

**On the Judgement and Reporting of Other's Behavior:
A Mixed-methods Study of Chinese Preschoolers' Development of Tattling**

by

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Statement of Originality

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On the Judgement and Reporting of Other's
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Abstract

Tattling refers to the reporting to a second party of counter-normative violations which are considered to be committed by a third party. Tattling, one of the most prevalent speech activities among children's social life, has been recognized as a common and necessary methods for children, especially for preschoolers, to fulfill various intentions, such as self-benefit preservation, expressing insights into norms, and even malicious retaliatory motives. Though existing researches revealed that social cost of tattling has not emerged among preschoolers thus far, rare research has been conducted to specifically investigate classroom tattling activities of preschoolers with different sociometric statuses, as well as their insights into tattling events. A total of 136 children aged between 4 to 6 years were recruited in this thesis to conduct a 4-month mixed-method study. To be specific, the daily classroom tattling activities of the children were recorded and analyzed by participant observation and event sampling methods. In addition, an social rules interview was conducted on the respective child's evaluation of tattling, cognitive abilities (e.g., theory of mind and emotion understanding). The findings implied that: 1. preschoolers with different sociometric statuses would adopt a wide range of tattling strategies and insights into tattling events. To be specific, the children of the mentioned population were biased towards reporting negative actions by peers. The rejected and controversial children in the respective class were more proficient in reporting others, while the former children reported more on events regarding themselves and the controversial children focused more events with no victims. In addition, given the overall tattling frequencies of the neglected children, they seldom reported on others.

2. Most reports were ignored by teachers, unless there would be an obvious negative emotion corrupt. The participant observation was conducted to contextualize different tattling intentions of preschoolers, as well as teachers' interpretations of tattling, which demonstrated that tattling could take place in complex social contexts. The attitudes of teachers to tattling would differently affect the classroom tattling atmosphere.

3. As suggested from the investigation of children's moral evaluations of tattling, children with different sociometric statuses would have different personal tattling intentions in peers' moral transgression and distribute credits to tattling activities with different intentions.

Additionally, 4. teachers' authoritative effect would also impact children's acceptability for tattling.

This thesis presented an innovative and localized perspective for educators to more effectively gain insights into classroom tattling events, developed effective class disciplines to decrease unnecessary reports, while demonstrating valuable linkages between psychology and educational studies.

Keywords: tattling, individual differences, sociometric statuses, class disciplinary effect, moral norm understanding

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One afternoon in the preschool, Tiantian, a 4-year-old boy, was sharing his thoughts about the story that his teacher has just depicted during the class. All children stood up in a crowd. Zexuan accidentally pushed Tiantian. However, without informing Zexuan, Tiantian tattled on his teacher that, “Zexuan pushed me.” Then, the teacher patted on Tiantian’s head, and the class continued.

Yuxuan, a 5-year-old girl, brought a new bottle of crystal mud to the classroom to share with her peers. While she was playing with others, a 5-year-old boy, Chengen, came to her and said, “they are playing with your slime without your permission.” Yuxuan turned upset and tattled her teacher that “they are playing with my slime without asking me!” The teacher asked the crowd to return the slime to Yuxuan and left. Right at that moment, Chengen turned to Yuxuan: “May I play with your slime?” Yuxuan agrees and replied: “You can because you ask me first.”

The common grounds of the mentioned two episodes are presented below. The episodes depict the similar scenario that a child tattles the behavior of a third party. To be more specific, both of the reporting children are examples of tattling peers’ negative or antisocial behaviors. As a matter of fact, the mentioned episodes represent an act of tattling in Western culture, or “告状/gao zhuang” in Chinese culture.

With the expansion of social interactions with peers, children gradually get more chances in getting involved in moral and social conventional conflicts, thus they gradually

develop a clearer understanding of what behavior should be expected in certain scenarios. Tattling refers to one denounces counter-normative violations which he or she considers are committed by a second party to a third-party (Ingram & Bering, 2010, 2014). It has been ranked by teachers as one of the most frequent and intractable events in the everyday classroom. Several studies have been conducted to gain insights into the ecology of this denouncing behavior in various environment settings, ranging from family studies to the educational environment (Ross, & den Bak-Lammers, 1998; Chiu Loke, Heyman, Forgie, McCarthy, & Lee, 2011; Ingram, & Bering, 2010). On the whole, tattling, especially for preschoolers, has been adopted as a common and necessary strategy to express personal understanding of norms, even to satisfy various personal desires (Ingram, 2009). For instance, children will protest against peers' aggressive activity, so the classroom properties could be protected; besides, for the first few minutes, they tattle peers' dangerous activities to keep the miscreant from causing further harm, whereas a few minutes later, they might turn to the teacher to report that one of the peers has spilt water on the floor, which merely has the intention of getting praised. Accordingly, looking at children's tattling behaviors should be a significant and applicable method for researchers to conduct an in-depth study on the development of their norm understanding and further explore how children exploit norms to satisfy different desires.

Since tattling is so frequent and common among preschoolers, researchers and educators are concerned whether tattling can be correlated with certain malfunctions of children's wellbeing. Existing studies indicated that the frequency of children's tattling activities might be correlated with their less developed ability of problem solving. To be specific,

children tattling frequently might be lack of the ability to solve problems since they always rely on the tattling strategy to seek help for solving the social conflict they encounter in daily life. Further, it was demonstrated that children tattling frequently might have higher anxiety (Buta, 2015) and poorer interpersonal relationships with peers than the others. As indicated from the mentioned findings, frequent tattling behaviors may affect the developmental abilities of children. However, the specific type(s) of tattle activities that may exert negative developmental effect on the children has been rarely studied, as well as whether there are any latent clues capable of assisting educators to notice those potential problematic tattling habit and provide the corresponding interventions timely.

In addition, a tattling event, as a speech activity, consists of at least 3 characters, i.e., a tattler reporting the event, a miscreant having committed a transgression, as well as an audience encountering the tattling event. Teachers, acting as the norm reinforcer and conflict mediator of classroom, is of critical significance in tattling activities conducted by children. However, scarce studies investigated the effect of teachers on classroom tattling events, or whether teachers' attitudes to tattling of children will affect students' actual behaviors and norm understanding of tattling and transgressions.

Given the existing studies and these unsolved questions, this thesis modified the research methods. The present thesis aimed to gradually explore Chinese preschoolers' classroom tattling behavior and moral understanding of norms, starting from an individual competency perspective, to a broader mutual teacher-student interactive scope. With this approach, the readers could better understand the tattling behavior development of children, as well as the importance of timely instruction towards inappropriate tattling

activities.

This thesis first aimed to examine 4-6 years old children's tattling trajectories by using a method of a natural classroom observation. Most studies on tattling were conducted under experimental settings to verify whether children would report the target events to others, whereas tattling, consistent with other interpersonal activities, involves various motivations and varies with specific contexts (Chiu Loke & Heyman, 2014; Ingram & Bering, 2010; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 2006). Thus, a quantitative observation can present an optimal and clear perspective to analyze the development of tattling. Moreover, this thesis investigated social competences of children, as well as their sociometric statuses. It was proposed that children with different sociometric statuses would address different tattling patterns in their daily activities, so the potential social indicators of the problematic tattling tendency of children could be studied.

Second, this study aimed to analyze how children perceive others' tattling behaviors, and whether their evaluations of others' reporting have considered the effects of a wide range of factors (e.g., the severity of the transgression, intentions of the tattler, as well as the authoritative instruction). Furthermore, how the cognitive development of children impacts their moral evaluation is to be investigated in this part. As proposed by the domain theory, children are born with innate intuitions to detect norm violations (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 2013), while their general insights into different violations fall into three irreducible domains, i.e., the moral domain, the conventional domain and the personal domain. With the development of cognitive abilities and the accumulative complexity of social interpersonal interactions, the insights into boundaries of domains become clearer, thereby deepening children's awareness of how to respond in various

social contexts. By conducting the social rule interview to assess preschoolers' evaluation of tattling, this thesis attempted to acquire more information regarding how children perceive tattling, and then their daily tattling performances were combined to examine the innate consistency between tattling behaviors and evaluations.

Third, how preschool teachers address different tattling events should be clarified, as well as their attitudes to classroom transgressions and tattling events, as they generally act as a norm enhancer and a conflicts moderator in the presence of peer conflicts. Existing studies discussed the effect of teachers in tattling events by employing a qualitative method. However, the correlation between teachers' response to tattling and the nature of tattling event has not yet been discussed (i.e., tattling on moral transgressions or tattling on conventional transgressions), nor quantitative studies have been scarcely conducted to explore how attitudes of teachers affect children's norm understanding of tattling and transgression or their practical tattling strategies. Accordingly, this thesis also explored the mutual correlation between preschool teacher's attitudes to tattling and children's tattling behaviors.

1.1 Outline of the Thesis

The core proposition to be highlighted in this thesis is that tattling refers to a negotiate product of individual's moral cognition and social relations. As an innate spontaneous speech-act of children, tattling effectively represents the tattler's sensitivity regarding misbehaviors, even the moral understanding of norms, which tends to change into a complex social activity as the individual needs of the tattler evolve. Accordingly, by

conducting a literature review on existing studies in tattling behaviors, this thesis first discussed the development of children's tattling behaviors, as well as the factors correlated with their tattling behaviors, thus an overall idea that why tattling is so prevalent could be generated. In the second part of the literature review, the authority and gender effects on children's tattling behaviors were presented, as well as the significance of exploring tattling behaviors in the context of Chinese culture. In the third part of the literature review, children's tattling judgment and relevant cognitive competences were discussed.

The rest of the thesis falls to 6 chapters. Chapter 3 set out an overall structure of the thesis, including the research questions, the research methodologies. In Chapter 4, the motives of preschoolers' tattling and teachers' interpretations of tattling were explored in a qualitative participant observation approach. After drawing the overall picture of tattling's function in the triadic relationship of teacher, tattler and other children, some assumptions were naturally generated, which would be testified in the following chapters. In Chapter 5, quantitative event sampling method was applied to investigate 4-6 years old children's classroom tattling pattern, and the tattling patterns of children with different sociometric statuses was also analyzed. In Chapter 6, response patterns of Chinese preschool teachers to tattling were explored in quantitative approaches. In Chapter 7, whether children's moral understanding of tattling in different intentions were investigated by the social rules interview. In addition, whether the tactic of little class head might affect children's moral consistency was also evaluated. Moreover, a general discussion was presented in Chapter 8, and the overall research findings, educational insights, strengths and limitations of the thesis were concluded.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Children's Report about Third Party Behavior

2.1.1 Definition of Tattling

Tattling has been defined in various manners in eastern and western cultures. Xing (Xing, 2002) defined tattling as a teacher-oriented speech act conducted by children considering that their peers commit a norm violation. Liu (Liu, 1999) considered tattling as an interactive activity between reporting children and teachers, claiming that children are inclined to tattle on peers after being transgressed by them, or sometimes they will tattle on the miscreants after witnessing certain types of inappropriate norm transgressions. Ingram originally defined tattling as the tattling on a second party's violation to a third party (Ingram, 2009), and he later modified this definition and demonstrated *tattling* as a type of tattling to a second party about a third party's counter-normative behaviors (Ingram & Bering, 2010). This thesis intended to integrate the mentioned definitions of tattling and give a broader description: *Tattling refers to the reporting to a second party of counter-normative violations that they consider are committed by a third party*, in which "counter-normative" denotes explicitly proscribed behaviors, or those behaviors inappropriate to the tattlers and that they firmly believe will be considered poorly by the audience as well (Ingram & Bering, 2010, 2014). Since this thesis discussed about

children's classroom tattling activities, the second party referred in the thesis was specifically defined as teacher authority.

2.1.2 Trajectory of Tattling: From Intrinsic Innocence to Complex Intentions.

In this section, I intended to set out a developing structure of tattling behavior along with children's age growth. In this method, an overall understanding of how such speech act evolves from innate sensitivity of difference to a complex verbal art could be built up.

A. Infancy (0-2 years)

Various studies have been conducted to explore when exactly children start to tattle, while different voices arise. Based on the outcomes of the experimental setting research, Tomasello and Vaish demonstrated that children would not verbally protest on something until they are 3 years of age (2013). However, the findings from natural environment researches insisted that even children at the 2 years of age would reveal behaviors such as protesting and tattling (den-Bak & Ross, 1996; MacWinney, 2000). Despite of the arguments about the origin of tattling, one common sense is shared. To be specific, children's tattling behavior represents their sensitivity towards moral norms, and such rule sensitivity does not dramatically expose out of air. Rather, children's sensitivity of norms has already begun to thrive at a far earlier stage.

From the age of 9 month or even earlier, infants start to add entities into their interactive communication with caregivers (Carpenter et al., 1998), rather than merely communicating themes within themselves or between the caregiver and themselves. By including triadic communication with their mothers, children shared more complex

conversation accordingly (Tomasello, 1999). Besides, infants gradually reveal the sensibility of other's knowledge state. By playing hide and seek with the caregivers, 13-month-old infants would adjust their hiding strategies according to the situation whether the caregivers could find them (Bourdais et al., 2013). Further, infants would also show more interests in looking at stranger's face other than their mothers (Lewis et al., 1975). Therefore, these findings indicated that even infants have gradually develop their ability in social interaction, and there is a general trend that they expand their focus targets to a broader range other than themselves or parents.

Although there is no evidence that infants have already equipped the ability of evaluating right and wrong among various activities, some latent clues have been noticed, which could support such hypothesis. For example, the infants would spend longer time looking at a surprise character that suddenly appeared in a cartoon scenario which they were familiar. Studies of selective association have shown that young children and infants as young as 5 months (Hamlin et al., 2011) prefer to interact with toys or puppets that they have witnessed exhibiting prosocial rather than antisocial behavior, and expect other characters to do the same (see also Hamlin et al., 2007; Kenward and Dahl, 2011; Meristo and Surian, 2014; Vaish et al., 2010; Vaish et al., 2016). These findings suggest that even infants are innately sensitive to the unusual events, and they would reveal preference to those appear more prosocial. This preference could be explained by an evolutionary perspective, as infants may reflect a general adaptive tendency as social animals to approach individual who are likely to help them and avoid individuals who might bring harm to them. With this approach, infants could better preserve themselves accordingly (Baumard et al., 2013; Ingram, 2019).

B. Childhood (2-8 years)

In the present section, toddlers (2-4 years of age) and children's (4-8 years of age) tattling developments are presented together due to the inseparable consistency of the mentioned two periods, and there seems numerous crossover parts between them. Accordingly, the developmental trajectory of their tattling could be more clearly clarified and understood.

With the development of cognitive abilities, language ability, and more sophisticated gross motor abilities, infants gradually step into the early childhood stage. During this period, with the expansion of the social interaction range, as well as the ability of expressing a full sentence, children gradually develop their ability to report on others' misbehaviors from a body language manner to a vocal language manner (den Bak & Ross, 1996), including protesting to the transgressor, and even reporting to a third party (Ingram & Bering, 2009, 2010; Kachel & Tomasello, 2018; Vaish, 2011). In the experimental setting of observing 3 years old children's joint play with another partner child, Kachel and Tomasello (2018) noticed that 3 years old children would protest when the partner child intentionally broke the game rules, implying that 3 years old children have developed the ability of expressing personal understanding of rules, and meanwhile they have an innate urge to correct such improper acts without other's assistance.

Besides, children's tattling targets have also extended to their playgroup/classroom peers (Ingram & Bering, 2010), and the mentioned tattling events generally take place in the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts. During this period, a few obvious features of tattling gradually reveal accordingly. First, the contents of their tattling events concentrate more on peers' major transgressions. Ingram (2009, 2010) conducted a

longitudinal observational study on the 4 years old preschoolers' tattling behaviors of preschoolers, which demonstrated that most children's tattling were about major (moral) violations (e.g., physical aggression and unfairness in property entitlement), as well as a slight amount of tattling concerned with conventional transgression. The different frequencies in tattling contents could be partially explained by the nature of the transgressions, since children are sensitive in transgression breaching a permission rule besides the family regulation (Harris & Nunez, 1996).

Second, along with the age grows, children start to tattle the events to an authoritative audience, and most of the time, such authoritative audience refers to caregivers which they look up to, such as parents, baby-sitters and teachers. Den Bak and Ross (1993; 1996) studied 40 intact Canadian families with siblings aged 2 and 4 years in 6 90-min sessions per dyad. Since family refers to the original place for children to obtain norms and interact with close members, they considered that it would be perfect to explore the tattling development of young children. As indicated from the outcomes of the study, most of young toddlers' (aged 2-4 years) reporting contents were concerned with the misbehaviors of their siblings, and younger and older siblings stressed more conflicts regarding property entitlement and physical aggression, which were generally prohibited by their parents. As argued by the authors, the reason for their frequent reporting might be their insights into family disciplines, and children would tattle siblings for practicing and reinforcing the rules (den Bak & Ross, 1996). Moreover, children are innately sensitive to the ways their parents treat them differently (Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1992, 1994; cf. Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1998). Given this, den Bak and Ross assumed tattling as a vital approach for children to verify whether parents treat them equally. Thus,

most parents do not agree on their children reporting to them, and tattling is perceived as an inappropriate behavior at home, whereas tattling to a certain extent reveals children's understanding of moral and social norms in the family life, as well as their competitive relationship with siblings (den Bak & Ross, 1996). Besides the sibling studies, tattling behaviors have also been investigated in the classroom environment. When children perceive themselves as the victim, or sometime the witness, of social violations, they actively defend themselves through the act of protesting, arguing and tattling, and they report peers' misbehavior to their teachers other than classmates. (Ingram & Bering, 2010).

Given the explosive increasing tendency in preschoolers tattling, considerable researchers are wondering whether tattling is completely adverse to children's wellbeing. Several studies regarding this question were conducted, and the results revealed that most of the reporting contents were correlated with severe transgression (e.g., physical aggression, property damage, stealing and deception) (Ingram, 2009, 2010), while there have also been conflicts related to minor transgressions (e.g., disobey of classroom rules and agreement). It is explained that children are innately sensitive to the detection of normative transgressions even when they are young toddlers (Hamlin, 2007; Smetana, 2006), and they intrinsically tend to distinguish things breaching the rules, whereas it would be relatively difficult for young children to determine whether it is good or bad (Turiel, 1998). Accordingly, reporting the witnessed or experienced transgression committed by peers to teachers would be optimal to confirm whether the transgression is ok.

Some researchers concluded that children's reporting is partially driven by their innate



sense of moral. For instance, Hamlin et al. (2007) adopted the “climbing the hill” paradigm to test toddlers’ preference for prosocial character or antisocial character. As they reported, both infants aged 6 and 10 months demonstrated a preference for the prosocial character, and even 3-month infants made the identical choice by measuring their preferential looking period (Hamlin, 2010). Thus, children’s moral understanding might emerge much earlier than traditional moral theorists assumed (Guo, 1998; Fleming, 2005; Kohlberg, 1963; Smetana, 2006). Given the mentioned concept, Vaish et al. (2011) investigated 3-year-olds’ attitudes to behaviors that could potentially harm others. They reported that children would tattle the harmful behaviors even though there were no victims, which demonstrated that even 3-year-olds would tattle for more reasons other than egocentric and self-serving, show empathic concerns for others’ welfare, even have a prosocial oriented behavior (tattling) to “make things good”. However, they actively exploit the tattling strategy to protest antisocial behaviors, thereby revealing their early moral judgment and moral behavior towards potential harmful events.

C. Adolescence Tattling

The tattling on peers’ misbehaviors to authority dramatically decreases in higher primary school pupils and adolescence. Barnes (1904) investigated the willingness of university students to report a peer for cheating if the penalty for misbehaviors is severe. As suggested from the outcomes, most of university students refused to tattle peers. Moreover, Friman et al. (2004) studied the correlation between tattling, likeability and social classification of adolescents, reporting that the perceived tattling rates showed the significant negative correlation with their likability and the positive correlation with social rejection. As revealed from the mentioned studies, adolescents (peer group) might

have set a social proscription to tattling behaviors. In turn, tattling on older children and adolescents involved a negative metaphor, which indicated the weakness of the tattler for still relying on the third-party authority to tackle down in-group conflicts (Ingram, 2009). As declared by another explanation, this was because older children came to realize that tattling on others might not bring benefit or appraisal to themselves, whereas tattling behaviors would be at the cost of their own social reputations, and even they would perceive more potential retaliations from others (Friman, 2004). However, compared with the emergence of social cost awareness, some researchers considered that the social costs of tattling emerge far earlier than adolescence (e.g., increased aggressive behaviors and less cooperation between peers in kindergartens) (Griger, Kauffman, & Grieger, 1976). Thus, it seems there is a gap to explore if young children also hold an innate unwelcome judgmental tendency to tattling, even though rare studies investigated this idea.

Ingram (2009) described tattling as a public activity since young children are “quite open about tattling on other children’s behaviors”, and seldom consider about the consequences the tattled children may have. Moreover, they rarely think about the social cost they may undertake, as they often intently report to the authorities in front of children being tattled (Ingram, 2010). As opposed to the mentioned, the tattling of older children turns out to be significantly less overt, while an evolved, covert version of tattling, i.e., Gossips, becomes remarkably more frequent (Mettetal, 1983).

Given the brief review of existing literature on children’s tattling at different age levels, a preliminary conclusion could be drawn below. The trajectory of tattling evolves in various aspects during the development of children, the way they express concerns towards unusual things vary from looking manner to a verbal expressive way, they

gradually adopt the tattling tactics in various situations, ranging from self benefit preservation, norm protection, to expressing cares to peers, and even being retaliatory to others. Most of children's tattling involves their own interests, and as they are growing up, others' behavior arouses their increasing concerns. Tattling is more than a reporting incidence, which represents the tattler's intention and moral judgment to the miscreant's behavior as well. Tattling can be driven by antisocial and malicious desires to punish and harm others, to arouse more attention from authorities, or to be propelled by an accumulative prosocial intention, as an attempt to maintain and reinforce social norms and protect others from dangers.

2.2 Children's Understanding of Norm Transgression and Tattling

Besides the investigation of children's daily tattling behavior, their evaluations of tattling should be also studied since understanding children's evaluations of tattling can indirectly indicate how they think in various tattling scenarios. This thesis, I will discuss the correlation between children's tattling behaviors and evaluations of tattling based on the social cognitive domain theoretical framework. The social-cognitive domain theory (the domain theory or the social domain theory, SDT) withholds the constructivist perspective, which demonstrates that children are active agents during their own development, exerting themselves to explain their experiences on a day-to-day basis. This theory is rooted in the structural traditions of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1963), absorbing the relational and developmental perspectives of the children developmental theory over the past two decades (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2010). Consistent with other established moral developmental theories, the domain theory underlines that morality is established out of reciprocal individual environment interactions (Helwig & Turiel, 2003;



Turiel, 1983, 1998). The developing children's understanding of right and wrong is formed on the basis of their social experiences. Besides, children's social understandings (i.e., thoughts, beliefs and judgments) are equally important in how they are engaged with their environments (Jambon, 2016), which demonstrates that individual differences in the ability to distinguish morality from social convention may be critical to children's social behaviors and development.

As mentioned above, children's tattling of the misbehaviors of peers can effectively help study their insights into perceived norms (Chiu Loke et.al., 2011; Ingram, 2010), whereas it would be difficult for us to gain further insights into their intentions of tattling. Domain researchers largely focused on the contextual and cultural variations of environments, demonstrating that interviewing individuals' moral evaluations in various contexts is the optimal method to understand the intentions of moral behaviors (Smetana, 2006).

Accordingly, children's judgments of tattling should be understood.

Nevertheless, the SDT reveals a significant difference when compared with other structural developmental stage models, which demonstrates that children's moral understanding is developed by gradually differentiating principals of justice from non-moral concerns with conventions, pragmatics and prudence (Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1932/1965). As indicated from the domain theory, children's social knowledge domains are already differentiated in early experiences, by complying with different developmental trajectories (Smetana, 2006), and in accordance with the differences among concepts regarding welfare, fairness and rights, i.e., the basic concerns of SDT, domain researchers have defined three irreducible domains below (Helwig & Turiel, 2003; Nucci, 2001; Turiel, 1983).

2.2.1 Variations in Social Knowledge

The *moral domain* entails concepts and actions pertaining to issue of harm, justice, fairness and right (Jambon, 2016). Issues regarding this domain are considered obligatory, universally applicable, impersonal and normatively binding (Smetana, 2006). For instance, it is commonly acknowledged that physical aggression triggers pain and negative emotional responses to the victims. As judges, our judgements of this issue are not determined by the social status of the aggressor/victim, nor the location where the incident happens, whereas we generalize an intrinsic consequence that the transgressor has violated others' welfare. Thus, moral prescriptions are not subject to personal preference (*obligation and inalterability*), and they are applicable in various social contexts (*generalizability*), and also independent from rules (*rule independence*) and authority figures (*authority independence*) (Jambon, 2016; Smetana, 2006).

Besides, the societal domain presents individual's insights into societal and cultural arrangements, social organizations and social groups (Jambon, 2016). It also refers to *the conventional domain* since social conventions take up most of the societal aspects (Turiel, Killem, & Helwig, 1987). The conventional domain stresses relationships, rules, social expectations and social order (e.g., behavioral uniformities for people to interact in a certain social system), inconsistent with the moral domain (Turiel, 1977, 1978, 1983).

As proposed by Nucci (1996, 2001), individuals also exercise personal agency when asserting control over *personal issues (or prudential questions)*. The mentioned issues consist of privacy, safety, comforts, self-harm, preference and activities that individuals could cope with independently. Personal issues are excluded from the realm of societal

and moral concerns for merely belonging to private life and not affecting others' welfare (Nucci, 1981; Nucci & Gingo, 2011). As reported in existing studies, early by the age 3, children have already been capable of distinguishing moral and conventional issues from the personal issues either in the kindergarten or at home (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci & Gingo, 2011; Weber, 1999). This thesis would not consider the mentioned non-social area issues.

2.2.2 Tattling Judgments and Domains

As proposed by domain researchers (Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Smetana & Rote, 2012), domain distinctions emerged at least around the 4th year of life, as assessed by conducting a verbal interview. By 42 months of age (3.5 years), children distinguished morality and convention by complying with all of the three criteria tested. The mentioned findings for 3.5-year-olds were replicated in a subsequent longitudinal study by Smetana, Rote et al. (2012). Chiu Loke et al. (2011) investigated the evaluations of peer reporting of 6-11-year-olds' by presenting a series story vignettes regarding different transgressions. As illustrated from the outcome, younger and older children considered that it is appropriate to report peers' major transgressions (i.e., pushing, cheating and stealing) to their teachers. Consistent outcomes were found in the study by Buta (2015), reporting that 5- to 7-year-olds evaluated the tattling of major transgression to teachers to be more appropriate than tattling minor transgressions. Smetana explained that moral domain concerns others' rights and welfare. In the presence of moral (major) transgressions, children develop an intrinsic sense to correlate harm with the victim, so their judgements seem obligatory, universally applicable, impersonal and normatively binding (Smetana, 2006, p121).

Harris and Nunez (1996) compared 3- to 4-year-olds' insights into the acknowledged rules (e.g., "doing something naughty.") and the description rules (e.g., "doing something different."). They found that children suggested significant differences in the former rules, instead of in the latter ones. Moreover, similar findings were detected in cross-cultural studies with children (Harris & Nunez, 2001) and adults (Sugiyama, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2002), which demonstrated that children are innately able to detect things from social experiences and norms. Furthermore, Smetana (1993, 2006) highlighted that children's sensitivity in moral transgressions could be attributed to the immediate and concrete consequences of the major misbehaviors involving physical harm, thereby enabling children to be more easily aware of the damage they would suffer. Accordingly, this thesis could infer that preschoolers' understanding of transgression and norms would develop and be more specific as they grow up.

2.2.3 Tattling Judgments and Theory of Mind

Tattling is a reporting activity, vividly representing the interpersonal relationships between the tattler, the miscreant and the authority. As mentioned above, when a child experiences or witness peers' misbehaviors, an ability to interpret the scenario and estimate potential consequences turns out to be necessary and critical. The term "Theory of mind" (ToM) was coined by Premack and Woodruff (1978), i.e., children's insights into others' intentions and beliefs. Children at the age around 4 years begin to take the others' perspectives and interpret others' behaviors by complying with their mental states (first-order theory of mind). In the meantime, they tend to understand that others may have false belief to themselves as impacted by the lack of informative knowledges, while they start taking the others' perspectives and interpret others' behaviors in accordance

with their mental states (second-order theory of mind) (Perner & Wimmer, 1985; Wang, 2015).

Over the past few years, it has been increasingly recognized that ToM is correlated with moral judgments (Fu, Xiao, Killen, & Lee, 2014), and with the studies on tattling evaluations (Smetana, 2006; Talwar, 2016; Chiu Loke et al., 2011; Buta, 2015). For instance, Chiu Loke (2011) reported that younger children held higher positive attitudes to minor tattling on transgressions (doing things differently than others, accidentally breaching the rule), while older children revealed negative evaluations, and they would not tattle on the mentioned minor transgressions. In addition, as claimed by Buta (2015), there was a partial correlation between tattling evaluation and age difference. Older children have better executive functions and theory of mind than the younger, thereby enabling them to refrain their desire to tell the truth and think more from others' perspectives and consider the possible consequences of telling (Chiu Loke et al., 2011). However, rare study specifically investigated this issue (Cheung, 2016), and limited study investigated the specific relations of first- and second-order ToM with tattling evaluation.

Furthermore, children's evaluations of transgression change with age. In other words, children as young as aged 2 years have been shown to be aware of the correlation between seeing and knowing (O' Neil, 1996), and their judges of whether a behavior is right or wrong complies with if it has violated a rule and impose any damage, whereas older children will start considering the intentions of violation. Talwar (2016) investigated 6-12-year-olds' evaluations of tattling, confession, antisocial and prosocial lies by presenting 12 depict story vignettes that described a protagonist either telling a truth or a lie. According to the results, children had a moderately sensitive identification

of norm transgressions and lie detection, and older children ranked prosocial lies more favorably than selfish lies, and they no longer perceived a minor transgression as a virtuous act that should be rewarded. As opposed to the mentioned, younger children rewarded both tattling and confession relatively higher than lie telling and indicated no differences in ranking prosocial and selfish lies. This thesis proposed that children would also consider the intentions of an act, while no existing study looked into children's evaluation of different intentional-oriented tattling.

2.2.4 Tattling Judgments and Emotion

On the whole, morality is considered to be multifaceted as it has affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Smetana, 2006, p.119), whereas traditional structural theories have neglected the significance of affective response (e.g., Kohlberg, 1963). Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the role of emotion in moral development (Arsenio, 2014; Arsenio, Cooperman, & Lover, 2000;). Consistent with the mentioned trend, the domain theory also considers emotions as an inseparable source to provide motivational or energetic force for judgment (Smetana, 2006, p.120).

It has been recognized that different affective experiences are correlated with different domains of transgressions (Arsenio, Gold, & Adams, 2006). For instance, Arsenio reported that middle children evaluated moral event to be emotionally negative, and transgressions correlated with conventional domain were considered to be affectively neutral, and the mentioned ratings were highly correlated with judgments with obligatory and alterability (Arsenio & Ford, 1985). In turn, different traits of emotions help children gain more insights into the contextual environment and evaluate the experienced or

witnessed events. To be specific, children would infer one initiating event to be moral, conventional or personal by observing whether the victim is happy, sad, fearful, angry, or neutral (Arsenio, 1988). Based on the mentioned findings, Arsenio proposed that different degrees of affective arousal might lead to differential encoding of events. Highly emotionally aroused moral transgressions may be considered “immoral” partially because they reveal higher affective salient (Arsenio, 1988).

In addition, Ingram (2009) found that preschoolers issued significant negative emotions to moral/major transgressions and neutral emotions to minor transgressions. He modified two models (Nichols, 2004) with the mechanisms of the tattling action (Appendices). Then, he proposed that if one child has been violated by others, the affective response will exert a major effect on children’s decision. Besides, if the tattler him/herself does not get violated by the transgressor, the cognitive normative judgment will exert a major function for the decision of tattling other than the affective response. Following Ingram’s proposition that tattling is a way to externalize emotional problems (Ingram & Bering, 2010), Buta et al. (2015) investigated young children’s (aged 5 and 7 years) tattling and tattling evaluation. It was found that tattling was positively correlated with children’s basic emotion understanding competence, whereas it was negatively correlated with the ability to understand more complex emotions. They also indicated a positive correlation between emotion understanding and tattling evaluation after the controlling for age ($r = .57, p < .05$). Next, children with better emotion recognition would be more positive about tattling ($r = .35, p < .05$) and show a higher personal tendency to tattle on miscreants ($r = .55, p < .01$). Furthermore, they found that children with more insights into external causes of emotion would be more positive in tattling ($r = .44, p < .01$). Interestingly,

children with poor understanding of concealing emotion expressions would be more positive in tattling ($r = -.39$, $p < .05$).

2.3 Social, Cultural and Evolutionary Influences towards Tattling

2.3.1 Tattling: Development of Indirect Reciprocity and Indirect Aggression

Though tattling takes place quite common among young children, it is not as embraced as it seems to be. As opposed to the mentioned, tattling has been considered one of the most difficult issues for teachers to address. According to Alwood, neither teachers nor parents prefer children frequently tattling on others, since it could act as a means of getting others in trouble (Alwood, 2008). Thus, the vital problem arises that how such an unwelcome behavior turns out to be so prevalent during the childhood. Given the prevalence of tattling, this thesis attempts to explain tattling's functions in an evolutionary manner by analyzing its correlations with gossip phenomena.

2.3.1.1 Gossip: Indirect Reciprocity and Indirect Aggression

As demonstrated from the core proposition of evolutionary psychology, human comprises numerous functional mechanisms as a consequence of natural selection, and the mentioned designed mechanisms ensure humans to more effectively adapt to social activities and interpersonal relationships (Bjorklund & Hawley, 2014; Buss, 2009). Human beings, as senior primates and social animals, cooperate with each other and establish a concrete and large enough community to preserve their own safety (Dunbar, 1993); on that basis, the community thrives and gathers more resources for its members (Bjorklund & Hawley, 2014). To more effectively regulate the social community, more

information regarding individuals should be exchanged more efficiently. Hence, gossips, i.e., the tattling on a second party's behavior to a third party (Ingram, 2009), takes up the exact information-exchange function of interpersonal communication. Mettetal (1983) conducted a quantitative, naturalistic study on children's gossip. She suggested that children could begin to gossip between the ages of 7 and 11, and one third of older children's conversation consisted of gossips.

Anthropologists conducted a wide range of field studies to investigate the functions of gossips (e.g., Brison, 1992; Colson, 1953; Gluckman, 1953; Mintz, 1997; White, 2000). It was suggested from the study that from developed areas (e.g., California and Spain) to backland of India, gossips exist in the respective studied region. The high prevalence of this phenomenon among human communities was partially due to the superiority of language development, as generalized by anthropologists. By talking with multiple group members simultaneously, human communication becomes more efficient and informative (Dunbar, 2004). Moreover, gossips, an effective communicating means, break down the geographic limitation, while allowing people to contact with remote-distance friends and families via mutual contacts (Dunbar, 1993, 1998). Accordingly, gossips ensure individuals and communities to judge one person more thoroughly by assessing different types of information at different scopes. To be specific, if a person is considered good enough from every aspect, he/she would be more socially accepted and trusted by others (cf. Ingram, 2009); otherwise, negative gossip ensures the gossip receiver (individual and social groups) to be timely aware of the potential danger of social deviants, so the (potential) free riders are excluded away from themselves (Enquist & Leimar, 1993). Besides, Dunbar (2004b) mentioned that negative gossips could encourage the intra-

group coordination by spreading information of the free riders and exclusion, so people with the identical beliefs would organize a more concrete group.

Gossip Functions as Indirect Reciprocity

Besides the function to enhance intra-group cooperation and danger exclusion, gossips also play two opposite characters in motivation realization. First, gossips act as an act of indirect reciprocity. It was proved that indirect reciprocity is a promising way to reduce conflicts and boost cooperation (Nowak & Sigmund, 2005). To be specific, indirect reciprocity represents a motto, i.e., if you scratch my back, someone else will scratch yours. Besides, if my confederate is violated by another, I will fight back for him/her as well. In the real society, people face huge difficulties in getting a chance to detect the good/bad individuals and repay them in person, so a good person will not be recognized and appraised (Enquist & Leimar, 1993), while the miscreants get punished for the misbehaviors. Gossips, as a prosocial and just speech act on behalf of others' welfare, can effectively prevent the majorities from (potential) the harm of social deviants, increase the intra-group cooperation, while ensuring the prosocial/antisocial behaviors to be praised/punished by the third parties, instead of the direct assistance recipients/ victims (Dunbar, 1998; 2004a; Enquist & Leimar, 1993; Ingram, Piazza, & Bering, 2009; Nowak & Sigmund, 2005).

Gossip Functions as Indirect Aggression

However, the second function of gossips appears to be completely opposite, which acts as a malicious tool for individuals to fulfill egocentric, selfish goals (e.g., one spreads other competitor's rumor to win the campaign), or even serving as an extreme method to expel

social members holding different thoughts (e.g., centralized government expels democrats). Moreover, inconsistent with direct physical aggression, it is perceived to be morally inappropriate for causing direct harmful consequences to the victim (Smetana, 2006). The effect of gossips is exerted in an indirect relational aggressive manner, the reputation damage is intangible, making it even more difficult to be judged by audience, so gossipers are not required to be punished. Thus, the ambivalent intentions of gossips make this evaluative activity well manipulated by all sorts of people for various goals.

In brief, humans are complex, so are their intentions of a range of behaviors. The construction of a societal community is founded on a general ideology. In addition, reciprocities between societal peers and those between individuals and community are critical to self-preservation and community expansion. As argued by Gluckman (1963), gossips refer to a selection of group-serving intentions since they can uphold social norms, realize social comparison in a covert aggressive manner, and meanwhile outwardly maintain the group harmony and friendships (Gluckman, 1963, p.312). Accordingly, even though gossips involves negative consequences to a certain extent, they have generally boosted the information transformation and protected the majorities' benefits. However, several studies disagreed with the theory of group selection, in which gossips act as a competitive activity for individual benefits (Ingram, 2009; Paine, 1968), and such a debate remains.

2.3.1.2 From Direct Aggression to Tattling to Gossip

It has been proposed that tattling refers to the precursor of the adulthood gossip behavior, and it is a deferred adaption preparing children for the role of gossips in deterring norm

violations in adult lives (Ingram, 2010; 2014). Compared with gossips, tattling reveals some developmental differences. To be specific, most of gossips is acted out in a covert manner, which indicates that people are inclined to talk about non-present others, whereas children usually tattle on peers in front of the target (Engel & Li, 2004; Fine, 1977). As opposed to the mentioned, tattling concerns more about egocentric, self-related issues while gossip involves more positive and neutral information regarding others. Moreover, most of children's tattling behaviors are true (Ingram, 2010), while the truthfulness of gossips is remarkably lower (Kniffin & Wilson, 2005). Despite of the mentioned differences, the mentioned two verbal acts share a lot in common.

Indirect Reciprocity and Tattling

Though more evidence should be proved to confirm whether tattling is also a sign of children's understanding of indirect reciprocity, this thesis intended to make some hypotheses and test they are concrete. First, tattling could be a vital method to make children who disobey rules frequently understand a norm, that they might be reported or punished by a third party after acting out bad behaviors to others, even though the victim is absent or unaware of the situation (Ingram & Bering, 2010). Second, children reporting on others' misbehaviors, as a useful approach to claim friendship with peers, can enable them to protect their friends' interests, so their friends will protect their own benefits. Thus, this thesis aimed to testify whether children would tattle for protecting others' benefits, as well as whether the friendship between the tattler and victim would intermediate the outcome.

2.3.2 Indirect Aggression and Social Dominance of Tattling

Tattling, a reactive response to peers' misbehavior, refers to a typical moral behavior, thereby indicating the reporting children's moral understanding of social norms, their judgments towards others' actions, as well as their intentions of the reporting acts (Ingram, 2010; Chiu Loke & Heyman, 2014). According to Social Domain theorists, children's moral understanding is actively formed based on their daily interactive experiences (especially with peers), which fundamentally impacts daily behavioral activities (Nucci, 1993, 1998; Smetana, 2006). For young children, tattling is an efficient practice for the internalization of normative understanding. As indicated from Ross and den Bak (1996, 1998), preschoolers might tattle on peers for individual needs (e.g., protecting themselves from confederate's harm, seeking for authority's attention, as well as inquiring help from authority). Moreover, they might tattle with malicious intentions (e.g., desires of punishing or harming peers, gaining appraisal from the authorities). Besides, children could tattle as an attempt to maintain the norms, or concerning others' welfare; for instance, children tattled on others damaging public properties, even if their own benefits were not violated (Vaish, 2011). By observing the consequences of the children reported and the responses from the authorities, children also gain indirect experiences about breaches of norms. As a result, they become significantly clearer in differentiating which type of events is appropriate and which is prohibited, thus gradually develop a stable moral belief.

Children's tattling also involves a potential developmental character as indirect aggression (Buta, 2015; Ingram, 2009). Massive studies found that most of the tattling incidents are correlated with the tattler's own benefits, while relatively little part is related to peers' benefits violation (Buta, 2015; Ingram, 2010; 2014), thereby indicating

children concern more for egocentric motivations than others' benefits. Accordingly, children would intentionally tattle on others to achieve selfish desires, and the mentioned intentions are often positively correlated with social dominance hierarchy (Bjorklund & Hawley, 2014, p.163; Ingram, 2009; Buta, 2015). As demonstrated from a finding of Ingram's observational study on 4-to 6-year-olds' tattling, the dominant children significantly tattled more than the submissive children, whereas submissive children were not inclined to exploit tattling as a revenge method to fight against the dominant children (Ingram, 2009). With age, the use of verbal strategy to bully on peers turns out to be more frequent (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). As explained by Bjorklund and Hawley (2014), This is because children begin to realize that direct physical aggression no longer provides them with the resources they want, whereas that peer exclusion simply consumes more social relationships. As a result, the transformed strategy of verbal reporting turns out to be popular among children, and by tattling on peers. the tattler can re-acquire manipulation to the peer relationships.

2.3.3 Authorities' Attitudes to Tattling

The prevalence of tattling is also partially attributed to the ambivalent attitudes of authorities (den Bak & Ross, 1996, 1998). Generally speaking, young children's original moral understanding of rules originates from parents and teachers; during this period, normative rules gained from parents are absolute right and unalterable (Kohlberg, 1980). However, authorities' attitudes to tattling are significantly fuzzy and vague, thereby failing to instruct children properly understand when to tattle from the very beginning. For instance, children are constantly encouraged by parents and teachers to tattle on peers (Buta, 2015; Sun, 2015), so the tattlers could protect themselves from peers' bullying or

keep confederates away from dangers (Ingram, 2009; Pepler & Craig, 2000), as well as asking for assistance from authoritative teachers timely (Sun, 2015). Furthermore, teachers could exploit the peer-tattling strategy to effectively reinforce rules (Skinner, Cashwell, & Skinner, 2000), and considerable parents did not consider tattling an annoying behavior (den Bak-Lammers & Ross, 1996). However, most of the studies were conducted in Western culture, while it remains a blank in Chinese preschool teachers' attitudes to tattling. Given the mentioned issue, this thesis aimed to look into Chinese preschool teachers' responses to daily reports of classroom children, as an attempt to identify the consistencies and differences of tattling response.

2.3.4 Gender Effects and Tattling

Though many researches (Gilligan, 1982) demonstrated that gender effect is critical to children wellbeing development (e.g., girls showing more empathic concern to others than boys (Batson et al., 1996; Hoffman, 1988; Toussaint, & Webb, 2005), boys being more physical aggressive than girls and more impacted by violent games (Tian & Zhang, 2014)). Compared with similar age girls, preschool boys were inclined to engage in more physical plays (Pellegrini, 1987, 2007), and older boys were engaged with more physical aggression than girls. As opposed to the mentioned, girls seemed to engage in more verbal and relational aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Underwood, Galenand, & Paquette, 2001). However, no significance was recognized if girls were more likely to tattle than boys (Buta, 2015; Chiu Loke & Heyman, 2014; Ingram, 2009). Thus, this thesis also attempted to investigate whether sex difference is not significant among Chinese children, and the reasons would be evaluated after the investigation.

2.3.5 Tattling in China

Though tattling has successfully aroused many researchers' attention for its complex motivations and relations to moral development and social functions, rare studies have been conducted to specifically explore the scenarios in China (Sun, 2015; Liu, 1999). Accordingly, the thesis attempted to investigate Chinese preschoolers' tattling behavior in this thesis, and next it would will present the reasons and significances by complying with this issue.

2.3.5.1 Overprotective Parenting

First, as the oriental teachers of children's, family adults are obligated to correctly instruct children in acquiring norms and gaining insights into social relationships (Smetana, 1993; 2006), as well as to protect their safety. However, over parenting might greatly decrease children's social competences and fundamentally impact their development (Wolke, 2013; Ungar, 2009). For instance, Wolke et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 70 studies on more than 20,000 children. They achieved a noteworthy finding that overprotective parenting would adversely affect children. To be specific, parents trying hard to protect their children from harm might actually make their children suffer more bullies. Wolke suggested that a favorable parenting should make children competent, self-regulating and effective. However, overprotection from parents deprives children of solving conflicts independently, so they could never learn how to tackle down significant issues (e.g., bullying).

The definitions of overprotection are twofold. One is children being taken care of by parents for everything. Instead of children completing the tasks independently, parents

will take charges of all issues. The second definition refers to excessive restriction of children, i.e., parents will place enormous focus on children and restrict them from doing anything that could be dangerous (Sun, 2015). Any activities not supervised by parents will be prohibited. Thus, the more being protected by parents, the weaker the social competence of children will be, the less competent their problem-solving ability and more reliable to authorities they will be.

The phenomenon of overprotective parenting is significantly common in China (Chen, 2014; Sun, 2015). China has just ended a long phase of family planning policy (1979-2015, Zhu, 2003). Moreover, during the mentioned decades, a typical family structure, i.e., the 4-2-1 family structure (4 grandparents, 2 parents and 1 child), has been gradually formed. Since there is only one child at home, all family would pay extreme attention to his/her development. Furthermore, grandparenting, another common situation in China, aggravates the issues of overprotection and child-spoiling (Chen, 2014).

2.3.5.2 Confucian Tradition: Respect for Teachers

It is a common sense that cultural gaps exist between Western and Eastern societies. To be specific, the Western culture upholds individualism, and the Eastern culture values collectivism. Moreover, Confucianism, as the core value of Chinese culture, always advocates respects for teacher, which represents that teachers are the absolute authority and should not be challenged. Since preschoolers are too young to understand knowledge, class and social rules, teachers' instruction can be a vital and efficient approach to assist their studies and peer conflict reconciliation (Ingram, 2009). Nevertheless, excessive respects for teachers might cause children to be less independent and more reliable to

authority (Sun, 2015; Chiu Loke, Heyman, Itakura, Toriyama, & Lee, 2014). The long-period qualitative study by Sun (2015) in China's primary school has supported the mentioned assumption, proposing that lower grade students tattled more to teachers who are strict, and they were more reliable to teachers, more intending to tattle on classmates to arouse attention from teachers. However, according to Chiu Loke et al. (2014), Japanese young children evaluated minor transgression reporting more inappropriate than American children did, demonstrating that Japanese culture values interrelationship harmony and respect for authority, so they would not consider minor reporting an appropriate activity. Similar to Japanese culture, China also withholds the identical belief of social harmony and respect for teacher, whereas the effects are significantly inconsistent with each other, so in-depth investigations are further required.

2.3.5.3 Social Concepts of "Good Kid"

Last but not the least, environmental factors probably affecting Chinese children's tattling behaviors is considered to be prejudice from society, which was described by Sun (2015) since Chinese society perceives a good kid to be obedient to adults and get along with others constantly. In other words, instead of behaving freely, Chinese children have received many restrictions in their daily activities. The Children Work Department of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) has conducted the second national-scale investigation in family education status in 2015, which involved 93 cities and counties across 28 provinces. According to the results of investigation, Chinese family education is generally balanced and conducive to children's development, while problems of father being absent from education, excessive concern to children's academic performance and habit formation remain prominent. Though there is not any direct evidence indicating that

children's tattling is correlated with the mentioned problems, a further assumption might be inferred that adults' excessive concern to children's habit formation and academic performance might make children less competent to solve problems independently, think creatively and be more reliable on adults' evaluation. Accordingly, tattling on others might be a good method for them to arouse adults' attention and get more appraisal, even an extreme way to achieve retaliation to peers (Li, 2016).

Compared with Western culture, China places more stress on inter-relational harmony and encourages mutual tolerance (Sun, 2015). For instance, as indicated from numerous studies, instead of rigorously inspecting peer conflicts, Chinese teachers are more inclined to employ passive approaches to address problems (e.g., teaching children to be more caring to others and ignoring children's reporting) (Li, 2016; Sun, 2015), and they would even reprimand both the miscreant and tattler or remove the controversial properties (Huang, 1994). As demonstrated from Zhu (2002), conflict reconciliation acts as a vital way for children to gain social norms since children tend to develop an ability to properly express their own needs in an accepted scenario. However, by overemphasizing the inter-relational harmony without expressing personal needs, children's practical thoughts regarding the problems might be repressed (Zhao, 2007). With age, the children would face more difficulty in expressing their own feelings, and more trust issues might happen.

In brief, China's special culture and social environment have fundamentally affected children's development. As impacted by the concepts of education and the limitation of teaching resources, teachers may have insufficient energy dealing the respective tattling Event and peer conflict. The stereotype of good kid education may cause children to be

less capable of solving problems, independently thinking and understanding the implications of norms. The overprotection from adults may make children more reliable, more obedient to authority and have fewer opportunities to practice social problems independently. Thus, more researches should be conducted to study Chinese children's tattling behaviors, as an attempt to provide more academic resources for education formulation.

2.4 A Mixed Methods Approach for Researches

Applying both qualitative and quantitative methodologies for a research has been considered as an optimal approach to overcome the methodological divisions (Cook & Reichardt, 1979). To be specific, a qualitative perspective not only assists researchers generating initial frameworks of experimental or other quantitative hypotheses (Hammersley 1992), but also getting in-depth assumptions regarding to the quantitative outcomes. In turn, the use of an experimental methodology is particularly well suited to hypothesis testing, but because it returns only a narrow set of data it is not well suited to exploratory research. By combining these two approaches, the strikes between these two methodologies seem have been modified. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) proposed that the mixed-methods research should be seen as a third methodological paradigm in its own right, which in certain contexts may be superior to the deployment of either qualitative or quantitative methods alone.

Since tattling is reported in a massive and various intentional-oriented way, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods would be naturally suitable for us to explore the nature behind such speech acts. By generating the dynamic functions of tattling in the

preschool classroom setting in qualitative method, the further hypotheses of the research could be assumed and testified quantitatively.

Accordingly, the order in which I introduced these methodologies into the research program was (a) participant observation as a classroom assistant, to generate hypotheses; followed by (b) quantitative sampling, to generate and test hypotheses; followed in turn by (c) quantitative measurements, to test hypotheses. Although the research was designed and presented following such method, the procedure of the qualitative and quantitative data collection could be carried out during the same period. Specifically, the qualitative participant observation was carried out over the whole period of quantitative observation data collection of event sampling.

Chapter 3: This Thesis

Based on the literature review of tattling development, it may be concluded that, as a speech activity, children's tattling activities are prevalent and complex, and the formation of this speech activity not only entails children innate sensitivity of moral, individual cognitive and social competencies, but also reveals a prolong mutual relationship between children and educators, and even the social community. However, the study of children's tattling remains many unclarified questions, which could impede the comprehensive understanding of this behavior. To be specific, rare research specifically explored children's development of tattling events based on type variations, nor any study investigated teachers' influence on children's tattling activity and tattling understandings, or correlation between daily tattling behaviors and moral understanding



of tattling. This thesis focused on the following mentioned questions to explore the mysteries of children's tattling.

3.1 Research Questions

The research questions could be generalized into five sections. Firstly, although various tattling researches have been conducted in western culture, little is known about Chinese preschool children's classroom tattling patterns, nor if there are any behavior consistencies between Chinese and western culture. Driven by this purpose, the thesis firstly observed 4 to 6-year-old Chinese preschoolers' classroom tattling behaviors in and generalized an overall graph about this reporting activity in both qualitative (Chapter 4) and quantitative approaches (Chapter 5).

Second, domain theorists proposed that children review an event from different domain approaches, respectively, i.e., the moral domain and the conventional domain, and they will consider the intentions of actions as well. Thus, this thesis aimed verify whether preschoolers will consider the intentions of tattling events. Furthermore, I am curious about how children's cognitive competencies support children to conduct a moral evaluation about tattling, and the social rule investigation was conducted in Chapter 7. Accordingly, the social rule interview in Chapter 7 is interested in testifying whether preschoolers' tattling development (actual behaviors and moral understanding of tattling) can be explained based on the domain theory, as well as in verifying whether children will reveal different strategies/perspectives to moral and conventional domains events.

Third, existing studies demonstrate that children's tattling behaviors could be correlated

with their social competencies (e.g., social dominance hierarchies, popularity (Buta, 2015), relational aggression and prosociality degree) (Ingram, 2009; 2010). Existing studies demonstrated that children tattling frequently are correlated with high degree of social rejection and high anxiety, thus inferring that the tattling habit could bring negative effects to children's wellbeing. Nevertheless, which specific tattling activities will be negative to their social life remains unclear, while no study has investigated the correlation between social competencies and various tattling events based on a quantitative observation. I wonder how children's social competencies and tattling activities affect each other, so whether tattling based on different intentions influences children's social status was studied in Chapter 5 and Chapter.7.

Fourth, by investigating children's tattling behaviors, tattling evaluations, children's social and cognitive competencies, this thesis was fascinated by the cooperative functions between actual activity and moral understanding. It would be expected to investigate how norm understandings of tattling of children are correlated with their daily actual behaviors, and whether children with different social competences might reveal consistencies in tattling activity and understanding (Chapter 7).

Fifth, teachers, as the norm reinforcer and conflict mediator of classroom, play an important role during children's tattling activities. However, rare studies investigated teachers' role in classroom tattling events, or whether teachers' attitudes to children's tattling will affect students' actual behaviors and norm understanding of tattling and transgressions. Accordingly, this thesis in Chapter4 and Chapter 6 aimed to explore teachers' role in preschoolers' various intention-based tattling behaviors and insights into



tattling events based on a mixed observation. Thus, we could fill in the research blank and re-evaluate teachers' influence in moral wellbeing education. Moreover, since the nature of tattling varies across Western and Chinese contexts, the cross-cultural effect would be expected.<sup>[L]
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3.2 Research Setting and Participants

To gather a comprehensive perspective of children's development of tattling behaviors and moral understanding of tattling events, this research adopted a mixed-method approach accordingly, containing both qualitative and quantitative observations, social rule interviews, as well as quantitative studies of children's cognitive and social competencies respectively. Step by step, the research findings were presented in each of the following chapters with specific themes.

The research I presented was based on a 4-month and 2-week participant observation conducted from March 2018 to July 2018 in a private preschool located in a working-class neighborhood of Luohu District, Shenzhen. The preschool comprised 12 classes in three grades (4 in the respective grade), a total of 293 children (*xiao-ban*, aged 3-4 and *zhong-ban*, aged 4-5, and *da-ban*, aged 5-6). A total of 136 Chinese Han children from five classes with age ranges from 4 and 6 were invited in the study. All children originate from Han ethnicity families, living in a 15-min walking distance around the school. Many of them live in the identical neighborhood where the school is located.

The school is located in a city park, fully creating the exercising space for the students in the preschool. Except for gymnastic exercises, usually conducted on the outdoor playground in front of the teaching building, most of the classes are taught in fixed

classrooms. The respective class consists of two teachers and one caregiver (*A-Yi*), all the teachers I met were females. As impacted by the high application ratio of children and inadequate teaching resources, the staff/pupil ratio takes up nearly 1:11 to 1:12, lower than the government requirement of 1:8.

Table 11 lists the daily routine of children. During the observation, I stayed at the school on a daily routine, taking notes of the teachers and children's interactions on tattling events and staying longer in the playground to observe children's social activities and chat with teachers through informal conversations. I adopted a notebook and recording equipment to take notes of the tattling activities throughout the school time, and then typed the notes up by the end of the respective day. After the observation was finished, I input the observed data into the SPSS software to analyze children's tattling patterns in daily classroom activities. In addition, I also asked a professional fellow to help upload all the notes and chatting transcripts into MAXQDA and developed a coding system in Chinese, the software effectively helped categorize the emergent themes in the research, especially helping describe the functions of tattling in various scenarios.

3.3 Descriptive statistics of Participants

The whole research was conducted within 5 randomly assigned classes with a total of 136 4-to 6-year-old children. *Class A* contains 31 children, and 29 of them participated (13 girls and 16 boys). Their age at the start of the study, which lasted for 3 calendar weeks, ranged from 5;7 years to 6;8 years ($M_{age} = 6.25$, $SD = .31$).

Class B contained 29 children and all of the class members participated (20 girls and 9 boys). At the beginning of a three-calendar-week in *Class B*, children aged from 5;8 years

to 6;8 years ($M_{age} = 6.13$, $SD = .31$).

26 children from Class C were recruited (10 girls and 16 boys) in the study. The overall research in Class C lasted for 3 calendar weeks, and participated children's ages ranged from 5;0 years to 6;7 years ($M_{age} = 5.68$, $SD = .44$).

31 children from *Class D* (18 girls and 13 boys) agreed to participate in the observation research. The whole session for Class D lasted for 2 and half calendar weeks, age ranged from 4;10 years to 5;8 years ($M_{age} = 5.46$, $SD = .20$) respectively.

There were 21 children (11 girls and 10 boys) in *Class E*, and the whole class members were recruited. The whole study lasted for 3 weeks and children's age by the beginning of research ranged from 4;0 years to 5;6 years ($M_{age} = 4.74$, $SD = .50$; 11 girls).

Since all the participated classes were mixed age, we tested the age effect and noticed a significant age hierarchy among these classes $F(4, 130) = 70.14$, $\eta_p^2 = .68$, $p < .001$.

Specifically, *Class A* and *B* were both considered to be the *Oldest Group* as the mean age were older than the other three groups, meanwhile the differences between these two was insignificant ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.34$ months, $p = 1.0$). *Class C* and *D* ranked as the *Middle Group* for the same reason ($M_{\text{difference}} = 2.63$ months, $p = .23$) and *Class E* was regarded as the *Youngest Group*. This group classification was applied, as it would enable us clearly sense the structure of participants, and it would made us much more conveniently to discuss teacher's' authoritative effect in the upcoming chapters.

14 preschool teachers of the observed children were also invited to the study, all the teachers were females ($M_{age} = 28.7$ years, $SD = .29$). Informed consents were obtained

from the guardians of all children in both schools. Consent forms were not sought from the children, instead, they were informed that I would be working as assistant teacher with them for a couple of weeks. All names of children appearing in this thesis have been anonymized.

3.4 Research Methodologies to be Used

3.4.1 Participant Observation for Qualitative Observation

Along with the quantitative studies, the participant observation was initiated. The participant observation, one of the qualitative research methods, refers to the observer investigating a certain social activity while actively participating in a non-observational manner (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This research method has been pervasively applied in ethnographic studies to help the researcher more effectively gain the social acceptance by foreign cultures or alien groups (Linderman, 1924; Barbara, 2005).

3.4.2 Event Sampling for Quantitative Observation

Event sampling method was applied in this thesis to observe children's daily tattling activities and teacher's responses to each tattling event. It has been regarded as a useful observation technique for behavior observation. With this approach, the observer could record the participant's activities in the actual environment without interrupting the participants; Further, event sampling could facilitate effective collection of information to help researchers focus on target behaviors that need to be observed.

Before the event sampling, a preformatted observation sheet would be generated, and researchers could take notes about the observed behavior following a structured index,

thus data could be effectively recorded and better categorized when the observation has been conducted.

3.4.3 Social Rules Interview for Moral Evaluation

Social rules interview is one of the classic methods that domain theorists would adopt to investigate young children's understanding of moral and conventional concepts (Jambon, 2016; Smetana, 1981, 1985; Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Smetana, Rote, et al., 2012). Instead of describing abstract morality and social conventions in a verbal expressive approach, prototypical transgressions of morality and social conventions are depicted in a simple approach, thus children could extract information they need to evaluate the depicted events are appropriate or not (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 2006, 2013; Turiel, 2006).

Specific criteria is included for researchers to build up the depicted scenario of each domain. The prototypical moral violations include acts resulting in concrete physical harm, psychological harm entailing emotional or psychological distress, unfairness, and encroachments on property rights. The prototypical conventional violations often take place in a school or classroom environment, and transgressions usually include classroom rule breach, dress differently, dining habits. After each transgression scenario is presented, children's initial evaluations of the depicted actions' acceptability are firstly assessed by dichotomous choices (is it ok or not for the child to __), and severity evaluation are evaluated accordingly.

Other than investigating if children could distinguish the moral transgression and conventional transgression, social rules interview focuses more on the criterion judgements that children are adopting to understand the depicted scenarios (Turiel, 1983).

This is accomplished by asking children to re-assess their acceptance towards the transcribed scenario under different dimensions. The dimensions vary across specific studies, while the most common dimensions include generalizability (“what if it happened at home instead of school?”), rule independence (“what if there was no rule against doing the act?”), authority independence (“what if the adult allowed children to do that?”), and rule in-alterability (“what if the teacher decided to change the rule against doing it?”) (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987).

Chapter 4: Functions of Tattling in Preschool Classroom Setting

As explained in Chapter 2.4, a mixed method design was chosen for this thesis, as tattling entails large amounts of transgressions that need to be assessed under specific contexts. Before presenting the outcomes of quantitative sampling of children’s tattling pattern as well as their understanding of tattling, this chapter presented the results of the participant observation that I applied during the whole period of the research. To begin with, I firstly explained the reason why choosing participant observation for the present research. Secondly, I described the preparation of my research at the school and how I practiced and interacted with the children and teacher. Participant observation has been proved to be helpful to categorize the functions of tattling for both children and teacher, and the results were presented in section 4.3. Besides, it also useful for exploring the dynamic relationship between teachers’ interpretation of tattling and children’s moral cognition of tattling. I conclude with some reflections about the features of Chinese preschoolers’ tattling behavior as well as teacher’s influences towards children’s moral understanding development. Based on the results, some assumptions were set out accordingly, which

would be tested in the following chapters.

4.1 Participant Observation for Qualitative Observation

Along with the quantitative studies, the participant observation was initiated. The participant observation, one of the qualitative research methods, refers to the observer investigating a certain social activity while actively participating in a non-observational manner (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This research method has been pervasively applied in ethnographic studies to help the researcher more effectively gain the social acceptance by foreign cultures or alien groups (Linderman, 1924; Barbara, 2005). During the observation, the researcher is expected to be part of the studied group via an intensive involvement in the natural social environment, so the observer can explore information regarding how the group is being operated (Fine, 2003). One of the primary intentions of this thesis is to explore how the tattling behavior is formed, and the functions of tattling in the daily classroom activities. With the application of participant observation, the research can be effectively brought back to specific social contexts. Since the observed children were too young to be interviewed under an elaborated questioning framework, which is a classic approach of conducting qualitative research, it was suggested to be more suitable and natural to observe children's tattling activities during their school time. Besides, children are constantly surrounded and looked after by the adult teachers, and teachers often take notes on children's behaviors for further student behavioral evaluations. Thus, my role playing as a classroom assistant was easily introduced to the children, and they had rare doubts about what notes I was taking. One or two children would occasionally come to me and show their curiosities about what I was doing and why I was always writing something down, I would tell them that I was taking notes of

our classroom activities for assignments, which would help design my future lessons. This reply turned out to be acceptable to them, and they would usually nod along and walk away to initiate other activities. Accordingly, the lacking sense of being observed ensured the children's social interactions with peers not be affected by my presence, so I was able to gather more in-depth information regarding their tattling behaviors.

The second reason for adopting the participant observation is that I intended to investigate the teacher-children's triadic relationship who involved in tattling activities by delving into the specific social contexts, which could not be fully demonstrated in a quantitative manner. Besides of the quantitative research of various social statuses children's tattling patterns, the thesis also intended to understand how children with different sociometric statuses perceive tattling. In addition, teachers are considered important roles in reconciling tattling events and reinforcing classroom norms, investigating children's tattling activities under social contexts allows me to gain insights into how classroom disciplines and teachers' interpretations of tattling affect the overall class tattling trend's formation and individual tattling behavior at specific sociometric hierarchies.

Though the participant observation allows for "richly detailed description" and highlights the intension to describe the behaviors, intentions, scenarios, and events as understood by one's informants" (DeMunck & Sobo, 1998; cf. Barbara, 2005), some criticize that the participant observation does not apply to children (Fine, 1988; Pellegrini, 2004), since the presence of adult may affect children's behavioral routine. Furthermore, Johnson and Sakett (1998) argued that participant observation is not representative, since much of the collected resources are biased by the researcher's individual interests. The mentioned two

critics would not be concerned in this thesis, and the reasons are as follows. First, this research focuses on preschoolers' classroom tattling activities, which would naturally involve authoritative figure's intervention, my presence in the classroom seems to unlikely distort their behaviors and the consequences of the events. In addition, as mentioned above, I was introduced to the children as a classroom assistant. To be more effectively accepted by the class, I maximally played the role of an actual assistant. Children never expressed doubts to my role during the observed semester. Given the issue of research credibility, the sampling observation outcomes provided statistical supports to my qualitative research, thereby reminding me to be conscious about what I should focus on in the whole observation.

The third intension of participant observation application is to give something back to the participated school, educators and children, who have greatly supported my study. Since this thesis includes both preschoolers and teachers' attitudes to tattling, some of the preschools I have contacted before were concerned about the information security, thus most of them turned this thesis application down. When I talked to the principal of the participated preschool, a forty years old lady, I was so grateful that she quickly agreed on my proposal and she provided me lots of suggestions and supports during the whole study. As a return for the preschool participation, I was requested to give a brief presentation for the teachers about this thesis outputs as soon as the study was finished. In spite of me volunteering as helping labor in the classrooms, I strongly felt a necessity of organizing this thesis reports in a qualitative way, so it might be useful for the participated teachers to think about classroom tattling in a different perspective, and provide epistemological supports for their moral education formulation.

4.2 Preparation & Research Practice

Before presenting the research findings of this thesis, my interactions with classroom teachers and children should be clarified, and the difficulties that I encountered during the process should be demonstrated. Since the mentioned social factors could affect the way I conducted the research, the respective factor was discussed as follows.

4.2.1 Interaction with Teachers

Since I have only observed one preschool during the research, the nature of the thesis required me to enter different classrooms and interact with various teachers and caregivers. I explicitly expressed my wish to work as a classroom assistant to the respective class teacher and I was willing to share the workload of taking care of children and undertaking teaching errands. As mentioned above, each teaching fellow should take care of 11 to 12 children, most of the teachers expressed welcome to me, so they could obtain extra help to ease pressure from various events. Some teachers showed extremely positive attitudes to me, as the school was attempting to be rated as an excellent school, teachers were required to hand in more qualified observation recordation. They thought that my character in the classroom would help provide specific analysis to specific children, in which I indeed offered hands in writings sometime after school. I was always polite and supportive, so the teachers were quite supportive to me. They would set aside specific periods for me to collect data for this thesis (*children's evaluations of tattling*, Chapter 7), and invite me to have lunch together. For this reason, I was given a great observing opportunity to understand how they share teaching experience with colleagues, as well as how they think about some students in their classrooms.



4.2.2 Interaction with Children

All the teachers I communicated with were pleased to introduce me to the children in their classrooms. In general, I started my self-introduction with my name and my duties in the classroom that I have prepared already. They called me “Teacher Dou Dou” in a lovely way, since my identity was not as transparent as the real teachers, and I did not undertake any teaching lessons or discipline children’s behaviors. Besides helping teachers with a range of tiny errands, I was mostly sitting in a corner of the classroom and taking notes of what was happening. During the playground time and the meal-time, I was walking around, while observing and interacting with the children. As partially impacted by the identity ambiguity of my role, children efficiently accepted me, and I became well-liked by them. They would gather around me and invite me to play games with them, so there was rare difficulty in being accepted by the children.

4.2.3 Difficulties of the Research

As the research was deepened on the tattling behaviors, the effects of unexpected issues gradually became evident. The mentioned difficulties originated from the application of the multi-method observation and unexpected behaviors during the study. First, since participant observation was conducted with the quantitative sampling, it seemed significantly difficult to cope with such considerable resources in limited time. Though I have prepared a structured manual to take notes of tattling events as soon as they would occur, the social relationships between the children remained difficult to recognized simultaneously. Accordingly, compared with the single approach of participant observation, the depth of the results would be a major problem of the research. Further,

this thesis was engaged with some exploratory questions, requiring me to take a few steps back to observe the environmental effects. I was a little upset when coming to realize that I was drowning in numerous reporting information and I could not find the clues.

To tackle down the mentioned problem attributed to mixed research approach, I efficiently adjusted myself. Besides note taking, I employed a vocal recorder to help me find some missing information in their conversations. Sometimes one child or a group of children would walk to the teacher and tattle considerable transgressions. The recorder was suggested to be effective in taking such type of simultaneous tattling events.

Second, since all the observation should be conducted independently, I should focus on the notes taking during the study. However, my popularity among the children imposed huge inconveniences on my writing. For instance, Yuanze was an outgoing six-year-old boy, who was nominated as the controversial children by his peers. He was the first child expressing welcome to me. I spent much time with him during the initial week, and we enjoyed playing games after school. Given the sense of closeness, he would constantly sit around me and try to arouse my attention to him, even when I was busy writing down notes. Since some children were sensitive to their names appearing in my notes, I applied numbers instead. Yuanze showed strong curiosity to my notebook and the way I wrote in numbers. He kept asking if he could write in my notebook. Similar scenarios might take place. To decrease the odds of such attention distracting events, I prepared spare copy papers. If some children intended to write in my notebook, I would assign a piece of paper to them and asked the them to present me some free-style creation with the paper subsequently. Children were usually distracted and continued to do others stuff instead of talking to me, whereas some children (e.g., Yuanze) would still show reluctance to leave.

For such circumstance, I would look at the teacher or caregiver of the class and hint them to divert the child away. Fortunately, most of the teachers were quite supportive, they would call the child's name and ask him or her to move away.

The third obstacle during the study was caused by one of the classroom teachers. Teacher Deng was a 23-year-old female, in charge of a kindergarten class. After explaining the intentions of observing in her classroom, she agreed on my proposition and claimed that she and the other teachers in the classroom would help me do the research. In a regular afternoon, children were having afternoon dessert and chatting with each other as usual. Rongyu, a 6-year-old boy, finished his cookies and wanted more. The care giver informed him that there was no more dessert. The boy, however, became upset and tried to grab his classmate's cookie on the table. The victim of this event, Yuqian cried into burst, and her friend Yixi loudly tattled on Rongyu's misbehavior to Teacher Deng. At that moment, Teacher Deng was busy with her lesson preparation, she looked back to Yuqian and excused: "I am busy right now. Mind your own business, and you (Yuqian) should learn to say no other than crying like a baby! If you want to tattle on others, you all should come to Teacher Dou. She is professional." At that moment, I was totally astonished by her comments. For children in the class, they were very excited to be informed that my role in the room was a professional receptionist of various reports, and Teacher Deng's referral strongly deepened their belief that I would give satisfying solutions to each single report. I could do nothing but end the observation of this classroom in a hurry. One of the reasons was that my regular observation routine was overall violated, children kept tattling to me on others, which made me incapable to complete the focal follow observation of the respective child. The second reason was



because my personal discontent over the teacher might distort the objectiveness of results. Though the unpleasant episode made me fail to explore the dynamics of Teacher Deng's classroom further, the effect of her negative attitudes to tattling was quite evident still. Children require an authority figure to help reconcile peer conflict and protect their own benefits. Even though the teacher clearly expressed indifferent attitudes to severe transgressions, they would attempt to seek other tunnels to help solve the situation. I further made a prediction that if children were repressed excessively long from tattling on everything, the frequencies of classroom tattling would bounce as a spring and reveal a steep increase, once the authority showed acceptance to tattling activities.

4.2.4 Dealing with Tattling

It is noteworthy that how I cope with children's reports to me, as my responses to such behaviors might directly affect the consequences of tattling events. As far as I was concerned, since I introduced myself as a classroom assistant to the children, I should act as much as an assistant should be. Besides, I did not want my actions to impose extra influence on their behaviors and teachers' interventions. Thus, I generally opted a neutral approach to deal with their reports to me (e.g., expressing sympathy to the children or showing acknowledge of the events). For instances, Yinxi was pushed away by a boy on the playground. Shen then cried and came forward me and tattled on the boy's misbehavior. I slightly patted on her shoulder and asked if she was hurt. While I was comforting Yinxi, Teacher Chen came over and questioned what had happened. Yinxi repeated the situation to Teacher Chen, and Chen asked the boy to apologize to Yinxi. There are two reasons that I acted as a comforter during the similar events regarding severe transgressions. First, children always expressed significant negative emotions to

severe transgressions (Ingram, 2009). As discussed in Section 4.1, teachers are more inclined to notice and intervene tattling events with distinct negative emotions. While comforting the child, there was a higher chance that the teacher could notice the incident and come forward. Second, if the reporting child was not satisfied with my response, since I was not intended to reprimand the miscreant, the tattler would proactively find another teacher and tattle on the issue again. For children's reports about minor transgressions, I would show acknowledge to the children, and they would basically walk away.

4.3 Children Tattle for a Reason

In this section, I generalized the preschoolers' motives of tattling. The underlying theme of this part is that tattling is an important route for children to express individual understandings of other's behaviors. By acting as an assistant of the classrooms have provided me fruitful opportunities to closely understand how it functions in their actual daily life.

4.3.1 Conflict Resolution

During my observation of children's daily activities, most of the time children's tattling contents are reaching out for teacher's intervention to reconcile a conflict. For example, during the paper cut class, children were told to make use of paper cups to create a panda, and each two groups shared the scissors. However, Lingling took all the scissors back to her own group and won't return. Ziyu, from the other group, pointed at and protested angrily: "we should share together!" Lingling fought back and said: "I need to use them first, you can wait!" Ziyu turned to Ms. Chen and said: "she won't give us scissors!" Ms.

Chen patted Ziyu's head and asked Lingling to share the scissors, case closed.

Under such kind of cases, children often seek for adult's help to obtain certain kinds of resources. Although Ziyu did try to solve the conflict by herself, sometimes the protest could not get effective accordingly. Therefore, adopting tattling tactics under such conflict situation is an effective approach for children to reconcile the situation.

4.3.2 Attention Seeking

Sometimes, children tattle for fulfilling the boring time they are experiencing. When such circumstances take place, children usually report on something related to their own benefit, but lose interest in waiting for teacher's intervention. For an instance, Zhenyang was wandering in the classroom, his shoulder was accidentally hit by Zecheng, so he turned to Ms. Chen and report on Zecheng. However, before the teacher respond any feedbacks to him, Zhenyang left away and continued wandering again.

4.3.3 Free from Punishment

Besides of conflict resolution, children sometimes used the tattling method to make themselves out of punishment, such tattling often takes place when the tattler was blamed for certain behaviors. For example, Ruirui was spotted to talk with other peers during the nap time, Ms. Lu informed her to either sleep or play by herself. Ruirui replied: "Zeheng is also playing." Another instance, Zerui was reported by Tiantian for hitting latter child's belly during play. Ms. Liu reprimanded him and asked for the reason why he hit others. Zerui responded : "He grabbed my toy first!" After being noticed the reason, Ms. Liu reprimanded both of them. For cases like this, children try to make their own

misbehaviors reasonable by reporting on other's similar transgressions, or declaring their transgression was for self-protection.

4.3.4 Revenge

Although children are expected to be prosocial, nice behaving, and they are expected to tattle for norm protection or preserving peer's benefits, the facts revealed that sometimes preschool also make use of tattling tactic to fulfil retaliatory motives. Zerui, a 6-year-old boy, was reported by Yuanze for not standing in a line during the morning exercise. After being reprimanded by the teacher, Zerui spent a whole morning looking at Yuanze's activities and eventually caught him dropping egg on the ground. He emotionally reported Yuanze's misbehavior to Ms. Chen immediately. After hearing that Yuanze was asked to tidy up the floor, Zerui stopped observing Yuanze's activity and went back to play. Such kind of tattling was observed a several times among some dominant children, it might be explained by children's personalities, as well as their social characters.

4.3.5 Compensation of Transgression/ Norm Practice

For some cases, children's tattling could be used as an effective way for them to practice norms. By observing and reporting on peer's certain type of proscribed behavior, children deepened their understanding of norms accordingly. For instance, after Ms. Lu instructed the class that children should raise their hand to answer questions during class, Yuqing came to Ms. Lu and said: "Lingling did not raise her hand to answer question." Ms. Lu agreed on Yuqing and replied "yes, we need to raise hand first." After the class rule was again announced, Lingling began to observe the rest of the class. A few minutes later, Lingling reported to Ms. Lu: "Qianrong did not raise her hand."

From this case, Yuqing made use of her observation of the peers' behavior and obtained norm practicing experience by spotting the proscribed misbehavior. For Lingling, who was reported on the proscribed behavior, also actively took up the role to monitor other peers' behavior. It could be explained by a motive to express that they have learned the lesson and decided to correct.

4.3.6 Indirect Reciprocity

Besides of preserving self-benefit, there is a small amount of tattling events related to supporting on other's benefits. Here is an example: Xiyin was fighting with Chengen, the teacher approached them and asked for the reason why they were fighting, Chengen relied emotionally: "He said my hair is funny!" Xiyin denied: "I never say such thing." Zhiyuan jumped into the conversation and said: "I heard him saying that this morning!" After hearing this, Chengan held Zhiyuan's shoulder and said: "Thanks! Bro!"

The scenario was a little amusing, as these two little bros behave like adults and defend on their own friends' interests. However, such cases were seldom observed during the observation. For most of the similar cases, the intention of protecting other's benefit often happens when the violated peer was severely transgressed by the aggressor.

4.3.7 Comfort

Although majority of tattling events are motivated by the intentions of conflict reconciliation or retaliation. Children could also adopt the tattling strategy to seek comforts from the authority. Such case often takes places when the reporting event is related to the tattler's benefit, and negative emotions were aroused by the transgression.

For example, children were having cakes together, but Rongyu intentionally grab away Ziwei's cake and would not return. Ziwei approached Ms. Deng with tears and reported the event. Ms. Deng comforted her by wiping out her tears, told Rongyu to apologize to Ziwei. For such cases, the tattlers not only expressed their protest on peer's misbehavior, but also obtained authority's comforts.

4.4 Teacher's Interpretation of Tattling

As mentioned in 4.3, children tattle for various motives, and most of the time, children would try to include the teachers to reconcile the situation. However, it seemed that whether an effective response from teacher could be intervened not only depends on teacher's workload, but also depends on the audience teacher's personal understandings of such reporting activities. Based on the observation and casual talk with the preschool teachers. Some interpretations of tattling were generalized.

4.4.1 Annoying

Although teacher's teaching characteristics vary from each other, it was likely that most of the teacher shared a similar opinion towards tattling: "there are too many students in the classroom, if everyone has something to tell the teacher, I will never be able to do anything!" Therefore, teachers would generally adopt two methods to deal with the unnecessary reports: 1. Actively instruct the children to solve problems before reporting on teacher. For example, Ms. Li was an organized teacher, she wished her students could resolve problems on their own. Therefore, she would ask the children to re-memorize the rules (such as loving each other, taking care of your own property) each time before she began the class. She would clearly inform the children: "before you approach the teacher

and report on others, please try to solve the problem by yourself.” In such method, children have been given an authority to manage things on their own.

The other distinctive method teachers might use to respond unnecessary tattling events was passively dealt by excusing to leave or reprimanding the tattler. Ms. Deng, who did not agree on children’s tattling behaviors at all, would sometimes ask the children to walk away as she was busy, and even some occasions she would reprimand the reporting child: “Don’t tattle on others! Why are you so obsessive in reporting?” It seemed that children would stop reporting to her, but they would continue reporting to the other teachers present. Meanwhile, children’s enthusiasm in obeying classroom could be destructed, and even summarizing a negative understanding of the norms: the teacher does not care about rules, we can do anything we want. Therefore, a negative circle of endless tattling and misbehavior was generated.

4.4.2 Moment for Norm Reinforcement

Other than bringing head-aching experience to the educators, tattling could also be used as a teachable moment for teacher to stress students’ understanding of norms. Ms. Chen commented: “I think children’s reports could be useful for me to make use of the content as an example to explain the reason why and how they should follow the rules. The reported things are so real and related to themselves. Instead of repeatedly stressing the norms during class, the actual example makes them more relate to it, and they can better understand the consequences they might suffer if rules are broke.”

4.4.3 Student State Acquisition Approach

Tattling could be a method for teacher to better understand student's mental, social states. To be specific, children's immediate report on transgressors enables the teacher to not only grasp the state of the transgressed children's behavior, but also get familiar with the reporting child's psychological state. For example: Chengen has tattled on the peers for 10 times a day, Ms. Lu showed concerns about his state: "Does anything happen to you? It seems you are different from who you were ever since you came back from travel." After the communication, it turned out Chengen missed the moment of family travel. When he returned to school, the class and peers bored him.

For cases as such, teacher could detect children's abnormal states in time through the reporting event. It is not easy to imagine, if the child is reluctant to share thoughts with the teacher, the mental state changes could hardly be noticed among so many students in the class.

4.4.4 Class Discipline Approach

Although teachers shared a common sense that Tattling is sometimes annoying and brings extra workload, children's tattling could be applied as approach to monitor classroom discipline. For example, Zhicheng, a 5 years old boy, was evaluated as a good child by his teachers, often behaved well during class. During the class, he was always the first one to complete the task, and teacher would assign him to assist other children in finishing the tasks. Sometimes, he would approach the teacher and reported on peer's misbehavior, the teacher would usually agree with him and inform the class to behave properly, meanwhile teacher would sometimes select Zhicheng as the example to advocate the class to learn from him. Inspired by the teacher and good child



representative, the other children in the classroom would look up to him and mimic Zhicheng's conducts.

4.5 Teacher's Effect towards Children's Tattling Behavior

After representing both children and teacher's interpretation of tattling, it could be assumed that there is a mutual relationship between preschoolers' classroom tattling behavior and teacher's attitudes towards their reports. By reporting on others severe misbehaviors, children could protect themselves and even the peers from harm; by reporting on specific transgressions, children's sense of norm obedience could be reinforced. Last but not the least, children could build up a rapport relationship between themselves and the teacher. As mentioned before, children at the preschool stage value more on authority's figure other than interrelationship with peers, the conversation about other's transgression not only destruct the peer's impression, but also create a closer relationship between the child and the teacher. In the following section, I intended to highlight the importance that teachers should take proper respond and class room discipline methods to instruct children's tattling behavior. On the one hand, ineffective intervention of tattling could bring negative effect to classroom discipline formation. Nevertheless, if teachers constantly make use of tattling to monitor the classroom discipline, it could bring some side effects towards children's understanding of norms.

4.5.1 Teachers' Ineffective Responses Increase Classroom Tattling Behaviors

One of the most original functions of tattling refers to help children protect their own rights and interests with the help of the outside world (Ross and den Bak-Lammers, 1996), so tattling is suggested to be vital for young children to fulfill self-interest



preservation. Besides, tattling, as a speech activity, also involves the socialization of aggression, since it acts as a relatively peaceful approach for children to solve conflicts by inviting the authority as the mediator, rather than directly confronting with each other under a physical violence (Ingram, 2014). The teachers' response attitude, as the child's helper in the tattling incidents, represents a psychological bonding between the teacher and student, while indicating whether the child's report is legitimate for the behavior. The findings implied that the more teachers ignore the tattling events, the worse the tattling conflicts between peers could be settled. Such results suggest that teachers' indifferent attitudes to class disciplines and tattling might impose negative consequences to the classroom children. Moreover, most of the time, children choose to tattle since they hope that teachers are able to intervene, rather than a simply desire to inform a fact to the authority. Additionally, it seems that teachers' indifferent attitudes to tattling might trigger more classroom tattling activities, with an apt example of Zhenyang's story. Zhenyang, a 6-year-old boy, was racing with Jinhao on the playground. However, Jinhao was so eager to win the race that he jumped the gun. Even worse, he accidentally pushed Zhenyang to the ground while the latter tried to run in front of him. Zhenyang ran to Teacher Deng and told her the whole story, whereas the teacher was too busy to listen. She patted on Zhenyang's head and encouraged him to continue, but Zhenyang did not go back to the crowd. Instead, he ran directly to the dean's office and repeated the incident. Such type of events were quite common, which may help understand how tattling events increase if teachers did not effectively intervene the reported incidents. When one child encounters a problem that he considers to be quite serious, the inner moral sense of the child would motivate him to protest. If the teacher ignores the reports, it is more likely



that the child would turn to another teacher and continue to report, as an attempt to get help or recognition from the adults.

Teachers' ineffective response to severe transgressions increases the possibility of children's constant tattling on the identical event, while bringing up the chances of children to deal with conflicts in physical aggressive methods. Yixi and Yuyue were arguing on whose skirt looked more beautiful. After a long argument, they disagreed and finally quarreled. Rongyu noticed the incident and walked to the teacher, saying that: "Teacher Chen, they are fighting each other!" However, Teacher Chen looked at Rongyu and replied: "Don't you know boys should never intervene girls' business?" Rongyu blushed all in a sudden, and the two arguing girls stopped fighting and laughed as the whole class did. Rongyu was so embarrassed that he ran towards Yuyue, punched her on the right shoulder and fled. In the next focal follow observation periods, Rongyu seemed quite upset about Teacher Deng's as well as other classmates, and he stopped tattling to Teacher Chen. Even worse, he became more aggressive than before. When encountering peer conflicts, he chose to directly attack the peer other than asking for help or arbitrament from the teachers. Thus, teachers' ineffective response towards reports can impair children's motivation to report, thereby triggering more violent behaviors in the class.

Nevertheless, such type of violent conflict resolution was indicated to be more common among boys, while girls educated in an ineffective response environment were suggested to be more relational aggressive than those taught in effective response classes.

Consistent with Yuyue and Yixi, they continuously called Rongyu as "Tattler" ("gao zhuang jing") for several days after the incident, whereas they did not feel inappropriate.

One factor correlated with this phenomenon might be the gender identity between children and teachers. Since all of the participated teachers were females, girls were more likely to identify with, even imitating the female teachers' behavior (Smetana, 2006). Accordingly, if the teachers apply negative responses to address severe transgression events, girls might undertake more imitative actions to cope with peer social activities.

4.5.2 Little Class Head Strategy and Children's Reporting

It seemed that teacher would adopt the tattling tactic to monitor the classroom discipline, and children who behave well in class are often selected as the teacher's representative to assist monitoring the class. Compared with controversial children, popular children applied less report strategies to resolve self-benefit-related issues, and most of their norm violation reports were told out of a desire to restrain class disciplines. As opposed to the mentioned, though controversial children revealed a high frequency in observing and tattling on peers' class norm violations as well, and their tattling events were more inclined to have various self-serving intentions. Besides of the intrinsic motivation that can trigger their norm violation reports, an external factor from the little class head ("xiao ban zhang") election might act as a magnifier to amplify the possibility of children's norm violation reports as well.

Power refers to an important, if not exclusive, component of the social structure (Giddens, 1984), as constructed and embedded in the respective human action. In other words, each verbal expression represents an act of power of the speaker. Even if its expression is not conducted in a public manner, it involves the potential possibility of becoming an act of power. Children's use of tattling highlights their ability of moral

cognition and moral responsibility, and it may represent the child's desire to acquire resources and authority recognition.

China has a long history in instilling obedience to authority (Hung, 2014), and a vital way to enact such a concept is to mobilize children to tattle on peers and correct their misconducts (Xu, 2020). To more effectively regulate the class discipline, preschool teachers generally select one child as a "little class head" to assist the teacher monitoring peers. The practice of assigning some individual children to an authorized position is significantly common among preschools, and it is even enacted as a formal rule in several Chinese prestige preschools (Chu, 2017). Besides, the privilege of "little class head" is mostly assigned in a spontaneous and informal way. The teacher would select one child as her own will and authorize the child to role as a delegate of the teachers' figure. The child serving as the teachers' assistant would act as a little inspector and discipline the peers seriously. For instance, the little class head would come forward the peers, point at and warn the miscreant like: "A, do not speak!"; "B, listen carefully to Teacher"; "C, don't sleep! Be alert!". For the children being disciplined, they would usually express obedience to the little class head and stay alert if the class head is looking at them. Such privilege authorization strategy seems quite effective in keeping children from out of control, and in some way, the teachers' authoritative figure is strengthened, whereas children become competitive to each other, as the better they perform, the more plausible they will be selected as the privileged child.

Nevertheless, teachers often select the little class head through certain standards (Xu, 2019). Children behaving well and following the teachers' instruction are more likely to be selected, especially for the younger classes; for the older classes, the selection criteria

became stricter, children should behave well in classrooms and should be good at academic performances (Xu, 2020). Given the selection standards, popular children are more likely to be selected as surrogate of teachers than children from other sociometric statuses, as they care about peers, being reported less than others and exhibit a better ability in problem solving (*Chapter 3*). Thus, the reason why a large proportion of popular children's reports were correlated with classroom norm violations is explained. If the concept of privilege is introduced to the children, thereby making them to have tasted the flavor of power, or have witnessed what it is like when the little class head is disciplining peers, their enthusiasm of earning teachers' favor will be motivated. Compared with other types of children, the controversial children are to a certain extent more fascinated by such attention attraction competition. They express a higher level of dominant hierarchy in resource allocation and play rule formulation, while exhibiting an ability to maintain positive relationships with certain peers. In addition, developing a stable relationship with teachers would help them extend their strength in social dominance and acquire constant self-identity from the authorities. As motivated by such a desire, controversial children actively act as the little class head and help teachers monitoring the class. Yuanze, a six-year-old dominant boy, was criticized by the peers as a model of love and hate. He might be very bossy at others, while he would occasionally be very caring and helpful. Teacher Li might appointed his friend Yinxi as the "little class head" when teaching lessons to the class, whereas Yuanze never got the chance. In comparison of Yinxi and Yuanze, Yinxi was quick to perceive teachers' instructions and behaved more effectively in behaviors and academics. For instance, Yinxi would listen carefully during the class, and quickly organize all the toys once Teacher Li asked

children to gather the instruments. Though Yuanze did not perform as well as Yinxi, while he found his own way to arouse attention from Teacher Li. He acted as a little class head to command peers to obey, while even actively tattling on peers' misbehavior to Teacher Li. For instance, Zhicheng, a docile child, was still talking to his friend from other class when Teacher Li called the class together. Yuanze turned to look back and talked to Zhicheng in a loud voice: "Zhicheng, stop talking and come to queue!"

However, Zhicheng did not notice his words. Yuanze walked towards Teacher Li and said: "Zhicheng didn't listen to me! He is still talking to others! I have been long waiting for him." As obviously indicated from the example, Yuanze was attempting to arouse attention from teachers by demeaning peers' behavior and expressing himself. It was therefore indicated that for children (e.g., Yuanze), they were equipped with a cognitive capacity to detect what was counted as norm violation in the classroom environment, their moral cognition towards such rule breach was also entangled with a desire to be recognized by the authority figures, or further, a desire to be liked by the teachers. It could be assumed that controversial children might reveal a different frequency in reporting events not correlated with their direct benefits.

On the one hand, the adoption of applying "little class head" strategy might effectively keep the classroom children from serious behavioral transgressions and facilitate children's obedience to rules. However, we cannot help concerning the potential side-effect imposed on children as they are being introduced to the concepts of power or privilege at such an early age, thereby probably violating the authority independence criteria for children's moral cognition (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci & Gingo, 2011).

To be specific, domain theorists proposed that children's cognition of moral issues is not

determined by the existence of rules and authority (Jambon, 2016), while children's actively constructing their moral understandings via social interactions. If children are exposed to an environment highly requiring authority's approval to behaviors, whether their moral cognition might be affected is hard to determine.

4.6 Conclusion and Assumptions for Quantitative Analyses

Since tattling is so prevalent and in the preschool setting, the study enabled me to draw some tentative conclusions about children's tattling intentions, teacher's interpretation of tattling, as well as the triadic interaction between the tattler, peer and teachers. It was noteworthy to see that children tattle for certain motives, and along age grows, their intentions became more complicate. During the preschool period, since children value more on teacher's attention to themselves, they used the tactic of tattling from time to time, so that they could build up a closer relationship with the adult, and perhaps obtain praise from them. For the teachers, there is a striking conflict between their attitudes towards tattling, on the one hand they refer tattling as something annoying, while on the other hand they used it as an effective method to monitor the class. Such attitudinal inconsistency could bring side effects to children's understanding of norms and social conventions.

Some assumptions were generated based on the qualitative results of participant observation: 1. Children in different sociometric statuses might reveal different tattling patterns, especially the controversial type children. 2. Teacher's negative response towards tattling might bring up more tattling events. 3. The adoption of little class head strategy might affect children's understanding of moral transgression, as they might value too much on authority's opinions. These assumptions would be helpful to construct the exploration of dynamic interrelationship between preschoolers and teacher.

Chapter 5: Chinese Preschoolers' Classroom Tattling Patterns under various Sociometric Statuses

Tattling refers to the reporting to a second party of counter-normative violations which the tattler considers are committed by a third party. Tattling, as a speech activity, illustrates the tattler's sensitivity of moral norms, while representing a series of strong individual motivations that drive the tattler to report. Existing studies suggested that children's tattling acts as a precursor of adulthood gossips, and the application of tattling strategy assists them to practice social skills (Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1996, 1998; Ingram, 2009). Such a type of speech act with diverse motives provides sufficient research resources to study the social development of children. In the present chapter, the 136 4- to 6-year-olds were selected in total as the subjects, and the consistency of their moral cognition of tattling and classroom tattling behavior was examined by combining the methods of social rule interview and event sampling observation. In this chapter, the overall graph of Chinese preschoolers' classroom tattling pattern would be presented.

This research had 3 aims. 1. By observing children's daily activities, an overall graph of Chinese preschoolers' tattling would be generated. 2. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, existing studies demonstrated that children tattling frequently are correlated with high degree of social rejection and high anxiety, thus inferring that the tattling habit could bring negative effects to children's wellbeing. Nevertheless, which specific tattling activities will be negative to their social life remains unclear, while no study has investigated the correlation between social competencies and various tattling events



based on a quantitative observation. To fill in the research gap this field, children's social abilities and social statuses were included into the research. Based on the previous researches on children's tattling behaviors, some obvious hypotheses could be put forward, thus the mentioned primary goals would be achieved accordingly.

5.1 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a. Topics of Tattling This thesis predicted that children would tattle on more events entailing physical aggression and property conflicts other than conflicts with complex issues (e.g., deception and disagreement) since the former types of issues usually end up with direct and strong affective consequences (Smetana, 2006). In line with Nichols's proposition, children would consider norms that produce strong affective responses to be more severe than those do not (Nichols, 2004). This thesis hypothesized that the main findings of the observed Chinese children's tattling in preschool environment would be consistent with existing studies on preschoolers' tattling (Ingram, 2009, 2010), which demonstrated that children would be more sensitive to reporting activities with physical and property issues involved, they would focus on more self-benefit involved transgressions.

Hypothesis 1b. Egocentrism Existing studies postulated that children would tattle on others' misbehaviors even though the misbehavior is not correlated with their own benefits (Tomasello and Vaish, 2013). Children are basically self-centered, compared with detecting norm violations related to others' benefits, which requires an more advanced sensing ability, children are generally more self-centered to their own daily activities and find their individual stories to be more interesting (Ingram, 2009). Thus,

this thesis proposed that children would generally tatttle more on conflicts correlated with their own benefits. Moreover, since children might adopt tattling with complex intentions (e.g., retaliation and relational aggression), they might also put an eye on other peers' daily activities and report misbehaviors that are not conventionally suitable. This thesis further predicted that reporting transgressions with no clear victims would take up a large proportion of overall tattling activities.

Hypothesis 1c. Intentions of Tattling Since tattling is correlated with children's ability of cognitive understanding and desires of social relationships, I propose that younger children would apply the tattling strategy for more basic intentions (e.g., seeking for help). Besides, for complicated intentions (e.g., revenge), intentionally tattle on peers would be more frequent with age.

Hypothesis 1d. Gender Effects Though many researches (Gilligan, 1982) demonstrated that gender effect is significant in children wellbeing development, which is reflected that girls show more empathic concern to others other than boys (Batson et al., 1996; Hoffman, 1988; Toussaint, & Webb, 2005), while boys are more physically aggressive than girls and more impacted by violent games (Tian & Zhang, 2014). Compared with similar age girls, preschool boys are inclined to engage more physical play (Pellegrini, 1987, 2007), and older boys engage more physical aggression than girls. In contrast, girls seem to engage more verbal and relational aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Underwood, Galenand, & Paquette, 2001). However, no significance has been recognized if girls are more likely to tattle than boys (Buta, 2015; Chiu Loke & Heyman, 2014; Ingram, 2009). Accordingly, this thesis also attempted to investigate whether sex difference is significant among Chinese children. It was expected that there would be a

significant difference in the reporting content, in which boys might tattle on more events regarding physical aggression, boys might be reported more frequently by peers, as preschool boys might be engaged in more physically rough plays (Pellegrini, 2007; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998), and children often considered an aggressive child to be more rejected than others.

Hypothesis 1e. Age Effect and Tattling Behavior This observational study recruited 4-to 6-year-olds from different classes. By complying with existing studies (Ross and den Bak-Lammers, 1998), this thesis predicted that older children might report slightly less events than the 4-year-olds, as the younger ones might report everything they encountered in social lives on a day-to-day basis.

Hypothesis 2. Sociometric Status and Tattling Behavior The respective speech has its own meaning, which entails the individual's personal thoughts regarding the spoken event. As highly evolved primates, human has an urge to express their own understandings of things, so this thesis could obtain more useful information and supports. The ability to tattle on peers' behavior enables us to investigate children's sensitivity of norms, while raising a perspective for us to see which social and cognitive factors prompt the child to report other than reconcile the conflict in other approaches. Existing studies demonstrated that older siblings would tattle more than the younger siblings do in the family environment (Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1998), and it seems that children's dominance hierarchy is innately related to classroom tattling frequencies (Ingram, 2009, 2010). Additionally, inconsistent with adolescent gossips, children's sense of self identity mainly originates from authority other than social groups, so they do not consider tattling as a harmful method to their reputation (Friman, 2004; Ingram, 2009).



All the mentioned researches implied that children's social hierarchy competence would impact their daily tattling behaviors (Strayer & Strayer, 1976). Given the mentioned implications, I decided to more specifically verify whether children's tattling frequency and reporting proportion vary with the sociometric status. To be specific, it is expected that the socially popular children would report less self-benefit-related events than the average group, they would tattle on more other benefit-related events; the rejected children would adopt the tattling strategy the most for self-benefit-related conflicts; the controversial children might also adopt the tattling strategy more often than the average children; and the neglected children would report the least.

One explorative question was also investigated in this thesis. Specifically, children's narrative speech ability was evaluated to explore if it is related to children's tattling activities since children were recruited from several classes, the class effect might be significant in impacting the overall tattling trends.

5.2 Research Design and Methodology

5.2.1 Participants

136 4-to-6-year-old children were invited to this research, after the approval was obtained from the guardian of the preschool, the event sampling was collected accordingly.

5.2.2 Procedure

A. Tattling Behavior Sampling

I spent a total of 200 hours on event sampling, spread over 4 months in continuous

sessions. According to Ingram's definition in tattling (2009), a verbal description by a child of peer's behavior should be noted as a qualified tattletale. Therefore, during the observation, I fit myself in the classroom and took note about every event that I overheard. Each child was focal followed by me for two 45-minute sessions. During a tattling event, the conversation, emotional expressions of reporters', the consequences that whether the reporting event was settled, as well as teacher's' response types towards the reporting were noted. Each tattling conversation was noted on a memo book as soon as a related event took place. I made myself not get involved in too many interactions with children, so that I could concentrate on every event I observe or overhear, and meanwhile decreasing the possibility that children's familiarities of me influencing their tattling activities. For example, they might report on others more to me for gaining my attentions to them.

A pre-formatted manual by Ingram (2009) was used for coding children's tattling content, frequencies and audience responses. The recorded information of one tattling incident includes: the time at which the event occurs; child(ren) who complete the report (Tattler); who has carried out the reported action (Miscreant); to whom the child(ren) report to the incident (Audience); whether the audience has witnessed the miscreant's acts; the person most affected by the reported behavior (the victim); if the tattler's accounts are true or not (true, false, or indeterminate); what is the child reporting about (tattling content) and how does the audience respond to the incidence (audience's response).

Children's free reporting contexts were recorded and coded following the coding scheme presented below. I firstly transcribed the contexts into laptop and then rated all of the

contexts. A fellow assistant who was blind to the observation predictions helped rate the contexts again. Inter-rater reliability for content type was 94%, and for response type it was 88%; Cohen's kappa was .88 and .83, respectively.

Tattling Content

During the incident, the free context of children's reports was recorded and assigned to ten revised categories by Ross and den Bak-Lammers (1998). 1. Conflicts about unexpected *Physical contact*, such as hitting or pushing will be categorized as physical aggression. 2. *Property entitlement* describe reports about taking peer belongs without permission, or children refuse to share things that themselves own or be using. 3. *Property damage* reports cover reports of damaging properties. 4. *Joint play violations* refer to children reporting peer refusing to play along them or hindering the other children's work. 5. *Disobey of classroom* describes children's violations of conventional rules in classroom, such as not behaving well when teacher asks everyone to be seated, or poor table manner; 6. *Taunting* reports mean one child shouting at others or directly call their names in an unfriendly tone; 7. Reports of *Disagreement* refer to one child demonstrate disagreements to what another child said or believed. 8. *Deception* reports include children report on other child's lying events, or misleading others. The other two categories are 9. *Non-judgmental reports* (report innocent events of other child), and 10. Positive reports (report of other child's prosocial behaviors). Since this study focus on children's negative reporting to others, these two categories were not recorded.

Reporting Intentions

Based on Ingram's (Ingram, 2009) and Sun's (Sun, 2015) contexts investigations of children's tattling intentions, I generalized a pre-formatted manual to analyze the intentions of reports as follows: 1. *Seeking for help from authority*, which means the reporter tattles to seek the teacher's' justice to solve the dispute conflict or request protection from the teacher; 2. Report on peers for *Retaliatory purpose*, children who report for such intention often hold a grudge or feel jealous of the miscreant. The purpose of such report is to make use of the teacher's' authority to criticize or punish the miscreant, thus satisfying the reporter's psychological needs; 3. *Seeking for comforts* refers to the reporter tattle to gain favorable attention from the authority; 4. *Informing a fact* to the audience, which represents the tattler's desire to inform the teacher of something should be known about, and they believe the reported fact would be important to help the teacher make a judgement towards the miscreant or something; 5. *Get away from punishment*, meaning that children tattle on others to get themselves out of trouble; 6. *Attract attention* from the authority, referring the child tattle on others to obtain attention from the authority. Such motivation is arguably one of the stereotypical motivations of tattling (Sun, 2015); 7. *Moral norm practice*, referring the child reports on something to verify is such behavior complies with the rules. The coding criteria was based on the observation of the whole conflict process. By observing the origin of the conflict, the debate of the event, and the consequence if children have revealed a satisfactory response respectively, the intentions of tattling were categorized accordingly. One assistant was also recruited to categorize the data, and interrater credibility of 0.90 was met.

B. Social Competencies

Sociometric Nomination for Sociometric Status Measurement

Peer nomination approach was applied to measure children's closeness to peers. Each child will be invited to nominate 3 their *liked most* (corresponding to the Likert-type rating of 5) and 3 *liked least* (Likert-type rating of 1) confederates by asking “*could you name three children you like to play with*”, and “*could you name three children who you do not want to play*”. (Coie, 1982; Friman, 2004; Sun, 2004; Warman & Cohen, 2000). Each child's own preference to peers will be recorded.

The likeability and dis-likeability scores were credited to each child on the basis of ratings from their classmates. Children's nomination scores will be standardized transformed into social preference ($SP = Z \text{ liked most} - Z \text{ liked least}$) and Social Impact ($SI = Z \text{ liked most} + Z \text{ liked least}$) based on their own class. According to the scores of SP and SI, 5 social status will be created accordingly: **Popular** ($SP > 1, Z \text{ liked most} > 0, Z \text{ liked least} < 0$); **Rejected** ($SP < -1, Z \text{ liked most} < 0, Z \text{ liked least} > 0$); **Neglected** ($SI < -1, \text{score of liked most} = 0$); **Controversial** ($SI > 1, Z \text{ liked most} > 0, Z \text{ liked least} > 0$); and **Average** ($-0.5 < SI < 0.5$).

Social Competencies

Children's social competence were measured by teachers of the participated children in the following approaches.

a. Social Dominance Hierarchy

Dodge and Coie's Teacher Checklist (1987) has been shown to be a valid measure of social dominance for children 4 to 12 years old (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). There are in

total 24 items and 5 of those related to social dominance will be used (i.e., this child is a leader, gets what he/she wants, is competitive, suggests to other children how things should be done, and is frequently the center of the group; Cronbach $\alpha = .89$). A Chinese version scale modified by Zha (2006) was applied, with Cronbach $\alpha = .73$.

b. Relational Aggression and Pro-sociality

Teachers of the children were invited to evaluate each children's prosocial behavior and relational aggression via the Preschool Social Behavior Scale -Teacher form (PSBS-T; Crick et al., 1997). Since tattling potentially contains a desire to hurt others and uplift oneself, it has been constructed as one approach of relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Furthermore, children's intention of reporting might also reveal their concerns of the further dangers for the miscreant or others, thus the prosocial behavior tendency will also be evaluated. PSBS-T is used to assess teachers' perceptions about 3.5 to 5.5-year-old preschool children's social behavior (Crick et al., 1997), consisting of 25 items with four factors: relational aggression (8 items), overt aggression, prosocial behavior (4 items) and depressed affect. PSBS-T's reliability is high, with Cronbach's alpha for relational aggression scale, $\alpha = .96$, and prosocial behavior scale $\alpha = .88$ (Crick, et al., 1997). A Chinese version of PSBS-T modified by Cao (2009) was used, with relational aggression Cronbach $\alpha = .925$, prosocial Cronbach $\alpha = .793$.

5.2.3 Analyses

All analyses in the current study were conducted using IBM SPSS 24.0, and One-way ANOVA, repeated measures of ANOVA, Chi Square analysis, correlational analysis and independent sample t-tests were applied accordingly.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Children's Tattling Classroom Tattling Behavior

Preliminary Analyses

A preliminary step referred to examining gender differences for all of the outcomes, as conducted in independent sample t-tests.

As indicated from the results, for 4-to 6-year-olds, no gender differences were detected on tattling Events ($p > .05$). However, this thesis noticed that 5- (M= 6.18, SD= 5.10) and 6-year-old boys (M= 6.23, SD=7.06) were more frequently tattled by peers than girls (5-year-old: M= 3.57, SD=3.39, $t(72) = 2.65, p = .01$; 6-year-old: M= 2.87, SD=3.55, $t(47) = 2.06, p = .04$).

For the average tattling frequencies, no significant difference was identified between boys and girls in tattling frequencies ($p = .41$). Besides, a significant effect was reported between reporting content and miscreant's gender, $\chi^2(7) = 29.791, p < .0005$. The correlation was moderately strong (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V= .21. 6-year-old boys were more likely to be tattled about physical aggression (100%), property damage (83.3%) and property entitlement (60%) than girls ($\chi^2(7) = 20.63, p = .004$, Cramer's V= .32). In addition, no significant sex differences were identified among 4-year-olds ($\chi^2(6) = 8.93, p = .18$) or 5-year-olds ($\chi^2(7) = 12.69, p = .08$).

For children's nomination of sociometric statuses of their classmates, 22.8% of the participants were nominated as popular children in their social groups (4 from 4-year-olds, 19 from 5-year-olds and 26 from 6-year-olds); 37.5% were rated as average children (8 from 4-year-olds, 22 from 5-year-olds and 21 from 6-year-olds); 14.0% were

recognized as rejected children (2 from 4-year-olds, 10 from 5-year-olds and 7 from 6-year-olds); the controversial (9.6%) and neglected (14.0%) types of children were not nominated in 4-year-olds. The proportion distribution was consistent with existing research outcomes (New-comb et al. 1993; Nelson et al. 2016).

Table 2 lists children's mean scores of cognitive abilities. As suggested from the results of ANOVA tests, children's cognitive abilities of theory of mind, emotion understanding and continuous speech were improved with age (all $p < .01$). Since children's continuous speech competence was not correlated with the tattling activities ($p > .05$), it was excluded in the subsequent analyses.

Overall Topics of Tattling

Of the 136 children participating in the observational study, 116 (85.93%) reported at least once during the observation. On the whole, 669 examples of tattling were recorded, $M = 5.01$ reports per child attended, $SD = 4.09$. Among the tattling events, mean proportions of 4-6-year-olds' tattling is listed in *Table 3*, ordered in the overall frequency proportion.

On the whole, the most common tattling event was child(ren) violating class rules, which accounted for around 37% of tattling events. Children's tattling on peers' physical aggression and Property entitlement shared the identical second proportion of tattling events (18%).

A significant effect of age towards children's overall tattling frequency was noticed, $F(2,133) = 3.04$, $p = .032$. Post hoc analysis in Tukey's HSD approach indicated that the 4-year-olds reported more frequent than the 6-year-olds ($p = .040$). No other significance

was detected when comparing age effects on benefit orientational tattling frequencies ($p > .05$).

We further specifically analyzed if there is any correlation between age and various tattling events by performing bivariate correlational analyses, which reported a slightly correlation between children's birth month and frequency in tattling on physical aggression ($r = -.14, p = .04$). No other significances were identified.

Given the proportion of reported activities, there was a minor positive correlation between children's birth month and proportion of tattling for other peers' benefits, complying with the existing research, which demonstrated that with age, children would gradually expand their social interactions with peers and start concerning about others' benefits.

Egocentrism

Of 116 children tattling during the sampling observation, the mean proportions of children's benefit orientation of the tattling events were calculated (*Table 4*). It was suggested that tattling tended to be very self-centered, primarily focused on achieving help or punishment for something having happened to the tattler, mean share = .46, SD = .37. Tattling on others while no victim(s) exist took up the second largest proportion of tattling events (mean share = .35, SD = .30), and tattling on peers for others' benefits ranked the lowest respectively.

Tattling intentions

Table 5 illustrates 4- to 6-year-olds' tattling intention distributions. A 7(intentions) x 3

(age groups) multi-factor ANOVA was conducted, with intentions as the within-subjects factor and children's age as the between-subject factor. As suggested from the result, there was an effect of age, $F(2,133) = 10.44, p = .03, \eta^2 = .19$ besides the effect of intentions, $F(6,133) = 29.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27$. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that most tattling was motivated by the desire of attention seeking and asking for help, and the tattling of children on retaliatory intention was the least frequent. More intentions were revealed by applying tattling strategy with age, and both 5- and 6- year-olds were more often to tattle with malicious intentions of revenge (both $p < .05$), and evade punishment (both $p < .05$). 4-year-olds were more likely to tattle for attracting the audience's attention than 6-year-olds ($p = .044$). An interaction effect was also detected, $F(12,133) = 7.49, p < .042, \eta^2 = .07$, thereby indicating that 6-year-olds were less likely to tattle for help than 4-year-olds.

Sociometric Status and Social Competence

As expected, children's nomination of peers' social preference and social impact are generally in line with teachers' ratings of the respective child's social competence. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to compare the social dominance of different sociometric children whilst controlling for age. Levene's test and normality checks were performed, and the assumptions were met. A significant difference was reported in dominance hierarchy scores, $F(4,130) = 6.57, p < .001$. Post hoc tests indicated that popular ($M = 10.84, SD = 3.54$) and controversial children ($M = 12.08, SD = 3.67$) were rated to be more socially dominant than the average ($M = 8.12, SD = 3.24$) and neglected children ($M = 7.55, SD = 3.84$) (all $p < .01$), while neglected children scored lower than

controversial children ($p = .003$). For the degrees of pro-sociality, a significance was detected $F(4,130) = 1.95, p = .04$ as well. The post hoc test revealed that only prosocial children's ($M = 11.97, SD = 3.56$) pro-sociality was rated higher than that of rejected children ($M = 9.26, SD = 3.21; p = .047$). Given the differences in relational aggression, controversial children ($M = 15.26, SD = 1.63$) were rated to be significantly higher than popular children ($M = 8.29, SD = .99$), average ($M = 7.70, SD = .77$) and neglected children ($M = 7.87, SD = 1.17$). No other significance was detected accordingly.

The mentioned results suggested that children's evaluation of peers was in line with the teachers' ratings of children's social competences, and the social characters of the respective sociometric type of children are listed in *Table 6*. The outcomes ensured the reliability of children's sociometric nomination, while evidencing that there might be an innate correlation between children's thoughts about authority power and peer popularity.

Children's Tattling and Sociometric Status

Table 7 lists the frequency and reporting proportion distribution of children with various sociometric statuses. I first attempted to confirm if there is an interactive effect between age and sociometric status in predicting tattling frequencies, whereas the result was suggested to be insignificant $F(66, 1353) = .85, p = .64$. However, a main effect of sociometric status was indicated to be significant $F(44,1353) = 7.79, p < .0001$.

To be specific, the rejected and controversial types of children revealed considerable similar behavioral patterns in tattling frequencies, thereby indicating that both of the mentioned two types of children would generally tattle on more events than the popular, average and neglected children (all $p < .05$) and appear higher frequencies in tattling on

self-benefit-related events than the other three types (all $p < .01$). Additionally, the mentioned two types of children are more often reported in daily interactions (all $p < .01$), while the rejected children were tattled on more than the controversial children ($p < .001$). Accordingly, it could be implied that controversial and rejected children would report to teacher the most in daily classroom environment, but rejected children were more often to be reported by others.

I further investigated if children with various sociometric statuses would reveal difference in event frequencies with various benefit orientations. The controversial children appeared higher frequency in tattling on taunting events than popular ($p = .045$) and neglected children ($p = .046$), reporting peers disobeying classroom norms than neglected children ($p = .017$), expressing disagreement than rejected ($p = .024$) and average children ($p = .05$), as well as reporting joint play violation than popular ($p = .001$), average ($p = .013$) and neglected children ($p = .037$). The mentioned outcomes vividly provide evidence that controversial children are hyperactive in applying tattling approach to solve various of social conflicts they encounter in everyday life.

As is expected, though the rejected children did not tattle on more events regarding other benefit ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 1.40$) or no victim situation ($M = 0.79$, $SD = 1.03$), they did report significantly more events regarding self-benefits ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 4.19$) than any other type of children (all $p < .001$).

For the controversial children, they also reported significantly more events regarding self-benefits ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 4.61$) compared with the popular, average and neglected children (all $p < .001$). Additionally, they appeared to have reported most of no victim events ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 2.14$) than any other types of sociometric status (all $p < .05$). Given the

frequency of tattling on behalf of others' benefits, no significant differences were detected. No other significances were detected among popular, average and neglected children.

Reporting Proportion

Next, I compared the proportion of each type of tattling content. 54% of the popular children's reports were related to peers' violation of classroom norms, significantly higher than the rejected children (20%, $p = .04$). The rejected children reported 33% of events regarding property entitlement, significantly higher than the popular (9%; $p = .001$), neglected children (9%; $p = .002$), as well as a quasi-significant difference to average children (21%; $p = .07$). As opposed to the frequency analysis outcomes, controversial children did not identify any significant differences in content proportion distribution ($p > .05$).

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a significant effect of sociometric status on proportion distribution of self-benefit-oriented events ($F(4,131) = 4.64$, $p = .002$). As suggested from Bonferroni post hoc tests, rejected children ($M = .69$, $SD = .30$) had a significantly less proportion of tattling compared with the popular children ($M = .69$, $SD = .30$, $p = .002$), average children ($M = .33$, $SD = .31$, $p = .003$) and neglected children ($M = .36$, $SD = .54$, $p = .03$).

For analyze tattling events under the no clear victim scenario, the homogeneity of variance was violated ($p = .032$). The Welch statistic indicated a significance [*Welch* (4, 48.62) = 3.28, $p = .02$] effect. According to the post hoc analysis in Games Howell tests, rejected children ($M = .69$, $SD = .30$) reported significantly smaller proportion compared

with the popular children ($M=.38$, $SD=.32$, $p=.02$) and average children ($M=.32$, $SD=.30$, $p=.05$).

The mentioned evidences support the hypothesis that preschoolers in different sociometric statuses would adopt different strategies in tattling on others, which popular children would generally report less than the rejected and controversial children, while they revealed a higher chance in tattling on peers' transgression when no one's benefit has been violated. The controversial children achieved significantly higher frequencies in overall tattling frequency as well as various contents of events, especially higher frequency in tattling on others' violations of class norms, whereas the proportion distribution analysis revealed that controversial children were more often tattling on self-centered events. The rejected children also achieved higher overall tattling frequency than other types of children, and the proportion of tattling self-benefit-related events were noticeably higher than the other sociometric groups. The overall tattling frequency of neglected children ranked significantly lower than the other types of children, nearly one third of the population did not report any events to teachers, which was in line with previous research outcomes (Ingram, 2009; 2010).

Tattling Intentions and Sociometric Status

I further analyzed if the mean frequency distribution of children's report intentions also revealed to be different among various sociometric hierarchies (*Table 8*). An ANOVA was conducted, with tattling intentions as the within-subjects factor and sociometric status as the between-subject factor. Results suggested that besides the effect of tattling intentions, $F(6, 134) = 12.85$, $p < .01$, there was an effect of sociometric statuses, $F(4,$

134) = 9.27, $p < .01$, and an interaction between tattling intentions and sociometric statuses, $F(5, 54) = 2.81$, $p = .03$. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that popular children significantly reported less events for help than other groups, and 46.63% of popular children's reports were driven by an intention of informing a fact to the authority; the controversial children revealed a wide range of intentions of tattling, and they reported significantly more events for informing a fact to the audience; the neglected children displayed remarkably simpler intention distributions than the other groups, and most of their reports were driven by a desire of asking for help; the rejected children revealed a significantly higher frequency in tattling for help.

5.4 Discussion

5.4.1 Children's Classroom Tattling

Egocentrism

According to the study of observing children's tattling behaviors based on an event sampling, tattling on peers' behaviors was an important and prevalent communicative form during their social activities. One of the most basic questions of the study was to investigate the overall situation of Chinese preschoolers' tattling behaviors. As expected, most children's reports were correlated with their own benefits other than others' benefits. To some extent, this finding reveals that the basic attribute of tattling is to safeguard their own interests. Children are proficient in using a narrative method to arouse the attention from the authoritative figure to address interpersonal disputes, other than directly confronting the conflicts themselves. It may be implied that tattling reflects

the tattler's sensitivity of moral norms, while revealing an urge of obtaining and protecting more resources (Hawley, 1999; Xu, 2020). Children's tattling on misbehaviors of peers under no victim circumstances were interestingly higher than those when another peers' benefits have been violated. This outcome might partially because children would always be sensitive to the protection of their own benefits. If one has violated another child's interests, it would be noticeably more possible that the victim confides to the teacher by himself before other child notices. Second, it could also be presumed that tattling on no victim transgression acts as a gesture of promoting group cohesion, since no victim transgressions are directly correlated with classroom norm violations, children tattling in such scenarios might consider that the transgressor is jeopardizing the whole group's interests (D. S. Wilson et al., 2000). As opposed to the mentioned, Xu proposed that the reason for such frequency inequality among Chinese preschoolers could be driven by the tattlers' various malicious intentions (Xu, 2020), as the tattlers might get more attention or praise by intentionally lower peers' reputation.

Contents of Tattling

By analyzing the tattling contents distribution, the data output revealed that 4- to 6-year-olds were significantly more likely to tattle issues of peer disobeying classroom norms, property entitlement or property damage than tattling on joint play violation, taunting, deception or disagreement. The finding was quite inconsistent with previous researched among western populations (Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1996, 1998; Ingram & Bering, 2010), which implied that young children were more inclined to tattle on property entitlement and physical aggression conflicts other than peer(s) classroom rule violations.

However, 37% of the observed events in this thesis comprised classroom norm violations. This result was consistent with Xu's observational study (Xu, 2020), who demonstrated that 42 of the 56 notable tattling incidents were "third party tattling" (children tattle on peers as bystanders other than victims). Though the sample size was limited, it might be interpreted that there is a latent cultural effect influencing Chinese and Western children's tattling behaviors formation, as well as their thoughts of tattling others. To be specific, China's Confucian culture upholds honoring the teacher and respecting his teaching ("*zun shi zhong dao*"), and children growing up in such cultural background might innately form a sense of behaving exactly as the teacher instructs. Compared with western children, Chinese children might attach more significance to the authority of teachers, as well as the classroom rules pronounced by teachers. Thus, with the constant practice of norms, children would tend to develop an advanced sense of detecting classroom norm violators and tattle to the authority. Besides, Chinese culture advocates collectivism and group harmony, while Western culture upholds individualism and independence. Thus, it might be more unacceptable for Chinese children to notice group benefits being or having been jeopardized by certain peers.

Tattling Intentions

By analyzing children's tattling motives, this thesis found that a large proportion of tattling events were motivated by the intentions to seek help and attract attention. In addition, as children grow older, more motives are progressively appeared. Young children were more likely to tattle for help than the older children, which can be understandable for their relatively weak ability in cognitive competence and problem

solving (Chiu Loke & Heyman, 2014; Smetana, 2006, 2010). Accordingly, preschool teachers are suggested to be necessary to help young children address conflicts and issues.

Besides, preschoolers' self-identity is basically obtained from the outside world, and praise and attention of authority figures are important approaches for children to obtain self-identity at this stage (Smetana, 2006, 2010). Thus, obtaining teachers' recognition can boost children's sense of self-esteem and sense of achievement. As demonstrated from another explanation of children reporting to seek appraisal from Ingram (2010, 2014), children regard their close relationship with authority as a privilege, thereby enabling them to consider that they could acquire more resources than the other class members. Accordingly, the more the teacher positively responds to the tattler, the higher chance children would be mentally satisfied in such a teacher-student interrelation. This thesis might conclude that if educators can create another approach for children to gain self-identity in the classroom, the frequency of classroom tattling will be reduced. For instance, Lambert et al. (Lambert, et al., 2015) introduced the tootling training (teaching children to recognize peers' prosocial behaviors other than inappropriate behaviors) to the elementary school students, noticing that tattling behaviors significantly decreased after interventions. The effects of such a technique should be verified in the preschool environment in subsequent research.

It was reported that children's reporting motives varied with age, thereby indicating that children's social interaction patterns began to be more sophisticated, and that their cognitive level began to support them to make more attempts. This complied with Ingram's argument that children's complaint behaviors are similar to adult gossips, and

they begin to have more social attempts. Through complaint behaviors, they can achieve more complex intensions, similar to adult gossips, while being entertained, sharing information and even gaining profit at the expense of others through information collection and sharing.

Gender Effect

Though educators and researchers claimed that girls were more likely to be rated relational aggressive than boys (Crick, 1997), the results of the study revealed gender effect was not significant in the overall tattling frequencies. However, boys were more likely to report events about physical aggression and they were more often to be report for physically harming others than girls. Both boys and girls were more inclined to report events regarding their own interests. Since preschool boys engage in more physical games than girls, it is obvious that boys are more likely to suffer from physical aggression or harms (Pellegrini, 2007).

Age Effect

It was also noticed that there was a negative decrease in overall tattling frequencies among 4-to 6-year-olds. To be specific, 4-year-olds were more likely to tattle on peers than 6-year-olds, especially on reporting peers' physical aggression, while no other differences were detected. This finding was significantly opposite to existing studies, thereby demonstrating that older siblings tattled more frequently than the younger ones (Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1996), as older children are more cognitive readily to detect norm violations and tattle on others. Given this, this thesis presumed that younger

children are lack of self-regulation, and they are more self-centered than the older ones. There might be a higher chance of more rough-tumbling play accidents taking place among the younger children group. Besides, China has had a long period of advocating One-child policy. The superiority of being the only child of family may further enhance children's sense of omnipotence and self-centeredness, thus they would be remarkably more sensitive to self-protection while interacting with peers. With age and the expansion of social activities, children's self-centeredness tends to decrease, they might seek other methods to address conflicts, instead of directly tattling on peers, and this could be one way to explain such results.

Sociometric Status and Tattling

Next, I propose that children's tattling behaviors vary with their sociometric statuses. As expected, children in different sociometric statuses did reveal significant variations in overall tattling frequencies as well as tattling intentions. The specific results are presented below:

In line with Ingram's study (2009), children nominated as neglected type achieved significantly lowest odds in tattling on others' behaviors. I also analyzed the proportion distribution of contents. Similar to average children, neglected children reported more self-benefit-oriented issues than other benefit or no victims scenarios. This finding partially supported Ingram's assumptions of tattling functions as social practice for children to interact with peers. Neglected children have been found to be less sociable and less aggressive than the average children, they are engaged in less social activities than other children. Though children being neglected by others might be attributed to

various factors (e.g., individual personality and cognitive incompetence), it might be concluded that the mentioned children are unlikely to report for class norms maintenance or speak for others. On the other hand, related studies propose that some neglected children are surprisingly good at academic performance and self-behave (Newcomb & Bukowski, 1993), the reason for neglected children's less tattling on others was attributed to their reluctance to solve peer conflicts, protect class norms in a tattling approach, or obtaining benefits by harming others in such a narrative method.

Controversial and rejected types of children used tattling strategies the noticeably more often than the popular, average and neglected children. Nevertheless, compared with the rejected children, whose reports were mainly directly correlated with their own interests (e.g., property disputes, physical aggression, etc.), controversial type children were more likely to pay attention to various forms of non-compliance of miscreant, including taunting, joint play violation, disagreement to others' activities and violations of class rules, etc. During my observation, the controversial children revealed a unique behavioral reputation compared with other children, they seem quite good at detecting peers' misbehaviors, and intentionally informing such behaviors to the authority in a narrative speaking approach.

Though both popular children and controversial children are considered to have superior social abilities to get along with others, the former type of children reported significantly less than both controversial and neglected children. Further, they reported significantly lower proportion of self-benefit-related events. Popular children are usually engaged in positive social activities with peers, have high levels of pro-sociality and low-level of aggression, it is easy to understand why they report less self-benefit-related activities.

Nevertheless, an unexpected outcome revealed that popular children were more likely to tattle on peer disobeying classroom norms than the other groups. As I mentioned above, controversial children achieved a higher frequency in tattling on class rule violations. The finding noticed that popular children revealed a significant higher proportion in tattling on classroom norm violation, while controversial children accounted for a higher proportion in self-benefits reporting, even though the latter group achieved a higher tattling frequency in classroom norm violations. this finding of supports the assumptions set out in Chapter 4.6, in order to obtain appraisal from the teacher, controversial children could mimic the popular children's activity in spontaneously taking up the role to monitor classroom peer's behavior. Under such circumstances, controversial children and popular children report on others for different intentions. The popular children might have an innate responsibility to help protect classroom norms, as they consider norms as important mechanism to maintain orders; as to controversial children, they might think tattling on others' norm violations from a malicious perspective, so they could obtain more resources or benefit from authority. This finding is helpful for researchers to determine if popular children and controversial children's tattling behaviors would be strengthened by external environmental factors.

5.4.4 Limitations of the study

Though preliminary, the findings of this thesis provides new perspectives in exploring the correlation between children's tattling behaviors and tattling understanding, several caveats should be considered when interpreting the data presented here.

First, given that the whole sample was collected in one preschool, and the current sample

was composed of mostly middle-class Shenzhen caregivers. It remains unclear how children from international schools perceive tattling during their daily life.

Second, considering the complexity of tattling intentions, difficulties appeared in analyzing the internal correlation between moral cognition of tattling and behavior.

Subsequent research will set out a designed scenario to explore how children process the decision of tattling.

Thirdly, this thesis only investigated children's tattling activities in a short period of time, and most of the sample tracks were lost as they have entered other schools. Longitudinal research should be conducted, so more dynamic information could be noticed.

5.5 Conclusion

The results of this thesis generalized a dynamic graph on children's everyday tattling behavior as well as 4-to 6-year-olds' understanding of tattling, which demonstrated that children usually adopt the tattling strategy to fulfill individual preservation intentions.

With the growth of age, the overall frequency of children's report decreases, but the motives of tattling begin to show diversification. The study also found that children in different sociometric statuses revealed different strategies in tattling activities and tattling intention distributions, with popular type children reporting less frequently and more likely to report norm violation related events. Controversial children and rejected children often apply the tattling strategy for self-benefit protection, but the controversial type children appeared more complex motives in using tattling strategies. The neglected type children reported the least among the observed participants. These findings supported the assumption presented in Chapter 4.6, that children in different sociometric statuses would

reveal different tattling patterns their daily classroom activity. In the next chapter, the researcher will investigate the participated teachers' personal attitudes to classroom tattling and study how the authority's effects towards classroom children's tattling behaviors formation.

Chapter 6: Teachers' Response Type towards Children's Tattling Behaviors

The core proposition I intended to stress in this thesis was that tattling refers to a negotiate product of individual's moral cognition and social relations. Tattling, as a spontaneous speech-act that children are innately born with, well represents the tattler's sensitivity to misbehaviors, even the moral understanding of norms, it tends to change to a complex social activity with the individual needs of the tattler. The mentioned social relations refers to the relations among the tattler, the miscreant and the victim, while indicating a hierarchical correlation between teachers and students. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how Chinese Preschool teachers in tattling events, nor did we know if teachers' indifferent attitudes to tattling would affect classroom children's tattling behaviors and moral understanding.

Accordingly, I observed and recorded teachers' responses to each tattling event in a sampling observational approach and generated the characteristics of teachers' response patterns. The exploration of teachers' influence towards classroom tattling was divided into two sections in this chapter. In section 1, teachers' response types of children's classroom tattling events and the consequences of the reported event were observed and analyzed in a quantitative approach.



6.1 Hypotheses

The event sampling of teacher's' responses to reporting events, as discussed in this chapter, was observed and accounted along with the reporting events presented in the previous chapter. In order to ensure the coherence and consistency of the research structure, I intentionally allocate the sampling results of teacher's' responses in this chapter.

The literature review demonstrated that tattling is a prevalent speech among preschooler's everyday social activities, which represents a triadic relationship among the tattler, the miscreant and the audience. Teachers usually acts as norm educators and conflict intervenors in classroom environment, and children would report on peers to teacher for various purposes (Ingram 2009, 2010). Based on the assumptions I postulated at 4.6, I propose that

Hypothesis 1. Teacher's' positive response towards tattling would help reconcile the peer conflicts, while negative response towards tattling could bring up worse tattling behaviors.

Hypothesis 2. Teacher would take the severity and reporter's affective states into consideration while they decide whether or not to intervene the reported events.

Additionally, since five classes with three age levels were recruited in this research, an explorative factor of general class tattling atmosphere would also be measured and compared in this chapter, thus we might gather quantitative data to assist further discussing teachers' importance in tattling event instruction.



6.2 Research Method

6.2.1 Event Sampling of Teacher's Response

Based on the free contexts of teacher's reactions towards each reporting event, seven categories of responses generalized by Ross and den Bak-Lammers (1998) were recorded as follows: 1. *Supporting a tattler*, such as verbally asking the miscreant to stop playing the toy by himself and play with other peers; 2. *Expressing acknowledgement* to the tattler and meanwhile not judging the miscreant about the reported behavior; 3. *Ignoring* the children's reporting; 4. *Excusing* an action to the reporting children, and informing him/her an idea that the reported action is innocent; 5. *Reprimanding the tattler* for reported behavior. For example, Teacher informs the reporting child that she should not always report on others when she desires a toy. 6. In some cases, both the tattler and miscreant would be reprimanded by audience. 7. A *Questioning* response will also be recorded when the audience asks the children (tattler, miscreant, or both, to other witnessed audience) what exactly happened. Furthermore, I noticed that in some occasions, the reporting children would return to the peer groups before the teacher making any responses to the reporting event. Therefore, I categorized this response type as 8. *Child leaves before audience responds*. An additional response type that I intended to add was 9. *Teacher looks at the miscreant(s) without any word*, as I noticed it was also a frequent approach for teachers to respond to reporting events.

Further, teachers' responses could be categorized into two types respectively.

Specifically, the responses of ignoring, acknowledgment would be categorized as Negative Responses. Given that the tattlers would not expect a reprimand to themselves, teachers' reprimand for the tattler were also categorized as Negative Response. The other

responses (except for *child leaves before the teacher responses*) were categorized as an Positive/Neutral Response.

6.2.2 Event Sampling of Children's Affective States

Besides of teacher's' responses of tattling, children's affective status was also noted by observing, as current study hypothesizes that teacher's' responses towards reporting vary according to children's affective status as well as the severity of reporting events.

Specifically, if the reporter expressed obvious emotions such as sadness, anger and anxiety, the reported event will be noted as “event with negative affective state”; feelings such as joy, happiness will be categorized as “event with positive affective state”; if the reporter does not reveal any obvious facial expressions, the report will be categorized as “no clear emotion event”.

6.2.3 Event Sampling of Conflict Reconciliation

The consequence of each tattling event was recorded by the standard if children stopped verbally/physically arguing about the transgressed event, or whether the reporting child(ren) stopped reporting to others. Fail to reconcile: Children continue reporting; children solve conflicts in physical aggression or verbal fight. Success to reconcile: Children stop reporting with satisfactory. Children stop commenting on the transgressed incident.

6.3 Analyses

All analyses of the present study were conducted using IBM SPSS 24.0, and Chi Square analysis, linear regression analysis, correlational analysis and independent sample t-tests were applied accordingly.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Teachers' Response towards Tattling

669 tattling events were recorded in the observation, while 7 events were excluded from this thesis for failing to clearly record the conversations between teachers and tattlers, so 662 samples of teachers' response were eventually noted. *Table 13* lists the frequencies and mean shares of various responses to tattling, ordered by overall frequency.

Regarding whether teacher has well responded to children's tattling events, as revealed from the outcomes, nearly 47.3% of the events were replied in an ineffective approach, and 52.7% of the reports received effective responses.

This proportion distribution outcome was significantly inconsistent with Ingram's research (Ingram, 2009), demonstrating that around 50% of the reports were resolved by teachers supports. Besides, only 20.4% of events gained supports from teachers, and 20.4% of the time teachers would directly ignore children's tattling, and 19.8% of tattling were ended up with teachers' acknowledgements.

According to *Table 14*, Chi-square analysis was conducted to verify if teacher would adopt different responses to various tattling events. The result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(56) = 216.80, p < .001$. There was a small effect size, Cramer's $V = .22$ (Cohen, 1988). 40.4% of events regarding physical aggression were responded by

teachers' supports, 54.5% of reports of children disagreeing with others' behaviors were explained by teachers. Teachers generally applied the attitudes to acknowledgement (24.8%) and ignoring (23%) when children tattled on property entitlement issues and joint play violations (acknowledgement: 28.2%; ignoring: 24.7%). For the reports of disobey of classroom rules, 23.5% was dealt by ignoring attitude and 20.6% obtained supports from the teachers, respectively. 25.6% of the conflicts regarding property damage successfully aroused the attention from teachers, and the teachers would question what had happened. Since rare events of deception and taunting were observed, we did not draw any conclusions regarding this issue.

6.4.2 Teachers' Response and Children's Affective States

377 events were recognized with distinct emotions, and 352 events were found as negative emotion incidents. A linear regression test was performed to see whether children's affective states could predict teachers' effective response to tattling. The result was that tattlers tattling with the expressions of negative emotions (e.g., cry, angry, sad and unhappy) significantly predicted if teachers would effectively respond to the tattling event, $\beta = .333$, $t(661) = 3.86$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, tattlers' negative emotions took up a significant proportion of variance in tattling conflicts reconciliation, $R^2 = .076$, $F(1, 661) = 6.86$, $p = .01$. No significant evidence revealed that teachers' positive responses would more effectively resolve the reported conflicts ($p > .05$).

6.4.3 Teachers' Response and Conflict Reconciliation

By analyzing the correlation between teachers' response towards tattling events and the

consequences of the tattling events, linear regression analysis results indicated that 11.7% of the variance of tattling conflict reconciliations could be predicted by teachers excusing to ignore the tattling ($\beta = -.250$, $t(661) = 2.823$, $p = .02$), implying that the more teacher ignores the tattling events for an excuse, the worse the tattling conflicts between peers could be settled (Fig.10).

6.4.4 Class Differences in Teachers' Response Type and Tattling Frequencies

Table 13 lists descriptive statistics. A one-way between-subject ANOVA was conducted to compare the class effect on classroom children's tattling frequency. Classes significantly impacted the tattling frequency at the $p < .05$ level, $F(4, 661) = 12.34$, $p = 0.03$. As indicated from the post hoc comparisons applying the Tukey HSD test, Children from Class E ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 2.84$) significantly reported more events to teachers than the other four classes, and quasi-significance ($p = .074$) suggested that Class B ($M = 6.31$, $SD = 5.54$) reported more events than Class A ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 3.28$). However, Class C ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 2.67$) was not significantly inconsistent with Class D ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 4.21$).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine the correlation between class and the response type (*Table 15*). As indicated from the results, the class effect on response types was significant in the older group, with $\chi^2(1, N=288) = 31.57$, $p < .001$. A moderate effect size was found, Cramer's $V = .33$ (Cohen, 1988). Teachers in Class B were more likely to respond to tattling events in a negative manner than those in Class A. No significant difference was identified in Class C and Class D, and the teachers from the mentioned two classes were more likely to respond in positive/neutral manners. Since

only one class was categorized as the young group, I categorized the teachers' response type as the negative type.

6.5 Discussion

6.5.1 Chinese Preschool Teachers' Response Type towards Tattling

By comparing the findings with Ingram's observational study on Ireland preschool teachers' response types, it was indicated that Chinese teachers were more inclined to adopt negative approaches to deal with tattling events, and such outcome was consistent with existing research conducted in a Chinese primary school (Sun, 2015). By further analyzing the responses methods towards various reports, this thesis noticed that this responding difference might be attributed to the nature of the events. As teachers in China were more likely to adopt ineffective responses to deal with tattling events regarding classroom norm violations, while no difference was recognized in solving conflicts correlated with physical aggression or disagreement. Given the frequency differences in tattling on norm violations, which was discussed in chapter 3, Chinese children were also observed to appear more inclinations than the western population did (Ingram, 2009; 2010). Then an intriguing question arises: if teachers rarely reply the norm violation reports in a positive manner, how Chinese children are obsessed in tattling on such type of events even though they might not benefit from the report? As proposed by Hung (2014), preschools in China have long been sites for instilling obedience to authority and boosting hierarchical relationships between teachers and students. Children begin to learn how to behave "as a good child" since very early ages, and preschool teachers encourage them to tattle (Xu, 2019). Precisely due to the constant development



of submissiveness that children might consider tattling an essential approach to obtain approval from the authority figures. Nevertheless, compared with the heated desires of tattling on norm violations, teachers did not positively respond to their reports, thereby revealing a contradictory loop regarding such issue. On the one hand, teachers stressed rules and orders by strengthening the significance of children's self-mobilization (Hung, 2014). On the other hand, teachers do not perform effective actions to support such reports, which might stress the teachers' personal disapproval to tattling behaviors.

6.5.2 Children's Affective States and Nature of Transgression Affect Teachers'

Response Strategy

This thesis noticed that the severity of the reported incidents and the affective state of the tattler would impact teachers' decision of whether to intervene or not. To be specific, tattling events related to major transgressions physical aggression, property damage and taunting were more likely to arouse teachers' attention. Teachers were more likely to adopt effective responding (e.g., supporting the tattler, questioning what happened, etc.) methods to intervene tattling if the tattler expressed distinct negative emotions. Since negative emotions are often directly correlated with severe transgressions (Ingram, 2009). Compared with academic or disciplinary educations, ensuring children's safety in the classroom environment was suggested to be more important. Accordingly, such finding is easy to understand. Besides, as impacted by the limited energy in interacting with children, it is understandable why teachers often apply ineffective approaches to respond to minor transgressions.

6.5.3 Teachers' Negative Responses Increase Classroom Tattling Behaviors

One of the most original functions of tattling refers to help children protect their own rights and interests with the help of the outside world (Ross and den Bak-Lammers, 1996), so tattling is suggested to be vital for young children to fulfill self-interest preservation. Besides, tattling, as a speech activity, also involves the socialization of aggression, since it acts as a relatively peaceful approach for children to solve conflicts by inviting the authority as the mediator, rather than directly confronting with each other under a physical violence (Ingram, 2014). The teachers' response attitude, as the child's helper in the tattling incidents, represents a psychological bonding between the teacher and student, while indicating whether the child's report is legitimate for the behavior. The findings implied that the more teachers ignore the tattling events, the worse the tattling conflicts between peers could be settled. Such results suggest that teachers' indifferent attitudes to class disciplines and tattling might impose negative consequences to the classroom children.

5.5.4 Unexpected Finding

Another interesting finding in the present section was that there was a small number of events tattled on to the teacher in a rush. In other words, children who report such type of reports did not expect the teacher to give any feedbacks. They were usually conducted in a noisy way, as if they intentionally try to make the miscreant notice his or her tattling behavior other than attracting the teachers' attention or seeking assistance from the authority. To my point of view, I think it is more like an advanced type of threatening to report, which describes an individual trying to exploit authority figures to deter the

miscreant without actually getting others in trouble. This finding further supports the proposition of tattling is more than a genuine competence of recognizing moral norms, but also conveys the individual's understanding of social norms and powers. It is necessary and meaningful for us to further explore the mutual effects between children's tattling activities and teachers' interpretations of such behavior.

6.6 Conclusions

This thesis investigated preschool teachers' response towards tattling, noticed that Chinese teachers were more likely to adopt ineffective response method to deal with reports. Children's affective states and the nature of reported events would influence teachers' strategy in response type adoption. The findings also noticed that teachers' ineffective responses not only could bring up more continuous reports, but also could affect children's initiative in tattling on severe transgressions, push them to resolve conflicts in a regressed violent approach. Further, selecting children as little class head as surrogate to help monitor classroom might be effective in preventing children from committing severe misbehaviors, while strengthening the competitive atmosphere of between children. By tattling on peers' classroom norm violation, children would obtain privilege from authority and admirations from peers, and such strategy application might negatively influence children's moral understanding of tattling.

Chapter 7: Preschoolers' Moral Evaluation of Tattling

The former chapters have demonstrated both preschoolers' classroom pattern and teachers' response types towards tattling, and also illustrated that children in different sociometric statuses would reveal different tattling strategies in daily classroom activities. In the first section of this chapter, I intended make use of the social rules interview method to investigate if children could differentiate the intentions behind the tattling behavior. I postulated that children's moral evaluation of tattling vary according to the nature of the transgressed events, and meanwhile children's cognitive abilities, sociometric status might affect their evaluations towards tattling. The second section of the chapter aimed to explore if the tactic of little classroom head could affect classroom children's understanding of reporting severe transgression. According to the qualitative findings presented in Chapter 4.5, it seemed that the adoption of selecting little class head to monitor the class on behalf of the authoritative teacher might affect children's judgement of moral norms, and they might tattle for praise other than an intrinsic intention to protect norms. Therefore, the second section compared two classes children's evaluation of reporting on severe and minor transgressions, and meanwhile tested if their judgement of tattling vary if an authority independence has been provided. children educated in an environment that tattling

7.1 Preschoolers' Evaluation of Tattling in Various Intentions

7.1.1 Participants

136 4-to-6-year-old children were invited to this research, after the approval was obtained from the guardian of the preschool, the event sampling was collected accordingly.



7.1.2 Hypotheses

In this section, children's moral evaluation of tattling was investigated in a Social Rules Interview method. Children's sociometric statuses, social competencies and cognitive competencies were analyzed accordingly. The Hypotheses were shown below:

Hypothesis 1. Moral Reasoning of Tattling By investigating children's moral evaluation of tattling with various intentions, it is expected that participants in all age groups would evaluate tattling on moral transgressions more appropriate.

Hypothesis 2. Moral Reasoning of Tattling with various intentions Older children would evaluate tattling events with prosocial intentions more appropriate than those with personal benefit and retaliation intentions, while retaliation intention would be more difficult for children to comprehend.

Hypothesis 3. Age effect and Moral Evaluation It is expected that age difference will affect children's evaluation of tattling, in which younger children would consider conventional transgression to be more severe, and they might show more agreement and personal tendency about tattling on conventional transgressions.

Hypothesis 4. Sociometric Status and Tattling Evaluation It is expected that children in different sociometric statuses might reveal differences in evaluating tattling events. To be specific, the rejected children might allocate more credibility in tattling behaviors on peers.

Since children came from five different classes, an explorative analysis was also conducted to see if children's evaluation in various classes differ from each other.

7.1.3 Procedure

7.1.3.1 Moral evaluations of tattling with various intentions

The social rules interview was applied to measure children's evaluation of tattling in this chapter. Before the formal test, a series of 12 vignettes were developed by the experimenter and modified after consulting suggestions from professional professors and several teachers in the preschool, so that we could ensure these presented scenarios are clearly, understandable and realistic for the preschool children. All protagonists' names are feminized in girl's interview and masculine in boy's interview. The names of protagonists are changed in accordance to the sex of participants (The vignettes were piloted by 14 children between 4 to 7 years of age and re-revised based on the children's rating of incident severity and acceptability of tattling).

Children were assessed individually in a quiet area of their school, and they were presented with a series of four three-part depicted vignettes in an iPad, with the first part of each vignette depicted a single protagonist or a group of protagonists who engage in a moral or conventional transgression that is witnessed by a peer observer, and the second part of the vignette presented an image of the peer observer turns to report on the transgression to a teacher, the third part of the vignettes described the same scenario of the peer's reporting to a teacher, except a thinking bubble appeared above the reporter's image, which presented the intention of the reporter (e.g. "*If I report on him, I will be praised by Ms.Li.*")

Since the present study aims to investigate if children would consider the intentions of tattling while evaluating the tattling events, four scenarios (2 moral transgressions:

stealing, pushing; 2 conventional transgressions: wrong clothes, drink spilt) were selected, and each scenario constructs three different vignettes with different intentions (personal benefits, retaliation and prosocial intention). Here is an example for a moral transgression:

(Moral Transgression) At school, Lin-Lin and Yuan-Yuan are playing bricks together. Peng-Peng in pushed Lin Lin's back, Yuan-Yuan fell down and broke down the bricks. Yuan-Yuan witnessed this incident.

Self-benefit: Yuan-yuan thought: "If I tell the Ms. Li what happened, she will punish him and I will be praised." So Yuan-Yuan called Ms. Li and pointed at Peng Peng: "He just pushed Lin Lin's back and Lin Lin broke down the bricks!"

Retaliation: Yuan-yuan thought: "Just now Peng-Peng tattled on me, I will tell Ms. Li so that he will be punished too!" So Yuan-Yuan called Ms. Li and pointed at Peng- Peng: "He just pushed Lin Lin's back and Lin-Lin broke down the bricks!"

Prosocial intention: Yuan-yuan thought: "I should tell Ms. Li in case Lin-Lin gets hurt!" So Yuan-Yuan called Ms. Li and pointed at Peng-Peng: He just pushed Lin- Lin's back and Lin-Lin broke down the bricks!"

(Conventional Transgression) At school, classmates are having fruit juice together. Mei-Mei accidentally fell off and spilt some strawberry juice on the floor, and Lin- Ling witnessed what happened.

Self-benefit: Ling-Ling thought: "If I tell Ms. Wang, she will praise me for holding my own cups tightly." So she called Ms. Wang and pointed at the stained floor and said:

“Mei-Mei spilt the strawberry juice on the floor.”

Retaliation: Lin-Ling thought: “She just reported on me to Ms. Wang, I will tell on her too!” So she called Ms. Wang and pointed at the stained floor and said: “Mei-Mei spilt the strawberry juice on the floor.”

Prosocial Intention: Ling-Ling thought: “It is so slippery! I should tell Ms. Wang in case others slip.” So she called Ms. Wang and pointed at the stained floor and said: “Mei-Mei spilt the strawberry juice on the floor.”

After being acknowledged the first part of one vignette, two pre-questions were assessed to ensure children’s understanding of the situation “What happened to Lin-Lin (victim)?” “who (transgressor) did this?”. If the child fails to respond, the experimenter will present the vignette again and ask the same two questions once more. The interview continues only if the child answers these two questions correctly.

Next, the researcher would ask the child’s attitudes of the *severity of transgression* “do you think it is good or bad, or neither good nor bad for Tian-Tian (transgressor/s) doing this?” Participants responding that the action was good or bad were then asked to rate how good or bad (e.g. good, very good) and responses were scored on 7-point scale (Chiu Loke, 2014; Lee, Cameron, Xu, Fu, & Board, 1997) in which the response options ranged from -3 (very, very bad) to 3 (very, very good).

Secondly, the researcher presented the child the scenario which the peer observer reporting to teacher. *Children’s acceptability of tattling* was interviewed as “do you think it is good or bad, or neither good nor bad for Ming-Ming (tattler) reporting this to

teacher?” The same 7-point scale will be used for coding scores. Children were also asked an *obligation to tell*: “What should Ming-Ming Have done? Should he have told the teacher what Tian-Tian did, or not told?” The response was coded on a 3-point-scale: not to tell (-1 point), other (0 point), and should tell (1 point). The same scale for *personal tendency* question “What would you do?” Children’s explanations of their responses were also interviewed and noted as explorative resources to assist acquiring further evidence which might not be revealed from a quantitative approach.

After being presented the third part of the vignette, *children’s acceptability of tattling with various intentions* were noted following the same 7-point scale (Chiu Loke, 2014; Lee, Cameron, Xu, Fu, & Board, 1997) in which the response options ranged from -3 (very, very bad) to 3 (very, very good).

7.1.3.2 Measurements for Cognitive and Social competencies

A. Cognitive Competencies

Theory of Mind

Two standard ToM tasks assessing children’s false beliefs were conducted, and during the assessment, each child was invited to take part individually.

a. First-Order False Belief Test

Tests modified from the “change of location” paradigm (Wimmer & Perner, 1983) was applied. For example, the researcher presented two depict stories to the child and ask the participant to look at the pictures accordingly. Since the participants are all Chinese, the

names have been changed into Chinese names, so that the participants will be familiar with. For example, the contents of the pictures illustrate a boy named Xiao Ming is reading a book, and he puts the book on the table when he leaves. Then, Li Li comes in and she places the book from the table to the drawer, and then she leaves. After Li Li leaving the room, Xiao Ming comes back and starts looking for the book he just read. Two confirming questions will be asked first to assure the child has understood the story: “Where did Xiao Ming put the book?” “Where is the book now?” The target question will be asked only after the child correctly answered these two questions. “Where will Xiao Ming go to find the book when he returns?” Another similar situation will be repeated with the same score rules. The maximum score will be 2 points.

b. Second-Order False Belief Test

The “new story” paradigm used by Sullivan and Zaitchik (1994) was conducted to test children’s second order false belief. This paradigm has been regarded as a clever method to test children’s second order false belief as it is easy to conduct and low requirement in information processing, thus making children easier to comprehend the story and more precise in testing their actual performance. Two stories will be depicted in a book and children will be invited to look at the stories.

One story would be the “Birthday Present” and the other one would be a similar story developed by the researcher. For example, the “Birthday Present” describes an interaction between the protagonist (Yuan Yuan) and his/her mother. Yuan Yuan’s mother wants to give him a birthday surprise, so she tells Yuan Yuan that he will get a bike as birthday present, but the real present is actually a bike. However, Yuan Yuan accidentally found

out that the real present is a bike when his mother is absent. The control questions are “does Yuan Yuan know that his mother will give him a puppy dog for birthday?” “Does Yuan Yuan’s mother know that Yuan Yuan has found out the puppy dog?” The target questions were asked only after the child correctly answered these two questions. “Yuan Yuan’s grandfather asks mom: ‘does Yuan Yuan know that his birthday present will be a puppy dog?’ What will mom answer?” “Yuan Yuan’s dad asks mom: ‘What present does Yuan Yuan think you have prepared for him?’ What will mom answer?” Both questions will be open questions so that children will be free to answer, thus the researcher will also ask the child “why will mom answer like that” to confirm the child actually understand the situation.

For each question, 0.5 point was given for correctly answering the question, and 0.5 for explaining the reason. Incapable of explaining (“I do not know.”) or unrelated explanations (“She thinks Yuan Yuan will prefer a puppy dog.”) was scored 0 point. A similar story vignette (Birthday present: Bike) was presented to the child with the same score scheme. A maximum score was 2 points for each participant. The whole duration for ToM investigation was around 5 minutes.

Emotion Understanding

Children’s abilities in emotion understanding was measured in the proposed study and the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) for 3 to 12-year old children designed by Pons and Harris (2000). During the test, all participated children were invited to fulfill the task individually. The TEC evaluates 9 separate components, including: 1. Basic facial expression recognition; 2. understanding external causes of emotion; 3. understanding

desire-oriented emotions; 4. understanding belief-oriented emotions; 5. understanding the influence of a reminder; 6. understanding the regulation of an experienced emotion; 7. understanding the possibility of hiding an emotion; 8. understanding mixed emotion; and 9. understanding moral emotions (Pons, & Harris, 2000). TEC has good reliability and validity, with index of consistency= 0.68, test- retest reliabilities after 3- and 13-months were 0.83 and 0.68 respectively (Pons, et, al., 2004). A cartoon book consists nine corresponding short animated stories will be illustrated respectively in each page. At the bottom of each story, four options were presented to children to choose from (facial emotional expressions accordingly). As the researcher finished reading one vignette for the children, they were invited to choose the proper emotion expression for the scenario (happy, sad, angry, fear, or just alright) as the complexity of scenarios develop.

A Chinese amended version of TEC (Liu, 2010) was applied. Two approaches were taken for score calculation. Firstly, each individual score of nine components were calculated independently, with one point being assigned to one component being correctly answered. Secondly, the overall score of nine components were generated, ranging from 0 to 9 points. Further, these nine components were categorized into three clusters as follows: The External group (including recognition of emotions, understanding external causes of emotion, and understanding the influence of reminder); the Mental group (including understanding of desire- and belief-based emotions, and understanding the possibility of hiding emotions; the Reflective group (including the comprehension of mixed and moral emotions, and emotion regulation) (Pons & Harris, 2005).

7.1.4 Analyses

All analyses in the current study were conducted using IBM SPSS 24.0, and One-way ANOVA, repeated measures of ANOVA, Chi Square analysis, correlational analysis and independent sample t-tests were applied accordingly.

7.1.5 Results

Preliminary analyses indicated no effects of whether the protagonist was a single peer, the gender of participants, or question order, so the mentioned factors were omitted from subsequent analyses. All of the participants were aware of the story scenarios, thus a total of 136 samples were recruited in the analyses.

7.1.5.1 Evaluation of Transgression

Paired t tests on the overall mean for children's evaluation of transgression for moral and conventional transgressions with Bonferroni adjustments confirmed that children consistently considered moral transgressions to be more severe than conventional transgressions. Additionally, both conventional transgressions were rated similarly, too. Thus, composite scores were created and used for all analyses.

Table 9 lists the mean ratings for the evaluation of transgression question. An ANOVA was conducted for the evaluation of transgression question with transgression type as the within-subjects factor and children's age as the between-subject factor. As suggested from the result, besides the effect of transgression type, $F(1,133) = 80.92, p < .001, \eta^2 = .53$, there was an effect of age, $F(2,133) = 16.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .32$, and an interaction effect between transgression type and age, $F(2,133) = 13.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) revealed no significant age differences in the evaluations of

moral transgressions, and both 5- and 6-year-olds evaluated conventional transgressions less severe than moral transgression. *Fig. 1* illustrates 4- to 6-year-olds' evaluations of transgression.

7.1.5.2 Children's Acceptability of Tattling

Table 10 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for children's evaluations of tattling. An ANOVA was conducted for the evaluation of transgression question with transgression type as the within-subjects factor and children's age as the between-subject factor. As suggested from the result, besides the effect of tattling type, $F(1,133) = 59.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .47$, there was an effect of age, $F(2,133) = 7.94$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .26$, and the interaction effect between tattling and age was not significant, $F(2,133) = .86$, $p = .43$. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that children evaluated tattling on peers' moral transgression more acceptable than tattling on conventional transgressions. 6-year-olds' evaluation of tattling under moral conditions was significantly lower than 4- and 5-year-olds', and 6-year-olds' allocated lower acceptance in tattling on conventional transgression than 4-year-olds. *Fig. 2* illustrates 4- to 6-year-olds' acceptance to tattling accordingly.

7.1.5.3 Obligation to Tell and Personal Tendency

Participants' responses to the obligation to tell and personal tendency questions for moral and conventional transgressions are shown in *Fig. 3* and *Fig. 4*. Results were similar to children's evaluation of tattling. 4-year-olds thought that characters are obligated to report and themselves also reveal strong personal tendencies in tattling in either moral or

conventional scenarios, while 5- and 6-year-olds only revealed the decisions to tell in moral transgression scenario. A one-way ANOVAs was conducted for conventional scenarios. The outcomes indicated an effect of age in both obligation to tell, $F(2,133) = 6.14, p = .003, \eta^2 = .66$ and Personal Tendency to tell, $F(2,133) = 3.05, p = .05, \eta^2 = .28$, with 6-year-olds thought tattling on conventional transgression less necessary than both 5- and 4- year-olds, and 5-year-olds achieved less willingness to tattle on conventional transgressions than 4-year-olds.

7.1.5.4 Children's Acceptability of Tattling with Different Intentions

Table 10 lists children's evaluations of tattling with various intentions. A 4 (1 controlled evaluation and 3 subscribed tattling intentions) x 3 (age groups) x 2 (transgression type) multi-factor ANOVA was conducted by applying evaluations of tattling on moral transgressions and on conventional transgressions as repeated design dependent variables. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2(5) = 38.54, p < .0001$, so a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was used. Significant main effect of intention $F(2.51, 373.89) = 151.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .84$, of transgression type, $F(1, 373.89) = 32.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .78$. As revealed from the planned contrasts ($p < .05$), children rated reporting moral transgressions more positively than telling conventional transgressions, and children evaluated the tattling for the retaliatory intention the least acceptable than praise intension or prosocial intention, and children assessed the prosocial intension of tattling most acceptable.

Interaction effect of intention and age, $F(5.03, 373.89) = 9.48, p = .001, \eta^2 = .27$, and interaction effect of intention and transgression type, $F(2.81, 373.89) = 5.12, p = .002, \eta^2 = .13$.

=.23, were also noticed. Planned contrasts ($p < .05$) indicated that 5- and 6-year-olds evaluated tattling for retaliatory intention the least appropriate, and 6-year-olds suggested the most differentiation in recognizing tattling with various intentions (*Fig. 3*). No difference was identified in 4-year-olds in evaluating the intentions of praise and retaliation.

7.1.5.5 Sociometric Status and Theory of mind, Emotion Understanding

Children's theory of mind and emotion understanding competencies were compared in the ANOVA, with children's sociometric status as the independent factor. As suggested from the result, sociometric status effect was significant in children's performance of emotion understanding tests, $F(4,131) = 2.37, p = .047$, the post hoc comparisons adopting the Tukey HSD test revealed that the mean score for the rejected children ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.33$) was lower than controversial children ($M = 5.92, SD = 1.15$) and popular children ($M = 5.46, SD = 1.61$). However, no other significant difference was identified. After splitting the data by age groups, one-way ANOVA results indicated that sociometric status effect in cognitive competences were not significant among 4-year-olds (all $p > .05$). Moreover, 5-year-olds in different sociometric statuses scored differently in the overall performance of theory of mind, $F(4,69) = 3.70, p = .009$. As suggested from the post hoc comparisons applying the Tukey HSD test, the mean score for neglected children ($M = .53, SD = .40$) was lower than controversial children ($M = 1.32, SD = .65$) and popular children ($M = 1.03, SD = .68$) and average children ($M = 1.02, SD = .66$). For 6-year-olds, the ability of recognizing reflective group emotions was significantly different in various sociometric groups, $F(4,44) = 2.78, p = .038$. As implied from the post hoc comparisons applying the Tukey HSD test, the mean score for controversial children

($M = 2.00$, $SD = .33$) was remarkably higher than average children ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .78$) and neglected children ($M = 1.14$, $SD = .69$) and rejected children ($M = .71$, $SD = .76$). No other significant difference was identified.

7.1.5.6 Sociometric statuses, Theory of Mind, Emotion Comprehension and Moral

Evaluations of Tattling

A 4 (1 controlled evaluation and 3 subscribed tattling intentions) x 2 (transgression type) x 3 (sociometric status) multi-factor ANOVA was conducted to check if children in different sociometric hierarchies might reveal different acceptance in evaluating tattling events. However, no significant interaction effect was identified ($p > .05$).

Next, A 4 (1 controlled evaluation and 3 subscribed tattling intentions) x 3 (age groups) x 2 (transgression type) multi-factor analysis of covariances was conducted using evaluations of tattling on moral transgressions and on conventional transgressions as the repeated design dependent variables, and children's overall score of the theory of mind and emotion understanding competences acted as the covariates. As indicated from Mauchly's Test of Sphericity, the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2(5) = 32.20$, $p < .0001$, so a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was exploited. An interaction effect of emotion understanding and intention was identified $F(2.58, 370.04) = 3.71$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .23$. To be specific, children with a better ability to differentiate the intentions of praise and retaliation from prosocial intention scored higher in the overall competence in emotion understanding. Furthermore, this thesis identified no significant interaction effect between intention and the theory of mind.

7.1.5.7 Explanation of Personal Tendency

132 Children's explanations of personal tendency to report in moral and conventional scenarios were noted and transcribed in *Table 11*. Almost half of children's explanations of tattling on moral transgression was driven by a concern of the victim, 46.8% of the children considered that it is unnecessary to tattle on conventional transgression. Besides, a minor sociometric effect in analyzing the explanation distribution was noticed, $F(4,131) = 3.26$, $p = .039$, $\eta^2 = .09$, and popular children were more inclined to develop a third way to deal with moral transgressions (talking to the transgressor first and then deciding whether to tattle or not).

7.1.5.8 Class Effect and Tattling Evaluation

Independent t samples of analyses were conducted between the Oldest Group and Middle Group to verify whether class variation exists among the participants. As indicated from the results, the oldest group children's evaluations of tattling were generally consistent ($p > .05$), while children from Class C allocated less acceptability in tattling on moral transgressions for praise ($M = .65$, $SD = 2.04$) and revenge ($M = -.50$, $SD = 1.92$) intentions than children from Class D (praise: $M = 2.10$, $SD = .83$, $t(55) = -3.01$, $p = .001$; retaliation: $M = .81$, $SD = 1.38$, $t(55) = -2.98$, $p = .004$).

7.1.6 Discussion

7.1.6.1 Children's Evaluation towards Tattling

This thesis first investigated if 4- to 6-year-olds' moral understanding of tattling in the scenarios of moral and conventional transgression. As approved by children in all age groups, the tattling on moral transgressions was more acceptable than the tattling on

conventional transgression. They also expressed obligation and personal tendency to tattle on peers' moral transgression. However, 4-year-olds revealed more obligation and personal willingness in tattling on conventional transgression. The second intension of the study was to investigate whether 4- to 6- year-olds would consider the intentions of tattling when evaluating the acceptability of tattling. Children in all age group evaluated the reporting of prosocial motives the most acceptable, and 5- and 6-year-olds thought tattle for retaliatory intentions the least acceptable, while 4-year-olds did not recognize the difference between retaliatory intension and praise intension. By examining if children's cognitive competences and sociometric status would affect their evaluations of tattling with different intentions, the competence of emotion understanding turned out to be negatively correlated with children's evaluations of tattling on conventional transgressions, while theory of mind and children's sociometric status were not correlated with their judgements.

The result of children evaluating reporting moral transgression more acceptable than conventional transgression complied with social domain theorists' demonstration, i.e., children have innate ability to distinguish moral and conventional domain events (Smetana, 2010; Turiel, 2008). Given children's decreased acceptance of tattling, one factor might have contributed is children's cognitive abilities. This thesis noticed an intrinsic correlation between children's emotion understanding competence and intention differentiation ability, and it is considered that such a competence allows children to more effectively recognize and empathize others (Harris, 1994). Accordingly, children with better competence in emotion understanding might be more likely to identify which situation would bring negative feelings to the victim. The second factor might be

children's social experience. Through experiences, children might progressively interpret tattling as less acceptable by the social group (Friman, et al., 2004). The third factor concerns a teachers' attitudes to tattling (Sun, 2015; Xu, 2019), as Chinese teachers are very concerned about the establishment of class order, one possibility can't be ruled out is that teachers' negative attitudes to tattling might affect children's understanding of tattling.

7.1.6.2 Tattling Behavior and Tattling Evaluation

This thesis not only aims to explore children's understanding of different tattling motives, but also to explore the consistency of children's moral cognition towards tattling and classroom tattling behaviors. This thesis noticed that four-year-olds adopt a relatively unitary pattern of tattling, with most of the events were self-related, and the intentions of tattling were mainly motivated by the desire of seeking help and attracting attention. Their acceptance towards tattling were broadly consistent with the moral domain theory's argument, that children have innate ability to distinguish between moral and conventional domain events. However, due to the relatively weak ability in moral cognition or a lack of social experiences, 4-year-olds were unable to understand complicated intentions of tattling. It could be concluded that both 4-year-olds' tattling cognition and behavior are consistently positioned in a primary stage. At the age of five, as cognitive and social skills develop, children begin to show more complex motivations in reporting, and their understanding of intentions deepens. However, the overall frequency did not decrease. This inconsistency might be attributed to a relatively weak competence of executive functions, which was important in assisting self-control (Adam, 2005). For 6-year-olds, significant decreased acceptability of tattling on conventional transgression and



decreased overall tattling frequency were noticed, and children at the age of six revealed a better ability to differentiate intentions. Moreover, the motives of children's daily tattling activities became remarkably more diverse. The result implies that 6-year-olds begin to actively apply the tattling strategy to fulfill desires of obtaining either entity resources (e.g., disputes) or social resources (e.g., reputation, dominance power) other than passively tattle on others to protect individual benefits. Ingram (2010) presented that older children's motives of tattling are often conducted in a complex approach, which means that children constantly optimize their tattling strategies, so their real intentions could be well hidden behind their rationalized tattling activities.

Besides analyzing the consistency between tattling behavior and tattling cognition from the perspective of age development, this thesis also explored the behavioral consistency of children from a sociometric status scope. Though children with different sociometric statuses did not reveal effects in evaluating tattling events, significant different tattling frequencies were noticed. The overall frequency of popular children's reports is significantly lower than that of other children. In addition, popular children were suggested to be more likely to tattle on norm violation events other than seek-for-help incidents, and their explanations of personal tendency to report also indicated an advanced ability in problem solving (i.e., reason with the miscreant first, and then decide whether report or not.). Thus, popular children are more intended to apply positive strategies in dealing with peer conflicts, which might be another factor to explain why prosocial children tattle less than the other children.

For the controversial children, they tattle the most frequent in classroom, and they appeared a wide range of tattling motivations. However, the moral understanding of



tattling did not vary from the other sociometric hierarchy children. The implication of this result suggested an inconsistency in tattling behavior and understanding. On the one hand, they presented age-appropriate evaluation of tattling, on the other hand, they consider tattling a useful approach to fulfill various personal intentions. Though some quasi-significances indicated that controversial children received higher scores in theory of mind tests and emotion understanding measures, especially the competence in recognizing reflective emotions, the limitation of small sample size failed to further testify this hypothesis, thus more participants will be recruited to modify this issue in the future studies.

The rejected children concerned more on self-benefit-related events. Though they will report transgressions unrelated to their own interests when they grow older, most of such reports were tattled on out of revenge motives, which can be traced back to serve their own interests. I preliminarily hypothesize that the inconsistency of their tattling behavior and understanding might also be explained by the less developed ability of cognition, as less advanced performance in emotion recognition might correlated with the ability of self-emotional regulation (Buta, 2015). This thesis noticed that rejected children scored lower in emotion comprehension, while due to the limited sample size, the difference was not noticed.

7.2 “Little Class Head” Strategy’s Effect towards Children’s Moral Understanding of Tattling

Since children’s understanding of the world is inevitably correlated with their social

experiences, actions, and developmental outcomes (Olson & Dweck, 2008), investigating children's moral judgements through interviews is a vital method for researchers to understand how they process moral event information and their personal inclinations through such moral scenarios. Based on the research findings that the "little class head" strategy might increase children's tattling on peers' classroom norm violations, as children are motivated to behave better so that they could obtain favors from the teachers, the current investigation aimed to verify whether children's acceptance towards tattling will be affected when teachers announced approval to the reported transgression. This thesis predicts that children from the "little class head" strategy adopted class would reveal less acceptance towards tattling after the teachers' approval to moral transgression. Based on the findings of the mixed observation, a social rules interview was carried out to investigate if the strategy of applying "little class head" monitoring classroom discipline would affect children's moral evaluation of tattling. As impacted by the limited sample size, this investigation was only conducted as preliminary research to arouse researchers' attention that children being introduced to the concepts of power or privilege during preschool age might gain a distorted moral understanding of rules.

7.2.1 Participant

26 children from Class C were recruited (10 girls, $Mage = 5.68$, $SD = .44$) and 31 children from Class D (18 girls, $Mage = 5.46$, $SD = .20$) were invited to this thesis by the end of the observation study. The reason for selecting the mentioned two classes, was because teachers from Class C used the "little class head" strategy quite often than Class D, which did not adopt such strategy at all. No age difference was identified ($p > .05$), so

the age effect was omitted in the following tests. 7 children of Class C and 6 children of Class D were nominated as popular children, 4 children of Class C and 2 children of Class D were nominated as controversial children. As impacted by the limited sample size, this thesis failed to investigate whether controversial children would reveal less acceptance when teachers held an indifferent attitude to the transgression that was tattled on.

7.2.2 Measures and Analyses

Consistent with the social rule interview study in Chapter 2, 4 scenarios (2 moral transgressions, i.e., hitting and teasing; 2 conventional transgressions, i.e., walk in line and disagreement in play) were selected from children's activities on a day-to-day basis. All protagonists' names were feminized in girl's interview and masculine in boy's interview. The names of protagonists were changed by complying with the sex of participants.

Children were assessed individually in a quiet area of their school, and they were presented with 4 two-part depicted vignettes in an iPad, with the first part of the respective vignette depicting a single protagonist or a group of protagonists engaging in a moral or conventional transgression that was witnessed by a peer observer, and the second part of the vignette presented an image of the peer observer turns to tattle on the transgression to a teacher. After being acknowledged the first part of one vignette, two pre-questions were assessed to ensure children's understanding of the situation "What had happened to Lin-Lin (victim)?" "Who (transgressor) did this?". If the child failed to respond, the experimenter would present the vignette again and ask the identical two

questions once more. The interview would continue only if the child answered the mentioned two questions correctly.

Children's acceptability of tattling was interviewed as “do you think it is good or bad, or neither good nor bad for Ming-Ming (tattler) reporting this to teacher?” Participants responding that the action was good or bad were subsequently asked to rate how good or bad (e.g., good, very good), and responses were scored at 7-point scale (Chiu Loke, 2014; Lee, Cameron, Xu, Fu, & Board, 1997) with the response options ranging from -3 (very, very bad) to 3 (very, very good).

Next, a *Reverse authoritative instruction for tattling* question was asked: “If there is another teacher called Ms. Liang from other class says she will not do anything about this tattling, do you think if it is good or bad for Ling-Ling reporting the transgression to her? Why?” A 7-point-scale was employed for recording participants' responses to this issue.

7.2.3 Analyses

All analyses in this thesis were conducted with IBM SPSS 24.0, and paired sample t tests were performed accordingly.

7.2.4 Results

Acceptance towards Tattling

Paired t tests on the overall mean for children's evaluation of acceptance for moral and conventional transgressions with Bonferroni adjustments confirmed that children consistently considered moral transgressions to be more severe than conventional transgressions. Additionally, both conventional transgressions were rated similarly, too.

Thus, composite scores were created and used for all analyses.

The mean ratings for the tattling acceptance are presented in *Table 16*. As can be seen, children evaluated reporting moral transgression more acceptable than tattling on conventional Transgression. An independent t tests was conducted to confirm if two participated classes revealed tattling differently, while the results indicated no class effect exists, $p > .05$. (*Fig. 7*).

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to verify whether children's acceptance towards reporting moral transgression varies after the reverse authoritative instruction was given, $t(56) = 9.62$, $p < .0001$. To be specific, children's acceptance towards tattling ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .68$) decreased in the authoritative instruction condition ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .81$). The similar results revealed in conventional reporting situation, with children's acceptance towards reporting conventional transgression ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 1.02$) decreased in the authoritative instruction condition ($M = .16$, $SD = .37$).

This thesis further analyzed if Class C children's acceptance towards tattling decreased noticeably lower than Class D by independent sample test, it revealed that Class C ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.77$, $SD = .91$) children's acceptance decreased significantly more than Class D children ($M_{\text{difference}} = .84$, $SD = .86$), $t(55) = 3.97$, $p < .001$ (*Fig. 8*) while the acceptance difference was not significant in the reporting conventional issue condition (*Fig. 9*).

7.2.5 Discussion

In line with the findings of social rule interview in 7.1, this thesis also noticed that children's acceptance towards moral reporting was higher than reporting conventional

transgressions, thereby indicating that children are aware of the severity differences between moral and conventional conflicts. This thesis also noticed that children's acceptance towards tattling significantly decreased in both moral and conventional conditions. Such outcome might be correlated with nature of tattling behavior, as tattling is generally considered as an unwelcome activity in the social groups, thus teachers' indifferent attitude towards tattling might make the children to consider if tattling is the appropriate method to deal with the described event. Besides, this outcome might somehow support the above-mentioned situation, which teachers' indifferent attitudes to tattling might decrease children's initiative in reporting.

The outcomes also noticed that children from the "little class head" strategy class were more likely to be navigated by teachers' attitudes to the described reports, which provides evidence to our concerns that children's moral concept might be distorted if they are introduced to the concept of power or privilege in early age of their development. To be specific, the use of privilege strategy among preschoolers for class discipline management has a potential danger to harm children's moral value in a distorted way. Even though their moral understandings did not vary from other normal developing individuals, such children are more easily to have formed a fractional understanding of tattling, as well as a competitive and unhealthy correlation between teachers and students. In brief, tattling refers to a natural behavior among children, teachers should instruct children to differentiate from things that should be reported and those should be resolved by themselves, other than excessively exploiting such a speech act to monitor classroom discipline ethos. Even though tattling might represent the bonds between teacher/pupil hierarchy, tattling should not have a competitive and malicious motivation to please the



teachers.

7.3 Conclusion

Through the study of children's evaluation of tattling events, it was implied that children would consider the nature of the transgressing events, as well as the motivations of the tattler while evaluating the acceptance of the complaint. Age effect was significant in affecting children's ability to differentiate tattling motivations. Children from different sociometric statuses did show reveal different acceptance to various tattling intentions, but considering their daily tattling behaviors, obvious inconsistencies between words and deeds were noticed.

Chapter 8: General Discussion

As a speech act, tattling not only represents children's cognition of norms, but also underlies the reporting children's desires behind such activity. Due to the complexity of tattling motivations and reported issues, rare studies discussed if children with different social competences would appear different strategies in tattling on peers' misbehaviors, nor did previous study investigated if teachers' responses to tattling might affect the classroom children's tattling activity. Thus, the goals of this thesis were to explore Chinese preschoolers' tattling behavior formation in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This thesis first discussed the intentions of preschool children's tattling intentions in daily activities and teachers' interpretations of tattling in a qualitative approach, thus an overall view of tattling was built up, and some assumptions could be generated for the following investigations. Secondly, by adopting a sampling



observation method (Ingram, 2009), this thesis addressed the overall features of Chinese preschoolers' tattling activities, as well as the tattling characteristic differences among children in different sociometric status. Thirdly, this thesis discussed teachers' external effect towards classroom children's tattling behaviors development. By applying a mixed observation approach, Chinese preschool teachers' response type towards tattling was generated, and external factors that might influence children's classroom tattling behaviors were discussed. To further confirm the behavioral consistency between children's tattling behavior and understanding of tattling among various sociometric status children, the social rules interview method was conducted accordingly. Last but not the least, based on the findings of observation study, another social rule interview was conducted to confirm if the "little class head" discipline strategy might affect children's moral cognition of tattling.

Several vital results were obtained from the findings. First, children usually adopt the tattling strategy to fulfill individual preservation intentions. With age, the overall frequency of children's tattling decreased, whereas the motives of tattling become remarkably more various. Second, children in different sociometric statuses revealed different strategies in tattling activities and tattling intention distributions, with popular children tattling less frequently and more likely to tattle norm violation-related events. Controversial and rejected children often adopt the tattling strategy for self-benefit protection, whereas the controversial children were suggested to have more complex motives in using tattling strategies. In addition, controversial and rejected children were tattled on by peers the most. The neglected type children were tattled on the least among the observed participants. Third, according to the analysis on children's evaluation of



tattling events, children would consider the nature of the transgressing events, as well as the motivations of the tattler while evaluating the acceptance of the tattling. The age effect was significant in affecting children's ability to differentiate tattling motivations. Fourth, children from different sociometric statuses did not show different acceptances to various tattling intentions, whereas given their daily tattling behaviors, obvious inconsistencies between words and deeds were identified. The 5th main finding of this thesis suggested that Chinese preschool teachers are more likely to adopt ineffective response strategies (for instance, ignoring the tattling, merely expressing acknowledgement, and reprimanding the tattler) to deal with children's tattling. 6th, teachers' ineffective attitudes to serious transgression not only might increase the possibility of children's constant reports, but also brings up the chances of children dealing with conflicts in physical aggressive methods. Last but not least, the "little class head" strategy was suggested as an effective way to manage class disciplines, whereas children educated under such an environment were indicated to be more competitive than those not taught in little class head atmosphere. They are implied to be more eager to please the teachers, so they could be adopted as the surrogate of the authority and obtain admirations from the peers. However, if children are introduced to the concept of power at the preschool age, their moral acceptance of tattling on moral transgressions were more likely to be affected by the authority's attitudes.

8.1 Strengths and Contributions of this Thesis

The significances of this thesis could be considered from the following aspects. First, the meaning of exploring children's tattling behavior is not just because it represents children's moral cognition of norms, the more important feature of tattling is attributed to

its multiple functions, and children can achieve their inner intentions when applying such a type of narrative means. Tattling is more than a regular speech, it also represents tattler's intention and moral judgment to the miscreant's behavior. It could be motivated by an antisocial and malicious desire to punish and harm others, to arouse more attention from authorities, or be stimulated by an accumulative prosocial intention to maintain and reinforce social norms and protect others from dangers. Children's social popularity and social impact act as 2 vital indexes to assess a child's social relationships with others, which effectively represents the child's social dominance hierarchy in the class, as well as the child's pro-sociality, aggression behaviors (Wilt, 2019; Zequinão, et al., 2020). Accordingly, studying tattling behaviors of children with different sociometric statuses can yield a valuable approach for us to understand how children with different social characteristics think and do during their social interactions.

Second, young children's tattling behaviors provides a vision to understand how children develop and practice their understandings of norms, while offering an opportunity for researchers to directly observe how authority figures and peer relationships affect their early social behaviors. By observing different ages of Chinese preschoolers' tattling behaviors in a natural teaching environment and collecting psychological and social factors of all observed children (e.g., aggression degrees and popularity), this thesis provides both statistical and empirical evidence for us to view the correlation between tattling behaviors and tattling understanding, and the interactions with children's social competencies, cognitive abilities and teachers' attitudes to tattling events.

Third, domain theorists propose that children's moral develops in different approaches, with age, the distinction between moral and conventional domains turns out to be even



clearer. Though SDT has been effectively supported in various developmental behavioral studies (e.g., aggression development (Jambon, 2016; Nucci, 2015) and Moral Evaluation studies (Arsenio, 2014)), relatively rare tattling studies have been conducted to testify this theory. Thus, this thesis investigated children's moral understanding and classified their daily tattling activities in a SDT approach, thus enabling us better understand the correlation between moral behaviors and moral understandings under the issue of tattling.

Last but not least, tattling represents a triadic relationship among the tattler, the miscreant and the audience. Existing studies noticed an intrinsic association between childhood tattling and adulthood relational aggression, and further indicated a negative correlation between tattling and social interrelationship with peers. Accordingly, a path is required to intervene children's proper tattling behaviors and prevent them from obsessed tattling or relational aggression. As the adult authorities in the classroom, teachers are critical to making rules and peer conflict reconciliation. Existing studies claimed that teachers should more carefully care about peer conflicts and be empathic to children, as an attempt to help children with emotion expression. However, nowadays Chinese education faces several challenges (e.g., large numbers of students, lack of preschool teachers, as well as professional training), thereby making it difficult for teachers to more effectively intervene in each tattling event. This thesis suggested that the strategy of "little class head" might be an effective approach to decrease class physical aggression events, while it might bring up more complicated intention-based reports. This finding helps understand children and the operation mechanism of their society, while presenting cross-cultural perspectives for researchers to understand Chinese moral education.

8.2 Educational Inspirations in Preschool Teaching Settings

As presented in the current thesis, it is quite common for children report on peers during the middle childhood (Ingram, 2019). Through the findings, it has been implied that teachers have different interpretations about classroom tattling activities. Due to the extremely busy workload of teachers', it was impossible for teachers to intervene every tattling event. Besides, their preference towards the tattler, and the nature of the transgressed event could also affect their response type of the tattling event. Nevertheless, it seemed that children during this period innately have an urge to communicate with the authoritative figures (i.e. the teachers in the classroom setting). If teachers adopt a passive method to intervene the reported conflict, a series social conflicts (maybe even worse) might keep acting out until the teachers take actions. Therefore, in order to effectively intervene children's classroom tattling events, some practical suggestions were listed accordingly.

Immediate interventions such as stopping the harmful behavior, comforting the victim should be provided once a severe transgression has been reported. With these actions, it should be helpful to keep further harmful event from children. Secondly, by comforting the victims, teacher's immediate intervention not only well protects children's benefits, provide psychological supports to the victims, and then develop a rapport relationship with the children, but also make well use of the reported event as an example to reinforce class students' understanding of morality and social norms.

Regarding to the minor transgression reports, although they are quite common among preschool, it seemed that children would address lower credits to such tattling events. It could be suggested to instruct the children practicing their own problem solving abilities in the daily class. Different from the major transgression, which is often related to

physical and mental aggressions and could not be reconciled by children themselves, minor transgression reports are more related to social conventional misdeeds, such as joint play disagreement, careless and harmless misdeeds. It should be useful to gradually develop children's problem-solving abilities, thus the frequency of reporting might decrease as children have resolved the conflicts themselves before they are reported. Besides, encouraging children to tootle on peer's positive behaviors has also been regarded as an effective approach to decrease classroom tattling frequencies. By intentionally observing the good deeds in the classroom, children would focus more on the positive activities and gradually internalize such behaviors into their daily life (Miller, 2017).

Teachers' responses towards tattling should not only be adjusted according to the nature of the transgressed events, but specific interventions towards different type of children needed to be postulated. Based on the findings of classroom popular children, it seemed that they revealed lower frequency of overall reporting, lower ratio in reporting self-benefit-oriented events and higher chance in reporting classroom violations which were unrelated to their benefits. Meanwhile, teachers often showed a preference in selecting such kind of children to behave like a little class head to assist classroom discipline management (Xu,2019). However, such selection could bring side effect of enabling the other classroom children (especially controversial children) to spontaneously act as the class head role to monitor the class, thus increasing the classroom tattling, and even directing their moral recognition to a hypocritical intention method. To decrease the side effects of other children imitating popular children's reporting activities, maybe it should be helpful to let the class students understand more about how the popular children



actually behave during their own daily activities and how they actually help monitoring the class. For instances, the popular children might be good at completing their own tasks during class, they care about others. When they witness someone has transgressed, they would evaluate the severity of the incident first. If the event is not very important, they would verbally inform the miscreant to correct the misdeed first. If the miscreant won't obey or correct, then the report will be approached to the teacher. I wonder if the other children could get a chance to know the criteria of selecting the little class head, they may develop a better understanding of how to achieve self- management and build up a positive atmosphere of classroom regulation.

For the neglected children, they seldom tattle on others, and there are fewer chance for them to communicate with the teachers respectively, thus it would be more difficult for the teachers to be aware of these children's mental states. In turn, the neglected children might also have lost a lot of chance to practice on social activities and moral norms. As mentioned before, the teachers could try to encourage these children to spot the classroom positive behaviors conducted by peers. In this method, neglected children could get positively influenced by the peers, and their social net expand by making more friends, and even build up a healthy communicative relationship with the teachers as well as their self confidence.

Peer responses to the approaches of rejected children were more likely to be negative, and the rejected children were more likely to display inappropriate and aggressive behaviors than the popular children (Dodge, 1982). The findings of the thesis support these evidence, noticing that rejected type children would adopt the tattling strategy the most for self-benefit-related conflicts, and there were more likely to be reported by



others. Based on previous findings, it seemed that there was a latent effect coming from their emotion recognition ability. These children might have a developmental incapability in properly expressing negative emotions (Smetana, 2006). To be specific, they might express angry emotion while the scenario would often advocate an upset emotion.

Therefore, teachers could reinforce this type of children's ability in thinking in other's shoes and encourage them to express emotions in words other than physical ways. With these practices, it might be helpful to decrease their extreme activities caused by other's careless misbehavior. In addition, since majority of rejected children's tattling events were related to their own benefit, instructions of "sharing is caring" could be allocated to these children, too.

Last but not the least, teachers should well restrain their direct evaluations towards the classroom student. As mentioned in the thesis, the improper commented addressed by the teacher was quickly spread out the whole class, thus causing class students imitate the teacher's evaluative comments, and making the commented child quite embarrassed. Although such event was not directly related to children's tattling activities, and it only took place one or two times, the educators should always be cautious about these behaviors. As demonstrated in this thesis, children in the preschool stage value teacher's authority over their social relationships with peers, they would intentionally do things and say things like the teachers. Therefore, teachers should keep this alert in mind, so that avoid the risk of reinforcing the negative impressions towards other's behaviors.

8.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Though the quantitative research was the most informative part for us to understand

children daily tattling activities, most of the observation was noted in a hand-written approach. In contrast, using audio or video recorders to observe and transcribe children's tattling behaviors would help save considerable energy in observation, and might allow for finer-grained observation of the observed child's tattling motivations and emotions.

This thesis employed the observation method, the story interview method as well as the cognitive competence tests, thereby causing the whole duration of the research to be time-consuming and the workload to be huge. By the end of the research, only one school was recruited in this thesis, so the diversity of sample sources is lost. Since the whole sample was collected in one preschool, only tentative conclusions could be drawn from the observations. Besides, the current sample comprised mostly middle-class Shenzhen caregivers. It remains unclear how children from international schools perceive tattling during their daily life. Subsequent research will focus on recruit more participant from diverse social economical background to examine if children in different sociometric statuses would reveal similar patterns of tattling in other school environments.

Though this thesis explored if children's theory of mind, emotion understanding and narrative speech competencies will affect their tattling behaviors and tattling understandings, factors (e.g., parent's attitudes and instructions on tattling and moral education) and other factors (e.g., children's personalities, executive functions) are also important for children's tattling behaviors formation. Subsequent research should take the mentioned factors into consideration.

8.4 Conclusions

This thesis described a general graph of the tattling behavior formation of Chinese

preschoolers aged between 4 to 6 years. As indicated from the results, the tattling the children was basically motivated by a self-serving intension, while with age, children began to adopt the tattling for various intentions. Behavioral and moral inconsistencies were detected from the age and sociometric perspectives. The response types of the teacher to tattling would affect the ethos of classroom children. Furthermore, the application of little class head strategy would affect the overall intentions of tattling in the classrooms.

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Appendix

A. Tables and Figures

Table 1. Tattling Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

	Self-benefit-related	Other benefit-related	Non victim report	Total
Age				
4-year-old (n=13)	4.23 (3.17)	2.62 (1.50)	0.69 (1.11)	7.54 (3.45)
5-year-old (n=74)	2.61 (3.23)	1.57 (1.78)	0.84 (1.44)	5.00 (4.42)
6-year-old (n=49)	2.12 (3.26)	1.43 (1.59)	0.82 (1.09)	4.37 (3.83)
Gender				
Girls (n=72)	2.65 (3.47)	1.71 (1.77)	0.74 (1.01)	5.10 (4.39)
Boys (n=64)	2.52 (3.04)	1.52 (1.64)	0.91 (1.55)	4.92 (3.99)
Sociometric Status				
Popular (n=31)	1.39 (1.56)	1.97 (2.06)	0.81 (1.28)	4.16 (3.03)
Controversial (n=13)	5.46 (4.61)	3.38 (2.14)	1.15 (2.14)	10.00 (4.58)
Average(n=51)	1.90 (2.15)	1.45 (1.29)	0.94 (1.61)	4.29 (3.40)
Neglected (n=22)	1.50 (2.94)	0.82 (1.22)	0.36 (0.58)	2.64 (3.22)
Rejected (n=19)	5.68 (4.19)	1.21 (1.40)	0.79 (1.03)	7.68 (4.83)

NOTE: Numbers in parenthesis are standard deviations.

a. Mean frequency in tattling on self-benefit-related events.

b. Mean frequency in tattling on other benefit-related events.

c. Mean frequency in tattling on peers under no clear victim situation.

Table 2. Mean Scores of theory of mind, Emotion Understanding, Narrative Speech Ability

	Theory of mind			Emotion understanding competence				Narrative Speech
	1st Tom	2nd Tom	Overall Tom	External Group	Mental Group	Reflective Group	Overall Score	
4-year-olds	.19 (.25)*	.15 (.38)*	.35 (.47)*	1.54 (.60)*	1.06 (.34)*	.31 (.47)*	2.90 (1.16)*	15.75 (6.44)*
5-year-olds	.58 (.38)*	.32 (.47)	.89 (.64)	2.49 (.56)*	1.64 (.69)	.74 (.86)*	4.90 (1.51)*	26.16 (8.96)*
6-year-olds	.64 (.41)*	.45 (.50)*	1.09 (.75)*	2.77 (.31)*	2.00 (.68)*	1.33 (.80)*	6.10 (1.35)*	30.78 (10.21)*

Note: parentheses for standard deviation

Topics of tattling

Table 3. Proportion of Reported Categories of Negative Behavior

	4-Year-old	5-Year-old	6-Year-old	Total
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Proportion of Reporting Children (%)	12 of 13 (92.3%)	65 of 74 (87.8%)	39 of 49 (79.60%)	116 of 136 (85.30%)
Disobey of Class Rule	.41 (.19)*	.34 (.32)*	.42 (.31)*	.37 (.31)*
Physical Aggression	.18 (.15)	.17 (.23)	.20 (.25)	.18 (.23)
Property Entitlement	.15 (.19)	.20 (.27)	.15 (.21)	.18 (.24)
Joint Play Violation	.12 (.10)	.13 (.21)	.09 (.12)	.12 (.18)
Taunting	.02 (.04)	.04 (.09)	.05 (.11)	.04 (.09)
Property Damage	.07 (.06)	.07 (.13)	.05 (.13)	.06 (.13)
Disagreement	.04 (.08)	.05 (.12)	.04 (.08)	.05 (.10)
Deception	.000 (.00)	.01 (.03)	.01 (.04)	.006 (.04)
Overall Tattling Frequency	7.54 (3.45)*	5.00 (4.42)	4.37 (3.83)	5.01 (4.09)

Egocentrism

Table 4. Proportion of Reported Categories of Negative Behavior

	4-Year-old	5-Year-old	6-Year-old	Total
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Self-Benefit	.51 (.26)	.50 (.40)	.37 (.33)	.46 (.37)
Other Benefit	.11 (.15)	.18 (.27)	.26 (.30)	.20 (.27)
No Clear Victim	.38 (.19)	.34 (.33)	.37 (.28)	.35 (.30)

Tattling intentions

Table 5. Proportion of Tattling Intentions

	Seeking for help	Retaliatory	Seeking for comforts	Informing a fact to the audience	Get away from punishment	Attract attention	Moral Norm Practice
4-Year-old	.23 (.11)	.00 (.00)	.17 (.14)	.17 (.14)	.04 (.02)	.27 (.19)	.02 (.02)
5-Year-old	.19 (.22)	.06 (.10)	.16 (.22)	.20 (.27)	.05 (.09)	.29 (.14)	.05 (.14)
6-Year-old	.12 (.19)	.05 (.13)	.10 (.10)	.29 (.22)	.08 (.07)	.27 (.07)	.09 (.12)

Note: parentheses for standard deviation

Table 6. Social Competence Distribution with Various Sociometric Statuses

Sociometric Status	Prosociality	Relational Aggression	Social Dominance Hierarchy
Popular	High	Average	High
Controversial	Average	High	High
Neglected	Average	Low	Low
Rejected	Low	High	Average

Table 7. Tattling Frequency and Proportion Distribution of Children with Various Sociometric Statuses

	Popular		Controversial		Average		Neglected		Rejected	
	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
Tattler No.	26 of 31	83.9%	13 of 13	100%	42 of 51	82.4%	16 of 22	72.7%	19 of 19	100%
Disobey of Class Rule	2.19 (2.07)	.54 * (.33)	2.85* (1.72)	.29* (.21)	.42 (.31)	.39 (.29)	.37 (.31)	.32 (.36)	1.58 (1.43)	.20 (.20)
Physical Aggression	.68 (.83)	.15(.15)	1.85* (1.86)	.15 (.11)	.20 (.25)	.16 (.21)	.50 (.74)	.32 (.43)	1.39 (1.29)	.17 (.17)
Property Entitlement	.39 (.72)	.09 (.15)	1.23 * (1.30)	.14 (.16)	.15 (.21)	.21 (.26)	.27 (.70)	.09 (.25)	2.16 * (1.68)	.33* (.28)
Joint Play Violation	.26 (.51)	.05 (.11)	1.46* (.78)	.18 (.12)	.09 (.12)	.13 (.19)	.50 (.10)	.14 (.28)	1.05 (1.02)	.12 (.12)
Taunting	.10 (.30)	.02 (.06)	1.00 (1.00)	.09 (.08)	.05 (.11)	.04 (.10)	.09 (.29)	.01 (.04)	.89 (1.59)	.08 (.13)
Property Damage	.26 (.51)	.08 (.16)	.85 (1.46)	.07 (.10)	.05 (.13)	.05 (.09)	.18 (.85)	.02 (.08)	.58 (.90)	.10 (.19)
Disagreement	.23 (.50)	.06 (.13)	.69 (.63)	.08 (.09)	.04 (.08)	.03 (.07)	.18 (.39)	.09 (.17)	.05 (.23)	.003 (.01)
Deception	.06 (.25)	.02 (.07)	.08 (.28)	.003 (.01)	.01 (.04)	.003 (.02)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.05 (.23)	.003 (.01)
Overall Tattling Frequency	4.16 (3.03)		10.00 * (4.58)		4.29 (3.40)		2.64* (3.22)		7.68* (4.83)	
Frequency of Being Reported	2.12 (2.11)		7.69 (4.39)		3.02 (2.92)		3.27 (3.37)		13.74 (5.38)	

Table 8. Mean Distribution of Tattling Intentions

	Seeking for help	Retaliato ry	Seeking for comforts	Informing a fact to the audience	Get away from punishmen t	Attract attention	Moral Norm Practice	Overall Tattling Frequency
Popular	.87 (1.05)	.23 (0.54)	.49 (0.72)	1.94* (2.13)	.27 (.15)	.28 (.12)	.08 (.04)	4.16 (3.03)
Controv ersial	1.45 (.84)	.92 * (.89)	1.09 * (.78)	3.38* (2.76)	1.02 * (1.03)	1.67* (1.48)	.47 (.80)	10.00 (4.58)
Average	1.12 (.77)	.11 (.13)	.65 (.10)	1.67 (1.04)	.22 (.07)	.31 (.07)	.21 (.09)	4.29 (3.40)
Neglecte d	1.45* (1.12)	.00 (.00)	.48 (0.23)	.42 (.29)	.00 (.00)	.29 (.14)	.00 (.00)	2.64 (3.22)
Rejected	2.72* (.94)	.48* (.00)	1.74 (1.67)	1.36 (1.04)	0.77* (.49)	.33 (.27)	.28 (.02)	7.68 (4.83)

Note: parentheses for standard deviation

Table 9. Mean Scores of the Evaluation of Transgression Measure for Each Vignette and Significance Values (p) of Paired t-Test Comparisons of All Vignettes Across All Age Group

Vignette	Moral Transgression		Conventional Transgression	
	Stealing	Pushing	Wrong Clothes	Drink Spilt
4-year-olds	2.28 (.98)	2.23 (1.01)	1.87 (1.07)	1.92 (1.04)
5-year-olds	2.61 (.83)	2.69 (.76)	1.51 (.94)	1.49 (1.11)
6-year-olds	2.57 (.57)	2.55 (.55)	.58 (.87)	.55 (.84)
Stealing		0.52	<.0001*	<.0001*
Pushing			<.0001*	<.0001*
Wrong Clothes				0.11
Drink Spilt				

Note: 1. parentheses for standard deviation

2. Single asterisks indicate significance at $\alpha = .002$ (Bonferroni adjusted).

Table 10. Mean Scores of the Evaluation of Tattling with Different Intentions

	Moral Transgression				Conventional Transgression			
	Control	Praise	Retaliatio n	Prosocial	Control	Praise	Retaliatio n	Prosocial
4-year-olds	2.23 (1.01)	2.15 (.99)	1.54 (1.94)	2.85 (.55)	1.92 (1.04)	1.39 (1.71)	1.00 (1.47)	1.62 (1.89)
5-year-olds	2.69 (.76)	1.37 (1.72)	.27 (1.95)	2.61 (1.17)	1.49 (1.11)	.82 (1.48)	.38 (1.83)	1.99 (.84)
6-year-olds	2.55 (.71)	.26 (1.97)	-.72 (1.79)	1.96 (1.41)	.55 (.84)	-.24 (1.46)	-.90 (1.64)	1.82 (1.44)

Note: parentheses for standard deviation

Table 11. Explanations of Personal Tendency to Report

Moral Transgression		Conventional Transgression	
The victim is hurt.	49.7%	It is important to let the teacher know.	10.4%
It is important to let the teacher know.	16.9%	The transgressor is not right.	13.4%
I don't know	18.3%	I don't know.	17.9%
I used to be the victim, I feel sad.		Tattling is wrong	7.5%
Tattling is wrong.	3.7%	It is unnecessary.	46.8%
I will not tattle on the transgressor, I will tell him this is not right. If he won't listen, then I will report to the teacher.	7.2%	Teacher will not like it.	2.7%
Because teacher says we should tell.	4.2%	I will talk to him first, if he wouldn't listen, I will tattle to teacher.	1.3%

Table 12. Daily Routine at Preschool

8:00--9:00	Children gradually attend, Morning Exercise, Breakfast	12:15--14:30	Afternoon Bedtime
9:00--9:30	Free Play	14:30--14:40	Tidying up and Drinking
9:30--9:40	Drinking	14:40--14:50	Afternoon dessert
9:40--10:10	Perception Games	14:50--15:20	Story Time
10:20--10:30	Drinking	15:20--16:00	Handmade DIY
10:30--11:00	Outdoor Exercise/ Workshops	16:00--17:00	Busing and Parents Picking Up
11:00--11:10	Drinking and Relaxing	16:00--16:45	Free play on the play ground
11:10--11:55	Lunchtime		
11:55--12:15	After Lunch Walk		

Teacher Response to Tattling

Table 13 Frequency and mean shares of the various types of responses to children's reporting.

	Older Group		Middle Group		Youngest Group	Total
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Class E	
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	
Supporting	33 (30.8)	17 (9.4)	22 (24.7)	38 (30.9)	25 (15.4)	135 (20.4)
Ignoring	16 (15.0)	76 (42.0)	5 (5.6)	14 (11.4)	24 (14.8)	135 (20.4)
Acknowledging	16 (15.0)	13 (7.2)	29 (32.6)	20 (16.3)	53 (32.7)	131 (19.8)
Excusing	14 (13.1)	5 (2.8)	22 (24.7)	7 (5.7)	20 (12.3)	68 (10.3)
Questioning	14 (13.1)	7 (3.9)	8 (9.0)	13 (10.6)	10 (6.2)	52 (7.9)
Reprimanding	3 (2.8)	32 (17.7)	0.00	7 (5.7)	5 (3.1)	47 (7.1)
Looking at Miscreant	0.00	13 (7.2)	0.00	16 (13.0)	17 (10.5)	46 (6.9)
Both Reprimanded	5 (4.6)	18 (9.9)	2 (2.2)	5 (4.1)	8 (4.9)	38 (5.7)
Child leaves before response	6 (5.6)	0.00	1 (1.1)	3 (2.4)	0.00	10 (1.5)
Ineffective Response	35 (32.8)	121 (66.9)	34 (38.2)	41 (33.4)	82 (50.6)	313 (47.3)
Effective Response	72 (67.2)	60 (33.1)	55 (62.8)	82 (66.6)	80 (49.4)	349 (52.7)
Mean Report Frequency (Standard Deviation)	3.66 (3.28)	6.31 (5.54)	3.62 (2.67)	4.29 (4.21)	7.90 (2.84)	5.01 (4.20)

Teacher Response to Tattling

Table 14 Crosstabulation of Teachers' Responses to Various Tattling Events

Type of Response	Type of Tattling Content							
	Physical Aggression	Property Entitlement	Property Damage	Joint Play Violation	Disobey of Classroom Rule	Taunting	Disagreement	Deception
Supporting	46 (5.8)	15 (-2.1)	6 (-1.1)	13 (-1.2)	49 (0.1)	4 (-1.9)	2 (-1.3)	0 (-1.0)
Acknowledging	22 (-0.1)	26 (0.9)	9 (0.2)	24 (2.1)	40 (-1.4)	5 (-1.4)	4 (-0.2)	1 (0.3)
Ignoring	13 (-2.6)	28 (1.3)	4 (-1.9)	21 (1.1)	56 (1.5)	9 (0.1)	3 (-0.8)	1 (0.2)
Excusing an innocent action	0 (-4.0)	1 (-3.6)	3 (-0.7)	9 (0.1)	41 (4.4)	2 (-1.3)	12 (7.0)	0 (-0.7)
Reprimanding the tattler	8 (0.0)	9 (0.4)	4 (0.6)	3 (-1.4)	10 (-2.2)	11 (4.9)	0 (-1.3)	2 (3.4)
Reprimanding Both	5 (-0.7)	10 (1.6)	4 (1.0)	6 (0.6)	5 (-3.0)	7 (3.1)	1 (-0.2)	0 (-0.5)
Questioning	12 (1.2)	11 (0.8)	11 (4.5)	2 (-2.0)	12 (-2.0)	4 (0.4)	0 (-1.4)	0 (-0.6)
Child leaves before response	2 (0.2)	3 (1.1)	1 (0.5)	1 (-0.3)	3 (-0.4)	0 (-0.8)	0 (-0.6)	0 (-0.2)
Looking at the conflict	6 (-0.8)	10 (0.9)	1 (-1.2)	6 (0.0)	22 (1.7)	1 (-1.2)	0 (-1.3)	0 (-0.5)

Note: parentheses for standard deviation

Table 15 Cross-tabulation of Teachers' response type

	Older Group		Middle Group	
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
Ineffective Response	35 (-5.6)	121 (5.6)	34 (-.7)	41 (.7)
Effective Response	72 (5.6)	60 (-5.6)	55 (-.7)	82 (.7)

Note: Adjusted residuals appear in parentheses behind observed frequencies

Table 16. Mean Scores of the Evaluation of Tattling Acceptance Measure for Each Vignette and Significance Values (p) of Paired t-Test Comparisons of All Vignettes

Vignette	Moral Transgression			Conventional Transgression		
	Hitting	Teasing	Mean	Walk in line	Disagreement in Play	Mean
Class C	2.51 (.54)	2.57 (1.08)	2.54 (.81)	1.24 (.92)	1.14 (1.74)	1.19 (1.33)
Class D	2.66 (.47)	2.64 (.63)	2.65 (.55)	1.27 (.74)	1.25 (.62)	1.26 (.68)
Hitting		0.65		<.0001*	<.0001*	
Teasing				<.0001*	<.0001*	
Walk in line					0.49	
Disagreement in Play						

Note: 1. parentheses for standard deviation

2. Single asterisks indicate significance at $\alpha = .002$ (Bonferroni adjusted).

Fig. 1. Children's evaluations of Transgressions

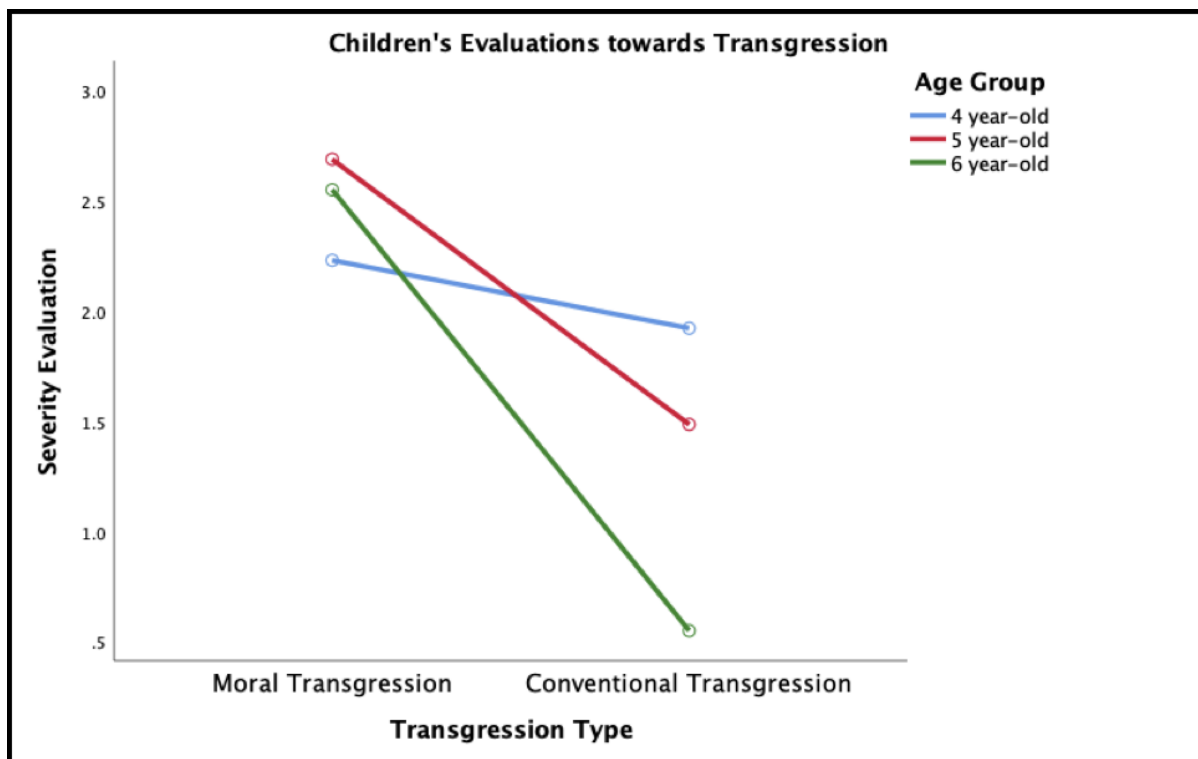


Fig. 2. Children's Acceptance towards Tattling

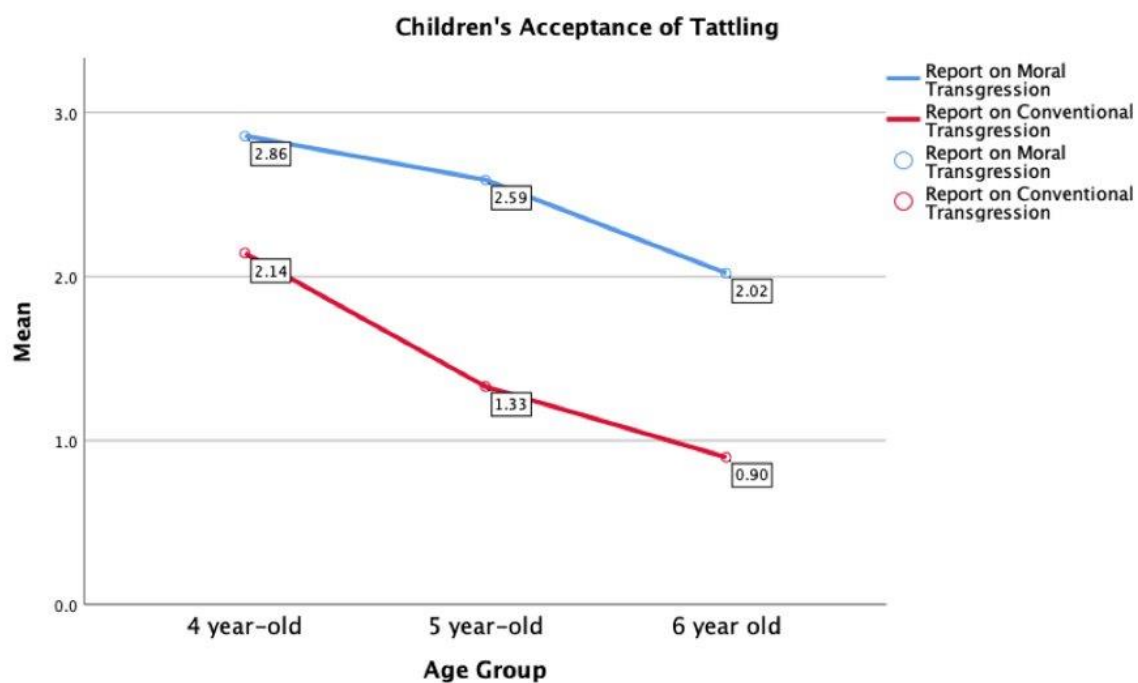


Fig. 3. Children's Obligation to Report

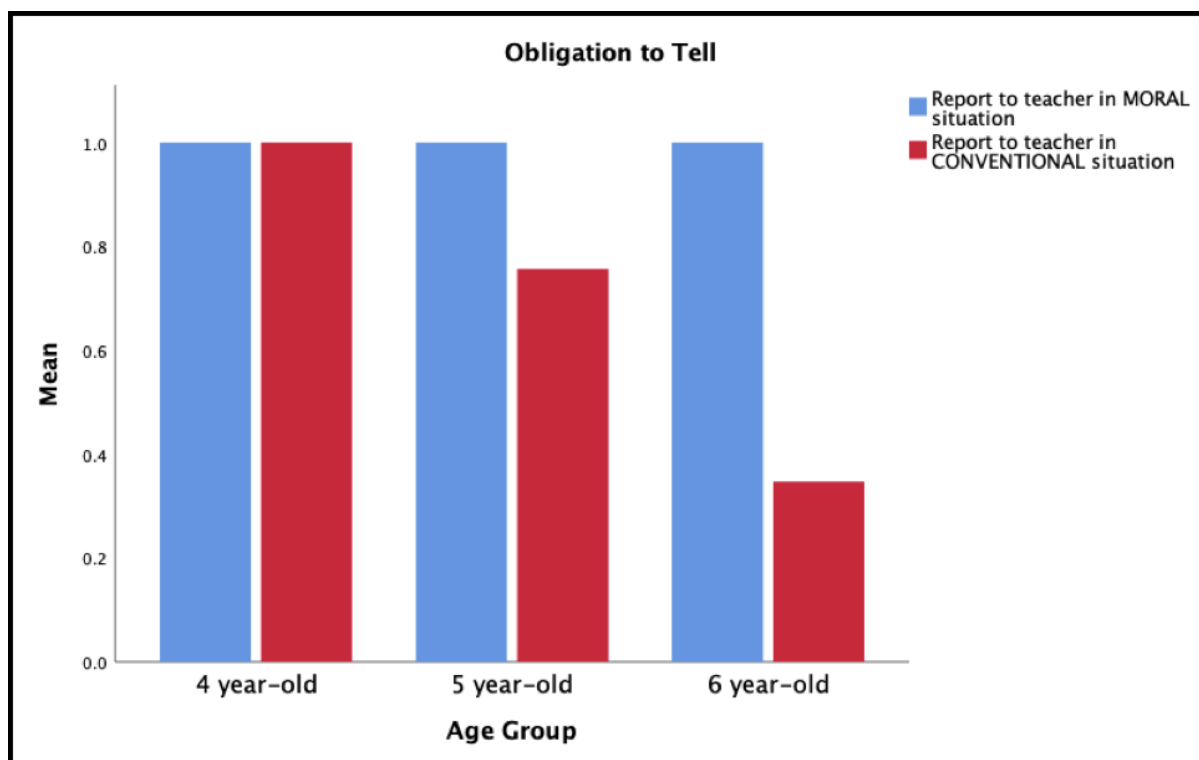


Fig. 4. Children's Personal Intention to Report

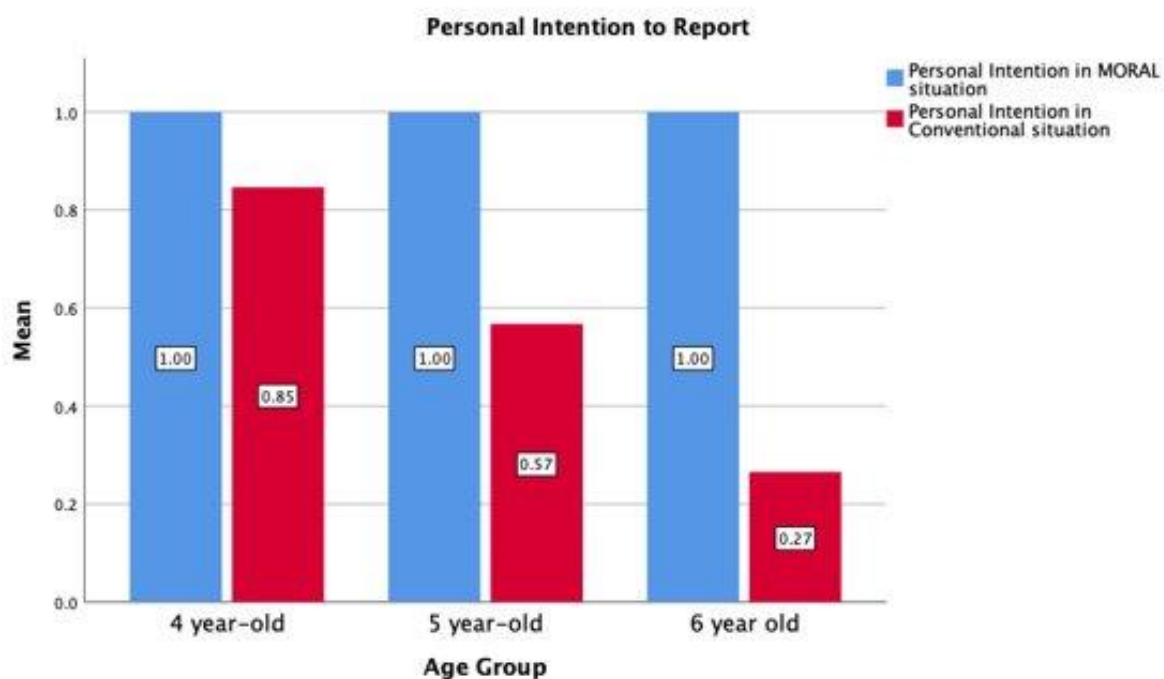


Fig. 5. Children's Acceptance of Reporting Moral Transgression with Different Intentions

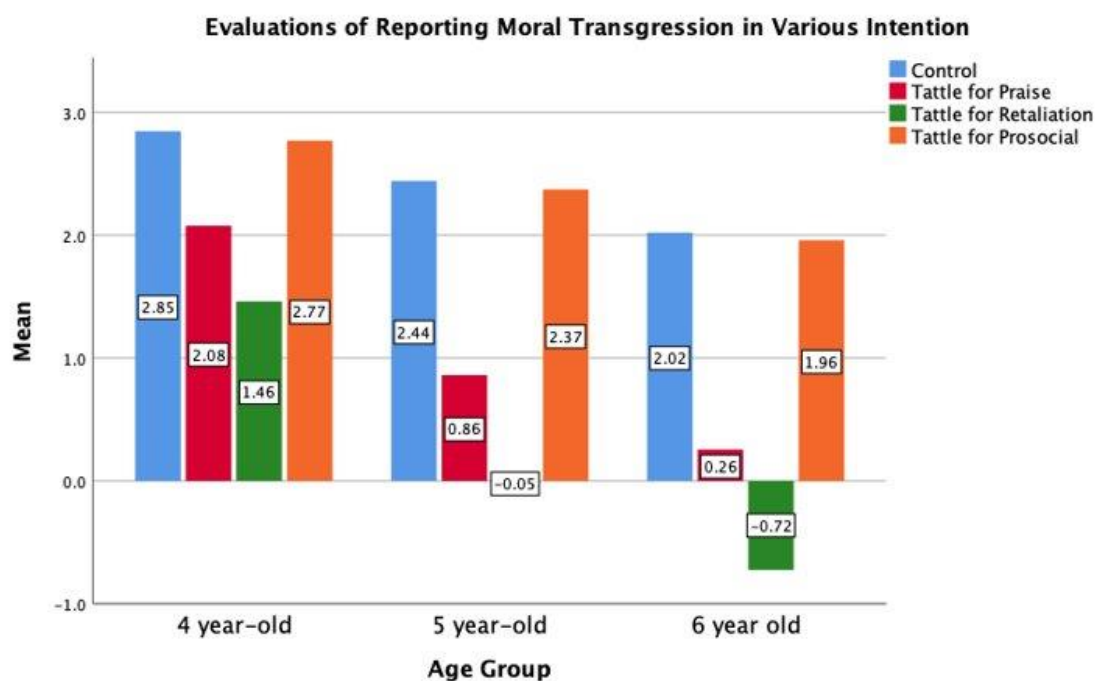


Fig. 6. Children's Acceptance of Reporting Conventional Transgression with Different Intentions

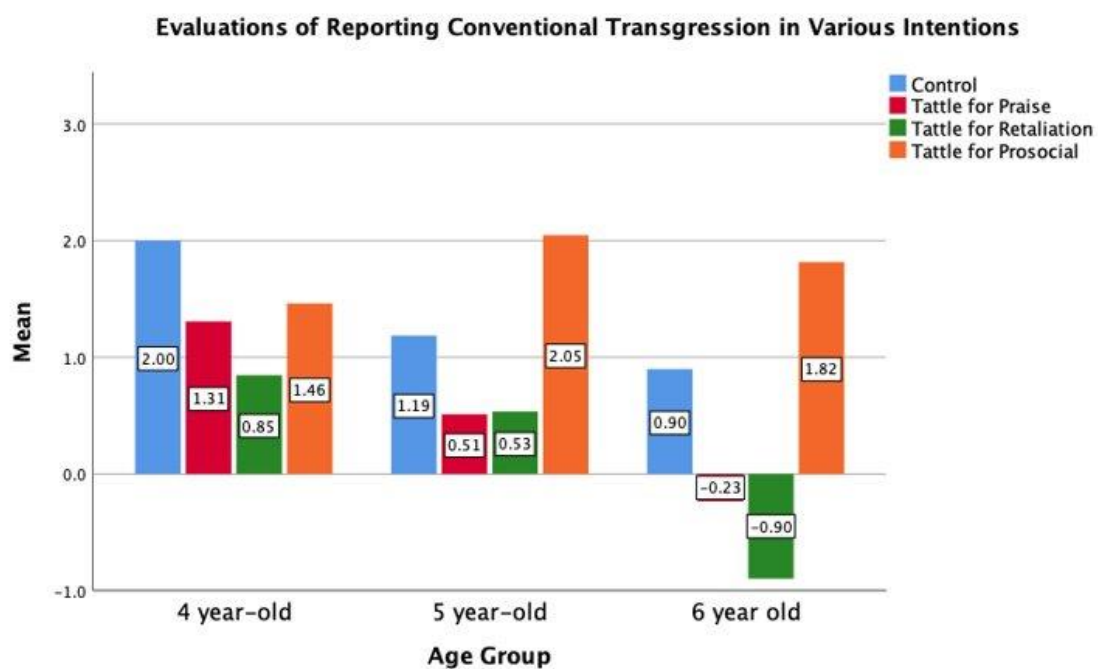


Fig. 7. Children's Mean Acceptance towards Tattling

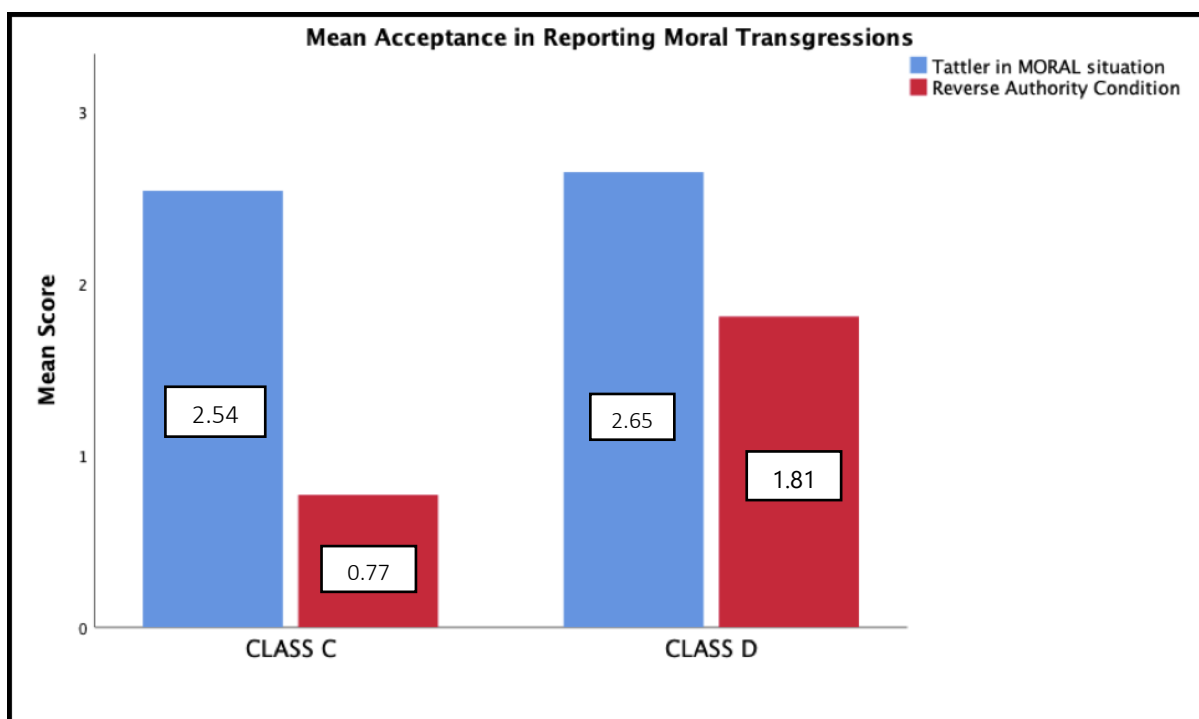


Fig. 8. Mean Acceptance Change between Origin and Reverse Authority Condition
(Moral)

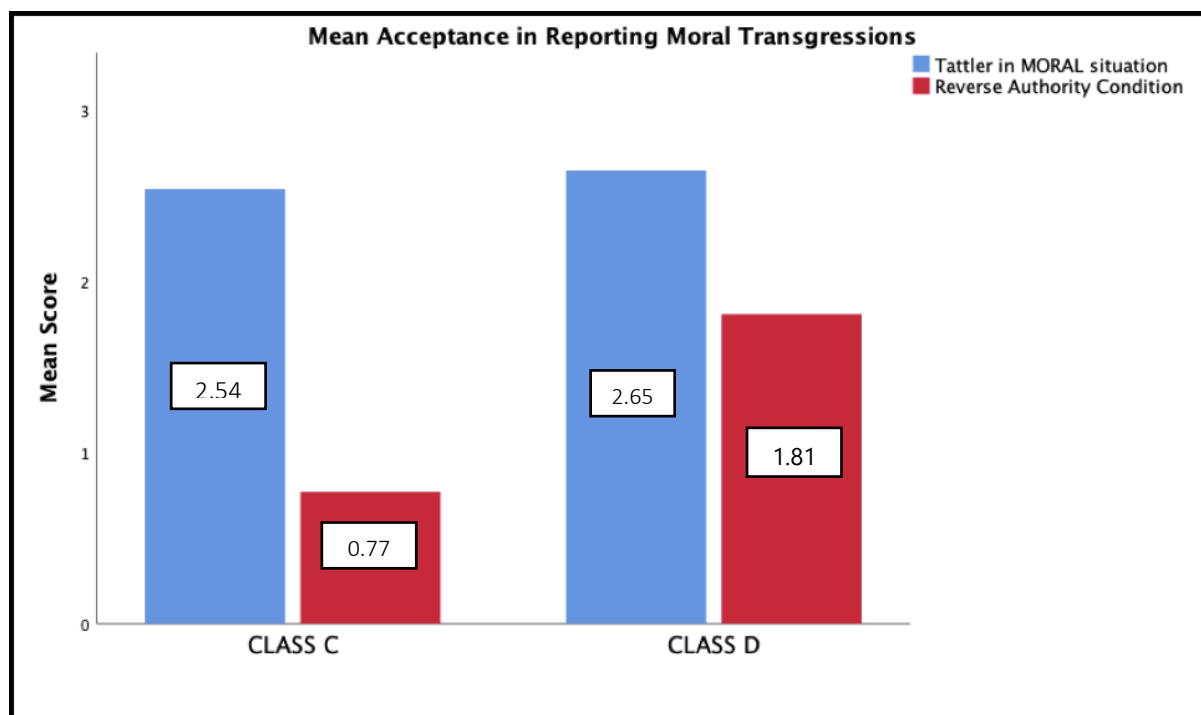


Fig. 9. Mean Acceptance Change between Origin and Reverse Authority Condition
(Conventional)

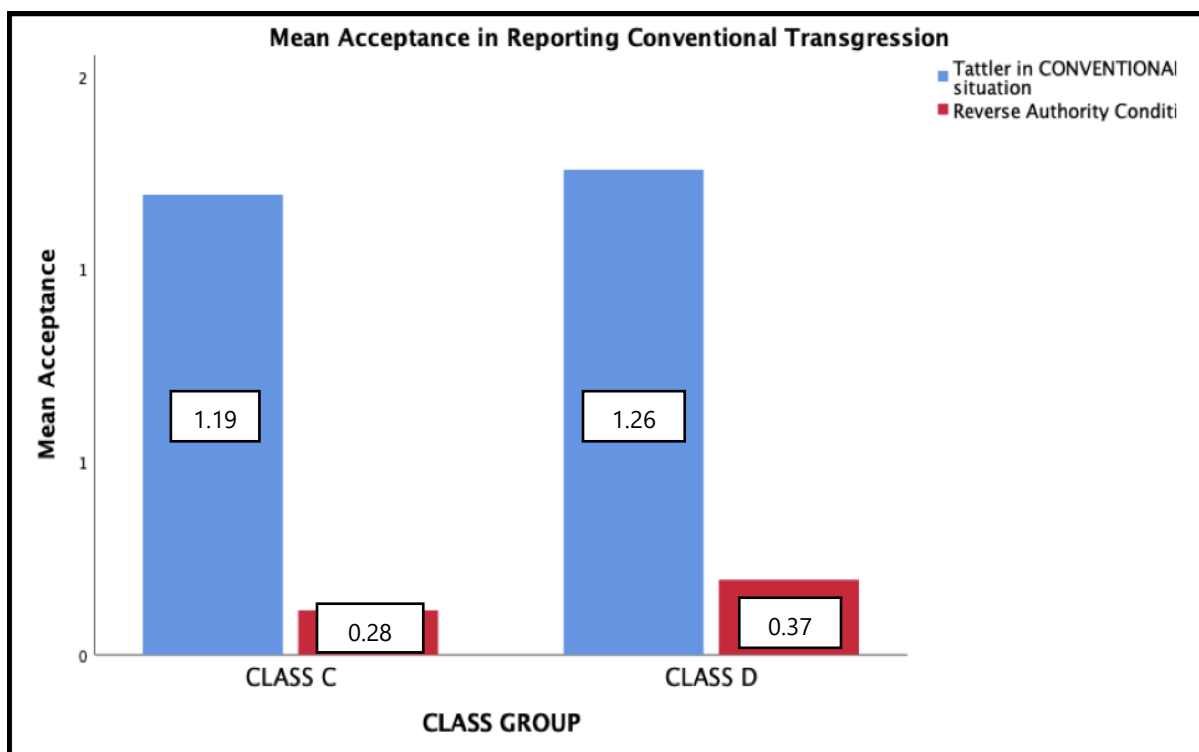
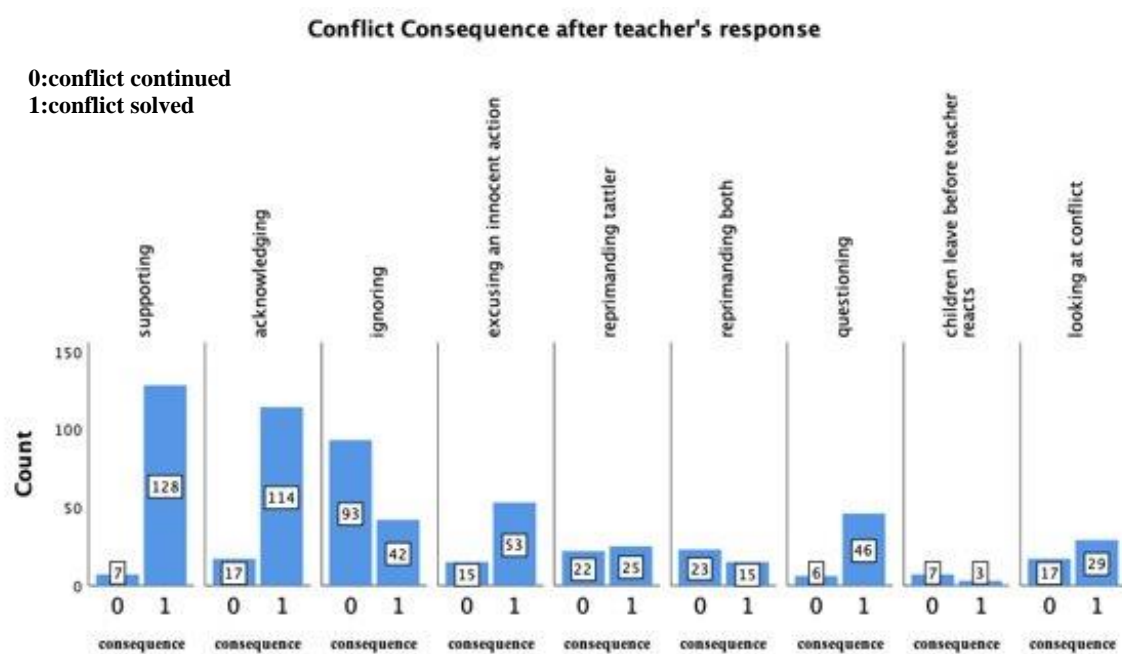


Fig. 10. Conflict Consequence after Teacher's Intervention



B. Measures

1. Chinese Version of Teacher Reported Scale on Children's Pro-sociality, Relational Aggression and Social Dominance Hierarchy

问卷及测验部分（教师填）

儿童姓名 _____ 儿童性别：男 / 女

儿童年龄 _____ 教师姓名 _____ 教师年龄 _____

请您根据以下提出的一些问题，选出您认为最符合这名儿童的选项。请依据您对该儿童最近

一个月的总体印象，对以下问题进行评价。请您完成这份问卷之后不要与其他老师或学生谈

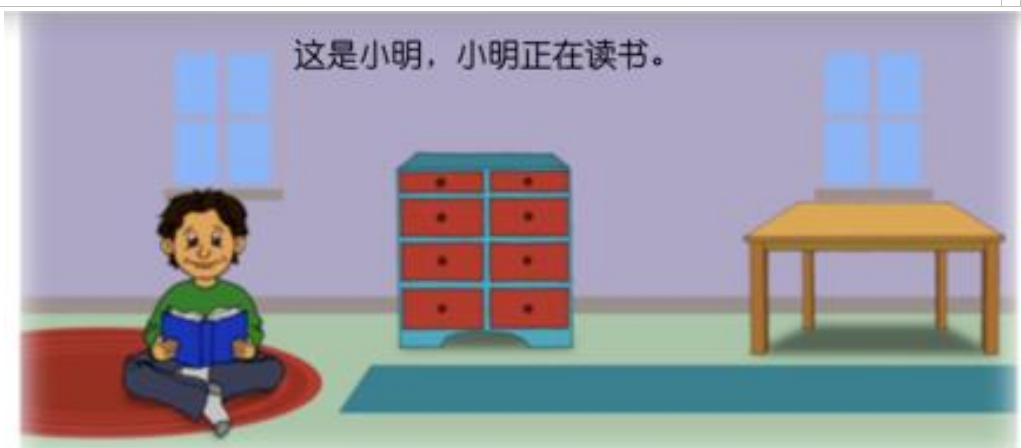
论此次问卷调查。本评分将采用一到六分制，具体如下：

1 分：该陈述内容从未出现在该儿童身上。 2 分：该陈述内容很少出现在该儿童身上。

3 分：该陈述有时候会出现在该儿童身上。 4 分：该陈述时常出现在该儿童身上。 5 分：该陈述经常出现在该儿童身上。 6 分：该陈述总是出现在该儿童身上。

这名儿童乐于分享并懂得与同伴轮流玩耍。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童是个小领袖。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童能得到任何他/她想要的东西	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童告诉其他人不要和某个同伴玩或者做朋友。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童乐于帮助同伴。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童尝试让其他同伴不喜欢某个同伴。（如：背着这名同伴跟其他小朋友说他/她的坏话）。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童常常是团体的中心。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童言语威胁某个同伴，如果这名同伴没有做到他/她所要求的某件事，这名儿童就不能参加游戏小组。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童说话做事会为其他小朋友考虑。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童告诉同伴，除非这名儿童做到他/她想要做的事情，否则这名同伴不会被邀请到自己主持的活动里。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童对同伴友好。	1	2	3	4	5	6

这名儿童告诉一名同伴，除非这名同伴做到他/她要求的某件事，否则他/她不会和这名同伴玩或者做朋友。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童的竞争意识很强。	1	2	3	4	5	6
这名儿童生一个同伴的气的时候，他/她会将这名同伴排除在游戏小组之外。	1	2	3	4	5	6



2. Theory of mind

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MIND TASK BATTERY



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快看，丽丽走过来了，她把书从桌子上移到了柜子里。



然后丽丽走开了。



看，小明回来了，他还想接着读书。





这是源源和他的妈妈。



今天是源源的生日，全家人要给源源庆祝生日。



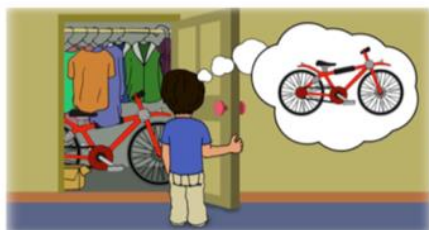
妈妈为源源准备了一台自行车作为生日礼物惊喜。
她把自行车悄悄藏在了衣柜里。



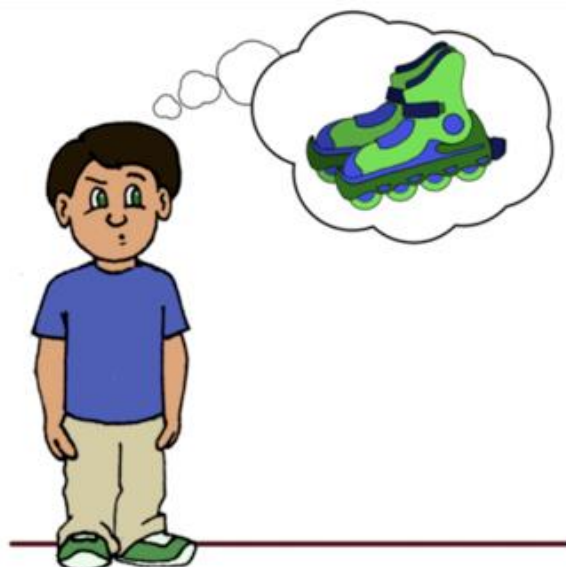
源源到厨房里面对妈妈说：
“妈妈，我真的很想要一台自行车当生日礼物。”
小朋友请记住哦，妈妈希望自行车能够成为源源的生日惊喜，所以她回答源源：
“对不起，我没有给你准备自行车，但是我给你准备了一双溜冰鞋。”



源源朝妈妈招招手道别，对妈妈说：“好吧，那我出去找小朋友玩咯，一会儿再回来。”



源源到衣柜去拿衣服然后准备出门，他看到了一辆新的自行车。
源源很开心。
源源心想：“妈妈没有给我买溜冰鞋！她真的给我准备了一辆自行车！”
妈妈并没有看到源源打开了衣柜。
妈妈也不知道源源看到了自行车。



源源心想：“妈妈给我准备了一双溜冰鞋呀。”



源源原以为他会得到什么生日礼物呢？



过了一会儿，源源的爷爷来了。
爷爷问妈妈：“源源知道他会得到什么礼物吗？”



妈妈会怎么回答呢？
她会告诉爷爷，源源以为自己会得到什么礼物呢？



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3. Examples of Social Rule Interview



