Mining Traditional Chinese Wisdom: What does Taoism have to offer?

2017 Asian American Psychological Association Conference
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TAOISM
Naturalism
Transcendence from self and secular standards; (re)integration with nature

Personal achievements are fleeting and relative; Seeking harmony with the dynamic force of nature (Tao)

Action through Non-action (wuwei)

CONFUCIANISM
Humanism
Self-cultivation (ren and li) as a means of creating a strong & peaceful society

Social hierarchy and maintenance of social order through self-control and perseverance.
Water as a central metaphor in Taoism

“The best of man is like water,
Which benefits all things, and does not contend with them,
Which flows in places that others disdain,
Where it is in harmony with the Way.”

(Chapter 8 Water, Dao de Jing).

The Eight Principles of Taoist Cognitive Therapy

- Benefit without harm
- Act but do not compete
- Limit possessions & moderate desire
- Know when it is enough, know when to stop
- Know harmony and be modest
- The soft can overcome the tough
- Be clear and still and rest in [wuwei]
- Let nature take its course
Session Outline

I. Exploring the Therapeutic Value of Taoist Philosophy: A Pilot Test of Taoist Cognitive Therapy with Chinese Immigrants with Generalized Anxiety Disorder—Ariane Ling, New York University

II. Letting Nature Take Its Course: Does a Taoist Worldview Buffer the Effects of Acculturative Stress?—Iris Yi Miao, New School for Social Research

III. Cultural Mindsets and Effects on Test Performance in Chinese Immigrant Students—Doris F. Chang, New School for Social Research

Exploring the Therapeutic Value of Taoist Philosophy:
A Pilot Test of Taoist Cognitive Therapy with Chinese Immigrants with Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Presented by Ariane Ling, Ph.D.
Chinese Context

- Dramatic social, cultural, and economic changes have significantly impacted the daily lives of Chinese people (Sun & Ryder, 2016).
- Increase in social mobility, removal of financial and economic safety nets, and increased competition for housing and jobs (Guthrie, 2006; 2012).
- Anxiety and worries about the future in the context of a constantly changing economic and social landscape.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- In China, overall lifetime prevalence of GAD reported to be 1.2% (Ma et al., 2009)
- Characterized by chronic, excessive, and uncontrollable worry that occurs frequently and persists over time (APA, 2013).
- Comorbid with other mental health problems and somatic symptoms.
Chinese Taoist Cognitive Psychotherapy (CTCP)

- Developed by Zhang Yalin and Derson Young, Central South University, Hunan China (Young, Zhou, & Zhu, 2008; Zhang et al., 2002)
- Conceptual framework:
  - Interconnections between thoughts, feelings, behaviors, in which interpretive frameworks are grounded in a Taoist worldview
  - Targets the individual's worldviews and value system to promote a more flexible way of thinking, feeling, and behaving that is more realistic and aligned with the law of nature

Chinese Immigrant Context

- Chinese immigrants face similar and significant disruptions in family structures and routines, financial uncertainty, changing cultural norms, and the need to develop adaptive coping responses.
- Acculturative stressors linked to mental disorder (Hwang & Ting, 2008), with anxiety being the most common manifestation of distress among Asian Americans (Hong, Walton, Tamaki, & Sabin, 2014).
- Asian Americans with a lifetime prevalence of anxiety is reported at 10.2% (Hong et al., 2014)
Multiphase Project

**Phase 1: Description of CTCP framework and procedures**
- Didactic training in CTCP by Dr. Zhang Yalin
- Collection of video recordings and case material from actual cases of CTCP treatment in China
- Review and analysis of session videos and discussion with Dr. Zhang and the Chinese research team.

**Phase 2: Consultation with Spiritual and Clinical Experts**
- Consultation with Taoist expert on the CTCP approach to clarify interpretation of core Taoist concepts.
- Consultation with experts in GAD and acceptance-based and behavioral therapies on the treatment components.
- Ongoing discussion with the team in China and the U.S. research team, which consisted of immigrant Chinese students led by the primary investigator, a 2nd generation Chinese American.

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**Complete draft of CTCP manual**

**Initial draft of TCT manual (TCT v1)**
Multiphase Project

Phase 3: Consultation with Clinician Stakeholders (U.S.)
- Presentation of TCT v1 to 16 Chinese bicultural/bilingual clinicians and clinic administrators
- Description of prototypical patient profiles
- Identification of barriers to implementation related to patient and clinician characteristics, usual care practices clinical structures, and exploration of possible solutions.

Phase 4: Initial testing of TCT v2 - open trial
- Assess feasibility, acceptability, and treatment outcomes with 5 Chinese patients with GAD
- Identify challenges in implementing TCT
- Refine TCT across cases based on user experience and patient response

Second draft of TCT manual (TCT v2)
Third draft of TCT manual (TCT v3)

Treatment Structure
14 Sessions divided into 3 stages of treatment

- **Stage I: Assessment & Orientation**
  - Session 1: Negotiating Views of the Problem
  - Session 2: Conceptual Frameworks
  - Session 3: Assessment of Values
  - Session 4: Assessment of Coping

- **Stage II: Taoist Doctrine Instruction & Application**
  - Session 5-8: Instruction and application in 2 principles per session

- **Stage III: Internalization and Reinforcement of Taoist Principles**
  - Session 9-12: Internalization and Reinforcement
  - Session 13-14: Consolidation and Preparation for Termination
Taoist Principles in Practice: A Case Study

Case Study

Taoist Cognitive Therapy: Treatment of Generalized Anxiety Disorder in a Chinese Immigrant Woman

Doris F. Chang
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Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, New York, New York

Nancy Ng
New School for Social Research

Ariane Ling
New York University

Teddy Chen
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, New York, New York

Yuping Cao and Yalin Zhang
Second Xiangya Hospital of Central South University
Mrs. Liu

- Divorced then remarried in the U.S., 1 daughter who is 9 years old.
- Employed as a cashier in a busy supermarket
- Diagnosis: GAD and PTSD (mild)

**History:** Onset of sx in the context of the traumatic discovery her aunt and uncle who had raised her had both passed, a fact hidden from her for nearly 1 year.
- Feelings of guilt, anger, sadness
- Worries: about health of family members; persistent reassurance-seeking, fears that someone else will die.

**CC:** Sleep disturbances and excessive worries, with associated avoidance (not wanting to go back to China)

Values

**Session 3: Discussion of values**
- “honesty, filial piety, the safety of her family, her own safety”
- Dawning realization that these values can motivate her behavior, but their outcomes cannot be guaranteed (i.e., family’s safety and health).
  - P: I value my family members too much, I want to protect every single member in my family. But the fact is, I can’t really do that.
  - C: or to the degree that you wish to.
  - P: Yea, it’s impossible. Probably because of this, I feel very annoyed and nervous when I cannot achieve my goal. Should I try to lower my expectation (about how much I can control what happens)? It might help with my anxiety.
Taoist Principle 1 & 2

利而不害，为而不争
Benefit without harm.
Act but do not compete.

Case Example:

[Benefit without harm]. “If he told his wife about this, it would not benefit him, and maybe neither his wife... It is a very uncertain situation. His relatives may not be mentally prepared at all for his death. So they might have similar thoughts like I did [in context of her aunt and uncle], and not be able to accept the fact that he is gone.”
Taoist Principle 3 & 4

少私寡欲, 知足知止
Limit possessions and moderate desire.
Know when it is enough and learn to be satisfied.

Case Example

Therapist: “It sounds like when you are analyzing this situation, you notice that everyone has their own perspective. And it’s easier now for you to accept other people’s opinions that may differ. Know when is enough and be modest (and the soft can overcome the tough) can be applied here. It seems like you are not like who you were before, when you used to believe that only your view was correct.”
Taoist Principle 5 & 6

知和处下，以柔胜刚
Know harmony and be modest.
The soft can overcome the tough.

Case Example:

“If it was the old me, I might go very extreme. But now, I think my bar has been lowered [to a more reasonable level]. Elders… if you force them to do something, they are more likely not to do it. But if you approach it from a softer way, you are more likely to reach your goal.”
Taoist Principle 7 & 8

清静无为, 顺其自然
Be clear and still and rest in nonaction (wuwei).
Let nature take its course.

Case Example:

“I want to let nature take it's course, and just take things one step at a time, depending on what happens. I have a plan, to go back to China someday, but [rather than force herself to go before she is ready], maybe I will just let nature take it's course. Instead of avoiding that, I am facing it directly and acknowledge that I haven't reached that point yet.”
## Pilot Study: Participants

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<td>GAD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pilot Study: Participants

- Presenting problems:
  - Coping with unexpected death in the family resulting in pathological worry about family members’ safety
  - Worry about son’s job and safety and marital conflicts
  - Multiple psychosocial stressors including work, family health crisis, and parenting issues
  - Financial stressors, conflict with parents and brother
  - Work stress at restaurant, health issues (Hepatitis B), father of 3 young children

Assessment Measures

- Acceptability
  - Credibility/Expectancy Questionnaire (CEQ)
  - Taoist Values Inventory (TVI)

- Primary Clinical outcomes: Worry and Anxiety
  - State-Trait Inventory for Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety-Trait Version (STICSA-Trait)
  - Chinese-Penn State Worry Questionnaire (Ch-PSWQ)

- Secondary Outcomes: Cognitive flexibility, depression, role impairment
  - Action and Acceptance Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II)
  - Chinese Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)
  - Interpersonal Relations (IR) and Social Role (SR) subscales of the Outcome Questionnaire-45 (OQ-45.2)
Analysis Plan

- Results are descriptive
- Clinical measures compared to published norms
- Reliable Change Indices computed
- If statistically reliable change was found, clinical significance of the change at post treatment was compared to normative samples.

Results

- Acceptability
  - Mean credibility rating = 1.57 (SD=.55, range 0.63-1.9)
  - Mean expectancy rating= 1.77 (SD=.72, range 0.53-2.12)
  - TVI averaged 6.22 out of 7 (SD=0.66) and 6.20 (SD=.03) at 4mFU

- Clinical measures at baseline:
  - PSWQ and STICSA-Trait all above clinical cut-off
  - 3 participants reported moderately severe depressive symptoms (PHQ-9 >15)
  - 4 participants reported psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance
Results continued

- Clinical outcomes
  - Statistically and clinically significant improvements in worry and anxiety for 3 participants without comorbid depression only.

- Secondary Outcomes
  - Depression scores dropped to negligible levels by termination and 4mFU.
  - Psychological inflexibility decreased to below clinical range.
  - 2 participants showed significant improvements in interpersonal functioning and social role.

4 Month Follow Up

“...my level of anxiety is not that intense anymore. Because before, I couldn’t fall asleep at all. But now, I will do a lot of deep breathing to keep a clear mind. And also, my thoughts were very extreme. I won’t think of the positive aspect.”

Participant 1
4 Month Follow Up

“Each principle is helpful in different situations. For the 1st principle [Benefit without harm], I use it when it’s work related. At work, small events would make me annoyed and frustrated. Like when working with others and our ideas don’t match….when doing something and it doesn’t affect others or me, why be bother by it?”

“For the 2nd principle [Act but do not compete], I would not compare myself with my coworkers. It doesn’t matter how you do it, as long as it is done.”

Participant 4

4 Month Follow Up

“I used to worry a lot about my physical health. I have hepatitis B infection, and often take medication. I always worry about this. But I realized that it’s useless to worry so much. There’s nothing I can do about it. All I can do is to do what I can do. I can’t really change that much.”

Participant 5
Discussion

- Novel effort to adapt a promising intervention developed in China to a US context.
- Barriers to attending weekly sessions
- Medication changes
- Contraindicated for co-morbid Depression?

Questions?

KEEP CALM AND WU WEI
Letting Nature Take Its Course:
Does a Taoist Worldview Buffer the Effects of Acculturative Stress?

Iris Yi Miao, M.A.
The New School for Social Research

The rise of “third wave” contextual therapies

- The emergence of mindfulness and acceptance-based behavioral therapies
  - **Mindfulness**: heightened awareness of here and now, and full engagement in what the person is going (Harris, 2006; Segal et al., 2001).
  - **Acceptance**: acknowledge events without attempting to change them and allowing one to feel unpleasant feelings without effort to struggle against them (Hayes et al., 2006).
- Contextual therapies focus on the appraisal of how individuals relate to their internal experiences.
The relevance of contextual psychotherapies to Asian Americans

- Despite the theoretical roots in Asian philosophies, contextual approaches focus on the individual rather than the groups, and on direct control rather than indirect control (Sull et al., 2011).
  - Self vs. Other
  - Active Coping

- Primarily Western cultural therapeutic base, less culturally-relevant to individuals who have Asian cultural values.

Life satisfaction and Acculturative Stress for Asian American immigrants

- For members of collectivist community, individual’s satisfaction of life does not only derive from one’s evaluation of the self, but also from one’s culturally grounded view of the world and one’s assessment of the general social context in which one functions (Suh, 2000; Chen et al., 2006).
  - The impact of socio-cultural factors on individual coping style: face-loss concerns and help-seeking behaviors among Asian Americans with mental health concerns (Zane & Yeh, 2002).

- Furthermore, for foreign-born Asian American immigrants, there is another layer of stress – Acculturative stress.
  - Acculturative stress: problems that arise from the process of acculturation (Berry, 1988).
  - Significantly associated with psychological outcome such as somatic symptoms, anxiety, depression (Sirin et al., 2013) and life satisfaction (Suh et al., 2016).
Research Aims

- Considering the perception of stressors is influenced by individual’s cultural values, the approach of defense and coping depends on one’s cultural value system (Zhang & Young, 2002).
- To extend upon the results of TCT case studies, we are interested in how the Taoist way of thinking relate to distressing events in one’s life, and impact individual well-being.

RQ1: What is the relationship between acculturative stress, Taoist cultural beliefs and life satisfaction?

RQ2. Is the relationship between acculturative stress and life satisfaction moderated by Taoist cultural beliefs?

RQ3: What is the nature of the moderated relationship?

Procedures

- Participants (N=84) were recruited from a community organization that focused on equipping immigrants with job and language skills in NYC Manhattan Chinatown.
- Data collection was conducted during two separate visits.
- Measures:
  - Taoism Values. The Taoism Values Inventory (TVI-9): a 9-item measure developed by Dr. Doris Chang and her research team.
  - Acculturative Stress. The Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS): a 36-item measure assessing acculturative stress faced by international students and immigrants.
  - Psychological Wellbeing. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): a 5-item measure assessing global cognitive judgments of one’s life satisfaction.
Taoism Values Inventory (TVI-9)

1. When deciding what to do, I consider the benefits to others as well as myself.

2. I have a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses. I do my best without comparing myself with others.

3. I am grateful for what I have and limit my desires to what I need.

4. Knowing my limits, I do what I can and am satisfied with what I have achieved.

5. I don’t need to stand out or show off in a group. I prefer to work harmoniously with others to achieve my goals.

6. When facing difficulties, I try to be patient and flexible, like water flowing around a stone.

7. I try to see the world as it actually is, not clouded by my assumptions or judgments.
### Participant demographics

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### RQ1: What is the relationship between acculturative stress, Taoist cultural beliefs and life satisfaction?

- Acculturative stress is significantly and negatively correlated with life satisfaction.
- Taoism cultural orientation is significantly and positively correlated with life satisfaction, but it is not significantly correlated with acculturative stress.
**RQ2. Is the relationship between acculturative stress and life satisfaction moderated by Taoist cultural values?**

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<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.0659</td>
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</table>

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

• Results indicated that the overall regression was statistically significant (Adjusted $R^2 = .251$, $F(4,79)=7.96$, p<.001).
• There wasn’t a significant interaction between Acculturative Stress and Taoism Orientation (beta = .002, t(79)=-.338, p=.736). Hence, the linear moderation analysis is not significant.

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**RQ3: What is the nature of the moderated relationship?**

- At the same level of acculturative stress, individuals with high TVI indicated higher satisfaction of life compared to individuals with low TVI.
- However, this association was buffered in the individuals with moderate TVI, indicated that they are less likely to be adversely affected by acculturative stress.
Based on the conceptual understanding of Taoist principles, which place great emphasis on moderation and flexible adaptation.

Therefore, TVI as a moderator may not work in a linear fashion.

Nonlinear moderation analysis using interaction term $X M^2$

For example:
- Low TVI:  -1.4 $\rightarrow$ 1.96 after squaring
- Moderate TVI: 0.4 $\rightarrow$ 0.16 after squaring
- High TVI: 1.4 $\rightarrow$ 1.96 after squaring

After converting, the original “low” and “high” TVI become “high” TVI² and the original “moderate” TVI become “low” TVI².

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*gc<.05. **gc<.01. ***gc<.001.

Results indicated that the entire model was significant, accounting for 34% of the variance in satisfaction of life, $F(4,79)=10.22, p<.0001$.

The interaction of acculturative stress and squared Taoism orientation was significant, $t=-2.848, p=.0056$, indicating the presence of moderation.
Moderate TVI (TVI mean approximately range from 5.0 to 5.89)

Low TVI + High TVI (TVI mean approximately range from 3.11 to 4.89; and from 6.0 to 7.0)

- In the present study, when encountering high acculturative stress:
  - Individuals with moderate level Taoist beliefs have a more stable level of life satisfaction, and less likely to be adversely affected by acculturative stress.
  - Individuals who endorsed high and low level of Taoist beliefs reported lower satisfaction with life, indicated that they failed to cope as well as the ones with moderate level of Taoist beliefs in difficult situations.
Non-action (wu wei):
- Fatalistic component
- Activist component

It is in line with the concept of **fatalistic voluntarism**, which has been found to be positively correlated to life happiness among Chinese populations in a cross-cultural study (Liu & Mencken, 2010).

This cultural specific concept shares some similarities, but it is different from the Western explanation of Fatalism.

Although non-action is conceptualized as cultivation of a mental state in which our actions are quite effortlessly in alignment with the flow of life, sometimes it could be taken in as extreme passivity.

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Immigrants with high Taoist value endorsement:

- practice transcendence from self and secularity to a high order integration with the infinite Tao and the Law of Nature.

- When facing acculturative stressors such as racial discrimination and language barrier, they internalize the belief that one should not try to alter or change the arrangement of Nature.

- Therefore, they might withdraw from seeking other’s help even in difficult time, and resort to self-endurance in facing hardships and suffering as a consequence.
Further Implications

• Interactions between psychological processes and socio-cultural factors such as religious cultural beliefs.
  • “Depressive” attributional style is not that depressive for Buddhist by Liu, Wang & Peng (2017).

• Complimenting the missing piece of collectivist responsibility in modern contextual approaches such as ACT and mindfulness.
  • “know when its enough and know when to stop”: individual to limit their selfish pursuits and excessive desire while cultivating an accurate sense of self based on one’s own ability and needs.
  • “know harmony and be modest”: cultivating harmonious relationship and putting self in a humble stance to reduce conflicts and help maintain group stability and unity.
  • Self is not an isolated concept - it is always conceptualized in relation to nature, others and the society in Taoist teachings.
    • Through promoting psychological decentering the notion of selflessness and egalitarianism values, it encourages social engagement beyond the self and it is more culturally syntonic to Asian American values.

Limitations:

• Self-reported measures
  • Although direct and intuitive, people might behave differently when facing negative outcomes in real life.

• Validity of TVI-9
  • As a newly developed measure, further studies need to be done to confirm its construct validity (e.g., cognitive flexibility, locus of control) and criterion validity.
Cultural Mindsets and Effects on Test Performance in Chinese Immigrant Students

Doris F. Chang
New School for Social Research

Asian American Academic Achievement

54% of Asian Americans have a BA degree, compared to: 36% of Whites, 23% of Blacks, 16% of Latinx

Asian Americans have higher grades and standardized test scores, are more likely to finish high school and attend college, and are more likely to attend the most elite colleges relative to whites.
Explaining Asian Americans’ academic advantage over whites

Amy Hsin* and Yu Xie†,‡,§

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We find that the Asian-American educational advantage over whites is attributable mainly to Asian students exerting greater academic effort and not to advantages in tested cognitive abilities or socio-demographics. We test explanations for the Asian-white gap in academic effort and find that the gap can be further attributed to (i) cultural differences in beliefs regarding the connection between effort and achievement and (ii) immigration status. Finally, we highlight the potential psychological and social costs associated with Asian-American achievement success.

• Many Asian immigrants are highly educated when they arrive in the US
• They bring a specific “success frame,” e.g., earning a degree from an elite university and working in a high-status field.
• Reinforced in many Asian communities, via info sharing (college preparation courses and tutoring) including to low-income members.

Confucian Values and Academic Achievement

(Hsin & Xie, 2014; Huang & Gove, 2015)

♦ Self-Cultivation (Virtues) and Learning (Work Ethic)
♦ Collectivism: “Education as a family business” (Huang & Gove, 2015)
  ♦ Low achievement brings shame and embarrassment on the family
♦ Family Hierarchy and Harmony
  ♦ Filial Piety: Expression of respect from the child towards the parent and elders
  ♦ Social Harmony results from fulfillment of one’s roles and responsibilities within the hierarchy
Costs of Academic Achievement

- Hsin & Xie (2014)
  - Asian Americans rate ~0.3 SDs lower than whites in terms of positive feelings toward themselves. ["I feel good about myself."]
  - Spend ~0.3 SDs less time with friends than their white peers.
  - More conflict with their parents than comparable white peers.

Academic Stress, Culture and Coping

- Culture organizes experiences of coping through the mediation of distinct cognitive processes of **appraisal** (what is perceived as stressful) and what **coping responses** are selected.
- Culturally appropriate coping strategies (Taiwan: Hwang, 1977; China: Li, 1990; Yue, 1994):
  - **Confucian**: Forbearance, striving, self-cultivation, self-control
  - **Taoist**: non-action; Let nature take its course; “going with the flow”
Complementary roles of Confucianism and Taoism in Chinese life

CONFUCIANISM: My parents have sacrificed so much for me so that I can have a better future. I must work hard so that I can get into a good school, and get a good job so that I can take care of them. This is my duty.

TAOISM: There will be challenges as I work towards this goal, but all I can do is work hard and do my best. I will be patient and flexible; it might take me some time to succeed and I should be humble in my efforts. I will let nature take its course and be ready to act when the time is right.

Does manipulating the salience of Confucian or Taoist mindsets differentially impact performance on a challenging cognitive task?

Primming Confucianism vs. Taoism

The dynamic social constructivist approach:
- Cultural icons activate mental representations of relevant cultural meanings and practices to construct psychological experience in dynamic interaction with individual difference characteristics of the actor.
- Once culturally relevant knowledge is activated, this knowledge mediates the effect of culture on behaviors.
Research Question

Among Chinese immigrant students, does priming Taoist vs. Confucian cultural mindsets differentially affect performance on a challenging cognitive task (controlling for individual difference characteristics)?

- Main Hypothesis:
  Priming Taoist concepts of flexible adaptation to situational constraints will boost test performance relative to priming Confucian concepts of filial duty and parental sacrifice.

Sample Recruitment

- **Recruitment site:** Community service agency in NYC Chinatown that provides ESL, educational, and occupational training for recent immigrants
- Group-based administration to 5 cohorts of Chinese immigrant students enrolled in a program for young adults preparing for higher education or work (16-month data collection period).
- Final sample N= 121 Chinese immigrant students
Sample Characteristics (N=121)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N(%) or Mean</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N(%) or Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priming condition*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism Taoism</td>
<td>60 (49.6%)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>106 (87.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (50.4%)</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean= 21.18</td>
<td>Years living in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1 yr - 1 year</td>
<td>93 (76.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75 (62.0%)</td>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>19 (15.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46 (38.0%)</td>
<td>3-9 years</td>
<td>8 (6.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred language:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>41 (33.9%)</td>
<td>&lt;High school</td>
<td>56 (46.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>37 (30.6%)</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>44 (36.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>37 (30.6%)</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>4 (3.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>9 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No significant differences between priming conditions

Study Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTROL VARIABLES</th>
<th>RANDOMIZATION (10 min)</th>
<th>ACT READING COMPREHENSION TEST (20 min)</th>
<th>SELF-REPORT VALUES MEASURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taoism Prime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confucian Prime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- General Self-Efficacy
- GRIT scale

- Taoist Values Inventory (α=.75)
- Asian Values Scale-R Family Recognition (α=.85)
- Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II
- Demographic Measure
Taoism Prime

Confucius and his students went on a hike out in the countryside. He was thinking of using the opportunity to engage the students in a discussion about the Tao when one of them approached and asked: "Master, have you ever been to Liu Liang? It is not far from here."

They topped a rise and were able to see the entire waterfall. Then they gasped collectively, because at the bottom of it, they saw a man in the ferociously churning water, being spun around and whipped this way and that by the terrifying currents.

Moments later, they broke through the forest to arrive at the river... They expected to see the man's lifeless body... Instead, they saw him swimming casually away from the waterfall... singing loudly, evidently having a great time. They were dumbfounded.

Confucius: "How can it be that you were not harmed by the waterfall? Are there some special skills that you possess?"

"No, I have no special skills whatsoever," the man replied. "I simply follow the nature of the water. That's how I started with it, developed a habit out of it, and derived lifelong enjoyment from it."

"Well... If I had to describe it, I would say that when the powerful torrents twist around me, I turn with them. If a strong current drives me down, I dive alongside it. As I do so, I am fully aware that when we get to the riverbed, the current will reverse course and provide a strong lift upward. When this occurs, I am already anticipating it, so I rise together with it."

SAMPLE ITEM: All of the following life lessons are described in this passage EXCEPT:

(A) It is better to follow the natural current of life, rather than fight against it.
(B) Struggling against the current, no matter how forceful, is the key to achieving life’s goals.
(C) Setbacks are only temporary; sooner or later, things change and new opportunities present themselves.
(D) Through careful observation and patience, one can successfully adapt to the changing conditions of life.

Confucian Prime

During the Later Han Dynasty, a filial son named Jiang Ge supported his widowed mother. As his father had passed on years ago, the son and mother got along as best they could. The mother worked from dawn to dusk every day in order to support the family. She did not buy any new clothes for years in order to save enough money to pay for Jiang Ge to go to school. After Jiang Ge grew up, his mother became sick from working so hard.

Jiang Ge would go out each morning in search of odd jobs. Whatever bits of cash he earned would go to supporting his mother in the style she was accustomed to before her husband had passed on. Jiang Ge wore ragged clothes and went barefoot; he ate wild greens and porridge himself, but the clothing and food he provided for his mother was the finest he could afford.

He was not the least bit remiss in the care of his mother. Their neighbors praised his selflessness in service to his mother and urged him to relax the hardship and strict discipline he imposed upon himself. Jiang Ge would only smile, and say, "A son's duty is to care for his parents."
Group Comparisons

![Bar chart showing comparisons between Confucian Prime and Taoism Prime on various scales.](chart)

* $p = .012$

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson’s R or Spearman’s rho</th>
<th>ACT # correct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>-.044</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRIT</td>
<td>-.086</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taoist Values Inventory (TVI)</td>
<td>-.055</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian American Values Scale-R (Full scale)</td>
<td>-.134</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAVS-R Family Recognition through Achievement</td>
<td>-.081</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance &amp; Action Questionnaire II</td>
<td>.258**</td>
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Hierarchical Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Trait variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>8.459</td>
<td>1.767</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSE</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>-.812</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grit</td>
<td>-.400</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = .448</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Cultural prime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoism Prime</td>
<td>1.204</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.224*</td>
<td>2.496*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .058</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR² = .050</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔF = 6.230”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

- First study to examine effects of priming of Confucianism vs. Taoism
- Initial evidence that priming Taoist concepts boosted test performance relative to the Confucian priming condition.
- Priming condition was not associated with explicit endorsement of Taoist (TVI) or Confucian values (Total AVS & Family Recognition through Achievement).
- Key Limitation
  - Absence of a neutral control, cannot determine whether priming Taoist concepts boosts performance or priming Confucian filial piety suppresses performance
Wuwei: Adaptive Strategies for a Chaotic World

1. **Accept:** what you cannot control.
2. **Analyze:** your goals, values and intentions.
3. **Assess:** without bias the reality of the situation, your capacities and resources, and options
4. **Act (or don’t act):** strategically, when the timing is right
5. **Allow:** let nature take its course.

Acknowledgements

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- Career Mobility Partnership
- Central South China University