



This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in *Early Child Development and Care* on 1/03/2016, available online:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/03004430.2015.1043911>

This is the post-peer reviewed version of the following article:

Li, S. (2016). A mechanism for gratitude development in a child. *Early Child Development And Care*, 186(3), 466–479.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1043911>

Downloaded from [e-publications@UNE](http://e-publications@une.edu.au) the institutional research repository of the University of New England at Armidale, NSW Australia.

A mechanism for gratitude development in a child

On the family moral education practices of China's "me" generations of the one-child policy

Abstract:

Most scholars consider gratitude as a moral emotion, with only few seeing it as a character trait. As a result, no systematic mechanism has ever been attempted to develop gratitude in children. Given the social issue of widespread lack of gratitude in the one-child generations of China, this paper attempts to outline a mechanism of parental moral education for gratitude development. The mechanism is underpinned by love, induction and discipline; and theoretically justified in accordance with key psychological and sociological theories, such as Piaget's theory of moral development, Kohlberg's moral stages theory, attachment theory, Hoffman's internalisation theory, Rest's social justice theory, and Baumrind's parenting styles theory. The benefits and potential risks of each strategy of the mechanism are addressed.

Key words: mechanism for gratitude development, love, inductive discipline, justice, attachment theory, one-child generations, parenting styles, family education, parental moral education

A mechanism for gratitude development in a child

On the family moral education practices of the China's "me" generations of the one-child policy

“Gratitude is one of the most neglected emotions and one of the most underestimated of the virtues” (Solomon, 2004, p. v). Of the limited number of studies researching gratitude, with all agreeing that gratitude does not refer to a social etiquette like saying “thank you”, some explored the theological foundation of gratitude, God the Almighty, (e.g. Harpham, 2004; Parachin, 2005; Schimmel, 2004) or saw the object of gratitude as the cosmos more generally (e.g. Nakhnikian, 1961); some discussed the appropriateness of gratitude in terms of the right target, degree, time and circumstance in behaviourism (e.g. A. Smith, 1790/1976); others philosophically and psychologically examined its positive (e.g. happiness) and negative functions (e.g. a feeling of debt or a humiliating emotion) for one’s well-being (e.g. Fredrickson, 2004b; McCullough & Tsang, 2004; McDougall, 1929; Robert, 2004; Sommer, 1984; Watkins, 2004). With regards to whether gratitude is an episodic emotion or a virtue, some consider gratitude as merely an emotion, an episodic disposition in nature (e.g. Aristotle, trans. 1976; Williams, 1985), while Emmons points out that “[o]ne can be prone to experiencing and certainly expressing gratitude on appropriate occasions without necessarily being a grateful person” (2004, p. 9) and holds, joined by a few other scholars (e.g. Komter, 2004; S. Li, 2014b; Robert, 2004; Watkins, 2004), that gratitude is a long-term disposition, a state of character or a character trait, a virtue. Watkins’s statement “[a]lthough I propose that the grateful disposition is difficult to change, improving one’s tendency to respond gratefully should not be impossible” (2004, p. 187) further suggests that the development of gratitude as a character trait is a painful process of cultivation. In summary, a literature review suggests that gratitude is more of a consistent state of character, a virtue in moral philosophy, than merely an emotion.

What exactly is gratitude? The definition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “the quality or condition of being thankful; the appreciation of an inclination to return kindness” (1989, p. 1135), seems to

be over simplistic because it only sees gratitude as a feeling or an attitude. It does not capture its intrinsic or long-term disposition to perform a moral obligation in behaviour and finance for kindness received, described by Emmons as “its dutiful aspects rather than its emotional quality” (2004, p. 7). Therefore, to deal with “its dutiful aspects”, Li put forward a notion that “gratitude should be comprehended not just as a desire to show appreciation for, but more importantly, an act of returning kindness” (2014b, p. 3). The acts of appreciation could simply be a smile or a word of thanks, and could also be a laborious task such as looking after an elderly parent for years in the culture of filial piety. The appreciation of an inclination to return kindness is not just a desire, and more importantly, needs to be tangible and even substantialised sometimes in order to be felt.

Then what makes a person feel grateful? Some scholars believe that it originates from love, initially from within a family, or caring, empathy from a psychological perspective (e.g. Buck, 2004; McAdams & Bauer, 2004; Spinoza, 1677/1981). Is gratitude a natural response if all these psychological conditions (love, caring, and empathy) are met? It appears to be the consensus of opinion in the aforementioned literature review in which gratitude is considered as an episodic emotion. However, as was briefly discussed above, gratitude is more of a moral virtue or a character trait, as Li says, that it “is not inborn and needs to be trained” (2014b, p. 3) intentionally or unintentionally. Others ascribe it to reciprocity or fair exchange of kindness or benefits, or human cooperation in a sociological perspective (e.g. Bonnie & Waal, 2004; Buck, 2004; McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Larson, 2001). In this sense, one needs to resort to social justice. Given the fact that a moral obligation for reciprocity is distinct from a legal one by its unique property, emotions, the concept of reciprocity or social justice in the moral context is better described as morality of justice (Kohlberg, 1964; Piaget, 1965) or as “emotions of justice” (Solomon, 2004, p. x). Thus, it is legitimate to conclude that gratitude as a moral virtue needs to be trained or cultivated by following the path of moral development underlaid by both love and social justice, that is, morality of justice. These psychological and sociological factors are the two key integral components for cultivating gratitude. This paper seeks to work out a mechanism to develop a grateful child by applying both factors.

An empirical background driving the development of this mechanism is a gratitude issue in the one-child generations of China. Over the last thirty years, since the one-child policy was put into effect in 1979 (Short, Zhai, Xu, & Yang, 2001), parental moral education in China has mostly focused on the psychological factors, love, caring and empathy without attending to the sociological factor, social justice. This has resulted in a serious social issue of widespread lack of gratitude in the one-child generations (Bi, 2007; Z. Chen & Zou, 2007; Deng, 2011; Du, He, & Xu, 2010; F. Li & Li, 2007; Tang, 2007; Xiaoshan, 2006; Zhou, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to first have a good understanding of the background information on which the mechanism is based.

Lack of gratitude in one-child generations of China

A number of surveys (Y. Chen & Yang, 2011; M. Li & Peng, 2011; Lu, 2009; Ma, 2011; Zhang, 2013) on gratitude in the one-child generations conducted in China's middle schools and universities, using various questionnaires, all revealed a widespread lack of gratitude in these adolescents and young adults towards their parents. For example, Lu's (2009) investigation of 500 junior middle students in a rural area showed that 83.82% of respondents considered self-fulfilment as a way of expressing gratitude to parents; and Li and Peng's (2011) survey of 485 middle school students in an urban area found that 100% of them believed that gratitude was not relevant to them at that time, and 30% of them never expressed gratitude to their parents. These surveys revealed that, although some of the respondents reported feelings of gratitude towards their parents, few acted on these feelings, for example, helping their parents with the housework. These surveys echo other research findings of "little emperors" (Bi, 2007; Z. Chen & Zou, 2007; Deng, 2011; Du et al., 2010; Huang, 2011; F. Li & Li, 2007; S. Li, 2014a; Tang, 2007; Zhou, 2008). These researchers found that in a typical one-child family of the 4-2-1 structure (4 grandparents, 2 parents, and 1 child), mostly in urban areas, the only child is excessively pampered by the six elders with unconditional love and care. These children are not required to do/perform any family chores and have no siblings to look after as part of the family responsibility that normally happens in multi-child families. In other words, they have all the rights and benefits of a family as best as their parents can provide, but take no

family responsibilities of any kind, for example, not even making their own beds. The mindset of Chinese parents of these only children is best reflected in the self-narrative of one parent in one of the best-known 21st century Chinese literature works *I am your Father*:

I want my child to be happy. No matter how much shame and suffering I have to go through for him, as long as I live I'll never let him know hunger or pain of any kind. I will never, never let him suffer what I have been through – I would give my life for him (Wang, 2002, p. 192).

As a result, “with many an only child becoming extremely egocentric, with the mindset of only taking without giving, they have regrettably reduced into generations of apathy with no sense of gratitude” (Z. Chen & Zou, 2007, p. Preamble). For these children in one-child families, home is where only love dwells, nothing else. Such mentality has nurtured them to become the “me” generation (Jacka, Kipnis, & Sargeson, 2013).

The prevailing absence of gratitude in the young generations of the one-child policy has raised a serious social concern for the Chinese Government, particularly in light of the fact that filial piety still plays a pivotal role in its underdeveloped social aged-care system. In the last decade, widespread official campaigns of gratitude education have been launched at all levels of education from primary school to university across all the provinces and autonomous regions and also in public media (Bi, 2007; Z. Chen & Zou, 2007; Ci, 2009; Deng, 2011; Du et al., 2010; Huang, 2011; F. Li & Li, 2007; Tang, 2007; Xiaoshan, 2006; Zhou, 2008). The activities ranged from regular themed class meetings, school mobilisation assemblies, school commendatory meetings, a theme activity week/month, and symposiums, to touring report groups such as the Long Marches for Gratitude Education of China on Campus, and to massive publications of books and articles on gratitude to reinforce ideological education. Moral reasoning was adopted as the single method of education in these gratitude education campaigns to address the concern and develop the moral virtue, gratitude, in children.

Although moral reasoning has been found to be able to influence behaviour to some extent (Lickona, 1991), there exists quite a discrepancy between moral reasoning and moral actions. Kohlberg noted

that one could “reason in terms of such [moral] principles and not live up to them” (1976, p. 172). The actions/approaches people consider to be the correct ones, may differ from what they actually do in moral action situations, especially when involving a vast amount of investment in time, energy, money, social identity, et cetera. For instance, an adult child in China where the government aged-care services are not well developed, awareness of filial piety and his/her moral and legal obligation to look after an elderly parent may not translate to putting these principles into moral actions, as the latter could involve a large amount of personal sacrifice, even lifestyle. Aristotle (trans. 1976; Curzer, 2002) stated that the development of a virtue is a painful process as it needs to get over the hedonistic nature of human beings. Gratitude, as a virtue and character trait, is predestined to need a mechanism for training.

A working mechanism for gratitude development

The mechanism consists of three keystone properties of parenting, love as a major characteristic of parenting, and induction and discipline as major moral educational methods for social justice. In the following sections, the strategies of the mechanism will be elaborated item by item and then theoretically justified using some key psychological and sociological theories, with its benefits and potential risks briefly addressed.

The property, love

Love is the most important property of parenting, which distinguishes family from peer group, school, community, and workplace. Far from being labour potential a century ago, nowadays most children are considered as love objects in families “economically useless but emotionally priceless” (Zelizer, 1994, p. 281). In the development of the “emotionally priceless” child, parental love plays a vital role, serving as the seed for the reciprocity of love and other positive emotions such as caring, sympathy, empathy, compassion, generosity, and even trust (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004a, 2013;

Komter, 2004; McNeely & Barber, 2010), “which in turn has the effect of building that individual's physical, intellectual, and social resources” (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 300). Attachment theory researchers (Ainsworth, 1961, 1967, 1969, 1989; Bowlby, 1965, 1969, 1980, 1982; Brenning, Soenens, Braet, & Bal, 2012; Steele & Steele, 2013) make it abundantly clear from the findings of their empirical studies that attaining or maintaining proximity to a caring mother-figure is critically important for a child, particularly for infants. And deprivation or inadequate parental love and care during early childhood has serious short-term and long-term ill-effects on personality development and aspects of mental health, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, grief, mourning and depression. Such attachment arising from mother-figure love and care has also been observed to influence an individual's behaviour over time, well into adulthood and across generations (M Main & Goldwyn, 1995; Mary Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Dr Alice Honig, a prominent expert on prosocial behaviours, also noted a strong prosocial disposition in children who had been brought up with parental love (2004). She found that “a child is likely to grow up as a sociopath when no adult has provided consistent or inconsistent affection during the early years. That child easily hurts others and does not feel empathy for others' pain” (2009, p. 1009). In sum, clinical research has revealed that parental love (mostly carried out by the mother-figure) is critically important for the development of a healthy personality from a psychological perspective and of healthy interpersonal relationships from a sociological perspective.

Despite the positive effects of parental love, unconditional love of parents and the absolute reciprocity of love with love may often result in ungratefulness in children. Rawls (1999) stated that love is the origin of parental authority. However, sacrifice of parental authority for the sake of love often results in selfishness in children, rather than the return of love or gratitude (Cunningham, 2005). The absolute reciprocity of love with love may also have the potential to evoke a lack of gratitude as a child grows older (Komter, 2004). Komter noted:

the less the mother is capable of giving the best of her being to the child, the less responsive and grateful the child will become. An ever more disturbed relationship may develop if the child doesn't give in return, causing the mother to become less responsive as well. (2004, p. 203)

As a result, the child starts to resent the mother for not loving him or her anymore and then starts to develop an attitude of selfishness towards the mother. This is particularly the case for China's one-child families, evidenced by a saying circulating among some enlightened Chinese parents that "selfless parents often nurture a selfish child". Therefore, to cultivate children to put parental love in an historical and holistic perspective, inductive discipline is required to complement parental love for the purpose of the moral development of gratitude.

The properties, induction and discipline

Induction is to reason and discuss rules focusing on consequences for others, while discipline is to enforce these rules. Inductive discipline refers to "techniques which point up the consequences of the child's behaviour for others. A moral orientation based on fear of external detection and punishment is associated with discipline techniques having high power-assertive components – physical force, material deprivation, or the threat of these" (Martin L. Hoffman, 1975, p. 228). Three strategies underpinned by the properties of induction and discipline are identified and recommended, including one active strategy and two passive strategies (one before and one after a child's actions). These strategies will first be elaborated on and then theoretically justified, and, finally, their benefits and potential risks addressed.

The three strategies of the mechanism

Sharing household duties, as an active strategy, is very important for children to develop responsibility, which in turn leads to gratitude. To implement this strategy, two principles must be borne in mind; firstly, assignments of household chores should be a developmental process (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989); secondly, relevant consistency in assigning housework tasks and monitoring their enactments is key in habituating responsibility (Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009). Curbing desires and bearing negative consequences are the two passive strategies. First, parents should set limits by "discuss[ing] rules in a reasonable spirit with their child" (Spock, 1965, p. 423) so that children are clear about which behaviour is encouraged and what is disallowed. In this process,

parents should “direct the child’s attention to the consequences of his behavior for others (rather than the punitive consequences for himself) and to the logical demands of the situation” (Martin L. Hoffman, 1975, p. 234). Second, if children break these rules, they have to bear the disapproval consequences so as to develop the mentality to respect and follow rules.

Rationale

These strategies are primarily based on some very influential psychological and sociological theories, Piaget’s theory of moral development, Kohlberg’s moral stages theory, the social justice theory, and Hoffman’s moral internalisation theory. Piaget’s (1965) theory reveals that, as early as five years old, children are growing aware of justice, which plays as one of the two aspects of moral reasoning (along with respect for rules) in his two-stage moral development from heteronomous to autonomous morality. Kohlberg (1976, 1984) also holds that justice functions as the most fundamental benchmark for his six-stage theory of moral development, which progresses from Stage 1, the punishment avoidance orientation, to Stage 2, the self-interest orientation, Stage 3, the interpersonal conformity orientation, Stage 4, the social systems orientation, Stage 5, the social contract perspective, and finally to Stage 6, the universal ethical principles. In Kohlberg’s theory, it is not until Stage 5, the social contract perspective, that a sense of justice has progressively been developed in a person. He also found that the development of moral reasoning is not automatic, simply occurring in tandem with chronological aging, and that the vast majority of adults never reach Stage 5.

Then why is justice considered as the centrality of morality? And how is it so difficult to develop? To answer these two questions, we need to look into the mechanism of justice and human nature. As justice always entails social interactions, so justice also refers to social justice in the discussions that follow. Of a good number of theories on social justice (1982; Elm & Weber, 1994; Martin L. Hoffman, 1975; Hume, 1960; Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1965; Rawls, 1999), representative is Rest’s (1979) social justice theory, stating that moral development is primarily based on social justice achieved through balancing different rights, obligations, and benefits, which is the bedrock of social

cooperation and harmony. This concept can be expanded from psychological and sociological perspectives. From a psychological perspective, given the fact that the hedonistic predispositions of human beings are largely constitutional (Aristotle, trans. 1976; Hume, 1960; Kohlberg, 1964), social justice is a vital avenue to subjugate one's hedonistic needs for moral values (Martin L. Hoffman, 1975). While from a sociological perspective,

Individuals are born into associations of people and must balance their own interests with those of others in the association. Therefore, the problem of justice becomes one of balancing interests in social cooperation and achieving equilibrium through that balance. Thus moral thinking is based on assignment of rights and responsibilities in a social system to provide cooperation and stability (Elm & Weber, 1994, p. 343).

Through balancing diverse rights, obligations and benefits, individuals will learn to respect mutual rights and benefits; which in turn leads to a long-term disposition of appreciation of kindness rendered by others, that is, a character trait of gratitude. Therefore, justice can be the vital means for overcoming the psychological tendency of an individual's self-interest and reaching the sociological balance between rights, obligations and benefits between human beings; cultivating justice can be viewed as a challenging and demanding undertaking as it is against human nature. It may be the social justice theory that lays psychological and sociological foundations for gratitude development.

Then how to fulfil this challenging undertaking, developing justice? Although understanding the mechanism for justice appears not difficult, neither Piaget nor Kohlberg claimed that moral understanding or thinking naturally leads to moral acting. Hoffman's moral internalisation theory may provide a vital means for such conversion.

According to Hoffman's internalisation theory (1960; 1975), justice has to be developed through internalisation by inductive discipline, that is, reasoning with rules and enforcing them. This view has been endorsed by numerous psychologists (e.g. Minton, Kagan, & Levine, 1971; Schoggen, 1963; Simmons & Schoggen, 1963). Although moral reasoning is considered by Kohlberg (1976)

as a precondition for the next moral stage in his theory, there is no necessity between moral reasoning and moral actions, in particular, when it comes to such factors as costs (Bee, 1994; S. Li, 2014a). As we know, moral development against the hedonistic or selfish nature of human beings is a painful process (Aristotle, trans. 1976). For gratitude, as a moral virtue, is more of an act of returning kindness received than merely a thought (Bee, 1994; S. Li, 2014a), and can be costly in such situations as filial piety – the development of gratitude may be predestined to be a demanding undertaking. Hoffman (1975) held that both induction (moral reasoning) and discipline are indispensable for the development of justice, and discipline, in particular, plays a vital role in its moral internalisation process. On one hand, parental discipline is an essential requirement in exerting constraint on the self-interest tendency of a child and it can, as explained by Blustein, “gradually shift from its position of outward authority to an inner position of self-control” (1982, p. 127). Aristotle maintains that learners develop their ability for performing virtuous acts “through habituation first motivated by punishment and threat of punishment”, rather than by teaching (Curzer, 2002, p. 158); he insists that “teaching is futile before good habits are already in place” (Curzer, 2002, p. 145). Hoffman’s internalisation theory is designed to help develop the habit of performing such acts with the indispensable catalyst, discipline. In this manner, “the deepest form of gratitude” and “a way of life”, as Shelton (2004, p. 273) described, can be cultivated. Without the measure of discipline, induction or moral reasoning alone is unlikely to work. On the other hand, if parents exercise power-assertive discipline without moral reasoning, children are prone to the development of blind obedience, timidity, and hatred. Therefore, it is also important to develop moral thinking in children, so that they are able to perform virtuous acts from fear of painful feelings, such as shame, guilt, or remorse. When hardship in pursuing virtuous acts meets with the hedonistic nature of human beings, external discipline and internal shamefulness may hold the key for moral actions, which can be the reason why Hoffman’s internalisation theory may hold the key solution for gratitude development.

These strategies provide such opportunities for children to internalise morality of justice. It has been found that household chores can act as a vital means for the development of moral character in a child (Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1965). “Morality is embedded in and is an outcome of everyday

family practices” (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2007, p. 5), which serves to be “sobering children into the social fact that growing up means the obligation precedes pleasure” (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2007, p. 9)..For the development of a habitus of morality of justice, childhood is a vital phase, as Aristotle stated, “it is no little importance what sort of habits we form from an early age – it makes a vast difference or rather all the difference in the world” (trans. 1976, p. 32). Through sharing family responsibilities, a child will be able to learn that their rights should be earned by correspondingly fulfilling their obligations, and there are no rights in the world without obligations attached to them. The engagement of housework throughout childhood provides children great opportunities for internalising or habitualising morality of justice in his or her inner state with inductive discipline. In addition, Smith (1969) noted a significant correlation between household chores and achievement motivation. The research findings from these aforementioned scholars indicate that housework is a great vehicle for a child’s moral development of justice, which in turn leads to the cultivation of gratitude for their parents’ sacrifice to their growth. Moreover, an appropriate amount of housework can even boost one’s academic performance.

Benefits and potential risks

The benefits of these strategies are plentiful. Sharing housework can not only build up living skills and, once the child becomes capable of a family task, ease the housework burden on the parents , but it can also foster a sense of family belonging (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). However, over-rigid and inconsistent assignments of housework can be ineffective and counter-productive. Over-exercise of discipline and overload of housework can also be counter-productive and detrimental to the cultivation of children’s autonomy. Blustein suggested that “overprotectiveness, lax and inconsistent discipline, and an unwillingness to make demands on children have all been shown to inhibit the development of autonomy” (1982, p. 133). It is also worth noting that housework alone, such as setting the dinner table, may not help a child to see the bigger picture of needing to be grateful for living in a family that does provide love, food and school supplies, and to realise the necessity of doing prosocial actions for others. Thus, this strategy needs to be used along with love and moral reasoning to ensure the child develops a grateful heart.

Curbing desires and bearing negative consequences may help teach children mutual respect of rights and interests, which can promote healthy interpersonal relationships at a community level and a social cooperation and harmony at a societal level. It is particularly beneficial for children at an individual level, valuing goods rendered by others and expressing gratitude accordingly enhances one's mental and physical wellbeing (Watkins, 2004). On the contrary, in a psychological light over indulgence of a child will make children wilful, selfish and imperious, which may result in an ungrateful child. In a sociological light, an uncontrolled desire and irresponsible behaviour will lead to strained personal relationships as a result of disrespect and infringement of others' rights and interests. A society will fall into moral disorder if a large population makes little effort to keep their desires under control and disregards social justice. Inconsistent use of curbing desires and bearing negative consequences may result in lax attitudes towards family rules; and overuse of negative consequences of a child's action that are not age appropriate or are beyond the child's capacity to accommodate may be damaging to the child's well-being, possibly also leading to child abuse.

Discussion

In the previous sections, the three keystone properties (love, induction and discipline) and three strategies (sharing housework, curbing desires, and bearing negative consequences) of the mechanism for the development of gratitude were outlined, theoretically justified, and their benefits and potential risks also briefly discussed. In this section, the correlations between the three properties of the mechanism and Baumrind's parenting style theory will be discussed, as well as other factors which might affect the mechanism.

Love, induction and discipline are the integral parts of the mechanism, complementing each other. Lacking any part of them, the mechanism may fail. Love without induction and discipline, such as indulgent parenting, may lead to self-interest (Y. Chen & Yang, 2011; Huang, 2011; F. Li & Li, 2007; Tang, 2007; Xiaoshan, 2006; Zhou, 2008); a high use of power-assertive discipline without love and induction is associated with low levels of consideration for others (Honig, 2004). It has to be noted

that induction and discipline without human love could be the most dangerous. As represented in Kafka's novel *The Trial* (2014), the law without humanity was abused by corrupt judges for personal gains, which resulted into disastrous consequences with justice without compassion becoming inhuman and unjust. In sum, the use of emotionally toned reasoning, coupled with clear explanations of rules in consideration for others, and a persistent determination to implement these rules, may arouse gratitude in children for acts of kindness they have received.

In principle, the mechanism dovetails with Baumrind's (1966, 1968, 1971, 1978) authoritative parenting style. Baumrind's seminal research identified three major styles of parenting: authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. Authoritarian parenting requires of children blind obedience and conformity. Permissive parenting imposes few rules and standards (which is also subdivided into indulgent and neglectful parental styles by some other scholars (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992)). Authoritative parents involves nurturing love, strong parental interest in their children and clear expectations and rules for their behavior, It features warmth, rationality, and discipline, which are accordant with the properties of the mechanism, love and inductive discipline. What distinguishes the mechanism and the authoritative parental style may lie in their attitudes towards standards – the former only sets moral standards with an aim to promote moral virtues such as gratitude, while the latter sets not only moral standards but also high standards for academic achievements (Maccoby, Martin, & Hetherington, 1983). Hetherington et al (1992) found that “authoritative parenting by both mothers and fathers was associated with better outcomes for both boys and girls and in all family types” (p. 203). Even single mothers or stepfathers using authoritative parenting can greatly help children to become socially and academically competent in their adjustment (E Mavis Hetherington, 1993). Baumrind (1971) also found from a survey that the authoritative parental style was clearly associated with all indexes of social responsibility in boys compared to authoritarian and permissive parenting, and with high achievement in girls (perhaps due to a low expectation in society of girls assuming responsibility). Being closely associated with morality of justice, social responsibility may be more likely to lead to gratitude. It may be safe to suggest that children brought up under authoritative parenting are more likely to develop the long-term disposition of gratitude.

There are also some factors that it may not be appropriate to regard as strategies, but which do have some impacts on the development of the morality of justice, gratitude in particular, and also affect the implementation of the mechanism. A child's inherited traits, parents' education and personal values, siblings, peers and other environmental factors have been identified in existing research that may have an impact on the effect of moral development. First, a child's congenital factors may have an effect on the consequence of parental discipline, such as aggressive tendencies, personal orientation (Bell, 1968), emotional attitude toward the parent, and the rate of cognitive development (Martin L. Hoffman, 1975). Second, the parent's education and personal values also affect their discipline behaviour, positively related "with the use of induction and negatively with power assertion" (Martin L. Hoffman, 1975, p. 230). Third, "the quality of family life and sibling relationships, the effects of peers and the media, the influence of schools and churches, and the overall level of civility that characterizes a child's social world all play some role in the development of gratitude" (McAdams & Bauer, 2004, p. 89).

It is also worth noting that an egalitarian practice of "sharing with everyone" may not help develop morality of justice in children. "Sharing with everyone" is a school program implemented in many schools in China, in which some parents are asked to encourage their child to share things (mostly prepared by the parents) with other children for the purpose of the development of a sense of appreciation and cooperative behaviours. However, some empirical studies (e.g. Xu, 2014) reveal that the practice of sharing often ends up with appreciation for reciprocity of benefits within a small circle of friends. This is perhaps because it does not involve the element of obligation of producing the gifts that is a key part of social justice, so does not help the cultivation of morality of justice. However, good role modelling by parents may not naturally lead to a moral child. There is a misconception about parental role modelling with many believing that a child will naturally follow by merely observing. Role modelling by parents may perhaps work in some non-moral aspects, such as behavioural manners, for example, where the child may talk like his or her parent. However, role modelling by parents does not work for children unless it develops a sense of justice in them (S. Li, in press).

Conclusion

Given a prevailing lack of gratitude in young generations of China's one-child families, this paper created a simple and workable mechanism for resolving the situation. The mechanism includes three properties, parental love, induction and discipline, and three strategies, one active strategy (sharing housework) and two passive strategies (curbing desires and bearing negative responsibility). These properties and strategies are justified with some key theories in psychology and sociology, such as Piaget's moral development theory, Kohlberg's moral stages theory, attachment theory, the social justice theories, Hoffman's internalisation theory, Baumrind's parenting styles, and Honig's prosocial theory. The benefits and potential of these properties and strategies were also addressed. In sum, the core thinking of this mechanism is through the internalisation of morality of justice by love, induction and discipline to habitualise gratitude in a child.

There are several limitations to this paper. First, the mechanism is based on the existing empirical and conceptual research outcomes, rather than its own empirical research findings. Second, the mechanism has not been tested and verified in an empirical study. Further investigations on the mechanism are needed. Third, although there have been no signs of any positive change in gratitude in modern Chinese society, the effect of gratitude campaigns launched by the Chinese Government has not been scientifically examined. It is necessary to conduct a survey with Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form of Chinese children from one-child families.

Bibliography:

- Ainsworth, M. (1961). The effects of maternal deprivation: a review of findings and controversy in the context of research strategy. *Public Health Papers*, 14, 97-165.
- Ainsworth, M. (1967). *Infancy in Uganda: Infant care and the growth of love*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Ainsworth, M. (1969). Object relations, dependency, and attachment: A theoretical review of the infant-mother relationship. *Child Development*(40), 969-1025.
- Ainsworth, M. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), 709.
- Aristotle. (trans. 1976). *The ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean ethics* (J. A. K. Thomson & H. Tredennick, Trans.). Harmondsworth, New York: Penguin.
- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development*, 37(4), 887-907. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1126611>
- Baumrind, D. (1968). Authoritarian vs. authoritative parental control. *Adolescence*, 3(11), 255-272.
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, 4(1, Pt.2), 1-103. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0030372>
- Baumrind, D. (1978). Parental disciplinary patterns and social competence in children. *Youth & Society*, 9(3), 239-276.
- Bee, H. L. (1994). *Lifespan development*. New York, NY: HarperCollins College Publishers.
- Bell, R. Q. (1968). A reinterpretation of the direction of effects in studies of socialization. *Psychological review*, 75(2), 81-95. doi: 10.1037/h0025583
- Bi, L. (2007). *Jiao Haizi Xuehui Ganen de 36 Zhong Fangfa [To teach children the 36 ways of learning how to hold gratitude]*. Beijing, China: Petroleum Industry Press.
- Blustein, J. (1982). *Parents and children: The ethics of the family*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bonnie, K. E., & Waal, F. B. B. D. (2004). Primate social reciprocity and the origin of gratitude. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 213-229). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1965). *Child care and the growth of love*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1). New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 2). New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and loss: retrospect and prospect. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52(4), 664.
- Brenning, K., Soenens, B., Braet, C., & Bal, S. (2012). The role of parenting and mother-adolescent attachment in the intergenerational similarity of internalizing symptoms. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(6), 802-816. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9740-9>
- Buck, R. (2004). The gratitude of exchange and the gratitude of caring: A developmental-interactionist perspective of moral emotion. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 100-122). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Y., & Yang, D. (2011). Investigation of gratitude in middle school students from a high school in Tangshan city (Zhongxuesheng Ganen Guannian Xianzhuang de Diaocha yu Yanjiu -- yi Tangshan Shiqu Gaozhongsheng Weili). *Adolescents' Invention and Creation*(3), 44-45.
- Chen, Z., & Zou, J. (2007). *Xuehui Ganen, Rang Shijie Chongman Ai [To learn about gratitude is to make the world full of love]*. Nanning, China: Guanxi Ethnic Publishing House.
- Ci, J. (2009). The moral crisis in post-Mao China: Prolegomenon to a philosophical analysis. *Diogenes*,

- 56(221), 19.
- Cunningham, H. (2005). *Children and childhood in western society since 1500* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Longman.
- Curzer, H. J. (2002). Aristotle's painful path to virtue. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40(2), 141-162.
- Deigh, J. (1982). Love, guilt, and the sense of justice. *Inquiry*, 25(4), 391-416.
- Deng, J. (2011, May 9). Weishenme Women Queshao Ganen Yishi? [Why are we short of gratitude?], *Chengdu Business*. Retrieved from http://e.chengdu.cn/html/2011-05/09/content_233637.htm
- Du, D., He, S., & Xu, H. (2010). Gaoxiao Jiating Jingji Kunnan Xuesheng Ganen Yishi de Queshi yu Duice [Lack of gratitude in economically disadvantaged university students and its counter-measures]. *Tertiary Education Studies*(02).
- Elm, D. R., & Weber, J. (1994). Measuring moral judgment: The moral judgment interview or the defining issues test? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 13(5), 341-355. doi: 10.1007/bf00871762
- Emmons, R. A. (2004). The psychology of gratitude: An introduction. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 3-16). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (1998). What good are positive emotions? *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 300-319. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.300
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004a). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1367-1377. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2004.1512
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004b). Gratitude, like other positive emotions. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 145-166). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Positive emotions broaden and build. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(Journal Article), 1-53. doi: 10.1016/b978-0-12-407236-7.00001-2
- Goodnow, J. J., & Delaney, S. (1989). Children's household work: Task differences, styles of assignment, and links to family relationships. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 10(2), 209-226.
- Harpham, E. (2004). Gratitude in the history of ideas. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 19-36). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hetherington, E. M. (1993). An overview of the Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage with a focus on early adolescence. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 39.
- Hetherington, E. M., Clingempeel, W. G., Anderson, E. R., Deal, J. E., Hagan, M. S., Hollier, E. A., . . . Bennion, L. D. (1992). Coping with marital transitions: A family systems perspective. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 57(2/3), i-238. doi: 10.2307/1166050
- Hoffman, M. L. (1960). Power assertion by the parent and its impact on the child. *Child Development*, 31(1), 129-143.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1975). Moral internalization, parental power, and the nature of parent-child interaction. *Developmental Psychology*, 11(2), 228-239.
- Honig, A. S. (2004). How teachers and caregivers can help young children become more prosocial. In E. Chesebrough, P. King, T. Gullotta & M. Bloom (Eds.), *A blueprint for the promotion of prosocial behavior in early childhood* (pp. 51-91). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Honig, A. S. (2009). Understanding and working with non-compliant and aggressive young children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(8), 1007-1023. doi: 10.1080/03004430701726217

- Huang, J. (2011). Lun Gaoxiao Pinkunsheng Ganen Yishi de Queshi ji Ganen Jiaoyu [Discussion on lacks of a grateful heart and gratitude education for poor students at university]. *Journal of Hengshui University*, 13(6), 103-105.
- Hume, D. (1960). *A treatise of human nature*. New York, NY: Dent.
- Jacka, T., Kipnis, A. B., & Sargeson, S. (2013). *Contemporary China: Society and social change*. Cambridge ; Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press.
- Kafka, F. (2014). *The trial*. London: Sovereign Classic.
- Kohlberg, L. (1964). Development of moral character and moral ideology. In L. W. Hoffman & M. L. Hoffman (Eds.), *Review of child development research* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stages and moralization: The cognitive-developmental approach In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research and Social Issues* (pp. 31-53). Holt, NY: Rinehart and Winston.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages* (Vol. 2). San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Komter, A. E. (2004). Gratitude and gift exchange. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lamborn, S. D., Mounts, N. S., Steinberg, L., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Patterns of competence and adjustment among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful families. *Child Development*, 62(5), 1049-1065.
- Li, F., & Li, J. (2007). *Bill Gate Gei Qingshaoniang de 12 Tang Ganenke [The twelve lessons for youngsters on gratitude by Bill Gates]*. Beijing, China: China City Press.
- Li, M., & Peng, B. (2011). Survey on gratitude in middle school students, measures and suggestions for gratitude education (Zhongxuesheng Ganen Xianzhuang Diaocha yu Shishi Ganen Jiaoyu Duice yu Jianyi). *Basic Education Review*(13), 67-69.
- Li, S. (2014a). "All good is of parents" and its Chinese context. *China Report*, 50(4), 1-12.
- Li, S. (2014b). How to make a grateful child: Reflection on gratitude campaigns in China in recent years. *Sage Open*, 4(4).
- Li, S. (in press). Ineffectiveness of selflessness of Chinese parents in role modelling to their only child. *Childhood Education*.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. New York, N.Y: Bantam.
- Lu, T. (2009). Survey on gratitude in junior middle school students in rural areas and measures of school's gratitude education (Nongcun Chuzhongsheng Ganen Xianzhuang Diaocha yu Xuexiao Shishi Ganen Jiaoyu Celue Yanjiu) *China's Collective Economy*(12), 190-191
- Ma, X. (2011). Survey on gratitude in teacher students (Dui Gaoshi Xuesheng Ganen Xianzhuang de Diaocha Yanjiu). *Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology(Social Sciences Edition)* (1), 206-207,210.
- Maccoby, E. E., Martin, J. A., & Hetherington, E. (1983). *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. Volume 4).
- Main, M., & Goldwyn, R. (1995). Interview-based adult attachment classifications: Related to infant-mother and infant-father attachment. *Developmental Psychology*, 19, 227-239.
- Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 50(1-2), 66-104.

- McAdams, D. P., & Bauer, J. J. (2004). Gratitude in modern life. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 81-99). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., Kilpatrick, S. D., & Larson, D. B. (2001). Is gratitude a moral affect? *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*(2), 249-266.
- McCullough, M. E., & Tsang, J.-A. (2004). Parent of the virtues? The prosocial contours of gratitude. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 123-141). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- McDdougall, W. (1929). *Outline of psychology*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- McNeely, C. A., & Barber, B. K. (2010). How do parents make adolescents feel loved? Perspectives on supportive parenting from adolescents in 12 cultures. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *25*(4), 601-631.
- Minton, C., Kagan, J., & Levine, J. A. (1971). Maternal control and obedience in the two-year-old. *Child Development*, *42*(6), 1873-1894.
- Nakhnikian, G. (1961). On the cognitive import of certain conscious states. In S. Hook (Ed.), *Religious Experience and Truth* (pp. 156-164). New York, NY: New York Cambridge University Press.
- Ochs, E., & Izquierdo, C. (2009). Responsibility in childhood: Three developmental trajectories. *Ethos*, *37*(4), 391-413. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1352.2009.01066.x
- Ochs, E., & Kremer-Sadlik, T. (2007). Introduction: Morality as family practice. *Discourse & Society*, *18*(1), 5-10.
- Oxford English dictionary. (Ed.) (1989) (2nd ed., Vols. VI). Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Parachin, V. (2005, Nov/Dec
Nov/Dec 2005). Develop your gratitude attitude. *Vibrant Life*, *21*, 14-17.
- Piaget, J. (1965). *The moral judgment of the child* (M. Gabain, Trans.). New York: Free Press.
- Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rest, J. R. (1979). *Development in judging moral issues*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Robert, R. C. (2004). The blessings of gratitude. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. v-xi). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schimmel, S. (2004). Gratitude in Judaism. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 19-36). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schoggen, P. (1963). Environmental forces in the everyday lives of children. In R. G. Barker (Ed.), *The stream of behavior: Explorations of its structure & content*. East Norwalk, CT: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Shelton, C. M. (2004). Gratitude, considerations from a moral perspective. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 230-255). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Short, S. E., Zhai, F., Xu, S., & Yang, M. (2001). China's one-child policy and the care of children: An analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. *Social Forces*, *79*(3), 913-943.
- Simmons, H., & Schoggen, P. (1963). Mothers and fathers as sources of environmental pressure on children. In R. G. Barker (Ed.), *The stream of behavior: Explorations of its structure & content*. East Norwalk, CT: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Smith, A. (1790/1976). *The Theory of moral sentiments* (6th ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics.
- Smith, C. (1969). The origin and expression of achievement-related motives in children. In C. P. Smith (Ed.), *Achievement-related Motives in Children* (pp. 102-150). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Solomon, R. C. (2004). Foreword. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of*

- gratitude* (pp. v-xi). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sommer, S. (1984). Adults evaluating their emotions. In C. Z. Malatesta & C. E. Izard (Eds.), *Emotion in adult development* (pp. 319-338). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Spinoza, B. d. (1677/1981). *Ethics* (G. Eliot, Trans., & T. Deegan, Ed.). Salzburg: University of Salzburg. (Original work published 1677).
- Spock, B. (1965). *Baby and child care*. London, England: Bodley Head.
- Steele, H., & Steele, M. (2013). Parenting matters: An attachment perspective. In L. McClain & C. Daniel (Eds.), *What Is Parenthood?: Contemporary Debates about the Family* (pp. 214-233). New York and London: New York University Press.
- Steinberg, L., Lamborn, S. D., Dornbusch, S. M., & Darling, N. (1992). Impact of parenting practices on adolescent achievement: Authoritative parenting, school involvement, and encouragement to succeed. *Child Development*, 63(5), 1266-1281. doi: 10.2307/1131532
- Tang, L. (2007). *Ganen Zaojiu Zhuoyue [Gratitude generates brilliance]*. Beijing, China: Blue Sky Press.
- Wang, S. (2002). *Wu shi Ni Baba [I am your Father]* (V. Pallatte & E. T. Liu, Trans.). Kunming, China: Yunnan People's Publishing Company.
- Watkins, P. C. (2004). Gratitude and subjective well-being. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- White, L. K., & Brinkerhoff, D. B. (1981). Children's work in the family: Its significance and meaning. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 43(4), 789-798.
- Williams, B. (1985). *Ethics and the limits of philosophy*. London: Fontana.
- Xiaoshan. (2006). *Ganen [Gratitude]*. Beijing, China: Beijing Times Economy Publisher
- Xu, J. (2014). Becoming a moral child amidst China's moral crisis: Preschool discourse and practices of sharing in Shanghai. *Ethos*, 42(2), 222-242.
- Zelizer, V. A. (1994). *Pricing the priceless child*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zhang, C. (2013). Survey on gratitude to parents in university students -- Sampling Beijing Forestry University students (Dangdai Daxuesheng dui Fumu Ganen Xianzhuang de Diaocha Yanjiu -- Yi Linye Daxuesheng Weili). *Theory Research*(22), 116-118.
- Zhou, Yafeng (2008). *Xuegei Fumu: Suzao Haizi de Ganenzhixi [Writing to parents: To forge the heart of gratitude for children]*. Beijing, China: China Society Press.