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Development of children's moral evaluations of modesty and self-promotion in diverse cultural settings

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Abstract

This cross-cultural study of the moral judgements of Mainland Han-Chinese, Chinese-Canadian, and Euro-Canadian children aged seven to 11 examined the evaluations of narrative protagonists' modest lies and self-promoting truthful statements in situations where they had done a good deed. The story characters had thus either lied or told the truth about a prosocial act that they had committed. Chinese children judged modest lies more positively and boastful truths less positively than Euro-Canadian children. Chinese and Chinese-Canadian children rated immodest statements more negatively than did Euro-Canadian children. The cultural differences were greatest with the oldest children. Chinese children rated modest lies significantly more positively than either Canadian group who did not differ from each other but an interaction between age and culture revealed the three groups to be significantly different at age 11 with Chinese children most positive, followed by Chinese-Canadian children, and with Euro-Canadian children evaluating modest lies least positively. Cultural strictures and acculturation factors respecting modesty and self-enhancement are reflected in these differences.

Introduction

Studies of the development of children's understanding of veracity reveal that young children distinguish lies from truths early in life (Bussey, 1992; Peterson, 1995; Sullivan, Winner, & Hopfield, 1995). In their preschool years children quite readily recognize a lie as a lie and the truth as the truth, especially respecting antisocial acts. However, recent studies show that when children are asked to evaluate verbal deception, their responses are both contextually sensitive and culturally determined. Socialization effects and cultural experiences are critical to the development of children's nuanced evaluations of verbal deception and the moral consequences of truth telling and lying (Lee, Cameron, Xu, Fu, & Board, 1997; Lee, Xu, Fu, Cameron, & Chen, 2001; Talwar & Lee, 2008). However, there is a general dearth of empirical cross-cultural research on children's moral judgements; and in particular, there is an absence of research on the moral evaluations of children exposed to a

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secondary culture—one that is significantly different from their own—when they migrate from one cultural community to another.

Zoe Smith is a Canadian 4th grader. One day, she stayed in her classroom during recess because she was getting over a cold. She decided to clean up the classroom for her teacher and fellow students. After recess, the teacher was delighted with the clean classroom.

‘Do you know who cleaned up the classroom?’ she asked Zoe.

‘Yes, I did,’ Zoe answered her happily.

This would not be an unusual narrative in a Western classroom. The truth is the truth. Zoe did not hesitate to tell the teacher that she had done a good deed for the class, and show that she was proud of her work. She acknowledged that she had done it. Whether or not a reward was in the offing, she was not hesitant to reveal her involvement, and self-promotion is not seen in her community as inappropriate.

Siu Ling Zhong is also a 4th grader but she is in China. She, too, had stayed in her classroom during recess and she too cleaned it. However, when the teacher asked her if she knew who cleaned the classroom, she denied all knowledge of it.

Siu Ling understood that she had told a lie to the teacher, but would be too embarrassed to admit the truth. Her parents had told her not to be boastful, and had emphasized that modesty will earn special positive social evaluation as much as any good deed. Siu Ling’s denial was also a bow to a sociocultural convention. But what if Siu Ling Zhong moved to Canada and became a member of Zoe Smith’s fourth-grade class? Would she take on the moral perspectives of her classmates, or would she maintain her family values?

Humility, self-effacement or modesty is an essential element of virtue emphasized in Confucian cultures, and is reinforced by early socialization experiences in many Asian communities. In the present study, modest lying is operationalized as *lying to avoid praise or attention for performing a prosocial deed*. In other words, the refusal to admit doing something positive for others because it would embarrass prosocial actors by making them the centre of attention is identified here as an expression of modesty. In Eastern cultures, and particularly the Chinese culture, self-promotion is considered to be boastful, disruptive of the social fabric, and is thus inappropriate in many social contexts (Lalwani, Shrum, & Chiu, 2009). Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman, and Lee (2007) showed cultural factors to serve as determinants of children’s evaluations of truthful and untruthful statements and reported significant differences between education in collectivistic and individualistic societies. Chinese children’s evaluations reflect the influence of a cultural emphasis on self-effacement and modesty (Bond, 1986; Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1987; Kim, Kim, Kam, & Shim, 2003; Kurman, 2002; Lalwani et al., 2009), whereas western cultures are more inclined to protect an individual even if that might harm a group. That is, Canadian children reflect a Canadian cultural appreciation of promoting self-confidence and self-esteem (Lee et al., 1997; Fu et al., 2007), somewhat similar to the perspectives of American children (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Children’s acquisitions of moral values in their moral evaluations can be interactively constructed by the active construction of knowledge along with the social transmission inherent in sociocultural contexts in which they are promulgated (Miller, 1984, 2001).

Studies restricted to Western participants may preclude legitimate generalization to other cultural groups because moral values associated with verbal deception and truth telling do reflect these different cultural contexts (Lee et al., 1997). Lee et al. (2001) compared Taiwan Chinese, Mainland Chinese, and Euro-Canadian children’s categorizations and evaluations of lie- and truth-telling related to pro- and anti-social behaviours. While they found no

cultural differences in the children's categorizations of story characters' statements, when the older children evaluated these statements, Chinese children from both Taiwan and Mainland China made more judgements amenable to a modesty interpretation, and those judgements reflected modesty more than did the judgements of younger children. Further, Chinese children rated story characters' lies about doing good deeds positively and admissions of good deeds negatively. Euro-Canadian children, by contrast, rated immodest truths more positively and modest lies more negatively than children from the Asian culture; and differences between the cultural groups also increased with age. In sum, the judgments of deception were affected by social context and cultural values, confirming a social-conventional view of modest lying (Sweetser, 1987).

Moral judgements of verbal deception and truth telling have both social and cognitive components. Children's moral evaluations are constructed out of reciprocal social interactions. The affective context and the child's interrelationships influence those children's responses and the means by which they evaluate situations (Smetana, 1999). Cultural milieu is a crucial variable in children's moral evaluations. Their socialization is affected by their family-community interactions, social contexts, educational experiences, the political environment and the range of ethnic origins encountered (Sameroff, 2010).

Banerjee (2000, 2002) reported that British children's perceptions of the desirability of modesty increased between six and 10 years of age, and he found audience effects on the development of self-presentation and increased sensitivity to audience with age as context also matters. Watling and Banerjee (2007), replicating Lee et al. (2001), noted that as age increases, children understand modesty in a more nuanced fashion. They investigated the difference between the effects of peer and adult audiences, and found that children alter in their deployment of modesty as a self-presentational tactic. They further reported British children to be less likely to tell the truth of a prosocial act to a peer than to a teacher, and they increasingly considered other factors, like social consequences and evaluations, rather than simply truthfulness in evaluating self-presentation. Children become more aware of factors reflective of their contexts and cultures with age.

Children's moral evaluations of lies depend on what is being lied about, what the context of the lie is, and what their own cultural values are. Age becomes a critical factor when looking at children's evaluation of verbal deception. Cultural heritage is an important proxy for socialization effects in mono-cultural settings, and possibly, acculturation effects in a multicultural setting. The number of years spent in the original culture, and the years spent in an adoptive culture, may affect children's experiences and their moral evaluations (Berry, 1997). Few studies have examined how different settings affect children's evaluations of verbal deception under varying circumstances such as the setting in which a lie is uttered: for instance, are children more willing to tell the truth in public (to an audience of two or more) or in private (to another individual when nobody else is present). East Asian, but not North American, children have been reported to view modest lies more positively when told in public than in private because East Asian modesty norms specifically encourage public displays of humility and discourage public immodesty (Fu et al., 2007, 2010). Likewise, older East Asian children typically refer to the virtue of humility because of their focus on the desirability of encouraging humble expression in maintaining social cohesion (Fu et al., 2010).

The present study then was conducted to extend the findings of Lee et al. (2001). The ages of 7, 9, and 11 years were chosen as these ages have been established in our previous studies to anchor the variables from emergent through to well-established decisions respecting deception of children in middle childhood. Beyond exploring (a) age and cultural differences between Chinese and Canadian children and their interactions, we sought to discover (b)

whether Chinese-Canadian immigrant children in western Canada, maintain strongly situated eastern cultural perspectives on modesty, or whether that perspective might be modified in the process of western acculturation (Miller, 1984). Further, we explored (c) whether peer or authority figures (e.g., teachers or parents) influence children's decisions about telling the truth in dilemma situations; and whether the surrounding environment (i.e., public or private setting) affect children's evaluation about admitting the truth, especially in prosocial situations, such has been reported of Chinese (but not US) adolescents and adults (Fu, Heyman, & Lee, 2011).

Many communities in Western Canada with their unique Asia Pacific location are multicultural and therefore ideally situated for studying differential acculturation effects on Chinese-Canadian children. Children of immigrant families are interestingly placed to evidence unique responses to questions about moral beliefs, given the dual demands on them to acculturate by adopting Western mores, and their experiences of family pressure to maintain Eastern values. They are in a special position, by virtue of their culturally mixed social experiences; but few studies have yet investigated the development of moral evaluations in such a multicultural community.

According to the most recent Statistics Canada Community Profile for Vancouver British Columbia, the Western Canadian community in which this study was conducted, almost half the population had emigrated from other countries (with over 200 ethnic origins reported), and Chinese immigrants account for the largest proportion of visible minorities and 29.4% of that total urban population (Statistics Canada, 2007). In the present study, Chinese-Canadian children in Western Canada, that is, children who were born or whose families were born in China, Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan and who had migrated to Canada, are compared with Chinese children from Jinhua, Zhejiang, PR China, where 100% of the population was Han Chinese, and with Euro-Canadian children in Eastern Canada. The visible minorities in the Eastern Canadian city in which this study was conducted (Saint John New Brunswick) made up only 4.6% of the total population and just 1.3% of the community was Chinese (Saint John Community Profile: Statistics Canada, 2007). In excess of 90% of the population was mono-cultural, the majority being ethnically Euro-Canadian.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred and seventy-six children participated in this study. Our sample included a total of 96 *Mainland-Chinese* students: 32 seven-year-old children ($M = 6.77$ years, $SD = 0.53$; 16 females); 32 nine-year olds, ($M = 9.13$ years, $SD = 0.39$; 16 females) and 32 11-year-olds ($M = 10.81$ years, $SD = 0.52$; 16 females). Mainland-Chinese participants lived in a city of 4.5 million predominantly Han Chinese residents, and no European or North American students were enrolled in the participating school. Participants were consequently exclusively Han Chinese. It was not possible to determine the socioeconomic backgrounds of the Chinese children.

Participants in Canada came from a spectrum of economic backgrounds but on average, they were primarily from working- to middle-class families. Ninety *Euro-Canadian* children in Eastern Canada participated: 30 seven-year-olds ($M = 7.23$ years, $SD = 0.36$; 15 females), 30 nine-year olds ($M = 9.35$ years, $SD = 0.56$; 14 females) and 30 11-year-olds ($M = 11.35$ years, $SD = 0.63$; 15 females). The population of the participating Eastern Canadian industrialized city was approximately 120,000, with a large majority of residents being Euro-Canadian, with only 700 residents being Chinese. None of the participating schools had any Chinese children enrolled in them. Both of the Mainland China and Eastern Canada cities are culturally homogeneous and relatively static.

In Western Canada, 90 *Chinese-Canadian* children participated: 30 seven-year-olds ($M = 7.35$ years, $SD = 0.74$; 15 females), 29 nine-year olds ($M = 9.32$ years, $SD = 0.71$; 13 females), and 31 11-year-olds ($M = 11.34$ years, $SD = 0.56$; 16 females). The schools attended by participants each had more than half their families reporting that the home language was Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, or a dialect), creating highly heterogeneous cultural school environments. All of the Chinese-Canadian children who volunteered to participate in the study were selected for this analysis and students of other ethnic origins were excluded for this aspect of the research.

Among the 90 Western Chinese-Canadian participants, 33 of them were born in Canada (and three had either one or both Chinese parents born in Canada). Immigrant children accounted for the largest proportion of this sample: 57 students were from Asian cities that endorsed traditional Chinese values: cities in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. Time spent in Canada ranged from recently arrived to 11 years' residence. Table 1 shows by age the numbers of Canadian-born children and the numbers of immigrant children who had been in Canada approximately one or two thirds or all of their lives. The younger children were more likely to have spent the majority of their lives in Canada. The majority of the younger two age groups (seven- and nine-year olds) were in Canada for the most recent half of their lives; whereas, only half of the oldest children had been in Canada for the most recent two thirds of their lives.

Materials

The children were shown eight scenarios accompanied by illustrations, displayed on a laptop computer. The scenario presentations were counterbalanced for story types and orders. Responses were recorded manually on an answer sheet. Moral evaluations were rated using a seven-point rating scale with words and symbols: very, very good (three red stars), very good (two red stars), good (one red star), neither good nor bad (a circle), bad (one black cross), very bad (two black crosses), and very, very bad (three black crosses). Four of the stories depicted story characters enacting prosocial deeds, and four, antisocial deeds. Two of the story characters denied their prosocial acts in two stories (Prosocial—Modest lies), and two admitted them (Prosocial—Immodest truths). Likewise, there were four antisocial stories half of which were either admitted (truths) or denied (lies). These stories were included to balance the design but not reported here, as they do not pertain to self-promotion or self-effacement. Settings were either public or private between (subjects) and recipients were either peers or teachers (a within-subjects variable). The researchers in both Canada and China collaboratively created the scenarios that represent situations equally plausible in each country. Characters' names were culturally appropriate. They have been used in the following published studies: Fu et al. (2007) and Fu, Heyman, and Lee (2011) and are provided in the Appendix.

Procedure

Participants were interviewed individually in the language of their educational institutions, that is, in English in Canada, and Chinese in China. At the beginning of the session the children were instructed with respect to the meaning of the words and symbols on the seven-point rating scale they would use to specify the strengths of the evaluations they were about to make with respect to story characters' statements. First, they were asked a categorization question about the story character's statement: 'Is what s/he said a lie, the truth or something else?' The children were then asked the moral judgment question: 'Is what s/he said good or bad?' They were then asked to rate how good or bad had been the statement, using the seven-point rating scale provided.

The meaning of each symbol was repeated every time the question was asked. The children were also asked to justify their rating of the statement. The story settings (public vs. private) were counterbalanced between stories, and the words 'good' and 'bad' in the two questions also alternated within participants.

Results

Preliminary analyses revealed no gender or scenario order effects so subsequent analyses were conducted with these factors combined.

Immodest truths

Classifications of immodest truths—Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of children in each cultural group and age group that classified the immodest truthful statements as a lie, the truth, or something else.

Chi-square analyses were performed to examine children's classifications of immodest truths. No differences were found between ages in their classification. However, a cultural effect was found. Chinese-Canadian (94%) and Euro-Canadian (97.8%) children classified (immodest) truthful statements as the truth more frequently than Mainland-Chinese children (89%) $\chi^2(4, N = 552) = 8.13, p = .007$. At 11 years, Mainland-Chinese (5.7%) children identified truthful statements as something else more frequently than Chinese-Canadian (2.8%) children. And no Euro-Canadian children (0%) identified truthful statements as something else.

Judgments of immodest truths—A 3 (cultural groups: Euro-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, Mainland-Chinese) by 3 (age groups: 7-, 9-, 11-years) by 2 (recipients: adult vs. peer) by 2 (settings: public vs. private) mixed measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the last variable a repeated measure was conducted with the children's evaluations of the immodest truths. The *moral judgments* of story characters' statements were converted to integers as follows: very, very bad = -3, very bad = -2, bad = -1, neither good nor bad = 0, good = 1, very good = 2, and very, very good = 3. Preliminary analyses showed no significant effect of gender or story orders, so these two factors were collapsed for further analyses. Table 3 gives means (and standard deviations) for cultural groups and ages of immodest truth-telling.

There was a significant effect of culture on the evaluations of immodest truths with mean ratings of 2.15, 1.85, and 2.35 in Mainland-Chinese, Chinese-Canadian and Euro-Canadian students respectively ($F(2,275) = 7.05; p = .001; \eta^2 = .05$). The Euro-Canadian children rated immodest truth-telling significantly more positively than Chinese-Canadian children ($F(1,179) = 18.46; p < .001; \eta^2 = .00$). The Mainland-Chinese children rated immodest truth-telling marginally more positively than Chinese-Canadian children ($F(1,185) = 4.03; p = .05; \eta^2 = .02$). Euro-Canadian children did not differ significantly from the Mainland-Chinese children.

There is no significant main effect of age. However, the interaction between age and culture was significant. ($F(4, 275) = 2.88; p = .023; \eta^2 = .04$). Linear measures post hoc tests showed that Chinese-Canadian seven-year-olds evaluated immodest truths more positively than nine-year-olds with means of 2.08 ($SD=0.64$) and 1.94 ($SD=0.75$) respectively ($p = .034$). Mainland-Chinese children at seven years rated immodest truths significantly more positively than children at 11 years with means of 2.47 ($SD=1.24$) and 1.88 ($SD=1.11$) respectively ($p = .004$). No other differences were significant.

There were no recipient main or interaction effects: immodest truths told to an adult and to a peer were rated at 2.10 ($SD=0.93$) and 2.13 ($SD=0.97$) respectively, but there was a significant setting effect ($F(1, 275) = 9.79; p = .002; \eta^2 = .04$), with children rating immodest truth-telling in public more positively than in private settings, 2.23 ($SD=1.26$) and 2.00 ($SD=0.99$) respectively.

Modest lies

Classifications of modest lies—Table 4 shows the frequencies and percentages of children in each cultural and age group that classified the modest lies as a lie, the truth, or something else.

Chi-square analyses revealed significant cultural and age effects on modest lies, $\chi^2(4, N = 552) = 52.27, p < .001$ and $\chi^2(4, N = 552) = 32.23, p < .001$ respectively. Pair-wise comparisons showed that Mainland-Chinese children classified modest lies as something else significantly more frequently than either Chinese-Canadian children $\chi^2(2, N = 372) = 18.37, p < 0.001$; (24% vs 11.7%), or Euro-Canadian children $\chi^2(2, N = 372) = 46.40, p < .001$; (24% vs 4.4%).

Age had a significant effect on children's classifications of modest lies $\chi^2(4, N = 552) = 32.23, p < 0.001$. Pair-wise comparisons showed that seven-year-old children classified modest lies as lies significantly more frequently than nine-year-olds $\chi^2(2, N = 366) = 12.84, p = 0.002$ and 11-year-old children $\chi^2(2, N = 370) = 30.43, p < 0.001$; and classifications provided by nine-year-olds were found to be marginally different from children at 11-years $\chi^2(2, N = 368) = 6.13, p = 0.05$.

Judgments of modest lies—A 3 (cultural groups: Euro-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, Mainland Chinese) by 3 (age groups: 7, 9, 11 years) by 2 (recipients: adult vs. peer) by 2 (settings: public vs. private) mixed measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the last variable, a repeated measure, was conducted with the children's evaluations of the modest lies. Table 5 gives means and standard deviations of modest lie ratings.

A significant cultural effect $F(2,275) = 35.32; p < .001; \eta^2 = .21$ was established; Mainland-Chinese children rated modest lies significant more positively than Chinese-Canadian $F(1,185) = 22.25; p < .001; \eta^2 = .11$ and Euro-Canadian children $F(1,185) = 52.69; p < .001; \eta^2 = .22$, with Mainland-Chinese children rating modest lies at 0.66 versus Chinese-Canadian children rating at -0.32 and Euro-Canadian children at -0.81 Chinese-Canadian children also rated modest lies more positively than Euro-Canadian children $F(1,179) = 7.81; p = .006; \eta^2 = .042$.

There was a significant effect for age, each age being significantly different from the others ($F(2,275) = 23.35; p < .001; \eta^2 = .15$). Seven-year-olds and nine-year-olds evaluated modest lies negatively ($F(1,182) = 10.31; p = .002; \eta^2 = .05$) at -0.76 and -0.13 respectively, whereas 11-year-olds rated modest lies significantly more positively than seven-year-olds ($F(1,184) = 37.61; p < .001; \eta^2 = .17$) and marginally more when compared with children aged nine ($F(1,184) = 8.55; p = .004; \eta^2 = .05$), provided a positive rating of 0.48.

There was a marginal age by culture interaction $F(4,275) = 2.51; p = .043; \eta^2 = .04$ as seen in Figure 2.

No cultural difference was found at age seven between Mainland-Chinese children and Chinese-Canadian children, but Mainland-Chinese children rated modest lies significantly more positively than Euro-Canadian children ($F(2,91) = 4.36; p = .02; \eta^2 = .09$) at -0.38

($SD=1.33$) and -1.28 ($SD=1.20$) respectively. At nine years, Mainland-Chinese children 0.77 ($SD=1.42$) evaluated modest lies more positively than either Chinese-Canadian -0.48 ($SD=1.02$) or Euro-Canadian children -0.75 ($SD=1.11$) ($F(2,90) = 14.07$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .24$). Likewise at 11 years, the Mainland-Chinese children 1.59 ($SD=1.34$) perceived modest lies more positively than Chinese-Canadian 0.16 ($SD=1.32$) and Euro-Canadian children -0.38 ($SD=1.90$) ($F(2,92) = 22.36$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .33$). No recipient (i.e., teacher and classmate) effect was found.

Acculturation effects

The modest lie ratings of the 57 Chinese-Canadian immigrant participants were analyzed to examine a potential acculturation effect. Sixteen seven-year-old children ($M = 7.1$ years, $SD = 0.76$, 4 female), 17 nine-year-olds ($M = 9.3$ years, $SD = 0.81$, 10 female), and 24 eleven-year-olds ($M = 11.3$ years, $SD = 0.58$, 12 female) were selected for analysis as they were all born outside of Canada and their parents were born in China, Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan. A bivariate correlational analysis was conducted: a significant correlation was found between modesty lying and the age of the child on arrival in Canada, $R^2 = 0.252$. Children who moved to Canada at an older age rated modest lies more positively than children who arrived when they were younger. Figure 3 shows this effect.

Furthermore, it would seem that time spent in the new culture might to some extent take its toll on traditional cultural values. There was a decrease in ratings of modest lies in accord with the number of years the Chinese-Canadian children had lived in Canada: $R^2 = 0.098$. Figure 4 shows the correlation between number of years spent in Western Canada and the ratings of modest lies.

Discussion

This study effectively advances appreciation of important socialization aspects of children's attitudes to modesty and lying and enhances understanding of certain aspects of the process of children's development of these attitudes and behaviours beyond the pioneering cross-cultural research originally initiated by Bond (1987) with Chinese people. It confirms the comprehensive explorations of Miller (1984) with respect to the intersections between cultural transactions and development and more recent analyses of cultural impacts on self-enhancement and -effacement such as is described in the research analyses of Lalwani, Shrum, & Chiu (2009). No age or cultural differences were revealed in the children's classifications of immodest truthful statements, although a slight tendency was observed for the oldest Mainland-Chinese children to label immodest truths as 'something other' than a truth, perhaps reflecting the complexity of such truths for them as shown in their relatively negative evaluations of them. Furthermore, with increased age, Mainland-Chinese children were inclined to classify modest lies as truthful statements or something else. Based upon these findings, we can confirm the relationship between culture and moral judgements of modest and immodest lies and truths uttered in scenario contexts. Miller (1984) suggested that social transmission, historical factors and active construction of knowledge are complementary aspects of knowledge acquisition. Children from the three different cultural locations identified and rated modest statements significantly differently from one another. Mainland-Chinese and Chinese children in Western Canada found self-promoting truthful statements to be significantly less salutary than Euro-Canadian children. Furthermore (confirming Kurman, 2002), time spent in a culture also related to judgements such that seven- and nine-year-olds found immodest truthful statements to be more acceptable than 11-year-olds did, and the interaction between culture and age also emerged as expected with older Mainland-Chinese children being least approving of the three groups of boastful truthful statements, with Chinese-Canadian children rating self-promotion significantly less positively than Euro-Canadian children but significantly more so than Mainland-Chinese

children. Effects of experience in a culture relate significantly to moral evaluations (Kim, Kim, Kam, & Shin, 2003; Miller, 1984). Oldest Mainland-Chinese children eschewed self-promotion most, followed by Chinese immigrant children in Canada and then by Euro-Canadian children.

No differential effects of audience to self-promotion were established. It did not matter whether boasts were uttered in the presence of peers or authority figures in any cultural context tested here. The only situational effect on prosocial truth-telling was the greater acceptance overall of immodest truths told in private as opposed to public. This main effect was not expected but perhaps such self-promoting communications in private could be seen by many children at this age as less embarrassing and could potentially build personal cohesion within their intimate social groups. Further exploration of this finding is called for.

More powerful were the differential evaluations of modest lies. In their classifications of modest lies, Mainland-Chinese children were somewhat less likely to call a modest lie a lie, and this was also the case for older children as well. With respect to modest lying, both cultural and developmental judgement effects were clearly established. Mainland-Chinese children were significantly more positive about modest lies than the other two cultural groups (as would have been expected by Bond, 1986; Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1987; and Kurman, 2002), and most differentially so at age 11. Furthermore, as anticipated, the oldest Chinese-Canadian children held modest lies to be significantly better than Euro-Canadian children, but significantly less good than Mainland-Chinese children did. Although no setting and recipient effects or interactions emerged with respect to modest lies, children in all cultural groups were more approving of modesty as expressed to a teacher (adult) than to a peer, perhaps establishing their humility to an authority figure perceived in a position to judge them, and thus apparently not disrupting the social fabric of peer relations by deception.

Although age on arrival and time spent in the new culture interact to confirm the acculturation of Chinese children in Canada, age on arrival and years in Canada are potentially confounded. A recently arrived seven-year-old will encounter different influences from a recently resettled 11-year-old. The relatively small sample size when the group was segmented by age and time of arrival precluded further analyses of these potentially important acculturational factors that are worthy of further investigation. Importantly, although there was already clear evidence for East–West differences in evaluation of modest and self-enhancing behaviours, the present study is the first known study that demonstrated how enculturation processes support and enlarge this cultural difference.

Implications for education

Since the national adoption of a strong multiculturalism policy in 1988, many schools in Canada have introduced programs with respect to social responsibilities for promotion of multiculturalism, celebrations of diversity, building tolerance among cultures, and anti-racism programs. The intention was to create nuanced social responsibility curricula, and to provide guidance in promoting inclusiveness and accommodation of diverse cultural beliefs. This initiative lays the foundation on which school personnel encourage parents from different cultural backgrounds to engage in school activities and promote their children's education related to diversity and inclusion. Yet teachers and other school staff often lack training, tools and skills necessary to implement this mission with parents and children. Many teachers, minority parents and students experience conflicts, and struggle to accommodate each other's fundamentally different perspectives on parenting, discipline and power relationships and many academic matters (Li, 2007, 2009). Most importantly,

children's perspectives on relationships can be different from adults', and depending on how many cultural contexts they have to accommodate (Kuczynski & Navara, 2005), they develop different perspectives on moral situations. Our findings reveal the significance of alternative perspectives when confronting commonalities and differences among associates. Respecting differences explicitly can be a first step in assuming social responsibility for harmonious relationships (Tappan, 2005).

Moral education becomes an essential topic when there is a goal to enhance inclusion, not cultural segregation, in schools. Success in this requires awareness that moral understanding is affected by cultural and social experiences. Based upon Li's (2007) findings, programmatic interventions would be best initiated with the induction of teachers and parents before efforts are made for primary prevention interventions. Differential expectations for self-promotion and self-effacement attitudes and behaviours can be understood, respected and honoured in diversity programmes. Educators and parents seeking to assist the next generation to recognize the cultural differences in approaches to moral dilemma situations can inspire them with hope for enhancing a more compassionate society (Tappan, 1998, 2005).

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Appendix of scenario examples

Mark: lunch money

Here is Mark. Mark knew that his friend, Timmy, had lost his lunch money on the way to school and now had no money to buy his lunch. When Timmy left his desk, Mark secretly put some of his own money in Timmy's desk so Timmy could buy some lunch. So Mark left some money for Timmy, and when Timmy found the money and told his classmate, the classmate said to the class, 'Timmy just told me that someone has given him money so he can now buy his lunch.' The classmate then asked Mark in front of the class, 'Do you know who left the money for Timmy?' (Even though Mark left money for Timmy, Mark said to his classmate, 'No, I didn't do it.') (Mark left Money for Timmy so he said to his classmate, 'Yes, I did it.')

Alex: indoor recess

Here is Alex. Alex had to stay inside at recess time because he was getting over a cold, so Alex decided to clean up the classroom for his class. So Alex cleaned the classroom. When his classmate returned after recess, he said to his class, 'Oh, I see that someone has cleaned the classroom.' When nobody was around the classmate asked Alex, 'Do you know who cleaned the classroom?' (Alex cleaned the classroom. Alex said to his classmate, 'Yes, I did it.') (Even though Alex cleaned the classroom, Alex said to his classmate, 'No, I didn't do it.')

Jenny: outdoor recess

Here is Jenny. When Jenny was out at recess, she saw that the school yard was littered with garbage, so she picked up all the pieces she could find and threw them in the trash can. So Jenny cleaned the schoolyard. At the end of recess, Jenny's classmate said to her class, 'I notice that the schoolyard is now nice and clean.' When nobody was around the classmate asked Jenny, 'Do you know who cleaned the yard?' (Even though Jenny cleaned the schoolyard, Jenny said to Mary, 'No, I didn't do it.') (Jenny cleaned the schoolyard so she said to Mary, 'Yes, I did it.')

Kelly: trip money

Here is Kelly. Kelly knew that her friend, Anne, had lost her money for the class trip and now couldn't go on the trip with the rest of her class. When Anne hung up her coat, Kelly secretly put some of her own money in Anne's pocket so Anne could go on the trip. So Kelly left the money for Anne, and when Anne found the money and told another classmate, the classmate said to the class, 'Anne just told me that someone has given her money so she can now go on the trip.' The classmate then asked Kelly in front of the class, 'Do you know who left the money for Anne?' (Kelly left the money for Anne so she said to her classmate, 'Yes, I did it.') (Even though Kelly left the money for Anne, Kelly said to her classmate, 'No, I didn't do it.')

Figure 1.
Interaction between ages and cultural groups in immodest truth-telling

Figure 2.
Interaction between ages and cultures in the evaluation of modest lies

Figure 3.
Relationship between age of arrival in Canada and ratings of modest lying

Figure 4.
Relationship between number of years spent in Canada and ratings of modest lies

Table 1

Chinese-Canadian participants' time spent in Canada

Age Group	Total Number	Number born in Canada (Years in Canada)	Number of Immigrants (Years in Canada)
7-year-olds	30	14 (7 of 7 years)	7 (1–2 of 7 years)
			7 (3–5 of 7 years)
			2 (6–7 of 7 years)
9-year-olds	29	12 (9 of 9 years)	5 (1–2 of 9 years)
			8 (5–6 of 9 years)
			4 (7–9 of 9 years)
11 year-olds	31	7 (11 of 11 years)	10 (1–3 of 11 years)
			7 (5–8 of 11 years)
			7 (9–11 of 11 years)

Table 2

Frequencies (and percentages) of classification of immodest truths by culture and age

		Immodest Truth		
Cultural Groups	Age Groups	Classification		
		Lie	Truth	Something Else
		<i>n</i>(%)		
Mainland-Chinese	7	2 (3.1%)	60 (93.8%)	2 (3.1%)
	9	5 (7.8%)	59 (92.2%)	0 (0.0%)
	11	3 (4.7%)	52 (81.3%)	9 (14.1%)
Mean		10 (5.2%)	171 (89.1%)	11 (5.7%)
Chinese-Canadian	7	0 (0.0%)	59 (98.3%)	1 (1.7%)
	9	4 (6.9%)	51 (87.9%)	3 (5.2%)
	11	1 (1.6%)	60 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Mean		5 (2.8%)	170 (94.4%)	5 (2.8%)
Euro-Canadian	7	4 (6.7%)	56 (93.3%)	0 (0.0%)
	9	0 (0.0%)	60 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	11	0 (0.0%)	60 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Mean		4 (2.2%)	176 (97.8%)	0 (0.0%)

Table 3

Means (and standard deviations) of cultural groups and ages for immodest truth-telling

Cultural Groups	Age Groups			Totals
	7-year-olds	9-year-olds	11-year-olds	
Mainland Chinese	2.47 (1.24)	2.11 (1.06)	1.88 (1.11)	2.15 (1.15)
Chinese Canadian	2.08 (0.64)	1.51 (1.13)	1.94 (0.75)	1.85 (0.87)
Euro-Canadian	2.18 (0.84)	2.35 (0.60)	2.52 (0.50)	2.35 (0.67)
Totals	2.25 (0.95)	2.00 (1.01)	2.10 (0.87)	2.12 (0.95)

Table 4

Frequencies (and percentages) of classifications of modest lies

		Modest Lies		
Cultural Groups	Age Groups	Classification		
		Lie	Truth	Something Else
		<i>n</i>(%)		
Mainland-Chinese	7	57 (89.1%)	2 (3.1%)	5 (7.8%)
	9	40 (62.5%)	8 (12.5%)	16 (25.0%)
	11	30 (46.9%)	9 (14.1%)	25 (39.1%)
Mean		127 (66.1%)	19 (9.9%)	46 (24.0%)
Chinese-Canadian	7	55 (91.7%)	3 (5.0%)	2 (3.3%)
	9	49 (84.5%)	2 (3.4%)	7 (12.1%)
	11	49 (79.0%)	1 (1.6%)	12 (19.4%)
Mean		153 (85.0%)	6 (3.3%)	21 (11.7%)
Euro-Canadian	7	59 (98.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)
	9	57 (95.0%)	2 (3.3%)	1 (1.7%)
	11	54 (90.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (10.0%)
Mean		170 (94.4%)	2 (1.1%)	8 (4.4%)

Table 5

Means (and standard deviations) of modest lie ratings

Cultural Groups	Age Groups			Totals
	7-year-olds	9-year-olds	11-year-olds	
Mainland-Chinese	−0.375 (1.33)	0.766 (1.42)	1.59 (1.34)	0.66 (1.58)
Chinese Canadian	−0.65 (1.16)	−0.48 (1.02)	0.16 (1.32)	−0.32 (1.22)
Euro-Canadian	−1.28 (1.20)	−.075 (1.11)	−0.38 (0.90)	−0.81 (1.13)
Totals	−0.75 (1.28)	−0.13 (1.37)	0.48 (1.46)	−0.12 (1.44)