"After this I learned….".

Moral and Cultural Voices in Chinese Children's Personal Narratives about

Peer Conflict

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2013

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in Psychology

This Honors paper by <u>Jiawen Li </u>has been read

and approved for Honors in <u>   Psychology   </u>.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Marsha Walton for her guidance throughout the years of work that went into this Honors project. I am so grateful to Dr. Walton for venturing into the world of Chinese children's narratives with me, sharing her thoughtful advice about every aspect of the research process and for supporting my passions wholeheartedly in all circumstances. Special thanks also go to the members of Dr. Walton's research team – particularly Lin Qiu, Annika Wuerfel, Bhavna Kansal, Tara Connors and Eliza Hendrix– for their insightful feedback and many hours spent coding stories.

I am particularly indebted to Dr. Yeh Hsueh of University of Memphis for his role as a dedicated advisor and his insightful advice in the entire research process. I am also grateful to Dr. Chris Wetzel for continuously providing thoughtful guidance and expertise for the project. Additional thanks go to our research team alumni—Regan Humphrey, Alexis Harris and Christie Brewer, whose works had been a constant guidance and inspiration for this research. I would also like to acknowledge all faculty members in psychology and department assistant Christy Waldkirch for supporting this work.

Finally, I am very grateful to the children and teachers from Shenzhen who participated in our study. The students shared themselves so willingly with us, and their stories are incredibly compelling. I have learned so much from listening to their voices. These children have been my teachers and I believe they will continue to be for this year and beyond.

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Abstract

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Bruner (1990) proposed that sharing personal narratives is critical to social and moral development. Stories are told when something goes awry in human interaction. As we tell stories, we attempt to position ourselves vis-à-vis the other actors in our stories, those listening to our story, and the standards and norms of our larger cultural traditions (Bamberg, 2003). Although considerable work has examined parent-child narrative practices in China, no studies have looked at conflict narratives in Chinese elementary schoolers. We have studied 152 stories by Chinese 4th – 6th graders about "a conflict that really happened to you." Quantitative results showed unexpected grade effects, with firth graders exceeding the older and younger children in their reports of moral lessons, puzzlement and positive resolution of their conflicts. They were the most skilled appropriators of mainstream culture and values that approximate Confucian teachings. Qualitative analyses revealed children's use of other resources such as popular culture to form distinctive cultural voices. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses guide our discussion of children's use of narrative to position the self vis-à-vis cultural traditions undergoing rapid change in China.

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I planned to make up with Huang at night. But before I left home, it occurred to me that it was not my fault in the first place, why should I apologize to her? She should apologize to me. I stepped back. As I turned around, I thought: well, she is just spoiled. She meant no harm. As I was thinking about apologizing to her, the previous thought emerged in my head again. These two thoughts were like angel and demon competing in my head. I kept thinking: should I go or not? As I was wondering, I heard someone ring the bell. It was Huang. I asked what she was doing here. She said "sorry, it was my fault this morning, let's be friends again!" I was thrilled, approving such a good idea. At night, we watched many cartoons. We were exhilarated! It is so good to have friend! Friends dispel your trouble, share your joy and comfort your sadness. We should cherish our friendship because it is the most beautiful thing in the world!

This story, written by a 5th grader in China raises compelling questions about peer conflict in middle childhood and the role of narrative in moral development. This child's story reflects many cultural values of the community such as concern over social relationships, social perceptions of self, and acquiring moral lessons through self-evaluation. The author eventually comes to a moral lesson after this careful self-evaluation process.

In the present study, I have examined this kind of moral work in stories of peer conflict by Chinese children. I hope to expand our understanding of moral development in middle childhood. In particular, I have looked for critiques and justifications of self and others, moral lessons and moral puzzlement – all features of personal narratives that may reflect moral development in middle childhood. I am interested in the socializing role of narrative in "bringing children into culture" (Bruner, 1990). This interest has led me to consider whether children's reports of their own conflict reflect the Confucian values of social harmony, attention to others, and moral correctness, and to examine ways

children may appropriate other values such as ones from political discourse, and

contemporary Chinese popular culture. In the first section below, I present the theoretical

grounding for the present study. Following that, I present research to illustrate why

narrative is important for conflict resolution and for our understanding of moral

development in middle childhood. Subsequently, I review research about the role of

narrative in acculturation, then show how narrative is used in Chinese families as a

socializing tool to align children with their cultural traditions. Next, I elaborate on the

concepts of cultural voice and master narratives, regarding how children appropriate

language from their community to serve their own purposes and construct their identities.

Then, I demonstrate evidence that supports modern Chinese children's appropriation of

Confucian ethics. Finally, I examine instances when children adopt other cultural values

in the society.

Theoretical Grounding: A Narrative and Sociocultural Approach to Moral Socialization

The theoretical grounding for this work is the theory of narrative articulated by

Bruner (1990). Bruner identified two qualities of narrative that make it critical for the

examination of moral development in peer conflict. First, while all cultures contain a set

of norms, they must also contain a set of interpretive procedures. These interpretations

render meanings to the inevitable departures from norms that will happen when people

interact (Bruner, 1990). When something undesirable happens, causing a conflict, we tell

a story to explain our motives and to speculate about reasons for the others' behaviors.

Since stories are evoked by unexpected, often difficult-to-explain and rarely neutral

events, the teller of a story is called upon to take a moral stance. The storyteller will

present and evaluate the report-worthiness of the story, as well as justify and critique his

or her own behavior and the behavior of others. Stories achieve their meanings by forging links between the exceptional and the ordinary, interpreting the inexplicable in comprehensive forms. This is why narratives play a unique role in conflict resolution and offer a promise for constructing peace. Recounting experiences of peer conflict, children inevitably participate in this process of making moral evaluations and interpretation of the out-of-ordinary incident. When children have the opportunity to defend their own construal, they also get to learn others' judgments about the same situation. In this sense, a child's improvement in narrative skill is "not simply a mental achievement, but an achievement of social practice that lends stability to the child's social life." (Bruner, 1990, p.68).

The second quality of story sharing is that it enables us to share with other members of our culture an understanding of motives and emotions, as well as goals and ideas that are used to make sense of human action. According to Bruner (1990), telling stories to children and allowing children to create their own stories is a critical part of "bringing children into culture" (p. 84). This is where Bruner's narrative theory converges with Rogoff's theory of cultural community. According to Rogoff (2003), a community takes shape as people attempt to accomplish something together. One of the crucial building blocks of a community is a structured and constant communication with shared, though sometimes contested meanings. The community develops through a relay of cultural practices and traditions over generations. While individuals involved are modulated in the process of transmission, as cultural participants, they also transcend community traditions and values over generations. In this analysis, cultural community is in a constant developing existence. Culture here is conceptualized as the practices that

guide participation in dynamically related cultural communities. Story-sharing is one of these practices, a process that relays cultural values and traditions over generations.

Bruner (1990) argued that the practice of sharing stories and making negotiations about divergent moral commitments is a part of every culture. Narrative is the key cultural practice that socializes children into the meaning systems of their culture (Bruner; 1990; Engel, 1995). Children come into this negotiation as they participate more and more fully in the cultural practices of their communities. In accordance with Bruner's analysis of narrative and Rogoff's approach to studying culture, my work seeks to understand a dynamic relationship between children and their cultural communities. As children are socialized by cultural values embedded in narratives, they can also transform the traditional systems. As they create narrative accounts of their conflicts, children may both appropriate and resist the norms of their cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003; Engel, 1995). Since moral evaluation constitutes a major part of social norms, moral analysis made in peer conflict stories can effectively capture children's succession and modification of cultural values. In the context of modern Chinese society, a prominent meaning system that might be appropriated in children's stories is Confucian ethics, particularly those concerning interpersonal relationships and conflict management. After considering the importance of peer conflict narratives below, I will further examine relevant Confucian principles that apply in these contexts.

Narrative as a Means to Understand Moral Development in Middle Childhood:

Narrative Accounts of Peer Conflict

Starting from childhood, mistreatment and conflict are inevitable in the course of social interaction. According to Bruner (1990), storytellers both explain their own

motives and speculate about reasons for the others' behaviors as they create narrative

accounts of their experience. These explanations and speculations in a conflict setting are

seldom neutral or undisputed. As children recount their experiences of interpersonal

conflict, they ultimately make moral judgments through their understandings of the

situation (Wainryb, 2000). These narrative construals of their experience will reflect

children's moral reasoning about the incident. When children face dilemmas or disputes

between peers about what is right and what is wrong, their narrative accounts will reflect

their moral puzzlement and provide a window that will allow us to understand their

reasoning.

Wainryb, Brehl & Matwin (2005) studied oral narratives from preschool, 1st, 5th,

and 10th graders about two experiences: a 'victim' experience, when they had been hurt

by a peer, and a 'perpetrator' experience, when they had hurt a peer. The research found

that children developed multiple moral, social, and personal concerns, which were often

demonstrated in conflict in their social lives. When children positioned themselves as the

perpetrators, they shifted their attention from their own experience to the victims' in ways

that made their accounts less coherent than their victim accounts. When they positioned

themselves as victims, they narrowly focused on their own experience. Narrative

accounts of these conflict episodes provided a window that allowed these researchers to

see how children positioned themselves and others as moral actors.

One of the most fitting ages for studying moral development in narrative forms is

middle childhood. Important theorists of moral development such as Piaget (1932) and

Kohlberg (1984) have noted that middle childhood is a time when critical moral

development takes place largely because this is a time when children learn to construe

conflicts and to negotiate moral issues on their own, relatively unconstrained by adult intervention. These features make middle childhood a particularly interesting time to examine peer conflict narratives in order to understand children's moral lives. At this time, children start to take intentions, context and situation into consideration rather than simply assessing the "rules" as they move toward a more interpretive morality. Both Kohlberg (1984) and Piaget (1932) saw middle childhood as the time when children's morality moves from a heteronomous start (adherent to rules and authority) to an autonomous maturity (taking the perspectives of others into account). In addition to acquiring morality from adults, children negotiate morality as they join in the cultural practices that create a moral order. Thus, peer interaction becomes the crucial factor in moral development as children begin to act with motivation from an internal sense of what is right and wrong, and based less on external motivation stemming from an awareness of the rules, rewards and punishments that govern much of early childhood action (Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1932).

Previous research has examined moral development in conflict narratives of school-aged children in the U.S. For example, Walton & Brewer (2001) examined narratives written by inner-city fourth- through sixth-graders, asking them about a time when they experienced an interpersonal conflict. They found that very few children wrote about conflicts in which adults intervened. When adults did intervene, authors of these stories were less likely to make moral justification for others and moral critiques of self than children who wrote about conflicts with no adult participation. This reveals that the social scene in middle childhood is largely dominated by interactions with peers. Children no longer simply obey adults' moral teachings but start to appropriate morality

in participation of cultural activities. This finding is consistent with Piaget's notion that interaction between equals plays a key role in moral development (Piaget, 1932).

In another study of personal conflict, Harris and Walton (2009) examined fourth to sixth graders' written narratives about conflicts they had experienced. The researchers found that successful conflict resolutions at this age mostly originated from children's own problem solving through interaction and communication with equals, rather than from directly soliciting adult assistance. Some children described seeking adult help; others described withdrawing from the situation or retaliating. The most sophisticated strategies involved efforts to communicate or to reconcile through apologies or restoration. For each story, the researchers coded the extent to which the author made explicit efforts to justify or to critique the self or the behavior of other characters. The descriptions of communication or reconciliation strategies occurred along with the adoption of an explicit moral evaluative stance. Children who included the work of justifying their own behaviors or the behaviors of others and children who made critiques of their own behavior were more likely to describe successful conflict resolution. These various moral analyses clearly reflected children's active learning and practice of the moral values observed in their cultural communities at this special developmental stage.

Together, all the studies above show how American children's narratives reflect their moral reasoning and judgments in middle childhood. These rich results suggest that the study of narratives may also yield interesting results in my investigation of Chinese children's moral development in middle childhood.

Narrative and Cultural Socialization: The Appropriation of Cultural Voices

As we think of children as participants in the moral discourse of their culture, we inevitably need to examine the cultural contexts of their lives and the prevailing interpretive framework of the culture they enter. Their narratives reflect growing moral sophistication and increasingly shared commitments to the moral value of the cultural community that they enter. In the process of achieving narratives skills, children not only master the language but also enter human culture by learning forms of rhetoric and interpretation (Bruner, 1990). As children enter middle childhood, they claim a more active role in the appropriation and reconstruction of the dynamic traditions of their cultural community. Story-sharing is one of the practices that captures such movement (Rogoff, 2003).

Walton, Harris and Davidson (2009) showed how children's narratives reflect social norms in corresponding cultural contexts. They examined stories by children in two neighborhoods, high-stress and moderate-stress, which differed in poverty level, crime rate, and school performance. The high-stress neighborhood had 96% of children living in poverty, and school performance was at the 36th percentile on standardized achievement tests. The moderate-stress neighborhood had 51% of children in poverty and school performance was at the 54th percentile. In the high stress neighborhood, children described more aggression but gave fewer moral evaluations compared to children in the moderate stress neighborhood. In both neighborhoods, although boys appeared to engage in more aggression and violence than did girls, their aggression was described as normative, without moral evaluation. This illustrates how children's moral analysis reflects community norms about violence and gender.

Walton and Brewer (2001), in addition to their findings on how conflicts

provoked moral analysis, found that children in the higher-risk neighborhood as compared to the moderate-risk environment, were less likely to use psychological explanations for aggression, less likely to attend to epistemological issues, and more likely to report severe forms of aggression in their stories as they aged. These children did not recognize a need to create explanations of their violent or unjust experiences, and therefore they presented such events as ordinary. The authors interpreted this as evidence of problems associated with the failure of sufficiently incorporating children into the moral discourse that accompanies narrative practices.

Research above has demonstrated the close relationship between the moral discourse children undertake and the moral education in their surrounding community. Together they suggest that an intricate relationship lies between language learning and internalization of the values and customs of their cultural communities. Bakhtin (1981) also noted this culture-dependent quality of language. Although most may think of linguistic meanings as abstract, Bakhtin (1981) proposed that language in use is always socio-ideologically concrete. Each word resides in and transmits through a specific context. It may have a particular taste of a profession, a time or an age group. Linguistic expressions are never neutral or impersonal. They are always inherited socially and repopulated by a person with a specific intention in a specific time of a relationship. Only when individual speakers utilize and reproduce the language with their own intentions do words have meaning. Each utterance is always addressed towards an object and an interlocutor. Personal meanings are created as the person positions the self toward the object and the interlocutors within the specific context. Within each different dialogical communication, the speakers are engaged in a unique meaning making process as they

address a different interlocutor in a different context, which creates a specific positioning toward the audiences (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). For Bakhtin (1981), the subjective "I" is created within the intersubjective experiences with others. While addressing different audiences and topics of a dialogue, each person possesses multiple I-positions (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). For example, a student will take different I-positions, and will adopt a separate voice when addressing a teacher in the classroom than when addressing classmates outside of class. The same student will appropriate a different voice when telling about those interactions at a family dinner, and yet another while bargaining over the price of an object she wishes to buy. Bakhtin (1981) called this quality of human communication heteroglossia. Within the heteroglot world we reside as Bakhtin (1981) described, each utterance is rooted in the unique social context that it resides in, and is further populated by individualized intention.

Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) theory of the dialogic self and on research and theory on the development of authorial voice; Humphrey et al. (in press) examined how children in a highly diverse cultural setting appropriated the metaphors and idioms of their cultural community and used them for their own purposes. They introduced the term "cultural voice" to refer to an author's appropriation of idiom, metaphor, and other discursive devices that identify the author with some cultural community. Cultural voice emerges when children use language in ways that demonstrate membership in particular sociocultural groups. Humphrey et al. (in press) showed that cultural voice (colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions in particular) has implications beyond writing skills. The ability to do this was associated with positive academic and peer adjustment. Such ability also contributes to engaging writing, an individual writing style and the

establishment of self-hood (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994). Mastery of certain slang

vocabularies implies a person's association with a particular peer group and his or her

social status (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Children construct their identities as they associate

themselves with their cultural groups. They appropriate a variety of voices they hear as

they become more fully-fledged participants in such discursive practices such as arguing,

insult-games, bargaining, negotiating and story-sharing.

   Moore, Bindler, and Pandich (2010) found similar evidence in Chinese society.

They noted that Chinese youth nowadays have created a new body of "slangs" that

bridged the Internet world, popular culture, and the written languages. Through such

active reconstruction, Chinese youth form identities distinct from their parents'

generation. The main sources for these slangs include film, music, TV and the Internet.

Young people developed quirky language forms used on the Internet, words focused on

campus life, swearwords, and nicknames both for solidarity and aggressive purposes.

These metaphorical, vivid, and trendy cultural voices are windows to the youth culture.

They become both identity markers and group bonding for the millennial youth.

   While children adopt the expressive styles and cultural voices of their

communities, they also adapt forms of interpretation that pre-exist in their sociocultural

context, communicated in master narratives (Bamberg, 2004a) or dominant discourse

(Gee, 1992). Master narratives originate from myth, folklore, religious and literary

traditions, and they are constantly repopulated in popular culture. They may constrain

personal narratives as they hold the narrators to culturally rooted standards, as well as

notions of rights and wrongs that have been taken for granted (Talbot, Bibace, Bokhout,

& Bamberg, 1996). Constraining the subjects' agency, these familiar, prototypical stories

provide guidance to human action (Bamberg, 2004b). People may be lost without master

narratives as they structure how the world is intelligible (Bamberg, 2004b). Constructing

a narrative allows people to present themselves against the expected cultural background,

and social identities emerge as story-tellers position themselves vis-à-vis the social and

cultural expectations (Schiffrin, 1996). For example, innumerable stories, movies,

cartoons, songs, and other cultural products exist as a variation on a master narrative that

involves a fragile or delicate female who is sometimes overcome and sometimes rescued

by a stronger, more powerful male. A child may view this story line as simplified and not

true particularly when it comes to her own experiences. Aware of this master narrative,

the child may interpret her own experience as consistent or inconsistent with expectations.

In her personal account of being the strong girl who won a fight over three boys, she may

position herself as a woman in the dominant role, appropriating and transforming the

expected plot line. As they construct their personal narratives within their existing

cultural frame, children can choose to embrace, display neutrality or resist the master

narratives. Through such active positioning, children develop both their own narrative

plots and personal identities. Through this process, children come to acquire the

discourses they control. They substantiate a discourse as they act or speak the historically

and socially bound discourses, and ultimately change them over time. Such active

reconstructions of pre-existing discourses are reflected in children's own narrative plots

and in the positions or personal identities they adopt in their stories.

Narrative as a Means to Socialize Young Children— Transmission of Confucian Values

in China.

A rich body of literature has examined moral development in conflict narratives construed by school-aged children in the U.S. However, I have not found research that examined Chinese children's conflict narratives in relation to moral development. Previous studies on narrative development in Chinese children has mainly focused on the narrative transmission of cultural values to preschoolers. Narrative in these studies takes the form of parent-child oral communication. An interesting body of work regarding Chinese children's narratives specifically explored narratives' socializing function to convey moral and social standards in families (Miller, Fung & Mintz, 1996; Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang, 1997; Miller, Sandel, Liang & Fung, 2001). Findings have shown that narrative is used as a means to socialize young children to cultural values on self-evaluation, perfection and moral correctness.

Fung & Chen (2001) found that within Chinese families, children's past transgressions are used to invoke moral and social rules, and personal story-telling was not only to relive the child's past but also to prepare for a better self in the future (Fung & Chen, 2001). Miller et al. (1996) found that personal experiences of two-year-old Chinese children were interpreted within an explicitly evaluative, overtly self-critical framework maintained by various members in the family. Within such a framework, the caregivers structured the stories in a way to invoke social rules and to retrieve other's support against the misbehaved child. The older sibling maintained the structure by aligning with the parents as authority figures. The children themselves also preserved this framework as they confessed, kept silent or expressed a sense of shame. These findings demonstrate that discipline via oral narratives begins early in Chinese children's lives and

that evaluation and criticism were rooted in early socialization practices in the family.

Likewise, Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang (1997) analyzed narratives of past experiences in Taiwan and American families. They found that, compared to their European American counterparts, Chinese narrations were more likely to end with a didactic coda that articulated a moral lesson -- often a rule or the implication of violating a rule. For instance, such coda may include "Is it right? Saying dirty words is not good." "Next time I won't do it again." In addition, interviews and longitudinal observations of spontaneous home interactions among Taiwanese families revealed that children's transgressions were treated as a window for "opportunity education" (Miller et al., 1997). The caregivers not only corrected the children at the time they misbehaved but also took advantage of the occasion by bringing the lesson to its fullest effect by shaming the child. Through this educational opportunity, parents motivated their children to be responsible for themselves and strive to a better self in the future.

Taking these findings together, parents' seemingly mundane childrearing routines involve the crucial process of socialization, the process by which the social world tries to guide children toward the acquisition of desired beliefs and behaviors according to cultural values and norms (Li, 2012). The evaluative and self-critical framework in the families and the prevalence of didactic coda in parents and young children's narratives reflect the pursuit of self-perfection and personal growth rooted in Confucian values. According to the Confucian ethics, the highest level of self-cultivation is the concept of *Ren* (Li, 2012), to be a gentleperson or to be a truly *Ren* (translated as benevolent, humane) person who commits to becoming the most genuine and humane person he or she can become, requires a path of self-perfection (Li, 2012). In the pursuit of *Ren*,

mistakes and failures are not reasons to stop self-improving, but rather are the reason for

further self-perfection. With the sense of shame and guilt obtained from family

socialization, one maintains the self-corrective capacity that motivates personal growth

(Li, 2012).

In addition to the emphasis on self-perfection and self-critiques, Confucius also

focused on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships. Over two thousand years,

Confucian values have been at the core of maintaining successful working relationships

among a large and diverse population in China (Xiao, 2002). The constitutive rules of *Li,*

meaning the Chinese practice of propriety or rite, provide a powerful cultural mechanism

for social interaction and conflict management (Xiao, 2002). Observing such rules, social

interaction and conflict management do not rely primarily on the interests of the

individuals involved, but rather on the harmony of the social whole. The importance of

one being accepted as a gentleperson by one's community exceeds the importance of how

much compromise one can gain from others in a social interaction (Xiao, 2002).

The concepts mentioned above (*Li* and *Ren*) are overarching moral principles that

transcend individual human relationships. There are also Confucian values pertaining to

parent-child relationships, sibling relationships and friendships (Li, 2012). Within the

ideal parent-child relationship, parents are fully committed to children's welfare while

children express filial piety—the honest love and respect towards parents. Moral

obligation lies within this mutual relationship. The virtue for sibling relationships is *Ti*,

known as sibling love and responsibility. The older siblings are responsible for caring for

the younger and the younger ones remain receptive to the care and guidance of the older

siblings. As for friendship, trust is the value in guidance. Confucian connotation of trust

reflects on the persistence of friendship through both good and bad times. True friendship maintained by trust is not susceptible to changes in the circumstances (Li, 2012). Altogether, these subsets of Confucian virtues in individual human relationships reflect Confucius's emphasis on family and overall attentiveness to social interdependence.

Accordingly, considering the pursuit of *Ren* and *Li*, narratives about conflict in Chinese children might be especially attentive to self-cultivation, self-perfection and self-critique. As children mature, they may internalize these cultural traditions in more sophisticated ways. When recounting their conflict experiences, Chinese children may be especially attentive to finding a moral lesson in order to pursue a better self. To the extent that Confucian teaching has influenced these children, I would also expect to see children's attention to Confucian virtues when describing specific social relationships in construal of narratives. Children may reflect on the role of filial piety in parent-child relationships, values of *Ti* in sibling relationships, and trust in friendship. I would also expect that the successful resolution of conflicts in Chinese children's stories would be related to the tendency to attend to these matters.

However compelling it may be to interpret Chinese socialization practices in light of Confucianism, an understanding of the depth and complexity of Confucianism disallows the simplistic notion that Confucianism motivates a collectivist rather than an individualistic society. Confucianism covers family, society, the moral person, self-fulfillment, and happiness, among other things (Suzuki, 1980). It is simplistic to reduce Confucianism to a philosophical justification for collectivism (Hu, 2007). The present study considers Confucian values in the specific context of conflict management, family and school socialization within the contemporary Chinese society. While Chinese

scholars have suggested that Confucianism encourages social orientation in interpersonal

relationships, they have also revealed its intellectual attention to a person's self rather

than to the external world (Li, 2012; Hu, 2007). This suggests that Confucian doctrine

has both individual and collective focus depending on specific circumstances. Liu (2003)

argued that Confucian ideology is neither individualistic nor collectivist as both

Confucius and Mencius (one of the most important Confucians after Confucius himself)

affirmed individuality and sociality. Together with filiality, these three dimensions

constitute a paradox for Confucianism. As I look for evidence that Chinese children

appropriate Confucian values in their narratives, I do not intend the superficial

interpretation that this is evidence of collectivism, nor would I be inclined to judge a

child who does not rely on Confucian teaching in certain domains (i.e. conflict

management) as "individualistic".

A Multiplicity of Cultural Voices: Inconsistencies with Confucian Values in Modern

Chinese Family Interactions and a Diversified Cultural Scene.

While the research presented above has implied that Chinese family socialization

nurtures values and behaviors consistent with Confucianism and group-oriented traditions,

recent studies seem to portray a different story. Wang (2008) conducted a longitudinal

investigation of native Chinese, Chinese American and European American children's

emotion knowledge and autobiographical memory across their preschool years.

Interestingly, not until the end of preschool years did native Chinese children's emotional

knowledge and autobiographical memory start to show conformity to the Confucian

tradition. At earlier time points, native Chinese children demonstrated greater similarities

to Euro-American children in both emotion knowledge and autobiographical memory

measures than did Chinese immigrant children. Wang suggested the enforcement of One

Child Policy in mainland China may be the primary reason for such a phenomenon. As

the only-child receives all the attention of parents and grandparents and is often indulged

at home, he or she may develop characteristics that are more individualistic and self-

focused, approximate to the Western features. It was the enculturation processes from the

day care and education centers that introduced these children to the social values of

cooperation, respect for rules, and interpersonal relationship.

Way, Okazaki, Zhao, Kim, Chen, Yoshikawa, Jia & Deng (in press) also noted

the recent changes in family socialization practices. Examining urban Chinese mothers'

parenting styles, they found that the mothering style has gone through considerable

changes in urban China. Quite different from the traditional parenting style shown in

research on Chinese family narratives, many of these urban Chinese mothers employ

permissive parenting. In contrast to the stereotypical Chinese authoritarian style, these

mothers prefer a friendship-like relationship with their children, similar to the common

Western parenting style. Way et al. (in press) suggested that the single-child situation

may have heightened the mothers' sensitivities to their children's happiness, which leads

to parenting strategies that were accommodating to the children's moods and wishes in

ways that were previously not considered within a traditional Confucian family structure

(Way et al., in press).

Vibrant changes have occurred within the social and cultural domains of China,

alongside the parenting and socialization practices. While Confucianism is the ideology

used by most Chinese and western researchers as the theoretical framework for Chinese

children's development, it is crucial to reconsider limitations to its applicability in

explaining contemporary Chinese society (Lau & Yeung, 1996; Hu, 2007). First of all,

other schools of thoughts such as Taoism and Buddhism have also been major influences

in Chinese culture for centuries. Meanwhile, as the nation experiences major

transformation, ideologies and cultural scenes have inevitably boomed and flourished.

Although the mainstream culture still encourages obedience and collective interest to

some extent, with the establishment of a market economy, Chinese society is more and

more pluralistic (Yang, 2006). Tolerance in the social and cultural atmosphere has

created immense space for choices and development. Children can now make

independent choices to adopt different values, knowledge and lifestyles. While

elementary school children are still in a relatively enclosed and protected environment

compared to older children and adolescents, they are situated in a richer cultural scene

compared to their previous generation. As Confucian teaching claims a prominent

influence in education, especially moral education, it represents part of the voice of

cultural authority (Hu, 2007). While children in 21st Century China receive standard

education at school and socialization at home, they are also under major influences of

their peer groups, the bigger community, popular culture and the macro political system

that are under constant changes. That is to say, in addition to the standard moral

education at school, which most approaches Confucian values, children also have access

to other cultural influences.

The rapid development of industrialization, urbanization and mass media has

altered cultural phenomena and forms in China (Yang, 2006). The boom of mass media

and Internet has provided tools for youth and children's popular culture. Since the 1990s,

information and communication technologies have both encouraged wider dissemination

of youth popular culture and youth's active participation in the culture. Moral education

in preparation of a young ethical Confucius is no longer the single focus of children's

lives. The availability of information and cultural tools enable children to create a cultural

scene that is unique to their own generation. For instance, China Central Television

started the children's channel at the end of 2003, broadcasting for 18 hours every day

(Yang, 2006). In particular, Internet popularization has put children on a nearly equal

ground with adults in terms of information acquisition. The growing popularity of mass

media equipped children with more access to the world, which is conducive to their

ability to learn about the world and to form their independent ideas (Yang, 2006).

The Present Study

Previous literature has established two possible outcomes that we may expect in

the present study. While studies of Chinese family narratives suggest a path in line with

Confucian traditions, recent research on changes in Chinese parenting implies the

possibility of children adopting behaviors and values different from the traditions. While

stories bring children into culture, they also provide opportunities for children to actively

appropriate and resist the norms of their cultural communities, as children claim

increasing autonomy by construing their own stories in middle childhood (Engel, 1995;

Rogoff, 2003). By studying Chinese preschool children's independent stories and

memories, Wang & Leichtman (2000) revealed how children internalized cultural values

that have been established through earlier socialization. They found children's narratives

were consistent with the value placed on social harmony, attention to others, and moral

correctness in the cultural community. This research is the only study I found that looked

at Chinese children as independent narrators. With ample evidence on the significance of

exploring moral development in middle childhood, and using conflict narratives as a means to understand moral development, it is valuable to extend the investigation to older Chinese children's narratives. To my knowledge, there has been no research published in English or in Chinese that examines Chinese children's personal narratives in middle childhood. In this study, I have examined stories by Chinese school children, considering their appropriation or deviation from Confucian cultural and moral values in a critical time of moral development.

Two approaches were taken to the examination of Chinese children's stories. First, following the work of Walton, Harris & Davidson (2009), Harris & Walton (2009), Walton & Brewer (2001), I analyzed several features of stories that index the moral work children do as they write. These included the explicitness of their critiques and justifications of self and other, their expressions of moral puzzlement, inclusion of a moral lesson and their resolution of the conflicts they describe. Grade related changes were traced in these features of stories, and which features commonly co-occur in the stories were considered.

In the first part of this study, I tested the following two hypotheses, which imply Chinese children's increasing appropriation of moral and social standards that approximates to the Confucian traditions and principles.

1. As children get older, they will do more explicit critiques and justifications, in particular, they will be more inclined to self-critique and to justify others.

2. As children get older, they will be more inclined to report moral puzzlement, moral lessons and positive resolutions of the conflicts they describe.

In a second approach, I used a constructivist grounded theory to identify the cultural voices and the master narratives children appropriate or resist as they talk about conflict (Charmaz, 2006). This analysis was guided by the expectation that Chinese children would adopt multiple cultural voices in addition to ones reflecting Confucian values. I expected that they would not only embrace but also resist master narratives. Their appropriation of popular culture would reflect a diversified modern identity and lifestyle.

Method

Participants

One hundred and fifty-two Chinese children (4th graders: 51; 5th graders: 54; 6th graders: 47) from Jingtian Primary School, Shenzhen, China, participated in the study. The school principal had chosen one class from each grade based on students and teachers' available schedule on the day of data collection. Children's ages range from 10 to 12 years old (4th graders: 10, 5th graders: 11, 6th graders: 12). There were 69 girls and 83 boys. All children came from a middle-class neighborhood in an urban city Shenzhen, China. Data were collected in accordance with procedures approved by the Rhodes IRB, and all work with the data has followed guidelines designed to secure confidentiality and privacy of the children and their families.

Procedure

During a 30-minute class session, the teacher first introduced the researcher to the children. The researcher informed the children of the study's purpose and the significance. The children were told that their peers, their parents and their teachers would not have access to their stories. Their stories were only for researchers who were

interested in "learning about what it is like to be your age." Then children were asked by the researcher to write about a conflict they have had with their peers in response to the prompt: "Write a story about a conflict that really happened to you. Think about an argument, a fight, or some kind of misunderstanding. Write everything you can remember about what happened from the beginning to the end" (The prompt and all instructions were given in Chinese). All children wrote the story as a classroom procedure. Writing a narrative is a typical classroom experience, so the children did not experience this as an unusual request. After the children completed writing, the researchers collected the data in class. Students' names were removed and replaced with identification numbers. All paper copies of these stories were later brought back to Memphis and transcribed in an electronic file.

Narrative Assessments

Tables 1 – 3 summarize the features of children's narratives that were reliably assessed. Two native Chinese speakers coded all of the stories, and inter-rater reliability was assessed using the kappa statistic for all variables. Appendix A includes detailed coding instructions for each of the following variables.

Moral Stance. Walton & Brewer (2001) first developed this coding scheme, which included the following four subcategories: Justifications of the Self, Justification of the Other, Critiques of the Self, Critiques of the Other. It has been used in previous studies on child narratives in middle childhood (Walton, Harris & Davidson, 2009). Two native Chinese speakers independently rated each story on a scale of 0 to 2 (0: no moral assessment, 1: implicit evaluations, 2: explicit evaluations) for the explicitness of the author's Justification/Critiques of the self or any other character in the story.

Justifications of the self included statements such as " I don't want her to play with them because I am afraid they will ruin our friendship." Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .95. Justification of others included moral evaluations such as, ''I admit, she did not do anything wrong.'' Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .95. Critiques of the self included such statements as, ''I punched him, which was stupid.'' Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .99. And critiques of the other included any negative moral evaluation of another character, such as, " He hit the girl, my mother taught me never to hit a girl." Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .99. Table 1 presents definitions, examples of explicit evaluations in each category, as well as means, standard deviations and inter-rater reliabilities.

TABLE 1 Measures of Moral Stance

Variable	Example	Mean	Std. Deviation	Inter-rater reliability (Kappa)
Justification of Self	"She clearly took his stuff, why blame on me?!"	0.40	0.59	.95
Critique of Self	"This is clearly my fault. I apologized to him afterwards."	0.49	0.76	.99
Justification of Other	"He may be bad-tempered, but he is still a good person. "	0.10	0.36	.95
Critique of Other	"How can he be so	0.77	0.83	.99

bad-tempered! He is

doomed to be useless

in society."

Moral Puzzlement. We considered whether the child's story expressed uncertainty or confusion about the nature of the conflict or about the moral interpretation of the action. For example: "It was not my fault. well, yes, I was a little bit wrong. But can't friends joke with each other?" Each story was coded 0 for no evidence of puzzlement, 1 for ambiguous evidence, and 2 for clear evidence of moral puzzlement. Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .96.   See Table 2 for examples, means and standard deviations.

Moral Lesson. Presence or absence of a moral lesson in the story was coded. Moral lessons were recognized when the child explicitly gave a "moral of my story" and spoke explicitly about morality or virtue. For example, "From this incident, I learned/realized". Moral lessons most often came at the end but sometimes they introduced the story: (e.g., "One day I learned an important lesson…"). Each story was coded 0 for no evidence of moral lesson, 1 for presence of moral lesson. Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .94. See Table 3 for examples, means and standard deviations.

TABLE 2 Moral Lesson & Moral Puzzlement

Variable	Definition	Example	%Stories including Variable	Inter-rater reliability (Kappa)
Moral Lesson	A moral summary or didactic coda is included in the story.	"I should find out more about the truth before I judge someone."	32.9	.94
Moral Puzzlement	The child expresses uncertainty or confusion about the nature of the conflict or about the moral interpretation of the action.	A question has been haunting me "Why I helped him with good intention, he still yelled at me?"	18.4	.96

Conflict Resolution. Three categories of conflict resolution were coded: 1). The author explicitly presented the conflict as successfully resolved. 2). The author presented the conflict as ambiguously resolved or showed ambiguous feelings towards the incident.

3). The author explicitly presented that the conflict ended in an unsatisfying manner.

Inter-rater reliability was *kappa* = .89. See Table 3 for examples, means and standard

deviations.

TABLE 3 Conflict Resolution

Levels	Example	%Stories including Variable
Successful resolution	"In the end, I made up with her. We had a great time afterwards."	46.1
Ambiguous resolution	"I ignored him. Seeing that I paid no attention to him, he left and played with his buddies."	26.3
Unsuccessful resolution	This was a shame to me. I would never forget about this	27.6

*The Inter-rater reliability for this variable is Kappa=.89

Results

Quantitative Analyses

Our first set of data addressed the two grade-related hypotheses:

1. As children get older, they will do more explicit critiques and justifications, in

particular, they will be more inclined to self-critique and justify others.

2. As children get older, they will be more inclined to report moral puzzlement, moral lessons and positive resolutions. Although we did not make predictions about gender differences, we included gender in the analyses, in case it interacted with grade.

Grade and Sex Differences in Moral Stance

To test for grade and sex effects on moral stance, a two way factorial MANOVA was conducted with Sex (female, male) and Grade in school (4th, 5th, and 6th) as the independent variables, and the four moral stance measures (critique/justification of self & other) as the dependent variables. There were no significant Grade by Sex interactions, and no Sex main effects. The multivariate test of Grade reached significance, Wilks' $\lambda =$ .73, $F (8, 286) = 6.09$, $p < .001$. Follow-up univariate tests showed univariate main effects for Grade on critique of self, $F (2, 146)=11.70$, $p<.001$ and on justification of self, $F (2, 146)=9.82$, $p<.001$. (See Figure 1.) Post-hoc LSD simple effect tests for the critique of self revealed that fifth graders ($M=0.87$, $SD=0.93$) did significantly more self-critiques than fourth graders ($M=0.27$, $SD=0.53$) and more than sixth graders ($M=0.28$, $SD=0.58$). Fourth and sixth graders did not significantly differ. Post-hoc LSD simple effects tests for the justification of self revealed that fifth graders ($M=0.61$, $SD=0.74$) and sixth graders ($M=0.45$, $SD=0.50$) did significantly more justification of self than fourth graders ($M=0.14$, $SD=0.35$). Fifth and sixth graders did not significantly differ.
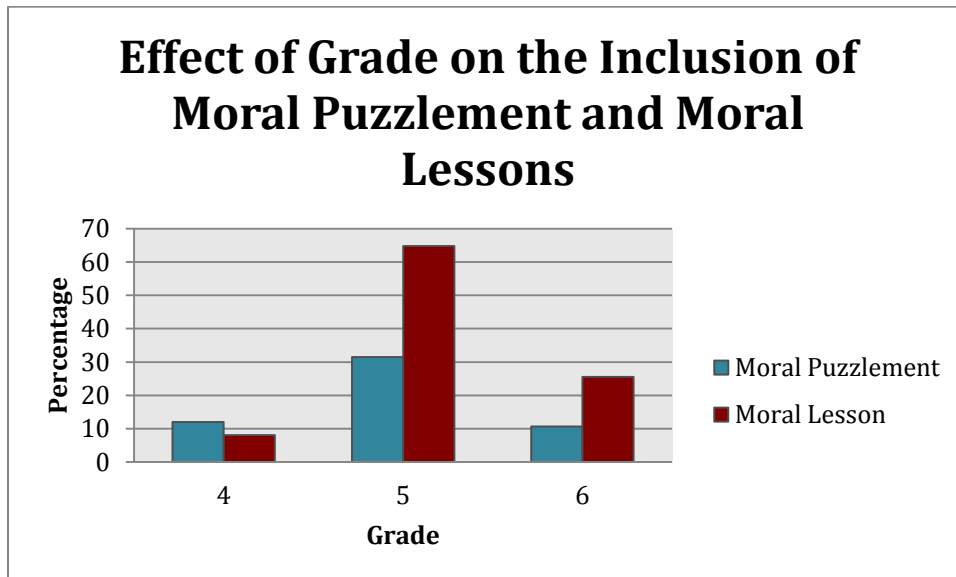
Figure 1
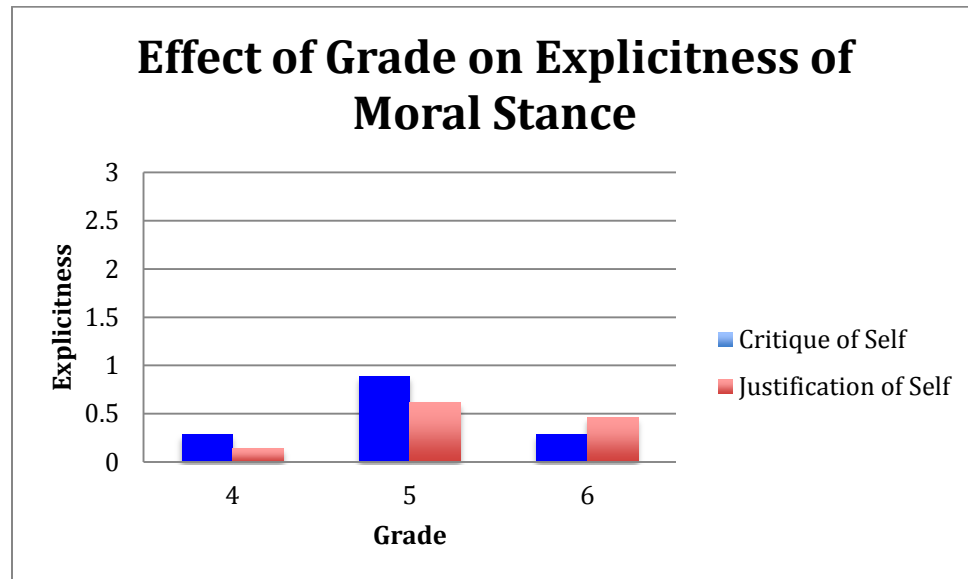
Grade and Gender Effects on the Presence of Moral Puzzlement and Moral Lesson

Two chi-square analyses were used to determine whether moral puzzlement and moral lesson occurred with different frequencies for children from the three different grades. As shown in Figure 2, children in the 5th grade wrote more stories with moral puzzlement than did children in the 4th or 6th grade, $X^2 (2) =9.53$, $p<.01$. Children in the 6th grade and 5th grade presented more stories with moral lesson than did children in the 4th grade, $X^2 (2) =41.34$, $p<.01$.

Another two chi-square analyses were used to determine whether moral puzzlement and moral lesson occurred with different frequencies for girls and boys. Girls reported more moral puzzlement than did boys, $X^2 (1) =0.021$, $p<.05$. There was no gender difference in reports of moral lessons.

Figure 2

Effect of Grade on the Inclusion of Moral Puzzlement and Moral Lessons

Grade and Gender Effect on the Outcome of Conflict Resolution

A chi-square analysis was used to determine how children from different grades resolve their conflict differently. As shown in Figure 3, children in the 5th grade wrote more stories with positive resolutions than did children in the 4th or 6th grade. Compared to 4th graders, 6th graders also presented more stories with positive endings. While 4th graders presented the largest percent of negatively resolved stories, 5th graders presented the least ambiguously resolved stories, X^2 (4)=13.18, *p*<.01 (See Figure 3). A second chi-square analysis revealed no significant gender difference in type of resolution described).

Figure 3
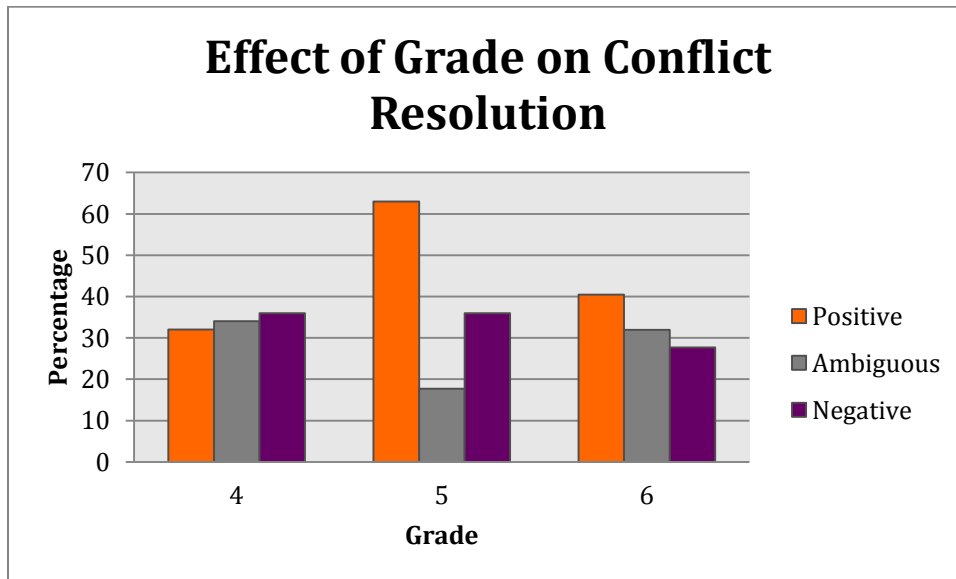
The following three tests examined how the narrative features we assessed co-occured and related to each other.

The Cooccurrence of Conflict Resolution and Moral Stance

A one-way factorial MANOVA was run with Conflict Resolution (positive, ambiguous, negative) as the independent variable, and the four moral stance measures (critique/justification of self & other) as the dependent variables. The multivariate main effect of Conflict Resolution reached significance, Wilks' λ = .69, F (8, 292) = 7.41, p <.001. Follow-up univariate tests showed univariate main effects for Conflict Resolution on critique of self, F (2, 149) =18.04, p<.001 and critique of other, F (2, 149) =7.45, p<.001 (See Figure 4.) Post-Hoc LSD simple effect tests for self-critiques revealed that positively resolved stories (*M*=0.86, *SD*=0.88) included significantly more self critique than did ambiguous (*M* =0.20, *SD* =0.46) or negative stories (*M* =0.17, *SD* =0.49). Ambiguous and negative stories did not differ significantly from each other. Simple effects tests for critique of others revealed a significant difference between stories with

negative resolutions (*M* =1.17, *SD* =0.85) and those with ambiguous (*M* =0.56, *SD* =0.71)

or positive stories (*M* =0.65, *SD* =0.80) Ambiguous and positive stories did not

significantly differ from each other. Figure 4 presents these findings.

Figure 4

Effect of Author's Report about Conflict Resolution on Moral Stance
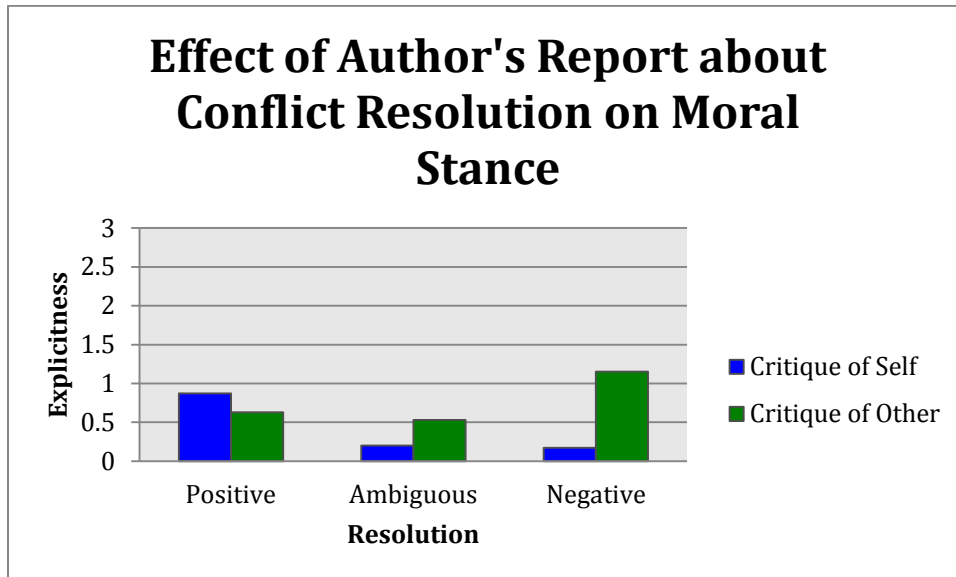
The Cooccurrence of Moral Lessons and Moral Stance

A one-way factorial MANOVA was conducted with Moral Lesson (present, not

present) as the independent variable, and the four moral stance measures as the dependent

variables. The multivariate main effect for Moral Lesson reached significance, Wilks' λ =

.31, $F (4, 147) = 82.30$, $p <.001$. Follow up univariate test showed univariate main effects

for Moral Lesson on critique of self, $F (1, 150) =26.54$, $p<.001$ and justification of other,

$F (1, 150) =5.81$, $p=.01$. See Figure 5.

Figure 5

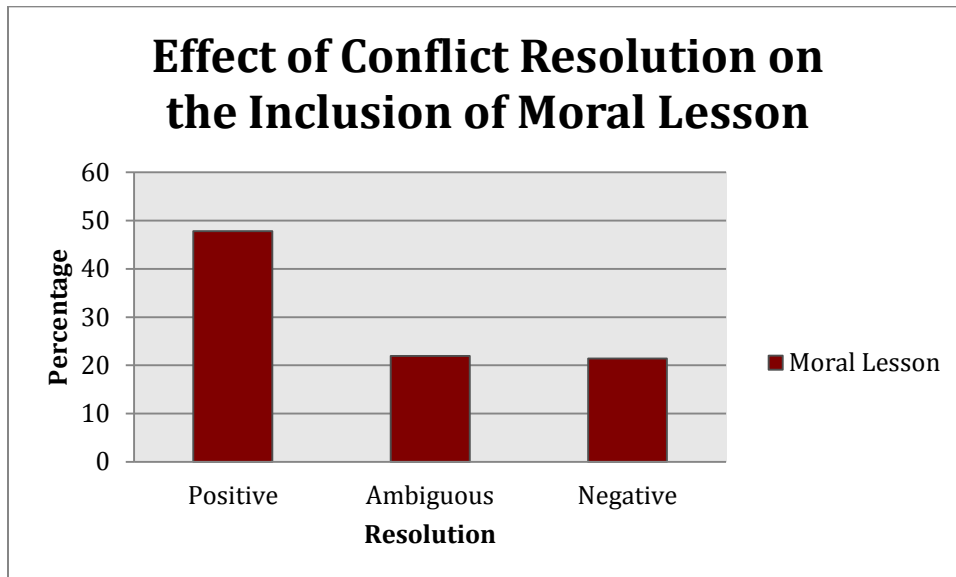Effect of Moral Lesson on Moral Stance
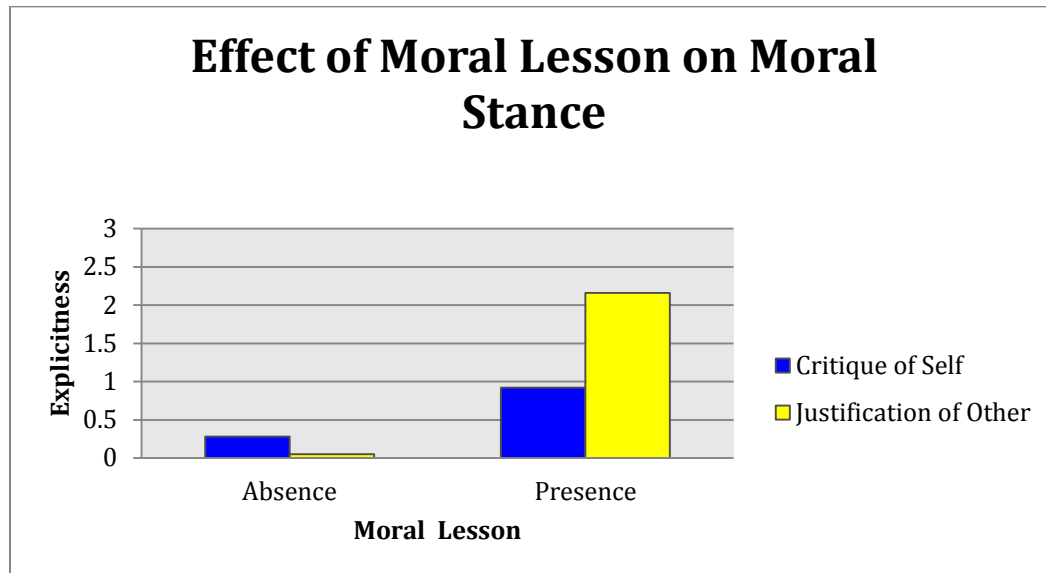
The Cooccurrence of Conflict Resolution and Moral Lesson

A chi-square analysis was used to determine how conflict resolution was related to moral lesson. Stories that ended with a positive solution included significantly more moral lessons than those ending in an ambiguous or negative tone, $X^2 (2)=9.67, p<.01$. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6

Effect of Conflict Resolution on the Inclusion of Moral Lesson

Percentage (y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60)

Positive | Ambiguous | Negative

Resolution

■ Moral Lesson

Results

Qualitative Analysis of the Language of Cultural Community

In addition to quantitative analysis, the present research conducted qualitative study of the data. Although the above coding allowed us to make counts and to discover the frequency of various patterns in the corpus, a comprehensive understanding of these children's interpersonal conflict, moral thinking and general values required an accompanying qualitative analysis. I began with open coding, taking a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding involves multiple passes through the data in which researchers make notes of recurring themes, tropes, and phrases – any features of the data set that offer information about how the children were understanding their own conflicts. In the open coding stage, the goal was to carefully read and see what was occurring in the data set. All noted features were brought to consultation with another Chinese speaker and to discussion with a research team. I relied on the five

members of the Rhodes Narrative Development Research team as an interpretive

community (Way, 1997). We took consideration of previous research in our team and

also of previous work with Chinese children; at the same time, we were open to the

possibility that different categories might emerge. Critical, ongoing discussions informed

each step of the qualitative research process.

Guided by the expectations that Chinese children appropriate modern cultural

voices and values in addition to ones associated with Confucian ethics, the present study

looked for cultural voice and narrative themes that corresponded to recognizable Chinese

master narratives. In the first section below, I present an analysis of cultural voice, in

which five categories were developed based on the different cultural sources of the voices:

parents, folk wisdom, formal discourse, popular culture, and cultural norms. In the

second section, I present an analysis of narrative themes organized into two categories

that correspond to identifiable master narratives in Chinese society: use of character types

and use of classic story plot lines.

Cultural Voices Identified in Children's Stories

As previous research and theories have suggested, cultural voice emerges when

children use language to demonstrate membership in particular sociocultural groups

(Bakhtin, 1981; Humphrey et al., in press). Analysis of stories in the present study

revealed interesting patterns in which children appropriated cultural voices and themes as

they performed their own narrative identities. When we listened for the cultural voice in

children's narrative, we noticed children adopting four different voices, each

appropriating a different cultural source: parents, folk wisdom, formal discourse, and

popular culture. Examples are presented in which children appropriate and resist cultural norms.

The Voice of Parent. The most clearly identifiable appropriation of voice occurs when authors use direct or indirect quotation. There were twelve occasions in our sample in which children used the words of their parents. For examples:

- Mom said "it's your fault then, you should be generous."

- Mom said "she may have many shortcomings, but she is not a bad person."

- Mother told me to tolerate my little brother because he is still young.

In close readings of the twelve stories that appropriated the voice of a parent we found that only in 1, the child argued against her parent, challenging the legitimacy of her parent's authority. In the remaining 11 stories, parents were all presented in a positive light. They were the mediators of conflicts. Parents' words served as guidance for children to solve the problem or to formulate a take-home-lesson that children internalized from the incident.

In terms of the types of conflicts involved in the 12 incidents, parents were teaching their children to maintain compatible peer relationships in half of the occasions, while the other half concerned teachings on observing appropriate roles in sibling relationships. Excepting the one occasion where the child discounted her mother who showed favor towards her brother, the eleven examples all serve as evidence for transmission of values consistent with Confucian ethics in the family spectrum—the attention to interpersonal harmony and the conduct of appropriate behaviors as the young and the old. The exceptional example revealed the presence of the traditional preference

for boys over girls and a girl's resisting voice against it. All of these examples illustrate

the transmission of traditional values and the maintenance of family structure within the

home.

　　　　The Voice of Folk Wisdom. Sometimes it is possible to hear cultural voices in

children's stories, even when they do not use direct or indirect quotations. In these cases,

the child fully incorporates another voice as his or her own rather than attributing the

locution to another. One of the most easily identified of these instances happen when

children borrow expressions from folk wisdom. The following are three examples from

the 34 occasions in which children used such expressions in their stories.

- "It takes two people to fight but one to stop."

- "One should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated."

- "One should have the courage to admit their mistakes."

- "Sometimes success is only a matter of time."

　　　　Among the 34 incidences, 12 were used to accuse others' behaviors, 9 were used

to justify the author, 5 were used to justify others, 3 served the purpose of moral lessons,

and 3 were used for descriptive purposes. Therefore, the most prominent uses of folk

wisdom were for children to accuse others and for children to justify the self or others. It

is worth noticing that the use of folk wisdom seems to instigate/maintain a conflict (21

times) rather than to resolve a conflict (8 times). Interestingly, among the five used to

justify others, they were all to justify the younger party in the conflicts—the younger's

behaviors were forgivable because they were still little. Themes that correspond to

Confucian values revolved around the topics of "gentleperson", Confucian's golden rule,

and the teaching of young and old relationships. Confucian values in total occurred 9 times in the usage of folk wisdom.

The Voice of Formal Discourse. There were instances when children appropriated expressions that carry a formal taste. They are not as casual and relaxed as languages transmitted in the popular culture. They are often heard in official settings, such as in standard school writing, languages of school officials or political voices from textbooks/media. This occurred 28 times in our data. In these cases, the authors tended to use grand and morally loaded expressions that are common in Chinese elementary moral education and official TV propaganda. For instance,

- "If our hearts are filled with love, the world will be more beautiful and harmonious."

- "If you use your brain, think about solutions, any difficulty will be overcome and the door to victory will open, and dreams will come true."

- "Sometimes if you tolerate others, give others a smile, trouble will no longer follow us."

All of the above examples (and 21 of the 28 total formal voices examples) were written in the second person and were close to quotations of official exhortations. On occasions, children incorporated the use of formal languages in their own locutions, as in the examples below.

- "She does not demonstrate any collective spirit."

- "I realize that I have to become the big boy who always take cares of my little brother, and the good student who works hard at school."

These uses of formal languages mainly became internalized moral lessons (21 times), and only 2 were used to accuse others. Instead of revealing the easygoing and spontaneous self when using popular phrases or slangs, children create the images as little adults in appropriating such expressions.

The Voice of Popular Culture. Popular culture was another source of inspiration for the authors. Use of slang, use of Internet languages, incorporation of instant message communication style in written narratives, the appropriation of video game expressions, and the appearance of popular stars and cartoon characters all fall under the category of popular culture. Popular culture voice occurred 32 times in our data. Slang among peer groups appeared 11 times. They were used for making nicknames, cursing and exclamations. Among these 11 times, slangs were used to accuse others 5 times and they were all used in direct quotations of the authors or their peers. These are words often heard in daily conversation and bear meanings that can be easily lost in translations. There were 7 times when cartoon characters or popular stars became the topic of disputes while there were 4 times children appropriated expressions from cartoon series. Among the 6 video game expressions used by children, they were all to describe the act of fighting. 2 cases showed use of Internet languages and 1 incorporated instant message styles in written narratives.

For example,

- " we seemed to enter the state of a video-game, as if we were the 'big boss' in the game."
- He started to "k" me.

- I said "It should be the monkey king, according to the preview online, the character likes to play wind. Aren't the two moves of monkey king "twisting wind" and "tornado"?

In these cases, the authors drew from the most popular topics within their peer group at the moment. The first example showed children's use of video game expressions—the phrase "big boss" was often used to describe the unbeatable monsters in a video game. In the second case, "k" was a video game expression used to describe attacking or killing. In the final example, there were multiple evidences of appropriating popular culture—the cartoon character monkey king was the instigation of the argument, the "twisting wind" and "tornado" were specific languages used in the cartoon, and the author also used an abbreviation of the word "preview online" in Chinese, showing his use of a slang.

These authors led the readers into another time and space— one to the digital world where he and his friends were the "big boss", another to the fighting scene in a video game, and the final one into the cartoon world of monkey king.

Resisting and Appropriating Cultural Norms. There are fourteen rich incidences where children appropriated and transformed cultural norms on gender and nineteen occasions where their stories showed them in dialogue about norms in the relationship between young and old. For example,

- "I believe he is not a gentleman. He doesn't even know that a gentleman never fights a woman,"

- "A boy should have greater endurance."

- "You are a man can't win over a fight with a woman…I said that women are no superior to men…she said women do better in exams…I said men are the ones who go to war, there are only few women."

- "One should always attend to the younger ones."

- "I will just forget it since my brother is still little." "I want to hit her, but she is still young."

- "How can she be my older sister (by doing this)?"

In the first three examples, readers have a peek into the ways children relate to gender dynamic in contemporary Chinese society. While social status for women has increasingly improved, some traditional conventions are still rooted in the cultural mind-set. For instance, dominant social values still believe that men have greater physical advantages over women and that a true gentleman should always take care of a lady. At the same time, new gender stereotypes are developing. Girls have been viewed as outperforming boys in academics. The last three examples concerned the relationship between older and younger children. Here children showed their learning of appropriate behaviors as either an older or a younger child. These expressions captured Chinese respective social expectations for the elder and the younger. They reflected the Confucian values of *Ti* in sibling relationships, where the young respect the elder ones while the older ones set up an example and look after the younger ones.

Master Narratives Appropriated in Children's Stories

The analysis above shows that rich cultural sources have left distinctive marks in children's stories. They not only shaped the unique writing styles but also imprint on the storyline children constructed. In current Chinese society, there are many master

narratives that dominate public attention. For example, there is the recently formed

master narrative about the spoiled children who are overindulged by their parents and

grandparents, revealing behavioral problems. There are also master narratives that have

been a part of folklore for a longer time, such as the prototypical story of the heroic

gentleman who takes care of a fragile lady. According to Gee (1990), it is through each

individual conversation and narrative that these historically and socially defined

discourses that children get to communicate with each other. Like adults, children re-

appropriated these previously existing discourses to communicate their own intentions. In

the analysis below, I first present children's use of 'stock' characters, recognizable

because they populate master narratives in contemporary society. Then, I show examples

of children appropriating plot lines from classic stories of Chinese history and

mythology, using elements of the story to articulate their own intentions and to establish

a unique identity (Bamberg, 2004b; Bakhtin, 1981).

Use of Character Types. When making critiques and creating justification of

self/other, children often borrowed character types from the most debated topics at the

time in order to defend their judgment. These various characters are representatives of

certain stereotypical groups in contemporary society. For instance:

- "He must be spoiled at home, he is doomed to be useless in the society."

- "I find him churlish! Uneducated!"

- "He said he spent two yuan on transportation every day as if he was so
  rich! Now everyone leads low carbon dioxide lifestyle. He still advocates
  high carbon dioxide life style!"

- "You crappy group leader, aren't you merely a group leader, what is so

  special about a group leader!"

The first example pertained to the "spoiled child" story where the only-child is

often viewed as socially maladjusted due to the overindulgence of his or her parents. In

the master narratives, these children are always portrayed as the little princesses and

emperors in the family who boss around their parents and demonstrate poor independence

and interpersonal skills. The character in the second example is a person who is not

brought up properly and demonstrates bad manners. The "Nouveau Riche" is often the

embodiment of such a character, as one accumulates personal wealth in a short amount of

time but lacks the proper manners of a real sophisticated noble person. In the third

example, the author appropriated the character that is wasteful and materialist. With

ample material wealth, such a character always centers on his/her personal fortune and

sacrifices the welfare of the public and the environment (i.e. lead a "high carb life"). The

final case pertained to the stereotypical bureaucrats who master both political and

economic powers. They bribe their position and disregard their duties. The imbalance

between their high privileges and poor service provokes pervasive public resentment,

which mirrors the grudge between an arrogant group leader and an irritated group

member depicted in this story. Together, these writings reflected the most prominent

characters in contemporary China and voiced explanations pervaded in the master

narratives. While children are seen as the "future master of China", they are in fact the

active heirs and constructors of the living culture.

Use of Classic Story Plot Lines. As children use character types in the master

narratives, they also manipulate famous stories for their own purposes. For example,

- "I was fighting alone. I finally realized the difficulties Lubu experienced when he fought the three heroes. But it was better as some people come to my side later, it's easier to be the 'five heroes on the langya mountain'".

Here the author has appropriated two classic battle anecdotes. The first story was from the "Romance of Three Kingdoms" written in the 14th century and regarded as one of the classics in Chinese literature. It portrays an exciting battle between Lubu, a powerful warrior in the three-kingdom era, and the three heroes—Liu, Guan and Zhang. The three heroes made their name after they defeated Lubu, the most skilled warrior at the time. In the second plot line, the five heroes were Chinese soldiers who fought against the Japanese attack under the leadership of the Communist Party from 1937 and 1945. The story of the five heroes is a classic incorporated into Chinese elementary text so to deliver the lesson of patriotism. Using these two plotlines, the author sophisticatedly portrayed his feelings that fighting alone was difficult while companionship made it easier. He appreciated the difficulties Lubu encountered since he had experienced the hardship of fighting on his own. In another example:

- "You crossed the 38th parallel, he said. Whoever crossed the line will be hit! (38th parallel is the line between boys and girls)".

This is a case when children adopted language initially associated with the Korean War. It is the "38th parallel"—the present Military Demarcation Line between South Korea and North Korea was coined after the Korean War in 1953. In addition to its original political significance derived from the War, the 38th parallel has gained rich cultural connotation referring to the clear division between men and women. As if the boys and girls were representing the two opposing powers of North and South Korea, a

crossover of the gender line between the desks was equal to a challenge of sovereignty and needed to be repaid with a slap.

In a final example, we see a child evoking a famous folktale in her effort to understand her own expectations for friendship.

• "Even though Lin admitted that she misunderstood me. I believe that friends are *zhiyin* who understands each other. How come she doubted my loyalty to her?"

In this example, the child described friends using the word *zhiyin*, which can be literally translated as "one who can appreciate your melody". The use of this phrase calls forth the classic tale of Boya and Zhong ziqi who were soul mates. Boya was a master of Chinese zither whereas Zhong was the one who could appreciate his music. After Zhong died, Boya destroyed his zither and decided not to play any more since the only person who could understand his music was gone. This story portrays the precious friendship shared by two soul mates. By borrowing the term, *zhiyin*, the child framed her expectation for friendships based on the mutual understanding shared between Boya and Zhong ziqi. Her friend's misunderstanding was disappointing as it disturbed the author's anticipation of a friend being the person who "knows her melody".

Discussion

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The present study revealed four significant grade effects. Fifth graders reported significantly more self-critiques, moral puzzlement and positive resolutions than fourth and sixth graders. Both fifth graders and sixth graders included significantly more justification of self, moral lessons and positive resolutions than fourth graders. Justification of self and construal of moral lessons required both narrative skills and

logical thinking. Reports of moral lessons and positive resolution demonstrated capability

to resolve interpersonal conflicts. Fifth and sixth graders' more frequent reports of

justification of self, moral lessons and positive resolution suggested a potential grade

related development in language, reasoning and interpersonal skills.

The second sets of tests assessed how narrative features co-occurred and related to

each other. Results showed that positively resolved stories included significantly more

self-critiques and moral lessons than did ambiguous or negative stories while critique of

others revealed a significant difference between stories with negative resolutions and

those with ambiguous or positive stories. In addition, stories with moral lessons included

significantly more critiques of self and justification of others than those that did not.

Theses correlations suggested that maintenance of positive peer relationship required

consideration of others' welfare and awareness of own mistakes. The emphasis on self-

critique can find its origins in family socialization, as shown in previous research (Miller

et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1997, Fung & Chen, 2001). Present findings suggested such

focus on self-critique continued in school education. The ability to self-critique and to

construe moral lessons corresponds to Confucian values of self-perfection and attention

to interpersonal harmony. Successful conflict management among elementary schoolers

reflects such cultural mechanism for social interaction, which called for observance of

cultural norms within the family and in other social setting. With greater experience in

school and family socializations, compared to the fourth graders, fifth and sixth graders

have demonstrated more sophisticated understanding and application of these skills.

Lastly, the only significant gender effect found was in the reports of moral

puzzlement. Girls expressed slightly more puzzlement than boys. Moral puzzlements

were instances where the child expressed uncertainty or confusion about the nature of the conflict or about the moral interpretation of the action. One possible reason for girls to outnumber boys in expressions of moral puzzlement may be that the socialization of girls more often encouraged such act. However, one needs to be careful with making generalized conclusions especially when there are multiple social forces in forging child's inclinations to express moral puzzlement. As gender difference was not the major focus of the present study, comprehensive understanding of the gender differences regarding moral puzzlement calls for further investigations in future studies. Meanwhile, there were no gender differences regarding expression of moral stance, moral lesson or conflict resolution. Though my qualitative analysis found evidences of children appropriate social norms regarding gender stereotypes, gender differences in elementary school may have not reached the point where they can generate pronounced statistical disparity. Future study may look into students in adolescence when more distinguished gender effects can be captured.

The Effects of Classroom Culture

The first set of research questions look for grade-related evidence of children's appropriation of moral and social standards corresponding to Confucian ethics. There was a significant increase from fourth to fifth grade in the explicitness of self-critiques, self-justification, inclusion of moral puzzlement and moral lesson, as well as the percentage of positively resolved stories. Sixth graders significantly included more moral lessons and reported more positive resolutions than fourth graders.

However, the most significant grade changes were found from 4th to 5th grades, which suggested that grade and developmental growth are not the sole factors in play.

The 5th grade's class was a special case with an exceptional teacher who had a reputation for encouraging students to take roles as the typical model students in Chinese educational context, with expectations for both high academic ability and concern for moral correctness. The particular classroom culture has closely aligned the 5th graders with the most standard cultural values. Compared with the other two classes, the 5th grade class demonstrated more advanced writing skills, higher concern for interpersonal harmony and greater tendency to self reflect and self critique. These factors evidenced fifth graders' skilled appropriation of ideals that most approximate Confucian ethics and mainstream values.

Confucianism as One Interpretation of China's Current Culture and a Source of Cultural Voice

Alliance with Confucian values was reflected in children's tendency to report more moral puzzlement, moral lessons, and successful conflict resolution, as well as to conduct self-correcting and self-reflecting moral works. Quantitative analysis indexed grade-related changes in the appropriation of such cultural voices, but showing fifth graders as the most adapt interpreters of such culture. Following qualitative analyses presented detailed evidences revealing the sources where children come by these values and roles as the "morally good" student. Parents, conventional sayings, expressions from standard school writing and official media propaganda constitute the major sources for children to internalize moral lessons and teachings that encourage harmonious interpersonal relationship, high concern of being morally "correct", expressing self-critiques and consideration of others. One of the prominent narrative themes concerned

the relationship between the young and old, which also found support in Confucian teachings.

The influences of Confucianism revealed in the present study partly showed the historical inheritance of Confucian values through continuous cultural socialization and heritage. Another constitutive force is the state's current revival of Confucian values due to the rapid economic development and China's conflict in international affairs (Keane, 2005). In such a context, the government was eager to fill the moral "ideological vacuum" that emerged from the laissez-faire market forces (Law, 1998, p.581). The state aimed at building a belief in political unity. Therefore, a promotion of traditional Confucian respect for moral disciplines, personal ethics and families as units for the production of values was apparent (Keane, 2005). Behind the newly launched campaign to integrate socialist and Confucian educational ideals, and to improve students' ideological and political quality was the national strategy to achieve China's socialist modernization (Ho, 2006).

It was clear that the current transmission of Confucian values and their serving purpose were carefully tailored for the interests of the government. Chinese politics and cultures bear a continual and changeable relationship (Goodman, 2001). Accompanied and intermingled with Confucianism, the Party state's political values constitutde the standard or the "mainstream melody" in Chinese society. The presence of state in mainstream culture construction was also reflected in the qualitative examination. The children in this study, mostly the 5th graders, adopted the grand and morally loaded expressions such as "harmonious society", and "maintain a collective spirit". Such delivery was often heard in mainstream media such as in newspapers like the Chinese

Youth Daily and TV channels such as China Central Television (CCTV), which were the

mouth pieces of the regime that takes the role of maintaining "correct orientation to

public opinion" (Zhao & Guo, 2005).

Additionally, these political sayings were also fused into Chinese children's moral

education, Chinese textbooks, and schools' teaching agendas. Throughout the history of

People's Republic of China, schools have carried the responsibility to shape citizen's

knowledge, attitudes and behavior toward society, the nation and the state (Fairbrother,

2003). In mainland China, political education has gained strong state support and has

been carried out in schools through curriculum and extracurricular activities (Fairbrother,

2003). Primary and secondary schools in many regions around China include topics such

as Chinese culture, national unity, and revolutionary heroes in the teaching content of

patriotism (Lee & Ho, 2005; Kuan & Lau, 2002). Therefore, it is not difficult to see that

the party state is still the powerful producer and controller of culture.

However, it requires a rather different approach to understand such powerful role

of the central government in China compared to the one in the U.S. In contemporary

China, the relationship between state and people still mirrored the one of father and child

(Ng., 2000). From a Confucian perspective, a government was comparable to a family. In

an ideal family, the father is the omnipotent figure who strived for the well-being of the

family. In return, children would be obedient and show no explicit criticisms towards the

father. Accordingly, the Confucian ideal society was governed by morally exemplary

rulers. Paternalism and dependency thus goes hand in hand in such model (Ng., 2000).

The Chinese do not think that the concept of paternalistic authority has the same stigma

as it does in the West. Instead, it is considered as a way of finding personal security (Ng.,

2000). The Confucian emphasis upon filial piety and paternalistic authority has encouraged an almost complete reliance upon authority in Chinese political process (Pye., 1985). While voices of adopting western democracy has been distinguished, this paternal political structure still holds a firm base in contemporary China. In this case, instead of merely seeing the imposition of various policies by the government, one should note how public acceptance can facilitate such political process. Accordingly, in conception of Chinese political model, one needs to abandon the complete opposing relationship between government and the public and to be comfortable with the intermingling of individual and state interests.

A Pluralistic Cultural Scene and Voice

While it is interesting to find persistence of Confucian and political influences in school and family socialization, emergence of other contemporary and diverse cultural voice gave a fuller body to individual author's identity as well as the pluralistic cultural scene behind. As the statistical analysis put fifth graders and the mainstream cultural voice into the spotlight, qualitative analysis revealed children's appropriation of popular culture. The use of Internet lingos, incorporation of instant message communication style in written narratives, the appropriation of video game expressions, the appearance of popular stars and cartoon characters, mentions of currently debated topics in society and the utilization of slangs all demonstrated the more vibrant aspects of children's daily lives. In these incidents, children were the creators of the culture particular to their generation. The rapid development of industrialization, urbanization and mass media has motivated the growth of such youth culture (Yang, 2006). The mobility of population and material wealth has created immense space for the creation and communication of popular

cultures. The boom of popular media, TV sets, Internet and computers have become the

mobilizing tools for youth culture. China's launch of reform and opening-up in the

economic and social fields also motivated the popular culture imports from HongKong,

Taiwan, Japan and Western cultures into mainland China. Meanwhile, the information

and communication development since the 1990s contributed to such this pluralistic

culture scene. The Internet helps to transcend certain cultural concepts that were not

accepted by the mainstream society. Speeding up the spread of the popular culture,

informationalization also greatly enhanced the scope and quality of youth culture (Yang,

2006).

In summary, both textual and statistical evidences demonstrated how children

find a place for themselves in a cultural world. With the 152 narratives, the present study

demonstrated the bi-directional relationship between influences from the bigger cultural

community and children's active appropriation of cultural voices to construct their unique

identities. While the conflict stories captured children's day-to-day activities, they also

reflected on some of the cultural phenomena in contemporary Chinese society.

Mastery of culturally bound language forms clearly has implications beyond

writing skills. While language is one of the key cultural tools, these narrative accounts

not only demonstrated the individual child's thinking processes but also revealed the

cognitive fruits yielded from the collaboration and distribution across the cultural

community (Rogoff, 2003). As a member of the cultural community, the child takes a

rather active role, instead of merely acquiring previous traditions or knowledge in

accounting for their personal experience. While certain classics such as Confucius golden

rule remains its presence, appropriation of ancient figures and use of new narrative forms

show children's creative use of the cultural tool. Through the use of particular language, children identify themselves with a certain cultural group (Bamberg, 2004b). Children who leaned towards the voice of official and school standards demonstrated an image of the good and morally correct child. Those who spoke through the hip slangs from video games portrayed themselves as the "cool" kids. It is through drawing on the dominant discourses that the authors develop a sense of self and community (Bamberg, 2004b).

Limitations and Future Research

First, the current study only included 152 students from only one primary school in Shenzhen, China. Only one class was chosen to represent each grade. In addition, there was no detailed information about students' family background, such as SES; or any information regarding students' school performance. These factors prevented the generalizability of our findings across different contexts. Comparatively, the 5th graders appeared to demonstrate higher level of writing skills compared to the other two groups. According to the school principle, this class had an exceptional teacher who motivated children's academic performance. In this case, the 5th graders may be more advanced in their narrative and academic skills than typical 5th graders. This factor may have confounded the tracking of grade changes. In addition, data were collected in narrative forms while in the classroom setting. Although researchers made it clear that the responses to the prompts are in a casual style, the school setting still may have exerted certain restraints on children as compared to a less formal environment. Finally, only two members within our interpretive community were native Chinese speakers. Discussion of the data depended on translation from the two researchers. Future research may include larger data set and more detailed information regarding students' background. These

improvements may help to trace moral development patterns through ages and to look for

trends and patterns of appropriation of standard culture represented by Confucian and

state values versus the popular culture.

Contributions and Future Directions

This study has contributed to research in developmental psychology in four ways:

First, no previous studies have looked at personal narratives by Chinese children

in middle childhood. Through the analysis of moral works and cultural voices in

children's conflict narratives, the present study reveals how socio-cultural forces in

contemporary Chinese society such as Confucianism, political and popular culture shape

children's moral development and personal values. Meanwhile, the study also showed

how children, as active participants in their community, appropriate various cultural

voices to distinguish their own intentions and identities. From the kid who fought with

his little brother over the most trendy video game and learned the lesson of "taking care

of the young"; to the child who was annoyed by her deskmate crossing over the "sacred

38th parallel" and had an argument about the superiority of woman over man; more than

simply the "little Confucians", these children have embodied unique identities originated

from various forces in the modern society.

A second strength of the study is the use of both quantitative analyses of reliably

coded features of the story and theoretically motivated qualitative analyses. While the

quantitative analyses revealed the appropriation of mainstream moral teachings and

Confucian values represented by the 5th graders, qualitative analyses captured other

prominent cultural voices raised in the data (i.e. expressions influenced by political and

popular culture) and helped to further explain how cultural influences instead of grade effects are the key factors in determining the outcomes obtained.

A third contribution of this study resulted from the decision to conduct coding and analysis entirely in Chinese. As the data was filled with rich conventional sayings and cultural expressions, this approach yielded more accurate results and best preserved the original intentions of the authors, compared to the approach of filtering them through another culture and language.

Finally, though using Confucianism as a representative of traditional and standard school of thoughts in China, the present study did not simply take it for granted as the sole interpretation of social phenomena in contemporary China. The study has considered both the complexity of Confucianism itself and the various prominent ideologies and cultural forces present in the society. Such perspective helped to reveal the intricate relationships between various cultural forces and how they together impact children's moral and personal values reflected from their stories.

As children gain more independence and greater access to the Internet and other communication technologies in middle and high school, longitudinal study may reveal how these changes over time impact children's appropriation of moral teachings and cultural voices in resolving peer conflicts.

Under the impact of globalization, more and more Chinese major cities including Shenzhen have established private schools, and international schools preparing children for higher education abroad. Future study may compare children from various schools and look at how different school cultures affect children's moral development and construction of personal identity.

In addition, future studies may consider using different type of measurement, such as video taping children sharing stories verbally within peer groups. Such technique may better capture the vibrant youth culture in a more natural setting.

Finally, future research can look into children's narratives describing conflict with parents, which may help to reveal generational gaps and the clash of values within the context of fast developing modern China.

Appendix A: Coding Manual

Read the entire story through once before beginning to code. This coding will require four passes through the data. First, code the moral stances variables, then code the conflict resolution, then go back and code the moral lesson variables, and finally code the moral puzzlement variable. If there are no instances of the variable in the story, enter a zero. However, if the child does not write a story, leave the variable blank for that ID number. Blanks must be distinguished from zeros. If the child wrote even one line of a story, we will code this line. However, if the child wrote, 'I don't have a story,' or "I can't remember anything," or a similar indication of a disinclination to contribute a story, then treat this as a blank, and do not enter zeros.

It is imperative that you have these coding instructions in front of you the whole time you are coding, and that you refer to them often. It is surprisingly easy to miss whole categories of events, especially those that are relatively rare. When they haven't shown up in several stories, coders will sometimes stop looking for them. The only way to avoid this is to be regularly looking at the coding manual. As a rule of thumb – never code more than ten stories without re-reading the category descriptions.

Coding is not an activity that you can do when you are sleepy or distracted. Take regular breaks, and monitor your ability to stay alert. Thanks for being conscientious and thoughtful about this part of the research effort!

Moral Stance

In each of the four categories for coding moral voice, record the highest level of explicitness of moral evaluation present at any point in the story. '2' refers to explicit

statements of moral evaluation, '1' refers to implicit moral evaluations, and '0' refers to

no moral evaluations present in the story.

A. *Justifications of the Self*

This category concerns the moral voice that is used to justify the author's own behavior

or reasoning, or to positively evaluate the self.

2 = The story contains an explicit moral voice expressed to justify or positively evaluate

the self.

Explicit moral expressions include the use of deontic auxiliaries (e.g. should, ought,

supposed to), judgments of right and good, and words and actions of truth, honesty,

loyalty, fairness, and compassion.

Example: "I think I did nothing wrong. It was his fault to hit me first."

1 = There seems to be a moral voice used to justify or positively evaluate the self, but it is

not explicitly expressed. Include any references of the author to unstated or unexplained

moral rules and retaliation.

Examples: "He hit me, so I hit him back". If the author writes, "he hit me and I hit him",

this does not count as an implicit justification because the use of 'and' does not indicate a

causal link.

0 = There is no evaluative voice or moral tone in the narrative that positively evaluates

the self.

B. *Critique of the Self*

This category concerns whether the author recognized or acknowledged her/his own fault

or wrong-doing in the story.

2 = The story contains an explicit moral voice expressed to critique or negatively evaluate the self.

Explicit expressions included acknowledgement of own fault or wrong, judgments of the author about the self as wrong, stupid, or bad. It also included apologies, admissions of guilt, and recognition of own mistakes. The author clearly expressed his/her guilt or shame. Sometimes the author may include the use of deontic auxiliaries as a mark of emphasis (should, ought to). The author sometimes included elaborations of why he/she was wrong.

Example: "I felt so so bad hitting him and I apologized". "I think I should not have hit him because brother is still too young."

1 = There seems to be a moral voice used to critique or negatively evaluate the self, but it is not explicitly expressed.

The author acknowledges own fault or wrong, implicitly expressing this. Compare to level 2, level 1 is weaker in tone. It does not have as intense tone or as clear elaborations compared to level 2. The author may only point out their mistakes without any reflections. The author may apologize but without any further elaborations or emphasis. It did not include expressions of apology required by an authority figure. Example: The teacher scolded me and told me to say sorry to him.

Example: "I apologized and then we made up."

0 = There is no evaluative voice or moral tone in the narrative that critiques the self. The author does not negatively evaluate his/her own actions, and does not acknowledge any fault or wrong.

C. *Justification of the other*

This category concerns the moral voice used by the author to evaluate another character positively or to justify another's actions or words.

2 = The story contains an explicit moral voice used to justify or evaluate the other positively. Explicit expressions include the use of deontic auxiliaries, judgments of right and good, and words and actions of truth, honesty, fairness, loyalty and compassion.

Example: "I admit, she did not do anything wrong."

1 = There seems to be a moral voice used, but it is not explicitly expressed. Include unstated or unexplained moral rules, or retaliation described to justify or positively evaluate the other.

Example: "I pushed him, so he pushed me."

0 = There is no evidence of moral justification or positive evaluation of the other in the story.

D. *Critique of the other*

This category concerns moral voice expressed by the author to negatively evaluate the actions, words or characteristics of another person. This category often includes a voice of moral indignation.

2 = There is an explicit moral voice expressed in the story that negatively evaluates the behavior or words of another. Explicit moral critiques include the use of deontic auxiliaries, as well as judgments of right and wrong and bad. Also include verbs that carry necessary moral weight, such as to lie, cheat, steal, hurt, harm, embarrass, curse, and kill. The author sometimes included elaborations of why the other was wrong.

Example: "He was wrong because friends should not lie to each other."

1 = Give the story a '1' if there seems to be a moral indignation or negative evaluation of the other, but it is not explicitly expressed. Expressions include unstated or unexplained moral rules, as well as accusations and transgressions that imply moral indignation toward the other. Moral rules that involved family and best friends but that went unexplained are especially meaningful in this classification.

Example: "My best friend made me angry."

0 = There is no moral voice expressed negatively evaluating the other.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is coded as the author's description of the conflict outcome. There are 3 categories: 1). The author explicitly presented the conflict as successfully resolved 2). The author presented the conflict as ambiguously resolved or showed ambiguous feelings towards the incident. For this coding category, it is important to code the author's own interpretation, description, and feelings of the outcome of the story. 3). The author explicitly presented the conflict ended in an unsatisfying manner.

1). Successfully resolved: The author is satisfied with the outcome of the conflict. The relationship is repaired or continued in a positive manner. The author may sometimes include a lesson they have learned from the conflict, but not necessarily. (e.g., After all, I made up with her. We had a great time afterwards.)

2). Ambiguously resolved: There are two categories may fall under this. First, it is unclear how the conflict ended. There is no clear resolution provided for the conflict. The author did not show the damaged relationship either continued in a positive or negative direction. Second, the author described the conflict's resolution in a descriptive and neutral tone. The author did not show any explicit evaluations of the conflict's outcome.

Even though there seems to be a "resolution" to the conflict, it is unclear whether the author perceived the conflict was successfully or negatively resolved. The author may present uncertain or confused feelings towards the resolution of the conflict.

Example, "My parents mediated this conflict." "I just can't figure out why she is jealous of me. We are friends! Ah, I just don't understand her."

3). Unsatisfied resolution. The author explicitly indicated negative evaluations of either the incident's outcome or the targeted person who was in conflict with him/her. The author explicitly expressed negative feelings towards the outcome of the incident.

Example, "I still feel very angry about this event." "Why they hit and scolded me when I was trying to mediate the fight? The more I think about it, the angrier I feel."

Moral Lesson

Moral lesson is the moral summaries provided by the author. Coder should count when child explicitly gives a "moral of my story". For example, count "From this incident, I learned/realized", "We should cherish our friendship" or "I decided it was the wrong thing to do." We will not count summaries of the outcome of the conflict such as "So we made up" or "After that we became friends." The lesson can comes at any point of the story. It may more often comes at the end but sometimes it can be at the beginning: "One day I learned an important lesson…" or at any parts of the story.

The moral lesson usually may involve a rule or obligation or expectation for behavior. These will usually have a deontic auxiliary, but they may not.

Signaling words: good or bad (used in a moral evaluative sense), virtue, evil, moral, right or wrong (in a moral evaluative sense) "after that day...", "from then on…"

For each story, code 0 or 1 for each of the following variables. Coding is for presence or

absence of each response type, for self (author) and other.

Moral Puzzlement

Code when the child expresses uncertainty or confusion about the nature of the

conflict or about the moral interpretation of the action, at any point of the story. The child

may express conflicting points of view or may just express confusion or a failure to

understand. Sometimes the child may attempt to account for the frustration or puzzlement

and failed to come to an explicit and certain interpretation of their confusion. For

example: "It was not my fault. well, yes, I was a little bit wrong. But can't friends joke

with each other?" "I just can't figure out why she is jealous of me, we are good friends!

Ah I just don't understand her." Other time, the child may describe moral confusion, but

eventually decides on the 'right thing to do'; we still count this as moral puzzlement.

For each story, code 0 for absence and 1 for presence of moral puzzlement.

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