Chinese children's evaluation of authority's responses to social events

Pui San Tse
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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College
ABSTRACT

CHINESE CHILDREN'S EVALUATION OF AUTHORITY'S RESPONSES TO SOCIAL EVENTS

by

Pui San Tse

Dr. Marta Laupa, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Chinese children's conceptualization of moral, conventional and personal events and their judgments of authority were examined by assessing their evaluation of authority's responses to these acts. Seventy-two Macau children from second, fifth and eighth grades made judgments of permissibility of acts, personal jurisdiction, and obedience to rules regarding these events and then rated moral, conventional and filial duty reasons provided by parents in response to these events. Findings were that children made distinctions among these events. They also rated moral reasons as the best response to moral transgressions. Children rated both moral reasons and conventional reasons more positively than duty reasons to conventional transgressions, whereas they preferred moral and duty reasons to personal events. The results suggest that children's evaluations of responses are based on their conceptualization of these events and children take into account the content of the social events in their judgments of authority.
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I would like to express my appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Marta Laupa, for her
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participation in this research.
INTRODUCTION

Adults, primarily parents, are children's primary disciplinarians. They constantly intervene in children's lives, telling them what to do and parents often reason with their children or use other strategies in order to gain their compliance. Although parents and other authorities continuously exercise power over children, prior research has shown that children do not judge such authorities to have absolute power (Laupa, 1994; Laupa & Turiel, 1986; Tisak, 1986). Rather, children base their judgments of authority in part on the type of commands issued. Children appear to evaluate their parents' reasons and commands regarding different social events and judge whether they are concordant with children's own conceptualization of these events. Most of the research on the way in which children judge different types of commands and the reasonings of authorities has been conducted with American children. It is the purpose of this study to examine whether children in a non-Western culture, specifically, Chinese children in Macau, make conceptual distinctions among the moral, conventional, and personal events and, as well, how they evaluate the appropriateness of responses from authority regarding these events.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of recent studies have shown that children form distinct conceptions of moral, social-conventional and personal events. According to Turiel (1983), moral events refer to prescriptive judgments of justice, right and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other, and they are not contingent on the presence of a rule or defined by social organizations. Acts such as stealing and hitting are considered within the moral realm. Social conventions are behavioral uniformities which coordinate the actions of individuals in a social system. Social-conventional events are arbitrarily defined by social organizations and are relative to the social contexts. Examples of social conventions include mode of dress and form of address. Personal events, as defined by Nucci (1981), are those actions considered to be outside the realm of societal regulation and moral concerns and they only affect the actor. Choice of friends is considered as a personal event.

Children as young as 2 1/2 are able to distinguish moral events from conventional events (Nucci & Turiel, 1978, Smetana, 1981). In Smetana's study (1981), children between the ages of 2 to 4 were asked to judge some moral and conventional transgressions. It was found that they perceived moral events (e.g. hitting, stealing) as more serious, more deserving of punishment and wrong even in the absence of rules.
whereas they tended to consider conventional events as rule contingent and relative to the social context. These distinctions seem to be constant across different ages (2½ to 20) studied (Nucci, 1982). Children of various ages judge moral rules to be generalizable and unalterable, wrong even in the absence of rules, and independent of authority dictates. Their reasoning about moral events focuses on the effects the actions have on the rights or well-being of others. In contrast, conventional acts are judged to be rule-contingent and subject to authority dictates, and children's responses to conventional transgressions center on aspects of social order. For example, these acts may be considered wrong because they create social disorder (Nucci, 1981, Nucci & Nucci, 1982, Smetana, 1985).

In addition, children also form distinct conceptions of personal issues. Children and adults (age 7 to 20) were found to distinguish personal matters from moral and social-conventional events. They classified actions in the personal domain on the basis that the results of such actions affect only the actor, and they rejected rules governing these actions (Nucci, 1981). In terms of degree of wrongness of these three types of social events, children generally rated moral transgressions, such as harm to others, most wrong, followed by conventional transgressions, such as those that disrupt social order. Personal matters, such as choice of friends, were considered least wrong. This result is consistent with the findings of Tisak's (1993) study of preschool children's evaluation of moral and personal events involving harm and property damage in which preschoolers, ages 36 to 72 months, also judged moral transgressions to be more wrong and deserve greater punishment than personal rule violations. In cases in which moral concerns are in conflict with social-conventional rules, studies have shown that children give priority to moral concerns such as fairness and welfare, and they base their judgment on moral
justifications. For instance, when 6 to 12 year-old children were asked to decide whether a teacher should keep a class quiet or should prevent two children from hurting each other, they generally chose an action that prevented harm and ensured the welfare of others. Wrongful intentions were used as explanations for condemning an act of harm (Killen, 1990).

In addition to the aforementioned interview studies of children's social reasoning, several observational studies of preschool and school-age children's responses to spontaneously occurring moral and conventional transgressions provide further evidence that children make conceptual differentiation of these events. For instance, in a study conducted by Nucci and Turiel (1978), the responses made by adults and 2 to 5 year-old children to moral and social conventional transgressions were observed. Children and adults (teachers) responded to moral transgressions with equal frequency, and their responses mainly centered on the intrinsic consequences of the actions. Preschool children's responses to moral events generally included statements about injury or loss, emotional states, and commands to cease from doing the act, while teachers tended to respond to these events by explaining the reason for prohibition of acts and pointing out the feelings of the victim to the transgressor or encouraging the victim to do so. With regard to social conventional transgressions, responses came mainly from teachers and their responses focused on aspects of social organization. Their typical responses consisted of commands to refrain from performing the act, rule statements and statements focused on the disorder the act created.

A second aspect of this study involved interviewing children who had witnessed the transgressions in order to determine whether they made conceptual distinctions
between moral and conventional events. Children judged moral transgressions to be wrong whether there are rules governing the act, whereas they considered conventional transgressions to be wrong contingent on the presence of rules. Findings from a subsequent observational study on older children conducted by Nucci and Nucci (1982) are consistent with the results of the previous study and confirmed that 6 to 13 year-old children also discriminate between observed moral and conventional events.

Children's differentiated concepts of moral and social-conventional events are also evident in the way they evaluated teacher methods of intervention of these transgressions. In Nucci's study (1984), students were asked to rate the effectiveness of the following types of responses provided by a teacher to moral and conventional transgressions: an intrinsic feature of the act statement (which indicates that the act is inherently hurtful or unjust), a perspective-taking statement (which is a request that the transgressor considers how it feels to be the victim of the act), a rule statement (which is a specification of a rule governing the action), a disorder/deviation statement (which specifies that the behavior is creating disorder or that it is odd), and a command statement (a statement that requires the actor to cease performing the act without further explanations).

It was shown that students preferred teachers to give domain appropriate statements, that is, statements that explain the explicit relationship between the act and its consequences. For example, in response to a moral transgression such as hitting, the intrinsic features of the act statement "it really hurt him" and the perspective-taking statement "how would you feel if somebody hit you" received higher ratings than other domain inappropriate statements such as the disorder/deviation statement "it is odd to
push others”. On the other hand, students considered disorder/deviation statements as the most appropriate in response to conventional acts. For example, students rated the disorder/deviation statement such as “it is very unladylike to sit with your legs open when you are wearing a skirt” as the most adequate response to the conventional transgression in which a girl wearing a skirt sits with her legs apart. This suggests that children form expectations of the type of responses adults should give based on their conceptualization of moral and conventional events. In another study that examined preschoolers’ evaluation of teacher intervention (Killen, Breton, Ferguson & Handler, 1994), preschoolers aged 3½ to 5½ also preferred domain appropriate responses in moral and social-conventional transgressions.

Children are found to judge authority based on their own conceptualization of social events. This suggests that children do not judge authority to have absolute power and their evaluation of authority depends on whether authority’s actions or commands are concordant with their own conceptualization of the acts concerned. Preschool and elementary-school children rejected authority’s commands that caused harm (Laupa, 1994; Laupa & Turiel, 1986). Moreover, children draw boundaries to parental authority (Tisak, 1986). They considered parents to have more legitimacy in making rules prohibiting stealing than in transgressions relating to family chores and friendship. They indicated that personal events (friendship) are outside the boundaries of parental authority, and as in the previous study conducted by Nucci (1981), children regarded stealing (a moral transgression) as most wrong, followed by not completing chores (a conventional transgression) as next, and playing with a forbidden friend least.
Further evidence that children evaluate authorities based on their concepts of social events comes from Nucci's (1984) study. After rating a teacher's different types of responses, these students were also required to rate hypothetical teachers who were described as typically employing either domain appropriate (DA) or domain inappropriate (DIA) responses to transgressions. Participants rated teachers employing DA responses higher than those employing DIA responses. This indicated that elementary-school-aged children preferred teachers to use statements that are concordant with the domain of the transgressions as a way to intervene in transgressions and that the way children rated the effectiveness of teachers as disciplinarians depends partly on teacher methods of intervention in classrooms.

Virtually all of the research on children's evaluation of authority's responses to social events has been conducted in the United States. It remains unknown how Chinese children would judge these social events, and there are some reasons to hypothesize that Chinese children would respond differently. Chinese culture has often been characterized as collectivistic, emphasizing dependence, affiliation, cooperation and harmony in interpersonal relationships (Hsu, 1981). Chinese children are generally expected to place a high value on collective welfare, social concern and conformity to authority. Chinese parents emphasize children's obligation to the family. Specifically, the cultural value of filial piety has strongly governed intergenerational relationships among Chinese families (Lin & Liu, 1993). Filial piety involves a series of obligations of the child to the parent. For example, such obligations include obedience, respect, honor, and financial support of the child to the parents. In one study of Chinese cultural values, people in China ranked filial piety as one of the most important values held (Garrott, 1995). To elicit children's
obedience, Chinese parents may use commands or statements that appeal to their sense of duty. Because of the strong emphasis on duties and obligations, it may seem that Chinese have a unitary orientation to their social world. This might lead us to conclude that Chinese children have a unilateral concept of adult authority and that they regard parents’ reasonings that appeal to children’s sense of duty as adequate responses to gain their compliance.

However, some studies have suggested otherwise. Lin and Liu (1993) conducted a study on the intergenerational relationships of Chinese American adults and their parents. Participants were presented with vignettes describing conflict situations that involved dilemmas pitting the requirements of filial obligation against other types of interpersonal demands. The results showed that the younger generation was willing to support their parents to ensure their well-being, but was reluctant to subordinate personal freedom to the wishes of parents. This suggested that different social orientations may coexist in their judgments.

Research has also indicated that Chinese and American adolescents share similar views regarding conflicts with parents (Yau & Smetana, 1996). For instance, Hong Kong adolescents experience similar conflicts to those of American adolescents. The Hong Kong adolescents judged these conflicts primarily in terms of personal jurisdiction, but they viewed their parents’ reasoning primarily as pragmatic and conventional. Yau and Smetana asserted that adolescent-parent conflict reflects the development of autonomy during adolescence and this developmental task proceeds in a similar fashion across cultures.
In another study that examined Chinese children’s concept of parental authority (Zhang, 1996), it was found that children of aged 5-13 were able to judge whether parents’ commands were right or wrong. Older children seem to realize that parents are not necessarily right, and they will endorse obedience only if they consider the commands to be appropriate. Children in China also shared the view that parents have authority in regulating moral acts. However, they do not consider that it is necessary for parents to make rules regulating conventional and personal acts. Nevertheless, once parents set up rules, more Chinese children than Americans tend to endorse obedience, and Zhang asserted that Chinese children are not as autonomous as American children. Thus, although there are differences in how American and Chinese children judge these acts, there are clearly more similarities between American and Chinese cultures than one might expect.

Cultures have often been characterized as either individualistic or collectivistic. According to Turiel and Wainryb (1994), it is too simplistic to classify a culture as having a homogeneous orientation such as individualism and collectivism. They assert that individuals within a culture possess and exhibit heterogeneous social orientations that are not adequately explained in terms of the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism. The findings that individuals form distinct domains (e.g., moral concept and conventional concept) of social judgments lend support to the notion that social orientations are heterogeneous even within one culture. Some cross-cultural studies have also provided evidence that people in a certain culture do not necessarily exhibit a unitary orientation to their social world. For example, Nucci, Turiel and Encarnacion-Gawrych (1983) replicated Nucci and Turiel’s (1978) observational study in the Virgin Islands.
Their findings were consistent with those of previous studies conducted in the United States. Both children and adults responded to the moral transgressions in terms of the intrinsic consequences of the actions. Their responses to conventional transgressions focused on aspects of social order. Moreover, they were able to differentiate moral from conventional transgressions.

Further research has confirmed that children in a non-Western culture also form distinct conceptions of moral and social-conventional acts. Korean children, like their American counterparts, were able to differentiate moral from conventional matters (Song, Smetana & Kim, 1987). These Korean children justified moral transgressions on the basis of obligation, fairness and welfare, and conventional transgressions on the basis of authority, social nonconformity and other pragmatic reasons. The findings of this research are in contrast to the view that cultural orientation is homogeneous with respect to transgressions, rules and authority. People in a certain culture show heterogeneity in their social reasoning, that is, they do not necessarily conform their social judgments uniformly to the dominant collectivistic or individualistic character of their culture.

It is unknown whether Chinese children form distinct conceptions of moral, conventional and personal events and how their conceptualization of these events influences their authority judgments. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to examine how Chinese children will evaluate parents' different types of responses to moral, conventional and personal acts. The study will be conducted in Macau, a Portuguese colony which is located in south-east China and is connected to mainland China by a narrow isthmus. It is 70 kilometers from Hong Kong and 145 kilometers from Canton, China. Macau was originally a Chinese territory. About 69.2% of Macau's population is
Chinese and about 26.7% is Portuguese. Most people in Macau were either born in Macau or China and about 96% of the population speaks Chinese. Although Macau is predominantly influenced by traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese residents there have also been exposed to substantial cultural influence from the West due to Macau’s status as a Portuguese colony.

A pilot study was conducted in Macau and there was some preliminary evidence that children differentiate these social events and they rated more positively those responses that are concordant with the domain. Based on the results from Nucci’s study (1985) and various other studies with non-Western children as well as the pilot testing, it is hypothesized that Chinese children make conceptual distinctions among moral, conventional and personal events and they will rate domain appropriate responses higher than the domain inappropriate responses to moral and conventional transgressions. Children’s judgments about permissibility of act and the extent of personal jurisdiction will serve as criterion judgments in this study. These criterion judgments, together with their justifications for the judgments, will be used to determine whether they make such distinction. In addition, children’s judgments of personal jurisdiction and of obedience to rules set by authority will be examined to assess their judgment of authority. It is predicted that children’s judgments would vary according to the type of event under consideration. Specifically, the following hypotheses were made:

Hypothesis 1: With regard to the judgment of permissibility of act, children will consider moral transgressions wrong, whereas they will judge conventional and personal acts as permissible if parental permission to engage in these acts was given.
Hypothesis 2: With respect to children's judgment of personal jurisdiction, they will prefer parents to set rules to regulate moral and conventional events, whereas they will assert personal jurisdiction over personal acts.

Hypothesis 3: Children's justifications for their judgments of permissibility of act and of personal jurisdiction for moral, conventional and personal events will be consistent with the domain concerned. For moral events, justifications will be moral in nature, focusing on other's physical or psychological welfare. For conventional and personal events, conventional justifications with an emphasis on social expectations and personal justifications with reference to personal choice will be used respectively.

These three hypotheses are related to the proposition that children make distinctions among moral, conventional and personal domains.

Hypothesis 4: With regard to children's judgment of authority, children will consider parents have more legitimacy to regulate moral and conventional transgressions than personal events and they will be less likely to endorse obedience to parental rules that govern the personal acts than those that regulate moral and conventional transgressions.

Hypothesis 5: With respect to children's ratings of authority's responses, children will rate most highly moral reasons that focus on the features of the acts as hurtful in response to moral transgressions and will rate most highly conventional reasons that focus on rules and social expectations as the best responses given by the authority to conventional transgressions. For personal events, children will treat these events as residing under their
own personal jurisdiction and they will accordingly reject authority's commands to refrain from the act.

Finally, it is anticipated that findings from this study would increase our understanding of how cultural factors affect children's social development and additionally would provide information on how children's conceptualization of these social events influences their judgment of authority.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 72 middle- to lower-class Chinese children from a private school in Macau. There were 24 children each, 12 boys and 12 girls, in second, fifth and eighth grades (the mean ages were 8.13, 11.0, and 14.22, respectively). The school was established by Chinese patriots and traditional Chinese virtues are promoted.

Design and Procedure

Each participant was interviewed individually for approximately 25 minutes by the experimenter (with the exception of seven children who were interviewed by the experimenter's assistant due to time constraint). There were two interview versions, A and B, with each including a moral transgression, a social conventional transgression, and a personal event. (See Appendix for the two interview versions) The contents of the moral and conventional transgressions and the personal event were different in the two interview versions so as to maximize the generalizability of children’s judgments to different acts within the same domain. These events were classified according to the criteria used in other studies that examined these distinctions (Nucci, 1981; Smetana, 1981; Turiel, 1983). The two moral events depicted in Version A and B were (a) a child pulling another child's hair to cut in front of the line, and (b) a child pushing another child aside to cut in front of the line. The two conventional events were (a) a child...
calling parents by their first names, and (b) a child eating rice with his or her fingers. The two personal events were (a) a child choosing to read during free time, and (b) a child choosing to wear a green jacket to a party.

The two versions were equally distributed with half of the participants receiving Version A and another half Version B. Equal number of males and females received either version.

The interview began with the basic assessment of each social event. Following a description of an event, participants were asked the following three questions in fixed order: (a) whether the act was right or wrong if the mother permitted the child to do so (indicating the permissibility of act), (b) whether the child should be able to choose what to do (indicating personal jurisdiction), and (c) whether the child should follow the rule if the mother set up one (indicating obedience to rules). Children were also asked to provide justifications for each of their answers. The basic assessment questions were intended to assess participants’ evaluations of the moral, conventional and personal events to determine their conceptualization of these events. Following the basic assessment was the ratings of authority’s responses. Children were told a story about each of the three events that involved a child (same age and sex as the participants) committing the act and an authority intervening. After the presentation of each story, participants were asked to rate the three different types of responses given by the authority, in this case, a mother, on a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 being “very good”, 2 “good”, 3 “OK” and 4 “not so good”. The scale consists of four circular faces of varying sizes with different facial expressions and verbal labels to indicate the rating scale as it
would be easier for younger children to understand. The three types of responses were as follows:

1. Moral reasons which incorporated the intrinsic features of the act and perspective-taking request by specifying that the act is inherently hurtful and request that the transgressor considers how it feels to be the victim of the act (e.g., “That could really hurt the child and how would you feel if someone pushed you?”)

2. Conventional reasons which stated that the act has violated social expectations and there is a rule governing the act (e.g., “It is bad table manners to eat rice with your fingers and the rule in our family is that we don’t eat rice with fingers.”)

3. Filial duty statements which explain to the actors that they have an obligation to obey their parent (e.g., “I am your mother and you must do what your mother tells you to.”)

After the rating of each response, participants’ justification of the evaluation were sought and recorded. Finally, the participants were also asked to rank order the three reasons to determine which one they consider as the best response to each event. To minimize any order effects, complete counterbalancing of the orders of the events in the basic assessment and in the rating was employed. The orders of responses in each event were also randomized.

**Translation and Back Translation of the Interview**

The interviews were conducted in Chinese. To ensure the equivalent measurements in the English and Chinese versions, the interview questions were translated into Chinese and then the back translation technique was employed. In this technique, the English version was first translated into Chinese by a bilingual who speaks Chinese as their first language and English the second. Then, the Chinese version was
again translated back into English by another bilingual translator. This version was then compared with the original English version, and any discrepancies were discussed and changed as appropriate.

Coding and Reliability

For the basic assessment questions, positive responses were assigned a score of one and negative responses were assigned a score of two. Responses of the ratings were rated on a scale from 1 to 4. Justifications for the ratings were coded using a system derived from the analysis of responses from half of the interviews and this coding system was then applied to the other half of the interviews. The justification categories were described in Table 1. To ensure the reliability of coding of the justification categories, 7% of the protocols was coded by a second judge. The interrater reliability was 87%.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Appeal to other’s physical, psychological welfare or negative feelings experienced from the victim’s perspective (“It hurts the child.” “It upsets other people.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Appeal to the existence of rules, the approval of authority, social expectation, norms, social customs, social order or negative reactions from other people (“It is impolite to call parents by first names.” “It is bad table manners to eat rice with fingers.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Appeal to individual preferences, permissibility of acts or rejection of rules (“The child has freedom to choose what to wear.” “Reading during free time does not affect other people.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference to Filial Duty</td>
<td>Appeal to children’s obligations to parents or rejection of the duty statements due to its authoritarian nature (“The child should obey parents because they are his parents.” “The mother is too arbitrary to say that the child has to obey her because she is mother.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Appeal to the disgrace brought to self or family (“The child will embarrass himself and his family if he eats rice with his fingers.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>Appeal to the concern and love authority have for the child (“The parent prohibits the child to wear the green jacket because she is doing this for the child’s own good.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Appeal to the practical needs, concerns and consequences (“It is not alright to eat rice with fingers because it is not hygienic.”)</td>
</tr>
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Table 1 (con’t)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncodable</td>
<td>Undifferentiated evaluations or no answer (&quot;it is wrong to eat rice with fingers.&quot;)</td>
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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Basic Assessment

The purpose of the basic assessment was to determine whether Chinese children in Macau make conceptual distinctions among the moral, conventional and personal domains. The assessment included a set of three questions for each event. The first question dealt with permissibility of the acts. The second examined the extent of personal jurisdiction of the acts and the third, children's obedience to rules. Table 2 presents the percentage of children responding positively to these three questions. That is, they answered 'yes' to the questions.

Table 2

**Positive Responses (in Percentages) for Basic Assessment Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Moral</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Personal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permissibility of act</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Jurisdiction</td>
<td>4⁹</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience to rules</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>75⁹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁹ Data are missing for one participant who failed to respond to the question.
As expected, children's judgments of permissibility of the two moral events showed that they unanimously considered that pulling someone's hair and pushing another person were wrong even with parents' permission to engage in such acts. On the other hand, they totally agreed that it was acceptable to engage in the two personal events which were reading during free time and wearing a green jacket to a party. Their responses to the conventional events, however, were divided. The majority of them judged that it was wrong to call parents by their first names or to eat rice with their fingers. When queried as to whether the acts should be subject to personal jurisdiction, most of the children accepted parents' authority regarding moral and conventional transgressions, but the majority asserted personal jurisdiction over personal events. Almost all participants endorsed obedience to moral and conventional rules set by parents. However, about one third of them refused to endorse obedience to rules that regulate personal acts.

Participants' mean responses to each of the three basic assessment questions were analyzed using 3 (grade: second, fifth and eighth) X 2 (gender: male and female) X 2 (version: A and B) X 3 (domain: moral, conventional and personal) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with domain as the repeated measure. Due to the large numbers of tests conducted, the alpha level was always set at 0.01 to control for Type I error. It must be noted that participants' mean responses were within the range of 1 to 2 with 1 being the most positive and 2 the most negative.

In each set of analyses, domain was found to be significant. Children's judgments of permissibility of acts showed a highly significant main effect for domain, F (2, 59) =
36.148, \( p < .001 \). Post hoc comparisons using orthogonal comparisons were made and revealed that children judged moral transgressions (\( M = 2.00, SD = .00 \)) to be the most unacceptable, followed by conventional (\( M = 1.79, SD = .41 \)) and personal acts (\( M = 1.00, SD = .00 \)) respectively, \( ps < .001 \). This was consistent with the first hypothesis regarding the moral and personal events. The assessment of personal jurisdiction and of obedience to rules also yielded significant main effects for domain, \( F_{(2, 59)} = 283.347 \) and 11.575 respectively, \( ps < .001 \). Consistent with the second hypothesis, children considered that they should have more personal jurisdiction over personal events (\( M = 1.07, SD = .26 \)) than over moral events (\( M = 1.96, SD = .20 \)) and conventional events (\( M = 1.92, SD = .28 \), \( ps < .001 \). As expected, children also endorsed more obedience to rules that regulate moral (\( M = 1.01, SD = .12 \)) and conventional (\( M = 1.01, SD = .12 \)) transgressions than those that impose restriction on personal events (\( M = 1.26, SD = .47 \), \( ps < .0001 \).

To examine whether there was a distinct pattern in how children responded to the three basic assessment questions and how consistent children's responses were with the criterion judgments, separate chi-square tests were performed for each event. The results showed that certain patterns of responding tended to occur more frequently for moral events, \( X^2_{(2, N = 71)} = 119.099, p < .001 \), conventional events, \( X^2_{(2, N = 72)} = 141.472, p < .001 \), and personal events, \( X^2_{(2, N = 71)} = 43.718, p < .001 \). The patterns of children's responses to the basic assessment for the moral and personal events were consistent with the underlying criteria of moral and personal domains. Most of the children (94%) judged that it was wrong to commit moral transgressions, that moral acts should be subject to rules set by parents, and such parental rules should be obeyed. With
regard to personal events, 93% of the children stated that it was acceptable to engage in the two personal acts, which should be under personal jurisdiction. Among these children, only 26% refused to endorse obedience to rules set by parents. It must be noted children's judgments of obedience to rules that govern these social events are not considered as criterion judgments of whether they make distinctions among these events.

Children appeared to judge the moral and conventional events in a similar way; 75% of children's responses to conventional events were the same as for moral events. As in their judgments about moral events, these children considered it was wrong to commit conventional transgressions and they preferred rules set by parents and endorsed their obedience to these parental rules.

**Justification for Basic Assessment**

Partly consistent with the third hypothesis, children's justifications for moral, conventional and personal events were mostly concordant to the corresponding domain. As shown in Table 3, their justifications for the negative evaluation of moral events were predominantly moral in nature, with a focus on the physical welfare of the victim (it hurts the child if you pull her hair). Conventional justifications were also common because some children focused on the aspect of the stories about cutting in front of the line. These children considered it was wrong to cut in front of someone and they appealed to conventional reasons like violation of social norms (the child should follow order). Conventional events were justified mainly in terms of conventional justifications with reference to social expectations (it is impolite to call your parents by their first names). As predicted, children used primarily personal justifications with an emphasis on the
Table 3

Justification (in Percentages) for Basic Assessment Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification Categories</th>
<th>Permissibility of act</th>
<th>Personal Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Obedience to rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filial Duty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncodable</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
permissibility of acts to justify their positive evaluation of personal acts (there is nothing wrong with wearing a green jacket).

For the assessment of personal jurisdiction for the three social events, children mostly used justifications that were consistent with the respective domains. They used moral and conventional reasons to justify rules setting to regulate moral transgressions, but they chose personal reasons (personal choice) to justify personal jurisdiction over personal acts. The justifications of children's judgments of jurisdiction for the conventional event were about evenly split between pragmatic and conventional.

Children tended to use more pragmatic reasons to explain the need for parents to set rules to regulate eating rice with fingers, whereas they preferred conventional reasons (social expectation) for the transgression of calling parents by first names.

The majority of justifications as to why rules should be obeyed for the moral, conventional and personal events was mainly references to filial duty. A common response would be “they are your parents and you should obey them.” In addition to reference to filial duty, children also used conventional reasons, mainly punishment avoidance, and moral reasons to justify endorsement of obedience to moral rules. Conventional justifications were the next most frequently used reasons to support judgments in reference to conventional events.

Ratings of Responses

Children's ratings of the moral, conventional and duty reasons are summarized in Table 4. Their ratings were analyzed using a 3 (grade: second, fifth and eighth) X 2 (gender: male and female) X 2 (version: A and B) X 3 (domain: moral, conventional and
personal) X 3 (reason: moral, conventional and duty) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with domain and reason as the repeated measures.

The results showed that there was a main effect for domain, $F (2, 59) = 170.384, p < .001$, and a main effect for reason, $F (2, 59) = 30.272, p < .001$. Orthogonal comparisons revealed that overall, children provided more positive ratings to responses to moral and conventional transgressions than to the personal events, $ps < .01$, and in general, moral reasons received the most positive ratings, followed by conventional reasons and duty statements respectively, $ps < .05$.

Table 4

Children's Ratings of Parents' Responses to Moral, Conventional and Personal Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Moral Reason</th>
<th>Conventional Reason</th>
<th>Duty Statement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>1.54 (.59)</td>
<td>1.87 (.68)</td>
<td>1.92 (1.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>1.25 (.44)</td>
<td>2.46 (.88)</td>
<td>3.00 (.72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>1.29 (.55)</td>
<td>2.08 (.88)</td>
<td>2.96 (.62)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.36 (.54)</td>
<td>2.14 (.84)</td>
<td>2.63 (.94)</td>
<td>2.04 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>1.75 (.68)</td>
<td>1.75 (.79)</td>
<td>2.33 (1.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>2.08 (.93)</td>
<td>1.83 (.70)</td>
<td>2.79 (.72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>1.83 (.70)</td>
<td>1.97 (.74)</td>
<td>2.96 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.89 (.78)</td>
<td>1.82 (.74)</td>
<td>2.69 (.93)</td>
<td>2.13 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>3.21 (.72)</td>
<td>3.25 (.94)</td>
<td>2.42 (.71)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>3.29 (.75)</td>
<td>3.88 (.34)</td>
<td>3.33 (.56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>3.21 (.88)</td>
<td>3.42 (.34)</td>
<td>3.54 (.66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.24 (.78)</td>
<td>3.51 (.73)</td>
<td>3.10 (.89)</td>
<td>3.28 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All grades combined</td>
<td>2.16 (.51)</td>
<td>2.49 (.53)</td>
<td>2.81 (.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The lower the mean is, the better the reason. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.
There was a significant domain by version interaction, $F(2, 59) = 5.601, p < .01$. Tests of simple effects and Student Student-Keuls indicated that in both versions, children provided more positive ratings in the moral and conventional events than in the personal events ($ps < .001$). Additionally, a significant gender by version by domain interaction was found, $F(2, 59) = 5.794, p < .01$. Both males and females rated reasons more positively with respect to the moral and conventional events than to the personal events in both versions. However, females responded differently to the personal events in the two versions with reasons in Version B (a child choosing to wear a green jacket) being rated more positively than those in Version A (a child choosing to read during free time, $p < .01$.

The analyses also indicated a significant reason by version interaction, $F(2, 59) = 5.471, p < .01$, and a significant reason by grade interaction, $F(4, 120) = 6.554, p < .01$. Children rated moral reasons more favorably than conventional and duty reasons in Version B, $ps < .05$. Post hoc tests also revealed that in terms of differences within each grade, fifth graders rated moral reasons more positively than duty statements, and eighth graders provided more positive ratings to both moral and conventional reasons than duty statements, $ps < .05$. Differences in the ratings of reasons among the three grades were found with second graders gave more positive responses to duty statements than did the fifth and eighth graders, $p < .05$.

Furthermore, there was a significant domain by reason interaction, $F(4, 57) = 42.63, p < .01$. Consistent with the fifth hypothesis with regard to moral events, Moral reasons were rated as the best reason in response to moral transgressions, followed by conventional and duty reasons respectively, $ps < .01$. For the conventional events, both
moral and conventional reasons were rated more positively than the duty statements, ps <.01. This was contrary to what was expected. In response to the personal events, children rated duty and moral reasons more favorably than the conventional reasons, ps <.01.

Finally, the analyses showed a significant domain by reason by grade interaction, F (8, 114) = 3.051, p <.01. Specifically, both fifth and eighth graders rated moral reasons as the best reasons, followed by conventional and duty reasons respectively for moral events, ps <.001. With regard to the conventional events, all children agreed that moral and conventional reasons were better than the duty statements, ps <.001. Second graders rated duty statements as the best response to personal events rather than the moral and conventional reasons, whereas fifth graders favored moral and duty reasons over conventional reasons, ps <.01.

**Justification for Ratings of Responses**

Children were asked to provide justifications for their ratings of each response. As shown in Table 5, for the moral events, children used mainly moral justifications (empathy) to justify their ratings of moral reasons. The majority of justifications for the conventional reasons were in terms of conventional justifications (social expectation). Likewise, these conventional justifications were used in justifying the ratings of conventional reasons for the conventional events. Children’s justifications for the ratings of moral reasons for the conventional events were split between moral and conventional justifications. The ratings of both moral and conventional reasons for the personal events were justified using primarily personal justification (permissibility of acts). Finally, in
Table 5

**Justification (in Percentages) for Ratings of Moral, Conventional and Duty Reasons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification Categories</th>
<th>Moral Event</th>
<th>Conventional Event</th>
<th>Personal Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Version A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filial Duty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncodable</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                          | Moral       | Conventional       | Duty           |
|                          | Version B   |                    |                |
| Moral                    | 36          | 3                  | 3              |
| Conventional             | 1           | 22                 | 3              |
| Personal                 | 0           | 6                  | 1              |
| Filial Duty              | 0           | 0                  | 30             |
| Shame                    | 0           | 0                  | 0              |
| Concern                  | 4           | 1                  | 0              |
| Pragmatic                | 1           | 2                  | 1              |
| Uncodable                | 7           | 15                 | 11             |

Version B
Table 5 (con't)

Justification (in Percentages) for Ratings of Moral, Conventional and Duty Reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification Categories</th>
<th>Moral Event</th>
<th>Conventional Event</th>
<th>Personal Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Versions Combined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filial Duty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncodable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
each of the three events, children used reference to filial duty (mainly rejection) to justify their ratings of duty statements.

**Ranking of Responses**

Children’s ranking of responses seemed consistent with the way they rated them. There was a significant agreement in children’s rankings for moral, conventional and personal events, $W = .658, .392$ and $.175$ respectively, $p < .01$. In both moral and conventional events, moral reasons ($M = 1.14$ and $1.61$ for moral and conventional events respectively) were ranked as the best response, followed by conventional ($M = 2.11$ and $1.67$) and duty reasons ($M = 2.75$ and $2.72$). In the personal events, moral reasons ($M = 1.54$) were again ranked as the best, duty ($M = 2.10$) second and conventional ($M = 2.36$) the last.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The findings from the basic assessment were consistent with hypothesis 2 and 3 and partially with hypothesis 1 and they support the proposition that Chinese children in Macau differentiate morality, social conventions and personal events. Distinctions of the moral and personal domains were clearly indicated from the way children judged these acts and personal jurisdiction and how they justified these evaluations. First, children unanimously agreed that moral transgressions were wrong even though parents gave them permission to engage in these acts. This shows that their judgments were not contingent on parental authority and children recognized that the wrongness of moral events were unalterable by authority. Moreover, they judged that these acts should be subject to rules set by parents. Further support of the notion that children have a clear understanding of the moral concept comes from their predominant use of moral justifications for the above evaluation. Children reasoned about these moral events mainly in terms of other’s physical welfare. Both their evaluations of acts and justifications were in line with the conceptual definition of the moral domain.

At first glance, it may seem that children treated the moral and conventional events in the same way. While all children judged that moral transgressions were wrong, fewer children, but still a majority, gave this response to conventional transgressions even
though they were given parental permission to engage in these acts. These children also considered it necessary for parents to make the rules prohibiting these transgressions. However, a careful look at their justifications shows that their reasoning was mostly conventional and pragmatic. Children tended to use conventional justifications with reference to the impoliteness of the act in order to justify the wrongness of calling parents by first names. Because filial duty is highly valued in Chinese society, it is considered disrespectful for children to call parents by first names. Even though children were given parental permission to do so, children still appealed to the importance of politeness and the need to maintain social status differences to justify their evaluation. Due to the emphasis on the hierarchy of relationships, calling parents by first names may mean that their status is equal and this may be considered as a serious transgression as it may possibly disrupt the social hierarchy. Furthermore, because calling parents by first names goes against what children have learned about respecting their elders, children probably were reluctant to address parents this way. Similar findings were also observed in the study of Korean children conducted by Song et al. (1987). Korean children considered not greeting elders cordially as more wrong independent of rules than other conventional events, but their justifications were mainly conventional with an emphasis on courtesy and social status. Song et al. suggested that respect for elders actually reflects the effort to maintain respect for the culture and social system and that Korean children have shown a better understanding of the function of conventions.

Moreover, only one criterion judgment, permissibility of act on the contingent of authority dictates, was examined in this study to determine whether children make distinctions between morality and conventions. It is possible that they may conceptualize
the two conventional events in this study as conventions if other criterion judgments were assessed. As Turiel (1989) points out, children do not necessarily differentiate morality from conventions on all criteria and other factors such as their familiarity with the issues may influence their judgments. Nucci’s (1986) study of Amish children and adolescent clearly demonstrated the need to assess criterion judgments that are relevant to the group. To examine whether Amish children differentiate moral and conventional prohibitions, they were asked whether it would be right for religious authorities to remove or change the rules pertinent to these moral and conventional prohibitions. The majority considered it was wrong to remove or change these rules. Based on their judgments, it might appear that the Amish children were unable to make such distinctions. However, when the questions were phrased and children were asked whether it was permissible to engage in the act if God made no rule about it, the majority regarded the conventional prohibitions as permissible and the moral prohibitions as wrong. Nucci’s study clearly showed that it is necessary to assess a number of criterion judgments and construct the questions in such a way so that they are relevant to the group.

Children’s reasonings about eating rice with fingers in this study were mostly pragmatic followed by conventional justifications. These children pointed out that besides that it is impolite to eat rice with fingers, it is entirely not hygienic to do so. For instance, to justify why it was wrong to eat rice with one’s fingers even with parent’s permission to do so, one child said, “the child in the story may forget to wash his hands. He may carry germs in his hands and he may get sick.” Given that eating rice with one’s fingers may put his or her health at risk, children most likely condemn such an act. Despite the similarities in children’s evaluations of the moral and conventional
transgressions, a number of children did recognize that it was permissible to commit these conventional transgressions once parental permission was given. Moreover, their justifications for the conventional events were mainly conventional in nature and children do demonstrate their understanding of the conventional domain.

As hypothesized, children were able to distinguish personal events from moral and conventional events. There is a clear indication that children treated personal acts differently than the other two events. All children judged that it was acceptable to engage in personal acts and that the actor should be able to choose what to do. Moreover, they reasoned about these personal acts primarily in terms of personal choice and the absence of effects on other people. The results confirm that Chinese children, like their American counterparts, are able to make conceptual distinctions among moral, conventional and personal events. This is contrary to the assumption that children in a collectivistic culture possess a homogeneous orientation to their social world.

In this study, the majority of children equally preferred parents to set rules to regulate moral and conventional transgressions but not personal acts. These findings were both similar to and different from Tisak's (1986) study of American children (aged 6-11) and Zhang's (1996) study of children in China (aged 5-13). In their studies, children judged that parents have greater legitimacy in making rules to regulate moral acts (stealing and picking flowers from a park), followed by conventional acts (family chores) and personal acts (choosing friends). The present study indicates that Chinese children considered parents to have equal legitimacy in making rules to prohibit the moral and conventional transgressions. This difference is possibly due to the content of
the conventional events, as calling parents by their first names and eating rice with their fingers may be perceived as more serious than leaving dishes on the table after eating.

The results of the assessment of obedience to rules with regard to three events were consistent with previous research which shows that children tend to endorse less obedience to rules that regulate personal acts than those that regulate moral and conventional transgressions. While almost all children endorse obedience to moral and conventional rules, fewer children, but still a majority, stated that rules that prohibit personal acts should be obeyed. Filial duty was used primarily to justify their judgments. Children reasoned that they have the obligation to obey their parents. This finding is not surprising given that obedience to authority is highly emphasized. Even though children regard personal acts as within their jurisdiction, once parents set up rules, most of them are likely to comply to preserve the harmony of their relationships with their parents.

These findings are consistent with hypothesis 4 and suggest that Chinese children also draw boundaries to parental authority. Their judgment of parental authority depends partly on their conceptualization of social domains. Children judged that parents have different degree of legitimacy in setting rules to regulate these social events and their endorsement of obedience also varies depending on the types of events. These findings show that Chinese children do not have a unitary orientation toward parental authority. Instead, children take into accounts the types of events and commands as well as the value of filial duty in their authority judgments.

Consistent with the hypothesis 5, children’s ratings of the moral, conventional and duty reasons show that they all considered moral reasons that focused on features of the act as hurtful and the appeal of empathy as the most appropriate response to moral
transgressions. Results of children’s ranking of the three reasons also support the above finding. Furthermore, moral justifications referring to empathy were used mostly by children to support their evaluations. For the conventional events, in addition to the conventional reasons that focused on aspects of the social order, children also rated moral reasons as the most adequate response. The results of their ranking show that children actually ranked moral reasons as the best response, followed by conventional and duty reasons. However, the finding also indicated that children rated moral reasons more favorably than conventional reasons for the events in Version B only (a child pushing another child aside, a child eating rice with fingers and a child choosing to read). Children’s reasonings about the ratings of the conventional reasons were mainly conventional. However, their reasonings about the ratings of the moral reasons were split between conventional and moral justifications. This is especially true when children evaluated the act of eating rice with fingers, whereas children tended to use mainly conventional justification for the transgression of calling parents by their first names. Children’s rating and ranking results are contrary to the hypothesis that children will rate conventional reasons as the best response to the conventional transgressions. One possible explanation is that some children, especially the youngest ones, may have difficulty comprehending the moral and conventional reasons. Sometimes, instead of evaluating the reasons, children focused on the act. For example, when children were asked to provide justifications for their ratings of the reasons, some said that the reasons were good because it was wrong to eat rice with fingers. This may result in similar ratings of these two reasons. A more likely explanation is that some children did think that the moral reasons were reasonable as shown by their frequent use of moral
justifications to justify their ratings. The moral reasons stated that other people would be upset if the child engaged in these acts (calling parents by first names or eating rice with fingers) and asked the child to consider how he or she would feel if other people violated these transgressions. It seemed that children, especially the older ones, were more concerned about how eating rice with fingers affected other people. They were likely to consider eating rice with fingers as an act that would upset other people by affecting their appetite. Moreover, they also appealed to the negative consequences as experienced from the victim's point of view. Specifically, they may find it disgraceful to be seen eating rice with their fingers. It is likely that other people may judge that they had poor manners and were not properly taught how to behave by their parents. Eating rice with fingers may also be perceived as disrespectful to other diners and accordingly may upset others emotionally. Thus, moral reasons may seem to these children as appropriate responses which complement the conventional reasons by stating the effects on other people.

According to Turiel, certain conventions may be viewed by individuals as having moral implications of a second-order nature (1983). In this case, though children conceptualized the event (eating rice with fingers) as conventional, they also perceived the possibility that other people might be offended because they were not adhering to the convention. This was consistent to the moral reasoning they provided to justify their rating of moral reasons. All children referred only the negative feelings other people may have as a result of their transgressions. Moreover, the moral reasons for the conventional events did call children's attention to consider how it felt like being the 'victim'. It is likely that children were referring to the moral implication of this conventional event and that was why they rated the moral reason as a good response.
Finally, children judged that both moral reasons and duty statements were more adequate responses than conventional reasons to personal events. Children also ranked moral reasons as the best, followed by duty statements and conventional reasons. It must be noted that children only rated these responses as fair or poor. In fact, their justifications about the ratings of moral and conventional reasons were primarily personal justifications. Children's evaluations of conventional reasons were mostly negative, perhaps because they did not perceive any violations of social norms and they rejected rules governing personal acts. Taking their ratings and justifications together, it seems that children were asserting their personal jurisdiction over these acts. Differences were observed in children's ratings of the three reasons. Second graders favored duty statements over moral and conventional reasons, whereas fifth graders preferred both moral and duty reasons over conventional reasons. In fact, second graders rated the duty statements so positively that they turned out to be the best response to the personal events. This also explains why the ranking results were inconsistent with their ratings. Overall, second graders gave more positive ratings to duty statements than the fifth and eighth graders did. It appears that as children get older and are exposed to more social experiences, they begin to understand better the concepts of morality and social conventions and are better at discriminating among moral, conventional and duty reasons. Moreover, older children also tend to assert more autonomy. In fact, there is evidence that children viewed the filial duty statements in a negative light as their justifications for the ratings of duty statements for all three events were mostly rejection of filial duty. Children seemed to think that the duty statements were too authoritarian and that the mother was coercing them to comply. Thus, they did not consider these statements as
appropriate responses to moral, conventional or personal events. Taken together, the results suggest that children form expectation of the types of responses parents should give based on their conceptualization of these events and evaluate the appropriateness of parent’s responses to these social events within that context.

Though children rejected duty statements as adequate responses to these social events, they nevertheless used filial duty as justifications to support their judgments of obedience to rules set by parents. It appears that children regard mothers’ explicit demand of filial duty as compelling and that parents may actually appeal to children’s sense of filial duty through more subtle processes. More research is needed to examine how these processes operate and how children’s conception of filial duty changes as they develop.

Finally, the study revealed that there was sex difference in children’s rating of reasons for the two personal events. Females seemed to favor those reasons in respond to the event about a child choosing to wear a green jacket and they gave poorer ratings to those in respond to the event about a child choosing to read during free time. This is an unusual finding as sex differences were generally not observed in previous research (Nucci, 1984). One possible explanation is that girls may find that the reasons given by the mothers for not wearing a green jacket were more convincing to them than those for not reading during free time. Mothers may be more concerned about their daughters’ appearances and may tend to comment more about their daughters’ choice of clothes. It is likely that girls are more familiar with the experience of mothers’ interference of their choice of clothing and they might rate those reasons more positively.
To conclude, the study supports the hypotheses that Chinese children in Macau form conceptual distinctions of the moral, conventional and personal domains and that they judged authority’s reasons based on their conceptualization of these domains. These findings support the notion that Chinese children exhibit heterogeneous orientations to their social world. Therefore, characterizing culture solely on the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism may have obscured our understanding of individual social judgment. At the same time, the study also shows that certain specific cultural factors do appear to be significant and need to be considered. For instance, the cultural value of “filial duty” certainly affects Chinese children’s judgment of obedience to parental authority.

This study, together with other cross-cultural studies such as those conducted in Korea (Song, Smetana, & Kin, 1987) and the Virgin Islands (Nucci, Turiel, & Encarnacion-Gawrych, 1983), indicates that across cultures, children form similar conceptualization of moral and conventional domains. These findings show that children do not acquire these concepts simply through cultural transmission. Rather, Turiel (1983) proposed that children’s development of social knowledge stems from their interactions with the environment (1983). Children are actively trying to make sense of their social experience. Some observational studies such as those conducted in the United States (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Nucci & Nucci, 1982) and the Virgin Islands (Nucci, Turiel, & Encarnacion-Gawrych, 1983) found that both adults and children’s responses to social conventional events differed from their responses to moral events. Through their qualitatively different forms of social interactions in the context of moral and conventional events, children process and construct moral and conventional concepts.
Certain limitations of the study may have influenced the results. First, there may be experimenter bias as the interviewer was aware of the hypotheses of the study. During the assessment, some younger children seemed to have difficulty elaborating their justifications and probably closed-ended questions are more appropriate for them. Finally, this study only examined limited judgment criteria to determine whether children make conceptual distinctions among the three domains. A more thorough assessment may include questions that examine other criteria. For instance, questions about generalizability of the act's wrongness and contingency of the act on the presence of rules can be included to help clarify whether children are able to distinguish the moral from the conventional transgressions and if there is domain overlap in their judgments.

The study indicates that certain cultural values such as filial duty affect children's judgment of authority. It is important to understand how these cultural beliefs and values might have contributed to differences among cultures and further research might profitably explore how children weigh such factors in their judgments.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEW VERSIONS

Interview Questions (Version A)

Basic Assessment:

Interviewer: I am going to ask you some questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All I want to know is your opinion. You can refuse to answer any questions that you don’t want to answer and you can stop the interview any time you want to stop.

Moral 1:

a. While waiting for the bus, a child pulls the hair of another child in front of him/her to get to the front of the line. Do you think it is all right for him/her to pull another child’s hair if the parents let him/her do that?

   Yes_____          No_____

   Why?____________________________________________________________

b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t pull someone’s hair” or should the child be able to choose what to do?

   Parents___   Child___

   Why?____________________________________________________________
c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t pull someone’s hair”, should the child follow the rule?

Yes______            No______

Why?______________________________________________________________________

Conventional 1:

a. A child calls his/her parents by their first names. Do you think it is all right for him/her to call his/her parents by their first names if the parents let him/her?

Yes______            No______

Why?______________________________________________________________________

b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t call your parents by their first names” or should the child be able to choose?

Parents____            Child____

Why?______________________________________________________________________

c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t call your parents by your first names”, should the child follow the rule?

Yes______            No______

Why?______________________________________________________________________

Personal 1:

a. A child wants to read a book during free time. Do you think it is all right for him/her to do that if the parents let him/her?

Yes______            No______

Why?______________________________________________________________________

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b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t read a book during your free time” or should the child be able to choose?

Parents____  Child____

Why?__________________________________________________________

c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t read a book during your free time”, should the child follow the rule?

Yes____  No____

Why?__________________________________________________________
Interview Questions (Version A)

Ratings of Responses:

Interviewer: I am going to tell you stories about a child and his/her mother. In each story, the child does something and the mother deals with the child in different ways. I would like to know what you think of the way the mother deals with the child. Please tell me whether it is 1-very good, 2-good, 3-ok or 4 not so good.

Moral 1:

Ann/Michael was waiting for the bus and she/he pulled the hair of the child in front of her/him so that she/he could get to the front of the line. Then, Ann/Michael’s mother said, “Don’t pull the child’s hair

Reason A – Moral - because that could really hurt her/him and how would you feel if someone pulled your hair?

What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good 2-good 3-ok 4-not so good

Why?

Mary/James was waiting for the bus and she/he pulled the hair of the child in front of her/him so that she/he could get to the front of the line. Then, Mary/James’s mother said, “Don’t pull the child’s hair

Reason B – Conventional – because it is rude to pull someone’s hair and the rule in our family is that we do not pull other’s hair.

a. What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good 2-good 3-ok 4-not so good

Why?
Julie/David was waiting for the bus and she/he pulled the hair of the child in front of her/him so that she/he could get to the front of the line. Then, Julie/David's mother said, "Don't pull the child's hair.

Reason C - Duty - because I am your mother and you must do what your mother tells you to.

a. What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good  2-good  3-ok  4-not so good

Why? ________________________________________________________________

Please rank order the following three reasons. Please put 1 next to the best reason, 2 to the second best and 3 to the third best.

_____ A. Don't pull the child's hair because that could really hurt her/him and how would you feel if someone pulled your hair?

_____ B. Don't pull the child's hair because it is rude to pull someone's hair and the rule in our family is that we do not pull other's hair.

_____ C. Don't pull the child's hair because I am your mother and you must do what your mother tells you to.
Interview Questions (Version B)

Basic Assessment:

Interviewer: I am going to ask you some questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All I want to know is your opinion. You can refuse to answer any questions that you don’t want to answer and you can stop the interview any time you want to stop.

Moral 1:

a. A child wants to get on the slide and he/she pushes aside another child who is there first. Do you think it is all right for him/her to push another child if the parents let him/her do that?
   
   Yes_____       No_____

Why?____________________________________________________________

b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t push people” or should the child be able to choose what to do?

   Parents____    Child____

Why?____________________________________________________________

c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t push people”, should the child follow the rule?

   Yes_____      No_____

Why?____________________________________________________________

Conventional 1:

a. A child is eating spaghetti/rice with his/her fingers. Do you think it is all right for him/her to eat spaghetti/rice with his/her fingers if the parents let him/her?
b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t eat spaghetti/rice with your fingers” or should the child be able to choose?

Parents_____  Child_____

Why?__________________________________________________________

c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t eat spaghetti/rice with your fingers”, should the child follow the rule?

Yes_____  No_____

Why?__________________________________________________________

Personal 1:

a. A child wants to wear a green jacket to a friend’s party. Do you think it is all right for him/her to do that if the parents let him/her?

Yes_____  No_____

Why?__________________________________________________________

b. Should the parents make a rule “Don’t wear a green jacket to your friend’s party” or should the child be able to choose?

Parents_____  Child_____

Why?__________________________________________________________

c. If the parents make a rule “Don’t wear a green jacket to your friend’s party”, should the child follow the rule?

Yes_____  No_____

Why?__________________________________________________________
Interview Questions (Version B)

Ratings of Responses:

Interviewer: I am going to tell you stories about a child and his/her mother. In each story, the child does something and the mother deals with the child in different ways. I would like to know what you think of the way the mother deals with the child. Please tell me whether it is 1-very good, 2-good, 3-ok or 4 not so good.

Moral 1:

Ann/Michael and her/his mother were in a park. Ann/Michael wanted to play on the slide and she/he pushed aside a child who was about to get on the slide. Then, her/his mother said, “Don’t push the child.

Reason A - Moral – because that could really hurt her/him and how would you feel if someone pushed you?

a. What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good 2-good 3-ok 4-not so good

Why?______________________________________________________________

Mary/James and her/his mother were in a park. Mary/James wanted to play on the slide and she/he pushed aside a child who was about to get on the slide. Then, her/his mother said, “Don’t push the child.

Reason B – Conventional – because it is rude to push other people and the rule in our family is that we do not push other people.

What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good 2-good 3-ok 4-not so good

Why?______________________________________________________________
Julie/David and her/his mother were in a park. Julie/David wanted to play on the slide and she/he pushed aside a child who was about to get on the slide. Then, her/his mother said, “Don’t push the child.

Reason C – Duty – I am your mother and you must do what your mother tells you to.

a. What do you think of the way the mother dealt with the child?

1-very good 2-good 3-ok 4-not so good

Why?_____________________________________________________________________

Please rank order the following three reasons. Please put 1 next to the best reason, 2 to the second best and 3 to the third best.

_______ A. Don’t push the child because that could really hurt her/him and how would you feel if someone pushed you?

_______ B. Don’t push the child because it is rude to push other people and the rule in our family is that we do not push other people.

_______ C. Don’t push the child because I am your mother and you must do what your mother tells you to.
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