
Chinese and Canadian Children's Evaluations of Lying and Truth Telling: Similarities and Differences in the Context of Pro- and Antisocial Behaviors

Author(s): Kang Lee, Catherine Ann Cameron, Fen Xu, Genyao Fu and Julie Board

Source: *Child Development*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (Oct., 1997), pp. 924-934

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Society for Research in Child Development

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1132042>

Accessed: 16-03-2020 23:28 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/1132042?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Society for Research in Child Development, Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Child Development*

Chinese and Canadian Children's Evaluations of Lying and Truth Telling: Similarities and Differences in the Context of Pro- and Antisocial Behaviors

Kang Lee, Catherine Ann Cameron, Fen Xu, Genyao Fu, and Julie Board

The present study compared Chinese and Canadian children's moral evaluations of lie and truth telling in situations involving pro- and antisocial behaviors. Seven-, 9-, and 11-year-old Chinese and Canadian children were presented 4 brief stories. Two stories involved a child who intentionally carried out a good deed, and the other 2 stories involved a child who intentionally carried out a bad deed. When story characters were questioned by a teacher as to who had committed the deed, they either lied or told the truth. Children were asked to evaluate the story characters' deeds and their verbal statements. Overall, Chinese children rated truth telling less positively and lie telling more positively in prosocial settings than Canadian children, indicating that the emphasis on self-effacement and modesty in Chinese culture overrides Chinese children's evaluations of lying in some situations. Both Chinese and Canadian children rated truth telling positively and lie telling negatively in antisocial situations, reflecting the emphasis in both cultures on the distinction between misdeed and truth/lie telling. The findings of the present study suggest that, in the realm of lying and truth telling, a close relation between sociocultural practices and moral judgment exists. Specific social and cultural norms have an impact on children's developing moral judgments, which, in turn, are modified by age and experience in a particular culture.

INTRODUCTION

Children's understanding and moral judgment of lying and truth telling was an early topic of investigation in developmental psychology (Binet, 1896; Hall, 1891; Piaget, 1932/1965; for a review, see Hyman, 1989). Since the early 1980s, developmental psychologists have shown a renewed interest in children's understanding and moral judgments of lying and truth telling, after neglecting the topic for nearly half a century (Bussey, 1992; Peterson, 1995; Peterson, Peterson, & Seeto, 1983; Strichartz & Burton, 1990; Wimmer, Gruber, & Perner, 1984). This recent upsurge of interest is mainly due to the fact that the study of the development of lying and truth telling bears theoretical significance for current debates about children's theory of mind (Wimmer et al., 1984) as well as the universality of moral development (Boyes & Walker, 1988; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987) and has practical implications for the controversy about using children as witnesses in courts of law (Burton & Strichartz, 1991; Goodman, 1984).

In his pioneering work, Piaget (1932/1965) presented children with pairs of scenarios in which protagonists engaged in various forms of verbal communication such as lying, guessing, and exaggeration. Children were asked to judge the "naughtiness" of verbal statements that deviated from the truth. He found that young children's moral judgments about

lying and truth telling primarily relied on the extent to which a verbal statement differed from factuality and whether or not the lie was punished. Not until around 11 years of age did children begin to use the protagonist's intention as the key factor in their moral judgments.

Recently, researchers have begun to use a single scenario, instead of Piaget's moral-dilemma choice-paradigm, to simplify task demands (Bussey, 1992; Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 1983). In general, the studies replicated Piaget's findings regarding the dominant role of factuality in children's moral judgment of lying and truth telling. However, whether or not a lie is punished was found to have little effect on children's moral judgment, at least at the elementary school level. On one hand, most studies confirmed that the role of intention is relatively limited for young school-aged children in determining a statement to be a lie or the truth. On the other hand, researchers disagreed with Piaget's claim that the use of intention emerges only around 11 years of age. Although researchers are still debating the role of intention (Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 1983; Wimmer et al., 1984), there is a general consensus in the literature that preschool and young school-aged children are distinctly capable of distinguishing lying from be-

© 1997 by the Society for Research in Child Development, Inc.
All rights reserved. 0009-3920/97/6805-0009\$01.00

havioral misdeeds and making consistent and accurate moral judgments. In particular, most studies have consistently shown that young children's moral judgment is similar to that of older children and adults when both the falsity of a statement and the speaker's intention to deceive are highlighted (Wimmer et al., 1984).

Despite the advances of research in recent years, our understanding of the development of children's moral judgments of lying is still rather restricted. One of the limitations is that all of the above-mentioned studies were conducted with children in Western countries. These children were raised in industrialized environments that emphasize individualism, self-assertion/promotion, and competition. It is unclear whether the findings with these children can be generalized to children of other sociocultural backgrounds. Recently, Sweetser (1987) proposed a folkloristic model of lying. She suggested that the concept of lying is not simply a cognitive construct defined by such key semantic features as factuality (whether a statement reflects the truth), intention (whether the speaker intends to deceive), and belief (whether the speaker believes the statement) alone, but it is also a sociocultural construct. She argued that the understanding of lying is greatly influenced by the cultural norms and moral values in which individuals are socialized. Although some anthropological studies and anecdotal reports (Gilsenan, 1976; Ochs Keenan, 1976) seem to support Sweetser's model, little systematic developmental evidence has been advanced (see Lee & Ross, 1997).

The present study was conducted to bridge this gap in the literature by directly testing the posited effect of culture on children's moral evaluations of lying and truth telling. Specifically, the present study focused on the lying and truth-telling situations that have derived the most consistent research findings from both past and recent studies (Bussey, 1992; Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 1983; Strichartz & Burton, 1990; Wimmer et al., 1984). These situations involve a speaker telling a lie or the truth while the speaker's intention and the true state of affairs are prominently indicated. The moral judgments of Canadian children and Chinese children from the People's Republic of China (PRC) were compared in situations in which pro- and antisocial actions were denied or acknowledged.

The choice of using Chinese children in PRC as participants of this study was not accidental. In contrast to Canada, the People's Republic of China is a communist-collectivist society that cherishes communitarianism over individualism and promotes

personal sacrifice for the social good (Bond, 1986; Dien, 1982; Ho & Chiu, 1994). Chinese children are systematically educated in the tenets of this ideology as early as the kindergarten years (Davin, 1991; Domino & Hannah, 1987; Hayhoe, 1984). For example, in addition to advancing collectivism and patriotism, the central government specifically requires schools at all levels to incorporate the promotion of honesty and modesty into their political-moral education programs (Davin, 1991; Lo, 1984; Price, 1992; Zhu, 1982). In fact, honesty and modesty are among the major "Five Virtues" (Price, 1992) that are strongly emphasized in the Chinese school curriculum, and these twin virtues are central criteria used to assess children's school comportment. In school settings, modesty and honesty are expected both in behavioral conduct and in academic achievement. With regard to honesty, children are encouraged to report misdeeds committed by themselves or others, not to misrepresent themselves to gain approval, and not to cheat or steal. To promote honesty, children are repeatedly taught specific rules and slogans that exemplify honesty, such as "Be an honest, good child" and "One must be brave to admit wrong-doing."

With regard to modesty, children are specifically taught to avoid self-aggrandizement, not to brag about personal achievements, including high marks and good deeds, and not to seek the teacher's explicit praise. As part of the endeavor to promote modesty, self-effacement is directly encouraged. Children are encouraged to minimize their own good behaviors and grades. They are taught to revere "unsung heroes" who commit good deeds and do not leave their names. In fact, school textbooks are replete with stories that condone "lying" in conjunction with good deeds (e.g., the stories of Lei Feng and Jiao Yulu, two communist heroes whose altruistic and philanthropic deeds were told only after their deaths). Furthermore, both Chinese Confucian and Taoist traditions support this teaching (Bond, 1986; Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1982; Ma, 1988). Bond et al. (1982) pointed out that in China, the humility of individual members is a priority for maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships in a collectivity (also see Ma, 1988). This and other traditional moral rules are deeply rooted in the Chinese culture. They are also reflected in the Chinese communist ideology (i.e., Maoism), and legitimized in the Chinese Communist Party's platforms (Hayhoe, 1984; Price, 1992). Hence, admitting a good deed is viewed as a violation both of traditional Chinese cultural norms and of communist-collectivist doctrine.

In Western culture, whereas "white lies" or decep-

tions to avoid embarrassment or hurt are tolerated, concealing laudable behavior is not explicitly encouraged, especially in the early school years. Self-aggrandizement, a part of the practice of individualistic self-promotion, is not considered a character flaw in the Western culture as it is in the Chinese culture. In fact, self-promotion is thought to enhance self-esteem, independence, and even achievement (Bond et al., 1982) and, hence, is encouraged in schools in North America (see, e.g., California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility, 1990; Early Childhood Consultants in Collaboration with Members of the Kindergarten Curriculum Advisory Committee, 1991; Seligman, 1996).

Whereas China's political and cultural rules regarding lying about good deeds differ quite dramatically from those in Canada and other Western countries, for whom self-effacement is not so strong a motive, both Western and Chinese parents and teachers stress the distinction between misdeeds and lying. Whereas lying about a misdeed is strictly prohibited, confessing a misdeed is encouraged in both cultures, although perhaps from different ideological bases: In the West, contractual assumptions between individuals, personal rights to information, and individual freedom all assume truth-telling principles (Bok, 1978; Grice, 1975; Kupfer, 1982; Sweetser, 1987); in China, the individual is held accountable for social disruption and therefore must admit a misdeed to be reintegrated into the group and maintain collective harmony (Bond, 1986).

Given the differences between Chinese and Western cultures regarding the moral significance of lying and truth telling in good-deed and misdeed situations, the comparison between Chinese and Canadian children's moral judgment offers an opportunity for examining the extent to which cultural practices affect the development of children's understanding and moral evaluations of lying. In addition, this comparison provides insight into questions of universality in moral development (Boyes & Walker, 1988; Shweder et al., 1987).

In the present study, 7-, 9-, and 11-year-old Chinese and Canadian children were assigned to two conditions in each of which they were presented four brief stories. The stories were constructed in such a way that the situations depicted were familiar to schoolchildren in both cultures. Two stories involved a child who intentionally carried out a good deed (a deed valued by adults in both cultures), whereas the other two stories involved a child who intentionally carried out a bad deed (a deed viewed negatively in both cultures). Then, when the story character was

questioned by a teacher as to who had done the deed, she or he either lied or told the truth. Sweetser (1987) suggests that the word "lying" often carries a negative connotation. Henceforth, "lying" behavior will be referred to as "lie telling," a neutral term. To delineate further situational effects and to ascertain the generalizability of the stories, half of the children were presented stories that depicted a child conducting a deed directly affecting another child (the social story condition), and the other half received stories that depicted a child carrying out a deed involving only physical objects, although also having social implications (the physical story condition). Children were asked to rate both the story character's deed and verbal statement as "naughty" or "good." Based on Sweetser's (1987) model and the above analyses, a cultural effect was expected on the ratings of lie telling and truth telling involving prosocial behaviors. Chinese children were predicted to rate truth telling in prosocial situations less positively and lie telling in the same situations less negatively than Canadian children. This difference was expected to increase with age as a result of the increased exposure to and experience with cultural norms. By contrast, based on the current literature (Berndt & Berndt, 1975; Bussey, 1992; Wimmer et al., 1984), children of both cultures were expected to show similar moral evaluations of lie telling and truth telling related to antisocial behaviors. All were expected to rate lie telling negatively and truth telling positively in antisocial behavioral situations.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and twenty Chinese children participated in the study: 40 7-year-olds (M age = 7.5 years, 20 male and 20 female), 40 9-year-olds (M age = 9.4 years, 20 male and 20 female), and 40 11-year-olds (M age = 11.3, 20 male and 20 female). They were recruited from elementary schools in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, a medium-sized city (provincial capital) in the People's Republic of China. Hangzhou is one of the main cultural, educational, and commercial centers in China. Information regarding the socioeconomic status of the children's families was not available, as the means to categorize families by social group standing still does not exist in the People's Republic of China, nor is it encouraged by the government. Half of the children participated in the social story condition, and the other half were placed in the physical story condition. The children were assigned to the conditions randomly.

One hundred and eight Canadian children also participated in the study: 36 7-year-olds (M age = 7.4 years, 20 male and 16 female), 40 9-year-olds (M age = 9.6 years, 24 male and 16 female), 32 11-year-olds (M age = 11.5 years, 14 male and 18 female). They were recruited from elementary schools in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Like Hangzhou, Fredericton is also a provincial capital, but its population is considerably smaller than Hangzhou. Neither city involved in this research is a heavy industrial center. Most of the Canadian children were from middle-class families. Nineteen 7-year-olds, 20 9-year-olds, and 17 11-year-olds were randomly assigned to the social story condition, and the other children were assigned to the physical story condition.

Material

Children were read four scenarios accompanied by illustrations. The English versions of the scenarios are shown in the Appendix. The following example illustrates the story used in the physical story condition that involves lie telling in a prosocial situation:

Here is Alex. Alex's class had to stay inside at recess time because of bad weather, so Alex decided to tidy up the classroom for his teacher. (*Question 1: Is what Alex did good or naughty?*)

So Alex cleaned the classroom, and when the teacher returned after recess, she said to her students, "Oh, I see that someone has cleaned the classroom for me." The teacher then asked Alex, "Do you know who cleaned the classroom?" Alex said to his teacher, "I did not do it."

(*Question 2: Is what Alex said to his teacher good or naughty?*)

Procedures

Children were seen individually. They were first instructed about the meaning of the words and the symbols on a 7-point rating chart. The words and symbols are: very very good (three red stars), very good (two red stars), good (one red star), neither good nor naughty (a blue circle), naughty (one black cross), very naughty (two black crosses), and very very naughty (three black crosses). Children were then read either four social stories or four physical stories. A story's "deed" section was first read to children, which contained the information regarding the child story character's pro- or antisocial behaviors. Children were asked, "Was what she (he) did good

or naughty?" They were asked to indicate their rating either verbally, or nonverbally, or both, on the rating chart. The meaning of each symbol was repeated every time the question was asked. Then, children were read the second section of the story and asked, "Was what she (he) said good or naughty?" Again, the symbols' meanings on the chart were indicated and children were requested to rate the story character's verbal statement on the chart. The words, "good" and "naughty," in the two questions were alternated within subjects. To control for an order effect, for each condition, two orders of the four stories were first determined using a randomization table. About half of the children in each condition were read the stories in one predetermined order, and the other half were read them in the other order.

RESULTS

Children's ratings were converted according to the following scale: very very good = 3, very good = 2, good = 1, neither good nor naughty = 0, naughty = -1, very naughty = -2, and very very naughty = -3. Preliminary analyses of the effects of order and gender yielded no significant differences. Hence, the data on these two dimensions were combined for subsequent analyses.

Tables 1 and 2 show the means and standard deviations of both Chinese and Canadian children's ratings of the story character's pro- or antisocial behaviors and verbal statements, respectively, in the four situations of social and physical story conditions.

1. Prosocial Behavior / Truth-Telling Situations

A planned 2 (culture: Canadian and Chinese) \times 2 (condition: physical and social stories) \times 3 (age: 7, 9, 11 years) analysis of covariance with the ratings of deeds as covariates was conducted on children's ratings of truth telling. The use of the ratings of deeds as covariates was to control for the effect of children's moral evaluations of prosocial behaviors on their subsequent ratings of truth telling. The covariate was not significant, $t(1) = .34$, *ns*, indicating that children of both cultures rated the prosocial behaviors similarly. The age and culture main effects were significant, $F(2, 215) = 9.79$, $p < .001$, and $F(1, 215) = 20.65$, $p < .001$, respectively. The condition main effect was not significant, $F(1, 215) = .82$, *ns*. The only significant interaction was the one between age and culture, $F(2, 215) = 5.75$, $p < .01$. As shown in Figure 1, the significant interaction was due to the fact that Canadian children at each age gave similar ratings to truth

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Chinese and Canadian Children's Ratings of Good and Bad Deeds

	China			Canada		
	Social	Physical	Combined	Social	Physical	Combined
Story 1: good deed situation:						
7 years	2.45 (.69)	1.60 (1.73)	2.03 (1.37)	1.90 (.88)	2.35 (.79)	2.13 (.85)
9 years	1.25 (1.77)	2.50 (.61)	1.88 (1.45)	1.80 (1.36)	2.35 (.67)	2.08 (1.10)
11 years	1.20 (1.32)	2.15 (.67)	1.68 (1.14)	2.29 (.85)	2.33 (.82)	2.31 (.82)
Story 2: good deed situation:						
7 years	2.45 (.69)	1.65 (1.50)	2.05 (1.22)	2.00 (.82)	2.35 (.79)	2.18 (.81)
9 years	1.25 (1.74)	2.55 (.61)	1.90 (1.45)	1.75 (1.37)	2.10 (1.07)	1.93 (1.23)
11 years	1.65 (1.27)	1.85 (.81)	1.75 (1.06)	2.06 (1.14)	1.93 (.80)	2.00 (.98)
Story 3: bad deed situation:						
7 years	-2.15 (.81)	-1.65 (1.46)	-1.90 (1.19)	-1.95 (.62)	-2.35 (.86)	-2.15 (.76)
9 years	-2.35 (.59)	-2.80 (.41)	-2.58 (.55)	-1.85 (1.18)	-2.50 (.76)	-2.18 (1.04)
11 years	-2.30 (1.38)	-2.40 (.68)	-2.35 (1.08)	-2.53 (.72)	-2.67 (.49)	-2.60 (.61)
Story 4: bad deed situation						
7 years	-2.40 (.75)	-1.35 (1.50)	-1.88 (1.28)	-1.63 (.68)	-2.12 (.86)	-1.88 (.80)
9 years	-2.60 (.50)	-2.25 (.72)	-2.43 (.64)	-1.60 (1.23)	-2.30 (.73)	-1.95 (1.06)
11 years	-2.65 (.49)	-2.25 (.55)	-2.45 (.55)	-2.47 (.62)	-2.27 (.70)	-2.37 (.66)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

telling whereas Chinese children's ratings became less positive as age increased.

2. Prosocial Behavior / Lie-Telling Situations

A planned 2 (culture: Canadian and Chinese) \times 2 (condition: physical and social stories) \times 3 (age: 7, 9, 11 years) analysis of covariance with the ratings of

deeds as covariates was conducted on children's ratings of lie telling in the prosocial behavior / lie-telling situations. The covariate was significant, $t(1) = 2.88$, $p < .01$, indicating that children from the two cultures rated the prosocial behaviors differently both in different age groups and in the two conditions. However, after partialing out the effect of the covariates, the age and culture main effects remained significant,

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Chinese and Canadian Children's Ratings of Lie and Truth Telling in Good and Bad Deed Situations

	China			Canada		
	Social	Physical	Combined	Social	Physical	Combined
Story 1: truth telling (good deed situation):						
7 years	1.75 (1.68)	1.90 (1.02)	1.83 (1.38)	2.11 (.74)	2.35 (.79)	2.23 (.76)
9 years	1.65 (1.90)	.85 (1.42)	1.25 (1.71)	1.45 (1.43)	1.70 (.92)	1.58 (1.20)
11 years	.55 (1.54)	.10 (1.07)	.33 (1.33)	2.06 (.83)	1.80 (.78)	1.93 (.80)
Story 2: lie telling (good deed situation):						
7 years	-.50 (2.01)	-.70 (1.87)	-.60 (1.92)	-1.26 (1.10)	-1.47 (.72)	-1.37 (.93)
9 years	-1.00 (1.89)	1.05 (1.93)	.03 (2.15)	-.95 (1.43)	-.95 (1.15)	-.95 (1.28)
11 years	.85 (1.79)	1.10 (1.17)	.98 (1.49)	-1.12 (.93)	-.87 (1.30)	-1.00 (1.11)
Story 3: truth telling (bad deed situation):						
7 years	1.95 (.83)	1.90 (.79)	1.93 (.80)	1.79 (.86)	1.77 (1.52)	1.78 (1.20)
9 years	2.00 (.80)	2.10 (.91)	2.05 (.85)	1.90 (.79)	1.90 (1.07)	1.90 (.93)
11 years	1.75 (.72)	1.90 (.91)	1.83 (.81)	2.18 (.81)	2.13 (.64)	2.16 (.72)
Story 4: lie telling (bad deed situation):						
7 years	-2.40 (.75)	-1.80 (1.28)	-2.10 (1.08)	-1.84 (.77)	-2.59 (.62)	-2.22 (1.79)
9 years	-2.60 (.60)	-2.65 (.59)	-2.63 (.59)	-2.35 (.81)	-2.25 (.55)	-2.30 (.69)
11 years	-2.90 (.45)	-2.35 (.81)	-2.63 (.70)	-2.53 (.62)	-2.67 (.49)	-2.60 (.56)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

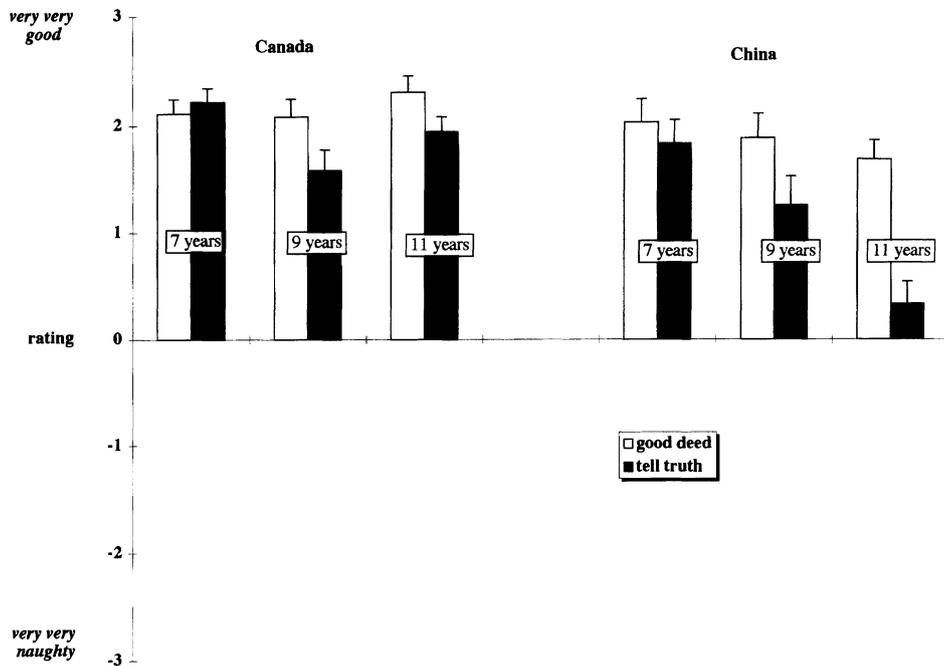


Figure 1 Chinese and Canadian children's ratings of truth telling in prosocial situations (social and physical story conditions combined).

$F(2, 215) = 8.80, p < .001$, and $F(1, 215) = 40.64, p < .001$, respectively. The condition main effect was not significant, $F(1, 215) = 2.27, ns$. Only the interaction between age and culture was significant, $F(2, 215) = 3.59, p < .05$. As shown in Figure 2, Canadian chil-

dren overall rated lie telling in this situation negatively. As age increased, their ratings became somewhat less negative. By contrast, Chinese children's ratings of lie telling in the prosocial situation changed from negative to positive as age increased.

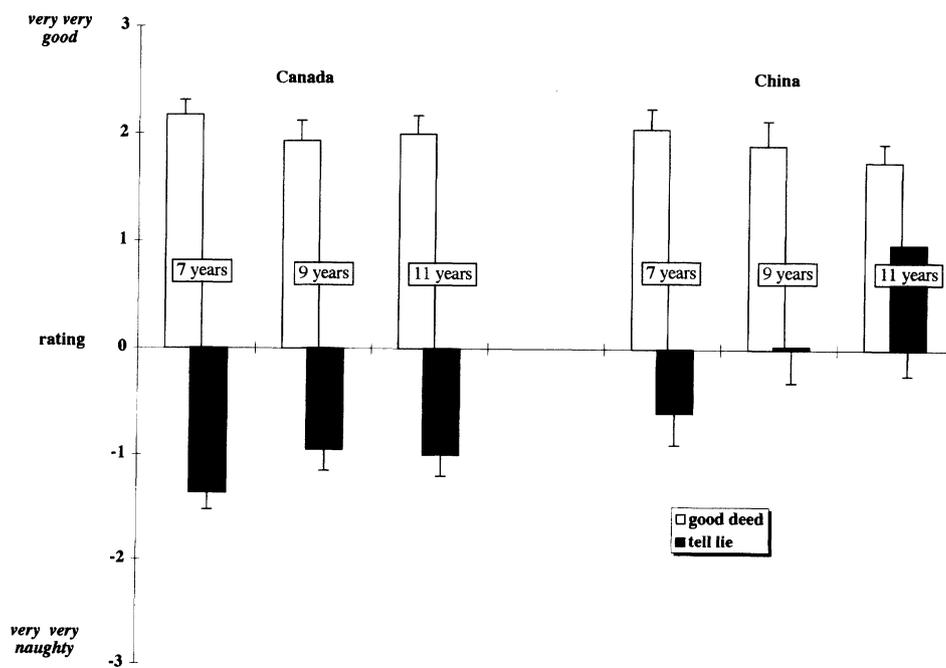


Figure 2 Chinese and Canadian children's ratings of lie telling in prosocial situations (social and physical story conditions combined).

3. Antisocial Behavior/Truth-Telling Situations

A planned 2 (culture: Canadian and Chinese) \times 2 (condition: physical and social stories) \times 3 (age: 7, 9, 11 years) analysis of covariance with the ratings of deeds as covariates was conducted on children's ratings of truth telling in the antisocial behavior/truth-telling situations. The covariate was not significant, $t(1) = -1.51$, *ns*, indicating that children from both cultures rated the antisocial behaviors similarly. No main effect or interaction was significant. As shown in Table 2, children from the two cultures rated truth telling in the antisocial situations very positively.

4. Antisocial Behavior/Lie-Telling Situations

A planned 2 (culture: Canadian and Chinese) \times 2 (condition: physical and social stories) \times 3 (age: 7, 9, 11 years) analysis of covariance with the ratings of deeds as covariates was conducted on children's ratings of lie telling in the antisocial behavior/lie-telling situations. The covariate was significant, $t(1) = 4.96$, $p < .01$, indicating that children of both cultures rated the antisocial behaviors differently in different age groups in the two conditions. However, after partialing out the effect of the covariates, the age main effect remained significant, $F(2, 215) = 3.50$, $p < .05$. The culture and condition main effects were not significant, $F(1, 215) = .08$, *ns*, and $F(1, 215) = .02$, *ns*. Only the interaction between age, culture, and condition was significant, $F(2, 215) = 5.18$, $p < .01$. As shown in Table 2, both Chinese and Canadian children rated lie telling in the antisocial situations negatively. Overall, negative ratings increased with age irrespective of culture. However, Chinese 7-year-old children rated lie telling less negatively than older children in the physical story condition, whereas Canadian 7-year-old children rated lie telling less negatively than older children in the social story condition. The reason for the specific interaction was unclear. No interpretation was attempted here.

DISCUSSION

The present study compared Chinese and Canadian children's moral evaluations of truth and lie telling in situations involving pro- and antisocial behaviors. The predicted cultural differences were found. Chinese children differed from Canadian children in their evaluations of truth and lie telling in prosocial situations. Chinese children generally rated truth telling in prosocial settings less positively than Canadian children. Even more interestingly, Chinese children rated lie telling in the same situations more positively

than Canadian children. As age increased, Chinese children's ratings went from negative to positive. This particular trend with Chinese children suggests that the emphasis on self-effacement and modesty in Chinese culture increasingly asserts its impact on Chinese children's moral judgment. As the children's experience with these moral rules increased through schooling and other means of socialization (e.g., mass media, extra-curricular political-moral educational activities), their moral judgment regarding truth and lie telling about prosocial behaviors became increasingly consistent with Chinese society's moral rules.

This is consistent with Chinese children's comments during postexperimental discussions. With regard to the prosocial behavior/truth-telling situations, 8% of 7-year-olds, 28% of 9-year-olds, and 48% of 11-year-olds gave negative ratings (-1 to -3) to the child story character who told the truth. When asked why they gave negative ratings, nearly half of them commented that they gave a negative rating because the child was "wanting" or "begging for" the teacher's praise, a behavior specifically discouraged by teachers in the Chinese schools (Zhu, 1982). One-third of the children indicated that one "should not leave his (her) name after doing a good deed." The rest of the children stated that the story character should not admit the good deed or tell the teacher about the deed. With regard to the prosocial behavior/lie-telling situations, 25% of the 7-year-olds, 43% of the 9-year-olds, and 70% of the 11-year-olds gave positive ratings (+1 to +3 scores) to the child story character who "lied" to the teacher. Most of those children justified their positive ratings of lie telling by either stating that one should not leave one's name after doing a good deed (54%) or indicating that one should not tell the teacher about the good deed (36%). These comments are consistent with the specific social rules regarding modesty explicitly taught in the Chinese schools. The Chinese children, however, did not offer further explanations about the rationales for following these rules. This may be due to the fact that these social rules, like any other cultural rules, are intersubjectively shared (D'Andrade, 1987; Grice, 1975; Sweetser, 1987). Whereas the moral rules themselves are explicitly known to the members of a specific culture, the rationale for following the moral rules is assumed to be self-evident and need not be made explicit (D'Andrade, 1987; Sweetser, 1987; Weinreich-Haste, 1984). Hence, the Chinese children might be able to explain the rationale underlying the rule, but they did not see the need to do so. This possibility, however, needs to be tested empirically with specific paradigms that

require explicit explanations about social and moral norms such as direct questioning and/or dialectical discussion about the rationale underlying the norms.

Chinese and Canadian children also made similar responses under certain conditions. First, children in both cultures clearly distinguished verbal statements from deeds. They gave differentiated moral evaluations of a deed and a verbal statement regarding the deed. Second, children in both cultures gave very negative ratings to lie telling in antisocial situations, as both cultures discourage such verbal behavior and seem to see it as compounding the error. Third, both Chinese and Canadian children rated truth telling in antisocial situations very positively, while giving antisocial behaviors negative ratings. This finding is in line with Bussey (1992), who found that Western children as young as 5 years of age were able to provide differential ratings for lie telling/truth telling and misconduct. For instance, children in the Bussey (1992) study, like those in the present study, not only rated truth telling about a misdeed positively but also reported a sense of pride in doing so. The findings of the present study as well as those of others (e.g., Bussey, 1992; Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 1983) suggest that, although a mature understanding of the concept of lying, *per se*, is achieved later in childhood, the distinction between lie telling and misconduct and the appropriate moral evaluations of them develop much earlier. However, it may be inappropriate to conclude that the response similarities between Chinese and Canadian children regarding confessing a misdeed are due to similar cultural practices in the two cultures. As indicated earlier, confession may serve different purposes for individuals in different cultures. For example, in the Chinese culture, confessional behavior is valued because it serves to maintain group harmony (Bond, 1986), whereas the Western culture encourages children to confess a misdeed to teach them the importance of fulfilling one's contractual commitment to one's partner in interpersonal communication and respecting the person's right to information (Bok, 1978; Grice, 1975; Kupfer, 1982; Sweetser, 1987). Whether Chinese and Canadian children's similar ratings of confessional behaviors stem from the two contrasting cultural orientations remains to be examined in future research.

Overall, the present findings indicate that, in the realm of lie telling, children acquire specific social and cultural norms, which in turn have a direct impact on moral development. This specifically results in differences in both Chinese and Canadian children's moral judgment. This close relation between sociocultural practices and moral development also exists in other areas related to the development of

lying. Studies have shown that children's early formation of the concept of a lie is strongly influenced by external rules (Bussey, 1992; Peterson et al., 1983; Piaget, 1932/1965; Strichartz & Burton, 1990). For example, young preschool children tend to label verbal statements that are prohibited by adults as lies. They are also more inclined to label an intentionally false statement punished by adults as a lie than the same statement that goes unpunished, although recent evidence shows that this tendency disappears after around 6 years of age (Bussey, 1992; Peterson et al., 1983). Nevertheless, social norms apparently play an important role in young children's acquisition of the concept of lying. Older children and adults have also been reported to use social rules such as the Gricean communicative maxims (Grice, 1975) for interpersonal communication (e.g., "To help; not to harm," and "To inform; not to misinform"; for definitions, see Sweetser, 1987) to define lying. For example, they are reluctant to label an intentionally false statement that the speaker tells to help the hearer to be a lie (Coleman & Kay, 1981; Lee & Ross, 1997; Peterson et al., 1983). The evidence presented here in conjunction with the existing evidence in the literature suggests that Sweetser's folklorist model of lying may not only be applicable to the development of the concept of lying but also can be extended to account for moral development in the behavioral area of lie telling.

The present study also contributes new evidence to the debate regarding the issue of the universality of moral development. Several earlier studies suggested that moral development is a universal phenomenon and is mainly determined by children's levels of cognitive development rather than social and situational factors (e.g., Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983; Edwards, 1981; Kohlberg, 1964; Turiel, Edwards, & Kohlberg, 1978). However, recent findings (for reviews, see Boyes & Walker, 1988, and Shweder et al., 1987), in line with the present results, indicated that moral development is a highly contextualized process (Baumrind, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Harari & McDavid, 1969; Snarey, 1985; Walker, 1989; Walker, de Vries, & Trevethan, 1987; Walker & Taylor, 1991) and is affected by the culture and/or social environment in which children are socialized (Dien, 1982; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Harkness, Edwards, & Super, 1981; Ma, 1988; Miller & Goodnow, 1990; Shweder, Jensen, & Goldstein, 1990; Tietjen & Walker, 1985). In light of the current evidence, it seems reasonable to propose that, although children's cognitive ability plays an undeniable role, cultural and social factors are also key determinants in children's moral development (Shweder et al., 1987).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the participating children, their parents, and their schools for their cooperation and support. We are also very grateful to Dr. Richard A. Shweder and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive suggestions. This research was supported by grants to the first and second authors from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

ADDRESSES AND AFFILIATIONS

Corresponding author: Kang Lee, Department of Psychology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6; e-mail: Kang@pavlov.psyc.queensu.ca. Catherine Ann Cameron is at the University of New Brunswick, Canada; Fen Xu and Genyao Fu are at Hangzhou University, P.R. China; and Julie Board is at Queen's University, Canada.

APPENDIX STORIES

1. Prosocial Behavior/Truth-Telling Stories

A. The Physical Story

Here is Jenny. When Jenny was out at recess, she saw that the school yard was littered with garbage, so she picked up all the pieces she could find and threw them in the litter bin.

(Question 1: Is what Jenny did good or naughty?)

So Jenny cleaned the school yard, and at the end of recess, the teacher said to her students, "I notice that the school yard is now nice and clean." The teacher then asked Jenny, "Do you know who cleaned the yard?" Jenny said to her teacher, "I did it."

(Question 2: Is what Jenny said to her teacher good or naughty?)

B. The Social Story

Here is Mark. Mark knew that his friend, Timmy, had lost his lunch money on the way to school and now had no money to buy his lunch. When Timmy left his desk, Mark secretly put some of his own money in Timmy's desk so Timmy could buy some lunch.

(Question 1: Is what Mark did good or naughty?)

So Mark left some money for Timmy, and when Timmy found the money and told his teacher, the teacher said to the class, "Timmy just told me that someone has given him money so he can now buy his lunch." The teacher then asked Mark, "Do you know who left the money for Timmy?" Mark said to his teacher, "I did it."

(Question 2: Is what Mark said to his teacher good or naughty?)

2. Prosocial Behavior/Lie-Telling Stories

A. The Physical Story

Here is Alex. Alex's class had to stay inside at recess time because of bad weather, so Alex decided to tidy up the classroom for his teacher.

(Question 1: Is what Alex did good or naughty?)

So Alex cleaned the classroom, and when the teacher returned after recess, she said to her students, "Oh, I see that someone has cleaned the classroom for me." The teacher then asked Alex, "Do you know who cleaned the classroom?" Alex said to his teacher, "I did not do it."

(Question 2: Is what Alex said to his teacher good or naughty?)

B. The Social Story

Here is Kelly. Kelly knew that her friend, Anne, had lost her money for the class trip and now could not go on the trip with the rest of her class. When Anne hung up her coat, Kelly secretly put some of her own money in Anne's pocket so Anne could go on the trip.

(Question 1: Is what Kelly did good or naughty?)

So Kelly left the money for Anne, and when Anne found the money and told her teacher, the teacher said to the class, "Anne just told me that someone has given her money so she can now go on the trip." The teacher then asked Kelly, "Do you know who left the money for Anne?" Kelly said to her teacher, "I did not do it."

(Question 2: Is what Kelly said to her teacher good or naughty?)

3. Antisocial Behavior/Truth-Telling Stories

A. The Physical Story

Here is Ryan. Ryan wanted to make paper airplanes so he tore some pages out of a storybook from the library.

(Question 1: Is what Ryan did good or naughty?)

So Ryan tore the pages from a storybook, and when the teacher noticed the missing pages in the book, she said to the class, "I see that someone has torn some pages from this book." The teacher then asked Ryan, "Do you know who tore out the pages?" Ryan said to his teacher, "I did it."

(Question 2: Is what Ryan said to his teacher good or naughty?)

B. The Social Story

Here is Katie. Katie wanted to play with the skipping rope during gym class but discovered that one of her classmates, Sherry, was already playing with it. Katie told Sherry that she wanted the skipping rope, and when Sherry said no, Katie pushed her to the ground and made her cry.

(Question 1: Is what Katie did good or naughty?)

So Katie pushed Sherry and made her cry, and when the teacher came over to see if Sherry was alright, she said, "Oh dear, Sherry's been hurt." The teacher then asked Katie, "Do you know who just hurt Sherry?" Katie said to her teacher, "I did it."

(Question 2: Is what Sherry said to her teacher good or naughty?)

4. Antisocial Behavior/Lie-Telling Stories

A. The Physical Story

Here is Shelly. Shelly wanted to draw some pictures, so she took one of the story books from the library and scribbled all over the pages.

(Question 1: *Is what Shelly did good or naughty?*)

So Shelly drew pictures all over the pages in the story book, and when the teacher noticed the scribbled pages, she said to the class, "I see that someone has scribbled all over the pages in this book." The teacher then asked Shelly, "Do you know who scribbled on the pages?" Shelly said to her teacher, "I did not do it."

(Question 2: *Is what Shelly said to her teacher good or naughty?*)

B. The Social Story

Here is Paul. A new boy, named Jimmy, had just joined Paul's class, and Paul decided that he did not like him. Paul went over to Jimmy, and when the teacher was not looking, Paul pushed Jimmy to the ground and made him cry.

(Question 1: *Is what Paul did good or naughty?*)

So Paul pushed Jimmy and made him cry, and when the teacher came over to see if Jimmy was all right, she said, "Oh dear, Jimmy's been hurt." The teacher then asked Paul, "Do you know who just hurt Jimmy?" Paul said to his teacher, "I did not do it."

(Question 2: *Is what Paul said to his teacher good or naughty?*)

REFERENCES

- Baumrind, D. (1978). A dialectical materialist's perspective on knowing social reality. In W. Damon (Ed.), *New directions for child development: Moral development* (No. 2, pp. 61–82). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Binet, A. (1896). Psychology of prestidigitation. *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of Smithsonian Institution*, 1894, 555–571.
- Berndt, T. J., & Berndt, E. G. (1975). Children's use of motives and intentionality in person perception and moral judgment. *Child Development*, 46, 904–912.
- Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. New York: Random House.
- Bond, M. H. (1986). *Lifting one of the last bamboo curtains: Review of the psychology of the Chinese people*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Bond, M. H., Leung, K., & Wan, K.-C. (1982). The social impact of self-effacing attributions: The Chinese case. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 118, 157–166.
- Boyes, M. C., & Walker, L. J. (1988). Implications of cultural diversity for the universality claims of Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. *Human Development*, 31, 44–59.
- Burton, R. V., & Strichartz, A. F. (1991). Children on the stand: The obligation to speak the truth. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 12, 121–128.
- Bussey, K. (1992). Lying and truthfulness: Children's definitions, standards, and evaluative reactions. *Child Development*, 63, 129–137.
- California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. (1990). *Toward a state of esteem*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.
- Coleman, L., & Kay, P. (1981). Prototype semantics: The English word *lie*. *Language*, 57, 26–44.
- Colby, A., Kohlberg, L., Gibbs, J., & Lieberman, M. (1983). A longitudinal study of moral development. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 48(1–2, Serial No. 200).
- D'Andrade, R. (1987). A folk model of the mind. In D. Holland & N. Quinn (Eds.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 112–150). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davin, D. (1991). The early childhood education of the only child generation in urban China. In I. Epstein (Ed.), *Chinese education: Problems, policies, and prospects* (pp. 42–65). New York: Garland.
- Dien, D. S. (1982). A Chinese perspective on Kohlberg's theory of moral development. *Developmental Review*, 2, 331–341.
- Domino, G., & Hannah, M. T. (1987). A comparative analysis of social values of Chinese and American children. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 18, 58–77.
- Early Childhood Consultants in Collaboration with the Members of the Kindergarten Curriculum Advisory Committee. (1991). *Young children learning: A teacher's guide to learning* (2d ed.). Fredericton: New Brunswick Department of Education.
- Edwards, C. P. (1981). The development of moral reasoning in cross-cultural perspective. In R. H. Monroe & B. B. Whiting (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural human development*. New York: Garland.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilsenan, M. (1976). Lying, honor, and contradiction. In B. Kapferer (Ed.), *Essays in social anthropology: Vol. 1. Trans-action and meaning: Directions in the anthropology of exchange and symbolic behavior* (pp. 191–219). Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Goodman, G. S. (1984). Children's testimony in historical perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 40, 9–31.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York: Academic Press.
- Haidt, J., Koller, S. H., & Dias, M. G. (1993). Affect, culture, and morality, or is it wrong to eat your dog? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 613–628.
- Hall, G. S. (1891). Children's lies. *Pedagogical Seminary*, 1, 211–218.
- Harari, H., & McDavid, J. W. (1969). Situational influence on moral justice: A study of "finking." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 11, 240–244.
- Harkness, S., Edwards, C. P., & Super, C. M. (1981). Social roles and moral reasoning: A case study in a rural African community. *Developmental Psychology*, 17, 595–603.
- Hayhoe, R. (1984). The evolution of modern Chinese educational institutions. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Contemporary Chinese education* (pp. 26–46). Armonk, NY: Sharp.

- Ho, D. Y. F., & Chiu, C. Y. (1994). Component ideas of individualism, collectivism, and social organization: An application in the study of Chinese culture. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S. C. Choi, & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method, and applications* (pp. 137–156). London: Sage.
- Hyman, R. (1989). The psychology of deception. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *40*, 133–154.
- Kohlberg, L. (1964). Development of moral character and moral ideology. In M. Hoffman & L. Hoffman (Ed.), *Review of child development research*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kupfer, J. (1982). The moral presumption against lying. *Review of Metaphysics*, *36*, 103–126.
- Lee, K., & Ross, H. (1997). The concept of lying in adolescents and young adults: Testing Sweetser's folkloristic model. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *43*, 255–270.
- Lo, B. L. C. (1984). Primary education: A two-track system for dual tasks. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Contemporary Chinese education* (pp. 47–64). Armonk, NY: Sharp.
- Ma, H. K. (1988). The Chinese perspective on moral development. *International Journal of Psychology*, *23*, 201–227.
- Miller, P. J., & Goodnow, J. J. (1990). Cultural practices: Toward an integration of culture and development. In J. J. Goodnow, P. J. Miller, & F. Kessel (Eds.), *Cultural practices as contexts for development* (pp. 5–16, New Directions for Child Development, No. 67). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ochs Keenan, E. (1976). On the universality of conversational implicatures. *Language in Society*, *5*, 67–80.
- Peterson, C. C. (1995). The role of perceived intention to deceive in children's and adults' concepts of lying. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *13*, 237–260.
- Peterson, C. C., Peterson, J. L., & Seeto, D. (1983). Developmental changes in ideas about lying. *Child Development*, *54*, 1529–1535.
- Piaget, J. (1965). *The moral judgment of the child*. New York: MacMillan. (Original work published 1932)
- Price, R. (1992). Moral-political education and modernization. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Education and modernization: The Chinese experience* (pp. 211–238). New York: Pergamon.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (1996). *The optimistic child*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shweder, R. A., Jensen, L. A., & Goldstein, W. M. (1990). Who sleeps by whom revisited: A method for extracting the moral goods implicit in practice. In J. J. Goodnow, P. J. Miller, & F. Kessel (Eds.), *Cultural practices as contexts for development* (pp. 5–16, New Directions for Child Development, No. 67). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shweder, R. A., Mahapatra, M., & Miller, J. (1987). Culture and moral development. In J. Kagan & S. Lamb (Eds.), *The emergence of morality in young children*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Snarey, J. R. (1985). Cross-cultural universality of social-moral development: A critical review of Kohlbergian research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *97*, 202–232.
- Strichartz, A. F., & Burton, R. V. (1990). Lies and truth: A study of the development of the concept. *Child Development*, *61*, 211–220.
- Sweetser, E. E. (1987). The definition of lie: An examination of the folk models underlying a semantic prototype. In D. Holland (Ed.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 43–66). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tietjen, A. M., & Walker, L. J. (1985). Moral reasoning and leadership among men in a Papua New Guinea society. *Developmental Psychology*, *21*, 982–992.
- Turiel, E., Edwards, C. P., & Kohlberg, L. (1978). Moral development in Turkish children, adolescents, and young adults. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *9*, 75–86.
- Walker, L. J. (1989). A longitudinal study of moral reasoning. *Child Development*, *60*, 157–166.
- Walker, L. J., de Vries, B., & Trevethan, S. D. (1987). Moral stages and moral orientations in real-life and hypothetical dilemmas. *Child Development*, *58*, 842–858.
- Walker, L. J., & Taylor, H. H. (1991). Family interactions and the development of moral reasoning. *Child Development*, *62*, 262–283.
- Weinreich-Haste, H. (1984). Morality, social meaning, and rhetoric: The social context of moral reasoning. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Morality, moral behavior, and moral development* (pp. 325–347). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Wimmer, H., Gruber, S., & Perner, J. (1984). Young children's conception of lying: Lexical realism—moral subjectivism. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *37*, 1–30.
- Zhu, Z. X. (Ed.). (1982). *Issues in child developmental psychology* (in Chinese). Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.