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The Analysis of Moral Education in China and its Effect on Chinese Children's Moral Development

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Running head: THE ANALYSIS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

The analysis of moral education in China and its effect on Chinese children's moral development

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Science, Mathematics & Computing Division
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Abstract

Moral education in China is an important domain of education, and includes more fields of education than just morality. Political ideology, courses in law, and physical and mental health are also parts of moral education in China. The philosophical and historical influences of Confucianism and Socialism in China have affected the Chinese people's understanding of morality and the formation of the current moral educational system. Meanwhile, these influences also contribute to some flaws in the practice of the system that lead to some negative impacts on Chinese children's moral development, such as a lack of consideration of individual interests. In order to solve the problems in modern moral education, an existing curriculum, that of psychological activities is introduced and analyzed. This curriculum contains many characteristics of Western moral education, including the consideration of emotion in moral judgments, and focuses on students' psycho-social development. As emotion is neglected in the current system, this curriculum could fill the gap left there. This project includes a proposal for a study, which would test the effect of the psychological activities curriculum on children's moral development under the current system. The results of this study should help provide insight on how to solve problems that current Chinese educational system faces, as well as improve the Chinese children's moral development.

Chapter 1 Introduction

When we hear the word “morality,” some moral values, such as respect, integrity, may come to mind. However, how morality should be taught is a challenge for the society, since “what is morality” is a difficult question to answer. Aristotle’s answer may be the best answer: “If no one asks me [morality], I know; if someone asks me to explain [morality], I do not know” (Aristotle cited in Simpson, 1989). People may have different understandings and attitudes towards morality, but it is commonly known that morality should have a connection with good. Moral education has played an important role in the educational system since morality is aimed to promote prosocial behaviors among children. Thus, how morality is understood and how virtue is taught is essential in the society, and how these can affect children’s moral development is also important.

This project will be about the analysis of moral education and its effect on children’s moral development. However, most of the psychological studies have taken places in Western countries and been analyzed through the lens of Western philosophy. Few studies have taken places in Eastern countries, and even fewer have been analyzed with the perspective of Eastern culture. Hence, this project will be written with a view of native Chinese speaker who underwent the moral educational system in China, and a historical and philosophical background will be provided to help to analyze the moral education in China. This project will be a study on a Chinese issue through the lens of Chinese philosophy.

This project will first focus on analyzing the specialties of Chinese moral education and provide some understandings of Chinese children's moral development under the system. There will be a brief discussion about some problems with the moral education approaches that China has now. Some possible solutions for these problems will be provided. A proposal of a study will be designed to test the effectiveness of the solution and the influence of the solution on children's decision-making and judgments.

There will be six chapters in this project. Chapter two will focus on the history of moral education in China, and some empirical studies will be discussed to help understand the influence of history on people's cognitive developments and behaviors. The importance of the moral education (德育 *Deyu*) is evaluated as same as academic education and physical education in the system. Moral education (*Deyu*) in China is a kind of education that teaches more than just moral values; physical and mental health, political ideology, and courses in law are also the focus of Chinese moral education (Li, Zhong, Lin & Zhang, 2004). The approaches to moral education in China are also different from the approaches that are known in Western countries. First, there is a timetabled subject-the moral education course-in China. As the education level of the students increases, the contents in the courses also change to be more political centered (Zhu & Liu, 2004). Besides the course, morning meetings, class meetings, and Party-led organizations (the Young Pioneers and the Communist Youth League of China) are also served as the main approach to moral education (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

China has a long history of moral education. Over the course of thousands of years in China, first Confucianism and then Socialism have great influence on the Chinese people, both from cognitive and behavioral perspectives. The evolution of Confucianism has been two thousand years. The core values of Confucianism, self-cultivation (修 *xiu*), knowledge (智 *zhi*), ritual (礼 *li*), have influenced the people's understanding of morality and moral education. Moreover, the history of China since the Communist Party took over the power is also influential. Important events that have occurred from that time until now help to explain why political ideology has become one of the main components in the Chinese moral education, and how moral education is practiced under current political system.

In addition to the history and philosophy of Confucianism and Socialism, there is much empirical data that are found from cross-cultural studies between China and American, which can be understood through the lens of Confucianism and Socialism. Some Chinese specific behaviors and cognition in these studies can be treated as a supplement to provide understandings of why Chinese moral education has been implemented in the way it is now.

However, not all of the influence of traditional values on current the practice of the moral education in China is beneficial, especially from the perspective of students' moral developments. Some of the influence of Confucianism and Socialism has led the moral education to develop in a direction opposite to that which it is intended to lead.

There are some challenges that Chinese moral education faces. In current educational system, political ideology has increasingly been taken an important role in Chinese moral education since

the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949. As a result, the current political system in China has made political ideology the main component in the moral educational system. The situation is such students in China have to learn values that are targeted at political good, instead of individual good. In such a system, individual interests are weakened, while group interests and national interests are emphasized. Moreover, Confucianism posits that in order to reach social harmony, everyone should follow the social hierarchy to fulfill their responsibilities according to their social position. This Confucian idea provides school and teacher authority over students because the social status of teacher is placed higher than students. The socialist system in China has led the educational system to be party-central, and the Confucian history enhances the importance of this hierarchy in the system. There is already a decrease of the importance of individual interests in the content of moral education, and the Confucian history involved in the system further helps to dismiss individual voices in the system.

There are some flaws in approach to moral education, which is different from the problems of cultural values that are discussed in Chapter two. The flaws in the practice of the education system will be discussed. Some possible solutions will be evaluated after the discussion of the flaws. The first flaw is that student's understanding of moral values and concepts are based on how well students memorize the values and concepts taught in class. Memorization without full understanding may lead students to be less capable of generalizing their knowledge to real life since situations occurring in real life are more complex than what is described in a textbook. In addition to the facts about the limitations of memorization, memorizing values that emphasizing

political ideology and good citizenry do not help students gain an ability to make judgments for their own good, but instead, strengthen the power of the central governments.

Secondly, the examination system used for the moral education course is similar to that of other academic subjects. However, the importance of the test score the course is lesser, compared with other academic courses, such as Literature, Math or Science. Although theoretically, moral education is claimed to have equal value to academic and physical education, it is not treated equally. Instead, the importance of moral education in the modern days is gradually dismissed, especially when approaching the stress and competition of the University Entrance Exam.

The solutions for these problems will be provided later in the chapter when analyzing the reforms to textbooks for the moral education course and the psychological theories of moral development. China has attempted to change the contents of the textbooks for the moral education course so that values taught in the textbook can be more close to children's real lives will be introduced. However, the purpose of the moral education still remains the same, which is to benefit the development of Chinese society instead of children's well-beings, even though how values are described have changed in the textbook. Furthermore, the reformed textbooks require high standards on teacher's abilities to teach the values, which most teachers are not capable of. Thus, the reforms to the current moral education are still far from being effective.

Due to the fact that children should be the focus of moral education instead of the Party, it is necessary to understand what can benefit children from the perspective of children's

psychological development. There will be some analysis on children's moral developments with some empirical data. Emotions have taken a great importance in children's moral developments. It can be served as both an element of children's moral reasoning and moral motivation. Furthermore, the effectiveness of an autonomy-supportive teaching and high emotional-relatedness are highly associated with one's motivation to work hard. Hence, the solution, which can solve the problems in the Chinese moral education system, needs to contain an emphasis on emotion and a teaching style that can motivate children to act. The psychological activities, which is an existing curriculum in China focusing on improving children's psychological well-beings, fit these two requirements, and may be the best fit to solve the problems that Chinese moral education faces.

In Chapter 4, the psychological activity curriculum will be described. This curriculum is originated from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and Mainland China adopted this new curriculum a few years ago. The approach used in the curriculum is known as "group guidance," which is a process of teaching a group of people who share similar interests at once. This approach is widely used at schools for students' mental and social development from elementary schools to high schools, even in certain universities. This curriculum will educate children about an understanding of internal state, and help children improve the ability to make decisions in real lives when they face various problems. This curriculum is student-oriented, and there should not be a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. So, the psychological activity

curriculum should be helpful for solving problems that have occurred in Chinese moral education.

Chapter 5 will be a proposal for a study to test the effect of the psychology activity curriculum on the modern moral education in China. This study will take place in an elementary school in China. This study is aimed at testing the effect of psychological activities curriculum on children's moral judgments and moral reasoning. One group of children will receive the psychological activities curriculum, while another group will receive the class meeting course. This will be a longitudinal study, which lasts a whole semester. At the end of the study, children will be tested with three types of story scenarios containing a main character who are facing conflicting moral dilemmas. The complicity of the moral dilemma will vary across the types of the stories. Children are asked to evaluate the main character's actions and provide explanations for their reasoning. The moral rules and interests that are introduced in the study will contain three levels, which are individual, group and national levels. Children's judgments on the importance of each level will also be studied. Some expected results will be given in the result sessions. The results will be used to test the feasibility of adopting the psychological activities curriculum to the current moral educational system in China.

To sum up the whole project, I will briefly review the whole project. I will then conclude this project with some possible implications the proposal study. The results of the study should shed light on how psychological activities curriculum can affect children's moral developments, and further, be helpful to solve the problems that Chinese moral education faces right now.

Chapter 2 Moral Education in China

Moral education (德育 *De yu*) is an essential element in the Chinese formal educational system. It is as important as academic education (智育 *Zhi yu*) and physical education (体育 *Ti yu*) in the system. The modern moral education (*De yu*) in China is not purely “ideological education”; the focus of it shifts towards citizenship education (Li, Zhong, Lin & Zhang, 2004). In the system, *Deyu* refers to a broad concept, which includes more than just moral values, but also political ideology, mental health, citizenship education, courses in law, and so on (Li & al, etc., 2004). In this chapter, I will first describe the contemporary approach to Chinese moral educational system (section 1). I will then devote the rest of the chapter to the history and concepts of Confucianism and Socialism in China to offer a better understanding of the historical and philosophical foundations of moral education in China. I will conclude this chapter with a brief analysis of the influence of history on Chinese people’s understanding of moral values and how it has helped to form the current moral educational system that China uses.

Modern Moral Education in China

In the Chinese educational system, there are three main educators who are responsible for students’ moral education: teachers of subject-based moral education, class teacher and Party admission (Zhu & Liu, 2004). These three groups of moral educators educate students through two contemporary approaches. The first approach is through subject-based moral education. In this approach, teachers instruct students in a way similar to other fields of academic education, such as Chinese, Math, or History. There are two types of teachers who are qualified to teach the

moral education courses; they are specialist teachers who finish initial training at training institution and class teachers who receive in-service training. All specialist teachers must first complete initial teachers' training in a "normal" teacher training institution¹. Based on the levels of the institution, the duration of the teachers' training varies from two years to four years (Zhu & Liu, 2004). The two-year normal university is for training primary school teachers; the three-year normal university is for training junior high school teachers, and the four-year normal university is for training high school teachers. There are three modules that are usually contained in the initial training at normal universities. They are a common foundation course (i.e. Politics, Foreign language, etc.), a specialized course discussing moral education, and other educational courses (i.e. Psychology, Teaching practice, etc.) (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

Besides the specialist teachers, class teachers can also teach the moral education course after receiving in-service training (Zhu & Liu, 2004). Based on the level of education, there are three levels of in-service training; from high to low, they are the provincial education institution, the city's education institution, and the district's education institution (Zhu & Liu, 2004). Class teachers who are chosen to participate in the in-service training are assigned by the principal and supervised by the Office of Moral Education and director of the grade. Some example modules in in-service training are "Theory and Skills", "Project Research", and "Practice and Visits" (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

¹ "normal" in Chinese is "师范(shifan)". 师(shi) literally means teachers and 范(fan) means models. "Normal" here is a term which "is derived from the French Ecole Normale Supérieure, which provided instruction in the 'normal' or 'standard practices' of teaching" (Zhu & Liu, 2004)

Beyond teacher training, the content of the textbook for moral education is carefully molded and controlled, to a great extent, by the government. The moral education textbooks used in elementary school are called Thought and Character (思想品德 *si xiang pin de*). In these textbooks, the Communist Party of China (CPC) requires there to be incorporated ten virtues, which are considered the national ethical code of conduct. They are patriotism (爱国 *ai'guo*), law-abidingness (守法 *shou fa*), courtesy (明礼 *ming li*), integrity and honor (诚信 *chen xin*), solidarity (团结 *tuan jie*), friendship (友爱 *you'ai*), diligence and frugality (勤俭 *qin jian*), self-improvement (自强 *zi qiang*), professional dedication (敬业 *jin ye*) and devotion (奉献 *feng xian*) (Tse, 2011). These virtues, corresponding with other social matters that are included in the textbooks, are arranged in a special order to match with the mental development of children. The arrangements of each virtue are based on children's knowledge level and ability to understand the meaning of it. Therefore, the focuses of the textbook vary through different grades.

For children from seven to eight years old, the topics are mainly about moral characteristics and life. For children from nine to twelve years old, the topics continue to about moral characteristics and society. As students' ages continue to increase, political ideology is gradually introduced into the textbook. For students aged thirteen to fifteen, the themes will be about ideology and morality. Once students attend middle school and higher educational institutions, the textbook title is exchanged from Thought and Characters to Politics (政治 *zheng zhi*). The focus also shifts to Chinese political ideology. For university students, courses for moral

education will include the works written by famous socialist scholars and former Chinese leaders, such as Marx, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and so on (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

The second approach to Chinese moral education is through extra-curricular activities. There are three types of activities that are frequently used in China: morning meeting, class meeting, and the Young Pioneers (or other CPC-related organization) (Zhu & Liu, 2004). The morning meeting is always on Monday morning when the national flag is raised. Each class takes turns to select two good students to represent the class to raise the flag in front of all the students and teachers. Since it is an honor to raise the national flag, the selected students must maintain good behaviors and grades at schools, and they are announced as role models during the morning meeting to encourage other students for good conducts. The principal and one more model student from that class will give speeches after the national flag is raised. The themes of the speech are mainly about patriotism (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

The class meeting is another form of extra-curriculum activities, but it is treated as a timetabled subject at school. The class meeting is always held in a classroom on a weekly basis, usually on Monday or Friday afternoon, and is led by the head teacher of that class. The teacher and students discuss some issues that have happened during the week or events about to happen in the coming week during the class meeting. During special seasons, the class meeting will also be used for organizing some school-wide events (i.e. a celebration of the anniversary of the founding of a school) or nationwide events (i.e. a memorial for the May 4th Movement) (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

In addition to the school-related activities, there are also some that are related to the Party. For example, the Young Pioneers is an organization under the purview of the CPC. This organization, which is always in charged by the representatives of the Party admission at school, help organize events and set up standards to encourage good conducts among children. Since the Young Pioneers only contains good pupils from the ages of eight to fourteen, children who are over the age limit can apply to The Communist Youth League of China. The Youth League contains good students between the ages of fourteen and twenty-eights, although students can only apply up to age 18. The members of Youth League are responsible for educating and helping pupils in the Young Pioneers. The students who are above 18 have the opportunity to apply to and become a Party member of the CPC. To become a good member in the Young Pioneer, students must demonstrate five merits: loving the country, loving the people, loving work, being eager to learn and caring for public property (Zhu & Liu, 2004). The Party is an additional educational resource in the school outside of the school officials, and the representative of the Party of the school, cooperating with the Young Pioneers or the Youth League, organize some educative activities (Zhu & Liu, 2004).

The Confucian interpretation of morality and moral education

The moral education system that China currently uses is only about forty years old, originating after the Cultural Revolution (1967-1977), but moral education in China has two thousand years of history. When discussing Chinese education, it is impossible not to talk about Confucianism. To some extent, Confucian education is primarily for moral education in China.

Understanding of Confucianism should help provide an understanding of the philosophical foundation of the current moral educational system in China. The goal of Confucius's teaching is to educate his students how to be virtuous human beings, instead of learning knowledge and transmitting it to technique skills (Huang, 2011).

The Confucian education has survived in the Chinese history even after the death of Confucius. During the Han Dynasty (206 BC -220 AD), Confucianism became the philosophical orthodoxy and established great influence on the system of moral education in various ways. In the two thousand year history, Confucian scholars has analyzed and re-edited with some additions and removals to suit the evolving values of people as time has gone on. Therefore, the Confucianism we are familiar with now is more like a combination of the best traits of various Chinese doctrines. Even so, the core values of Confucianism still remain close to the original and have influenced Chinese people and other people in East Asia.

To understand the effect of Confucianism on Chinese moral education, some of the core values of Confucianism will be briefly outlined.

Before talking about the core value, the most important virtue—*ren* (仁)—in Confucianism will be introduced. *Ren* (仁) is the general virtue in Confucianism, and it represents the basis of all goodness (Chan, 1973). *Ren* has been translated as benevolence, perfect, goodness, human heartedness, love, altruism, humanity and so on (Chan, 1973). *Ren* is served as the end virtue that a man should pursuit, and it is the goal of everyone who wants to virtuous. In order to receive *ren*, one needs to show filial piety (孝 *xiao*), which is to show respect and obedience to parents

and others. Filial piety is the foundation of *Ren*, which means that one cannot be virtuous if he/she does not show filial piety to his/her parents. This emphasis on respect and obedience of parents later influence the parenting styles of Chinese parents, which influences children's psychological and cognitive developments as well.

The first core value is self-cultivation (修 *xiu*). Self-cultivation is an essential part of being a "superior man" (君子 *jun 'zi*), who is an exemplary moral person in Confucianism. There are three levels of human, from high to low social status, they are the superior man (君子 *jun 'zi*), normal human (人 *ren*), and a small-minded human (小人 *xiao 'ren*). For people like Confucius, they are valued as "sage", which is above all three levels, and it is supreme honor to be acknowledged as a "sage" In Confucianism, only a few talented people are capable to be called "sage", while any human can become a supreme man. Also, self-cultivation is a process that one should carry throughout each year in one's life. Confucians believe the self-cultivation is ideal and required by natural law). Moreover, the self-cultivation should be done through the way of humanity (人道 *ren dao*), which is a process aiming at learning to be a virtuous human. During the cultivation, one should practice his/her behaviors and always reflect on oneself. According to Confucius, one should feel vigor when one's conduct meets the way of humanity while feeling shame when one's conduct contradicts it. However, if one refuses to cultivate oneself, one ought to be denounced as a small-minded person (小人 *xiao 'ren*), which is the opposite of a superior man. This value requires one to have a self-control ability, which one should cultivate oneself to be a virtuous man through daily reflection.

The second core value is knowledge (知 zhi). Acquiring knowledge is considered to be the first step toward perfection (Great Learning, Chapter 1; Legge trans. 1971 cited in Lou, Tamis-LeMonda & Sung, 2013). In Confucianism, the process of acquiring knowledge is not less important than the end-point of knowledge. During the process of learning, qualities like diligence and persistence are highly valued. Confucius believed “that people could [can] acquire new knowledge by cherishing and building upon what was previously learned, and that people should work diligently to pursue erudition” (2-11, 7-20, Analects of Confucius; Li, 2005 cited in Luo, al, etc., 2013). The importance of knowledge has influence people’s understanding of the process of learning, which pursuit knowledge becomes a moral virtue, and diligences, persistence’s, efforts are highly valued by the Chinese people (Li, 2005; Yang, 2007 cited in Luo, al, etc., 2013).

The third core value is *Li*², which can be translated as ritual, propriety or social norms. *Li* is different from punitive laws. When people violate *li*, they do not get punished, but they should feel shameful for their actions and they may be looked down upon by others in the community (Huang, 2011). Confucian education encourages the students to learn poetry and their moral sentiments should be stimulated by the poetry. Since this process requires high standards on the students, rules of *li* is used to stabiles the moral sentiments. *Li* is important in moral education: “being respectful without propriety, one will feel tired; being cautious without propriety, one will become timid; being courageous without propriety, one will become unruly, and being upright

² Wing-tsit Chan explains that “*li* originally meant ‘a religious sacrifice but has come to mean ceremony, ritual, decorum, rules of propriety, good form, good custom, etc., and has even been equated with Natural Law’” (Chan, 1963). However, there may not a precise term for *li*.

without propriety, one will become intolerant” (The analects 8.2 cited in Huang, 2011). One should follow *Li* when performing moral conduct and learning to become a virtuous man.

Moreover, this value is the foundation of the hierarchical system in Confucianism. In Confucian ideas, there is a state called “harmony” (和 *he*). To reach the harmonious state, one needs to understand and share a system of values and social norms with others. One needs to know their proper place in the hierarchy and does what is appropriate to that position. Therefore, maintaining social order in a Confucian society requires everyone to understand and follow *li*. Confucius said that “ruler is a ruler, subject is a subject, father is a father, and son is a son.” This sentence has led to various interpretations by Confucian scholars. However, it is generally understood to mean that one should take one’s social responsibility corresponding to one’s place in the social hierarchy.

Not only that the Confucian values influence Chinese people, the techniques that Confucius uses also has an impact on the current educational system. The use of textbook for moral education in the current system could be tracked back the time of Confucius. During Confucius' period, "Six Classics"³ (六经 *liu jing*) were used as the textbooks when teaching virtues. Confucius believes that for students, reading the works of ancient people is not simply for learning knowledge and satisfying curiosity about ancient works, but to become a better person by learning from the products of a moral person (Huang, 2011). In Confucian education, poetry is used to "serve to stimulate one’s imagination, sharpen one's sensitivity, increase one's sense of

³ The “Six Classics” are the textbooks that Confucius used to teach his students; they contains: *The book of poetry*, *The book of document*, *The book of rites*, *The book of music*, *The book of change* and *The spring and autumn annals*.

solidarity, and improve one's way of handling complaints [about immoral things]" (The Analects 2.2 cited in Huang, 2011). However, there is a difference between the Confucian use and the modern use of textbook, in which the Six Classics in Confucius's teaching serves as a stimulation of one's moral sentiments instead of a guideline of moral values.

Socialist and communist involvement in moral education in China

Confucianism has lasted for two thousand years, but the Confucian educational system did not last that long. In 1949, under the guidance of Chairman Mao, the old educational system, which represented feudalism, was reconstructed. Instead, building a new educational system that can benefit a socialist government became the mission for the people in New China. The ideological foundation of Chinese moral education is Marxism, which claims that human cannot survive independent of the society, and the relations around him/her. According to Mao, who has been the one of the highest authority in China, the new educational system should qualify such requirements: "First, it was [is] to serve the revolution and the new 'democracy'; secondly, it was [is] to be a national, scientific and people's culture and education; finally, it was [is] to cultivate people capable of building a nation, who could combat and defeat the remnants of feudalism, imperialism and fascism, and whom would seek to serve the People with their heart and soul" (Collection of the class documents of People's Republic of China Editorial Committee, 1994, Cited in Li, et, al, 2004). To eliminate and control the feudal and semi-feudal influence, the class materials in school became the works of Marx, Lenin and Mao, which took over the original texts of ancient Chinese scholars like Confucius. The ideological aspect of moral

education (德育 *de yu*) was emphasized during this period for both the reduction of the effect of feudalism and the consolidation of the central government. So, with the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the ideas of socialism and political ideology have been enhanced in Chinese moral education.

A transition period started in 1967 and continued until 1977, which is a time widely known as the Cultural Revolution. The idealism education since the foundation of China did not successfully cultivate people of building a socialist nation. Instead, during this period, a group of radical teenagers, with the hope of leading a revolution to eliminate all the leftovers of feudal China and capitalism and to create a brand new China, led a "revolution" that caused incalculable damage to China, in various aspects including educational, economic, culture, and others. These teenagers interrupted the running of educational systems for the sake of "revolution"; teachers and scholars were persecuted, criticized and later sent to farms in the countryside so that those who were considered as bourgeois could be "re-educated" by the peasants and workers. Historical documents, sites and rituals were destroyed and burned down, as a mark of success in overturning feudalism and superstition. Confucianism, as well, was considered feudal and was devalued and denied by students. Mao's words, Mao's works were elevated to a supreme status, which students were asked to read and memorized in class. The class was no longer led by teachers, but by older students. Therefore, the ideas of socialism and communism were further enhanced, but the credibility of moral education was seriously hurt due to this movement. The moral education was evaluated as "假 *ja*" (fake), "大 *da*" (grandiose),

空 *kong* (hollow) (Li, et, al, 2004). Even though the public evolutions are not seriously cared, the difficulty of teaching moral education increased since then.

Since the chaos, in order to achieve better well-being for people in China, the focus of development in China has shifted to economic. Especially Deng Xiaopin's policy -- Open Economics -- has helped China realize economic recovery and globalization with rapid growth in GDP and open harbors. Diversity in moral education is encouraged, and traditional values are evaluated and put back into the textbooks. However, the authority of the central government is never weakened. Political ideology still remained as the main component of Chinese moral education. Chinese moral education uses and will continue using untied moral values and political ideology in the moral courses to cultivate good citizens to build a new socialist society.

Brief Analysis of the Influence of History

Even though Chinese moral education did not adopt the Confucian educational system, the Confucian ideas have already permeated in the Chinese people's daily life, especially in the educational aspect. The Chinese people's attitudes towards knowledge and efforts are deeply under the influence of the traditional values knowledge (智 *zhi*) and self-cultivation (修 *xiu*). The pursuits of knowledge and the efforts that one put during the process of learning have become moral virtues, which are gradually treated as predictions of one's future success. The importance of knowledge is associated with the weight of academic achievements in China, in which is a prioritized value used to evaluate and predict one's moral behaviors (Luo, Tamis-LeMonda & Song, 2013). Chinese parents tend to rate their children's academic achievements as

a much more crucial element or essential predictor for their future success than any other factors (Chan, 2012; Wang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2003 cited in Luo, 2013).

In addition, Confucian emphasis on diligence and persistence during the process of learning, combining with the moral responsibility of self-cultivation, has resulted in a unique culture—“effort” in China. Effort-learning behavior is seen as a sign of moral reasonability, and students who put more effort gain the image of “being good and doing the right thing” regardless of their success or failure (Fwu, Wei, Chen & Wang, 2014). When evaluating children’s failure on academic performance, both Chinese and Chinese-American mothers tend to contribute the lack of effort as the predominate cause of low performance, and their children show similar patterns of evaluation (Hess, Chang, & And, McDevitt, 1986). There is an old saying: “how you behave when you are three decides who you will be when you are eighty”. My grandmother always used this quote to frighten me when I was lazy with my homework. Therefore, it is clear that the importance of knowledge affects Chinese parents’ attitudes on children’s academic achievements from a very young age.

In addition to the fact that Confucian ideas is influential to children’s and parents’ attitudes towards education, children’s moral preference is also affected by the teaching of political ideology in moral education. According to recent study, Chinese moral education with a specific political focus education is effective in affecting values that students hold and influencing moral judgments that students make. One study, which tested the moral judgments on truth and lies, supports the effectiveness of this group-oriented moral education. Chinese children, compared

with Canadian children, evaluated deceptions that help a group but harm an individual more positive than the opposite outcomes. They also rated truth that helps an individual but harms a group less positive than the opposite outcomes (Lee, 2007). Therefore, when Chinese children understand certain moral values and make moral judgments, they are more likely to justify their judgments based on the group interests instead of the individual interest.

One may claim that the inclinations of Chinese children are affected by the collective culture they live in instead of the socialist society under the control of CCP. However, it may not be true. There are a lot of Chinese-specific behaviors that cannot be simply explained by the effect of collective culture, but by the specific educational system that PRC uses. In a study, which compared the values held by early adolescents from Mainland China and Taiwan who both preferred moral values that focused on interpersonal relationship and collectivism, there are some significant differences between the emphases of the values (Yuan, & Shen, 1998). The values that hold by adolescents from Mainland China have more emphasis on patriotism and services to the group and the country than adolescents from Taiwan (Yuan, & Shen, 1998). Adolescents from Mainland China tend to hold values that are more competence-centered; adolescents from Mainland China also rate Patriotism “and” Secure country the highest. In contrast, the values that hold by adolescents in Taiwan are more close to traditional Confucian values, which are more family-oriented. Overall, even though adolescents from Taiwan show a preference to collectivism, they tend to focus more on values that benefiting interpersonal

relationship and values that originated from traditional Confucian values, compared with adolescents from Mainland Chinese (Yuan, & Shen, 1998).

Taiwan is also under the influence of Confucianism. However, unlike Mainland China, still maintains the capitalist political and economic system. These significant differences between the values hold by adolescents from Mainland China and Taiwan support the idea that the political ideology introduced in Chinese moral education influence children's moral understandings and their judgments and this influence exists despite the effect of a collective culture.

Those problems existing in moral educational system in China have negative impacts on children's moral development and their moral behaviors. Recent studies have showed that Chinese children are actually at increased risk of experiencing moral crisis, in which they are less able to distinguish and make judgments about their behaviors and their beliefs of what is right and wrong, leaving them unable to reconcile their actions and morality (Xu, 2014). "Sharing" is a value taught in China to improve children's altruistic behaviors and to cooperate with others in the group. However, in a preschool in a case study in Shanghai, China, "sharing" is known to become a strategy for improving children's interpersonal relationship and their social status. By choosing whom to share with, children come to treat their sharing behaviors as *guan'xi* (an exchange of favor) (Xu, 2014). Children simply obey the authority of the teacher to bring snacks and toys to school, but they are not morally motivated to do such altruistic behaviors. In addition to the strategic use of "sharing", sharing sometimes creates pressure on children. If a child chooses not to share due to some personal issues, he/she is punished for not conforming to others'

sharing behaviors (Xu, 2014). A moral cultivation becomes an obligation of conformity; tan egalitarian sharing behaviors become a routine of performing collective ritual instead of intrinsically altruistic actions (Xu, 2014). This is not what morality should teach in school.

These kinds of moral problems not only happen in preschool; they are widely occurring social and moral issues, which should be brought to the attentions of the public. The problems with the moral education system in China will be discussed in next chapter. Some reforms that have been made to the current education system will also be discussed. In Mainland China, the CCP is in charge of the educational system, it is thus hard to change the contents of the textbook for moral education courses, and the emphasis on political ideology is less likely to be eliminated. It is worthwhile to take consideration of other approaches to changing the current situation of the moral educational system in China through the lens of psychological theories of moral development. Some analysis on empirical research on children's moral development will be made in next chapter as well.

Chapter 3 Problems and solutions of Chinese moral education

Some history and philosophy continue influencing the modern moral education in China. However, they are not affecting the educational system in a good direction. It is commonly acknowledged that real life may not often go as philosophers expect. Even though some approaches to the moral educational system in China seems to be reasonable and rigorous, there are some problems with the practice of Chinese moral education in real life.

First major problem of the moral educational system is that the values introduced in the textbooks are too far behind children's daily life. From the early period of primary school, Chinese students started to learn different moral requirements, while some of the requirements are too far away from children's lives. In China, People's Republic of China National Educational Committee (PRCNEC) is in charge of the moral education course in China. The moral requirements that are introduced to students in Grade 1 and Grade 2 include "love the country", "show brotherliness to fellow classmates", "abide by the rules and disciplines of school", "abide by social morality", and so on (PRCNEC 1997 cited in Lu & Gao, 2004). In order to match with the moral requirements, the stories of "big figures" such as Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou, are used in the textbooks (Lu & Gao, 2004). Both the values and the story used to interpret the values are far from the life of an elementary school student. While children put efforts in memorizing these distant values, the greatest beneficiaries are not themselves.

These moral morals have a lot of political influences, in which ensure the political foundation and status of Chinese Communist party.

In order to maintain the authority of the central government and ensure the successes of socialism, CCP embedded Communist morality, which to this extent I only talk about the political perspective of it, in moral educational system. Communist morality concerns the collective well being of the community rather than the well being of an individual (Chan, 2004). Also, memorization is a tradition in China, which the literal words of moral values are taught and memorized before children even come to understand them. Confucius' tradition of teaching morality with textbook still remains influential in China. Imprint of this tradition can be visible in parents' and teachers' goals in education in China. Chinese teachers and parents tend to believe that learning more from literatures will help children to later cultivate themselves into moral men. Therefore, it is not hard to understand why these values are taught early in China.

However, too much interventions of the political ideology in moral education have weakened the importance of individual values that should be introduced to Chinese children, since the political moral values have taken a huge portion of Chinese moral education. An analysis of approved *Deyu* teaching materials for elementary and secondary students showed that over half of contents in the textbook are political contents (Lee, 2001 cited in Li, ZHong, Lin & Zhang, 2004). Hence, children's autonomy is dismissed by the current moral educational system. In contrast, values that protect the interests of the group and the governments are enhanced and children are taught to always follow these values.

The second problem of moral education is about the status of moral education in Chinese educational system. The importance of moral education is gradually dismissed and downgraded into a minor role at school as the level of education increases, in which is opposite of the goal of moral education. The method of testing students' understanding of moral education is similar to other academic subjects, their performance on the examination for moral education will not help them success in entering university since the university entry examination do not take into the consideration of students' grades in the subject of moral education (Chan, 2004). Despite the fact that children have to experience an unpleasant process to memorize the distant moral values, take exams designed for the moral educational courses, and write down the "right answer" they memorize from textbook, the time and energy the children devote do not necessary provide any help for entering an famous university or getting a well-paid job. The competition of university entry examination in China is well known, and the importance of other academic subjects increases since they are the one that university entry examination really cares, while the role of moral education becomes a subject that only contains little practical value. Maybe, one day, Thought and Character will become a subject only exists in name.

Some reforms have taken to the moral educational system in China. There are some changes that have made to the textbooks used for the moral education course, and this change has been underway in all provinces and cities in China, except Beijing and Shanghai (Lu & Gao, 2004). Textbooks are designed to emphasize values that are more close to the real lives by children. For instance, the major contents for children in Grade 3 are changed to be about friendship, family

life and personal safety Lu & Gao, 2004). Instead of establishing control over children and requiring them to meet the moral standards set by the country and society, the reformed moral education is aimed at providing guidance to children's lives and help them develop moral characteristics that are importance for the modernization and development of Chinese society (Lu & Gao, 2004). Even though the goal of the textbooks becomes that "telling children's stories in children's way", the primary goal of current moral education is still to cultivate "successors for the proletariat" who can help with the establishment of a socialist society. As a result, the uses of new textbooks have some positive influence on children by increasing their interests to asking questions in class. However, there are still many problems remain for the reform. Teachers who are teaching the course are not yet professional enough to fully understand the idea of the textbooks and be able to transform the textbooks into a conversational text. The effect of the reformed textbook will be weakened if there is no conversational relationship between teachers and students. Furthermore, it is still the fact that the textbooks cannot be excessively accommodation to the reality; the contents in the textbooks may still be too ideal and simple compared with the real life situations. So, there are still some challenges left for moral education in primary schools. Given that, we must consider what we can do to make changes with a new perspective.

The goal of moral education is to encourage children's pro-social behaviors and to ensure a good life for them. The focus of a good moral educational system should be on children. Thus, the purpose of solving the problems in the current moral educational system should not be only

for the sake of creating a sound system, but also for the sake of providing an education benefiting children's development in the society. Hence, it is essential to understand the moral development of children before coming up with solutions to solve the problems that current system has.

Moral judgments and internal state

Firstly, children's abilities to make moral judgments are associated with their abilities to understand internal states (i.e. theory of mind). Research has shown that children's moral judgments are significantly associated with their development of second-order false belief, especially when they are facing moral dilemmas. Children's abilities to understand first-order and second-order false belief predict their judgments on the intention of a transgression. Children's second-order false belief ability is significantly related to their moral judgments on transgressive behaviors with accidental intentions. Older children are less likely to blame accidental transgressors than younger children, those who have not yet develop second-order false belief (Fu, Xiao, Killen & Lee, 2014). Furthermore, a transgressor with a clear intention to do something bad is evaluated to be more negative by children as the age increases (Fu, Xiao, Killen & Lee, 2014). Therefore, the ability to understand the internal state is an essential factor for children to learn how to make appropriate moral judgments based on the actor's intention in a real life situation.

Children start to incorporate emotion into their moral judgments at a very young age. Children can understand and experience positive or negative emotions when they fulfill or fail to fulfill their desire since the age of 2. Until the age of 8 or 9, children start to realize and

understand the connection between the actions and the emotions that are related by those actions (Zajdel, Bloom, Fireman, & Larsen, 2013 cited in Hertz & Krettenauer, 2014). As children grow older, they tend to incorporate emotion in the context of action and consider emotion as an outcome that needs to be weighted when making moral judgments. (Hertz & Krettenauer, 2014).

Children also tend to increasingly concern other's psychological knowledge when making moral judgments. When children are asked to evaluate necessary harm caused by an actor, they are more likely offer forgiving evaluations if there is a positive intention involved for the action (Jambon & Smetana, 2014). When children make a moral evaluation of well-intended harm, children are more likely to focus on the nature of the actor's actions, and less likely on the transgression itself as their age increases (Jambon & Smetana, 2014). There is also a positive correlation between children's social cognitive perspective taking and a higher level of moral reasoning (Rubin & Schneider, 1973 cited in Lane, Wellman, Olson, LaBounty & Kerr, 2010). ToM and emotion understanding (EU) of children help to predict an increased consideration of other's emotional and mental states in their moral reasoning (Lane, Wellman, Olson, LaBounty & Kerr, 2010). Children can process information about desires and emotion differently when making moral judgments. Research showed that 3-year-olds are more likely to evaluate transgression scenarios that involves a wicked desire to be more negative while evaluating transgression scenarios satisfying a material desire to be more positive (Smith & Warneken, 2013).

Emotion is associated with one's moral judgments from a neurological perspective. When people are asked to solve tasks that contain moral-personal dilemmas (e.g., Footbridge dilemma), the brain regions that related to emotion (i.e. MPFC, orbitofrontal cortex (OFC)) are activated. The moral-personal dilemmas are more likely to invoke some negative immediate emotional responses among people than moral-impersonal dilemmas (Han, Chen, Jeong, & Glover).

Moral emotion and moral motivation

Moral concerns, by definition, are our concerns of other's well beings (Turiel, 1983 cited in Campos & Witherington, 2011). Emotion is what helps to satisfy our concerns (Frijda, 1986 cited in Campos & Witherington, 2011). To some extent, our emotion and action tendency rises when there is a moral concern (Campos & Witherington, 2011). Hence, when a person follows a moral rule, one should feel a positive emotion, and his/her action tendency rises. When a person violates a moral rule, which results in negative consequences of hurting others' well-beings, he/she should feel a negative emotion and have a tendency to change such immoral behavior (Campos & Witherington, 2011). Furthermore, according to Freud's theory of moral development, children try to reduce anxiety, avoid punishment, and remain parental affection by identifying with parents, internalize their standards of right and wrong. During this process, they will form the superego, which is the moral element of personality (Santrock, 2010). Hence, it is possible that emotion can serve as a motivation for one's moral actions.

Emotions that are usually served as moral motivation are the emotions called moral emotions (i.e. shame, guilt, empathy). Emotion will help to cultivate children's moral behaviors

because children learn how to identify the emotion, and then anticipate what kinds of action can improve others' emotional states (Thompson, 2009 cited in Santrokck, 2010). For example, moral emotions are important in children's development of sharing behaviors (Gummerum et al., 2010; Malti et al., 2012; Ongley & Malti, 2014 cited in Ongley, Nola, & Malti, 2014). The feeling of moral emotion—guilt—is positively associated with children's sharing behaviors (Ongley, Nola, & Malti, 2014). The feeling of guilt reveals that one has transgressed his/her internalized moral rules, and thus feels responsible and motivated to take moral actions (Malti & Ongley, 2014 cited in Ongley, Nola, & Malti, 2014).

In addition, it is necessary to relate children's belief about rightness (i.e. morality) with their beliefs about mental states, such as beliefs and intentions (Chandler, Sokol, & Hallett, 2001; Chandler, Sokol, & Wainryb, 2000, cited in Xu, Bao, Fu, Talwar & Lee, 2010). There is a possibility that children's moral knowledge is not directly related to their actual behaviors, and their actual actions in real life depend on children's understanding of others' internal states. In Xu, Bao, Fu, Talwar & Lee, 2010, children are inclined to tell pro-social lies in a politeness situation, even though they categorize untruthful statements as a lie. Older children's also tend to make judgments on prosocially lie less negative and more positive, if the lie is told in a politeness situation.

Moral development and teaching styles

In addition to internalize children's by increasing their awareness of emotion as a solution to motivate children, it is also possible to motivate children's moral behaviors by changing the

teaching styles. According to self-determination theory (SDT), autonomy in learning should promote children with high motivation, and thus lead to high academic performance (Zhou, Lam, & Chan, 2012). During children's learning at school, a feeling of being autonomous can promote motivation and lead to positive learning outcomes among children, while a feeling of being controlled may hurt children's motivation and lead to poor learning outcomes (Zhou, Lam, & Chan, 2012). Recent studies also showed that social emotional relatedness between teachers and students might influence how students perceive teachers' behaviors. The emotion relatedness can mediate one's feeling of being controlled. Children who have high level of emotional relatedness with their teacher are more likely to internalize the messages they receive from the teachers, and feel motivated to perform in the way the teacher expect (Zhou, Lam, & Chan, 2012). Overall, a close relationship between teachers and students and an autonomy-supportive environment can promote children's motivation and lead to a good performance. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take the consideration of teaching style as well to increase the effectiveness of moral education.

In sum, the problems of moral education are majorly about a decreased importance of individual interests, and a disconnect between children's need and the contents of moral education. Those problems lead to a failure of the current educational system to cultivate moral values to children in China. According to the research on children's moral development, there are several factors that can benefit children's moral judgments. First, emotion is an important factor that can influence their moral judgments. An understanding of internal states is an essential ability for children to make appropriate moral judgments when facing complicated and conflicting moral

dilemmas. Furthermore, emotion can serve as a motivation for children's moral actions. Improving children's ability to understand emotion can be effective to promote children's moral development. An additional change can be made on the teaching style to further help children grasp the ideas, values and expectation from the teachers. A close emotional relatedness between teachers and children can help internalize the knowledge received from teachers and feel motivated to follow the teachers' guidance. Hence, a solution that contains those factors should be effective in changing Chinese children's moral development under the current moral educational system, and the psychological activities curriculum is a solution that fits the requirement.

The psychological activities curriculum (心理辅导活动课 *xinli fudao hongdongke*), also know as the mental health curriculum, is a new type of curriculum that has been adopted in some cities in China. This curriculum is aimed at teaching children's abilities to understand their and others' internal feelings, and thus develop a critical thinking ability of make appropriate judgments based on their understanding of the internal states. Moreover, the curriculum promotes a close and equal relationship between teachers and students, and teachers need to ensure that children receive autonomy during the teaching of curriculum. The detailed description of the curriculum will be introduced in next chapter. The characteristics of the psychological activities curriculum contain an emphasis on emotion and an autonomy-supportive teaching style, thus it should be a good fit for solving the problems that Chinese moral education faces.

Chapter 4 Psychological Activities Curriculum

There is a new type of curriculum that has been introduced to the Chinese educational system for several years (Zhong, 2007). Different from mainstream educational culture in China, which has a major focus on academic achievements, psychological activities curriculum is aimed to ensure a proper development of students' mental health. This curriculum can be taught in various forms, such as lectures, individual counseling, Internet counseling, hotline, mailbox communication, and so on. The one I am interested in for helping Chinese moral education is one of the most popular forms, group guidance, and specifically the kind used in schools. Group guidance is a technique, in which group leader provides information to a group of people who are facing similar issues at once. The group guidance that is used in Chinese schools is often run on a class-by-class basis, with a whole class of students gathered together; this course takes similar amount of time as other regular academic subjects.

Similar to the structure of Thought and Character, which is taught in elementary schools in China, the contents of group guidance in Chinese schools are designed according to children's mental development. Typically, a lot of example class materials, such as those written by Zhong zhi'nong, a widely recognized authority of the psychological activity curriculum, correspond with Erikson's stages of psycho-social development. Many themes are designed for students' psychological and social needs when they are at different stages. The teachers who teach the psychological activities curriculum need to be specified. They should receive certain trainings in order to be able to teach the class, and their class materials should be written under careful

considerations and be re-edited based on students' reactions during the class. Near the end of each semester, classes are reviewed and evaluated by experienced teachers for future development.

There are yet some major differences between the group guidance that is used in the Chinese psychological activity curriculum and the typical Chinese moral educational approach. First, the major focus for group guidance is on children's internal states, as opposed to set moral values. Children are educated to understanding different emotions they have in different situations. The procedure of group guidance in psychological activity curriculum is aimed at creating an equal relationship between teachers and children, so that children have more autonomy in making decisions and judgments based on their own understandings and feelings instead of authority set by teachers or schools.

The procedure focuses on emotional interactions among children, and teachers are not allowed to provide any direct or indirect guidance to make children answer in an expected way, or given an "ideal answer". Teachers should be more like a guide during children's interactions, instead of a leader. Most of the time, examples or stories are used in class discussions to help make the topic better resonate with children. The ideas, examples, values or judgments that are mentioned or used during group guidance are always close to daily activities. Since the class materials are more visible and accessible to children, children more easily get involved in the discussion than when the class materials are full of empty and vague concepts. Teachers of group guidance use various types of materials such as storybooks, video clips, in-class activities to

evoke children's interests to the topic. These emotional reactions can hopefully directly or indirectly influence children's attitudes and behaviors, and become the motivation for them to make changes in the future. Besides, unlike Thought and Character, which is taught through a textbook, group guidance is full of flexibility. Teachers can change their class materials based on children's reactions in class in order to reach maximum student involvements during the class.

Here is an example of the class material of a psychological activity course that is taught to third graders. The following is a translation of the primary resource of class material:

“I will not call someone names”

The concept of the activity:

Name-calling is a widely occurring phenomenon among students at school. According to research, about 95% of students have experienced to being called names by someone else. Nicknames can be positive or negative. One person might get stressed about it, while another might enjoy it. This activity is aimed at solving the interpersonal problems that exist in students' real lives and improving the overall environment for students. The activity is aimed at creating a relaxing, harmonious, and sincere environment; as well as organizing activities that corresponds with students' psychological development; and making students' actively participate in the activity. During the activities, students are encouraged to speak, and have as many experiences as possible. After this activity, students should be able to make correct judgments when faced

with the phenomenon of name-calling, and try to avoid or reduce the negative effect of bad nicknames.

Activity Purpose:

1. Nicknames have two sides, which can be both positive and negative. One should not generalize them.
2. One should understand that to call someone names because of disadvantages they may have is impolite and disrespectful behavior, and people can be hurt because of the behavior.
3. One should learn to respect and praise others and try not to call someone bad names, so that the relationship among students can be improved.

Materials:

Teaching materials (pre-recorded video or comedy transcript that are used during class as a supplement for teaching);

Preparation

Students are divided in groups of six, and are each be distributed a “respect card” (an empty index card).

Procedure:

Warm-up Activity (Promoting a close relationship between the teacher and students)

1. Game: “Everything has a name”
 - a) Students are asked to stand up and form a circle
 - b) Teachers will call out names of plants and animals. When the name is of a plant,

the students will put their hands up. When the name is of an animal, the students will put their hands in front of them.

- c) The teacher will later increase the speed of the game. Students who make the wrong gesture will sit down. The group that has the most people left wins.

1. Talk Time: The meaning of a name

- a) The teacher asks for the students' feedbacks about the game, and reminds them that plants have names, animals have names, and as people.
- b) The teacher shows the students his/her name, and then the teacher asks students to guess why he/she has this name. This process helps students to realize and understand the meaning behind a name.

Transition Activity (Shifting to the major topic)

1. Game: "Guess who it is"

- a) The teacher plays another game with the students again. The teacher puts some pictures of some people on the screen. The teacher will call out positive nicknames⁴ that matched with the people based on their specialties and strengths. Students are asked to explain why they think in that way.
- b) The teacher later asks students to think of some other positive nicknames they usually hear in real life and list some students who are called by these positive nicknames.

⁴ The positive nicknames the teacher calls out are used to reflect positive traits. One example for that is “及时雨”, which in English means “timely” “rain”. This name is used to describe a person who can always provide help at a time when others are in trouble.

1. Comedy Time: “My worries about my name”⁵

- a) After the game, the teacher either plays a video clip of a comedy or asks students to come in front of the class and perform the comedy with a written script.
- b) After watching the comedy, the teacher asks the students how they feel after the comedy, and then summarizes their answers.

1. Discussion Time: “What do I feel/think about nicknames”

- a) The teacher points out that here are a lot of people who have been called names and asks how students feel when they are called by a nickname.
- b) Students can write down their feelings in a piece of paper and the teacher plays a piece of music to provide relaxing environment for the students.
- c) Based on students’ answer, three groups are formed, and students can choose which group they prefer. One is the “like” group, in which people hold positive attitudes towards nickname. Another is “dislike” group, in which people hold negative attitudes toward nicknames. The last is “neutral” group, in which people do not have a strong preference to either positive or negative.
- d) The teacher interviews students from each group and lets the students talk about why they chose their group and why think in that way.

Working Activity (Recognizing and solving the problems that are related to the topic)

1. Letter reading time: “I do not want to be called ‘fat pig’”⁶

⁵ This is the most common comedy that it used for this class. The original name is 《杜子藤 (duzuteng) 一肚子疼 (stomachache)》. In this comedy, there is a boy named Du Ziteng, and his name sounds similar to the word “stomachache” in Chinese. His classmates in the story make fun of his name all the time.

⁶ The letter the teacher bring to class is designed to tell a story, and it is not a real letter from someone but a story. This is a “letter” from a girl who is fat. Her classmates call her “fat pig”, and she feels sad and gets stressed because of the name

- a) The teachers will read a letter of a “student” who suffers from the nickname that people used to call her. The main character in the letter suffers from the negative nicknames people use to call her. After the letter, the teacher asks students how they feel about this issue and what they think the girl should do.
- b) The teacher also asks the students to discuss their thoughts about this problem with the group members from the last activity, and share their answers with the class after discussion.

Concluding Activity (summarize the overall class and encourage students to write down or speak out what they gain after the class)

1. Teacher will ask students to write down their thoughts and feelings on the “respect card”. The students who wish to share their thoughts can do so that if time is available.
2. The teacher makes a quick summary of the class and the class is over.

This class material helps to provide a comprehensive description of how a psychological activity curriculum be practiced in real life. This curriculum is a student-oriented, emotion-focused activity, and it contains a lot of advantages for improving students’ moral and mental development, which moral educational course cannot provide.

One of the major advantages the psychological activity curriculum holds is about how right and wrong, good and bad are introduced to students. In the psychological activity curriculum,

there is no right or wrong answer, and there is no good or bad answer. Every student answer are accepted and treated equally. However, in the typical moral education—Thought and Character—or other approaches to moral education, students are demanded to provide the “right” answer, which is the one close to the textbook. It is a tradition in China to learn from language and learn from literature since Confucius education. Therefore, there is a reason why Chinese education systems have so much emphasis on moral education though textbooks. However, children may not believe the same ways as those who are in charge of the moral educational system.

Another advantage the psychological activity curriculum holds is that it challenges the negative influences on teacher’s authority in the educational systems that are left by the traditional Confucian values. Filial Piety encourages people to respect and obey their parents. In China, teacher shares similar status as children’s parents in the educational system. There is a old saying: once my teacher, forever my parents. To some extent, this has indicated that students are asked to respect their teachers as they respect their parents, and this tradition has provided teachers authority and a higher social status above children (Zhuo, Lam & Chen, 2012).

The psychological activities curriculum uses two approaches to weaken the authority of teachers, as well as to create an equal and harmonious relationship between students and teacher. Firstly, the concept of curriculum guarantees children’s autonomy in the activities. Students are the main characters during the activities in the curriculum, while the teacher is just a character that provides guidance for students and makes sure the activities flows well. Secondly, the

teacher must not create their status above the students, in which the teacher can try to act like they are the student's friends instead of their teacher. At the beginning of the class, the teachers always begin the class with some warm up activities to make children become familiar with the teacher so that children are less likely to be influenced by their authority as a teacher.

In addition to the great features of the psychological activities curriculum contains, the curriculum shares some characteristics of Western style of moral education. According to a study on teacher's view on morality and moral education, American teachers who teach morality are less likely to connect morality with religion or social values, while they are more likely to associated it with "respecting differences and moral decision making" (LePage, Akar, Temli, Sen, Hasser & Ivins, 2011). This view on moral education is similar to the concept of psychological activities curriculum, in which values should not be taught while the decision-making ability should. Moreover, American teachers focus more on local issues, while Turkish teacher, who are from a collective culture focus more on global issues related to morality (LePage, Akar, Temli, Sen, Hasser & Ivins, 2011). The traditional moral education shares similar focus on broad moral concepts with that of Turkish teachers, and both are under the influence of collective culture. Meanwhile, the psychological activities curriculum is more closely related to the view of American teachers than the current approaches to moral education in China, which focuses on the issues that are closely related to children's real lives.

In conclusion, the psychological activities curriculum is a type of curriculum that has an emphasis on benefiting children's psycho-social developments. The concepts and techniques that

are used in the psychological activities should be helpful to improve children's moral development since it focuses on emotion and autonomy of students. Further, the psychological activities curriculum shares some characteristics of Western moral education, which may lead children who receive this curriculum should behave in way similar to children from Western countries. A proposed study will be provided in next chapter to test how the psychological activities curriculum can affect children's moral development with the analysis on children's moral reasoning.

Chapter 5 Study Design

Introduction

Chinese moral education is currently at an increasing risk of creating a moral crisis among Chinese children, in which children cannot reconcile their actions with the moral knowledge they learn. This risk occurs because of two major problems of the system. They are the disconnect between the knowledge learned in class and children's real lives, and the decline of the importance of the moral education course. In China, parents and schools tend to believe that morality is profoundly connected with children's academic achievements, leading children's personal feelings neglected when teaching moral education. However, in some western countries, where morality is more connected with one's ability to make moral judgments than with knowledge, emotion is evaluated and has been tested as one of the motivations for moral behaviors, and the results suggest that it should be taken into account.

To make up the missing part of teaching emotions in the system, one type of curriculum—psychological activity—needs to be introduced into the Chinese moral educational system. Even though this curriculum is not yet widely acknowledged or applied to every school in China, the effectiveness of this curriculum in influencing people's attitudes and behaviors are noteworthy. A study tested in Taipei showed that The group guidance intervention has a quick and prolong influence on change high school students' smoking behaviors and their attitudes towards cessation (Huang & Lee, 2015).

The teaching concepts and techniques of the psychological activity curriculum have many western characteristics, due to which the addition of the curriculum to the moral educational system may not fit well with needs of the mainstream culture of Chinese education, which focuses on academic achievement. However, since the focus of the curriculum is on benefiting children's mental and social development, it should ultimately help children's moral development.

Unfortunately, the recent studies have only focused on specific behaviors or cognition, instead of a general understanding of moral values. It is not clear whether or not the psychological activity curriculum can directly influence children's moral judgments and decision-making. However, since the target of the psychological activity curriculum is students' emotion, and the purpose of it is to help students gain understandings of their internal states during the process of the class, the curriculum should make up the missing part—emotion—in the current system and influence children's moral decision-making habits and behaviors. Hence, this study is aimed at testing the effectiveness of the psychological activity curriculum on children's moral reasoning of emotion and their moral judgment under Chinese moral education. This study will be a long-term study, which would last a whole semester. Since we try to change children's moral understandings by increasing their exposure to emotion education with the psychological activities curriculum, it takes time for children to adopt a new way of thinking. Thus, it is worthwhile to make it a long-term study instead of a short-term study. However, even in the proposal, it is hard to eliminate the Thought and Character course at schools in China.

Students must take Thought and Character for credit and grades since it is mandatory. Hence, a study design that one group receives the Thought and Character course while another receives the psychological activities curriculum is too ideal and cannot be put in practice under the current educational system. Due to practical concerns, this study will make a few adjustments. The psychological activities curriculum will serve as a supplement for Thought and Character, similar to other approaches to moral education, instead of as a replacement for the Thought and Character. In other words, all participants in the study will have the Thought and Character course as normally scheduled. However, one group of children will have the psychological activities curriculum, in addition to their weekly Thought and Character class, while the other group of children will have their weekly class meeting instead of the psychological activities curriculum, as a supplement to the Thought and Character class.

In fact, there are a lot of similarities between the class meeting and the psychological activities curriculum. The class meeting, as briefly described in Chapter 2, represents an approach to modern moral education. Similar to the psychological activities curriculum, the class meeting involves some teacher and student interaction, and it is less a lecture-form than Thought and Character. Moreover, the focus of the class meeting is often on discussing certain problems or phenomena in the class, and certain activities are held for students to gain a better understanding of the topics.

Although there are some similarities that the class meeting shares with the psychological activities class, the class meeting is still a part of the moral educational system in China, which

means that it still contains the problems that other approaches in Chinese moral education have. Firstly, the hierarchical relationship between students and teachers still exists in the class meeting, and the teachers always play the role of director or host and take charge of the whole process. Secondly, the purpose of the class meeting is mainly aimed at the construction of class order and reputation, or the celebration of certain political and historical events. The discussions corresponding to these topics are more formal and sounds more grandiose than what is in the psychological curriculum. The core of the discussion is less about understanding students' personal feelings, and more about re-emphasizing the traditional and political values that are taught in Thought and Character.

The class meeting always focuses on a lofty concept; for example, name-calling will be defined as a problem, in the context of respect. Beyond that, the history of China and the great achievements of modern China are included as a supplement for students to understand the topic. The students in the class meeting not only learn to correct their behaviors due to the existence of certain moral principles but also praise the greatness of their motherland. Due to this lack of specificity, as well as a failure to focus on individual needs, the class meeting still maintains the problems that the rest of modern moral education in China has. Thus, the similarities in form of teaching between the class meeting and the psychological activities curriculum help to make the class meeting a good control in this study, and the typical characteristics of Chinese moral education that the class meeting still contains make a good comparison between the psychological activities curriculum and the modern moral education curriculum in China.

In this study, children's abilities to become a good decision-maker or not is not evaluated. Instead, children's moral understanding and reasoning will be tested. Since the psychological activities curriculum emphasizes on the students' emotion and tries to increase students' autonomy during the course, children who receive this curriculum should be more aware in their and other's internal states and may make judgments based on more aspects than the rule itself. We predict that children will be inclined to take emotion into consideration when making moral judgments instead of simply considering the rules existed in the world.

Prior studies have tested on children's judgments with stories scenarios. In this study, stories will be used to test children's moral understanding and reasoning. Unfortunately, the rules in the recent studies are relatively limited to general moral rules, such as lying, or stealing. In the study, the kinds of rules will be expanded. Given that China is a collective culture, and the political ideology is highly evaluated in the educational system, it will be worthwhile to test how children under such system will evaluate rules that set by a group and the nation. So, this study will not only test children's responses to actions that violate a general moral rule, such as not hurting someone, lie, and stealing. The moral rules that set to protect a group and a nation will also be included. This study will be tested on children's moral understanding and judgments on both individual-oriented and group-oriented rules.

Recalling the problems of the current moral educational system in China, children are educated to be a good citizen who sacrifices for the establishment of a socialist society. Moreover, the emphasis on political ideology and patriot ideas in moral education should lead

children to prioritize the interest of the nation or a group instead of the interest of an individual when making moral judgments. In a study that tests children's choice and evaluations of truths and lies Chinese children are more likely to justify an action using group interest than Canadian children, who are more inclined to use individual interest justification, (Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman, & Lee 2007). However, the psychological activities curriculum is a new type of education approach, which contains a lot of Western characteristics of education. It uses student-oriented teaching methods and encourages a student to speak out their thoughts, so it should help children to increase their awareness on self-interests, and affect their moral reasoning when facing moral dilemmas that relate to individual interest and group interest. So, we hypothesize that the children who receive psychological activities curriculum may act in a similar way to children from Western countries, who may be more inclined to the individual interest justification when making moral judgments.

However, if rules in the study are well established and practiced in the society, the children who are asked to make judgments may be forced to give a socially desirable answer due to the social pressure. There is a possibility that children simply accepted and memorized the rules set by the authority, while not be morally motivated to follow the rules when putting into action. Hence, one more kind of stories that contains no moral principles and rules will be used in the study. This kind of story is inspired by a non-sharing and stealing that have frequently been used in happy-victimizer studies that have been shown to be effective (Eisenberg, 1982; Keller et al., 2003; Nunner-Winkler and Sodian, 1988 cited in Malti, Gasser, & Buchmann,

2009). There are two stories for happy-victimizer studies, which are sharing the story and stealing story. A non-sharing story describes a main character who shirks a positive duty (i.e. not sharing); a stealing story describes a main character who does a negative duty (i.e. stealing) (Nunner-Winkler, 1999 cited Malti, et., 2009). For non-sharing stories, the main character does not directly violate an existing rule and only tries to escape from a moral duty. Children treated those transgressive moral behaviors differently. Stealing behavior that violates an existing rule is evaluated more negatively than not sharing behavior (Malti, et., 2009). In the study, stories describing actions, similar to that in the non-sharing stories, will be adopted, in which one refuses a moral action that may cause some harm to others. This kind of story is aimed at testing children's reasoning when a moral rule is not explicitly established.

The majority of the measurements used for this study will be based on participants' self-report, especially written responses. Participants' abilities of self-expression and writing skills need to be taken into consideration. Thus, this study will not include students who are in first grade and second grade (age 6-8), because of their difficulties with writing and speaking. The participants in this study will be students from the third grade (age 8-9).

The reason for choosing third graders as participants is not limited to their improved ability in writing among third graders. Recalling Chapter two, for children from nine to twelve years old, the topics that are in Thought and Character become moral characteristics and society, while children who are younger learn about moral characteristics and life. Thus, the third grade is a transition period when the scope of students' moral learning expands from life to society, and it

is also when students start to accept the hollow values that teach people to become a good citizen for a socialistic society. This shift of the attentions in Thought and Character should have an impact on children's moral development, especially from the perspective of individualism and collectivism. While the moral education for third graders represents a transitional period, in contrast, the psychological activities curriculum does not have any such transition in the content of the topics, since it is always student-oriented. So, if children only receive psychological activities curriculum, and no values are taught from Thought and Character, then children's judgments will be less likely to be influenced by the collective, and socialistic values learned from the textbooks. Instead, children can use their emotion as motivation to make moral judgments, which can be different from the judgments that the central government designs for people to make.

Not only the contents of Thought and Character are in a transition period, the children who will be in the study are also in a transition. According to Piaget's theory of moral development, children go through two stages in moral reasoning. For children from 4 to 7, they are at the stage of heteronomous morality, in which children think of justice and rules are unchangeable, and those are beyond the control of people. For children above ten, they are at the stage of autonomous morality, in which children realize that rules and laws are created by people, and they start to consider intention when judging an action. For children from 7 to 10, they are in a transition period, showing some features of heteronomous morality and features of autonomous morality (Santrock, 2010). Therefore, we should be able to have both types of moral reasoning

when testing third graders (age 8-9), who should be at the transition stage according to the Piaget's theory of morality development.

To briefly sum up, this study will test on two research questions. Firstly, we want to test whether or not the exposure of emotion in the educational system affects children's moral reasoning when making moral judgments. Based on prior studies, we expect that children who receive the psychological activities curriculum should attribute to emotion more in moral reasoning than those who have the class meeting course. Secondly, since the psychological activities curriculum has some Western characteristics, we want to see whether or not the children who receive the classes will increase their awareness of individual interests when making moral judgments. We hypothesize that the children who receive the psychological activities curriculum should judge behaviors that harm an individual as more immoral than the children who receive the class meeting course, and vice versa.

Method

Participants

There will be 60 participants, from 8 to 9 years of age. There will be an equal number of female and male participants in the study. All participants will be recruited from a public elementary school in an urban city, which should serve an economically diverse population and accept students from suburban and rural areas.

Materials and Procedure

There will be three types of scenarios: simple moral rule stories, emotion-rule conflict stories and emotion-interests conflict story. There will be three stories for each type. The rules and interests in the stories will cover three levels: (a) individual level (i.e. stealing someone's pen or not helping someone with their homework), (b) group level (i.e. intentionally breaking the window of the class or lowering the chance of the class to win a prize in a competition), and (c) national level (i.e. stepping on the national flag or not donating to the Red Cross when an earthquake happens). One story at each level will be provided for every type. For all scenarios, there will be two versions: one with a female main character (i.e. Xiaohong) and the other with a male main character (i.e. Xiaoming). The gender of the main character will be randomly assigned to students. All stories will be text-only and appear in a free-response questionnaire.

Simple moral rule stories. These stories will each contain a main character who does or intends to do a particular behavior, and a moral rule will be demonstrated in the story. There will be two possible endings in the stories: (a) rule-obeying endings or (b) rule-violating endings. For example: Xiaoming sees his friend Xiaohong's pen on the floor. Xiaoming picks up the pen and (a) tells Xiaohong that her pen is on the floor and returns it (rule-obeying ending), or (b) does not tell Xiaohong and puts the pen in his pencil case (rule violating ending). Children will receive either one of the endings in the questionnaire. No internal states of the main character will be described in the study, so no emotional information about the main character should be gained directly from the literally text.

Emotion-rule conflict story. In these stories, the main character will have some desire that prevents them from doing what morality dictates they do. This type of story is aimed at testing children's reasoning about how emotion intervenes when moral judgments are made. There will be two endings for this kind of story as well: (a) fulfilling one's desire but violating the rule, or (b) following the rules but abstaining from what one desires. In one story, for example, Xiaoming likes his friend's pen and hates the old pen he has. Unfortunately, his friend's pen is too expensive and he cannot afford to buy one. Xiaoming either (a) steals the pen from his friends, or (b) stay away from his friend's pen and continues to use the old pen he has. Children will receive either one of the endings in the questionnaire. The emotion of the main character, the character's love, hatred, anger, hope and so on will be explicitly described in the story.

Emotion-interests conflict story. This is the most complicated scenario among all three types. In such a story, the main character is emotionally drawn to taking one action. Even though the action itself does not directly break a rule, the results of that action will hurt the interests of an individual or a group, and the main character knows the consequences. Here is an example for this scenario: Xiaoming is the candidate to represent his class in a singing competition at school. However, Xiaoming is not the best singer in the class. Xiaohong is, and Xiaoming knows that Xiaohong sings much better than he does and can definitely win a prize in the competition. However, Xiaoming really wants to participate in the competition, so he (a) says nothing to the class and the teacher about Xiaohong, and joins the competition, or (b) tells the class and teacher that Xiaohong is a better singer than him, and Xiaohong joins the competition.

Question Procedure

There will be nine stories in total on the questionnaire, as well as some demographic questions asking about gender, age, family members, etc. Each story describes a character who conducts a behavior in a given situation. Under each story, there will be a morality scale. Students are asked to put themselves in the character's shoes and evaluate the main character's behavior on a morality scale—*most immoral, immoral, neutral, moral and most moral*. Then, the participants are asked to explain their answers, which serves as their *moral reasoning*.

The questionnaire will be totally anonymous, so students should not worry about being judged based on their answers. Moreover, the students will be told that there is no right or wrong answer to each question. Instead, the students will be asked to provide an answer that describes a decision or action they would be most likely to make in a given situation, as well as the reasons why they would choose to make that decision.

General Procedure

Two third grade classes from the school will be randomly selected. Due to the large number of students in classes in China, 30 students will be randomly selected from each class, 15 female students and 15 male students. One class of students will be assigned to the class-meeting group, and will be taught in that format. The other class of students will be assigned to the psychological activities curriculum group, and will be taught the in that form as well. The time to teach the course is dependent on students' original timetables, and the experiment takes place during the time when normal class meetings in the school schedule are held during the week;

usually on Friday or Monday afternoon. The rest of the students who are not selected to participate in the study will stay in the original classroom and have a class meeting held by the head teacher of their class as the class schedule indicated. Like a normal class, the study's class meeting and psychological activities curriculum will take about 40 minutes. Participants can go back to their classroom and continue their original class after the study. No other changes will be made to the participants' class schedules.

There will be two teachers who participate in the study; they are assigned to teach the class meeting and the psychological activities curriculum, respectively. During the study, the teachers who will teach in the study will lead the participants to an empty classroom. The study will be a long term study, which lasts a whole semester taking places once a week. Participants in each group will receive the same type of teaching format they assigned to and be taught by the same teacher throughout the study. The teachers will be provided pieces of class materials, which would be specifically designed for the study, and the topics of the class materials for the class meetings and the psychological activities will be the same; only the contents and the procedures of discussion of these topics will be different. The topics that are selected for the study are designed with the consideration of the social and psychological needs of the students at school. The class materials will follow the model of pervious class materials that are most used by experienced teachers, so that the characteristics for each type of the curriculum will be represented during teaching. For now, the class materials have mainly been collected from experienced teachers, published books and online materials. In order to make sure that the

teachers in the study are capable of delivering messages from the class materials while also maintaining the characteristics of the class meeting and the psychological activities curriculum, some experienced teachers will be invited to evaluate the teachers' performance twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the first week of training.

After the study, a week prior to the end of semester, all students from the two selected classes, including those who do not participate in the study, will receive a questionnaire that tests children's moral judgments with some story scenarios. The questionnaire will be distributed to students during the time of the normal class meeting as scheduled in the timetable. All students will finish the questionnaire in their original classroom, instead of the one they are brought to during the study. Since all students will stay together in their classroom, the teacher will ask the students not to look at other's answers and not to disturb others when working on the questionnaires. After the students finish the questionnaire, those who participated in the study will put their questionnaire in one pile while those who did not put theirs in another one. The data collected from the students who do not participate will serve as a baseline.

Coding of explanations

Children's answers will be evaluated in two ways. Children's judgments of the character's action on the morality scale will be coded and evaluated in conjunction their written explanations. Children's explanations for all stories will be classified into four categories: emotion-oriented explanations, rule-oriented explanations, future-oriented explanations and

others. The coding system will replicate the coding system used in Kristin 2005, while some slight changes will be made to better fit the study.

Emotion-oriented explanations will justify the main character's actions through the character's feelings towards those actions (i.e. It is fine for Xiaoming to take the pen because he feels happy to own the pen). In such an explanation, explicit terms that describe one's internal states need to be included, such as *feel, want, desire happy, regret, fear*, and so on.

Rule-oriented explanations will judge the character's action based on whether the character follows or breaks the rule (i.e. Xiaoming's behavior is immoral because it is wrong to steal). In order to qualify as rule-oriented explanations, explicit deontic terms or phrase must be included, such as *right/wrong things, should/should not, rule, can/cannot, obey, listen, being good/bad* and so on.

Future-oriented explanations will evaluate the character's actions with a future positive or negative outcome (i.e. Xiaoming's decision not to tell the class is immoral because it will be his fault if the class does not win the competition). Children need to provide some hypothetical outcomes that are related to the character's actions. Terms that are used help to explain hypothetical conditions need to be included in the explanation, such as *if, will, when* and so on.

Other explanations include explanations that do not fit in any of the categories listed above. For example: I do not know.

The coding system will allow for multiple codings of an explanation. For example, "Xiaoming will feel regret if he becomes a bad kid who steals things, and his friends

will feel betrayed if he steals the pen”, will be coded as future oriented, emotion oriented, and rule oriented.

Results

The results will be divided into two sections. The first section will be about the children’s moral preferences on different levels (individual, group, national level). Since three levels of rules or interests are included in each story, children’s judgments on the importance of level will be tested. The second section will be about the children’s moral reasoning in making moral judgments.

Moral preference

An ANOVA (group type: class meeting vs psychological activities curriculum) x (moral level: individual, group, nation) test will be used in the study. All children’ answers about how they feel about the character’s actions on the moral scale will be encoded. There should be a main effect on children’s preferences on moral judgments on actions that violate national rules or interest, the group rules or interests, and the individual rules or interests. Children who are assigned in psychological activities curriculum group should evaluate the actions that harm the individual rules or interests to be more severe on the moral scale than those who are assigned in the class meeting group or the baseline group. Further, children who are in the class meeting group should judge action that hurt the group and national rules or interests to be more severe on the morality scale than those who are in the baseline group or the psychological activities curriculum group.

Analyses of explanations

We will run an ANOVA (group: class meeting vs psychological activities curriculum) x (explanation type: emotion-oriented, rule-oriented, and future oriented) x (type of stories: simple moral rule, emotion-rule conflict story and emotion-interests conflict story) test on children's explanations. There should be a main effect of the groups that children are in on the explanation type they provided. Children who take the class meeting course should use the most rule-oriented explanations among all three groups. And the children who take the Psychological activities curriculum should use the fewest rule-oriented explanations among all three groups, with the baseline group lying in the middle. Children who are in the Psychological activities curriculum group should have more emotion-oriented explanations and future-oriented explanations compared with the children in the class meeting course group (See Graph 1). There should be a main effect of the story types on students' explanations as well. For simple moral rule stories, children should be more likely to provide rule-oriented explanations. For emotion-rule conflict and emotion-interests conflict stories, children should be more likely to provide emotion-oriented and future-oriented explanations. There should be an interaction between the group, story type, and explanation type. Children who are in the psychological activities curriculum should provide more emotion-oriented explanations when answering emotional-rule conflict stories and emotion-interests conflict stories than those who are in the class-meeting group.

Discussion

This study is aimed at testing the effect of the psychological activities curriculum on Chinese children's moral understanding and reasoning. Due to the emphasis on emotion during the psychological activities curriculum, this curriculum should help Chinese children be more aware of emotion when making moral judgments. Thus, the results of the study should show that children who take the psychological activities curriculum are more likely to make emotion-oriented explanations in their moral reasoning than those who take the class meeting course in the study. We should find out that the moral preferences and moral reasoning that are provided by the children from the psychological activities curriculum group are closer to children from Western countries. Those children should be more aware of individual emotion and should not have a strong inclination towards rule or interests set for groups and nations. Instead, children from the psychological activities curriculum group should be inclined to prefer more individual-oriented rules or interests.

However, there are some other possible outcomes to this study. Firstly, based on prior research, there is a risk of receiving invalid answers regarding children moral motivation, especially attribution to emotion. Children tend to increasingly give socially desirable answers and show their understanding of mental states as they grow older (Carpendale & Chandler, 1996 cited in Malti, Gasser, & Buchmann, 2009). Therefore, it is possible that children from all groups will provide emotion-oriented explanations simply because they want to provide a more favorable, 'correct' answer. We try to control this effect by making the questionnaire anonymous. We will also ask students to answer the questionnaire in a classroom with others who did not

participate in the study, so that the children should not feel themselves to be distinct from the rest of the class; this may decrease their feeling of responsibility to provide an answer that they think will make the study effective. Secondly, this study is a long-term study, which should take about one semester of a school year. Due to this length, there may be many factors that we cannot control for, such as family problems or health problems, which can affect children's development. Some unknown factors manifesting during the study may have a effect on the results of the study. Even so, the results of the study should reflect the effect of the psychological activities curriculum in real life on children's moral development.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This project is aimed at analyzing Chinese moral education and its effect on Chinese children's moral development. Moral education in China is deeply rooted in the tradition of Confucianism, and it incorporates Marx's ideas of Socialism into the practice of moral education. Hence, it is essential and necessary to understand Chinese moral education (*De yu*) through the lens of Confucianism and Socialism. The traditional values of Confucianism and the political ideology of Socialist help the formation of the current moral educational system. These influences have sharpened Chinese people's understanding of morality and moral education. Typically, the Confucian ideas have enhanced the moral value of learning, and further encouraged the increased importance of effort and children's achievements in the educational system. Moreover, the political system in China results in a focus on communitarianism, which focus on the collective well-being of the community instead of the personal well being. Children who receive education under such political system also tend to evaluate the group interests to be more important than self-autonomy.

However, Chinese parents' high evaluation of knowledge and effort results in an over-emphasis on academic achievements. In addition to the rising competition of the University Entrance Exam, it leads to a decrease of the importance of moral education in the educational system. Furthermore, political ideology and communist ideas in the context of the moral education course have gradually lost its significances in the post-Mao era, especially when China is undergoing a rapid social transformation changing from an obligation-based collective society

to a right-based individualist society (Yan, 2009, 2011 cited in Xu, 2014). Hence, moral education in China is now having a great challenging in educating children morality, due to the decrease of the importance of moral education in the system, and the old and lofty values taught in the moral education course. Children, under the education of this problematic system, are amidst of Chinese “moral crisis”, which they fail to reconcile what they learn with what they act. Therefore, without any change, moral education in China would not only lead to an unpleasant experience for children; learning morality but also taught distorted values that cannot benefit children’s development in the society as well.

Chinese scholars have realized the problems with moral education in China, and the educational system has undergone some reforms to provide a better education for children. Changes have made to the textbooks used for the moral education course. More individual rights and more real-life-related values are taught in the moral education courses. Even though these reforms have received some successes in changing children's attitudes towards the moral education course, the textbooks are still far away from being effective to improve children's lives in the real world, and teachers are not efficient enough to deliver the contents in the textbooks to children. To changing Chinese moral education, an explicit reform in the context of the moral education textbook may not be enough. Therefore, a new approach is taken into consideration. An understanding of children’s moral judgments and moral reasoning helped shed a light on what can be used to fill the gap in the moral education, especially on how to effectively motivate children to take a moral action.

With some analysis of children's moral judgments on particular moral dilemmas, children's judgments require children's ToM abilities, in particular, the ability to understanding others' internal states. Research has shown that children's moral judgments are highly associated with their understanding of emotion. Understanding of other's internal states helps children justify their decisions when they are asked to evaluate complicated scenarios containing conflicts between one's desire and moral rules. Moreover, moral emotions, like guilt, shame, empathy, serve like motivations for one's moral conduct since a very young age. Negative emotions like guilt and shame can prevent one from doing immoral actions, while positive emotions, such as empathy, can encourage one to perform moral actions. Therefore, the increasing emphasis on children's ability to understand internal states should be able to help improve children's abilities to make judgments when facing complex and conflicting moral dilemmas.

In addition to influencing children internally, some external factors can affect children's moral judgments as well. According to self-determination theory (SDT), autonomy should promote children's autonomous motivation, and lead to positive outcomes. When children are taught by autonomy-supportive teachers, children are more likely to feel be motivated. Furthermore, the connections between teachers and students also help maintain children to be motivated. The more children feel to be emotionally related to their teachers; the more likely they are to internalize the teachers' message and feel motivated to do what the teacher expects.

To sum up, to solve the problems that moral education in China has, we need to consider the solution from the perspective of children. By considering children's moral developments, the

solution for the problems of the current emotional system should be an increasing emphasis on emotion in teaching, and a change of teacher's teaching styles. An existing curriculum in China--psychological activities--fits the requirements of the solution. The psychological activities curriculum focuses on teaching children's ability to face the psych-social issues they face during their stages of psych-social developments. Children receive more autonomy during the curriculum than regular curriculum at school including the moral educational course. Moreover, the relationship between teachers and students are equal, and the teachers of the curriculum are not allowed to hold a higher status than students. Theoretically, the features that the psychological activities curriculum contains should make it a good fit to solve the problems that Chinese moral education has right now.

Unfortunately, there are little studies that have tested on the effect of psychological activities curriculum, since it is not widely adopted teaching approach in China. This curriculum contains many Western characteristics of education, and the concept of this curriculum is student-oriented instead of politic-oriented, or government-oriented. It is worthwhile to consider the psychological activities curriculum as a solution for solving the problems in the current system. Hence, this project provided a proposal study, which is aimed at testing the effectiveness of the psychological activities curriculum on children's moral judgments. The study will test children's moral reasoning when they are provided with story scenarios containing conflicts between one's desires and moral rules.

The results should indicate what kinds of reasoning children prefer; whether they prefer rule-oriented reasoning, emotion-oriented reasoning or others. We expect that children increase the use of emotion-oriented reasoning after receiving the psychological activities curriculum, and they should feel more free and autonomous in making judgments based on their own critical thinking than the one who do not receive the curriculum. The psychological activities curriculum should help children develop an ability to overcome the pressure of rules set by the authority, and using multiple types of reasoning when facing moral dilemmas. If this curriculum is tested to be effective in influencing children's moral judgments, then it may lead reform in changing the current moral educational system and resolve the challenging that the system faces right now.

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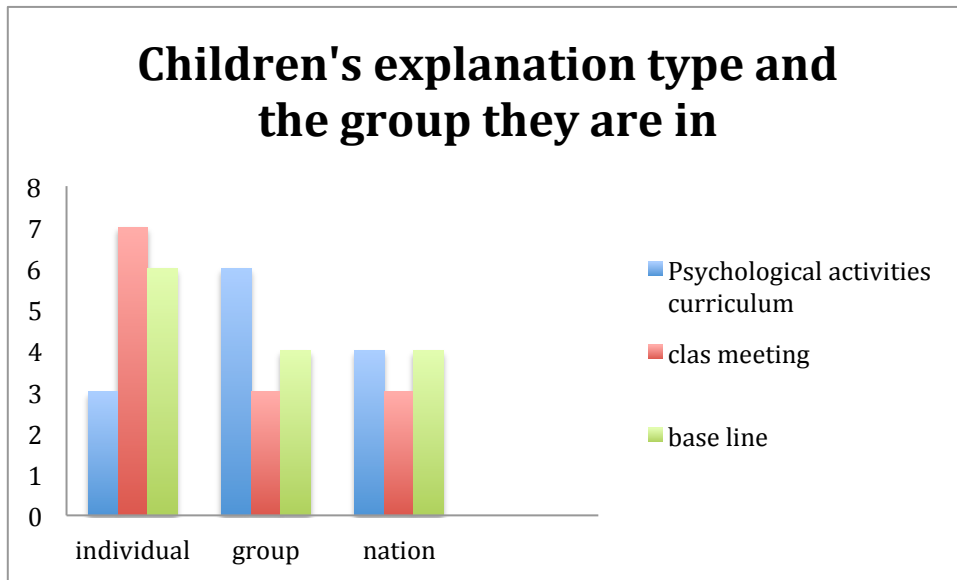
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Appendix



Graph 1

The types of the explanation children provided in their written response and the study group they are in