

Abstract

Mothers of preschoolers in Hong Kong were asked to describe their childrearing beliefs and philosophies in general, and the disciplinary strategies they would use with their children in four hypothetical situations involving different misbehaviors. The situations differed in terms of the domains of rule transgressed by the child, the degree of severity of the transgressions, the private versus public nature of the situations, and the social distance of the participants. The findings of the present study showed that multiple methods were used in the situations and the use of different disciplinary strategies varied across different situations. Convergent evidence was obtained in mothers' general philosophies and the specific disciplinary strategies used by the mothers. Isolation was used by more mothers in situations with socially distanced participants. The relative use of conflict avoidance, power assertion, and reasoning was affected by the domains and seriousness of the transgressions. Age of child was found to be an important determinant of the use of power assertive or inductive methods in specific situations. The findings of this study provided further support of the bidirectional model of socialization.