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Evidence for the Influence of Confucian Filial Piety on Deviancy Among Young People

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KEYWORDS

Confucianism, filial piety, delinquency, substance use, NLSY97

ABSTRACT

This study is a test of Confucian filial piety's ability to influence deviant behavioral outcomes among young people. Variables examining the acceptance/rejection of parental guidelines by young people, representing levels of filial piety, were collected from the NLSY97. These acceptance/rejection of parental guidelines variables were tested by delinquency and substance use outcome variables. The data was attained from the first three waves of responses from the NLSY97, with a sample of 8,985 people from the United States within the ages of 12-19. Confucian theory was supported by this examination, even after controlling for several variables including ethnicity, gender, year of birth, household income, parent education, etc. Generally, the more that parental guidelines were rejected, the greater the probability for delinquency and substance use. Limit-breaking in the years 1997 (both youth and parent reports) and 1999 (youth report) produced significantly greater levels of delinquency and substance use. Limit-breaking in 1998 (youth report) had no effect on delinquency and substance use. When young people reject the limits set by their parents, when they reject filial piety, there is a greater likelihood that limits will be broken within society as well. This study adds support to Confucian criminological theory.

INTRODUCTION

Confucius (551-479 BCE) has had a significant influence on criminal justice issues in China, as both a theorist and as an administrator. He was the Minister of Crime in his home region in the state of Lu, and he later counseled high officials on controlling the behavior of large populations of people. His crime reduction philosophy, along with the policies he instituted, were apparently successful. James Legge describes Confucius' success as the magistrate of Chung-tu and as the Minister of Crime:

As magistrate of Chung-tu he produced a marvelous reformation of the manners of the people in short time…A thing dropped on the road was not picked up. There was no fraudulent carving of vessels.

The duke Ting, surprised at what he saw, asked whether his rules could be employed to govern a whole State, and Confucius told him that they might be applied to the whole kingdom…He was quickly made minister of Crime, and the appointment was enough to put an end to crime. There was no necessity to put the penal laws in execution. No offenders showed themselves. (as quoted in Confucius [1893] 1971, 72)

This is a test of Confucian filial piety's ability to influence negative behavioral outcomes. The theory of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, who were operating from the sixth to the third centuries BCE, is considered. Their theoretical contributions are relevant

to modern social and criminological theory, as they were regular advisors to authorities on the control and punishment of people. Correspondingly, explanations for criminality are widely explored within their texts.

Studies have been conducted on how Confucian filial piety corresponds to impulsivity, the operation of different legal systems, cyberbullying, etc. For example, Kutcher (2006) detailed how many prominent philosophers in imperial China believed that filial piety was the optimal way to reduce criminality, particularly when compared to wholly legal means or a society largely dependent on a formal legal system for behavioral control. Wei and Liu (2020) investigated the effects of filial piety on cyberbullying among Chinese graduate students. They found a significant link between engagement in reciprocal filial piety and reduced cyberbullying. Zhu (2002) and Liu (2017) considered the moral implications of extreme forms of filial piety, namely the protection of criminal parents, but an empirical test of Confucian filial piety on delinquency and substance use has not been conducted. This subject is of significant worth, given that childhood influences have a habit of altering behavior later in life (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2007). As such, there is a need to detect interactions that promote healthy lifestyles in childhood and adolescence.

METHOD

The data used for the present study was collected from the first three waves of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 97 scores, gathered from 1997 to 1999. The NLSY97 is an initiative of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that follows a sample of 8,985 people born between 1980-84. The subjects, with a starting age range of 12-16, are being interviewed longitudinally, commencing in 1997 to the current time.

As indorsed by Cramer and Bock (1966), a two-way MANCOVA was applied to the means to help shield against expanding the type 1 error rate in the subsequent ANOVA's and post-hoc evaluations. The two MANCOVA's in the present study:

A two-way MANCOVA was implemented to examine the effects of two independent variables: 1) limit-breaking (youth report 1997) and 2) limit-breaking (parent report 1997), on two dependent variables: 1) delinquency scores and 2) substance use. A second two-way MANCOVA was implemented to examine the effects of two independent variables: 1) limit-breaking (youth report 1998) and 2) limit-breaking (youth report 1999), on two dependent variables: 1) delinquency scores and 2) substance use.

Both sets of MANCOVA's controlled for year of birth, ethnicity, gender, gross household income, the age of the biological mother when she had the first born, the biological fathers highest grade completed, the biological mothers highest grade completed, the fathers parenting style, and the mothers parenting style.

An analysis using Mahalanobis Distance with a critical value of .001 indicated that less than 1% of cases were outliers, which is an acceptable number. No outliers were removed from the dataset as there was no reason to believe that any were incorrect. Also, the added variability of the outliers did not influence the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The influence of limit-breaking (youth report 1997) on delinquency and substance use

A statistically significant multivariate test was attained from any limit-breaking (youth report 1997), Pillai's Trace = .034, $F(2, 1555) = 27.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .03$.

Table 2. Adjusted mean, std. error, and 95% confidence interval for any limit-breaking (youth report 1997).

Dependent Variable	Limit-breaking (youth report 1997)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound

Delinquency (1997)	0	.769[a]	.052	.667	.870
	1	1.219[a]	.050	1.121	1.316
Substance use (1997)	0	.465[a]	.034	.399	.532
	1	.765[a]	.032	.702	.829
a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mothers parenting style = 2.95, residential fathers parenting style = 2.97.					

Limit-breaking (youth report 1997) on delinquency

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking) on delinquency (scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased episodes of delinquency), $F (1, 1556) = 39.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 (M = 1.22) had significantly higher delinquency compared to level 0 (M = .77).

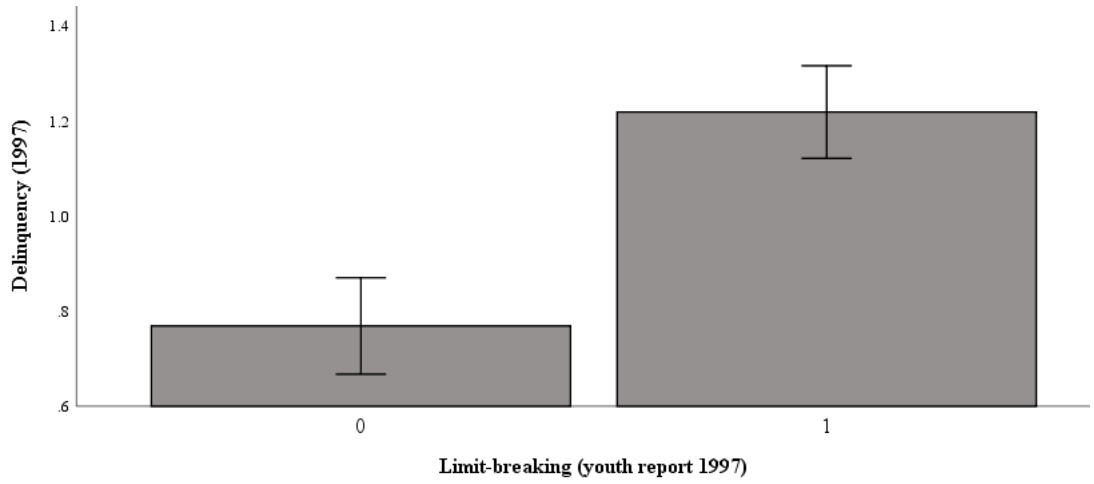

Figure 1. The effects of limit-breaking (youth report 1997) on delinquency.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.95, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.97.

*Delinquency scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased delinquency.

**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 1, the trend is that any limit-breaking produces a higher probability for delinquency.

Limit-breaking (youth report 1997) on substance use

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates

limit-breaking) on substance use (scores range from 0 to 3; higher scores specify increased episodes of substance use), F (1, 1556) = 41.01, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 (M = .77) had significantly higher substance use compared to level 0 (M = .47).

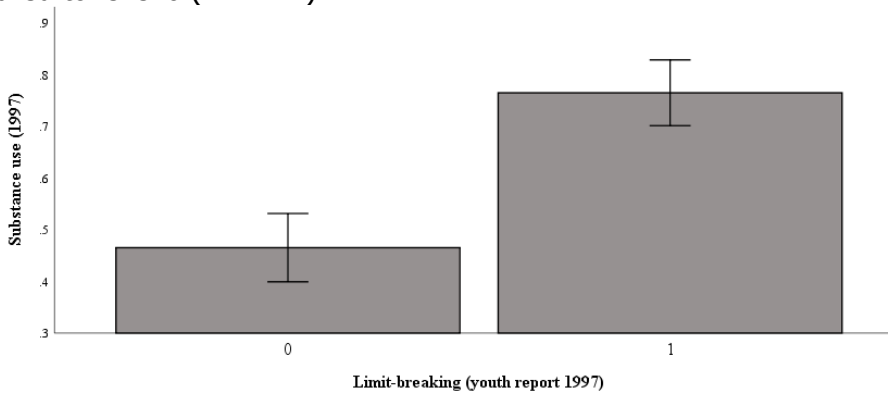

Figure 2. The effect of limit-breaking on substance use.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.95, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.97.

*Substance use scores range from 0 to 3; higher measurements specify increased substance use.

**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 2, the trend is that any limit-breaking produces a higher probability for substance use.

The influence of limit-breaking (parent report 1997) on delinquency and substance use

A statistically significant multivariate test was attained from any limit-breaking (parent report 1997), Pillai's Trace = .014, F (2, 1555) = 10.77, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .01$.

Table 3. Adjusted mean, std. error, and 95% confidence interval for any limit-breaking (parent report 1997).

Dependent Variable	Limit-breaking (parent report 1997)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Delinquency (1997)	0	.837[a]	.040	.758	.917
	1	1.150[a]	.060	1.033	1.267
Substance use (1997)	0	.533[a]	.026	.481	.584
	1	.698[a]	.039	.622	.774

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mothers parenting style = 2.95, residential fathers parenting style = 2.97.

Limit-breaking (parent report 1997) on delinquency

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking) on delinquency (scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased episodes of delinquency), F (1, 1556) = 18.58, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 (M = 1.15) had significantly higher delinquency compared to level 0 (M = .84).

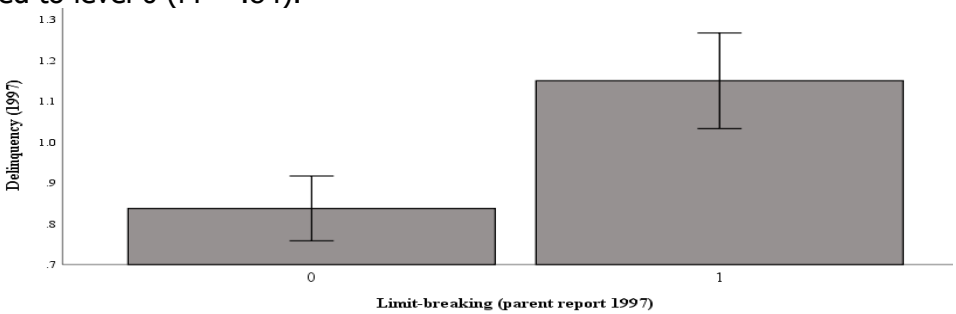

Figure 3. The effect of any limit-breaking (parent report 1997) on delinquency.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.95, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.97.

*Delinquency scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased delinquency.

**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 3, the trend is any limit-breaking (parent report 1997) produces a higher probability for delinquency.

Limit-breaking (parent report 1997) on substance use

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking) on substance use (scores range from 0 to 3; higher scores specify increased episodes of substance use), F (1, 1556) = 12.20, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 (M = .70) had significantly higher substance use compared to level 0 (M = .53).

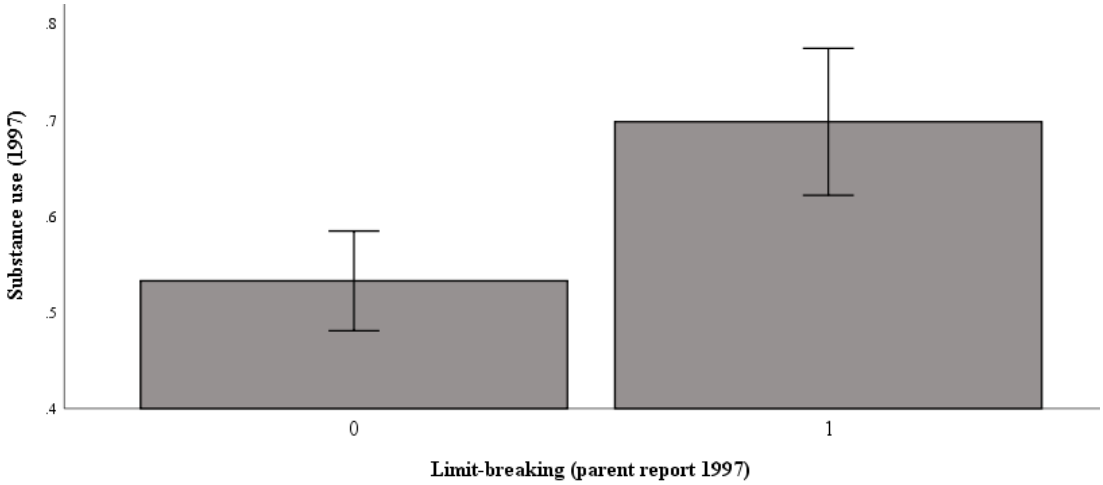

Figure 4. The effects of any limit-breaking (parent report 1997) on substance use.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.16, gender = 1.47, date of birth = 1983.50, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.54, gross household income in past year = 56035.35, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.86, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.92, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.95, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.97.

*Substance use scores range from 0 to 3; higher scores specify increased substance use.

**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 4, the trend is that any limit-breaking (parent report 1997) produces a higher probability for substance use.

The influence of limit-breaking (youth report 1998) on delinquency and substance use

A statistically significant multivariate test was not attained from limit-breaking (youth report 1998), Pillai's Trace = .001, F (2, 1343) = .51, p = .60, η^2_p = .01.

Table 2. Adjusted mean, std. error, and 95% confidence interval for any gang in the neighborhood

Dependent Variable	Limit-breaking (youth report 1998)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Delinquency (1999)	0	.547[a]	.054	.441	.652
	1	.607[a]	.041	.526	.688
Substance use (1999)	0	.912[a]	.047	.820	1.004
	1	.961[a]	.036	.890	1.031
a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.18, gender = 1.48, date of birth = 1983.49, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.65, gross household income in past year = 56995.54, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.87, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.97, residential mothers parenting style = 2.96, residential fathers parenting style = 2.96.					

The trend is that any limit-breaking (youth report 1998) does not produce a higher probability for delinquency or substance use.

The influence of limit-breaking (youth report 1999) on delinquency and substance use

A statistically significant multivariate test was attained from any limit-breaking (youth report 1999), Pillai's Trace = .051, F (2, 1343) = 36.04, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .05$.

Table 3. Adjusted mean, std. error, and 95% confidence interval for any limit-breaking (youth report 1999).

Dependent Variable	Limit-breaking (youth report 1999)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Delinquency (1999)	0	.425[a]	.043	.340	.510
	1	.729[a]	.052	.627	.830
Substance use (1999)	0	.690[a]	.038	.616	.764
	1	1.183[a]	.045	1.095	1.271

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.18, gender = 1.48, date of birth = 1983.49, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.65, gross household income in past year = 56995.54, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.87, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.97, residential mothers parenting style = 2.96, residential fathers parenting style = 2.96.

Limit-breaking (youth report 1999) on delinquency

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking) on delinquency (scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased episodes of delinquency), F (1, 1344) = 20.33, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 (M = .73) had significantly higher delinquency compared to level 0 (M = .43).

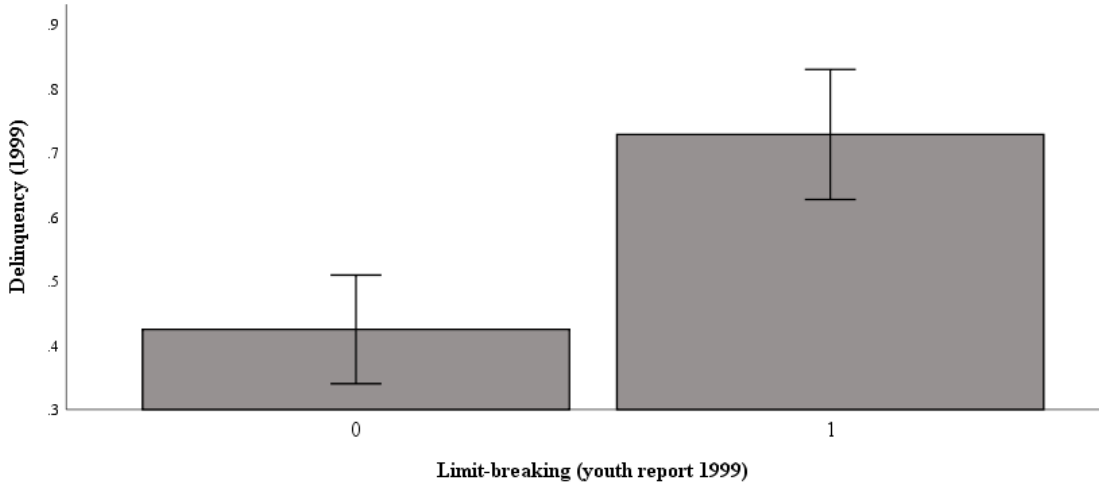

Figure 5. The effect of any limit-breaking (youth report 1999) on delinquency.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.18, gender = 1.48, date of birth = 1983.49, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.65, gross household income in past year = 56995.54, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.87, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.97, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.96, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.96.
*Delinquency scores range from 0 to 10; higher scores specify increased delinquency.
**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 5, the trend is any limit-breaking (youth report 1999) produces a higher probability for delinquency.

Limit-breaking (youth report 1999) on substance use

Univariate testing showed that there was a significant difference among the 2 levels of limit-breaking (scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking) on substance use (scores range from 0 to 3; higher scores specify increased episodes of substance use), $F(1, 1344) = 70.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .05$. Post hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD test specified significant differences between the two groups of limit-breaking, wherein level 1 ($M = 1.18$) had significantly higher substance use compared to level 0 ($M = .69$).

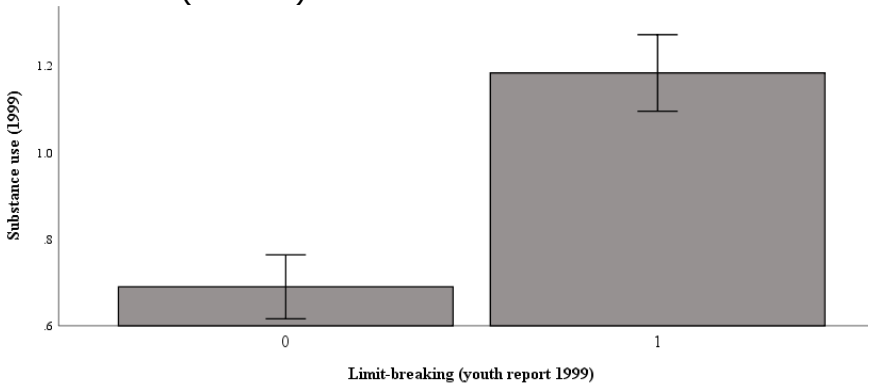

Figure 6. The effects of any limit-breaking (youth report 1999) on substance use.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: ethnicity = 3.18, gender = 1.48, date of birth = 1983.49, age of biological mother at first birth = 23.65, gross household income in past year = 56995.54, biological fathers highest grade completed = 12.87, biological mothers highest grade completed = 12.97, residential mother's parenting style (youth report) = 2.96, residential father's parenting style (youth report) = 2.96.
*Substance use scores range from 0 to 3; higher scores specify increased substance use.
**Limit-breaking scores are either 0 or 1; 0 indicates no limit-breaking, 1 indicates limit-breaking.

As shown in figure 6, the trend is that any limit-breaking (youth report 1999) produces a higher probability for substance use.

CONCLUSION

Confucian filial piety specifics how behaviors exhibited by young people toward their parents influences other, often more serious, behavioral outcomes within society—

namely, that the rejection of filial piety increases the likelihood for deviancy. This theory is largely reinforced by the NLSY97 variables and data investigated in this study. If Confucian filial piety is observed, if young people do not deviate from the guidelines set by their parents, the likelihood for a healthy society increases. Filial piety seems to yield a great advantage for young people, principally concerning delinquency and substance use.

This assessment has clear strengths. It was founded on a nationally representative sample forming a high-quality data set, which also permitted control over a considerable number of potentially confounding variables. A crucial advantage of the study is that the results were a product of interviews of young people; a central time in life when actions and relationships are initiated that may affect life-course outcomes (Huang et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Power et al., 2007; Whisman, 2006). In addition to the benefits of surveying young people, this sample was representative regarding gender (51 percent male, 49 percent female) and ethnicity (51.9 percent non-Black/non-Hispanic, 26 percent Black non-Hispanic, 21.2 percent Hispanic, and 0.9 Mixed raced respondents), and the data was gathered in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas throughout the United States, all evidence of equity across the demographic strata (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

This assessment was also advanced by copious data, a major benefit of employing the NLSY97 data set, that covers a comprehensive range of material on the subject's circumstances, such as filial piety, the family, education, delinquency, and substance use, permitting the documentation of possible underlying machinations swaying behavior. The NLSY97 data set is extensively used in observational studies, in various fields of concentration, and is considered to be one of the leading data sets for these investigations.

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