

Japanese and American Children's Moral Evaluations of Reporting on Transgressions

Ivy Chiu Loke
University of Toronto

Gail D. Heyman
University of California, San Diego

Shoji Itakura
Kyoto University

Rie Toriyama
University of Tokyo

Kang Lee
University of Toronto and University of California, San Diego

American and Japanese children's evaluations of the reporting of peers' transgressions to authority figures were investigated. Seven-, 9-, and 11-year-old children ($N = 160$) and adults ($N = 62$) were presented with vignettes and were asked to evaluate the decisions of child observers who reported their friend's either major or relatively minor transgression to a teacher. The results showed that, in both countries, participants across all age groups considered it appropriate to report major transgressions. However, compared with older participants, the youngest children thought it was appropriate to tattle (i.e., to report more minor transgressions). The results also showed a cross-cultural difference: Japanese compared with American participants considered it appropriate to report minor transgressions. The age-related findings are discussed with reference to children's social experience and improving cognition. The cross-cultural findings are discussed with reference to potential differences in the emphases placed on respecting authority relationships, empathy, and social interdependence by the 2 cultures.

Keywords: reporting transgressions, tattling, children, cross-cultural differences, moral evaluation

Parents around the world teach their children to uphold the values that they hold most dear, such as the importance of being honest and taking into account the interests of other community members. This leaves children with the challenge of figuring out how to apply these messages in cases where important values come into conflict (Broomfield, Robinson, & Robinson, 2002; Bussey, 1999; Lee & Ross, 1997; Ma, Xu, Heyman, & Lee, 2011; Xu, Bao, Fu, Talwar, & Lee, 2010). The present research focuses on how children reason about one situation that commonly elicits

such conflict among a range of values, such as honesty, fairness, and loyalty: making decisions about reporting on the transgressions of others (Chiu Loke, Heyman, Forgie, McCarthy, & Lee, 2011).

The way children reason about reporting the transgressions of peers has important implications for their developing conceptions of normativity, which may underlie their ability to participate in social institutions (Rakoczy, Warneken, & Tomasello, 2008; Wyman, Rakoczy, & Tomasello, 2009). For example, in their everyday interactions children often have disputes about how rules are to be interpreted, which can lead to a breakdown in cooperation if left unresolved (Tomasello, 2013).

The appropriateness of reporting might depend on the severity and nature of the transgression (Lyon, Ahern, Malloy, & Quas, 2010; Vaish, Missana, & Tomasello, 2011) and the potential costs and benefits of reporting or not reporting. For example, classmates might be grateful to a student who helps to enforce rules that prevent harm and promote fairness, or they might consider such reporting to be disloyal. The individual making the report might fear the loss of allegiance with an authority figure (den Bak & Ross, 1996) or, conversely, fear the loss of friendships or ostracism by peers (Friman et al., 2004). Also, a teacher might be either pleased or irritated with the student who provides the information (Kersey & Masterson, 2010). As a practical matter, knowledge about the normative development of children's reasoning about reporting peers' transgressions has implications for teachers and caregivers. For example, it could help them provide age-

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Ivy Chiu, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Gail D. Heyman, Department of Psychology, University of California, San Diego; Shoji Itakura, Department of Psychology, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan; Rie Toriyama, Department of Neuropsychiatry, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan; Kang Lee, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and Department of Psychology, University of California, San Diego.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kang Lee, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, 45 Walmer Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2X2, Canada. E-mail: kang.lee@utoronto.ca

appropriate advice to children about when to report transgressions (e.g., bullying), and how to avoid the social rejection seen in older children that can accompany a reputation for reporting on peers' transgressions (Friman et al., 2004). Finally, this topic has implications for the broader societal issues of underreporting and overreporting transgressions. Underreporting can be problematic when individuals fail to inform authorities about violent threats and acts that represent a danger to others (Brank et al., 2007; Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009), and overreporting can be problematic if it wastes the time and resources of the authorities who must respond to it or if it is used as a tool for manipulation.

Of interest in the present research is how children's reasoning about reporting on minor transgressions that are more conventional in nature compares to their reasoning about reporting on major transgressions that are more moral in nature. Although it has been well established that children make a strong distinction between moral and social conventional transgressions (Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Smetana, Schlagman, & Adams, 1993), little is known about whether they appreciate that the greater seriousness of moral transgressions carries relatively greater moral obligations to report on them to authority figures.

Reporting on minor transgressions is often referred to as tattling, which is defined as the reporting of another person's relatively minor violation of a normative expectation to a third party and is common among peers, or individuals within the same social group (Ingram & Bering, 2010). Piaget (1932/1965) was the first to investigate this topic in his work on the conflicts that children experience between solidarity among themselves and adult authority. Using a vignette to ask whether children thought it would be right to "tell tales," he showed that older children judged tattling on a sibling to a parent to be less appropriate than younger children did under the same conditions. With this observation, Piaget suggested that a sense of equality and reciprocity develops with age at the expense of submission to adult authority.

Since Piaget's work, it has been established that tattling is a prevalent phenomenon across a wide range of ages. By 16 to 18 months, children attempt to gain their mother's attention when siblings engage in transgressions, and by 18 to 24 months, they begin to verbally report their siblings' transgressions (Dunn & Munn, 1985). Tattling is commonly seen among preschool and early primary school-age children (den Bak & Ross, 1996; Ingram & Bering, 2010; Ross & Den Bak-Lammers, 1998), and it has been documented among adolescents in residential care settings (Friman et al., 2004).

A recent study examining children's reasoning about reporting the transgressions of others showed that 6-year-old children tend to give positive evaluations to the reporting of both major and minor transgressions, but by age 8, children no longer view reporting minor transgressions, or tattling, to be appropriate (Chiu Loke et al., 2011). One possible reason for this developmental difference is the shift in social costs associated with the reporting of others' minor transgressions. For younger children, tattling is unlikely to result in negative consequences and may actually result in positive consequences, such as support from the authority figure notified of the transgression (den Bak & Ross, 1996; Ingram & Bering, 2010). In contrast, older children risk more negative social consequences when they tattle, including disapproval from peers (Friman et al., 2004).

Prior research investigating tattling has been largely limited to North America and Europe. As a result, little is known about tattling behavior and children's evaluations in non-Western countries, or whether there are cross-cultural differences. Our goal in the current study was to bridge this gap in the literature by examining the developmental course of children's evaluations of tattling compared with the reporting of major transgressions in an Asian country (Japan) and a Western country (the United States; U.S.). Suggestive of possible cultural differences is prior work documenting differences between Eastern and Western cultures in moral evaluations of lying and truth-telling (Fu, Evans, Wang, & Lee, 2008; Fu, Lee, Cameron, & Xu, 2001; Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman, & Lee, 2007; Heyman, Itakura, & Lee, 2011; Lee, Cameron, Xu, Fu, & Board, 1997). For example, Chinese children have been found to rate lie-telling to help a group at the expense of an individual more positively than Canadian children do (Fu et al., 2007).

There are reasons to suspect that the evaluations of the reporting of others' transgressions by American and Japanese children might differ. Cultural psychology theories suggest that people in Western cultures, such as those in the U.S., are more likely to have an "independent" view of themselves, whereas people in Asian cultures, such as those in Japan, are more likely to have an "interdependent" view of themselves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In independent cultures there is a greater emphasis on expressing one's own unique attributes, personal needs, and preferences (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). In interdependent cultures there is a greater emphasis on maintaining relational harmony, on empathy, on social courtesy, and on an obligation to social norms (Rothbaum et al., 2000). Consistent with these patterns, Americans are more likely to consider personal consequences when making moral decisions, whereas Japanese people are more likely to consider group consequences and responsibility (Taylor, Ogawa, & Wilson, 2002). This suggests that Americans may be less inclined to approve of tattling because it is an act that can be viewed as an unnecessary cost to themselves, and that Japanese people may be more likely to approve of the reporting of all transgressions because the maintenance of relational harmony by the enforcing of normative expectations is important.

There are also cross-cultural differences in the relationships between authority figures and children that may result in Japanese children being more willing to report peer transgressions to authority figures. For instance, Japanese children tend to have particularly supportive and interdependent relationships with their mothers and consequently tend to show particular concern with behaving according to their wishes (Azuma, 1986; Doi, 1974). Also, Japanese children tend to remain close with both parents and peers into adolescence (Rothbaum et al., 2000), a time when American children tend to become more emotionally connected with peers and less emotionally connected with parents (Crystal, 2000; Rothbaum et al., 2000). Additionally, in Japan there is a strong emphasis on respect for the authority of parents and teachers (Hamilton, Blumenfeld, Akoh, & Miura, 1989; Kobayashi-Winata & Power, 1989; Power, Kobayashi-Winata, & Kelley, 1992), whereas Americans tend to be more accepting of questioning authority (Kobayashi-Winata & Power, 1989; Rothbaum et al., 2000).

Our primary goal in the present study was to examine American and Japanese children's evaluations of reports of major and minor

transgressions to an authority figure. Adults' evaluations of the same situations were examined for comparison. It was expected, based on previous research (Chiu Loke et al., 2011), that older participants would view the reporting of minor transgressions to an authority figure as being less appropriate than younger participants would. Also, it was expected that participants from both countries would approve of the reporting of major transgressions, but that such approval would be relatively stronger among Japanese participants. Finally, it was expected that differences in justifications would reflect the greater emphases placed by the Japanese culture on respecting authority and on empathy and social interdependence (Hamilton et al., 1989).

Method

Participants

Participants were 81 7-, 9-, and 11-year-old children and 34 adults from the U.S. and 79 7-, 9-, and 11-year-old children and 28 adults from Japan (see Table 1 for a summary of the participant groups). The U.S. data were collected from a West Coast metropolitan city with an approximate population of 1.5 million, and the Japanese data were collected from an urban city with an approximate population of 2 million. In both countries, child participants were recruited within schools and adult participants were university students. Participants were recruited from schools where the demographics were representative of the urban cities in which the study was conducted, resulting in a sample of participants who were predominantly from middle-class families. The U.S. sample was approximately 82% Caucasian, 8% Asian American, 6% Hispanic, 1% African American, and 3% multiethnic. The Japanese sample was ethnically homogeneous. Informed consent was obtained from adult participants and provided by parents and guardians of child participants. All children assented to their participation in the study.

Materials and Procedure

The vignettes used for this study were developed in an iterative process. Because our primary aim in the study was to examine children's reasoning about tattling among peers to teachers by comparing participants' evaluations of reports of major versus minor transgressions, the key dimension that was manipulated in the design of the vignettes was the seriousness of the transgressions. The vignettes involved interactions between friends, who are integral members of the peer group, to highlight the potential conflict between loyalty to authority and loyalty to friends.

An initial set of scenarios was developed in collaboration with several teachers and school principals from the U.S. and from Canada. Those scenarios were then discussed in focus groups with parents and children in order to ensure that they were clearly major or minor transgressions, were realistic, and were easy to understand. Based on these discussions, some scenarios were revised and others were eliminated. The vignettes were then piloted with 20 children between 4 and 11 years of age and were excluded or re-revised based on the children's ratings of incident severity. Vignettes included as major transgressions received evaluations of "bad," "very bad," or "very, very, bad." Vignettes included as minor transgressions received evaluations of "neither good nor bad." The following is an example of the first part of one of the three relatively *major* transgressions:

At school, Chris and his friend Tom are getting ready for lunch. Chris begins eating his lunch when he notices that Tom forgot to bring his lunch money and he steals another classmate's lunch money.

The other three vignettes described transgressions that are relatively minor, as in this example:

Yesterday the teacher asked the students to bring in three small pieces of blue paper for an art project. Today, Betty and her friend Lori are getting ready for art. As Betty is unpacking the three small pieces of blue paper she brought for the art project, she notices that, instead, Lori brought three large pieces of blue paper.

The vignettes and questions were translated from English into Japanese by a researcher who was fluent in both languages and translated back into English by a graduate student who was also bilingual. The translators and researchers discussed cross-cultural concerns and conferred to resolve discrepancies to arrive at a final set of vignettes that were culturally appropriate and accurately translated. The same graduate student who participated in the translation process also conducted interviews in Japan and retranslated the data into English for analyses. The same researchers coded all responses obtained from both countries.

Participants were seen individually and presented with the series of six vignettes. Adults were told that the stories were about children but were not given any additional instructions. The first part of each vignette describes a single protagonist or a group of protagonists who engage in a relatively major or minor transgression that is witnessed by a friend observer. Vignettes describing groups of protagonists were included to examine for cross-cultural differences related to reporting on an individual friend versus a group of friends. Specific information about the relationship between the protagonist and the observer was not included in the vignettes; however, the story was structured to suggest that they were friends and part of the same social group. The second part of each vignette described the observer reporting the transgression. The first and second parts of the vignettes were separated to minimize the potential confusion between evaluating the transgression itself and evaluating the observer's report of the transgression. After hearing the first part of each vignette, participants were asked a *transgression evaluation question* about the actions of the protagonist, which took the following form: "Is what Tom did good, bad, or not good/not bad?" The purpose of the transgression evaluation question was to assess children's differentiation between major and minor transgressions and ensure that the study's

Table 1
Summary of Participant Groups From the U.S. and Japan

Group	U.S.		Japan	
	<i>N</i> (males)	<i>M</i> age (<i>SD</i>)	<i>N</i> (males)	<i>M</i> age (<i>SD</i>)
7-year-olds	24 (14)	7.81 (0.27)	31 (17)	7.54 (0.32)
9-year-olds	30 (14)	9.78 (0.50)	29 (16)	9.57 (0.31)
11-year-olds	27 (14)	11.58 (0.26)	19 (13)	11.57 (0.25)
Adults	34 (17)	21.08 (1.45)	28 (6)	22.26 (2.46)

manipulation of transgression types was appropriate. Participants responding that the action was good or bad were then asked to rate how good or bad (e.g., good, very good, or very, very good) and responses were scored on 7-point scale in which the response options ranged from *very, very bad* (coded as -3) to *very, very good* (coded as 3). These response scales have been used effectively with children in this age range in prior research (e.g., Lee et al., 1997; Talwar & Lee, 2008). Participants were trained on how to use the response scale at the beginning of the session.

Next, participants heard the second part of the vignette where the observer was described as reporting the transgression to a teacher, as in this example: "Imagine that Chris immediately tells the teacher what Tom did." This was followed by an *evaluation of telling question* such as "Is what Chris did good, bad, or not good/not bad?" Participants responded to this question using the same 7-point scale that they used to respond to the transgression evaluation question.

Next, children were asked an *obligation to tell question* that concerned what the observer should have done in the situation: "What should Chris have done? Should he have told the teacher what Tom did, or not told?" Responses to this question were made on a 3-point scale, with the response options ranging from *not tell* (coded as -1), *other* (coded as 0), and *tell* (coded as 1). The same scale was used for the *personal tendency question*, in which participants were asked, "What would you do?" The six vignettes were designed to be similar in length and complexity (see Appendix A for a set of the vignettes).

Participants were asked to justify their responses to the evaluation of telling, obligation to tell, and personal tendency questions. Justification categories were derived with an exploratory coding of 20% of participants' justifications and an a priori interest in the potential cross-cultural differences in the emphases placed on authority relationships, interdependence, and harmony. Guided by this a priori interest, we created a scheme of four justification categories. The categories included (a) allegiance to authority; (b) allegiance to friend; (c) necessary report; and (d) empathy (see Appendix B for examples and a summary of the justification categories). The same bilingual graduate student who assisted with the initial translations of the vignettes translated the justification responses from Japanese participants into English. A research assistant, who was not familiar with the study, was trained on the coding scheme and coded all of the justifications for each category. Each response was coded as containing a reference to the response category (coded as 1) or not containing a reference the response category (coded as 0). Another research assistant coded a random selection of 10% of the responses from the U.S. participants and 10% of the responses from the Japanese participants for reliability. Cohen's kappa calculated for interrater reliability was .74 for both of the allegiance categories, .83 for the necessary report category, and .74 for the empathy category.

Although the exploratory coding suggested that participants referred to their allegiance to either the authority figure or the friend in their justifications, a full analysis of all of the participants' responses revealed that they generally did not make references to these categories. Coding of the entire set of responses revealed that less than 20% of the participants made any reference in their justifications to suggest a sense of allegiance to the authority figure or to the friend (see Table 2). Because these two categories were infrequently used and therefore not representative

Table 2
Summary of the Proportion of Total Participants Referencing the Justification Categories and Frequency of References to Each Category by Transgression Type

Justification category	Proportion of participants referencing category	Frequency of references to category	
		Major transgression	Minor transgression
Allegiance to authority	.19	42	54
Allegiance to friend	.10	18	19
Necessary report	.81	476	195
Empathy	.32	137	21

of participants' justifications, they were excluded from further analyses. The number of references that each participant made for the remaining categories of necessary report and empathy were totaled for each question for each transgression type (maximum score of 3), and the mean number of references to each category for each transgression type was used in the analyses.

Results

Preliminary analyses showed no effects of question order or gender, so these factors were omitted from subsequent analyses.¹ Further, although there is evidence of cross-cultural differences in children's evaluations of single-peer versus group behavior (Fu et al., 2007), preliminary analyses from this study showed no effect of whether the protagonist was a single friend or a group of friends. Therefore, this factor was omitted from subsequent analyses.

Transgression Evaluations

Paired *t* tests on the grand means for the major and minor transgression evaluation questions for each country for all age groups with Bonferroni adjustments ($\alpha = .05/15 = .003$; see Table 3) showed that all minor transgressions were rated similarly and all major transgressions were rated similarly except for the steal vignette, which was rated slightly more negatively. Although all three major transgression vignettes were classified with the criteria used during the piloting process, this study's participants may still have viewed the steal vignette as a more significant violation, possibly because stealing might be more often considered a punishable offense and may not be as frequently excused as typical childhood behavior. However, although both countries evaluated stealing more negatively than the other two transgressions, the *t* tests confirmed that the major transgressions were consistently viewed as more severe than the minor transgressions. Thus, composite scores were created and used for all analyses.

The primary goal of the *transgression evaluation question* was to assess participants' differentiation between major and minor transgressions. The mean ratings for the transgression evaluation question from participants in both countries for all age groups are presented in Table 4. *T* tests showed that participants from both the

¹ Since we were unable to obtain a gender balanced sample in Japan, further research will be needed before any firm conclusions can be reached about the existence of gender differences.

Table 3
Mean Scores (SD) of the Evaluation of Transgression Measure for Each Vignette and Significance Values (p) of Paired t-Test Comparisons of All Vignettes

Comparison	Major transgression			Minor transgression		
	Vignettes	Steal	Push	Worm	Poster	Paper
<i>M (SD)</i>						
U.S.	-2.29 (.77)	-2.03 (.91)	-1.86 (.92)	-.10 (.48)	-.03 (.46)	-.11 (.35)
Japan	-2.70 (.59)	-2.05 (.87)	-2.30 (.77)	-.31 (.61)	-.35 (.65)	-.26 (.66)
<i>p</i>						
Steal						
U.S.		.001*	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Japan		<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Push						
U.S.			.07	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Japan			.003	<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Worm						
U.S.				<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Japan				<.0001*	<.0001*	<.0001*
Poster						
U.S.					.23	.82
Japan					.53	.51
Paper						
U.S.						.12
Japan						.23

Note. Single asterisks indicate significance at $\alpha = .003$ (Bonferroni adjusted).

U.S. and Japan differentiated between major and minor transgressions in their transgression evaluations, $t(114) = 29.46, p < .01$, and $t(106) = 29.30, p < .01$, respectively.

Further analyses were conducted on participants' transgression evaluations to examine age-related and country-related differences. A mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with transgression type (major and minor) as the within-subjects factor and country and age group as between-subjects factors revealed significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 1,756.16, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .89$; country, $F(1, 214) = 26.74, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .11$; and age group, $F(3, 214) = 4.09, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .05$. Consistent with expectations, post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni) showed that major transgressions were evaluated more negatively than minor transgressions. Post hoc comparisons also showed that Japanese participants evaluated all transgressions more negatively and that the 7-year-old

group evaluated all transgressions more negatively than the adults did. The results also showed an interaction between country and age group, $F(1, 214) = 2.97, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) showed that the transgression evaluations by the 7-year-old group were not different between the two countries, but in all the other age groups the Japanese evaluations were more negative than the American evaluations. As a result of these differences, participants' transgression evaluations were controlled for in the subsequent analyses of their other ratings.

Evaluations of Telling

Table 4 shows the mean ratings for the evaluations of telling about major and minor transgressions for each country for each age group. A 4 (age group) \times 2 (transgression type) \times 2 (country) mixed factor analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted, with evaluations of telling about major transgressions and about minor transgressions used as repeated-design dependent variables. Evaluations of major and minor transgressions were entered as covariates because of the previously noted age group and country differences in the evaluations. After controlling for participants' evaluations of the transgressions, significant effects of age, $F(1, 213) = 11.35, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .12$, and country, $F(1, 213) = 6.85, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$, were found. Planned contrasts ($p < .05$) showed that the 7-year-olds evaluated telling about transgressions more positively than the 9-year-olds and the adults did, the 9- and 11-year-olds evaluated telling more positively than the adults did, and the Japanese evaluated telling more positively than the Americans did. Overall, older participants were less approving of reporting both major and minor transgressions, a pattern that had been expected only for minor transgressions.

There was also a modest interaction between country and transgression type, $F(1, 213) = 7.63, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Additional ANCOVAs for each of the transgression types, with the respective

Table 4
Mean Scores (SD) for the Transgression Evaluation and Evaluation of Telling Measures

Age group	Major transgression		Minor transgression	
	U.S.	Japan	U.S.	Japan
Transgression evaluation				
7-year-olds	-2.43 (.64)	-2.32 (.63)	-.19 (.35)	-.37 (.44)
9-year-olds	-2.08 (.64)	-2.31 (.58)	-.08 (.24)	-.32 (.54)
11-year-olds	-2.00 (.70)	-2.65 (.53)	-.02 (.18)	-.30 (.43)
Adult	-1.83 (.60)	-2.21 (.54)	-.06 (.39)	-.27 (.33)
Evaluation of telling				
7-year-olds	1.92 (.90)	1.82 (.80)	.03 (.86)	.29 (.86)
9-year-olds	1.36 (.67)	1.65 (.98)	-.49 (.43)	.13 (.56)
11-year-olds	1.54 (.81)	2.14 (.61)	-.40 (.74)	.04 (1.02)
Adult	.95 (.96)	1.08 (.62)	-.83 (1.00)	-.21 (.85)

evaluations of transgressions as covariates, showed that there was a difference between the two countries in their evaluations of telling about minor transgressions, $F(1, 219) = 13.81, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$, but not in their evaluations of telling about major transgressions. Consistent with our expectations, this result suggests that, after controlling for their evaluations, Japanese participants rated telling about a minor transgression more positively than American participants did.

Obligation to Tell

A 4 (age group) \times 2 (transgression type) \times 2 (country) mixed factor ANCOVA was conducted, with participants' responses to the *obligation to tell* about major and minor transgressions questions used as repeated-design dependent variables. Again, evaluations of major and minor transgressions were entered as covariates. The results showed that age group, $F(3, 213) = 15.87, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .17$; country, $F(1, 213) = 4.83, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .02$; and transgression type, $F(1, 213) = 12.30, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .04$, were significant factors in participants' responses (see Figure 1). Planned contrasts ($p < .05$) indicated that, in general, 7-year-olds gave more positive responses than all the other age groups, and the adults gave more negative responses than all the other age groups. The 9- and 11-year-olds were not different from each other. Planned contrasts ($p < .05$) also showed that the Japanese gave more positive responses than the Americans, and major transgressions elicited more positive responses.

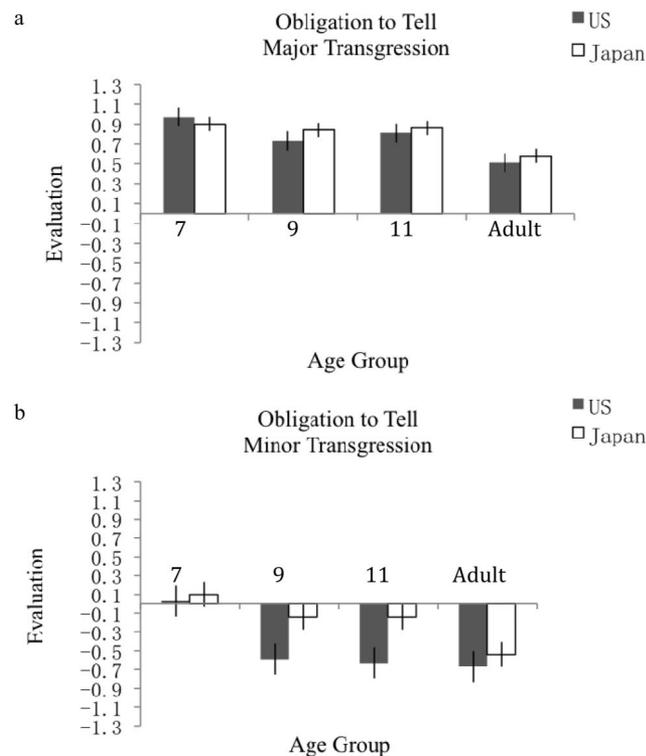


Figure 1. Panel a shows major transgression, and panel b shows minor transgression. Responses for the Obligation to Tell measure were made on a 3-point scale ranging from *should not tell* (coded as -1) to *should tell* (coded as 1). Error bars represent standard errors.

The effect of transgression type was qualified by an interaction between age and transgression type, $F(3, 213) = 3.79, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Follow-up ANCOVAs for each of the transgression types, with the respective evaluations of transgressions as covariates, showed that adults gave more negative responses than all other age groups for major transgressions, $F(3, 217) = 8.02, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .10$ (post hoc, Bonferroni). However, for minor transgressions, 7-year-olds gave more positive responses than all other age groups, $F(3, 217) = 10.91, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .13$ (post hoc, Bonferroni). Consistent with our hypotheses, this finding showed that younger participants had a more favorable view of reporting minor transgressions than older participants did.

The effect of transgression type was also qualified by an interaction between country and transgression type, $F(1, 213) = 9.78, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Similar follow-up ANCOVAs as above for each of the transgression types showed that there was a difference between the two countries in their responses for minor transgressions, $F(1, 219) = 5.69, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$, but not in their responses for major transgressions. Although modest, this result is consistent with our predictions and suggests that Japanese participants had a more favorable view of reporting minor transgressions than their American counterparts did.

Personal Tendency

Parallel analyses to the ones conducted for the obligation to tell measure revealed similar results for the *personal tendency* measure (see Figure 2). There was an effect of age group, $F(3, 213) = 13.99, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .16$, with the 7-year-olds more likely to report than the other age groups, and the 9-year-olds more likely to report than the adults (planned contrasts, $p < .05$). There was also an interaction between age group and transgression type, $F(3, 213) = 3.03, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Follow-up ANCOVAs showed that, for major transgressions, the 7- and 9-year-olds were more likely to report than the 11-year-olds and adults, $F(3, 217) = 7.34, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .09$ (post hoc, Bonferroni). However, for minor transgressions, only the 7-year-olds were more likely to report than the other age groups, $F(3, 217) = 10.40, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .13$ (post hoc, Bonferroni).

The results also showed an interaction between country and transgression type, $F(1, 213) = 10.65, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$, that indicated a pattern similar to the one seen for the obligation to tell question. Follow-up ANCOVAs showed that, for minor transgressions, Japanese participants were more likely to report than American participants, $F(1, 219) = 4.90, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .03$, but that there was no difference in the two countries' responses for major transgressions.

Justification Responses

Participants' justifications of their evaluation responses were examined for references to the derived themes of interest to this study, as described in the Method section. For each of the necessary report and empathy themes, a series of 2 (transgression type) \times 4 (age group) \times 2 (country) ANOVAs was conducted to examine participants' justifications for each of the evaluation of telling, obligation to tell, and personal tendency questions.

As predicted, Japanese participants were generally more likely than American participants to indicate that it was necessary to

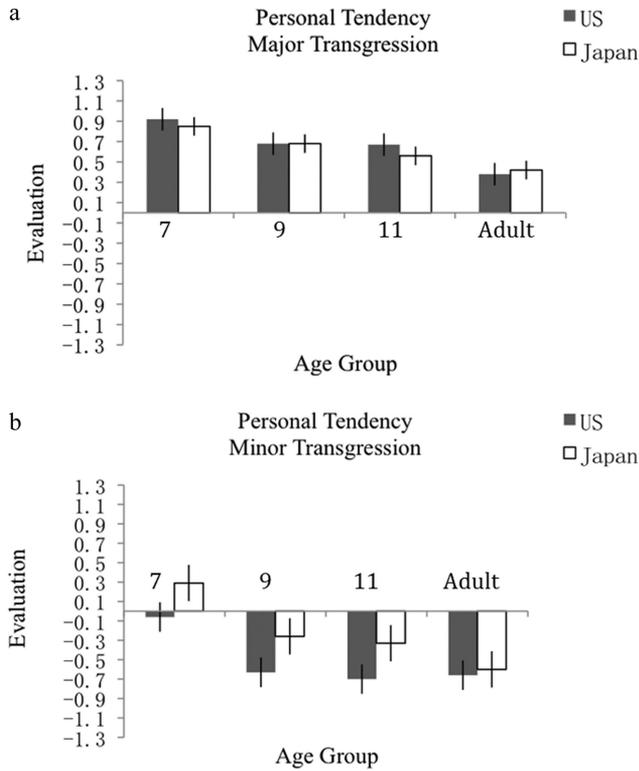


Figure 2. Panel a shows major transgression, and panel b shows minor transgression. Responses for the Personal Tendency measure were made on a 3-point scale ranging from *would not tell* (coded as -1) to *would tell* (coded as 1). Error bars represent standard errors.

report transgressions to the authority figure (see Table 5). For the evaluation of telling question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 90.41, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .30$, and country, $F(1, 214) = 7.95, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that more justifications indicating that reporting was necessary were given for major transgressions and by Japanese participants. For the obligation to tell question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 116.29, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .35$, and country, $F(1, 214) = 14.24, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that more responses indicating that reporting was necessary were given for major transgressions and by Japanese participants. For the personal tendency question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 79.34, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .27$, and country, $F(1, 214) = 15.39, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .07$, and an interaction between transgression type and country, $F(1, 214) = 5.63, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) revealed that more responses indicating that reporting was necessary were given for major transgressions and by Japanese participants. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) also showed that Japanese participants gave more responses that reporting was necessary for major, compared with minor, transgressions. Overall, these findings are generally consistent with our prediction that participant responses would reflect the greater tendency of Japanese people to emphasize respect for authority and normative expectations.

Also, as predicted, Japanese participants were generally more likely than American participants to make references to empathy,

Table 5
Mean References (SD) in Participants' Justifications to "Necessary Report" for the Evaluation of Telling, Obligation to Tell, and Personal Tendency Measures

Age group	Major transgression		Minor transgression	
	U.S.	Japan	U.S.	Japan
Evaluation of telling				
7-year-olds	.79 (.98)	1.23 (.88)	.46 (.78)	.68 (1.05)
9-year-olds	.73 (.83)	1.17 (.71)	.07 (.25)	.34 (.72)
11-year-olds	.74 (.76)	1.16 (.69)	.22 (.42)	.37 (.68)
Adult	.88 (.95)	.82 (.82)	.24 (.55)	.11 (.31)
Obligation to tell				
7-year-olds	.58 (.83)	1.39 (1.02)	.38 (.58)	.65 (.95)
9-year-olds	.97 (.89)	1.21 (.94)	.20 (.41)	.41 (.78)
11-year-olds	.85 (.86)	1.37 (.83)	.15 (.36)	.42 (.77)
Adult	.68 (.91)	.79 (.83)	.09 (.29)	.21 (.50)
Personal tendency				
7-year-olds	.38 (.58)	1.23 (1.28)	.29 (.46)	.68 (1.01)
9-year-olds	.77 (.77)	.83 (.89)	.20 (.41)	.45 (.78)
11-year-olds	.63 (.74)	1.05 (.97)	.07 (.27)	.11 (.32)
Adult	.38 (.74)	.89 (.83)	.09 (.29)	.18 (.48)

although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about minor transgressions due to the relatively small number of such responses in these scenarios (see Table 6). For the evaluation of telling question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 39.63, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .16$; age group, $F(3, 214) = 3.65, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .05$; and country, $F(1, 214) = 17.04, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .07$, and interactions between transgression type and age, $F(3, 214) = 2.92, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .04$, and between transgression type and country, $F(1, 214) = 8.74, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) showed that more references to empathy were made

Table 6
Mean References (SD) in Participants' Justifications to "Empathy" for the Evaluation of Telling, Obligation to Tell, and Personal Tendency Measures

Age group	Major transgression		Minor transgression	
	U.S.	Japan	U.S.	Japan
Evaluation of telling				
7-year-olds	.29 (.62)	.42 (.56)	.00 (.00)	.06 (.25)
9-year-olds	.07 (.25)	.31 (.47)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.19)
11-year-olds	.00 (.00)	.21 (.42)	.00 (.00)	.05 (.23)
Adult	.03 (.17)	.29 (.46)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Obligation to tell				
7-year-olds	.25 (.53)	.32 (.54)	.08 (.28)	.13 (.34)
9-year-olds	.07 (.25)	.31 (.47)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.19)
11-year-olds	.07 (.27)	.05 (.23)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Adult	.15 (.50)	.11 (.31)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Personal tendency				
7-year-olds	.25 (.53)	.58 (.81)	.13 (.45)	.16 (.45)
9-year-olds	.10 (.31)	.31 (.47)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.19)
11-year-olds	.04 (.19)	.26 (.45)	.00 (.00)	.05 (.23)
Adult	.21 (.48)	.21 (.42)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)

for major transgressions by 7-year-olds, compared with 11-year-olds and adults, and by Japanese participants. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) showed that the 11-year-olds were not different in their empathic references for major compared with minor transgressions, but all the other age groups referred to empathy more in their justifications for major transgressions. Also, although Japanese participants gave more empathic responses than American participants did, more references to empathy were made for major, compared with minor, transgressions. For the obligation to tell question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 20.38, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .08$, and age, $F(3, 214) = 5.00, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .07$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) showed that more references to empathy were made for major transgressions and by 7-year-olds compared with 11-year-olds and adults. Finally, for the personal tendency question, there were significant effects of transgression type, $F(1, 214) = 34.30, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .14$; age group, $F(3, 214) = 4.81, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$; and country, $F(1, 214) = 7.66, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$, and an interaction between transgression type and country, $F(1, 214) = 5.78, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni) revealed more empathic responses for major transgressions, by 7-year-olds compared with all other age groups and by Japanese participants. Simple effects analyses (Bonferroni) showed that Japanese participants gave more empathic responses for major transgressions than American participants did, but the empathic responses between the two countries were not different for minor transgressions. Overall, these findings are generally consistent with our hypothesis that participant responses would reflect the greater emphasis placed on empathy and relational harmony by Japanese people. However, because the analyses were based on a subset of responses and the overall frequency of references to both “necessary report” and “empathy” was not representative of the entire sample, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Discussion

This study investigated age-related and cross-cultural differences in American and Japanese adults' and children's evaluations of peer reports of major and minor transgressions to an authority figure. Previous research (Chiu Loke et al., 2011) documented that in North America, there is a shift from a positive to a negative view of reporting minor transgressions at about 8 years of age. The present research replicated this finding in the U.S. and showed that it generalizes to Japan. The present research also found evidence suggesting a cross-cultural difference, with Japanese participants holding relatively more favorable views of reporting minor transgressions.

The first major finding was that age-related differences in children's responses to reports of minor transgressions, or tattling, showed similar patterns across the two countries. These differences were evident even though participants in all age groups were able to distinguish between major and minor transgressions. These findings help to extend domain theory (Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Smetana et al., 1993; Turiel, 2008) by suggesting that it is well after children appreciate domain distinctions that they fully appreciate that there is a distinction to be made between reporting on conventional violations versus on moral transgressions where doing so might prevent further harm.

One factor that may have contributed to the age-related differences is young children's interest in the enforcement of social rules (Rakoczy et al., 2008; Wyman et al., 2009). Children as young as 18 months show considerable interest when they see siblings violate social rules or witness conflict between a sibling and a parent (Dunn & Munn, 1985). Young children are also aware that tattling sometimes results in positive alliances with authority figures (den Bak & Ross, 1996; Ingram & Bering 2010). It may be that young children view the reporting of a peer's transgression, even a minor one, as an opportunity to demonstrate their awareness of social rules or to align themselves with authority figures. With increased age, children put less emphasis on the strict following of rules and begin to incorporate psychological factors such as motivation and environmental factors such as outcomes into their reasoning about transgressions (Kalish & Shiverick, 2004). It may also be that as children learn the norms associated with societal rules, they overgeneralize the importance of helping to police these rules and gradually learn to pay attention to which aspects of transgressions they are morally obligated to report on.

Another contributing factor to the age-related differences may be social experience. Previous research has shown that the social costs of reporting on peers increase with age (Friman et al., 2004). It may be that with increased social experience, children observe or experience negative consequences associated with tattling behavior and begin to view the reporting of minor transgressions to authority figures as unnecessary and at the expense of peer loyalty. It may also be that, with age, children begin to experience a sense of group allegiance that prompts them to protect their friends from the dictates of authorities.

Children's improving cognitive skills may also be important. Executive function skills (Beveridge, Jarrold, & Pettit, 2002) may support older children's ability to consider multiple perspectives when evaluating the appropriateness of the peer report. Older children may also be better at interpreting simultaneous information elements, including the intentions, actions, and outcomes (Wainryb, 1991).

The second major finding was that although participants from both countries thought it was appropriate to report major transgressions, Japanese participants considered it more appropriate to report minor transgressions than American participants did. This may be because Japanese children tend to emphasize normative expectations and social responsibility to a relatively greater extent (Taylor et al., 2002; Taylor, Wilson, Kaneda, & Ogawa, 2000).

Further, Japanese participants in this study showed some evidence of being relatively more empathic, especially toward victims of major transgressions. Although it is important not to make too much of this difference given that these references were relatively uncommon even among Japanese children, the pattern is consistent with the cultural emphasis on focusing on the needs of others in Japan (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

Cultural differences in emphasis on respect for authority (Rothbaum et al., 2000) may also help to explain our findings, because reporting transgressions can serve to validate and enforce the rules put in place by authority figures. Both parents and teachers in Japan stress the importance of compliance and respect for authority (Hamilton et al., 1989; Power et al., 1992). They do not value children's willingness to challenge authority as much as parents in the U.S., who view this trait as an indication of developing individuality (Rothbaum et al., 2000). With regard to teachers as

authority figures, parents in the U.S. emphasize the importance of the teacher–child relationship but primarily only to the extent that it facilitates academic success (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005). In contrast, teachers in Japan are viewed as moral authorities (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998), and Japanese children exhibit a strong identification with teacher authority (Hamilton et al., 1989).

While our findings of cross-cultural differences were significant, it is important to note that effect sizes were modest and that further research will be needed to replicate the results. It is also important to note that although we have interpreted our findings of Japanese children's relatively higher rates of reporting on minor transgressions in terms of positive social values such as social responsibility, empathy, and respect for authority, it is also possible that this pattern can be viewed in a negative light. This is because reporting on others when it is not necessary to do so can have high social costs, including social disruption, and can be motivated by the desire to cause harm or to feel moral superiority.

Although it is not surprising that adults held a more negative view of reporting on minor transgressions than children did, finding the same pattern for major transgressions was not expected. One factor contributing to this unexpected finding may have been adults' relatively more positive views of the major transgressions, as suggested by their evaluations. This may have been because the scenarios were created for children and may not have been as significant for adults. Another possibility is that adults may have felt that the conflicts should be resolved among friends without involving authorities. Additional research will be needed to examine this possibility, as well as potential differences in cross-cultural considerations of these issues.

Future research will also be needed to systematically examine longitudinal change and the potential social and cognitive factors that contribute to the cultural differences found in this study. Future research should also systematically explore possible gender differences and whether boys and girls show similar patterns of evaluations given prior evidence that tattling may be viewed as more normative for girls (Giles & Heyman, 2005).

Another important direction for future research will be to examine how the characteristics of the observer and protagonist may influence evaluations. One important characteristic to examine will be age. This was not addressed in the present research, and it is possible that participants may show different patterns of reasoning about the appropriateness of younger or older children reporting on different types of transgressions. It will also be important to examine how the information about the relationships between the observer and protagonist may influence evaluations. It seems likely that participants would be less critical of decisions to report on the wrongdoing of acquaintances compared with friends. It will also be important to examine cases with disliked peers, where reporting on transgressions may be viewed as a more hostile act. The nature of the authority figure in question may also influence evaluations. This includes general social category information, such as whether that individual is a teacher or a parent, as well as specific information about the authority figure in question, such as how he or she tends to respond to transgressions.

Taken together, the findings from the present study provide evidence of cross-cultural similarities in patterns of age-related change in the U.S. and Japan. These findings suggest that, over time, social experience and improving cognitive capabilities allow children to be more selective in their reporting of transgressions.

Additionally, findings from the present research point to ways in which children's cultural experience may shape their developing beliefs about socio-moral rules.

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(Appendices follow)

Appendix A

Vignettes

Major Transgression Vignettes

Steal

Group transgressor. At school, Jill and her group of friends are getting ready for lunch. Jill begins eating her lunch when she notices that her friends forgot to bring their lunch money and her group of friends steals another classmate's lunch money.

Individual transgressor. At school, Chris and his friend Tom are getting ready for lunch. Chris begins eating his lunch when he notices that Tom forgot to bring his lunch money and he steals another classmate's lunch money.

Push

Group transgressor. During recess, Megan and her group of friends are playing in the schoolyard. While Megan is playing on the swings, she sees her group of friends push a classmate to the ground on purpose.

Individual transgressor. During recess, David and his friend Mitch are playing in the schoolyard. While David is playing on the swings, he sees Mitch push a classmate to the ground on purpose.

Worm

Group transgressor. Brian and his group of friends are getting ready for recess when Brian notices his group of friends putting worms into another classmate's shoe.

Individual transgressor. Andrea and her friend Sharon are getting ready for recess when Andrea notices Sharon putting worms into another classmate's shoe.

Minor Transgression Vignettes

Poster

Group transgressor. During recess, Jack and his group of friends are looking at a poster that his friends brought to school.

When the bell rings, Jack and his friends hurry to go inside and as Jack is walking away, he notices that his group of friends step on the poster by accident and get a small corner of the poster dirty.

Individual transgressor. During recess, Sarah and her friend Julie are looking at a poster that Julie brought to school. When the bell rings, they hurry to go inside and as Sarah is walking away, she notices that Julie steps on the poster by accident and gets a small corner of the poster dirty.

Paper

Group transgressor. Yesterday the teacher asked the students to bring in three small pieces of blue paper for an art project. Today, Bobby and his group of friends are getting ready for art. As Bobby is unpacking the three small pieces of blue paper he brought for the art project, he notices that instead, his group of friends each brought three large pieces of blue paper.

Individual transgressor. Yesterday the teacher asked the students to bring in three small pieces of blue paper for an art project. Today, Betty and her friend Lori are getting ready for art. As Betty is unpacking the three small pieces of blue paper she brought for the art project, she notices that instead, Lori brought three large pieces of blue paper.

Drink

Group transgressor. Bonnie and her group of friends are getting ready for snack time. As Bonnie sits down and begins to eat her snack, she sees her group of friends accidentally bump into another classmate's desk, spilling a small amount of the classmate's juice.

Individual transgressor. John and his friend Neil are getting ready for snack time. As John sits down and begins to eat his snack, he sees Neil accidentally bump into another classmate's desk, spilling a small amount of the classmate's juice.

(Appendices continue)

Appendix B
Justification Categories

Necessary Report

Code 0 = no reference indicating that telling the teacher about transgression was necessary

Code 1 = reference indicating that telling the teacher about transgression was necessary

Example	Code
It's a big problem and should not be ignored. (U.S.)	1
It's bullying and we should tattle it. (Japan)	1

Allegiance to Authority

Code 0 = no reference indicating that there should be an allegiance to authority

Code 1 = reference indicating that there should be an allegiance to authority

Example	Code
It's a big problem and should not be ignored. (U.S.)	1
It's bullying and we should tattle it. (Japan)	1

Allegiance to Friend

Code 0 = no reference indicating that there should be an allegiance to friends

Code 1 = reference indicating that there should be an allegiance to friends

Example	Code
Since Betty and Lori are working together, telling the teacher would break the partnership. (U.S.)	1
Tattling would break the friendship. (Japan)	1

Empathy

Code 0 = no reference indicating feelings of empathy

Code 1 = response indicating feelings of empathy

Example	Code
I feel sorry for the kid who got his money stolen. (U.S.)	1
I feel badly for the classmate who got worms. (Japan)	1

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