

The Influence of Confucian Ideology on Conflict in Chinese Family Business

Jun Yan

College of Business Administration, California State University, USA

Ritch L. Sorenson

College of Business Administration, Texas Tech University, USA

ABSTRACT The dual-concern conflict model argues that choice of conflict strategies are based on two concerns: concern for interests or goals of self and other. This article argues that the dual-concern model may only partially account for choice of conflict management strategies in Chinese family businesses, particularly in families that are strongly influenced by Confucianism. The article uses Confucian values and norms, which are an ancient set of guidelines for social interaction, as the basis for introducing additional concerns to explain choice of conflict strategies in Chinese family businesses: concern for relationships, interpersonal norms, and collective interests. Two sets of moderating variables are introduced based on the unique features of Confucian ideology. They include differences in age, status, and gender between conflicting parties, and types of conflict – normative or personal goal related, and task or relationship. Propositions summarize the major arguments.

KEY WORDS • Chinese family business • conflict • Confucianism

Conflicts are a prominent feature in family business (e.g., Harvey and Evans, 1995; Levinson, 1971; Sorenson, 1999). However, there has been relatively little research about conflict in family business. Moreover, the existing research has two limitations. First, the research tends to be based upon the

dual-concern model of conflict management that assumes that choice of conflict strategy is driven by rational decisions related to concern for self and concern for other (e.g. Sorenson, 1999). The dual-concern model does not include variety of additional concerns that undoubtedly influence strategy

choice including a concern for group, family, or organizational interaction norms (Whiteside and Brown, 1991).

The second limitation of the dual-concern model is that it is based on Western assumptions. Research in the United States and Europe tend to be consistent with the dual-concern model conceptualizations. However, researchers argue that causes, effects, and handling strategies vary with cultures (Wall and Callister, 1995) and that conflict management conceptualizations developed in Western cultures should be adapted and, perhaps, modified for non-Western cultures (Horowitz and Boardman, 1994).

This article uses the Chinese culture as a basis for introducing a third set of concerns to explain choice of conflict strategy in family businesses: concern for relationships, family and interpersonal norms, and collective interests. These concerns arise out of Confucian ideology, an ancient set of guidelines for social interaction. Specifically, this article examines the influence of Confucian ideology on conflict management in Chinese family businesses and, based on this discussion, suggests propositions.

Below we discuss why the dual-concern model may be inadequate in explaining the choice of conflict-handling behaviors in Chinese family business (see also Whiteside and Brown, 1991, for a discussion of limitations in the dual-concern model in family businesses in general). Then, we summarize relevant Confucian ideology and, based on Confucian values and ideologies, we suggest an additional set of concerns that may help to explain variance of the conflict-handling behaviors in a Chinese family business.

Choice of Conflict Management Strategies Based on the Dual-Concern Model

Western researchers have studied conflict strategies, resulting in an impressive literature (cf. Thompson, 1990; Wall and Blum,

1991; Wall and Callister, 1995). A central model in the conflict management literature is one of several variations of a dual-concern model, which suggests that two concerns or interests motivate individuals to choose different conflict management strategies (cf. Hall, 1969; Pruitt, 1983; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986; Rahim, 1983; Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). For example, Thomas' (1976) model identifies five different types of conflict-handling strategies that are driven by two concerns: concern for self and concern for the other. According to Thomas, competing is a power-oriented mode in which one pursues one's own concerns at the other's expense in a manner that is both assertive and uncooperative. Collaborating is assertive and cooperative in pursuit of one's own and the other's concerns. Avoiding occurs when one is concerned neither about one's own outcomes nor the other party's outcomes. Accommodating represents little concern for self and much concern for the other. Compromising represents an intermediate position where an individual attempts to partially satisfy the concern of both parties.

Studies show that concern for self is positively associated with a competing strategy, and concern for other is highly related to the choice of an accommodating strategy (Sorenson et al., 1999; Van de Vliert, 1997). However, concern for self and concern for other combined explain only some variance in the choice of collaborating and compromising strategies, and almost none of the variance in the choice for an avoiding strategy. Thus, concern for self and other do not adequately account for all the strategies described in the dual-concern models, especially avoidance, a style often used in oriental cultures (Morris et al., 1998).

Sorenson et al. (1999) found that concern for relationships, which is depicted in some models (e.g. Hall, 1969; Savage et al., 1989), was an independent construct and added explanatory variance in the choice to collaborate and compromise. Thus, concern

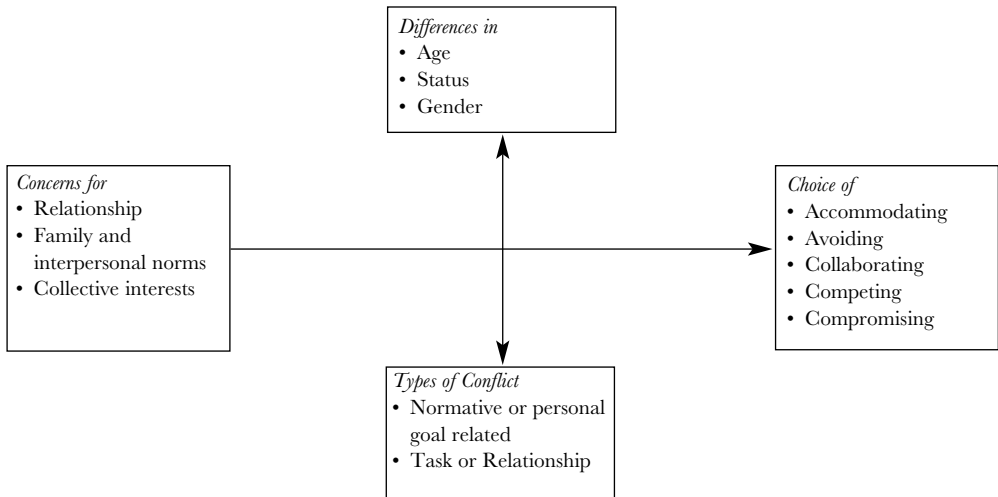


Figure 1 Confucianism-based concerns and choice of conflicting strategies in Chinese family businesses

for relationship is a good candidate for a third concern that might motivate choice of conflict strategy. However, Sorenson et al. (1999) found that even when concern for self, other, and relationship were combined, they explained almost none of the variance in the choice to avoid and no more than 19% of the variance in the choice to compromise and collaborate. Thus, it appears that additional motivations for choice of conflict strategies must be found.

This article argues that other cultures may provide insights into motivations for choosing conflict strategies. We do not argue against the universality of the dual-concern model across cultures. However, the dual-concern model may need to be supplemented with other culture-specific concerns if we are to better understand and predict conflict behaviors within various cultures.

In this article, we introduce additional concerns arising out of Confucianism that may help account for the choice of conflict strategies in Chinese family businesses and summarize them in terms of propositions (see Figure 1). These propositions may have application to family businesses in other non-

Chinese societies that have family and interpersonal values and norms consistent with Confucian ideology.

Conflict Management In Chinese Family Business

This article assumes that to understand Chinese interpersonal behaviors, especially in a family business, one must understand the influence of Confucian ideology (Bond and Wang, 1983; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). Confucian values are a vital part of Chinese culture (Fung, 1952; Tu, 1998a). In most ethnic Chinese societies and communities, Confucianism provides philosophical and ideological bases for Chinese values. Its influence on the development of Chinese civilization is profound and far-reaching, 'for well over 2000 years, served as the source of inspiration as well as the court of appeal for human interaction at all levels – between individuals, communities, and nations in the Sinic world' (Tu, 1998a: 3). A literature review shows that Confucian values and ideologies still influence both individual and organizational behaviors in over-

seas Chinese family firms (Jacobs et al., 1995; Lee, 1996; Weidenbaum, 1996a; Whitley, 1991; Xing, 1995).

Interest in studying the effects Confucianism increased after the 1980s when the People's Republic of China opened its door to international companies (Kirkbride et al., 1991; Ma et al., 2002; Shenkar and Ronan, 1987; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Studies have shown that Chinese family businesses in both organizational and management behavior have distinct characteristics influenced by Confucian values (Greenhalgh, 1994; Lee, 1996; Weidenbaum, 1996a; Whitley, 1991; Wong, 1993). Specifically, some of these studies show that Chinese values may influence Chinese people to use conflict strategies different from their Western counterparts. However, little research has been done about how Chinese people handle interpersonal conflicts in a family business (Weidenbaum, 1996a).

Family business makes up a significant part of the private economy and the private sector is growing; the private sector now accounts for 33 percent of China's GDP (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, PRC, 03/15.2002). Thus, understanding the impact of Confucian influence on family business will contribute to the growing literatures about the effects of Confucianism and about conflict in family business.

In this article, we review Confucian ideology relevant to the collective, the family, and interpersonal values, and propose how that ideology would influence conflict management in a family business. Different from other cross-cultural studies on the behaviors of Chinese organizations, we only focus on Confucian values, not Chinese values because Chinese cultures include elements from other traditional Chinese philosophies like Taoism and Buddhism, whose values are not always consistent with Confucian ideology.

Confucian Values Concerning Collective, Family, and Interpersonal Relationships

Confucius (551–479BC) is the most influential philosopher in Chinese history. *Confucianism is not a religion; it is a philosophy or theory of social relations – it provides a set of guidelines for proper behavior* (Fung, 1952; Hofstede, 1991; Tu, 1998a). It is not based in religious worship.

From the Han Dynasty (206BC–220AD) until the early 20th century, works of students of Confucianism such as *Da Xue* (The Great Learning), *Luen Yu* (Analects), *Zhong Yong* (The Doctrine of the Mean), and *Menzi* (Mencius) (de Bary, 1996; Tu, 1998a) have been widely used by governing administrations as fundamental and formal educational tools. Although the formal education of Confucianism ended with the demise of the last imperial dynasty (de Bary, 1996), Confucian values and ideologies are deeply rooted in Chinese society. Chinese families use stories, sayings, and special terms to instill Confucian ideals in children. The famous 'Twenty-four Stories of Filial Piety' is a good example. Confucian ideology continues to exert a major influence on the everyday lives of Chinese people (Gong, 1989; Jacobs et al., 1995; Kirkbride et al., 1991; Xing, 1995).

Confucian values and guidelines have shaped the social interaction of people in eastern and southeastern Asian countries for more than two thousand years. Recent economic successes in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and other southeastern Asian countries have aroused interest in Confucian teachings. There seems to be a consensus among researchers that Confucian influence contributes to economic achievement in these countries (Jacobs et al., 1995; Kirkbride and Tang, 1992; Richter, 2002; Tai, 1989; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Xing, 1995; Yeung and Tung, 1996).

In general, Confucianism uses five virtues to define relationships among individuals.

The five virtues are humanity/benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Five basic social relationships are also defined: father and son, ruler and ruled, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. Among the five relationships, only the last pair is equal in position (Tu, 1998b). Through all social spheres Confucianism emphasizes the importance of filial submission, loyalty, duty, conscience, harmony, consensus, reciprocity, trust, and sympathy (Wright, 1962). It urges individuals to adapt to the collectivity, control personal desires and emotions, restrain self-interest for the benefit of the group, avoid conflict, and maintain harmony (Kirkbride and Tang, 1992).

A complete review of Confucianism is beyond the scope of this article. We have extracted some key themes in Confucianism about the collective, the family, and interpersonal values that we believe are more closely related to conflict-handling behaviors in a Chinese family business environment.

Collective Values

Confucian values and guidelines provide the primary basis for collective characteristics of Chinese society. In a Confucian society, the meaning of a person's life is defined by his fellowmen and by his community – the individual is insignificant without community (Wright, 1962). The interests of the collective, e.g. family, group, organization, or the whole society, always precede the interests of any individual. The most important concept '*Ren*', which is the basis for all other Confucian virtues, has a very strong collective orientation; it encourages self-sacrifice for the good of others and community, self-restraints in pursuing one's personal interests, and self-effacement when interacting with the other people.

The other important Confucian collective values are harmony and stability; they provide the basis for the survival and prosperity

of any collective entity. In Confucianism, harmony is the highest good (Wright, 1962). Without harmony, a family cannot stand, a community will disintegrate, and a society collapse. Thus, personal activity should not disrupt harmonious social relationships or damage the underlying hierarchical social structure that is assumed to support all types of harmonious social relationships.

Family Values

Confucian ideology advocates the collectivist ideology that the family is the prototype of all social organizations (Hofstede, 1991; Slote and DeVose, 1998) and that the basic unit of society is not the individual, but the family. Thus, the will of the individual is subordinated to that of the family group. In addition, a child is not primarily an individual, but primarily a member of the family. Children are taught to restrain their individualism to maintain harmony in the family.

The relationship between parents and children is one of the most emphasized relationships in Confucian philosophy. The parent-child relationship is a sort of reciprocal relationship in which children serve their parents with filial piety and submission (*xiao*), and parents treat their children with kindness and care (*ci*). Filial piety, the Confucian 'cardinal value' (Hsu, 1998), is displayed by high levels of devotion including affection, respect, duty, and obedience. It requires subordinating self-interest for the good of the relationship. Children are taught to exhibit filial piety throughout the life of the parent (Hsu, 1998). In addition to filial piety to parents, 'precedence of the old over the young' (Tu, 1998b: 127) governs all kinds of family relationships between different generations and among siblings. A child in a Chinese family is taught to be respectful and obedient to all the other senior family members. Among siblings, younger children are expected to be respectful and submissive to older siblings (*gong*), and older children are expected to be respectful and kind to their

younger brothers and sisters (*you*). The relationship of mutual respect is expected throughout the lives of siblings.

Another Confucian family value, one of the five cardinal relationships (*Wu Lun*), is about husband and wife. In general, wives are expected to show submission to husbands, and husbands are expected to show care and kindness to their wives. Harmony between a husband and wife is one of the ideal Confucian family values.

Interpersonal Values

Outside the family domain, two basic relationships exist: between the ruler and the ruled, and between friends. The first is a hierarchical relationship in which the ruled is expected to be submissive to the ruler, while the ruler is expected to be kind and caring to the ruled, almost like the relationship of father and son (Tu, 1998b). This hierarchical relationship, dictated by status between the interacting parties, also extends to the superior and subordinate, employer and employee, teacher and student, etc.

Trustworthiness is the most treasured virtue in the relationship between friends. In addition, 'precedence of the old over the young', an ordering and sequencing principle, governs more than family relationships. This principle underscores age as a factor in organizing human relationships and setting up social hierarchy. Younger people should treat older people with respect under all circumstances, and give precedence to older people when conflict of interests arises. However, such a relationship is also reciprocal. Older people should treat younger people with care and kindness. Gender, a governing principle of interaction between husbands and wives, also dictates interactive behaviors between men and women in general in a Confucian society, which requires women to be submissive and avoid direct conflict with men.

Even though in a Confucian society, interpersonal relationships both inside and

outside families are dictated by age, status, and gender, two 'golden rules' (Tu, 1998c) universally govern almost all kinds of social interpersonal relationships. The first one is interpreted as 'Do not do to others what we would not want others to do to us.' This is a principle of consideration and reciprocity. It builds mutual trust and reduces opportunistic activities. The rule is stated in the negative based on the belief that what is best for me may not be best for others. It allows for some degree of diversity and shows that harmony can be established though interests differ.

The second golden rule is 'In order to establish ourselves, we must help others to establish themselves; in order to enlarge ourselves, we must help others to enlarge themselves.' Confucianism teaches that social and economic activities are not based on competition, but on the collectivist principles of cooperation, coexistence, and mutual support. A person is not viewed as being independent, but an integral part of a larger network of people that survives and succeeds together. Maintaining trusting relationships within the social network (*guanxi*) is vital.

Conflict Strategies In Chinese Family Business: Concerns Beyond the Dual-Concern Model

We argue that concerns beyond those depicted in the dual-concern model may be needed to fully explain the conflict-handling behaviors in a Chinese family business environment, especially when the business is under strong Confucian influence. Based on our analysis of Confucian influence on the collective, the family, and interpersonal values, we discuss three additional concerns that are likely to influence choice of conflict strategies in Chinese family businesses: concern for relationship, concern for family and interpersonal norms, and concern for collective interests.

Concern for Relationship

Confucian ideology provides a well-developed system of ethic and moral values for interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationship is the core concern of Confucian ideology. The most basic virtue, *Ren*, is also very relation-oriented. Thus, maintaining interpersonal relationship is definitely a major concern in almost all aspects of a Confucian society.

The mysterious 'Bamboo network' style of networking relationship among Chinese people, especially business people, has long puzzled Westerners (Weidenbaum, 1996b; Yeung and Tung, 1996). The interpersonal relationship in Chinese family businesses is often characterized as reciprocal rather than contractual, even between superiors and subordinates (Greenhalgh, 1994; Lee, 1996; Wong, 1993; Xing, 1995). In doing business, there is an old saying that even though our business may not be successful, our friendship shall always be there. Importance attached to maintaining interpersonal relationships has also been identified constantly in cross-cultural research on negotiation, in which Chinese negotiators seems to care about building good interpersonal relationships more than the business under negotiation (Kirkbride et al., 1991; Shenkar and Ronen, 1987). Maintaining interpersonal relationships in family business is very important. For example, Chinese family businesses tend to employ family members, relatives of family members, and the relatives and friends of their business associates (Lee, 1996).

Confucian culture has a long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1991; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) in which interpersonal relationships are taken as a long-term investment for future help and support (Yeung and Tung, 1996). Thus, we believe that when Chinese people face interpersonal conflicts, rational thinking (Thomas, 1991) to satisfy one's own desire will give way to the consideration of the conflicting parties' long-

term relationship. Such a consideration will be strengthened in a family business environment.

Personal relationships are often the most important standard for employment in Chinese family businesses. Thus, maintaining a good relationship is naturally a central concern when conflicts occur between family members and non-family members. Hierarchical and harmonious family relationship is almost regarded as sacred, and no interpersonal behavior is allowed to destroy or disrupt family harmony. Thus, we argue that concern for relationships in a Confucian family business would influence choice of strategies in interpersonal conflicts.

For example, a younger son may disagree with an older son about business practices. However, in a family business influenced by Confucianism, to maintain a harmonious relationship, the younger son would avoid confronting his older brother about the issue.

Proposition 1: Under the influence of Confucian culture, concern for relationships will be positively associated with the choice of avoiding, accommodating and compromising strategies, and negatively associated with the choice of competing strategies.

Concern for Interpersonal and Family Norms

Two types of reasoning are thought to have additive effects on the choice of conflict-handling strategy (Thomas, 1991). One is *rational/instrumental reasoning* that evaluates a course of action on the basis of the desirability of its probable consequences. The other is *normative reasoning* that considers the goodness of the act itself, that is, its normative acceptability which includes propriety, morality, ethicality, and worthiness. Traditional models of conflict-handling strategies, including the dual-concern model, are based more on rational/instrumental reasoning. However, in a society that highly emphasizes formal social norms or rites, such as Confucian or Islamic societies, people sometimes

give more weight to normative acceptability of a behavior than its rationality in an economic sense (Simon, 1957).

Based on the two types of reasoning, two types of interpersonal conflict may moderate the choice of conflict strategies in a Chinese family. The first is *goal conflict*, which involves divergent or apparently incompatible ends desired by involved parties. In negotiation models, goal conflicts are also commonly called conflicts about interests. The conflicting goals may involve personal needs, responsibilities, scarce resources, etc. The other is *normative conflict*, which occurs when one party perceives that another party violates desired social norms. The norms may have to do with standards, ethics, notions of equity and justice, hierarchical status, interpersonal relationships, and so forth.

Confucianism provides people with a very comprehensive and detailed set of codes of conduct. Confucian ideology advocates that social harmony depends on a rigidly hierarchical system of reciprocal duties and a morally educated people. Such a system depends on highly regulated and ritualized behaviors that follow a Confucian code of conduct. Confucian code of conduct describes appropriate behavior according to hierarchical position. The most important governing principles of hierarchical positions in a Confucian society include age, status, and gender (Tu, 1998b).

Since Confucian society is family-centered and based, the code of conduct that regulates interpersonal behaviors within the family has long been attached great importance. For example, the cardinal rule of Confucian society is filial piety. Violation of behavioral propriety both in and out of the family is highly unacceptable and is viewed as unethical, immoral, and even evil.

When Confucian social norms are violated, normative conflict occurs. Any individual is expected to assertively correct the norm violation. Thus normative reasoning takes precedence over rational reasoning when

social norms are violated. When norm violation occurs, individuals are expected to competitively assert themselves to right the social order. Competition to right the social order does not have the same basis as competition in the rational dual-concern model – concern for self. Instead the basis is concern for the collective – for group, for society, and for maintaining social norms. However, the strategy is competitive because it discounts concern for other and is both assertive and noncooperative.

For example, in the Chinese literature a story is told of a peasant who corrected an emperor when the emperor violated norms of conduct. The emperor accepted the correction because he had violated important social norms. Actually, people like this peasant who dared to risk his life correcting the emperor's wrong behaviors were the embodiment of ideal Confucian subjects (*Chen Dao*). Similarly in a family business, all family members would be expected to correct norm violations of family members even though the offending person is in a higher position in the hierarchy. Such corrections are both assertive and noncooperative, which means the person is competitive.

Proposition 2a: In a Chinese family business under Confucian influence, concern for family and interpersonal norms will be positively associated with the choice of competing strategies to handle normative conflicts.

However, when the conflict is not normative, but only goal/interest-related, Confucian family and interpersonal values such as the two golden rules will drive the conflicting parties to tend to adopt non-competitive strategies.

In a family business, for example, a child may desire to pursue a career outside the family business. However, Confucian norms prescribe that the collective interests of the family should take precedence over individual interests. Thus, the child would likely subordinate personal interests to the interests of the family business. The child would likely

not confront parents and insist on establishing his own career. Instead the child would likely accommodate or collaborate in helping to accomplish collective family interests.

Proposition 2b: In a Chinese family business under Confucian influence, concern for family and interpersonal norms will be positively associated with the choice of avoiding, compromising, and accommodating strategies to handle goal conflicts.

In a Confucian society, especially in a family, age, status, and gender play very important roles governing interpersonal and family relationships (Tu, 1998b). Differences in age, status, and gender both inside and outside the business family will influence the conflicting party who is a female, a junior, or in a lower position to take less competitive posture even when the other party is perceived to have violated the social and family norms. Such differences will influence those of lower status to adopt avoiding and accommodating strategies when goal or interest-related conflicts occur. This would mean that a child would submit to the desires of a parent and a younger sibling would subordinate to an older sibling.

Proposition 2c: In a Chinese family business under Confucian influence, differences in age, status, and gender will moderate the relationship between concern for family and interpersonal norms and the choice of conflicting strategies; they will reduce the tendency of the party who is female, junior, or in lower position to adopt competing strategies to handle normative conflicts, and increase their tendency to adopt avoiding, compromising, or accommodating strategies to handle goal conflicts. Otherwise individuals who hold positions equal to or higher than others in the social order will be competitive in normative conflicts.

Concern for Collective Interests

In a collective society, the interests of the collective are more important than those of individuals (Hofstede, 1991). Employees in a collective society are expected to act for the interests of the family or organization to

which they belong. Confucian ideology teaches that collective interests always have precedence over individual interests, and that individual activities and behaviors that support collective interests always deserve commendation.

In a family, even though a father's position is the most superior, he also has to subordinate his own interests to the interests of the entire family. In Chinese family businesses, businesses are treated as family property, rather than the property of any individual family member. Thus, Confucian family values require that family members put the interests of family business before their personal interests. Conflicts involving interpersonal incompatibilities, tension, animosity and annoyance (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995) introduce *relational or dysfunctional conflicts* that may be detrimental to the performance of a team or a business (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Sorenson, 1999). In a Confucian Chinese family business, relationship conflicts will be viewed as a threat to collective interest of the family business. Thus members of a family business would tend to avoid relationship conflict.

For example, in individualistic societies siblings often compete for control of the business resulting in much disagreement and tension at work. In Confucian family business, since collective interests are more important than individual interests and the social hierarchy is established and maintained by social norms, competition for control and attempts to discredit others would likely not occur. If individuals do feel animosity toward siblings, to maintain family solidarity they would not likely express them.

Proposition 3a: In a Chinese family business under Confucian influence, concern for collective interest will be positively associated with the choice of avoiding style to handle relationship conflicts.

However, conflicts are not always relational or dysfunctional. Disagreements often take place between working partners regarding

the solution to a problem or the proposal of a new project (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995). These conflicts involve differences over perception or facts. Such *task conflicts* occur when two cooperating parties agree with the ultimate goal, but differ on how to accomplish the goal. Concern of collective interest will likely encourage conflicting parties to work together to find the best solution to accomplish tasks, resulting in the choice of a collaborative strategy.

Proposition 3b: In a Chinese family business under Confucian influence, concern for collective interest will be positively associated with the choice of collaborating style to handle task conflicts.

Conclusion and Implications

In this article, we attempt to provide a framework for better explaining and predicting conflict-handling behaviors in Chinese family businesses with strong Confucian influence. Based on our analysis of Confucian values and ideologies, we argue that three concerns – concern for relationship, concern for interpersonal and family norms and concern for collective interest – will play a very important role in explaining and predicting selection of conflict-handling strategies in a Chinese family business. The stronger the influence of Confucianism, the more conflict strategy variance the three concerns could explain. In addition, we introduce several sets of moderating variables that will either weaken or strengthen the hypothesized relationships. These moderating factors, developed from Confucian values, include differences in age, status, and gender, and types of conflict.

We propose a number of relationships between the three new concern variables and choice of conflict-handling strategies. Specifically, we propose that concern for relationship will likely lead conflicting parties to select avoiding, accommodating, and compromising strategies. The influence of concern for interpersonal and family norms is

contingent upon the types of conflict, and the differences in age, status, and gender between conflicting parties. We argue that if the conflict is normative, Confucian interpersonal and family values will encourage individuals to adopt a competing style. When the conflict is about individual goals or interests, conflicting parties will choose avoiding, accommodating, or compromising strategies. However, these relationships are moderated by the differences in age, status, and gender between conflicting parties. The hierarchical relationships (Tu, 1998c) will tend to lower the competitive stance of the junior, inferior, or female parties even when they perceive the other party violates interpersonal or family norms. Moreover, these differences in age, status, and gender will strengthen their avoiding and accommodating stances in the face of personal goal or interest-related conflicts.

Regarding the influence of concern for collective interest, we argue that in a family business, the most important collective interest for all employees is the family business. The influence will be contingent on the types of conflicts. If the conflict is task-related, concern for collective interest will influence them to choose collaborating strategies. If the conflict is relationship-related, such a concern will encourage conflicting parties to adopt avoiding strategies so that collective interest will not be damaged by relational conflict.

The primary focus of the article has been on concerns that influence choice of conflict strategies in Chinese family business, a growing sector in mainland China's economy and an active player in the economy of many other countries like Indonesia. We believe that the concerns we have identified that result from Confucian values and ideology may also exist in non-Chinese family businesses, especially those that share similar family and interpersonal values with Confucianism. For example, family businesses in general often have a collectivist frame; indi-

viduals within the business sacrifice personal interests to enable the business to survive. Non-Chinese businesses probably have more variation in their collectivist leanings. To the extent that they adopt collectivist norms, we believe they will adopt less competitive and more avoiding, compromising, and accommodating strategies.

Moreover, many Western family businesses develop values consistent with Confucian values. They desire harmony and treat employees as family members. As managers, they adopt a benevolent parent attitude toward employees. And to varying degrees, they tend to develop norms of respect toward parents, management, and older employees. Thus, we would argue that the propositions provided in this article may also apply to Western family businesses to the extent that they adopt a collectivist orientation, emphasize interpersonal and family harmony, and develop structure and norms that clearly identify hierarchy in a manner consistent with Confucian ideology.

References

- Amason, A.C. (1996) 'Distinguishing the Effects of Functional and Dysfunctional Conflict on Strategic Decision Making: Resolving a Paradox for Top Management Teams', *Academy of Management Journal* 34(1): 123–48.
- Bond, M.H. and Wang, S. (1983) 'China: Aggressive Behaviors and the Problem of Maintaining Order and Harmony', in A.P. Goldstein and M.H. Segall (eds) *Aggression in Global Perspective*, pp. 58–74. New York: Pergamon Press.
- De Bary, W.T. (1996) 'Confucian Education in Premodern East Asia', in W. Tu (ed.) *Confucian Traditions in Eastern Asian Modernity*, pp. 1–37. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fung, Y. (1952) *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Greenhalgh S. (1994) 'De-orientalizing the Chinese Family Firm', *American Ethnologist* 21(4): 746–75.
- Gong, W. (1989) 'Legacy of Confucian Culture in Maoist China', *The Social Science Journal* 26(4): 363–74.
- Hall, J. (1969) *Conflict Management Survey: A Survey of One's Characteristic Reaction to and Handling of Conflicts between Himself and Others*. Conroe, TX: Teleometrics.
- Harvey, M. and Evans, R. (1995) 'Forgotten Sources of Capital for the Family-Owned Business', *Family Business Review* 9: 159–76.
- Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Horowitz, S.V. and Boardman, S.K. (1994) 'Managing Conflict: Policy and Research Implications', *Journal of Social Issues* 50: 197–211.
- Hsu, F.L.K. (1998) 'Confucianism in Comparative Context', in W.H. Slote and G.A. DeVos (eds) *Confucianism and the Family*, pp. 3–36. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Jacobs, L., Goupei, G. and Herbig, P. (1995) 'Confucian Roots in China: A Force for Today's Business', *Management Decision* 33(10): 29–34.
- Jehn, K. (1995) 'A Multimethod Examination of the Benefits and Detriments of Intragroup Conflict', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40(2): 245–82.
- Kirkbride, P.S. and Tang, S.F.Y. (1992) 'Management Development in the Nanyang Chinese Societies of Southeast Asia', *Journal of Management Development* 11(2): 54–66.
- Kirkbride, P.S., Tang, S.F.Y. and Westwood, R.I. (1991) 'Chinese Conflict Preferences and Negotiating Behaviors: Cultural and Psychological Influences', *Organization Studies* 2(3): 365–86.
- Lee, J. (1996) 'Culture and Management – a Study of Small Chinese Family Business in Singapore', *Journal of Small Business Management* 34(3): 63–7.
- Levinson, H. (1971) 'Conflicts that Plague the Family Business', *Harvard Business Review* 49(2): 90–8.
- Ma, Z., Wang, X., Jaeger, A., Anderson, T., Wang, Y. and Saunders, D. (2002) 'Individual Perception, Bargaining Behavior, and Negotiation Outcomes: A Comparison across Two Countries', *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* 2(2): 171–85.
- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, PRC, (2002) *Private Sector Prepares for Greater Growth*. News published on www.MOFTEC.gov.cn, 15 March 2002.
- Morris, M.W., Williams, K.Y., Leung, K. and Larrick, R. (1998) 'Conflict Management

- Style: Accounting for Cross-National Differences', *Journal of International Business Studies* 29(4): 729–47.
- Pruitt, D.G. (1983) 'Strategic Choice in Negotiation', *American Behavioral Scientist* 27: 167–94.
- Pruitt, D.G. and Rubin, J.Z. (1986) *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rahim, M.A. (1983) 'A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict', *Academy of Management Journal* 26: 268–376.
- Richter, F. (2002) *Redesigning Asian Business*. Westport, CN: Quorum Books.
- Savage, G.T., Blair, J.D. and Sorenson, R.L. (1989) 'Consider Both Relationships and substance when Negotiating Strategically', *The Academy of Management Executive* 3: 37–48.
- Shenkar, O. and Ronen, S. (1987) 'The Cultural Context of Negotiations: The Implications of Chinese Interpersonal Norms', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23(2): 263–75.
- Simon, H.A. (1957) *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Process in Administrative Organization* (2nd edn). New York: Macmillan.
- Slote, W.H. and DeVos, G.A. (1998) *Confucianism and the Family*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Sorenson, R.L. (1999) 'Conflict Management Strategies used in Successful Family Businesses', *Family Business Review* 7(2): 133–46.
- Sorenson, R.L., Morse, E.A. and Savage, G.T. (1999) 'A Test of the Motivations Underlying Choice of Conflict Strategies in the Dual-concern Model', *International Journal of Conflict management* 10(1): 25–44.
- Tai, H. (1989) *Confucianism and Economic Development: An Oriental Alternative?* Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute Press.
- Thomas, K.W. (1976) 'Conflict and Conflict Management', in M.D. Dunnette and L.M. Hough (eds) *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Thomas, K.W. (1991) 'Conflict and Negotiation Process in Organizations', in M.D. Dunnette and L.M. Hough (eds) *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Thomas, K.W. and Kilmann, R.H. (1974) *Thomas–Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument*. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom.
- Thompson, L. (1990) 'Negotiation Behavior and Outcomes: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Issues', *Psychological Bulletin* 108(3): 515–32.
- The Chinese Culture Connection (a team of 24 researchers) (1987) 'Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-free Dimensions of Culture', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 18(2): 143–64.
- Ting-Toomey, S., Gao, G., Trubisky, P., Yang, Z., Kim, H.S., Lin, S.L. and Nishids, T. (1991) 'Culture, Face Maintenance, and Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict: A Study in Five Cultures', *International Journal of Conflict Management* 2(3): 275–96.
- Tu, W. (1998a) 'Confucius and Confucianism', in W.H. Slote and G.A. DeVos (eds) *Confucianism and the Family*, pp. 3–36. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Tu, W. (1998b) 'Probing the "Three Bonds" and "Five Relationships" in Confucian Humanism', in W.H. Slote and G.A. DeVos (eds) *Confucianism and the Family*, pp. 121–37. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Tu, W. (1998c) 'Joining East and West', *Harvard International Review* 20(3): 44–9.
- Van de Vliert, E. (1997) *Complex Interpersonal Behavior: Theoretical Frontiers*. East Sussex: Psychology Press.
- Wall, J.A. and Blum, M.W. (1991) 'Negotiations', *Journal of Management* 17(2): 273–303.
- Wall, J.A. and Callister, R.R. (1995) 'Conflict and Management', *Journal of Management* 21(3): 515–58.
- Weidenbaum, M. (1996a) 'The Chinese Family Business Enterprise', *California Management Review* 38(4): 141–56.
- Weidenbaum, M. (1996b) 'The Bamboo Network', *Executive Speeches* 11(2): 5–6.
- Whiteside, M.F. and Brown, F.H. (1991) 'Drawbacks of a Dual Systems Approach to Family Firms: Can We Expand our Thinking?', *Family Business Review* 4(4): 383–94.
- Whitley, R.D. (1991) 'The Social Construction of Business Systems in East Asia', *Organization Studies* 12(1): 1–28.
- Wong, S. (1993) 'The Chinese Family Firm: A Model', *Family Business Review* 6(3): 327–40.
- Wright, A.F. (1962) 'Values, Roles, and Personalities', in A. Wright and D. Twitchett

- (eds) *Confucian Personalities*, pp. 3–23. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Xing, F. (1995) 'The Chinese Cultural System: Implications for Cross-Cultural Management', *Sam Advanced Management Journal* 60(1): 14–20.
- Yeung, I.Y.M. and Tung, R.L. (1996) 'Achieving Business Success in Confucian Societies: The Importance of GuanXi (Connections)', *Organizational Dynamics* 25(2): 54–65.
- JUN YAN is in the Department of Management/HRM, College of Business Administration, California State University, Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840, USA.
[email: jyan@csulb.edu]
- RITCH L. SORENSON is in the Area of Management, College of Business Administration, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409–2101, USA.
[email: ritch.s@ttu.edu]

Résumé

L'influence de l'idéologie confucianiste sur les entreprises familiales chinoises (Jun Yan and Ritch L. Sorenson)

Le modèle dual de gestion des conflits propose que le choix d'une stratégie de gestion des conflits dépend de deux aspects: le souci de l'intérêt ou des objectifs personnels ou de ceux d'autrui. Cet article avance que le modèle dual de gestion des conflits ne rend compte que partiellement du choix des modalités de gestion des conflits dans l'entreprise familiale chinoise, particulièrement dans les familles fortement imprégnées par le confucianisme. La recherche se fonde sur l'étude des valeurs et des normes confucianistes qui ensemble définissent à un corpus ancien de règles de conduite pour guider l'interaction sociale, et introduit des arguments supplémentaires expliquant le choix entre stratégies de gestion des conflits dans l'entreprise familiale chinoise: le souci des relations, les normes interpersonnelles et les intérêts communs. Deux catégories de variables modératrices sont proposées qui relèvent du caractère unique de l'idéologie confucianiste et incluent les différences d'âge, de statut et de genre entre les parties en conflit, ainsi que les types de conflits – normatifs ou reliés à des objectifs personnels, ou liés aux tâches et relations en jeu. En conclusion, des propositions de recherche résument l'argumentation générale.

摘要

儒家思想对华人家族企业中冲突问题的影响

Jun Yan and Ritch L. Sorenson

双重关注理论模式提出, 解决矛盾策略的选择是基于两种关注: 对利益的关注和自身及他人目的的关注。而本文却强调这种双重关注理论在受着很强的儒家思想影响下的华人家族企业中有关如何选择解决矛盾策略这一问题上并不完全适用。本文在儒家思想, 这一历史悠久教人如何社会交往的思想体系的基础上, 发展出用于解释在华人家族企业中如何解决矛盾策略的几项关注: 对关系的关注, 以及人与人交往的道德观和集体利益的关注。在独特儒家思想的基础上发展出两组中性的可变性参照。它们包括矛盾双方的年龄, 身份和性别的不同, 以及矛盾的类型 - 关于道德或是个人目的, 任务或关系。文章命题对在此问题上的主要争论都进行了概括。