



Resolution of Family Conflicts in Fiction: A Comparative Study of TV Series from China and the United States

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History:	<p><i>The main objective of this research paper is to conduct a comparative cross-cultural analysis of family conflicts in two distinct cultural contexts, as represented in television fiction from China and the United States. The author focuses on conflicts arising within families and portrayed in television series in both countries. To achieve this, a systematic and objective content analysis method is employed, examining family conflict situations presented in the narratives of these television productions. The results indicate that, for the most part, conflicts are resolved positively, reflecting the typical trend in television fiction to seek a happy ending, especially in commercial series. However, cultural variabilities are also observed in the paths each region has taken to reach these conclusions.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Communication, conflicts, mass media, television series, cultural variability</p>
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Introduction

Conflict, including its causes, consequences, and resolutions, presents a topic of significant relevance in the field of communication as well as in the social sciences, as all conflicts are produced or have their origin in common human causes such as economic, political, and/or social interests, etc., but they may manifest in different ways through the cultural constructs specific to each society. This is accomplished by selecting channels through which conflicts are effectively transmitted and communicated via treatments of the subject.

Another aspect of relevance for considering conflict as the subject of analysis in this study is that it is assumed that deeply rooted values existing in all societies could regulate the collective way of understanding, confronting, comprehending, and addressing problems caused by conflict. Among these values, it is worth highlighting the conception of the family and all associated values, which, nevertheless, are evolving and modified by circumstances affecting all levels of society, where it is also necessary to consider generational conflicts that occur.

Despite finding numerous comparative studies among various elements of both cultures, among all the research consulted, none has been found addressing the differences present in the field of family relationships and, specifically, conflicts between the two countries. Therefore, this work aims to provide original and novel information, analyzing family conflicts in television fiction and then contrasting the data obtained with research in the field of audiovisual communication within the social sciences and social psychology.

Theoretical framework

In one of the previously reviewed studies, from a psychosocial perspective, the focus is on the problems of adolescents in China and the United States about various elements of their lives, including the family (Turbin et al., 2003). Another study (Guan & Li, 2017) addresses the influence of family communication patterns and their impact on conflicts between parents and children, comparing cases from China, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.

Both works focus their object of study on conflicts resulting from processes of interpersonal communication within the family rather than the social representations of conflicts through mass media communication.

In contrast to the approaches of the aforementioned reviewed studies, the present study is interested in the content produced by the media that represents family conflicts with shared cultural baggage in the societies that produce them.

Media and society

Lasswell (cited in De Moragas, 1985) outlines approaches to studying communication research. Lasswell establishes the well-known formulation for investigating key communicative propositions of "who says what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect" (p. 51). Apart from the elements of the Communication Act, it is interesting to highlight the functions of mass media, which according to Wright (cited in De Moragas, 1985: 77-79) include: surveillance of the social context (warning, informing, controlling public opinion), correlation (avoiding social criticism, increasing passivity), cultural transmission (transmitting norms and common experiences, maintaining cultural elements), and entertainment (distracting the masses, promoting popular culture).

Therefore, it is useful for us to examine the function of cultural transmission in particular, as it is interesting to observe whether the content transmitted in the communicative system of a society is merely a matter of entertainment or if, on the contrary, it is used as a tool to transmit and instill a series of cultural values, something that is effective, as Lazarsfeld and Merton have suggested that the media generate concern for their ability to influence social behavior, tastes, and popular culture (De Moragas, 1985: 24-25). This considerable influence of mass media is acknowledged by Blumler and Gurevitch (cited in Wolf, 1994), alluding to the media's capacity in the social construction of reality:

Thanks to the constant repetition of certain plots, popular stories, portraits of characters and situations [...] the

media project specific images of society and reality. [...] the media play a crucial role, not only in transmitting information about events but also in shaping reality, in the perception of the sociopolitical context in which events are placed (p. 114).

The growing influence of mass media on the population is a proven trend, as they are present as another activity in people's daily lives, "in the sense that it constitutes an integral part of the regularized activities that shape everyday life" (Thompson, 2010: 63). In recent years, media has a wider extension, it is accessible and it has become a recurrent form of learning (Agrawal et al, 2022: 957).

Social Psychology Theories

Having recognized the importance of mass media in society, it is now of interest to examine how they reflect the situations of life in the societies under study. To do this, it is necessary to consider the nature of society. Therefore, the focus will be first placed on the sources of social psychology, starting with social aspects from a more general perspective and then applying them to the specific area of interest: the family.

Conformity and Obedience

Levine and Pavelcbak define conformity as "the idea that a person modifies their position in the direction of the position of a group" (1985: 44), which means that a person has been influenced by a group to agree with the beliefs of that group, a notion echoed by Páez and Campos (2004: 695), who maintain that "change in beliefs or behaviors due to the pressure of a group [...] in the direction of the norm established by the collective in question". This conformity is due to the ease of belonging to a group to achieve a goal, understanding reality adequately following the group's information (informational influence), being accepted by the majority and avoiding rejection (normative pressure), and finally and contrary to the three sources of conformity proposed above - the individual "self-categorizes", defining themselves as a member of the group and follows its norms and attributes (p. 699).

In summary, it is important to emphasize the significance of the "movement" attributed by Levine and Pavelcbak (1985) for the establishment of conformity because, according to them, if we talk about an individual's agreement with the group without any influence or pressure, we would speak of "uniformity of behavior". Obedience is also described by Levine and Pavelcbak as the change of an individual to submit to a series of orders, also being a form of social influence, but with the difference that, in the case of obedience, there are several aspects to consider, such as the difference in status between the person exerting influence and the individual, or the intention to control this individual (1985: 62), which leads them to understand that they are part of a hierarchy and must follow the orders of the people above them in that hierarchy to act correctly in different areas of their life (p. 66).

As noted above conformity and the act of belonging to a group and following its way of thinking is an advantage, providing security, acceptance, and less responsibility towards individual actions.

The Influence of the Individual

Despite the advantages of being part of a group, there are situations in which minorities or individuals play a fundamental role. It is common to think that such minorities hold controversial

and contentious opinions, so the social influence they wield is often minimal and typically rejected (Páez and Campos, 2004: 707). However, as Doms and Moscovici (1985) point out, when a situation requiring objectivity and rationality arises, the individual, against the knowledge influenced by the group, will respond rationally. This should not have a negative effect; rather, it can encourage the group to adapt, broaden perspectives, and understand that individuals or minorities can enrich the group (pp. 73-75), something that "also contributes to social change" (p. 74).

Emotional Intelligence

A fundamental aspect when analyzing family conflicts is that of emotional intelligence and how emotions are channeled and influence decision-making. Although "emotions" and "intelligence" may seem incompatible terms, Salovey and Mayer (1990) understand emotions as organized responses that go beyond physiological, cognitive, and experiential systems, among others, which arise briefly and intensely in a given situation (p. 185-186).

Social intelligence is often defined, according to Thorndike and Stein (in Salovey and Mayer, 1990: 187), as the ability to understand people and how to deal with them. Emotional intelligence is a subset of this social intelligence, which allows one to "monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions to discern among them and use that information to guide thinking and actions" (p. 189).

Particular interest is placed on emotions in the Chinese cultural context. Russell and Yik (in Bond, 1996) refer to several authors, such as Klineberg, Kleinman, or Potter, who agree that Chinese emotional behavior presents significant differences from what can be found in Western countries (p. 171). According to these authors, emotions in China are seen as "dangerous" and less relevant, so it is better to ignore them and not take them into account, as it is more important to maintain general harmony, which leads, for example, to the idea that Chinese "do not experience romantic love" (pp. 107-108). Therefore, it is interesting to understand how emotions are expressed in a culture where such emotions are not considered, or at least not given as much importance as in Western countries. Hence, it is relevant to particularly take into account the ability to deal with the emotions of different family members in the different cultures covered in this research.

Cultural Variability

After considering various points related to media, sociology, social psychology, and emotional intelligence, one more fundamental aspect must be taken into account when working transcultural with two different countries: the theory of cultural variability. Several authors have developed cultural dimensions to identify and explain differences in national culture models, which are useful when conducting transcultural research studies. Various authors, from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck to the perhaps more recognized in this Field-Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, Schwartz, and up to the monumental GLOBE project by Robert House, have created different cultural dimensions that take into account and highlight a series of societal values (Nardon and Steers, 2009: 3-6).

Among these authors, this research focuses on Hofstede (1999), who defines cultural dimension as "an aspect of a culture that can be measured about other cultures" (p. 48). The cultural



dimensions he works with are power distance (how power is distributed), uncertainty avoidance (how uncertainty and insecurity are faced), individualism-collectivism (importance of individual/group interests), masculinity-femininity (behavior according to the greater or lesser masculinity/femininity of a country), and long-term orientation (importance when planning life) (Nardon and Steers, 2009: 5).

Additionally, it is interesting for us to turn to Hofstede because of how he applies these cultural dimensions to the family, explaining what results are expected in the behavior of family members based on where countries rank on the scale. Our interest in the comparative transcultural analysis of family conflicts represented by media content produced in two different cultural societies leads us to adopt our more specific approach of study in our research project on one of the elements in Lasswell's formulation, which refers to what is being said. In this regard, this research's study objective is based primarily on content analysis, due to its efficiency in analyzing culturally produced content shown massively in a given society through its mass communication system.

General objective

The general objective of this study is to effectively observe both the manifest and latent characteristics of family conflicts by resorting to the media representation of such conflicts, specifically in the content of television series from China and the United States. The rationale behind the selection of television media is not only based on its capacity for massive transmission and high penetration levels into a significant portion of the population in each country but also because television series, along with movies and other artistic and cultural manifestations, draw inspiration from events and situations observed in everyday life, which would have a significant impact on viewers. Regarding the choice of Chinese and American series for this comparison, these two countries were chosen because they appear to be different models in various aspects of their societies and because both are significant producers of mass culture, with the United States having a broad reach and impact not only within its borders but also globally.

To achieve the general objective, which is to understand the society and culture of China and the United States by observing how television fiction portrays these social aspects, especially focusing on the main idea of this project, the family domain, several specific objectives are proposed for this work as questions to investigate.

Research Questions

1. What types of family conflicts are depicted as common or typical in television fiction in Chinese and American societies?
2. How is the influence of paternal authority over their children represented in these societies?
3. What differences exist regarding the emphasis on family loyalty in fiction produced in China compared to the United States?
4. How are family conflicts resolved and with what consequences in fiction produced in China and the United States?

Research Methods

To address the research questions posed, the method of content analysis is adopted, as it is "systematic, objective, and quantitative" and allows for a careful examination of human interactions; the portrayal of characters in TV commercials, movies, and novels; and much more (Neuendorf, 2002: 1).

Sampling of Study Objects

The Universe of interest is a television series from both free-to-air and paid channels in China and the United States broadcasted between January 2016 and April 2017. To study this universe, this research includes a sample of series from four television channels in each country. Television series produced in the United States are *Shameless* (2011), *Empire* (2015), *Mom* (2013), *Big Little Lies* (2017), and from China: *Ode to Joy* (2016), *The Lover's Lies* (2016), *Husbands' Secret Stash* (2016), *The Perfect Couple* (2017). These series have been highly successful in their respective countries.

Unit of Analysis

The concept defining a unit of analysis for our work is a scene in which any family conflict is portrayed, involving at least two characters with a family relationship between them. The scene begins with a change of shot that sets the action of the conflict and ends with a change of shot that concludes the action and begins another scene unrelated to the conflict. The content of these scenes will involve a conflict among family members, of any intensity.

Variables of analysis and coding book

To facilitate the recording of data from observation elements, which are mutually exclusive variables, whose categories are, precisely, and unequivocally defined beforehand. These definitions are collected and elaborated in a coding book that serves as a guideline or guide to instruct the researchers participating in the coding process (Igártua, 2006). This way, the personal backgrounds of the analysts are neutralized, and individual criteria adhere to rigorous objectivity. This allows for the unification of the initial impressions of different analysts to systematically carry out data coding.

Once the coding book has been created, a coding form (Igártua, 2006: 211) has been developed, gathering the variables mentioned in the coding book numerically to perform the coding and subsequent statistical operation.

Coding form

Some of the most relevant variables pertain to the causal origin of the conflict due to different issues (economic: inheritance distribution; exercise of authority: choice of partner or relationships: family loyalty), the characteristics of the conflict (physical violence, verbal and non-verbal psychological violence), or those referring to conflict resolution (positive or negative) and its consequences. Additionally, variables are collected to contextualize the conflict (historical time in which the scene takes place, use of humor, or audiovisual effects). In summary, the form evaluates 66 variables grouped into nine general sections.

Inter-coder reliability process

A 25% of the total number of units of analysis has been selected to check the level of agreement among the analysts who participated in the coding. To do this, the technique of analysis with a contingency table using the statistical software SPSS is applied. To find the level of inter-coder agreement, Scott's pi (π)



formula is applied, which corresponds to Cohen's kappa coefficient (κ) in SPSS, as follows:

$$P_i = \frac{PA_0 - PA_e}{1 - PA_e} \quad Kappa = \frac{PA_0 - PA_e}{1 - PA_e}$$

Once the process was completed, a result of 0.79 for the index of agreement is observed, a figure that, although not very high, approaches the minimum 80% agreement level that is desirable to achieve (Igartua, 2006: 221). The lowest agreement figure corresponds to 0.47 (which is understandable, considering that the variable in which this level of agreement was reached is very subtle, as it corresponds to the use of irony through gestures, which can be difficult to capture for the inter-coders), while the highest is 0.92. The average index of agreements results in $M=,79$, indicating an acceptable level of inter-judge agreement according to the research community.

Results

This study analyzes the representations of family conflicts in television series from China and the United States. To do this, culture is used as the independent variable (IV), and various variables considered relevant among all those analyzed as dependent variables (DV), are presented below. For processing these data, SPSS is used, recurring to its different functions to group and generate new variables and categories from the existing ones that have been previously tested.

Treatment of Conflicts in TV Fiction

To examine, in general terms, how conflicts are depicted in the contents of television fiction regardless of the cultural context of the society in which such content is produced and transmitted to the general audience, elements of observation selected are the variables [type of violation, aggression, and violence], as conflict could not be conceptualized otherwise by human society. Through these conceptual concepts, a preliminary

analysis is carried out to be able to increasingly delineate the profile of the conflict represented on the television screen.

To reduce the obtained data and create variable measurement scales that adapt to the objectives proposed in this work, a factorial analysis is performed. For this analysis, the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy measure is used to test whether the partial correlations between variables are small enough. KMO is an index that takes values between 0 and 1, used to compare the magnitudes of partial correlation coefficients. When small values are obtained, factorial analysis may not be a good idea, as these values indicate that the correlations between pairs of variables cannot be explained by other variables. Those below 0.5 should not be used in the factorial analysis with the data being analyzed. On the other hand, the Varimax rotation technique (maximum variance) is applied among the main components grouped in the same factor or dimension.

Representations of Violence in Scenes of Family Conflict in TV Fiction

One dependent variable considered is the one corresponding with different types of violence (physical, verbal, and gestural), grouping three factors and three variables. Data have been processed using the ANOVA technique (between two cultural groups) and cross-tabulation (for the three variables, as they only have dichotomous values). Factor 1 [Verbal violence with physical aggravation] identifies the categories "Major violence" ($W=,75$), "Property damage" ($W=,57$), "Insults" ($W=,67$), and "Serious threats" ($W=,76$). This factor accounts for 24% of the variance. Factor 2 [Gestural violence] groups the categories "Threatening with something" ($W=,80$) and "Pressuring" ($W=,77$). This factor accounts for 14% of the total variance. Factor 3 [Gestural violence with physical aggravation] contains the categories "Minor violence" ($W=,50$) and "Disrespectful looks and gestures" ($W=,60$). This factor accounts for a total of 13% of the variance.

Table 1.1 ANOVA on framing violence in scenes of family conflict in TV fiction from China and the USA

Factor "Violence Framing"	M Total		China		USA		F[1, 98]	p
	M	DT	m	dt	m	dt		
Verbal with physical aggravation	,12	,22	,05	,14	,18	,25	9,498	,003
Gestural, psychological	,02	,12	,03	,16	,01	,06	,918	,340
Gestural with physical aggravation	,49	,31	,53	,37	,46	,25	1,225	,271
	N= 100		n= 46		n= 54		* $p<,05$; ** $p<,01$	

Under this framework, three values that cannot be grouped are extracted to create mutually exclusive factors, generating three

variables: Variable 4 [Verbal Humiliation]; Variable 5 [Verbal Annoyance], and Variable 6 [Gestures of Irony].

Table 1.2 Cross-tabulation of violence framing in family conflict scenes in TV fiction from China and the USA

Variable "Violence Framing"	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	p
Humiliate/Make Feel Ashamed	24,0	17,2	29,6	2,040	,153
Yelling/ Discomfort When Speaking	95,0	89,1	100	6,178	,013
Looks/Gestures of Irony and Mockery	47,0	34,8	57,4	5,014	,024
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	* $p<,05$; ** $p<,01$	

The results in Table 1.1 indicate that American-produced fictions ($m=0.18$) show a significantly higher factor of "verbal violence with physical aggravation" than Chinese-produced ones ($m=0.05$), with $F [1,98] = 9.498$, $p = 0.003$. On the other hand, Chinese-produced fictions ($m=0.53$) exhibit a higher factor of "gestural violence with physical aggravation" than American-produced ones ($m=0.46$). However, this data does not reach statistical significance. Furthermore, the results of the violence framing variables in Table 1.2 show that American TV fictions

(100%) depict more "yelling, raised voices, annoyance in speech" by characters than Chinese ones (89.1%), with statistical significance at $\chi^2[1] = 6.178$, $p = 0.013$.

At the same time, American television fictions (57.4%) describe family conflicts with more "looks and gestures of irony and mockery" than Chinese productions (34.8%), with statistical significance at $\chi^2[1] = 5.014$, $p = 0.024$. Similarly, "verbal humiliation" is slightly more frequent in American fiction (29.6%) and less in Chinese ones (17.2%), although the difference does not



present statistical significance with $\chi^2[1] = 2.040, p = 0.153$ (Table 1.2).

Exercise of Authority in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

Following the preliminary analyses described in the previous section, the following authority factors were extracted:

Table 2.1 ANOVA of demand or authority factor in family conflict in TV fiction from China and the USA

	M Total		China		USA		F[1, 98]	p
	M	DT	m	dt	m	dt		
Personal/professional development	,04	,21	,03	,16	,05	,25	,283	,596
	N= 100		n= 46		n= 54		<i>*p<,05; **p<,01</i>	

The values that cannot be grouped and, therefore, are considered mutually exclusive variables are as follows: Variable 2 [Demand for adherence to the family]; Variable 3 [Division of

Factor 1 [Demand for personal and professional development]. It identifies the categories "Educational decisions" (W=0.80) and "Demand for independence" (W=0.80). This factor contributes to 11.4% of the variance.

household chores]; Variable 4 [Every day orders]; and Variable 5 [Choice of children's partners].

Table 2.2 Cross-tabulation of demand/authority variables as a cause of family conflict in TV fiction from China and the USA

"Exigencia/autoridad" como causa conflicto	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	p
Exigencia de adhesión a la familia	2,0	2,2	1,9	,013	,909
Cumplimiento reparto de trabajos de hogar	2,0	0	3,7	1,738	,187
Obediencia a ordenes cotidianos	5,0	0	9,3	4,483	,034
Elección de pareja de los hijos	14,0	28,3	1,9	14,389	,000
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	<i>*p<,05; **p<,01; ***p<,001</i>	

When examining the types of conflicts stemming from issues of exercising authority, notable similarities are observed in the data. For instance, conflicts related to "demand for personal and professional development" (Table 2.1) and demands for "non-independence/adherence," "household chore distribution," and "daily orders" are only evident in the American series (Table 2.2). On the other hand, conflicts regarding children's choice of partners, although present in both cultures, are significantly more prevalent in the Chinese context.

Specifically, among the demands or exercises of authority depicted in family conflict scenes in TV fiction, American productions (9.3%) tend to emphasize the requirement for "obedience to daily orders" more frequently than their absence in Chinese productions (0%), $\chi^2[1] = 4.483, p = 0.034$. Meanwhile, Chinese TV fiction (28%) depict family conflict scenes with a greater emphasis on the imposition of "children's choice of partner,"

particularly more frequently than American productions (1.9%). This difference was statistically significant at $\chi^2[1] = 14.389, p < 0.001$ (Table 2.2).

Relationships in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

The data has been processed using the ANOVA technique between two cultural groups and contingency tables for a factor "family distancing": Factor 1 [Family distancing]. It identifies the categories "Infidelity" (W=0.75) and "Lack of communication" (W=0.78). This factor contributes 9.3% to the total variance. In addition, there are six mutually exclusive variables: Variable 2 [discord over elderly care]; Variable 3 [Rejection of parents' new partners]; Variable 4 [discord over care of younger children]; Variable 5 [Sibling rivalry]; Variable 6 [Discrepancy in discipline between father and mother]; Variable 7 [Family loyalty]; and Variable 8 [Interference from mothers-in-law].

Table 3.1 ANOVA of Family Relationship Variable in TV Fictions of China and the USA

	M Total		China		USA		F[1, 98]	p
	M	DT	m	dt	m	dt		
Estrangement	,11	,32	,12	,36	,10	,28	,074	,786
	N= 100		n= 46		n= 54		<i>*p<,05</i>	

When it comes to conflicts with a causal origin in family relationships, once again, similarities are observed in family

distance between the fictions produced in the two societies (Table 3.1).

Table 3.2 Cross tabulation of family discord variables in TV fiction from China and the USA

Variable "family relationship"	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	p
Discord over elderly care	2,0	2,2	1,9	,013	,909
Rejection of parents' new partner	3,0	2,2	3,7	,200	,655
Disagreement over caring for young children	8,0	2,2	13,0	3,929	,047
Sibling rivalry / jealousy	6,0	0	11,1	5,347	,020
Disagreement between parents in disciplining	6,0	4,3	7,4	,412	,521
Loyalty to family	32,0	39,1	25,9	1,990	,158
Interference from mothers-in-law	5,0	11,0	0	6,178	,018
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	<i>*p<,05; **p<,01</i>	



When portraying family relationships in scenes of familial conflict in television fiction, Chinese productions (39.1%) emphasize "loyalty to family" more than American ones (25.9%). However, this difference, with $\chi^2[1] = 1.990, p = 0.158$, does not reach statistical significance (Table 3.2). On the other hand, American productions (13%) depict "discord over caring for young children" more frequently than Chinese ones (2.2%), significantly so with $\chi^2[1] = 3.929, p = 0.047$. Additionally, American fictions (11.1%) portray "sibling rivalry/jealousy," which does not appear in Chinese productions (0%), and this difference is statistically significant with $\chi^2[1] = 5.347, p = 0.020$ (Table 3.2).

Table: 4 Cross-tabulation of Extended Family or In-law Involvement Variables in TV Fiction of China and the USA

Variable	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	<i>p</i>
Resentment for abandonment	2,0	0	3,7	1,738	,187
In-law interference in decisions	5,0	10,9	0	6,178	,013
Avoidance of family member encounters	6,6	2,2	9,3	2,211	,137
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	* <i>p</i> <,05; ** <i>p</i> <,01	

Variables of Economic Issues in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fictions

The dependent variables in this part of the analysis are conflicts related to "family economics," composed of three variables.

Table: 5 Cross-Tabulation of Property/Economic Issues Variables in TV Fictions of China and the USA

Variable "Property/Economic"	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	<i>p</i>
Disagreement in inheritance distribution	3,0	6,5	0	3,631	,057
Salary problems	3,0	2,2	3,7	,200	,655
Wastage	3,0	6,5	0	3,631	,057
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	* <i>p</i> <,0,1; * <i>p</i> <,05	

Table 5 presents the results of the contingency table analysis, showing that Chinese fiction productions depict scenes of family conflict involving "disagreement in inheritance distribution" (6.5%) and "wastage of money" (6.5%), both of which are exclusive to China and absent in American productions (0%). These differences exhibit the same trend of statistical significance, $\chi^2[1] = 3.631, p < 0.1$ (Table 5). Regarding conflicts stemming from economic issues, while problems related to "salaries" are similarly represented in both contexts, China (2.2%) and the USA (3.7%), there is no significant difference between them (Table 5).

Table 6 Analysis of Protagonist Roles in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

Factors	ANOVA			<i>F</i> (1,98)	<i>p</i>
	M Total	M China	M USA		
Parents and children	1,9	1,9	1,9	,011	,918
Relatives from other generation	,09	,06	,12	,375	,542
Variable	Contingency table			$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>
	% Total	CHINA %	USA %		
Relatives from same generation	31	32,7	29,7	,108	,991
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54	* <i>p</i> < ,05	

The protagonists depicted in family conflict scenes in the fiction show no differences between Chinese and American productions, $p = 0.981$ (Table 6). Most conflicts occur between parents and children. In TV series from both countries, the presence of conflicts involving relatives from an older or younger generation (in terms of age) can be observed, being slightly higher

Related or Extended Families and In-Law Involvement in Fictional Representations

Conflicts related to extended families and the involvement of the in-laws, despite their similarities, show more notable differences in our analysis results. For instance, unwanted encounters are more frequent in the United States (9.3%). Also striking is the presence of conflicts related to the absence of the paternal figure, only evident in the American context (3.9%). However, these differences do not reach a level of statistical significance (Table 4). In contrast to the earlier observations, Chinese productions (11%) depict "interference of mothers-in-law" in scenes of familial conflict, which do not appear in American productions (0%), with a significant difference at $\chi^2[1] = 6.178, p = 0.018$ (Table 4).

The data has been processed using cross-tabulation techniques for the three variables: Variable 1 [Inheritance distribution]; Variable 2 [Problem of reduced salary]; and Variable 3 [Money wastage].

Protagonists in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

In this part of the analysis, the roles of the protagonists in family conflict scenes are analyzed. There are two factors and one mutually exclusive variable: Factor 1 [Parents and children] identifies the categories "Parent" ($W=0.88$) and "Child" ($W=0.73$). This factor contributes 9% of the total variance. Factor 2 [Family members of other generations] groups the categories "Elder family member" ($W=0.80$) and "Younger family member" ($W=0.84$). This factor contributes 8% of the variance, and Variable 3 [Family members of the same generation]. Data have been processed using a cross-tabulation technique for the three variables.

in the case of the U.S. ($m = 0.12$) compared to China ($m = 0.06$) but without reaching statistical significance $F(1,98) = 0.375; p = 0.542$. In both contexts, China (32.7%) and the U.S. (29.7%), conflicts among relatives of the same generation are similarly frequent, $\chi^2[1] = 0.108, p = 0.991$ (Table 6).



Effect on Individuals in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

To identify the effect of the conflict on the characters involved, two factors and three mutually exclusive variables are extracted: Factor 1 [Indifference from both parties] identifies the categories "Indifference" (by the aggressor) (W=0.78) and "Indifference" (by the victim) (W=0.85). This factor contributes

6.5% of the variance. Factor 2 [Psychological harm with physical aggravation on the victim] groups the categories "Psychological harm" (W=0.82) and "Physical harm" (W=0.69). This factor contributes 6.2% of the variance. In addition, there are Variable 3 [Discomfort in the aggressor], Variable 4 [Regret for initiating the conflict], and Variable 5 [Transient discomfort on the victim].

Table 7.1 ANOVA of Variables Effect of Family Conflict in TV Fictions of China and USA

Factor "Family tension"	M Total		China		USA		F[1, 98]	p
	M	DT	m	dt	m	dt		
Indifference	,46	,58	,45	,59	,46	,58	,003	,957
Psychological & Physical Harm	,21	,42	,25	,45	,17	,40	,744	,390
	N= 100		n= 46		n= 54			*p<,05

With these, the analyses were conducted using the ANOVA technique for the two factors between two cultural groups (Table 7.1) and the cross-tabulation technique to observe the three variables (Table 7.2).

Regarding the effect of the conflict on the characters involved, in the series from both countries, no significant differences

are observed in "indifference" both in the aggressor and the victim, China (M = 0.45) and USA (M = 0.46) with F(1,98) = 0.003, p = 0.957. As for the "psychological harm with physical exacerbation" effect, it is slightly higher in China (M = 0.25) than in the USA (M = 0.17). However, this difference does not reach statistical significance, F(1,98) = 0.744, p = 0.390 (Table 7.1).

Table 7.2 Cross-tabulation of variables on the effect of family conflict in TV fiction from China and the USA

Variable "effect of family conflict"	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	p
Discomfort after tension discharge	29,0	23,9	33,3	1,071	,301
Apology request	2,0	2,2	1,9	,013	,909
Passing annoyance	45,0	45,7	44,4	,015	,904
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54		*p<,05

Regarding the effects of "discomfort", China (23.9%) compared to the USA (33.3%), with $\chi^2(1)= 1.071$, p= 0.301, and regret with the "apology request" from the aggressor, China (2.2%) compared to the USA (1.9%), with $\chi^2(1)= 0.013$, p= 0.909. Similarly, the frequency of "passing annoyance" (on the victim) is very similar in the fictions from China (45.7%) and the United States (44.4%), with $\chi^2(1)= 0.015$, p= 0.904. In all these data, no significant difference is observed between the two societies (Table 7.2).

Types of Resolution in Family Conflict Scenes in TV Fiction

The last dependent variable covered in this research is the one that responds to the type of resolution that family conflicts have. In this study, there are seven mutually exclusive dichotomous variables: Variable 1 [Acceptance of apologies]; Variable 2

[Understanding the need to obey]; Variable 3 [Lack of consensus/disagreement]; Variable 4 [Acceptance of the victim's decisions]; Variable 5 [Imposition of acceptance of orders]; Variable 6 [Family breakdown]; and Variable 7 [Consensus among family members]. The data were processed using the contingency table technique.

Finally, the results of the analysis on the types of conflict resolution - acceptance of apologies, need to obey, lack of consensus, and respect for decisions, once again, show similarity between the fictions produced in both societies, China and the USA. However, we notice slight differences between both countries in variables such as "Imposed acceptance of orders" (higher in China with 2.2% and USA with 0%) or "Family breakdown" (China= 8.7%; USA=3.7%) and "Consensus among family members" (China= 6.5%; USA=3.7%) (Table 8).

Table 8 Cross-tabulation of Resolution Variables in Family Tension Scenes in TV Fiction in China and the USA

Variable "resolution"	% Total	China %	USA %	$\chi^2[1]$	p
Acceptance of apologies	2	2,2	1,9	,013	,711
Obedience to orders	3,0	2,2	3,7	,200	,655
Conflict continues without agreement	4,0	2,2	5,6	,740	,390
Consensus on another's decision	5,0	6,5	3,7	,415	,519
Imposition of acceptance of orders	1,0	2,2	0	2,559	,278
Family breakdown	6,0	8,7	3,7	1,098	,295
Consensus to solve problems	14	17,4	11,1	,814	,367
	N= 100	n= 46	n= 54		*p<,05

The results of the analysis mentioned above (Table 8) indicate that there are differences in the types of conflict resolution in TV fiction produced in China and the USA. However, the data do not provide any statistically significant differences.

Discussion

In this section, research questions proposed at the beginning of the study are discussed.

Firstly, in response to 1) What types of family conflicts are depicted as common or typical in television fiction in Chinese and American society? It has been observed that in television series from both countries chosen for this project, conflicts related to the exercise of authority by parents over their children are very common.

Secondly, 2) How is the influence of paternal authority represented on their children in these societies? Both in China and



in the United States, similar data for the variable "Demand for personal and professional training" is observed. Understandably, parents in both countries are concerned about their children's education and their ability to be independent. Another aspect worth highlighting within conflicts arising from the exercise of authority is those triggered by the choice of partners and the importance of parental approval. Despite finding a small sample in the United States, the value that truly catches our attention is that of China. This may be due to an aspect that can apply in this field, the previous one, and probably in any of those mentioned in this discussion: Confucian filial piety.

The choice of partners would be justified simply by the total authority that parents have over their children. Especially, this intervention of parents in the decision of their children's partners would be more related to the need to "ensure the continuity of the family lineage" and "dishonor the family name" (Ho, 1996: 197). Furthermore, parents expect their children to take care of them in their old age, making it understandable that Chinese parents want their children to have the "appropriate" job and partner. Additionally, regarding love and emotions in general, they are seen as "dangerous", as they are not necessary for filial piety; moreover, the Chinese consider social harmony more important than the expression of individual emotions (Russell & Yik, 1996: 170-1).

It can be concluded that conflicts arising from the exercise of authority are usually resolved negatively and affect parents more. According to Tous (2012), this is because American series tend not to blame teenagers for this situation, but their parents for not knowing how to act and guide their children during adolescence (p. 107). In the case of China, on the contrary, according to Chan in Bond (1996), Chinese parents show great concern for their children's intellectual development, so they try to find the most appropriate way to achieve this goal, through teaching and discipline being notably linked (pp. 96-97), which easily translates into the exercise of parental authority.

Thirdly, 3) What differences are present in the need for family loyalty in fiction produced in China and the United States? The other variable that stands out is related to loyalty to the family, abundant in series from both countries and with significantly higher figures in the Chinese case. In the case of China, this can be explained because the role of the family is a fundamental pillar of society, based on four fundamental points: belief in harmony and solidarity, the continuation of lineage with emphasis on the expansion and prosperity of the family, and finally, a strong sensitivity towards the family (Goodwin & Tang, 1996: 304-5).

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On the contrary, in the United States, although the family is still important as a "social structure that shelters people" (Tous, 2012: 195), in recent years, families have changed, resulting in various family models and increased individualism. However, in the units of analysis observed, these problems arising from loyalty issues stem from the fact that parents, both in China and in the United States, believe that their children are not loyal to the family because they decide what they want to do with their lives (studies, work, partner, etc.), which indicates a generational conflict, in which, due to the changes in modern societies, parents are unsure about their children's decisions, leading to conflicts.

Finally, 4) How are family conflicts resolved in fiction produced in China and the United States, and what are the consequences? Regarding the final resolution of conflicts, it is observed that most of the time they end positively, mainly with an agreement to resolve the issue that had divided the family, both in China and in the United States. The usual trend indeed is for conflicts to be resolved positively especially considering that this paper deals with commercial television series, where a happy ending is expected. However, in the analyzed units where the conflict is not resolved or is resolved negatively, it is because the positive resolution often comes in later moments of the episode or series.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper allows a better understanding of two societies from a cross-cultural communication approach. It has been observed how mass media incorporate elements present in life into the scripts of the analyzed TV series.

Undoubtedly, despite obvious differences between these two countries, some elements coincide. This demonstrates the importance of this work in the field of intercultural communication. In the 21st century, as modern societies progress rapidly, communication between them becomes easier and more evident, with people in similar situations, leading identical lives, in increasingly similar cities, and thus facing similar problems that lead to family conflicts like the ones analyzed in this research.

Through research on an "everyday" topic like family, with everyday conflicts represented in entertainment media, it is noticeable that these conflicts have evolved in their resolution due to changes in some traditional values, between generations, in geographies, in the economy, etc. In summary, various social aspects are reduced to the family sphere in the context of the world we live in in the 21st century.



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