CULTURAL VALUES REFLECTED WITHIN

CHINESE CHILDREN'S STORIES

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A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by

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Dr. Johnetta Morrison, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

CULTURAL VALUES REFLECTED WITHIN

CHINESE CHILDREN'S STORIES

presented by Chenyi Zhang,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Science,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Research on Chinese children's academic achievement (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996; Fuligni, 1997; Wang, 2004), psychological well-being, and Chinese parenting styles (Chao, 1994, 2001; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Wang, 2004) inform our understanding of the cultural values imparted to children. In the past two decades, Chinese society has changed tremendously due to modernization and globalization (Qi & Tang, 2004). Because culture can be shaped by the changed social ecologies (Trandis, 2004), it is appropriate to argue that current Chinese culture may have some new and different characteristics that differ from what researchers have previously reported. The present study employed children's stories as a tool for examining cultural values in China over the last 20 years. Hence, the study is expected to offer an updated description of Chinese cultural values.

There are few studies that focus on the socialization of Chinese children related to the impact of cultural changes. Ho (1989) argued that continuity with traditional patterns of Chinese socialization was still evident in the late 1980s. However, there were regional variations in child-rearing practices. This may have suggested that Chinese traditional culture was powerful and influential in the society. Studies after the mid-1990s have shown growing evidence denoting the changes in the socialization process for Chinese children (Chen et al., 1996; Fouts & Chan, 1995; Helig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2003;

Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). For example, Helig, et al. examined Chinese children's decision making in peer, family and school contexts, and found the presence of some Western values (i.e. concepts of rights, individual autonomy and democratic norms) were salient aspects of Chinese children's social reasoning and practices. Wang, et al.'s recent comparison study of Chinese and American children's psychological wellbeing reported that in some developed Chinese cities (i.e., Beijing and Shanghai), Chinese children share many similarities with American children. The authors also indicated that in recent years some Chinese families and children have been increasingly exposed to Western values. These findings strongly support the notion that changes have occurred in Chinese culture in recent years.

Studying cultural changes is very challenging. Due to its multi-dimensional structure, researchers define culture differently in their works (Trandis, 2004). The definition of cultural values is somewhat clear and concrete. Researchers agree that values are more important than the rituals, heroes, symbols, and artifacts that also make up a culture. Values construct the core elements in each culture; the prevailing value emphasized in a society may be the most central feature of the culture (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Schwartz, 1999). Therefore, one way of examining cultural changes is the comparison of cultural values between different periods.

Various cultural products, for example, books, movies, songs, and folk tales, can reflect the cultural values of a society. A few researchers have reported some interesting findings of Chinese cultural values by analyzing cultural products. Rothbaum and Tsang

(1998) compared the lyrics of popular love songs in China and the U.S., and found the

popular songs reflect different cultural values in China and the U.S. They found that

"love" is depicted as more embedded in Chinese songs due to values such as devotion

and commitment and the belief in unity with nature, which is advocated by Taoism.

As a cultural product and an indispensable component in children's socialization,

children's stories are not only a means of developing children's mastery of new

vocabulary, but also a tool for conveying cultural values (Henderson & May, 2005; Kim,

Green, & Klein, 2006; Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Children's stories are also important

because they can stimulate the storytelling process in families, another medium of

socialization (Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang, 1997). Additionally, stories have a

measurable impact on children's cognitive (Wellhousen, 1993) and emotional

development (Tsai, Louis, Chen, & Uchida, 2007).

This study examined and compared the orientation of cultural values reflected in

children's stories published in the past two decades in China, and in turn probed the trend

of cultural changes reflected by children's stories. Considering the impact of

globalization and modernization on Chinese society, this study also investigated Western

values in Chinese children's stories.

<p align="center">The Variations of Chinese Culture</p>

In previous studies, Chinese culture, which reflects strong collectivist oriented values

and norms, was considered to be the opposite of Western culture (e.g. American culture).

Chinese culture stresses interpersonal connectedness over individuality, and individuality

is highly advocated in European-American culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Chinese

traditional culture is mainly comprised of three value systems: Confucianism, Taoism,

and Buddhism. Confucianism is a well-structured system of cultural values and moral

standards, which can be viewed as the foundation of culture and morality in ancient

China. It directs Chinese people to act as "righteous people" who possess self-knowledge,

self-respect, sincerity, kindness, and honesty (Maosen, 1990). In order to achieve that

goal, some rules have to be followed, e.g. avoiding conflicts and suppressing emotion.

Confucian ideals also greatly influence Chinese families, parents and children's

responsibilities are outlined in the Confucian system (Goodwin & Tang, 1996). Family is

viewed as central to the socialization of children, and parents are responsible for training

and teaching their children (Chao, 1994, 2001; Wu, 1996). Children are socialized to

bring honor to, and be respectful to the elder generation, to be obedient and responsible to

their parents' household; to be altruistic in their social actions; and to bring honor to their

family's name (Fang & Fang, 2003; Fong & Wu, 1996).

Taoism and Buddhism are two influential religions in China. Taoism originated in

ancient China. The philosophy of Taoism focuses on the genesis of universe. Taoism

believes there is a *Dao* mastering the development of everything in universe. *Dao* is the

highest rule that everything in the universe should obey (Xu, 2007). Taoism advocates the

balance of nature and harmony (Ho, 1995). It doesn't encourage people to change or fight

with reality to gain benefits. On the contrary, it admires obeying *Dao*, and taking passive

roles in daily lives.

Unlike Taoism, Buddhism originally came from India. It highly stresses self-control and universal goodwill (Hong, 1993). Buddhism considers human life as a period of misery. Buddhism works mainly identify the origin of the misery and the method to stop the misery. Buddhism stresses causality; everything happens for some reasons or under certain circumstances (Xu, 2007). Therefore, because misery is believed to originate from people's ambition and aggression, people have to accept the reality and give up their ambitions to achieve peaceful lives in heaven.

Chinese traditional cultural values are derived mainly from these three value systems. For example, the value of "diligent working" focuses on the amount of effort people put toward reaching their goals. It is different from the value of "hard working" that most ethnic groups share; diligent working contains some element of Confucianism, i.e., self-knowledge and self-respect. It emphasizes the individual's resilience toward challenges and difficult context, i.e., economic hardship or education (Xu, 2007). Buddhism stresses causality; therefore diligent working indicates that success can only be achieved by putting effort into working (Xu, 2007). This differs from the flexible interpretation of success in Western culture.

Chinese traditional cultural values have been changing dramatically since the Chinese Revolution of 1949. First of all, moral education, focusing on the values of Marxism and Socialism, became a part of the Chinese school curricula (Fouts & Chan, 1995; Maosen, 1990) and textbooks (Ashmore, 2002; Straka & Bost, 1989) after the revolution. Chinese children are required to take political courses from elementary school

through college. Some state-oriented values, e.g., primary loyalty to the state and Chinese people (Fong & Wu, 1996; Straka & Bost, 1989), were gradually integrated into the Chinese cultural system. Concurrently, moral education may diminish the impact of some traditional Chinese values. For example, Starka and Bost (1989) studied textbooks for Chinese primary schools during the years 1963-82. These textbooks were drafted and edited by government-sponsored publishers. They found the "family" as a socialization agent lessened in importance while still being part of texts in the readings and exercises in 1963. But in 1978, this was true only in the readings. Reviews of the textbooks in 1982 indicated the almost virtual disappearance of family references in both readings and exercises.

Early Western sociologists firmly believed that Chinese traditional culture suppressed capitalistic development in society (Weber, 1951). However, modernization and globalization started shaping the Chinese social system in the 1980s with social reforms seen in Chinese economic, political, and educational systems (Fouts & Chan, 1995; Gilboy & Read, 2008; Yoshino, 2006). It is undeniable that Chinese society has more capitalistic development in recent years, which in turn influences Chinese culture. For example, China's "opening to the outside world" economic reform in the 1980s not only stimulated the dramatic development of Chinese economy, but also enabled a variety of cultural products from Western countries to flow into Chinese society. Western movies, books and music can easily be found in Chinese urban areas. Chinese people started celebrating Western festivals, e.g. Christmas and Valentine's Day, and viewing

Hollywood USA produced movies. These culturally-based activities introduced ideology, values, and religions of Western countries to China, and thereby Chinese society began embracing more individual orientated values from Western cultures, e.g. norms of competition (Wang, 2007). The internet is a brand new medium through which Chinese people can learn about the world and freely express their opinions (Gilboy & Read, 2008).

China's "one child" policy also greatly changed traditional familial structure. Chinese traditional values of "familism" are changing. For example, daughters, traditionally considered to be temporary members of the family who could not contribute to the lineage and who drained family resources, were devalued in the patrilineal system (Croll, 1994). But recent research indicates that the patrilineal system is weakening in China, and because of the "one-child" policy, daughters are also, like sons, expected to take on filial duties (Deutsch, 2006). In other words, the forces of modernization are exposing Chinese children to ideas and rules that are very contrary to those advocated by traditional Chinese culture.

Children's Stories and Culture

Chinese children's literature has a unique function. Ashmore (2002) studied the content of Chinese children's reading materials recommended by their schools, and confirmed that moral education is a focal point of much of the content. She found that in addition to some informational themes (nature and general knowledge of science and technology) political themes (nationalism and benevolence of the new society) are

principal in the various material. Studies of Chinese children's textbooks (e.g. Straka &

Bost, 1989) and school curricula (e.g. Fotus & Chan, 1995) revealed similar findings. In

other words, reading materials in China are often times used as a tool to impact children's

moral education.

　　Children's literature is an important method of passing on cultural heritage to

children (Henderson & May, 2005). In Chinese children's stories, thematic stories

strongly reflect traditional values and socially desirable standards (Bi, 2003; Li, 2004;

Miller et al., 1997). Bi conducted a pilot study using Chinese children's stories published

from the 1950s to 1990s. In the detailed content analyses, she found socialistic moral

values intertwined with Chinese traditional values in children's stories published before

the mid-1980s. Such stories were reported to be a tool for strict moral and political

education. Due to modernization, globalization and economic reform in the 1980s (i.e.

opening to the outside world policy), the terms revolution, communism, socialism,

Marxism, and Mao Zedong thought gradually disappeared in children's literature in the

1990s. Nevertheless, despite researchers' agreement that Chinese children's stories

convey values and influence Chinese children's emotional development (Tsai et al., 2007;

Wang & Leichtman, 2000), examination of Chinese children's stories as a tool for

examining value changes has not been emphasized.

<center>Purpose of the Study</center>

　　Cultural values are not static, but change with the development of social ecologies

(Trandis, 2004). Through the examination of the content of Chinese children's stories, the

following research questions will be addressed: (1) Do the latest Chinese children's

stories indicate more Western values than the stories of 20 years ago? (2) Are the

traditional values of Chinese culture consistently presented in the stories published in the

1980s, 1990s, and 2000s? (3) Has the frequency of stories reflecting traditional values

declined over the past 20 years?

<div align="center">Method</div>

Sample

The 145 Chinese children's stories in this study were selected from the Chinese

children's story magazine "The King of Stories". They were secured from four Chinese

state libraries and two Chinese national online databases. The magazine designs stories

for readers between 6 to 12 years old – the time period when children master important

social and academic skills (Erikson, 1982). It is a monthly magazine published by the

Chinese Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, a government sponsored publisher of

children's storybooks. The magazine has received awards as the most popular children's

story journal in mainland China. The publisher reported that it had 1.5 million readers in

2002 and 2003. The stories in the magazine are Chinese folklore, fiction, historical fiction,

and non-fiction stories, and stories composed by children. The selected stories in this

study are folklore stories (n_1=64) and fiction stories (n_2=81). Folklore stories may reflect

the changes in Chinese traditional values, whereas fiction stories are expected to reflect

the new cultural values that emerge with modernization and globalization.

Stories dated in the 1980s (n_1=23, n_2=34) were all the folklore and fiction stories in

"The King of Stories First 100 Issues Collection" – a special children's stories book

covering the most popular stories in "The King of Stories" published from 1983 to 1990.

The stories from the 1990s (n_1=15, n_2=16), and the 2000s (n_1=31, n_2=26) were selected

only from years that had all 12 issues and also containing folklore and fiction stories.

Measures and Procedure

Checklist of traditional cultural values. After reviewing previous literature on

Chinese traditional culture or core values, a checklist of Chinese traditional cultural

values was developed. There are 17 items of Chinese traditional cultural values

summarized from previous studies on Chinese families and Chinese children, e.g.

conformity, collective orientation and group accomplishments, inter-dependence, etc.

(Cheung, Nelson, Advincula, Cureton, & Canham, 2005; Ho, 1989; Wu, 1996).

Checklist of Western values. As a consequence of the interest in the Western values

that Chinese society might embrace due to globalization and modernization, a checklist

of Western values including 16 items was also developed, e.g. competition, individual

orientation and self-accomplishments, independence, etc. (Stouffer, 1995).

Checklist of Chinese social moral values. Moral education in China is influential in

Chinese children's socialization. It conveys the moral values advocated in society that

teach children which behaviors are viewed as right or wrong, and what is desirable or

undesirable (Maosen, 1990). The themes of stories sometime stress or emphasize moral

education (Bi, 2003). A checklist of Chinese social moral values   was developed to

measure the reflection of social moral values (i.e. Socialism) in children's stories, e.g.,

nationalism, loyalty to country, benevolence of the Chinese society, love for the Chinese

people, etc. (Ashmore, 2002; Fong & Wu, 1996; Maosen, 1990).

Scales. The selected stories were scored according to the presence or absence of each

cultural value. When scoring the selected stories, the raters checked off all the values

found in each story. The number of reflected items in each checklist was added for each

story, and the sums then reflected each type of cultural values in each story.

Raters. Two Chinese graduate students who are blind to the research questions of the

study and the publication dates of the books scored all of the selected stories. The raters

were trained to code the stories prior to the research project.

Inter-rater reliability. Cohen's kappa coefficient was computed to determine

inter-rater reliability. Based on previous studies the following as standards for strength of

agreement for the kappa coefficient were proposed: ≤0=no agreement, 01−.02=slight

agreement, .21−.40=fair agreement, .41−.60=moderate agreement, .61−.80=substantial

agreement and .81−1=almost perfect agreement (Cohen, 1960; Landis & Koch, 1977;

Sim & Wright, 2005). To make sure both raters fully understood the checklists and the

rating method, the training occurred until a reliability rate of at least .80 was attained

between raters. During the rating process, each rater was assigned 25 to 35 stories to rate

every three weeks. Among each 25 or 30 assigned stories, there were two stories (one

folklore and one fiction) common (but unknown to each rater) to both raters that was

used to monitor (three times) inter-rater reliability throughout the data gathering process.

Meetings with the raters and the researcher occurred every three weeks. During this time,

the raters and researcher scored four stories, two folklore and two fiction stories, together. Inter-rater reliability was checked, followed with discussions of the scorings. Table 1 presents the Cohen's Kappa coefficients during the scoring process.

All kappa values of the scored stories reached the range of "substantial agreement," except one fiction story which reached the range of "moderate agreement". Because fiction stories have more complicated plots and are longer in length than folklore stories, it is understandable to find the kappa values of fiction stories slightly lower than those of folklore stories. Nevertheless, the observed proportions of agreement in the tested stories were acceptable.

Data Analysis

After the raters completed rating the stories, the number of the reflected Chinese, Western, and social moral values were calculated respectively for each story. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the collected data. Two-way ANOVAs were used to test for main effects of story genre and publication decade and for their interactions.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Differences of Cultural Reflections in Stories

The stories published in different decades reflect cultural values differently. Analyses revealed significant differences in the extent to which Chinese cultural values, $F(2, 145) = 4.15$, $p < .05$, Western cultural values, $F(2, 145) = 3.25$, $p < .05$, and social moral values, $F(2, 145) = 1.43$, $p < .05$ were reflected in children's stories in different decades. The post-hoc Tukey HSD test was run for multiple comparisons among stories published

in the three different decades. The analyses showed that the stories, including folklore and fiction, published in the 2000s (*M*=3.26, *SD*=1.76) reflect more Chinese cultural values than stories published in the 1990s (*M*=2.39, *SD*=1.40) $p < .05$, but did not differ from the stories published between 1983 to 1991(*M*=2.75, *SD*=1.24) $p= .16$. The stories published in the 2000s (*M*= .67, *SD*= .81) also reflect significantly more social moral values than stories published in the 1980s (*M*= .35, *SD*= .48) and 1990s (*M*= .48, *SD*= .68) $p < .05$. The mean differences also showed that stories published in the 2000s (*M*=1.39, *SD*=1.24) reflect more Western cultural values than stories published in the 1980s (*M*= .96, *SD*= .78) $p = .07$ and the 1990s (*M*= .90, *SD*= .94) $p = .09$, at the $\infty = .10$ level. However, two-way ANOVA test yielded no significant interaction effect between stories' genres and publishing decades (G × D), indicating that the effects of stories' genres on reflecting cultural values did not change over time.

The two story genres (folklore and fiction) were associated with somewhat different cultural values. Folklore stories (*M*=3.16, *SD*=1.55) were more likely to reflect Chinese traditional cultural values than were fiction stories (*M*=2.65, *SD*=1.49), $F(1, 145) = 3.87$, $p < .05$. There was also a near-significant trend for folklore stories (*M*= .42, *SD*= .66) to be less likely than fiction stories (*M*= .57, *SD*= .69) to promote post-1949 social moral values $F(1, 145) = 2.90$, $p < .10$. However, analyses revealed no significant differences between folklore (*M*=1.06, *SD*=1.07) and fiction stories' (*M*=1.16, *SD*=1.07) reflection of Western cultural values, $F(1, 145) = .61$, $p > .10$.

An independent *t*-Test was then used to compare the reflection of cultural values

within each genre of stories published in different decades. First, the fiction stories

published in the three decades were compared. The fiction stories of the 2000s (M=1.42,

SD=1.26) reflect more Western cultural values than the stories of the 1980s (M= .97,

SD= .67), t(45)=1.77 p = .04. The stories of the 2000s (M = .71, SD = .82) also reflected

more social moral cultural values than the stories of the 1980s (M = .38, SD = .49),

t(48)=1.92 p = .03. The stories of the 2000s did not reflect significantly more Western

cultural values than the stories of the 1990s (M= .90, SD= .94). There was no significant

difference between the stories of the 2000s and the 1980s in terms of Chinese cultural

values, t(54)= .28 p = .78. A t-Test also yielded no significant differences between the

stories of the 1980s and the stories of the 1990s in reflecting each type of cultural values.

There were also no significant differences between the stories of the 1990s and the stories

of the 2000s on reflecting each type of cultural values.

The folklore stories published in the different decades were also compared by

independent t-Test. The folklore stories of the 2000s (M =3.77, SD =1.70) reflect more

Chinese cultural values than the folklore stories of the 1980s (M =2.78, SD =1.31),

t(47)=2.25 p= .03. The folklore stories of the 2000s (M = .62, SD = .80) also reflect more

social moral values than folklore stories of the 1980s (M = .30, SD = .47), t(41)=1.68

p=.05. The folklore stories of the 2000s and the 1980s were not significantly different in

their reflection of Western cultural values, t(47)=1.23 p= .22. Analyses yielded no

significant differences between the folklore stories of the 1990s and the 1980s in

reflecting each type of cultural values. Surprisingly, the folklore stories of the 1990s

(*M*=2.67, *SD*=1.29) reflect fewer Chinese cultural values than the stories of the 2000s,

t(39)= -2.17 *p*= .18, whereas no significant differences were found in reflecting Western

and social moral values.

Change over Time in the Cultural Values Promoted in Stories

When the completed data were arranged according to the published decades,

calculations were done to determine the number of times each cultural value was

reflected in the stories. Table 3 reports the number of stories per decade reflecting each of

the values.

The results denote that "familism" and "conflict avoidance, self-control" are two

important Chinese cultural values that were consistently reflected in the children's stories.

"Adulation of youth" and "Open expression of thoughts" are two Western cultural values

consistently reflected in the stories published in all three decades, yet they are not as

frequently reflected as Chinese cultural values. Social moral values were the least

reflected in the stories among the three types of the cultural values. However, "Sharing

and offering" is consistently reflected in the children's stories of all the three decades.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify cultural changes within Chinese children's

stories. The results showed that Western cultural values were increasingly reflected in

Chinese children's stories in the past 20 years. Chinese traditional values were also

consistently presented in the stories published in the different decades. The results

indicated that even if some of Chinese traditional values are weakening in the stories, the

Chinese cultural values are still influential and powerful; the stories of the 2000s reflect more Chinese traditional values than the stories of the 1980s and the 1990s.

Social Changes and Western Culture

The present study revealed an interesting pattern of cultural changes in children's stories in mainland Chinese society. Western cultural values were increasingly reflected in Chinese children's stories, particularly in fiction stories. This finding illustrates the influence of modernization and globalization on China. In the 1980s, some researchers believed that Chinese society had a special characteristic for resisting modernization, as Chinese culture encourages obedience and discourages innovation (Pan, 1990). However, nearly 30 years of social and economic reforms in China have stimulated interaction between China and the rest of the world. The analyses in this study indicate that the embracing of Western cultural values has been a gradual process; there was no significant difference between the stories of the 1980s and the 1990s, neither between the stories of the 1990s and the 2000s. However, when comparing the stories of the 2000s to the 1980s, there was a dramatic increase in the reflection of Western cultural values in the children's stories.

When comparing the frequency of Chinese and Western values in Table 3, a very interesting pattern of cultural change emerges. In the stories of the 1980s and the 1990s, Chinese cultural values, i.e. "respect for elders" and "respect for authority", suggest a strong Chinese traditional hierarchical social status. Thus, the Western cultural values that suggest equality and democratic social status, i.e. "Direct expression of opinions" "Direct

expression of emotion" and "Egalitarianism in status", were less frequently reflected in the stories. Conversely, the stories of the 2000s reflect fewer Chinese cultural values of hierarchical positions, while the Western cultural values that suggest democratic and equal social positions increase. In other words, the Chinese cultural values suggesting hierarchical social status still exist, but they are weakening in presence within stories. On the other hand, the Western cultural values promoting democracy were becoming powerful in China. Studies on Chinese social reform support such findings. Gilboy and Read's (2008) study indicated that Chinese society is getting more democratic after the nearly 30 years of social reforms. Chinese government "starts a turn-away from totalitarianism in the late 1970s, builds an authoritarian system based on collective decision making in the 1980s and 1990s … and permits capitalists to join the government in 1999 " (p.48).

The Continuity of Chinese Traditional Culture Values

Although Western culture has increasingly influenced Chinese stories, this study shows that Chinese traditional cultural values are still very powerful. The stories published in recent years reflect more Chinese cultural values than the stories of the 1980s and the 1990s. This may indicate the maturity of Chinese children's stories. Chinese children's literature was greatly influenced by politics before the 1980s; the themes of children's stories reflected the needs of government (Bi, 2003). However, with a variety of social reforms, the Chinese government gradually reduced its control on the publication system. Chinese authors have more freedom to explore different themes and

writing styles in conveying the important Chinese cultural values to children (Fang, &

Wang, 2004).

The increase in the reflection of Chinese traditional values also suggests the impact

of Chinese traditional culture, i.e. Confucianism, though the social reforms in the past

three decades made dramatic changes in the Chinese social systems (Gilboy & Read,

2008). This study demonstrated that the cultural values of "familism" and "Self-control",

two important values of Confucianism are consistently reflected in Chinese children's

stories from 1983 up to the present. Similar to Ho's (1989) finding, this study also

illustrated the continuity of Chinese traditional culture. Chinese children are still

socialized to traditional values in this globalization age. Even if Chinese family structure

changes, studies of the recent "one-child" families still find that children today express a

remarkable level of filial piety (Deutsch, 2006).

In recent years, many Chinese scholars strongly advocate "the spirit of Chinese

culture" (see Xu, 2007; Zhou, 2007). They recommend the reading of more Chinese

classic literature and believe Chinese traditional culture helps Chinese citizens to

construct their ethnic identities in the globalization age. To show the support, the Chinese

government intentionally added more Chinese traditional festivals to the list of national

holidays, while cancelling some national holidays reflecting strong socialism. It is

reasonable to assume that Chinese traditional culture will continue to be powerful.

Stories and Moral Education

This study revealed social moral values are less frequently reflected in Chinese children's stories than Chinese traditional and Western cultural values. Bi (2003) also found a similar trend in her case study of Chinese children's literature published after 1977 (the end of Chinese Cultural Revolution). These results may suggest that the Chinese government has become more flexible, cautious and subtle about using children's literature for its political purposes. However, it is important to note that social moral values are more frequently reflected in both folklore stories and fiction stories of the 2000s than the stories of 1980s and the 1990s. It may also attribute to the more diverse and complicated themes of the stories published in the 2000s. But it clearly suggests that although moral education is not the major theme of the children's stories, Chinese children's stories also function as a moral education tool aimed on constructing a positive image of Chinese socialistic society.

The Genres of Stories and Culture Values

The comparison of the two genres of children stories also revealed an interesting pattern. The folklore and the fiction stories reflect very similar levels of the three types of cultural values in the 1980s. Moving across the decades, the folklore stories gradually reflect more Chinese cultural values than fiction stories. Chinese folklore stories are mainly derived from the biographies of famous individuals, historical events in ancient China, and Chinese classic literature. Chinese traditional culture can be considered to be the focus of folklore stories. Unlike fiction stories, folklore stories have to take into

account certain historical events or particular social contexts in ancient China. It is hard

for Chinese authors to integrate other cultural values into these stories. They may be

reluctant to compose folklore stories with newly emerged language and writing styles.

However, this does not mean folklore is the best way to convey traditional values to

children. Folklore stories are usually short, simple, and easier to read than fiction stories.

It is difficult to find a Chinese children's story magazine that highlights folklore stories.

Take, for example, the children's magazine that this study used for selecting stories. Each

issue of the magazine has about 10 fiction stories, but only 2 or 3 folklore stories. Some

issues do not contain folklore stories. Chinese authors need to explore methods to enrich

the themes and plots of folklore stories, otherwise, folklore may gradually lose its

attraction for children, and hence become a less effective mean for conveying cultural

values.

Limitations

It is important to note the limitations of this study. The sample size is relatively small.

This may be the reason why the stories of the 1990s have a weaker reflection on each

type of cultural value than the stories of the 1980s and the 2000s. Because of the small

size, the statistical analyses may also ignore some differences or interactions when

comparing the stories of different decades. With a larger sample size, future studies may

be able to find the interaction between the stories' genres and publication decade.

In this study, other changes in Chinese children's stories were not examined due to

the lack of appropriate measures. The changes of Chinese culture can also be seen

through the change in themes, language and illustration in Chinese children's stories.

However, these factors are hard to quantify and code, because readers may have a

different interpretation and understanding when reading the same story. Thus, the

findings of this study only offer a general description of the cultural change reflected by

the Chinese children's stories. It is worthwhile for future researchers to develop some

reliable measures via content analyses of children's stories, and thus study Chinese

children's stories for other important characteristics, such as the illustrations in stories.

In addition, this study did not examine children's reflections on the stories.

Children's reading preferences determine the type of cultural values they are more

frequently exposed to. For example, if folklore stories are more preferred by children,

they might likely obtain more Chinese traditional values than Western cultural values.

Because children's multi-cultural literature should deliver "authenticity" of culture to

stimulate "asethnicity" of readers (Henderson & May, 2005), it is worthwhile for future

studies of this type to probe the effect of the stories on Chinese children's psychological

well-beings.

Conclusion

This study explored changes in Chinese cultural values through children's stories

from the 1980s through the 2000s. The change in Chinese children's stories is

correspondent to the development of Chinese society. The findings show that Chinese

traditional culture is still influencing Chinese children's stories. Due to the influence of

modernization and globalization, some traditional cultural values are gradually

weakening with the introduction of Western culture; the traditional cultural values of

hierarchical social status are weakening while the Western cultural values of democracy

are getting stronger. Besides conveying cultural values, the function of Chinese children's

stories as a moral education tool is evident in this study. Though social moral value is not

the theme of Chinese children's stories, they were more frequently reflected in the stories

of recent years.

This study offers an updated description of Chinese cultural socialization through

children's literature that has both theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, the

findings of this study indicate the trend of cultural changes in Chinese society. It can help

to facilitate future discussion about Chinese children's socialization and family relations.

Practically, this study indicates the characteristics of Chinese culture in recent years. It

can help children's literature professionals in the West in obtaining an image of current

Chinese culture and society. Chinese society is still in a period of transition.

Globalization and modernization have stimulated more social reforms in recent years

(Gilboy & Read, 2008). It is important for researchers in the West to notice the new

characteristics of Chinese culture.

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Table 1

Inter-rater Reliability in Story Rating Process

| | Folklore | | | Fiction | |
	κ	Agreement		κ	Agreement
Time 1	.78	.97		.64	.95
Time 2	.80	.95		.72	.92
Time 3	.89	.97		.60	.89

Note. Agreement= Observed proportions of agreement.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Cultural Values Reflection in Stories

	Type` 1		Type 2		Type 3	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Genre						
Folklore						
1983-91 (n=23)	2.78	1.31	.96	.93	.30	.47
1994-95 (n=15)	2.67	1.29	.73	.88	.27	.59
2000-08 (n=26)	3.77	1.70	1.35	1.23	.62	.80
Total (N=64)	3.16	1.55	1.06	1.07	.42	.66
Fiction						
1983-91 (n=34)	2.74	1.21	.97	.67	.38	.49
1994-95 (n=16)	2.13	1.50	1.06	1.00	.69	.70
2000-08 (n=31)	2.84	1.71	1.42	1.26	.71	.82
Total (N=81)	2.65	1.49	1.16	1.00	.57	.69

Note. Type 1= Chinese cultural values. Type 2 = Western cultural values. Type 3 = social

moral values

Table 3

The Frequent Reflected Cultural Values in Stories

Chinese Culture	Western Culture	Social Moral Values
1980s (n=57)		
Familism (26)	Adulation of youth (18)	Sharing and offering (9)
Respect for elders (24)	Open expression of thoughts	Love for new society (7)
Conflict avoidance,	(10)	Nationalism (3)
Self-control (22)	Egalitarianism in status and	
	relationship (9)	
1990s (n=31)		
Respect for	Adulation of youth (13)	Love for new society (7)
authority (12)	Open expression of	Sharing and offering (5)
Conflict Avoidance,	thoughts (4)	Loyalty to county (2)
Self-control (10)	Open display of	
Familism (10)	emotions (3)	
2000s (n=57)		
Conflict avoidance,	Open expression of	Sharing and offering (14)
Self-control (33)	thoughts (22)	Nationalism (10)
Familism (24)	Open display of	Loyalty to county (10)
Educational	emotion (10)	
success (22)	Adulation of youth (7)	

Note. The number in parentheses indicates the number of each cultural value was

reflected in the stories by decade.

Appendix:

Checklist of Chinese Traditional Values:

Harmony with nature	
Conformity	
Smooth, harmonious interpersonal relationship; conflict avoidance, restraint, self-control	
Consensus, assumption of the "middle" position	
Indirect, nonverbal expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings	
Stoicism, suppression of emotions	
Tradition and continuity	
Respect for older persons (age/wisdom)	
Hierarchical positions and status; respect for authority	
Cyclical concept of time	
Collective orientation and group accomplishments	
Mutual consideration and self-depreciation	
Familism	
Interdependence	
Formality	
Educational achievement	
Strong work ethnic	

Chung (1991), Fong & Wu (1996), Ho(1989), and Wu(1996).

Checklist of Western Values (themes)

Mastery of nature	
Competition	
Assertion of one's thoughts and feelings	
Dissensus acceptable (holding of a different position)	
Open, direct expression of thoughts, ideas, and feelings	
Open display of emotions	
Change, innovation, progress	
Adulation of youth and youthfulness	
More egalitarianism in status and relationships	
Specific points, schedule, clocks	
Individual orientation and self-accomplishments	
Assertiveness and self-determination	
Individualism	
Independence	
Informality	
Flexible definition of achievement	

Stouffer (1995).

Checklist of Moral Values (Theme/Content)

Nationalism	No. _____
Love Chinese people	No. _____
Love for the new society	No._____
Sharing and offering	No. _____

Ashmore (2002), Bi (2003), Chang (1996), and Maosen (1990).