conflicts

As shown in Table 2, participants (including adolescents and mothers) reported an average of 4.00 issues of conflict occurring over the previous two weeks. On average, these conflicts were rated as occurring relatively often ($M=2.95$ on a scale from 1 to 4) and as being medium in intensity ($M=2.65$ on a scale from 1 to 5).

Compared with mothers, adolescents generated a greater number of conflicts, $F(1, 166) = 3.71, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ ($M_s = 4.28, 3.72, SD_s = 2.13, 1.66$, respectively), and rated the intensity of conflicts higher than mothers did, $F(1, 166) = 7.04, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ ($M_s = 2.82, 2.47, SD_s = 0.73, 0.99$, respectively). In addition, compared with mothers, adolescents reported fewer conflicts with mothers, $F(1, 166) = 101.37, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .38$ ($M_s = .45, .91, SD_s = .36, .20$, respectively), and more conflicts with both parents, $F(1, 166) = 51.37, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .23$ ($M_s = .39, .08, SD_s = .35, .19$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban participants (including Group 1 and Group 2), a significant main effect for role was found in the total number of conflicts, $F(1, 106) = 6.41, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, indicating that urban children reported a greater number of conflicts than urban mothers did ($M_s = 4.70, 3.75, SD_s = 2.16, 1.62$, respectively). There were no significant differences in gender or in sibling status, nor interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban adolescents and among urban mothers, there were no significant main effects or interactions for the total number, frequency, or intensity of conflicts.

Among multiple-children families (including Group 2 and Group 3), a significant main effect for region in the total number of conflicts, $F(1, 102) = 8.81, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$, indicated that urban families reported more conflicts than rural families ($M_s = 4.65, 3.54, SD_s = 2.09, 1.78$, respectively). Also, a significant main effect for role in the average intensity of conflicts, $F(1, 102) = 11.23, p < .005, \eta^2 = .10$, showed that, across urban and rural settings, adolescents rated the intensity of conflicts higher than mothers did ($M_s = 2.81, 2.30, SD_s = .65, .91$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among adolescents from multiple-children families, a significant main effect for region in the total number of conflicts, $F(1, 51) = 9.02, p < .005, \eta^2 = .15$, showed that urban

Table 2: Total number, frequency, and intensity of conflicts and proportions of conflicts with mothers, fathers and both parents ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
N of	4.27 ^f	3.43 ^g	3.85	5.19 ^f	4.11 ^g	4.65	3.43	3.64	3.54	4.28 ^d	3.72 ^e	4.00
Conflicts	(1.87)	(1.59)	(1.77)	(2.39)	(1.60)	(2.09)	(1.81)	(1.77)	(1.78)	(2.13)	(1.66)	(1.92)
Frequency	2.99	3.01	3.00	2.85	2.89	2.87	2.86	3.08	2.97	2.90	2.99	2.95
(1-5) ^b	(0.79)	(1.02)	(0.90)	(0.70)	(0.97)	(0.83)	(0.72)	(0.94)	(0.83)	(0.73)	(0.97)	(0.86)
Intensity	2.85	2.78	2.82	2.88 ^f	2.45 ^g	2.67	2.74 ^d	2.16 ^e	2.45	2.82 ^d	2.47 ^e	2.65
(1-5) ^c	(0.85)	(1.06)	(0.95)	(0.73)	(1.00)	(0.89)	(0.58)	(0.82)	(0.76)	(0.73)	(0.99)	(0.88)
With	0.42 ^d	0.86 ^e	0.64	0.31 ^d	0.93 ^e	0.65	0.56 ^d	0.92 ^e	0.74	0.45 ^d	0.91 ^e	0.68
Mothers	(0.37)	(0.25)	(0.38)	(0.37)	(0.16)	(0.37)	(0.39)	(0.18)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.20)	(0.37)
With	0.17 ^d	0.02 ^e	0.09	0.20 ^d	0.01 ^e	0.10	0.11 ^d	0.02 ^e	0.06	0.16 ^d	0.01 ^d	0.08
Fathers	(0.24)	(0.07)	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.03)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.07)	(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.06)	(0.18)
With	0.41 ^d	0.12 ^e	0.26	0.42 ^d	0.06 ^e	0.24	0.32 ^d	0.06 ^e	0.19	0.39 ^d	0.08 ^e	0.24
Both	(0.34)	(0.23)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.16)	(0.31)	(0.37)	(0.18)	(0.32)	(0.35)	(0.19)	(0.32)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b Frequency was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very frequently).

^c Intensity was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (very mild) to 5 (very severe).

^d, ^e indicate significant difference between the means, ^f, ^g indicate marginally significant difference.

adolescents reported a greater number of conflicts than rural adolescents did ($M_s = 5.19, 3.43$, $SD_s = 2.39, 1.81$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among mothers of multiple-children families, there were no significant main effects or interactions for number, frequency, or intensity of conflicts.

In summary, there were no significant sibling-status differences among adolescents, mothers or families in this part of the analysis. There were no significant regional differences either, except that urban adolescents reported a larger number of conflicts than rural children did. Considering the roles (i.e. mothers or children), significant differences were: adolescents (including Group 1, Group 2, and in general) reported a greater number of conflicts, and adolescents (including Group 2, Group 3, and in general) rated the intensity of conflicts higher than their mothers did.

Types of conflicts

As shown in Table 3, participants (including adolescents and mothers) primarily reported conflicts over regulation of adolescents' activities ($M = 0.30$), homework and academic achievement ($M = 0.16$), parents' problems ($M = 0.15$), children's personality ($M=0.14$), and interpersonal relationships ($M=0.12$), and less frequently, appearance ($M = 0.06$), and other topics ($M = 0.07$). Adolescents reported more conflicts over parents' problems, $F(1, 166) = 9.37, p < .005, \eta^2 = .05$ ($M_s = .20, .10, SD_s = .22, .18$, respectively), whereas mothers reported more conflicts over regulation of adolescents' activities, $F(1, 166) = 10.96, p < .005, \eta^2 = .06$ ($M_s = .37, .24, SD_s = .27, .23$, respectively). There were no gender differences or significant interactions in the distribution of types of conflicts.

Among urban participants, a significant main effect for role in conflicts over parents' problems, $F(1, 106) = 8.33, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$, showed that urban children reported more conflicts over parents' problems than urban mothers ($M_s = .20, .09, SD_s = .22, .13$, respectively). There were not any significant differences in gender or in sibling status, nor interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban adolescents, a significant main effect for sibling status in conflicts over parents' problems, $F(1, 53) = 4.07, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$, showed that, adolescents from single-child families reported fewer conflicts over parents' problems than those from multiple-children families did ($M_s = .15, .25, SD_s = .20, .22$, respectively). Also, a significant main effect for gender in conflicts over personality, $F(1, 53) = 7.55, p < .01, \eta^2 = .13$, showed that urban girls reported fewer conflicts with their parents over personality or behavior style than did urban boys ($M_s = .08, .17, SD_s = .13, .15$, respectively). No significant interactions were found in this part of the analysis.

Among urban mothers, there were no significant main effects or interactions for types of conflicts.

Among multiple-children families, a significant main effect for region in conflicts about interpersonal relationships, $F(1, 102) = 6.38, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, showed that urban families reported more conflicts over interpersonal relationships than did rural families ($M_s = .16, .08, SD_s = .19, .15$, respectively). In addition, the significant Role x Region interaction, $F(1, 102) = 4.69, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, indicated the regional difference was mainly due to the difference between urban mothers and rural mothers (See Figure 1). Also, significant main effects for role were found in conflicts over regulation of adolescents' activities, $F(1, 102) = 6.97, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, and in conflicts over parents' problems, $F(1, 102) = 7.27, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$. This

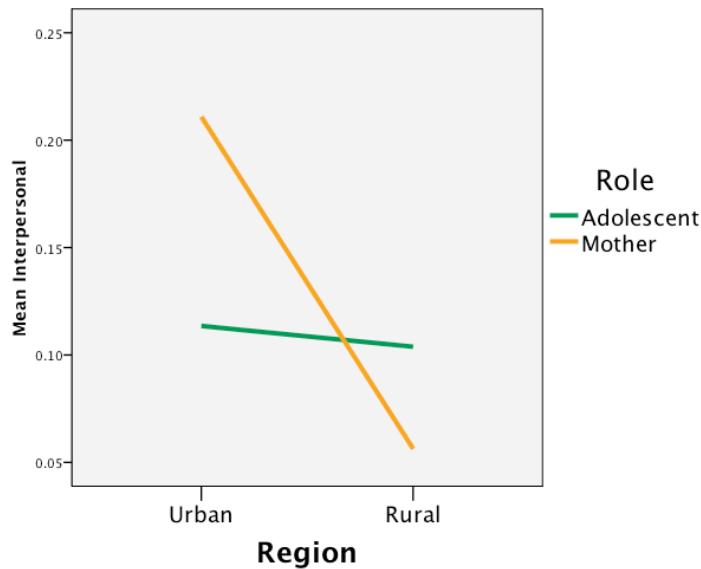
Table 3: Types of conflicts in percentage ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Daily	26 ^b (28)	41 ^c (28)	34 (29)	24 (20)	28 (21)	26 (20)	20 ^b (22)	40 ^c (29)	30 (27)	24 ^b (23)	37 ^c (27)	30 (26)
Homework & Study	22 (19)	14 (17)	18 (18)	17 (21)	11 (17)	14 (19)	16 (19)	14 (17)	15 (17)	18 (20)	13 (17)	16 (18)
Interpersonal Relationships	11 (17)	12 (17)	12 (17)	11 ^b (14)	21 ^c (23)	16 (19)	10 (17)	06 (12)	08 (15)	11 (16)	13 (19)	12 (17)
Parents' Problems	15 (20)	08 (17)	12 (19)	25 ^b (22)	09 ^c (14)	17 (20)	20 (23)	14 (23)	17 (23)	20 ^b (22)	10 ^c (18)	15 (21)
Appearance	05 (10)	07 (15)	06 (12)	03 (07)	07 (15)	05 (12)	11 (20)	06 (10)	08 (16)	06 (14)	06 (13)	06 (13)
Personality & Habits	12 (16)	15 (23)	13 (19)	10 (13)	16 (16)	13 (15)	13 (22)	16 (18)	14 (20)	11 (17)	15 (19)	14 (18)
Other	08 (13)	03 (09)	05 (11)	09 (12)	07 (11)	08 (12)	11 (26)	05 (10)	08 (20)	09 (18)	05 (10)	07 (15)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b, ^c, indicate significant difference between the means; ^d, ^e, indicate marginally significant difference.

Figure 1:
Interactions in conflicts over interpersonal relationships



showed, across urban and rural areas, adolescents reported fewer conflicts over daily activities ($M_s = .22, .40$, $SD_s = .21, .29$, respectively) and more conflicts over parents' problems ($M_s = .22, .11$, $SD_s = .29, .19$, respectively) than their mothers did. Gender differences were not significant in this part of analysis.

Among adolescents from multiple-children families, there were no significant main effects or interactions for types of conflicts.

Among mothers of multiple-children families, a significant main effect for region in conflicts over interpersonal relationships, $F(1, 51) = 9.81, p < .005, \eta^2 = .16$, showed urban mothers reported more conflicts over adolescents' interpersonal relationships than rural mothers did ($M_s = .21, .06$, $SD_s = .23, .12$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

In summary, there were no significant regional differences among adolescents, mothers or families regarding types of conflicts, except that urban mothers reported more conflicts over adolescents' interpersonal relationships than did rural mothers. There were no significant sibling-status differences, except that adolescents from single-child families reported fewer conflicts over parents' problems than did those from multiple-children families. Considering the role differences (i.e., the differences between mothers and adolescents), significant findings are: mothers (including Group 1, Group 3 and in general) reported more conflicts about regulation of adolescents' activities, whereas adolescents (Group 2, and in general) reported more conflicts about parents' problems.

Justifications for conflicts

As shown in Table 4, adolescents' justifications for conflicts were primarily personal (.45) and psychological (.26), and less frequently pragmatic (.19), conventional (.03) or moral (.02). In contrast, mothers' justifications for conflicts were primarily pragmatic (.58) and conventional (.25), and less frequently, psychological (.10), moral (.08) or personal (.01).

Among all of the participants, when giving justifications for conflicts, adolescents were

Table 4 Justifications (in percentage) for conflicts ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Moral	01 (03)	03 (07)	02 (05)	05 (09)	09 (11)	07 (10)	01 ^d (04)	06 ^e (13)	03 (10)	02 ^b (06)	08 ^c (11)	04 (09)
Conventional	03 ^b (08)	30 ^c (24)	17 (22)	03 ^b (08)	27 ^c (24)	15 (21)	03 ^b (06)	17 ^b (17)	10 (15)	03 ^b (07)	25 ^c (22)	14 (20)
Psychological	25 ^b (18)	03 ^c (08)	14 (18)	24 ^b (16)	08 ^e (14)	16 (17)	28 (26)	19 (23)	24 (25)	26 ^b (20)	10 ^c (17)	18 (20)
Personal	44 ^b (25)	01 ^c (06)	23 (28)	36 ^b (16)	01 ^c (06)	19 (21)	53 ^b (30)	0 ^c (0)	27 (34)	45 ^b (25)	01 ^c (05)	23 (28)
Pragmatic	21 ^b (24)	62 ^c (25)	42 (32)	27 ^b (22)	55 ^c (22)	41 (26)	09 ^b (12)	58 ^b (27)	34 (32)	19 ^b (21)	58 ^c (25)	39 (30)
Other	06 (09)	0 (0)	03 (07)	05 (07)	0 (0)	03 (06)	06 (20)	0 (0)	03 (14)	05 (13)	0 (0)	03 (10)

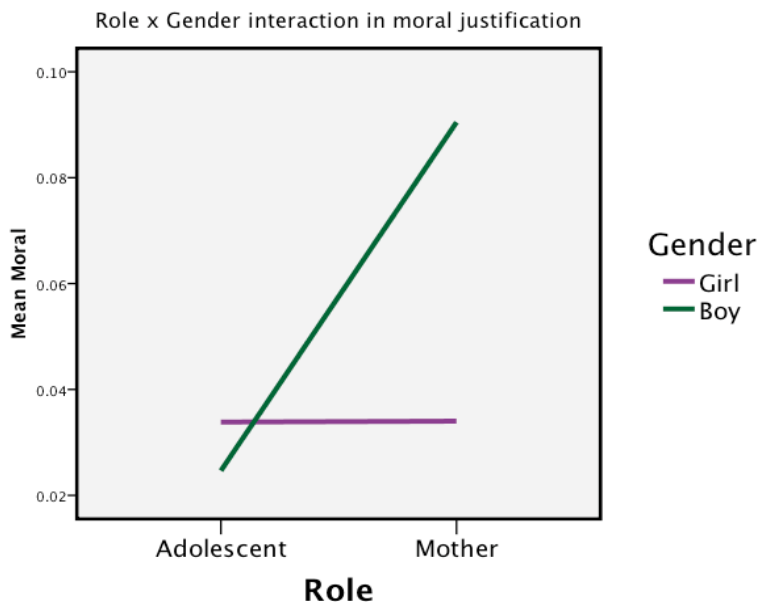
^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b , ^c , indicate significant difference between the means; ^d , ^e indicate marginally significant difference.

more likely to refer to personal choices, $F(1, 166) = 244.85, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .60$ ($M_s = .45, .01$, $SD_s = .25, .05$, respectively), and psychological concerns, $F(1, 166) = 27.34, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .14$ ($M_s = .26, .10$, $SD_s = .20, .17$, respectively); whereas mothers were more likely to use pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 166) = 121.90, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .42$ ($M_s = .58, .19$, $SD_s = .25, .21$, respectively), conventional requirements, $F(1, 166) = 71.48, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .30$ ($M_s = .25, .03$, $SD_s = .22, .07$, respectively), and moral concerns, $F(1, 166) = 8.05, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$ ($M_s = .08, .02$, $SD_s = .11, .06$, respectively), as justifications for conflicts. There were no significant gender differences in the distribution of justifications.

Among urban participants, a significant main effect for role in moral justifications, $F(1, 106) = 4.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, showed that urban adolescents used fewer moral justifications for conflicts than urban mothers did ($M_s = .03, .06$, $SD_s = .07, .09$, respectively). In addition, the significant Role x Gender interaction, $F(1, 106) = 4.65, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, indicated urban boys were more likely to differ from mothers on moral justifications than urban girls (Figure 2). Also, significant main effects for role were found in the four other types of justifications for conflicts, namely, conventional, $F(1, 106) = 55.61, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .34$, psychological, $F(1, 106) = 44.59, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .30$, personal justification, $F(1, 106) = 160.15, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .60$, and pragmatic justification $F(1, 106) = 59.0, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .36$. This showed that urban mothers were more likely to provide justifications based on conventions ($M_s = .29, .03$, $SD_s = .24, .08$, respectively) and pragmatic concerns ($M_s = .59, .24$, $SD_s = .24, .23$, respectively), whereas urban adolescents were more likely to justify conflicts based on psychological concerns ($M_s = .24, .06$, $SD_s = .17, .11$, respectively) and personal choice ($M_s = .40, .01$, $SD_s = .21, .06$, respectively).

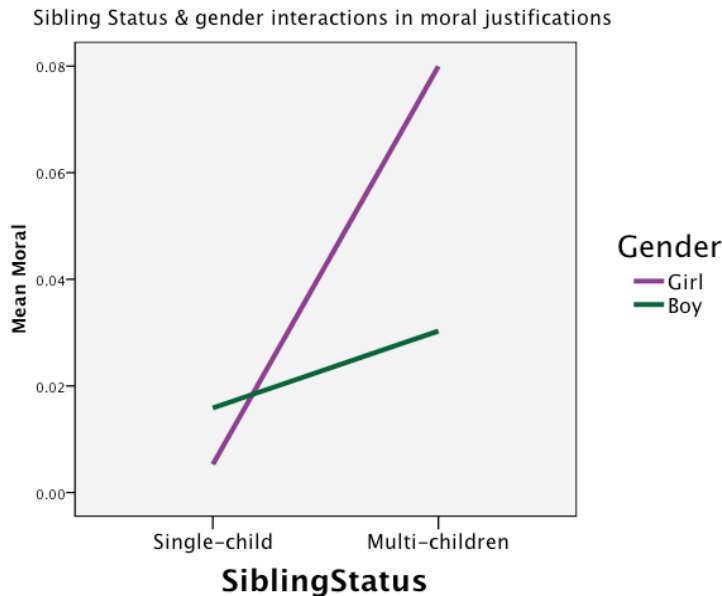
Figure 2:



Among urban adolescents, a significant main effect for sibling status in using moral justifications for conflicts, $F(1, 53) = 6.52, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$, showed that adolescents from single-child families used fewer moral justifications for conflicts than those from multiple-children families did ($M_s = .01, .05$, $SD_s = .03, .09$, respectively); additionally, the marginally

significant Sibling Status x Gender interaction, $F(1, 53) = 2.98, p < .1, \eta^2 = .05$, indicated that girls from multiple-children families used more moral justifications for conflicts than girls from single-child families, and the difference was much bigger than the one between boys from the two types of families (Figure 3).

Figure 3:



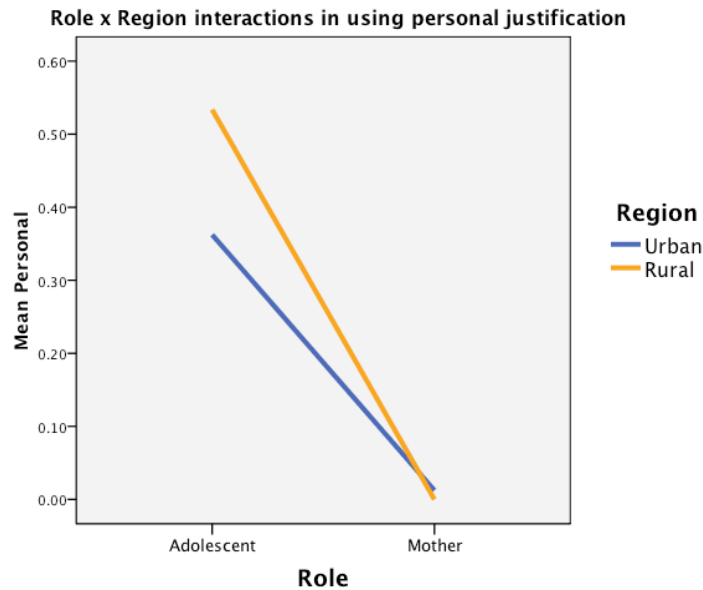
Among urban mothers, there were no significant main effects or interactions for justifications of conflicts.

Among multiple-children families, a significant main effect for role in using conventional justifications for conflicts, $F(1, 102) = 44.80, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .31$, showed that across urban and rural areas, adolescents used fewer conventional justifications than mothers did ($M_s = .03, .22, SD_s = .07, .21$, respectively). Moreover, significant main effects for region, $F(1, 102) = 5.61, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$, and for role, $F(1, 102) = 172.19, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .63$, in using personal justifications for conflicts, showed rural families used more personal justifications than urban families did ($M_s = .27, .19, SD_s = .34, .21$, respectively), and across urban and rural areas, adolescents used more personal justifications than mothers did ($M_s = .45, .01, SD_s = .25, .04$, respectively). In addition, the significant Region x Role interaction, $F(1, 102) = 7.40, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$, indicated the discrepancy between rural adolescents and mothers was larger than the one between urban adolescents and mothers (Figure 4). There were no differences in gender in this part of the analysis.

Among adolescents from multiple-children families, significant main effects for region were found in using pragmatic justifications, $F(1, 51) = 14.11, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .22$, moral justifications, $F(1, 51) = 7.24, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$, and personal justifications, $F(1, 51) = 6.70, p < .05, \eta^2 = .12$. These effects showed that urban adolescents used more moral ($M_s = .05, .01, SD_s = .09, .04$, respectively) and pragmatic justifications for conflicts ($M_s = .27, .09, SD_s = .22, .12$, respectively), whereas rural adolescents referred to more personal justifications for conflicts ($M_s = .53, .36, SD_s = .30, .16$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among mothers of multiple-children families, a significant main effect for region, $F(1,$

Figure 4:



51) = 5.22, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$, was found in using psychological justifications for conflicts, and a marginally significant main effect for region, $F(1, 51) = 3.36$, $p < .1$, $\eta^2 = .06$, was found in using conventional justifications for conflicts. These effects showed that rural mothers used more psychological justifications for conflicts ($M_s = .19$, $.08$, $SD_s = .23$, $.14$, respectively), whereas urban mothers used relatively more conventional justifications for conflicts ($M_s = .27$, $.17$, $SD_s = .24$, $.17$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

In summary, there were not any significant sibling-status differences in this part of the analysis. However, some regional differences were found among adolescents, mothers, and families. Compared with rural adolescents, urban adolescents used more moral and pragmatic justifications, and fewer personal justifications for conflicts. Compared with rural mothers, urban mothers used fewer psychological justifications and more conventional justifications for conflicts. Comparing roles (i.e., mothers or adolescents), significant differences were found in every domain. Adolescents (in each group, and in general) used more personal and psychological justifications for conflicts, whereas mothers (in each group, and in general) referred to more moral, conventional and pragmatic justifications for conflicts.

Justifications for different types of conflicts

To examine whether participants' justifications for conflicts differed as a function of the type of conflict, justifications were examined separately for the six most frequent types of conflicts (i.e., regulation of adolescents' activities, homework and study, interpersonal relations, parents problems, appearance and gestures, and personality and habits). As not all participants raised each type of conflict, statistical comparisons focused on differences in roles (i.e. mothers or adolescents), whereas sibling status, region, and gender differences were not examined. Analyses were performed only on response categories that included 5% or more of responses for each type of conflict.

As shown in Table 5, among all of the participants, conflicts over regulations of

Table 5 Justifications (in percentage) for different types of conflict ^a by role ^b

	Daily Activities			Homework & Study			Interpersonal Relationships			Parents' Problems			Appearance			Personality & Habits		
	C	M	B	C	M	B	C	M	B	C	M	B	C	M	B	C	M	B
Moral	01 (08)	01 (10)	01 (09)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	08 ^c (24)	0 ^d (0)	04 (18)	06 (16)	0 (0)	04 (14)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 ^c (0)	32 ^d (40)	18 (34)
Conventional	02 ^c (12)	12 ^d (29)	07 (24)	0 ^c (0)	19 ^d (31)	07 (22)	01 ^c (08)	41 ^d (39)	20 (34)	07 ^c (24)	24 ^d (35)	12 (29)	20 ^c (29)	70 ^d (40)	46 (44)	01 ^c (08)	24 ^d (35)	14 (29)
Psychological	07 ^c (21)	02 ^d (10)	04 (16)	32 ^c (39)	02 ^d (11)	20 (34)	31 ^c (36)	15 ^d (28)	23 (33)	52 ^c (41)	22 ^d (37)	43 (42)	02 (10)	0 (0)	01 (07)	17 (29)	16 (31)	16 (30)
Personal	63 ^c (36)	0 ^d (0)	29 (40)	45 ^c (40)	0 ^d (0)	27 (38)	57 ^c (41)	01 ^d (08)	30 (41)	19 ^c (33)	02 ^d (17)	14 (30)	67 ^c (39)	02 ^d (11)	36 (43)	29 ^c (40)	02 ^d (14)	14 (32)
Pragmatic	21 ^c (28)	85 ^d (32)	56 (44)	18 ^c (35)	80 ^d (33)	43 (45)	02 ^c (11)	43 ^d (39)	22 (35)	13 ^c (29)	51 ^d (45)	25 (39)	04 ^c (21)	25 ^d (40)	14 (33)	46 ^c (45)	26 ^d (38)	35 (42)
Others	06 (19)	0 (0)	03 (13)	05 (22)	0 (0)	03 (17)	01 (08)	0 (0)	01 (05)	03 (15)	0 (0)	02 (13)	07 (23)	0 (0)	03 (17)	06 (20)	0 (0)	03 (14)

^a Numbers in Parentheses are standard deviations.

^b C= child, M=mother, B=both; ^c, ^d indicate significant difference between the means.

adolescents activities were primarily justified with pragmatic reasons ($M = .56$) or with personal ones ($M = .29$), and less frequently with conventional (.07), psychological (.03), or moral (.01) reasons. However, adolescents and mothers differed significantly in giving specific justifications for this type of conflicts: adolescents were more likely to use personal choice, $F(1, 188) = 316.99, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .63$, whereas mothers relied more on pragmatic concerns to justify the same type of conflicts, $F(1, 188) = 212.18, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .53$.

Conflicts over homework and academic achievement were justified primarily with pragmatic (.43), personal (.27), or psychological (.20) reasons among all of the participants. Moreover, to justify for this type of conflicts, mothers were more likely to use pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 105) = 81.97, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .44$, whereas adolescents relied more on personal responsibility, $F(1, 105) = 53.24, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .34$, or psychological concerns, $F(1, 105) = 23.45, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .18$.

Conflicts over interpersonal relationships were justified almost evenly with personal (.30), psychological (.23), pragmatic (.22), or conventional (.20) reasons among all of the participants. Moreover, for this type of conflicts, mothers referred to more conventional requirements, $F(1, 84) = 43.90, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .34$, or pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 84) = 43.96, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .35$, whereas adolescents used more psychological concerns, $F(1, 84) = 4.72, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$, or personal choices, $F(1, 84) = 74.08, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .47$, as justifications.

Conflicts over parents' problems were justified as primarily psychological (.43), pragmatic (.25), personal (.14) or conventional (.12) among all of the participants. Moreover, mothers used more pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 107) = 28.20, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .21$, or conventional requirements, $F(1, 107) = 8.59, p < .005, \eta^2 = .07$, whereas adolescents used more personal responsibility, $F(1, 107) = 6.99, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$, or psychological concerns, $F(1, 107) = 12.96, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .11$, as justifications for this type of conflicts.

Conflicts over appearance were justified primarily on conventional grounds (.46), personal choices (.36), or pragmatic concerns (.14) among all of the participants. Moreover, mothers used more conventional requirements, $F(1, 43) = 26.11, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .00$, or pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 43) = 4.76, p < .05, \eta^2 = .00$, as justifications for this type of conflicts, whereas adolescents were more likely to appeal to personal choice, $F(1, 43) = 57.87, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .00$, to justify for those conflicts.

Conflicts over personality and behavioral style were justified primarily on pragmatic grounds (.35), and fewer on moral (.18), psychological (.16), conventional (.14) or personal (.14) ones. Moreover, mothers used more moral justifications, $F(1, 89) = 26.05, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .23$, or conventional requirements, $F(1, 89) = 16.35, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .16$, to justify for this type of conflicts; whereas adolescents used more personal choice, $F(1, 89) = 19.96, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .18$, or pragmatic concerns, $F(1, 89) = 5.42, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, as their justifications.

In summary, regardless of sibling status, region, and gender differences, adolescents differed significantly from mothers in giving the specific justifications for the same types of conflicts. More specifically, when giving justifications for the conflicts over regulation of adolescents' activities, and conflicts over homework and academic achievement, adolescents were more likely to use personal choice, whereas mothers relied more on pragmatic concerns. A similar pattern was found for conflicts over interpersonal relationships and conflicts over adolescents' appearance, in that mothers appealed to conventional requirements as well as the above noted pragmatic concerns, whereas adolescents continued to rely on personal choice as justifications. As for conflicts over parents' problems, mothers continued to justify them with

pragmatic concerns, whereas adolescents relied more on psychological concerns. Finally, for conflicts over adolescents' personalities and behavioral styles, mothers used more moral concerns or conventional requirements, whereas children used more pragmatic concerns as justifications for those conflicts.

Conflict resolutions

As shown in Table 6, overall, the majority of responses were either that parents' opinions prevailed (.31), or that families compromised on joint resolutions (.35), with smaller proportions indicating that there were no resolutions (.23), or that adolescents' opinions prevailed (.11). Participants in general were relatively positive and accepting of how conflict situations were handled ($M=2.25$ on the scale from 1 to 4, $SD=.67$), and rated actual resolutions as moderately fair ($M=2.34$ on the scale from 1 to 3, $SD=.61$).

Among all participants, adolescents were more likely to say that parents' opinion prevailed, $F(1, 166) = 17.87, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .10$ ($M_s = .39, .23, SD_s = .30, .25$, respectively), whereas mothers were more likely to report resolutions based on mutual agreement, $F(1, 166) = 5.78, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ ($M_s = .30, .41, SD_s = .29, .32$, respectively). Moreover, compared with mothers, adolescents rated resolutions as less fair, $F(1, 166) = 10.37, p < .005, \eta^2 = .06$ ($M_s = 2.19, 2.48, SD_s = .59, .59$, respectively), and endorsed less positive feelings toward resolutions, $F(1, 166) = 33.82, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .17$ ($M_s = 1.99, 2.51, SD_s = .61, .62$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of analysis.

Among urban participants, a significant main effect for role in reporting the proportion of the resolutions on which child's opinion prevailed, $F(1, 106) = 6.11, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, showed that, compared with urban mothers, urban adolescents reported a lower proportion of the resolutions in which the child's opinion prevailed ($M_s = .06, .14, SD_s = .13, .24$, respectively). Moreover, significant main effects were found for role in reporting the proportion of the resolutions on which parents' opinions prevailed, $F(1, 106) = 10.12, p < .005, \eta^2 = .09$, the fairness of the resolution, $F(1, 106) = 6.00, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$, and the feelings towards the resolution, $F(1, 106) = 19.41, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .16$. These effects showed that, compared with urban mothers, urban adolescents reported a higher proportion of the resolutions in which parents' opinion prevailed ($M_s = .36, .23, SD_s = .28, .28$, respectively), rated the actual resolutions as less fair ($M_s = 2.21, 2.45, SD_s = .57, .61$, respectively), and felt less positive towards the resolutions ($M_s = 2.08, 2.48, SD_s = .54, .58$, respectively). There were no significant differences in sibling status or in gender, nor interactions in this part of analysis.

Among urban adolescents, a significant main effect for gender in feelings towards resolutions, $F(1, 53) = 4.22, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$, showed that urban girls felt more positive towards the conflict resolutions than did urban boys ($M_s = 2.20, 1.90, SD_s = .59, .41$, respectively). There were no sibling status differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban mothers, there were no significant main effects or interactions for this part of the analysis.

Among multiple-children families, significant main effects for role were found in reporting the proportion of the resolutions in which parents prevailed, $F(1, 102) = 13.64, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .12$, the proportion of resolutions on which both sides agreed $F(1, 102) = 6.48, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, the fairness of the resolution $F(1, 102) = 5.80, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, and the feelings

Table 6: Conflict resolutions (in percentage) and evaluations of fairness of the resolutions^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Child's opinion prevails	06 (14)	12 (25)	09 (20)	07 ^f (12)	16 ^g (23)	12 (19)	10 (23)	14 (29)	12 (26)	08 (17)	14 (25)	11 (22)
Parents' opinion prevails	38 ^f (33)	24 ^g (32)	31 (33)	35 ^f (22)	23 ^g (23)	29 (23)	45 ^d (33)	21 ^e (20)	33 (29)	39 ^d (30)	23 ^e (25)	31 (29)
Joint Resolution	39 (32)	41 (31)	40 (31)	33 (26)	44 (34)	38 (30)	19 ^d (25)	37 ^e (32)	28 (30)	30 ^d (29)	41 ^e (32)	35 (31)
No Resolution	18 (21)	23 (25)	21 (23)	26 (23)	17 (23)	21 (23)	26 (30)	28 (29)	27 (29)	23 (25)	23 (26)	23 (25)
Fairness (1–3) ^b	2.19 ^d (0.58)	2.15 ^e (0.61)	2.35 (0.61)	2.23 (0.57)	2.39 (0.62)	2.31 (0.60)	2.16 ^d (0.63)	2.54 ^e (0.55)	2.35 (0.62)	2.19 ^d (0.59)	2.48 ^e (0.59)	2.34 (0.61)
Feelings (1–5) ^c	3.12 ^d (0.57)	3.46 ^e (0.61)	3.29 (0.61)	3.02 ^d (0.51)	3.51 ^e (0.56)	3.27 (0.58)	2.82 ^d (0.70)	3.58 ^e (0.71)	3.20 (0.80)	2.99 ^d (0.61)	3.51 ^e (0.62)	3.25 (0.67)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b Fairness of the resolution was rated on a 3-point scale, ranging from 1 (very unfair) to 3 (very fair).

^c Feeling to the resolution was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).

^{d, e} , indicate significant difference between the means; ^{f, g} indicate marginally significant difference.

towards resolutions, $F(1, 102) = 26.00, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .20$. These main effects showed that, across urban and rural areas, adolescents reported a higher proportion of resolutions in which parents' opinion prevailed ($M_s = .40, .22, SD_s = .28, .21$, respectively); whereas mothers reported a higher proportions of resolutions in which both sides agreed ($M_s = .40, .26, SD_s = .33, .26$, respectively). In addition, adolescents rated the resolutions as less fair ($M_s = 2.19, 2.47, SD_s = .60, .59$, respectively), and felt less positive towards the resolutions than their mothers did ($M_s = 1.92, 2.54, SD_s = .62, .63$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among adolescents or among mothers in multiple-children families, there were no significant main effects or interactions for conflict resolutions, the evaluations of fairness of resolutions, or the feelings towards them.

In summary, there were no significant regional differences or sibling status differences among adolescents, mothers, or families in this part of the analysis. Considering the roles (i.e., mothers or adolescents), significant differences were found in viewing resolutions as parent-driven, or as mutually agreed upon. Moreover, role differences appeared when evaluating the fairness of the resolutions and emotional feelings towards them: adolescents (including Group 1, Group 3, and in general) rated the resolution less fair and felt less positive towards them than their mothers did.

The Quality of Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Issues adolescents would/would not discuss with parents

As shown in Table 7, among all participants, the major issues adolescents would discuss with parents were: academic related issues (.31), adolescents' interpersonal relationships (.28), and daily activities (.23). Interestingly, as shown in Table 8, the major topics adolescents would not discuss with parents also included adolescents' interpersonal relationships (.27), along with personal secret or sex-related issues (.25).

Among all of the participants, when reporting issues adolescents would discuss with parents, adolescents listed more about daily activities, $F(1, 166) = 6.20, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, whereas mothers listed more about interpersonal relationships, $F(1, 166) = 7.87, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$, and personal thoughts, $F(1, 166) = 4.61, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. When reporting issues adolescents would not discuss with parents, mothers listed more about outside activities, $F(1, 166) = 4.90, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, whereas adolescents reported more about negative interpersonal relationships, $F(1, 166) = 20.21, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .11$. There was no significant gender difference or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban participants, when reporting issues adolescents would discuss with parents, adolescents listed more about daily activities than mothers did, $F(1, 106) = 9.37, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$ ($M_s = .25, .12, SD_s = .24, .21$, respectively), and the Role x Sibling Status interaction, $F(1, 106) = 6.57, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, indicated adolescents from single-child families were more likely to discuss daily activities with parents than those from multiple-children families, whereas the latter's mothers were more aware of such issues than the former's (Figure 5). Moreover, adolescents reported discussing issues about personal thoughts with parents less than mothers had thought, $F(1, 106) = 5.78, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ ($M_s = .02, .11, SD_s = .08, .24$, respectively). When reporting issues adolescents would not discuss with parents, a main effect for role in negative interpersonal relationship, $F(1, 106) = 6.01, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$, showed that urban adolescents did not want to discuss issues about negative interpersonal relationship with

Table 7 Issues (in percentage) adolescents would discuss with parents ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Academic related issues	27 (23)	31 (35)	29 (29)	40 (27)	35 (35)	37 (31)	33 (31)	21 (22)	27 (31)	33 (27)	29 (34)	31 (31)
Interpersonal relationships	26 ^d (24)	38 ^e (32)	32 (28)	25 (21)	27 (20)	26 (26)	14 ^b (25)	35 ^c (37)	24 (33)	22 ^b (24)	34 ^c (33)	28 (29)
Current news in media	09 ^b (15)	02 ^c (08)	05 (13)	09 (17)	05 (12)	07 (15)	06 (15)	05 (14)	05 (15)	08 ^d (16)	04 ^e (12)	06 (14)
Daily domestic activities	29 ^b (23)	08 ^c (18)	18 (23)	19 (25)	17 (24)	18 (24)	37 (35)	30 (37)	33 (36)	29 ^b (28)	18 ^c (29)	23 (29)
Personal thoughts /opinions	04 ^b (09)	14 ^c (26)	09 (20)	01 (06)	08 (22)	05 (17)	03 (11)	01 (06)	02 (09)	03 ^b (09)	08 ^c (21)	05 (16)
Others	05 (19)	06 (16)	06 (18)	07 (15)	06 (18)	07 (16)	08 (22)	08 (23)	08 (22)	06 (19)	07 (19)	07 (19)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b, ^c indicate significant difference between the means; ^d, ^e indicate marginally significant difference.

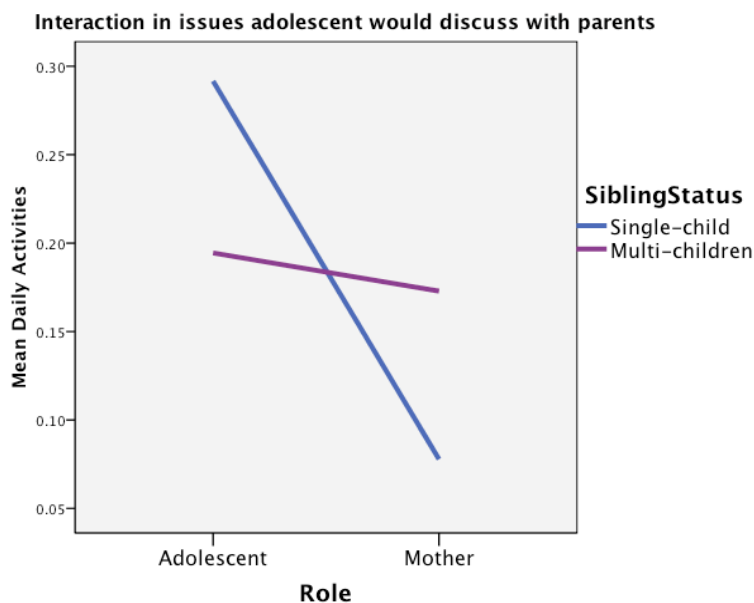
Table 8 Issues (in percentage) adolescents would not discuss with parents ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Negative academic performance	11 (23)	15 (35)	13 (29)	10 (24)	05 (20)	07 (22)	27 ^d (32)	13 ^c (26)	20 (30)	16 (27)	11 (28)	13 (28)
Interpersonal relationships	20 (30)	28 (31)	24 (31)	30 (34)	26 (32)	28 (33)	16 ^b (24)	41 ^c (33)	29 (31)	22 ^d (30)	32 ^e (33)	27 (31)
Negative relationships	22 ^b (30)	05 ^c (15)	13 (25)	21 ^d (31)	11 ^e (29)	16 (30)	30 ^b (31)	02 ^c (09)	16 (27)	24 ^b (31)	06 ^c (20)	15 (27)
Outside activities	13 (25)	19 (31)	16 (28)	07 ^b (16)	23 ^c (32)	15 (26)	07 ^b (26)	14 ^c (23)	11 (25)	09 ^b (23)	19 ^c (29)	14 (26)
Personal secrets	29 (10)	28 (15)	28 (12)	22 (07)	31 (15)	27 (12)	18 (20)	25 (10)	21 (16)	23 (14)	28 (13)	25 (13)
Others	06 (15)	05 (15)	05 (15)	10 (19)	04 (13)	07 (17)	02 (09)	05 (16)	04 (13)	06 (15)	05 (15)	05 (15)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b , ^c indicate significant difference between the means; ^d , ^e indicate marginally significant difference.

Figure 5



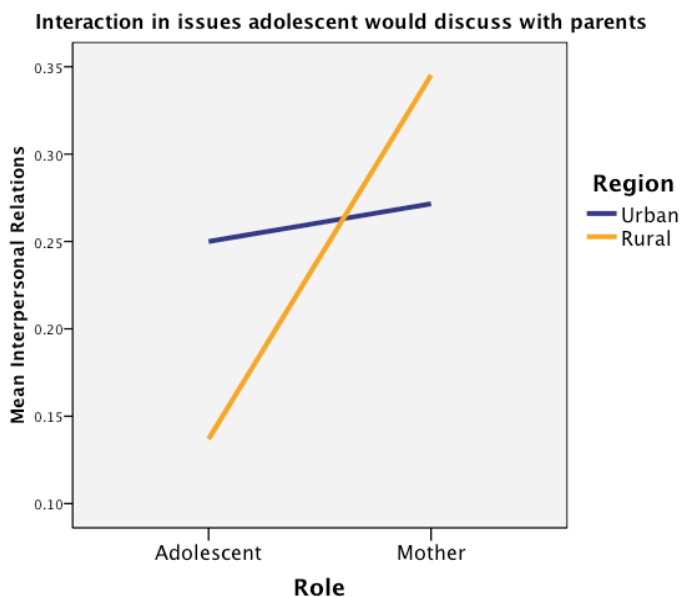
parents more than their mothers thought of ($M_s = .21, .08$, $SD_s = .32, .23$, respectively). Besides, urban mothers listed more about outside activities than urban adolescents did, $F(1, 106) = 5.58, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, showing that urban mothers thought their children may keep issues about outside activities from them more than adolescents actually reported ($M_s = .21, .11$, $SD_s = .31, .21$, respectively).

Among urban adolescents or among urban mothers, there were no significant main effects or interactions in this part of analysis.

Among multiple-children families, across urban and rural areas, when reporting issues adolescents would discuss with parents, mothers listed issues about interpersonal relationship more than adolescents did, $F(1, 102) = 4.63, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ ($M_s = .31, .19$, $SD_s = .34, .24$, respectively), and the marginally significant Role x Region interaction, $F(1, 102) = 3.20, p < .1, \eta^2 = .03$, indicated that the discrepancy between mothers' perceptions and adolescents' reports in rural area was larger than the one in urban area (Figure 6). When reporting issues adolescents would not discuss with parents, adolescents would keep issues about negative interpersonal relationships from parents more than mothers thought, $F(1, 102) = 14.43, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .12$ ($M_s = .26, .06$, $SD_s = .36, .22$, respectively), whereas mothers thought their children may hide issues about outside activities more than adolescents reported, $F(1, 102) = 6.48, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$ ($M_s = .19, .07$, $SD_s = .29, .22$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences in this part of the analysis.

Among adolescents from multiple-children families, when reporting issues they would discuss with parents, a main effect for region, $F(1, 51) = 4.39, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$, showed that rural adolescents listed more about daily activities than urban adolescents ($M_s = .37, .19$, $SD_s = .35, .25$, respectively). When reporting issues they would not discuss with parents, a main effect for region, $F(1, 51) = 5.21, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09$, showed that rural adolescents would hide issues about negative academic performance from parents more than urban adolescents did ($M_s = .27, .10$, $SD_s = .35, .24$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Figure 6:



Among mothers of multiple-children families, there were no significant main effects or interactions in reporting topics that their children would/would not discuss with them.

In summary, there were no significant sibling status or regional differences among children, mothers or families in this part of analysis, except that: rural adolescents reported discussing more daily activities issues with their parents than urban adolescents did; and they would hide issues about negative academic performance from parents more than urban adolescents did.

In examining roles (i.e., mothers versus children), significant differences were found as follows: when reporting issues adolescents would discuss with parents, adolescents (including Group 1, and in general) listed more topics about daily activities; whereas mothers (including Group 1, Group 3, and in general) listed more about children's interpersonal relationships, and mothers (Group 1, and in general) listed more about adolescents' personal thoughts. As for issues adolescents would not discuss with parents, mothers (in each group, and in general) thought their children might hide outside activities from them more than adolescents actually reported doing so; whereas adolescents (Group 2, Group 3, and in general) reported that they would keep topics about negative interpersonal relationships from their parents more than mothers had thought of.

Sense of closeness regarding the parent-adolescent relationship

The participants were asked to rate their sense of closeness towards the other side in the parent-adolescent relationship on a scale from 1 (not close at all) to 5 (very close). Overall, the ratings were high ($M=3.88$), and did not vary significantly among all participants, showing that there were no significant differences in role, region, sibling status or gender regarding the rating of emotional closeness.

Areas in which parents should/would improve

As shown in Table 9, the major areas that parents should/would improve for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship were primarily psychological (.64) and pragmatic (.15), and less frequently personal (.09), conventional (.06), or moral (.02). Among them, significant

Table 9 Areas (in percentage) in which parents should/would improve ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Moral	03 (13)	02 (09)	03 (11)	06 ^b (16)	0 ^c (0)	03 (12)	02 (09)	02 (09)	02 (09)	04 (13)	01 (08)	02 (11)
Conventional	02 ^b (09)	08 ^c (19)	05 (15)	02 (10)	0 (0)	01 (07)	02 ^b (09)	21 ^c (32)	12 (25)	02 ^b (09)	10 ^c (23)	06 (18)
Psychological	58 (42)	48 (44)	53 (43)	76 (40)	80 (40)	78 (40)	73 ^b (37)	50 ^c (45)	62 (43)	69 (40)	59 (45)	64 (43)
Personal	22 ^b (39)	03 ^c (18)	13 (31)	13 ^b (33)	0 ^c (0)	06 (24)	14 ^b (33)	0 ^c (0)	07 (24)	16 ^b (35)	01 ^c (11)	09 (27)
Pragmatic	13 ^b (26)	32 ^c (44)	23 (37)	04 ^b (19)	17 ^c (37)	10 (30)	04 ^b (13)	21 ^c (37)	13 (29)	07 ^b (21)	24 ^c (40)	25 (33)
Others	02 (09)	03 (13)	03 (11)	0 (0)	04 (19)	02 (14)	05 (21)	05 (21)	05 (21)	02 (13)	04 (18)	03 (16)

^a Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b, ^c indicate significant difference between the means; ^d, ^e indicate marginally significant difference.

main effects for role showed that children emphasized more personal improvements they desire in their parents, $F(1, 166) = 14.75, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .08$ ($M_s = .16, .01, SD_s = .35, .11$, respectively), while mothers emphasized more pragmatic, $F(1, 166) = 12.44, p < .005, \eta^2 = .07$ ($M_s = .07, .24, SD_s = .21, .37$, respectively), and conventional ones, $F(1, 166) = 11.62, p < .005, \eta^2 = .07$ ($M_s = .02, .10, SD_s = .09, .20$, respectively). It is noteworthy that psychological improvements were highly endorsed by both mothers and adolescent with no significant differences in their responses ($M_s = .69, .59, SD_s = .40, .45$, respectively), which showed that both adolescents and mothers agreed that it is important for parents to improve in this area. There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

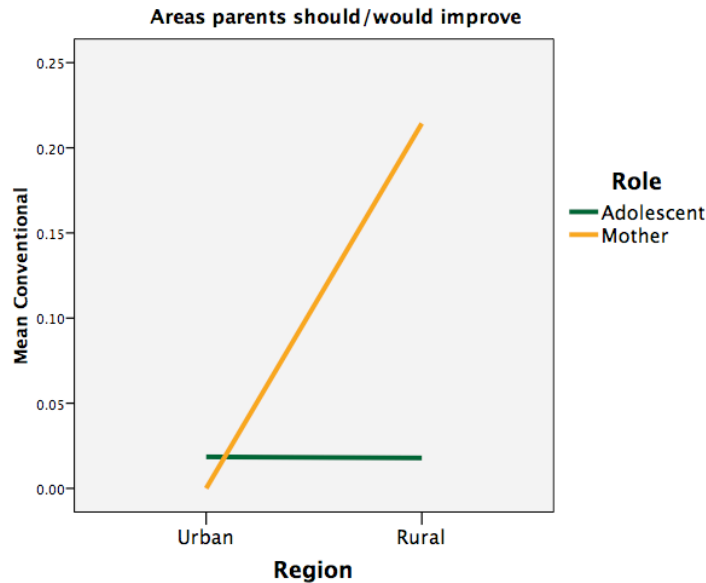
Among urban participants, significant main effects for role showed that compared with mothers, urban adolescents emphasized personal improvements they expected of their parents, $F(1, 106) = 9.26, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$ ($M_s = .18, .02, SD_s = .36, .13$, respectively), and under-emphasized pragmatic ones, $F(1, 106) = 6.08, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ ($M_s = .09, .25, SD_s = .23, .41$, respectively). Moreover, a significant main effect for sibling status, $F(1, 106) = 9.58, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$, in reporting the psychological area as one that parents should/would improve, showed that single-child families were less likely to emphasize psychological improvement in parents compared with multiple-children families ($M_s = .53, .78, SD_s = .44, .40$, respectively). There were no significant gender difference or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban adolescents, there were no significant main effects or interactions in reporting areas they would like their parents to improve.

Among urban mothers, a significant main effect for sibling status, $F(1, 53) = 7.72, p < .01, \eta^2 = .13$, was found in reporting psychological improvements as one of the areas parents should/would improve. This effect followed the same direction of the effect reported above for all urban families, indicating that mothers of single-child families put less emphasis on psychological improvements compared with mothers of multiple-children families ($M_s = .48, .80, SD_s = .46, .40$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among multiple-children families, significant main effects for role showed that children emphasized more personal improvements they desired in their parents, $F(1, 102) = 9.02, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$ ($M_s = .14, 0, SD_s = .33, 0$, respectively), whereas mothers put more emphasis on the pragmatic area, $F(1, 102) = 9.31, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$ ($M_s = .04, .19, SD_s = .16, .33$, respectively). Also, there was a significant main effect for region in reporting the psychological area as one that parents should/would improve, $F(1, 102) = 4.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, with urban families using this category more often than rural families ($M_s = .78, .61, SD_s = .40, .45$, respectively). Moreover, significant main effects for region and for role, $F_s(1, 102) = 15.98, 10.87, p_s < .0001, .005, \eta^2_s = .14, .10$, respectively, in reporting the conventional area as one of those that parents should/would improve showed that, urban families put less emphasis on the conventional area than rural families ($M_s = .01, .12, SD_s = .07, .21$, respectively), and across urban and rural settings, adolescents put less emphasis on the conventional area than their mothers ($M_s = .02, .11, SD_s = .09, .21$, respectively). In addition, the Region x Role interaction, $F(1, 102) = 15.58, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .13$, indicated that the regional difference was mainly due to the difference between urban mothers and rural mothers, in that the latter put significantly more emphasis on the conventional area than the former (Figure 7).

Figure 7:



Among adolescents from multiple-children families, there were no significant main effects or interactions in reporting areas they would like their parents to improve.

Among mothers of multiple-children families, significant main effects for region were found in listing the conventional area, $F(1, 51) = 20.21, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .28$, and the psychological area, $F(1, 51) = 6.56, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$, with urban mothers reporting conventional improvements less ($M_s = 0.21, SD_s = 0.25$, respectively), and psychological improvements more ($M_s = .80, .50, SD_s = .40, .47$, respectively) than did rural mothers. There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

In summary, when asked which areas parents should/would improve for an ideal parental-child relationship, mothers of single-child families put less emphasis on the psychological area than mothers of multiple-children families did. Moreover, regional differences existed as urban mothers emphasized the psychological area more than rural mothers, while the latter the conventional area more than the former did.

In examining family roles (i.e., mothers versus children), significant differences were found as follows: adolescents (in each group, and in general) put more emphasis on the personal area and less emphasis on the pragmatic area than their mothers did. Also, adolescents (Group 1, Group 3, and in general) put less emphasis on the conventional area than mothers did, when reporting areas in which parents should/would improve for an ideal parental-child relationship.

Areas in which adolescents should/would improve

As shown in Table 10, according to responses of all participants, the major areas that children should/would improved were primarily psychological (.60), pragmatic (.23), and less frequently conventional (.10), moral (.03) or personal (.02). Among them, significant main effects for role, $F_s (1, 166) = 6.15, 14.12, p_s < .05, .0001, \eta^2_s = .04, .08$, respectively, showed that adolescents put more psychological improvements ($M_s = .68, .52, SD_s = .39, .47$, respectively), and less pragmatic improvements ($M_s = .12, .33, SD_s = .24, .44$, respectively) than mothers did. There were no significant gender difference or interactions in this part of

Table 10 Areas (in percentage) in which adolescents should/would improve ^a

	Urban single-child families			Urban multiple-child families			Rural multiple-child families			All children	All mothers	All
	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both	Child	Mother	Both			
Moral	07 (22)	03 (13)	05 (18)	02 (10)	04 (19)	03 (15)	04 (13)	0 (0)	02 (09)	04 (16)	02 (13)	03 (15)
Conventional	03 (13)	10 (28)	07 (22)	06 (16)	04 (13)	05 (15)	20 (25)	20 (34)	20 (30)	09 (20)	11 (27)	10 (24)
Psychological	70 ^b (36)	48 ^c (46)	59 (43)	72 (40)	56 (47)	64 (44)	63 (40)	52 (48)	57 (44)	68 ^b (38)	52 ^c (47)	60 (43)
Personal	03 (13)	02 (09)	03 (11)	0 (0)	02 (10)	01 (07)	04 (19)	0 (0)	02 (13)	02 (13)	01 (08)	02 (11)
Pragmatic	15 ^b (23)	37 ^c (43)	26 (36)	19 (31)	35 (46)	27 (40)	04 ^b (13)	27 ^c (42)	15 (33)	12 ^b (24)	33 ^c (43)	23 (37)
Others	02 (09)	0 (0)	04 (17)	02 (10)	0 (0)	01 (07)	05 (21)	02 (09)	04 (16)	03 (14)	01 (05)	02 (11)

^aNumbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

^b, ^c indicate significant difference between the means; ^d, ^e indicate marginally significant difference.

the analysis.

Among urban participants, significant main effects for role, $F_s(1, 106) = 5.27, 6.75, p_s < .05, .05, \eta^2_s = .05, .06$, respectively, showed that urban adolescents expressed more emphasis on the psychological area ($M_s = .71, .52, SD_s = .38, .46$, respectively), and less on the pragmatic area ($M_s = .17, .36, SD_s = .27, .45$, respectively) than urban mothers did. There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among urban adolescents or among urban mothers, there were no main effects or significant interactions in reporting areas children should/would improve.

Among multiple-children families, a significant main effect for region, $F(1, 102) = 8.97, p < .005, \eta^2 = .08$, in listing the conventional area as one that children should/would improve, showed that urban families were less likely to express expectations for adolescents' improvement in the conventional area than rural families did ($M_s = .05, .20, SD_s = .18, .33$, respectively). A significant main effect for role in the pragmatic area, $F(1, 102) = 8.34, p < .01, \eta^2_s = .08$, showed that across urban and rural areas, adolescents put less emphasis on improvements in the pragmatic area than mothers did ($M_s = .11, .31, SD_s = .25, .44$, respectively). There were no gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among adolescents from multiple-children families, significant main effects for region, $F_s(1, 51) = 4.30, 5.09, p_s < .05, .05, \eta^2_s = .08, .09$, respectively, showed that, compared with rural adolescents, urban adolescents were less likely to express emphasis on the conventional area ($M_s = .06, .20, SD_s = .16, .31$, respectively), but more likely on the pragmatic area ($M_s = .19, .04, SD_s = .31, .13$, respectively), when reporting which areas they should improve for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship. There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

Among mothers of multiple-children families, a significant main effects for region, $F(1, 51) = 4.67, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$, in listing the conventional area as the area that they hope their children would improve, indicated that urban mothers were less likely to expect adolescents' improvements in the conventional area than rural mothers did ($M_s = .04, .20, SD_s = .13, .34$, respectively). There were no significant gender differences or interactions in this part of the analysis.

In summary, when reporting the areas children should/would improve, urban children and urban mothers, put less emphasis on the conventional area than their rural counterparts did; additionally, urban children emphasized pragmatic area more than rural children did. There were also significant role differences in this part of the analysis: adolescents (Group 1, and in general) emphasized the psychological area more than their mothers did, whereas mothers (Group 1, Group 3, and in general) put more emphasis on the pragmatic area. There were no sibling status differences in this part of the analysis.

Chapter 4 -- Discussion

This research was designed to examine potential differences between mothers and adolescent children, between urban and rural areas, and between single-child and multiple-children families regarding their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. The results show that there were certain differences between the two regions, as well as between two types of sibling statuses, in how they construe the parent-adolescent relationship, its conflicts, and their resolutions. These findings point to the importance of considering the specific context (i.e., location and sibling status) in which autonomy development occurs. Moreover, there were substantial differences between adolescents and mothers regarding their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy, which are consistent with the proposition that adolescent-parent conflict reflects processes of autonomy development during adolescence. In the following section I discuss the regional differences, sibling status differences, as well as role differences, regarding parent-adolescent actual daily conflicts and the quality of their relationships.

Actual Daily Conflicts

Regional differences

Despite the delay of social and economic development in Cangnan, a rural county in China, adolescents and their mothers there did not differ significantly in reporting actual parent-adolescent conflicts from their counterparts in Wenzhou, an urban city which underwent rapid social and economic development since 1980s. Such findings are consistent with previous studies (Fuligni et al., 2004; Zhang, et al., 2006; Zhang & Zhang, 2004) that reported similar levels of parental authority and expectations for personal behavioral autonomy among both urban and rural adolescents in China.

Altogether 60 ANOVAs analyses on 20 categories¹³ were conducted to test the potential regional differences among adolescents or among mothers, regarding parent-adolescent conflicts. There were almost no significant regional differences among adolescents, or among mothers over the issues of actual daily conflicts regarding their type, total number, frequency, intensity, as well as resolution. Key exceptions were (1) urban adolescents reported a greater total number of conflicts than did rural adolescents, and (2) urban mothers reported more conflicts over adolescent's interpersonal relationships than did rural mothers. As for justifications, the regional differences included: compared to rural children, urban children used (3) more moral justifications, and (4) fewer personal justifications for conflict; compared to rural mothers, urban mothers used (5) more conventional justifications for conflicts.

The first regional difference, that urban adolescents reported a larger number of conflicts than rural adolescents, may be due to a bundle of geographic and economic differences in the two areas. For instance, the three urban schools in the present study are day schools, which means students go home after school and stay with their parents, or in rare cases, some students may stay with their relatives who live closer to the school and go home during

¹³ The 20 items include six types of conflicts, conflict totality, frequency, intensity, five types of conflict justifications, four types of conflict resolutions, evaluation of the fairness of resolution and the feelings about it. For each item, one 2(Gender)x2(Role)x2 (Region) ANOVA was conducted among multiple-children families, and two 2(Gender) x 2(Region) ANOVAs, were conducted among adolescents and among mothers separately, to test the regional differences.

weekends. In Cangnan, most students live on campus during weekdays because of the long distance between the school and their home and the lack of efficient public transportation. Therefore, compared to rural adolescents, urban adolescents spend more time with their parents during the school year, thus they may have more interaction with their parents, which potentially leads to more disputes or conflicts¹⁴. Also, as shown in Table 1, urban mothers in Wenzhou had higher social economic status than rural mothers in Cangnan. This could be another possible reason that urban adolescents had more open conflicts with their parents than rural adolescents did. Higher education and socioeconomic status have been associated with more authoritative parenting in many studies, which entails parental explanation and negotiation in the context of firm enforcement of rules (Hoff-Ginsberg & Tardif, 1995). While parental explanations and inductive parenting practices may make parents' perspective clearer, they also may encourage adolescents to negotiate and assert their choices, resulting in a larger number of conflicts (Yau & Smetana, 2003).

A similar reason could also explain the second regional difference, that urban mothers reported more conflicts over adolescents' interpersonal relationships than rural mothers. Conflicts over adolescents' interpersonal relationships among multiple-children families mostly pertains to sibling relationships. Since urban adolescents may spend more time at home, they may have had more interactions with their siblings, which could lead to more conflicts. Another possible reason for the second regional difference is that, compared to their rural counterparts, children from multiple-children families in urban areas have more peers who are the only child in their families. Children from single-child families have been characterized as "little emperors" who can have anything in the household and claim family members' attention anytime they want (Feng, 2001; Li, 2000). Having witnessed the daily experiences of single-children families, children from urban multiple-children families may have higher demands for possessing materials and stronger feelings or resentment towards sharing resources and their parents' attentions with their siblings, compared to their rural counterparts. In rural areas, most of the families have more than two children, which makes interactions with siblings more common for adolescents. Accordingly, there may be fewer conflicts over interpersonal relationships in rural areas than in urban ones.

Consistent with the second regional difference, the third regional difference, that urban children used more moral justifications for their conflicts, may be due to the higher frequencies of their referring to principles of equality or fairness in family conflicts.

Interestingly, the fourth and fifth regional differences found in the current study, that rural children used more personal justifications for conflict than urban children and that urban mothers used more conventional justification for conflicts than rural mothers, are contrary to the expectations of this study. In previous studies (Markus & Lin, 1999; Triandis, 1990, 1994), Chinese culture has been described as collectivist and as stressing harmony and accommodation in interpersonal relationships. Since the rural region selected in this study has not changed as much as the urban region in the past decades in terms of their social economic system and their exposure to Western civilization, it is rural mothers, instead of urban mothers, that were expected to emphasize more conventional concerns for justifying their conflicts with children. The findings in the present study show that the global orientations

¹⁴ Secondary schools in China start summer break in early July. The interviews for this study were conducted from June, 18th to August, 22nd, 2008, and almost half of the participants were interviewed before the break, while the rest were interviewed during the break. Those rural adolescents who were interviewed during summer break actually spent a lot of time at home too.

such as collectivism, do not adequately characterize the contextual differences among Wenzhou and Cangnan mothers' and adolescents' justifications for the conflicts. Moreover, the present finding, that rural adolescents invoked the personal domain more often than their urban counterparts, provides evidence to dispute the pessimistic predictions by some observers, that the new generation of adolescents who were exposed to Western civilization would turn away from the traditional values and that Chinese society as a whole would face moral decline (Hang & Zhang, 2007; Qu & Chen, 2005; Tang & Parish, 2000; Wu, 2007).

Sibling status differences

Altogether 60 ANOVAs analyses¹⁵ were conducted to test the potential sibling status differences among adolescents or among mothers, within urban families, regarding parent-adolescent conflicts. There were almost no significant sibling status differences among adolescents or among mothers over the issues of actual daily conflicts regarding their types, total number, frequency, intensity, justifications or resolutions; the single exception is children from single-child families reported fewer conflicts over parents' problems than did children from multiple-children families. One possible reason for this difference is that parents' problems usually pertain to parents' negative characteristics, such as being easily upset, impatient, neglecting, or unwilling to communicate. Since parents of multiple-children families have more pressures and responsibilities for providing basic care, financial and emotional supports to their children (Feng, 2001; Li, 2000), they may tend to show more negative characteristics than parents of single-child families.

Role differences

Altogether 60 ANOVAs analysis¹⁶ were conducted to test the potential role differences between adolescents and mothers regarding parent-adolescent conflicts, among which 40 analysis¹⁷ showed significant differences between adolescents and mothers regarding their beliefs about parental authority and individual autonomy as reflected in their reasoning about daily parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationship. On the entire dataset level, for types of conflicts, mothers reported more conflicts about regulation of adolescent's activities, whereas children reported more conflicts on parents' problems. For the total number, frequency, and intensity of conflicts, mothers reported a smaller number of conflicts, and rated the intensity of the conflicts lower than their children. The findings on different views of parents and adolescents are consistent with a previous study by Yau & Smetana (2003) and with a central proposition in this research, that adolescent-parent conflicts specifically reflect processes of autonomy development during adolescence. Accordingly, children and mothers differed significantly when viewing actual daily conflicts between them.

The discrepancies between mothers' recollections of the parent-child conflicts and children's recollections showed that the two sides in the relationship held different perspectives on the content of conflicts. Mothers put more emphasis on children's daily

¹⁵ The 20 items were the same as above. For each item, one 2 (Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Sibling Status) ANOVA, was conducted among urban families, and two 2(Gender) x 2(Sibling Status) ANOVAs, were conducted among adolescents and among mothers separately, to test the potential sibling status differences.

¹⁶ The 20 items were the same as above. For each item, one 2(Gender) x 2(Role) ANOVA on entire dataset, one 2(Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Sibling Status) ANOVA among urban families, and one 2(Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Region) ANOVA among multiple-children families, were performed to test the potential role differences.

¹⁷ Role differences were found for 15 items in 2 (Role) x 2(Gender) ANOVAs; for 13 items in 2(Gender) x 2(Role) x 2(Region) ANOVAs, and for 12 items in 2(Gender)x2(Role)x2(Sibling Status) ANOVAs.

activities, which mostly pertained to children's daily routines such as when to wake up or go to bed, the amount of food they are supposed to eat at meals (especially breakfast), or the length of time they were allowed to watch TV, be online, or chat with their friends; on the other hand, children reported more conflicts over parents' problems, which mostly were about parents' negative characteristics, such as being easily upset, impatient, neglecting, or unwilling to communicate.

The fact that mothers reported fewer conflicts and rated the intensity of the conflicts lower than children could be due to the mothers' higher social desirability to maintain a happy-family image than their adolescent children. A second possible reason is that mothers may take a long-term view and therefore may not see each conflict as such a big deal in the general schema of life. Or, another interpretation is that these discrepancies indicated the unequal nature of the parent-child relationship. As the authority figure in the relationship, mothers may tend to ignore or forget some conflicts, and may view conflicts as not so serious as their children, who were on the subordinate side of the relationship.

Discrepancies resulting from power issues occurred again when mothers and adolescents evaluated the fairness of resolutions. The majority of responses were either that parents' opinions prevailed (31%), or that families compromised on joint resolutions (35%). When asked to evaluate the fairness of the resolutions and to report their feelings, children rated them less fair than did their mothers; and children felt less positive towards the conflict resolutions than did mothers. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003) suggesting that although Chinese children may outwardly conform to, or compromise with, their parents' wishes in resolving conflicts, they were very aware of issues of fairness, and may desire more autonomy and input into decision-making than is revealed by overt compliance.

Findings about role differences in justifications are also consistent with previous research (Yau & Smetana, 1996; 2003) in that children offered more psychological and personal justifications for conflicts, whereas mothers offered more conventional and pragmatic justifications for conflicts.

Moreover, adolescents differed significantly from mothers in the specific justifications given for the same types of conflicts. For instance, when giving justifications for the conflicts over regulation of adolescent's activities, homework and academic achievement, children were more likely to use personal choice, whereas mothers relied more on pragmatic concerns. A similar pattern was found for conflicts over interpersonal relationships as well as adolescents' appearance, where mothers appealed to conventional requirements as well as the above noted pragmatic concerns, while children continued to rely on personal choice to justify these conflicts. As for conflicts over parents' problems, mothers used more pragmatic concerns, whereas children used more psychological concerns to justify them. Finally, for conflicts over adolescents' personalities and behavioral styles, mothers used more moral concerns or conventional requirements as justifications, whereas children used more pragmatic concerns to justify this type of conflict. The findings show that across urban and rural areas, in both single-child families and multiple-children families, children justified many conflicts in terms of exercising or maintaining personal jurisdiction. This is consistent with research indicating that Chinese adolescents desire freedom, independence, and individuality (Yau & Smetana, 2003, Helwig, et al. 2003), and more generally, that even in cultures labeled as collectivism, individuals express concerns with personal choice and personal entitlements (Turiel, 2002; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000).

The Quality of Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Regional differences

Altogether 63 ANOVAs analyses on 21 categories¹⁸ were conducted to test the potential regional differences among adolescents or among mothers, regarding their views of the quality of parent-adolescent relationship. The significant regional differences between urban adolescents (or urban mothers) and their rural counterparts were found as follows: (1) Rural adolescents were more willing to discuss their interpersonal relationships with parents than were urban adolescents, and (2) rural adolescents are more likely to hide negative academic performance issues from their parents than urban adolescents. (3) When listing areas in which parents should improve to have a better parent-adolescent relationship, urban mothers emphasized the psychological area more, and the conventional area less than did rural mothers. (4) When describing areas in which children should improve, urban adolescents emphasized the conventional area less and the pragmatic area more than did rural adolescents.

The first difference may be associated with one of the findings about actual daily conflicts in the present study -- that urban adolescents had more conflicts with their parents over interpersonal relationships than did rural adolescents. One possible interpretation is that since rural adolescents were more willing to discuss interpersonal relationships issues with their parents, they might have fewer conflicts over these issues than did their urban counterparts. The second difference, that rural adolescents hid issues about negative school performance from parents more than urban adolescents, may be due to the societal value in China regarding people's academic achievement. In China, academic achievement provides the most important route for improving one's social status, especially for rural residents, who do not have the same level of citizenship treatment as urban ones (Kang, 2004). For instance, in the 1990s, urban residents were eligible for free medical care that was virtually entirely covered by the government, whereas rural families had to cover their medical expenses themselves. Starting from early 2000s, urban employers and employees jointly cover their medical insurance, but even this option is unavailable to rural residents (Kang, 2004). It is not surprising that rural children are bearing more pressure of fulfilling the expectations to improve their families' socioeconomic status through their academic achievement. Accordingly, they may feel more reluctant to discuss their poor school performance with their parents. As one rural male student said during the interview:

“..... my parents are both farmers. My father can read a little bit. My mother hardly can. She cannot even understand Mandarin very well..... They rarely ask me or my sister to do chores or work in the farm with them, because they want us to focus on our studies I usually like to tell them interesting things happening in school and I also like to discuss daily news with them I will tell them most of things, including my personal thoughts about my teachers and friends Yes, sometimes there are something I may not tell them. For instance, if sometimes I get bad scores in tests, I would not tell them the truth because they would be worried, disappointed and sad The best way to help them is to study hard, go to a good college, and work in a big

¹⁸ The 21 items include five types of issues that adolescents would discuss with parents, five types of issues that they would keep from parents, a rating for the sense of closeness, five areas in which parents should improve, and five areas in which adolescent children should improve. For each item, one 2(Gender)x2(Role)x2 (Region) ANOVA was conducted among multiple-children families, and two 2(Gender) x 2(Region) ANOVAs, were conducted among adolescents and among mothers separately, to test regional differences.

company in the city in the future

The third regional difference – that urban mothers identified more potential improvements in the psychological area, and fewer ones in the conventional area than did rural mothers -- may be related to the educational levels of the parents. As noted earlier, higher education and socioeconomic status have been associated with more authoritative parenting (Hoff-Ginsberg & Tardif, 1995). Authoritative parents are likely to emphasize interpersonal communication and taking the perspectives of their children when considering what they should improve to have a better parent-adolescent relationship. For instance, one urban mother, who is a manager of a large local hotel and has a single female child, said:

“.....We have a pretty good relationship. I am very busy, so I do not talk to her everyday, but she will keep me updated if there is something important happening in her school or with her friendsI think she must be hiding something from me..... I think it is common. After all, she is half grown-up now, and these days teenagers are much more sophisticated than my generation. I hope she will tell me more of her confusions and her problems with her friends I cannot force her, but I should be more communicative, try to take her perspective, and be less judgmental

It is noteworthy that the psychological domain, pertaining mostly to interpersonal communication (*Goutong*), was emphasized by both urban and rural mothers when considering what areas they should improve to have a better parent-child relationship. However, rural mothers emphasized it less than their urban counterparts, as shown in Table 11. On the other hand, rural mothers expressed more conventional concerns than urban mothers, such as “be a better mother”, or “be more assertive so that my children will listen to me”. One rural mother who is a housewife with two male children has said:

“ They are very quiet and obedient, but they do not talk too much to me Yes, they definitely hide some topics from me or my husband well, because they think I’m outdated It is true, but what can I do? I want to be a better mother well, you know, cook good food, make home comfortable, be more up-to-date, see what other mothers are doing I don’t know what else I can do, but I will learn

The fourth regional difference – that urban adolescents identified fewer desired improvements in the conventional area and more such improvements in the pragmatic area than rural adolescents -- is consistent with previous researches (Zhang & Zhang, 2004, Zhang et al., 2006) in that there were significant regional differences in attitudes towards filial piety. Rural adolescents possessed stronger attitudes toward serving and supporting parents than their urban counterparts. In the present study, rural adolescents may have been more aware of the conventional concerns of their parents. Accordingly, while urban adolescents usually gave such answers as “I should have a better daily schedule” or “I should eat more of my mother’s food” which were more in the pragmatic area, rural children tended to emphasize more the sense of responsibility, such as “I should be a good son and student. It’s my responsibility to do so.”

Sibling status differences

Altogether 63 ANOVAs analyses¹⁹ were conducted to test the potential sibling status differences among adolescents or among mothers, regarding their views of the quality of parent-adolescent relationship. There were almost no significant sibling status differences among adolescents, or among mothers over their daily communications and the feelings of relatedness, except when answering in which areas parents should improve. Mothers of multiple-children families expressed more concerns in the psychological area than did mothers of single-child families. This may be associated with the finding about actual daily conflicts, that adolescents from single-child families reported fewer conflicts over parents' problems than did those from multiple-children families. One possible interpretation is that adolescents from multiple-children families complained more about their parents' problems, which mostly pertain to parents' negative characteristics, such as being easily upset, impatient, neglecting, or unwilling to communicate. Mothers of multiple-children families therefore might be more aware of these communication issues, and would tend to think of "interpersonal communication" (*Goutong*) as the area they should improve for a better parent-child relationship. It is noteworthy that, although mothers of single-child families put less emphasis on the psychological area, compared to mothers of multiple-children families, the former still gave a lot of attention to psychological improvements for a better parent-child relationship. This showed that, although there were significant differences over this issue between the two types of families, they all recognized, to different degrees, the importance of interpersonal communications (*goutong*) in family relationships.

Role differences

Altogether 63 ANOVAs analyses²⁰ were conducted to test potential role differences between adolescents and mothers regarding their views of the quality of parent-adolescent relationship, among which 29 analyses²¹ showed significant differences between adolescents and mothers. The regional differences and the sibling status differences were overall not as substantial as the role differences, which is consistent to the proposition discussed earlier that Chinese adolescents go through processes of autonomy development during adolescence, much like those described among Western youth. They desire freedom, independence, and individuality (Yau & Smetana, 2003, Helwig, et al. 2003), just as adolescents of diverse ethnicities in the USA (Fuligni, 1998; Smetana, 1996).

In the present study, adolescents and mothers differed significantly over the following issues: (1) when reporting what topics adolescents would discuss with their parents, children listed more daily activities at home; whereas (2) mothers were more likely to report children's interpersonal relationships. (3) When reporting topics that adolescents would not discuss with parents, mothers perceived more daily activities outside of home than their children actually reported; whereas (4) children reported that they would keep topics about negative interpersonal relationships from their parents more than mothers had thought. (5) When

¹⁹ The 21 items were the same as above. For each item, one 2(Gender) x 2(Role)x2 (Sibling status) ANOVA was conducted among urban families, and two 2(Gender) x 2(Sibling status) ANOVAs, were conducted among adolescents and among mothers separately, to test regional differences.

²⁰ The 21 items were the same as above. For each item, one 2(Gender) x 2(Role) ANOVA on entire dataset, one 2(Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Sibling Status) ANOVA among urban families, and one 2(Gender) x 2 (Role) x 2 (Region) ANOVA among multiple-children families, were performed to test potential role differences.

²¹ Role differences were found for 12 items in 2 (Role) x 2(Gender) ANOVAs; for 7 items in 2(Gender) x 2(Role) x 2(Region) ANOVAs, and for 10 items in 2(Gender)x2(Role)x2(Sibling Status) ANOVAs.

answering in which areas parents should/would improve for an ideal parent-child relationship, adolescents emphasized the personal area more, whereas mothers emphasized the conventional area and the pragmatic area more. (6) When answering in which areas children should/would improve, children expressed more emphasis on the psychological area, whereas mothers emphasized the pragmatic area more.

The first four differences showed the discrepancies between mothers' perceptions and adolescents' reports regarding what topics children would or would not discuss with their parents. The first one, that adolescents were willing to discuss daily activities with parents more than mothers thought of, could be associated with the finding about actual conflicts, that mothers recalled more conflicts over children's daily activities than did adolescents. The interpretation is that, although discussions about children's daily activities were treated as one essential type of communication within the parent-child relationship, mothers tended to view those discussions as areas of disagreement or conflict, whereas adolescents were more likely to view them as a discussion or neutral communication. The second difference, that adolescents reported discussing interpersonal relationship with parents less than their mothers' perceptions, could be due to mothers' concerns for this issue and therefore they put emphasis on it as one type of communications with their children. The fourth difference not only echoed the second difference that adolescents did hide certain facts about interpersonal relationships from their parents, but also showed that they were more selective than mothers were aware of when deciding what to tell (e.g., common or positive interpersonal relationships) and what not to tell (e.g., negative interpersonal relationships).

The last two differences were about mothers and adolescents' reflections on what to improve for an ideal parent-adolescent relationship. The differences on what parents should/would improve could be associated with the findings in actual daily conflicts in the present study. Adolescents referred to more personal justifications for conflicts, whereas mothers used more conventional and pragmatic concerns as their justifications. This association shows that the adolescents' claiming for autonomy not only appears in the context of parent-adolescent conflicts, rather, it exists in other dimensions of their daily life and is reflected in different occasions. The differences on what children should/would improve, showed the discrepancy between mothers' and adolescents' expectations on this issue. For children, to have a better parent-child relationship, one should put more emphasis on the psychological domain, which pertains to interpersonal communication or dispositional issues. Their typical answers were: "I should be more communicative with them", "I should be more cheerful and sweet to my parents". Communication (*goutong*) is an expression they used very frequently. On the other hand, for mothers, when expressing the wishes about what their children could improve, they emphasized more the pragmatic domain. Typical answers were: "I wish she/he would study harder so that" This reflected the societal value in China discussed earlier, that people place a high value of on academic achievement. As Chao & Tseng (2002) explained, trying hard and doing well in school are generally considered some of the primary duties of children in Chinese families, and children who exhibit educational success bring honor and respect to their families. In addition, the present study showed that mothers emphasized more pragmatic concerns rather than conventional ones when it came to the issues of academic performance. Mothers not only expressed the wish that their children could work harder, but more importantly, they often emphasized their pragmatic concerns, such as "...so that she/he will go to a good college", or "... so that she/he will have more opportunities in the future".

Last but not least, the closeness ratings given by all participants were high, and did not vary significantly according to participants' role, region, sibling status, or gender. This not only is consistent with previous studies (Fulgini et al., 2004; Zhang, et al., 2006; Zhang & Zhang, 2004) and with the findings in the present study that both urban and rural adolescents in China espouse a strong sense of obligation to support, assist, and respect the authority of their families, but also shows that mothers and children do not differ significantly when it comes to the evaluations of their sense of satisfaction regarding the parent-child relationship. It is noteworthy that, although there were significant differences between children and mothers regarding what areas both sides should/would improve for an ideal parent-child relationship, they all put a lot of (variance in degrees) emphasis on the psychological area. It is true that children referred to more personal justifications, whereas mothers expressed more conventional and pragmatic concerns, in the context of parent-adolescent conflicts as well as in other dimensions of their daily life, as discussed earlier in this paper. However, it seems that both children and mothers in China, regardless of the region or children's sibling status, put considerable emphasis on the psychological domain, and especially on interpersonal communication (*Goutong*), as relevant to improving family relationships.

Summary, Study Limitation and Future Direction

Overall the regional differences or the sibling status differences were not as substantial as the role differences (ie, the differences between the adolescents and mothers), in how they view and understand the parent-adolescent conflicts and the quality of their relationships. Chinese adolescents showed their desires for freedom, independence, and individuality, which confirm the prediction in the present study that the parent-adolescent relationship is a developmental issue. They go through the process of autonomy development during adolescence, just as adolescents of diverse ethnicities in the USA (Fulgini, 1998). Moreover, the present study also found that, although Chinese adolescents and mothers differed significantly when viewing parent-child conflicts and communications in their daily life (children saw these in terms of personal justifications, whereas mothers saw them in conventional and pragmatic terms), they all put considerable emphasis on the psychological domain, and believed that improvements in this area, mostly pertaining to interpersonal communication (*Goutong*), would be a crucial step for a better parent-adolescent relationship.

In all, this study shows that, the pessimistic predictions by some observers that the new generation of adolescents in China would turn away from traditional Chinese values and society as a whole would face moral decline as China moved to a market economy at the close of the 20th century (Hang & Zhang, 2007; Qu & Chen, 2005; Tang & Parish, 2000; Wu, 2007), are not supported by the findings of this study. Despite the radical social and economic development in Wenzhou (a typical urban city in China), adolescents and mothers there did not substantially differ from their counterparts in Cangnan (a rural county where those shifts to market economy have not happened), as those pessimistic predictions would lead us to believe. It is noteworthy that in the present study, rural adolescents put even more emphasis on personal domain than their urban counterparts, contrary to presumed relations between traditional cultural contexts and a concern with autonomy and personal choice.

Several limitations of the present study should be noted. First, this study only looked at mothers and their adolescent children from one age group (eighth-grade). Continued research is needed to determine whether there are regional or sibling status differences among teenagers in later adolescence regarding parent-adolescent relationship issues. Second, the

present study examined certain connections between parent-child daily conflicts and the quality of their relationships. However, more research is needed to explain how they may interactively affect each other, and furthermore, affect adolescents' developmental outcomes.

Two statistic issues pertaining to data analysis strategies should be taken into account. First, based on the coding schema from previous studies (Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 2003b), this study performed ANOVAs for altogether 41 categories of actual daily actual conflicts and the quality of parent-child relationship, to examine the potential regional, sibling status and role differences. The advantage of doing so is that the findings from this study could be compared with those from previous ones, however, the drawback of this type of analysis is that, some of the categories did not fit for the present study, which made data analysis and later on interpretations difficult. For future studies, the data analysis could start with a MANOVA, and then proceed with ANOVAs if the MANOVA indicates a significant difference across the various outcomes. Second, in the present study, there were significant regional differences between urban mothers and rural mothers in terms of their educational level and SES. The author used that as one of a bundle of geographic and social-economic factors to account for certain regional differences among adolescents (e.g. urban adolescents reported a larger number of conflicts than rural adolescents). However, not having performed ANCOVAs, this study cannot determine whether mothers' educational and SES account for the regional differences in the data. For future studies, it would be interesting to control differences in mothers' (or parents') education and SES, and examine whether such significant covariates could be found in analyses of parent-adolescent daily conflicts and the quality of their relationship.

Finally, the present study examined actual conflicts and daily communications between parents and children. The discrepancies between mothers' and adolescents' reports about their actual conflicts and communications provided evidence for the proposition that the parent-child relationship is a developmental issue. However, due to the discrepancies of self recollection, the study did not allow comparisons of the evaluations and justifications of the same specific conflicts or communication issues. Therefore it would be interesting to compare Chinese mothers' and Chinese adolescents' perspectives by presenting them a series of hypothetical stories regarding parent-child conflicts and daily communications. When such scenarios are controlled, the differences between mothers and children, as well as other contextual differences (such as sibling status difference or regional difference), could become clearer.

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Appendix 1 Guiding questions in interviewing adolescents or mothers²²

Researcher gave introduction: This interview is to better understand how people think about the parent-adolescent relationship in China these days. There are no right or wrong answers. Neither your parents (your child) nor any one in this school will know what you say. If you don't want to answer a particular question, you don't have to. If you decide you don't want to continue with the interview, you can quit at any time.

Interviewing actual conflicts

Total number, frequency, and intensity

1. First, researcher asked: "Please recall the conflicts between your parents (your child) and you in the previous two weeks. By conflict, I mean any minor or major disagreement between you two. Here is a list of conflicts as example²³. Please take a look and see if you have any similar ones and some others that are not on it. Please be as specific as possible, and also tell me if each of the conflict is with your mother (you) or father (your husband), or both."

Examples of a list of conflicts

- 1) Parents regulate child's time of using phone, watching TV, or going bedtimes. Child doesn't agree.
- 2) Parents want child to do some chores, but the child doesn't want to.
- 3) Parents criticize child's homework and academic achievement.
- 4) Parents want to control child's choice of friends
- 5) Child had a fight with his/her sibling, parents favored the sibling.
- 6) Child doesn't like some of his/her parents' bad habits/character.
- 7) Parents criticize child's appearance, or the way he/she is dressed.
- 8) Child wants more allowances, but parents think they have given enough.
- 9) Child was found steal cash from parents' wallet, and was scolded.

2. As the participant starts to recall the specific conflicts, for each conflict, researcher asked:
 - 1) "On the scale from '1' to '5', 1 means rarely, 5 means very often, how do you rate the occurrence of this conflict?"
 - 2) "On the scale from '1' to '5', 1 means calm, 5 means very severe, how do you rate the intensity of this conflict?"

Justifications

For each conflict, to assess adolescent's justifications for the act's permissibility or wrongness, adolescent participants were asked: "Why do you think it is OK for you to do, or not to do, XXX?" In the same way, mother participants were asked: "Why do you think it is OK for you to let, or not let, your child to do XXX ?"

²² Words in parentheses are used when interviewing mothers.

²³ In previous studies (Yau and Smetana, 1993; 2003a), researchers did not give the note of example; rather, they let the adolescents come up all the conflicts as they can recall. However, in this study, since I am going to interview both adolescents and their mothers, I decide to give each side a list of examples, so that their recalling of numbers of conflicts could be as close as possible.

Conflict resolution

Researcher continued to ask the participant about the actual resolutions of each conflict.

1. To assess actual resolutions, researcher asked: “How was the conflict resolved?”
2. To assess fairness, researcher asked: “On the scale from ‘1’ to ‘3’, 1 means not fair at all, 5 means very fair, how do you rate this resolution?”
3. To assess their feelings towards each resolution, researcher asked: “On the scale from ‘1’ to ‘5’, 1 means feel very negative, 5 means feel very positive, how do you feel about this resolution?”

Interviewing the relatedness between adolescents and parents

Researcher continued to explain that the second part of the interview was about parents and children’s daily communications and the feelings of relatedness between them.

1. To see to what degree adolescents open up to their parents, researcher asked the adolescent or the mother: “Tell me what are typical topics that you (your child) usually share with your parents (you or your husband) on daily basis.”
2. Researcher continued to ask: “What typical topics you would rather not to tell them (What typical topics do you think your child may not tell you)?”
3. For each not-to-tell topic, the research asked: “Why not?”²⁴
4. To assess how emotionally close the adolescent or the mother feel towards each other in the parents-child relationship, the researcher asked: “On the scale from ‘1’ to ‘5’, 1 means not close at all, and 5 means very close, how do you rate your relationship with your parents (your child)?”
5. Then the researched asked: “To have an ideal parent-child relationship, what areas or issues you wish your parents (your child) would improve?”
6. And finally the research asked: “What areas or issues do you think you should improve?”

²⁴ As they started to list the topics, participants were told that there was no limit for the amount of topics, so that they could give as exhaustive a list as possible.

Appendix 2: Justification categories of the actual conflicts²⁵

1. Moral	Others' welfare	References to physical and psychological harm to others
	Trust / obligation	References to feelings of obligation, including personal trust, and duty
	Appeal to fairness	References to maintaining a balance of rights between persons
2. Conventional	Appeal to authority	Appeal to the approval of specific authority figures or to the existence of school rules or laws
	Social nonconformity	References to negative personal-social consequences of acting contrary to group norms
	Custom or norm	Appeal to personal, family, peer-group, or school customs, as well as to social customs and traditions
	Politeness	References to politeness, manners, consideration, or courtesy
	Punishment avoidance	References to negative reactions of other persons, including social condemnation as well as explicit punishment
	Responsibility	Appeal to the need for responsibility or to the importance of developing a sense of responsibility
3. Psychologi	Interpersonal	Appeals to friendship, interpersonal relations, affective bonds, or to the effects of acts on interpersonal relationships
	Psychological/ dispositional	Appeal to the child's psychological development or to traits, behavioral styles, and dispositional characteristics
4. Personal	Autonomy	References to autonomy seeking, individuation, or identity exploration
	Act permissibility	Appeal to the general permissibility of the act and/or recognition that the act has minimal or inconsequential effects on self or others
	Personal choice	Appeal to the child's preferences or prerogatives
5. Pragmatic	Prudential / harm	References to nonsocial negative consequences to the child, such as personal comfort or health
	Pragmatic	References to practical needs and consequences

²⁵ The table is based on previous studies by Yau & Smetana (1996, 2003b) and Smetana (1989).

Appendix 3: Categories of areas in which parents/adolescents should/could improve

(A) stands for Adolescent

(M) stands for Mother

Domains & Explanation		Parents should/would improve	Children should/would improve
1 Moral	<u>Trust:</u> References to feelings of obligation, including personal conscience, trust and duty.	(A): I wish my parents would trust me; (M): My behavior should be more consistent with my words (<i>Yan xing yi zhi</i>) so that I can be a good model for my child	(A): I will try not to lie (M): I wish my child won't lie to me anymore
	<u>Others' welfare:</u> References to physical and psychological and benefits to others.	(A): I wish my father would be more concerned about others' welfare.	(M): I wish my child would be more compassionate to others.
	<u>Fairness:</u> References to maintaining a balance of rights between persons	(A): My parents always give more concerns for my brother. I wish they would be more fair and consider my existence, too (M): I should be fair to my two children	(A): I should share stuff with my sister. I got much more things than her.
2 Conventional	<u>Authority:</u> Appeal to the approval of specific authority figures or law.	(A): I wish my mother would argue with me by reason instead of using authority. (M): I need develop more authority. My child never listened to me.	(A): I should listen to my parents' advices. They are adults, and they know more. (M): I wish my child can be more obedient (<i>guaiguai</i>)
	<u>Custom:</u> Appeal to family, peer-group, or school customs, as well as to social customs and traditions.	(A): I wish my mother would be less old-fashion. (M): I want to be a better mom. I don't know how, but I will learn.	(A): I should be more polite and be a good girl. (M): I wish my daughter would be more sophisticated (<i>dongshi</i>).
	<u>Responsibility:</u> Appeal to the importance of developing a sense of responsibility.		(A): I should study harder, which is my responsibility as a young student. (M): I wish my child would be more responsible for his study. It is his job to be a good student.
3 Psychological	<u>Interpersonal:</u> Appeals to friendship, interpersonal relations, affective bonds, or to the effects of acts on interpersonal relationships.	(A): I wish my parents can be more communicative (M): I should be more communicative.	(A): I should be more communicative with them (M): I wish she would tell me more of her thoughts. We seldom really talk these days
	<u>Dispositional:</u> Appeal to the child's	(A): My mother always keeps on talking. I wish she could talk	(A): I should be more cheerful and sweet to my parents,

	psychological development or to traits, behavioral styles, and dispositional characteristic.	less. (M): I should be more patient.	although sometimes it's hard. (M): I wish he would control his temper. He is very easy to get angry these days, and just locks himself in his room
4 Personal	<u>Autonomy</u> : References to autonomy seeking, individuation, or identity exploration	(A): I wish mom would respect my personal space, eg., knock my door before coming in my bedroom.	(A) I should make it clear to my parents what I really want to be
	<u>Act permissibility</u> : Appeal to the permissibility of the act and/or recognition that the act has minimal or inconsequential effects on others	(A): My mother would be less controlling over what I wear.	(A): I should control my addiction to video games
	<u>Personal choice</u> : Appeal to the individuals' preferences	(A): I wish they would respect my choices over some issues (M): I should respect for his choices, especially those that are related to his study.	(A): I should be clearer about my own choices and goals.
5 Pragmatic	<u>Pragmatic</u> : References to practical needs and consequences.	(A): I wish my parents can give me more allowance (M): I should work harder and make more money to give my child a better life.	(A): I should be more efficient with my daily schedule. (M): She is top 5 in her class. I wish she can study harder to be number 1. We are farmers, and she has to help herself.