There is little doubt that much of the nurture part of child development owes its power to parental socialization, especially in the early years of childhood. Parental moral guidance is no exception. Although there have been important strides in research over recent decades, much still remains to be understood, particularly with regard to the role socio-cultural contexts play in children’s moral development.

In this chapter, we draw on previous research (on the socialization of shame) conducted by the second author as well as the research by the first two authors (which traces the formation of learning virtues) to examine how parental socialization for moral guidance proceeds everyday in the specific culture of Taiwan. We first review related research and underscore the view deriving from recent research that morality should not be seen only as a cognitive and decision-making capacity, but as sensibilities that are cultivated in the socio-cultural context. Next, we discuss parent–child communication about moral topics as an essential process for children’s moral growth, but at the same time also as the acquisition of their actual moral sensibilities. We present our research findings by focusing on two kinds of moral messaging: knowing/feeling shame and cultivating learning virtues. While cognizant of the many overlapping, multilayered, and dynamic processes, we highlight two types of frequently occurring communicative activities to demonstrate how parent–child conversations may provide contexts for moral development in Taiwanese children’s homes. They are: (1) the elicitation of shame feelings in disciplinary encounters and (2) mother–child conversations about learning (which
are nondisciplinary encounters). These socialization efforts are characterized as moral messaging because both types of communicative activities contain morally evaluative, affective, and directive meanings that are valued by the culture. These meanings are expressed for the purpose of engaging children in thinking about, reflecting on, and actually improving themselves in the two domains of knowing shame and pursuing learning toward self-perfection. We conclude by stressing the importance of culture-sensitive, context-specific, and in-depth research approaches to moral development.

**Moral development in socio-cultural context**

Earlier research laid the foundation that children do construct moral cognition (Kohlberg, 1969). This well-established line of research documents that children develop their self-sanctioning capacity to reason through and justify actions pertaining to thou-shalt-nots, that is, not harming others without clear and justifiable reasons. Children also progress in thinking about and behaving in accordance with the thou-shalts, that is, doing the moral good. For example, in thinking about distributive justice, they move from relying on personal desire to claim things for themselves to considering the idea of sharing and fairness, and eventually to the inclusion of equity and benevolence (Damon, 1988).

However, recent decades have witnessed a new line of research that articulates the need to expand previous cognition-based theories to include the socio-emotional foundation for early moral development during the critical periods of infancy and preschool (Kochanska & Murray, 2000; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002; Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007; Thompson, 2010). Two areas are particularly significant. First, there is a large body of research on moral emotions. The roles of negative emotions of guilt and shame (Lewis, 1992; Tangney, 1998; Tangney, Burggraf, & Wagner, 1995) and the positive emotions of empathy, sympathy, compassion, including the broader concept of conscience (Kochanska, 1991, 1995), have been studied quite extensively. This research consistently shows that infants and preschool children, while developing moral cognition, also develop these moral emotions. Many researchers argue that moral emotions are necessarily intertwined with moral cognition in the developmental process (Eisenberg, 1998; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Hoffman, 1987, 1991, 2000; Kochanska, 1991, 1995; Kochanska, Tjebkes, & Forman, 1998; Wilson, 1970, 1981).

The second area, even more important and relevant to our own research, is the socialization process by which infants and preschool children develop socio-emotional and socio-moral competence. Recent
research has documented several key factors and processes that promote early moral development. First, the quality of the parent–child relationship features centrally in parental socialization effort and effect. When the relationship is founded on secure attachment, parents and children enjoy more constructive interactions. For example, mothers of securely attached children engage them in more open and more emotional discussions (particularly those surrounding negative emotions and conflict) than mothers of less securely attached children. At the same time, securely attached children exhibit better emotional knowledge, sensitivity toward others’ needs, cooperation with parental socialization effort, and a host of other prosocial tendencies (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995; Kochanska et al., 2004; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002; Thompson, 2010). Furthermore, parents’ reminiscing about past misbehaviors, related emotions, and consequences, but not talking about rules and obedience with their children, has also been positively linked to children’s conscience development (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003; Laible, 2004, 2006; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002). Reminiscing is argued to be a particularly effective context for such socialization because parental effort in the heat of disciplinary encounters may be reduced by children’s lesser ability to attend to moral instructions due to their intense emotional arousal at the moment. Discussing past events thus affords the opportunity for children to see events more clearly at a distance and to understand parents’ messages better, thereby evaluating and reflecting on themselves more successfully (Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007; Thompson, 2010). Finally, research in this area documents that the elaborative style used in maternal reminiscing – that is, asking many open-ended questions, providing details, and eliciting children’s thoughts and feelings – is especially effective in supporting children’s moral development. Such socialization has been shown to predict children’s greater internalization of moral values as well as their actual behavior in morally challenging situations (Kochanska, 2002; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002).

This new line of research has redressed the gap in previous research and theory. With this advancement, we now have the theoretical underpinning that not only considers children’s cognition and socio-emotional competence simultaneously, but also acknowledges the pivotal role children’s social worlds play in supporting their moral development. Much of the ongoing research is thus consistent with our own concerns. Despite increased attention to the socio-emotional factors, we wish to point out two issues that we would argue have not yet been adequately explored. First, similar to earlier theoretical perspectives, the current research is still predominantly geared toward universal moral development. Researchers tend to imply that the recent focus on socio-emotional factors and
processes should make previous theories more comprehensive, and that
the newly revised and integrated theory is more generative and more
applicable to moral development across the globe. This suggests a per-
spective that still favors a universal outlook. An emphasis on universality
may not be a flaw from a within-culture perspective and may be of utility
as part of the field’s research program. Nonetheless, we maintain that
when universality is the focus, the particularities of the socio-cultural
contexts are not, or are not easily, considered. Parental socialization is a
phenomenon of daily occurrence on the ground replete with spontaneity,
vagaries, and surprises, which cannot be reduced or condensed to an
abstract, universal level. Thus, a research program that aims at uncover-
ing universality of moral development is in disharmony with a research
program that aims to describe specific, daily processes. When the former
is at the center, the latter is by default at the periphery.

Second, along with the peripheral status of the particular processes,
cultural values and processes are also understudied. The impressive
recent research on the socio-emotional foundation for early moral devel-
opment has been conducted mostly with European-American and other
European-heritage parents and children. There is a lack of research on
this process involving other cultures. Yet, cultural values and processes
are part and parcel of the context in which children develop. The discus-
sion of culture in moral development frequently leads to a predicament
that forces researchers to choose between moral universalism and moral
relativism. In our view, this may turn out to be a false predicament. It is
quite possible that there may be abstract, principled, and transcendental
moral reasoning among highly developed individuals regardless of cul-
ture, as studied and articulated by Kohlberg and associates. Likewise,
there may be some general processes such as secure attachment, an elab-
orative reminiscing style, and positive parent–child relationships that
enable parents to accomplish their goal of moral socialization more suc-
cessfully. Still, we maintain that regardless of the level of moral reasoning
that children ultimately attain, they grow morally in the socio-cultural
contexts of family, peers, school, workplace, and other institutions that
are influenced by their cultures. It is the myriad socio-cultural contexts
involving concrete human interactions, experiences, conflicts, and reflec-
tions that afford opportunities for any and all moral development.

Paying attention to socio-cultural contexts and processes may help us
discover emphases, priorities, and meanings arising from specific circum-
cstances on the ground, rather than abstract or decontextualized judg-
m ents. Inclusion of socio-cultural contexts can uncover diverse pathways
that may converge eventually to form the more general patterns of think-
ing, feeling, relating, and action. In other words, it is sensible to view
children’s moral growth under parental socialization in specific socio-cultural contexts as the very foundation for further development in the moral domain.

**Importance of studying parent–child communication**

A significant part of parental socialization for moral guidance takes place in parent–child communication with verbal interaction occupying the center stage (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003; Laible, 2004, 2006; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002; Miller *et al.*, 2012; Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007). Moral development surely requires individual maturation of cognitive, emotional, and social capacities, but it also requires cultural learning by interacting with more mature cultural members (e.g., caregivers). Through daily socialization and interaction, children gradually become full-fledged members of their culture. Initially, this process enables them to internalize discrete and concrete meanings. As they experience both repeated and varied situations, children rework and modify previously constructed meanings to build more coherent and sophisticated understandings (Nelson, 1986). Eventually, they come to own the moral order that is upheld by their culture, and use that to guide their moral life and further development.

Parental communication begins early in life. Even before the child becomes verbal, research shows that parents talk to them with moral intent (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). As soon as children gain verbal capacity, two-way communication flourishes; that is, parents and children talk with each other continuously. They talk about events and experiences in the past (Miller, Fung, & Mintz, 1996; Miller *et al.*, 2012; Wang, 2001), events, thoughts, feelings, and judgments in the present (Fung, 1999), and hopes, wishes, anticipations, and promises in the future (Li, 2012). Beyond these temporal delineations, we also see three patterns in parent–child interactions. First, as most research has shown, parents instruct, model, reason with, persuade, approve, encourage, and so forth, while children accept, follow, align, and cooperate with parental guidance (Maccoby, 1992). Second, instead of merely being recipients of parental socialization, children also actively question, rebel, challenge, quibble, disagree, and negotiate with parents, regardless of specific cultures (Baumrind, 1971; Fung, Miller, & Lin, 2004). Children engage in this type of interaction quite commonly although the specific points of contention and styles may differ from culture to culture and from context to context (Chao, 1994, 1995, 1996; Fung, 1999). Third, either parents or children may be the initiator of moral talk. In addition to responding to parental socialization, children also take a leading role in
noticing, discovering, constructing, and asking about moral issues and topics (Damon, 1988). Such child-generated issues serve as further opportunities for parents to guide children. Through these recurrent interaction patterns, parents and children share and co-construct a sense of moral agency. For these reasons, parent–child communication is a fertile ground for studying parental moral guidance.

Although prevalent, parent–child communication is messy, due to the fact that it takes place in daily living. Anyone who has looked at such communication knows that it is frequently spontaneous, improvisational, unsystematic, and disorganized (Fung, 1999). In the comfort of home, parents socialize whenever a need arises, not according to a preplanned and scheduled timetable. Children, particularly those who are securely attached to their parents (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995; Kochanska et al., 2004; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002), respond in an equally spontaneous manner. Despite this messy nature, parental moral socialization is relentless. Likewise children’s participation is also intense (Miller, Fung, & Mintz, 1996; Miller et al., 2012).

**Moral guidance as a parental imperative in Taiwanese culture**

Although the majority of Taiwanese people migrated from Mainland China over the past 400 years, there are many indigenous groups and local subcultural traditions. Therefore, Taiwan remains predominantly a Confucian-heritage culture (aside from its democratic political system). As many scholars have described and documented, Confucian cultures emphasize the family as the nursery for fostering children’s moral development (Fung, 1999; Ho, 1989; Lau, 1996; Wu, 1996). Unlike Western perspectives that have been strongly influenced by religious prohibition of wrongdoing as expressed in the Ten Commandments (Nunner-Winkler, 1994; Rawls, 1971), Confucianism stresses the commitment to do moral good (Hwang, 1998). In general, the moral good assumes the highest good such as justice, fairness, altruism, public service, heroism, honesty, and so forth. However, Confucian moral teaching does not directly address very large and abstract prohibitions such as “thou shalt not kill” because these are taken for granted. Instead, the moral good addresses goodness or virtues that guide people’s daily behaviors and interactions, such as filial piety and devotion to learning (de Bary, 2000; Hwang, 1998; Rosemont, 1992, 2003). The general belief is that the prohibitions set the bar of conduct below which punishment is called for by society. This promotion of moral good for daily living guides people to do good (the more the better) rather than warning people against committing the
wrong with punishment looming. In promoting the good, it is believed that the wrong is reduced (Hwang, 1998; Rosemont, 1992, 2003).

In Confucian moral persuasion, four moral principles are cardinal: ritual propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame (Hall & Ames, 1987). In addition, there are many other virtues for guiding and gauging lived experience and quality of daily life (Li, 2012). For general living, for example, the virtues include honor, trustworthiness, generosity, magnanimity, self-reflection, and respect for elders and authority. For learning, the virtues are continuous striving to self-improvement, utmost dedication to work, diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance, and humility.

For the purposes of this chapter, we elaborate on a sense of shame (chì, 責) for the general moral good and virtues for learning. Regarding the former, Confucianism places high value on the cultivation of a sense of shame (Fung, 1999; Li, Wang, & Fischer, 2004; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992). Unlike in the mainstream psychotherapy literature where shame may be regarded as a disgrace or an unhealthy emotion to be rid of (Lewis, 1992; Schneider, 1987; Tangney, 1998), Confucianism underscores that a sense of shame is a human capacity that enables us to recognize our moral failures first, then to summon our courage to admit such failures, and finally to correct ourselves (Fung, 1999). For this reason, the experience of knowing and feeling shame is described by Confucius himself as “near courage” (Wu & Lai, 1992: 25). It is not courage yet because knowing and feeling shame alone does not guarantee admission and further resolve to self-rectify. If a person has done wrong but does not feel shame, this person is regarded as shameless, which is a state believed to be incongruous with the moral good (shamelessness includes a key cluster of shame concepts in Chinese, see Li, Wang, & Fischer, 2004). Of such a person, even “the devil is afraid” (ren buyao lian, gui dou haipa人不要臉鬼都害怕), as expressed in a Chinese idiom, which was also nominated by participants as one of the 113 Chinese shame terms in Li, Wang, & Fischer’s study (2004). If, however, a person has done wrong, but he or she knows and feels shame, this person is believed to possess the intact moral capacity to self-examine; therefore this person is near courage. Such courage is first generated when the person admits the wrongdoing either to the self or to others, and the courage is then achieved when the person resolves and actually takes action to self-correct. Thus, a sense of shame is an important moral sensibility in children that parents in Confucian-heritage cultures endeavor to foster (Fung, 1999, 2009a; Fung & Chen, 2001).

It is important to point out that in Confucian cultures there is no clear distinction between shame and guilt. As research shows (Fung, 2009b; Li, Wu, & Schwartz, 2004; Shaver, Wang, & Fischer, 1992),
guilt is conceptualized as a component of the larger shame concept in Chinese. There exist many terms in Chinese that are combinations of shame and guilt, for example, *shame-guilt*, *shame-guilt/conscience*, and *face covered with shame-guilt*. Therefore, the Chinese term *xiuchi* (羞耻) or *chi* (耻) is nagging conscience with strong social responsibility and accountability. When used to socialize children, the combined terms and expressions may exert greater impact on children than either concept alone, as argued by Li, Wang, & Fischer (2004).

Learning in Confucian-heritage cultures is centrally intertwined with moral cultivation as well (Lee, 1996; Li, 2012). Learning throughout Chinese history is first and foremost not geared toward intellectual and academic learning but moral self-perfection, that is, developing moral sensibilities as described previously. Although everyone is believed to possess the capacity to acquire all the Confucian moral principles and virtues, no one is believed to have them at birth or to obtain them miraculously. Instead, one needs to learn, or, to use a Confucian term, to cultivate oneself with these morals. This learning requires both tremendous effort by the child and concerted effort by the whole family, particularly the parents who bear the duty to guide the child from early on. Despite the inclusion of academic subjects in modern education, learning to cultivate oneself morally and academic learning are not distinct, separate processes but one single pathway toward self-perfection. Research over the past decades has documented that moral self-cultivation is indeed central to school learning for Confucian-heritage cultures (Cheng, 1996; Gao & Watkins, 2001; Ho, 2001; Tang, 2001). Beyond acquisition of knowledge and skill, one also learns to be responsible, to dedicate oneself to studies, to endure hardship, and to honor family, and to contribute to society. Such learning requires that individuals develop the learning virtues and use them toward improving themselves constantly. One of the parents’ obligations in childrearing is to ensure that their children acquire the learning virtues to be the best learners they can be. Children’s high achievement is taken as evidence that parents have fulfilled their childrearing duty and is reason for respect and admiration from the community (Li et al., 2008). Under such a cultural mandate, parents are also highly motivated to cultivate learning virtues in their children.

**Empirical exploration of parental moral socialization in Taiwan**

To examine how Taiwanese parents socialize their children in everyday discipline and in learning, we conducted two studies. The first study was conducted by the second author, and it was an ethnographic, observational, and longitudinal investigation, involving nine focal children and
Taiwanese parent–child conversations

their families who lived in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan (there is also a comparative component with European-American counterparts; see Miller et al., 2012). The recruited families were informed that the researcher was interested in how young children learn to communicate with others under everyday conditions. After rapport and trust were established, the focal children’s spontaneous interactions with family members in their homes were observed and videotaped for two two-hour sessions at each sampling point, spaced at intervals of three months. The main corpus of data consisted of over 140 hours of home observations, encompassing a range of ages from two-and-a-half to four, and supplemented by in-depth interviews with the main caregivers. All data were transcribed verbatim and meticulously coded for further analysis.

For the second study, we recorded 118 Taiwanese mother–child conversations (MCCs) about learning (in the original study, 102 European-American dyads were also included for comparative purposes). The elementary school children were six to ten years of age. We targeted this age group because these children and their mothers had experience talking about formal schooling. All families lived in Taipei and most came from middle-class backgrounds. In order to collect MCCs, we asked each mother to identify two real learning incidents that recently happened to her child with one incident showing a good learning attitude or behavior and the other showing a not perfect learning attitude or behavior (for convenience, we refer to the former incident as “good learning” and the latter as “poor learning”). The mother was told to take unlimited time to talk to her child and that she could take the conversation in any direction. The order of the good and poor topics was randomized. This method has been used by researchers who study children’s autobiographical memory, emotional, and conscience development (e.g., Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Laible, 2004). All MCCs were audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis (Li et al., in press).

The data from both studies contain very rich and important contextual details. The analyses we present in this chapter were done with interpretative approaches of discourse analysis. To be sure, these data lend themselves to multiple layers and perspectives of analysis. Any one perspective is only a heuristic choice for the purpose of highlighting certain kinds of exchange while setting the rest of the context aside. With this trade-off in mind, we conducted some structural analysis first in order to obtain a general picture of the contours of these socialization processes. For both data sets, we tallied turns between the caregiver and the child, and for the second data set we also tallied lengths of time a given exchange lasted, type and frequency of topics, and also exchange volume. These structural elements were similar when comparing Taiwanese and European-American parental socialization (Li et al., in press). Therefore, they are unlikely to be
the underlying factors for differences observed in communicative events. The actual moment-to-moment communication is the focus of our analysis. Next, we engaged in very long and laborious analysis through rigorous procedures that involved reliability coding, reading, and rereading of the data. What follows is the presentation of our discourse analysis with close attention to the details of communicative events. We illustrate two particular kinds of moral messaging and two strategies of communicative framing with which the moral messages are delivered and responded to.

Moral messaging

Parental socialization inevitably contains “moral messaging.” By “moral messaging,” we mean that routine family communication sends explicit as well as implicit morally evaluative, affective, and directive instructions to children. Although it is messaging, it is not typically done in the form of preaching where the adult lectures while the child just listens. Instead, such moral messaging is spontaneously generated in the context of ongoing family life; it is improvisational, emotionally charged, and dynamic. Despite this unplanned nature, moral messaging is clearly intentional but also measured and managed to fit the circumstance. We highlight two kinds of moral messaging.

Knowing and feeling shame

As stated previously, a sense of shame begins with the sensibility of knowing and feeling shame when one has done something wrong. Instilling this sensibility into children is of central importance for parents in Confucian-heritage cultures. Below is an example taken from the first study:

Didi is a boy at age three. When adults were engaging in conversation, he quietly approached the researcher’s unattended camcorder. As soon as the mother found out, she yelled at him. Although the child quickly moved away, his crying became another transgression that led not only the mother but also his sister, Tingting (age five), to join in to shame him.

MOTHER (M): Hey, Didi, whenever Mom tells you something, you always [don’t listen] [walks up to Didi]

DIDI (C): I saw it. [pretends to peek through the lens of the camcorder and walking away from it]

M: [walks up to C and spanks him]. You are not allowed. I’m gonna spank you. You’re a child who doesn’t obey rules! A child who doesn’t obey rules. You are not allowed to act like this. Mom has told you before that you are not allowed to come to this side. [drags C further away from the camcorder] We don’t want you. You are being punished. Stand here.
M: He's such a cry baby.
R: Oh no, oh no. [referring to C's loud cry]
M: It doesn't matter. Let him cry for a while.
C: [sits down on the floor and starts to cry loudly]
M: [to C] Such a disobedient child. I've told you before. Mom is really mad! Look, your crying is being filmed; how ugly that is!
R: Are you okay, is it okay [to tape your crying]?
M: [to C] It doesn't matter. Let him cry for a while. Once his trumpet goes off, it's hard to make it stop [i.e., once he starts to cry, you can't make him stop]. [sits down on sofa and extends her arm to C] Come here, let me talk to you. Get up, get up!
C: [cries more loudly]
S: [to C] Ugly monster, ugly monster, shame on you! [displays shaming gesture by sliding her index finger down on her cheek] [to M] You say to him "shame on you."
M: Let him cry. It doesn't matter. Let him cry for a while. Once his trumpet goes off, it's hard to make it stop [i.e., once he starts to cry, you can't make him stop]. [sits down on sofa and extends her arm to C] Come here, let me talk to you. Get up, get up!
S: Give him a good-spanking in front of Auntie [referring to R].
M: [to S, explains why C is being reprimanded] [it is because] he is not behaving. Mom has said no one is allowed to go there. [points to R's camcorder and picks C up from the floor; C stands next to M and leans his head into M's lap. M is holding C's chin] Close your mouth. Mom wants to say something. Mom wants to say something. You want to be held, but I want to say one thing first. Close your mouth.
C: [stops crying].
M: [points to R's camcorder] You didn't behave, didn't you? Did you? Did you? If you don't answer me, I'm gonna be mad at you.
C: [looks at R and S, who are talking to each other]
R: [looks at C and laughs] He's smiling; Didi is smiling.
C: [starts to cry again]
S: [cries more loudly]
M: [to R] Hey hey hey! Tingting, come here! Tingting! [smacks the coffee table with her hand, shakes her head and smiles to R]
S: [laughs]
R: "To loot when the house is on fire" [i.e., to take advantage of someone when he is in crisis]. [smiles and comments on S's behavior]

In this excerpt, Didi was disciplined for his invasion of others’ property and possible interference with a respectful adult’s work – a rule that his mother has laid out for him previously. His mother employs various verbal and nonverbal techniques, including public reprimand (punishing and spanking Didi in front of the researcher), disparaging remarks (e.g., “A child who doesn’t obey rules”), and threats of abandonment (e.g., “We don’t want you”). Although Didi is only three, he has a burgeoning sense of self and the need to social reference (Rosen, Adamson, & Bakeman, 1992; Striano & Rochat, 2000), and is capable of perceiving the meaning and feeling caused by his wrongdoing (Kochanska &
Murray, 2000; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002; Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007). Nevertheless, his crying brings him even more shaming, with derogatory comments, characterizing him as a “cry baby” and “disobedient child” and his crying as “ugly,” as well as threats of love withdrawal (“Mom is really mad!” “It doesn’t matter; Let him cry”).

While the researcher attempts to alleviate Didi’s problem, his sister who until now remained a bystander joins in to shame him. Seeing that their mother did not succeed in rectifying Didi’s behavior, she pushes shaming to its most forefront manner, using explicit shaming labels (e.g., “Ugly monster, ugly monster, shame on you”) and gestures (i.e., sliding her index finger down on her cheek), and urges further public shaming and reprimand (“You say to him ‘shame on you’.” “Give him a good spanking in front of Auntie”). Notice that after this collective shaming, the mother begins to give Didi a way out by humorously ascribing Didi’s crying behavior to unintentional factors, outside of Didi’s control (saying “Once his trumpet goes off, it’s hard to make it stop”). Moreover, the mother turns her attention to the rules with an attempt to explain to the sister and Didi why he was punished. While listening to all of this, Didi gazes with a smile. His sister pokes a hole in Didi’s new cry as “fake,” spanking him quickly and running away. The mother never receives verbal acknowledgment of his misdeed from Didi; she wants to ensure that Didi understands and acknowledges his misbehavior as the cause for his mother’s anger and her need to discipline him. She calls an end to the shaming event (not shown in the excerpt), while the researcher also sarcastically comments on the sister’s behavior (“To loot when the house is on fire”).

In these observed families, knowing/feeling shame occupies a central stage in moral socialization. The above example may leave the impression on American readers that the mother and sister are being harsh. Nevertheless, interactions like this are grounded in the prolonged parent–child bond and mutual interdependence sustained by the cultural values of filial piety. In the loving and protective home environment, to Didi’s mother, what she has done is simply about discipline, one of her most important jobs as a responsible parent. Although Didi has not acquired abstract moral principles yet, his mother has little doubt that he is capable of feeling and knowing the rudimentary sense of shame. Indeed, research shows that children in the second half of their first year become increasingly aware of adult norms and standards (see Kochanska, Casey, & Fukumoto, 1995; Rakoczy, Warneken, & Tomasello, 2008), and frequently engage in social referencing before taking further action toward things about which they are uncertain (see Rosen, Adamson, & Bakeman, 1992; Striano & Rochat, 2000). The mother’s attempt to invoke disgrace-shame (xiu), the affective aspect of shame, is mainly for the purpose of teaching him discretion-shame (chi),
the moral aspect of shame. Every participant plays a part in maintaining a “balanced” tension between the two (i.e., Didi’s sister and the researcher in this case). In addition to the role of a discipliner/shamer, the caregiver also often shifts her role to that of a mitigator/protector in order to safeguard her children from unnecessary or excessive shaming (from Didi’s sister in this case). Eventually, by acquiring the qualities of self-reflection and self-discipline – the essence of knowing shame (zhi chi) – parents expect that their children will courageously amend and constantly improve themselves, which will hence protect them from being shunned by others outside the family; these issues are discussed in greater detail in the “communicative framing” section below.

**Cultivating learning virtues**

The next example of a conversation, focused on poor learning behavior, was taken from the second data set between a mother and her nine-year-old son, Yun. Yun has volunteered this learning incidence to his mother in the pretalk interview (not shown) because he has been reprimanded by the teacher for chatting in his nature class.

M: … I found it strange why you didn’t know so many basic things, how come Yun, you didn’t know? Oh, dear, I finally realized it was because you didn’t listen to your teacher in class.

C: Hm …

M: Did you miss important things because of this?

C: Yes …

M: Yes, you admit …

C: I should.

M: Oh, good!

C: I admit, but you cannot scold me.

M: Oh, admitting, but no scolding.

C: Yup …

[M recalls that C improved for a while, and C mentions unrelated things such as enjoying basketball play. But M then brings him back to chatting with peers in class again.]

M: Then what happened? What happened? Did you still talk in the nature class?

C: Hm, less and less.

M: Less and less. Let me tell you … you just said that if you talk in class, see, I am afraid you won’t concentrate, right?

C: Hm …

M: First, you will miss important things, will you not?

C: Then I …

M: Then, do you feel in … his class, you’d like to chat because his class is boring or because you yourself want to play?

C: No, because when I hurry to think about this, then I’ll forget that.

[M mentions that Yun likes his nature class, but Yun says that he still does not do well. M and C turn the topic to Yun trying to help the teacher organize]
things after class for which Yun received a social progress award from the teacher. The mother returns to Yun’s continuous chatting problem in class.

M: … How would you like to … would you try to gradually …?
C: Do more practice …
M: Would you agree to concentrate better in class?
C: Yes.
M: Just like Little Brother Wei (a peer that Yun knows); he also talked to you … he seems to have a lot of free time … but he does well in school and is also well-behaved at home. How come he can do that?
C: Hm?
M: He concentrates well in class …
C: He gets the rewards for good kids.

In the first part of this conversation, the mother responds in two ways to Yun’s poor learning behavior: (1) characterizing it as a violation of learning virtues, namely lack of concentration in class, and (2) pointing out negative consequences of this problem (“miss important things” from the class). The good news is that Yun admits his problem, which wins his mother’s approval. But Yun is not just a passive recipient of his mother’s instructions. He negotiates with his mother by bargaining for his admission of his problem with no scolding from his mother. It is not clear if his mother agrees to his requests since she merely repeats Yun’s words. But the fact remains that she does not scold him throughout the excerpt. It is therefore reasonable for us to conclude that Yun succeeds in fending off his mother from scolding him.

However, his mother does not lose track of her parenting duty. After a few exchanges about Yu’s improvement, the mother asks if he still chats in class. Yun reports that he talks less and less, which does not satisfy his mother as she wants him to stop chatting altogether. She emphasizes again the cost of Yun’s chatting, namely not concentrating on learning and consequentially “missing important things.” Yun agrees again. At this point, the mother seems to be puzzled as to why, despite knowing and admitting the negative consequences, Yun still chats in class. So she probes further to establish whether this is caused by the boring class or her son not devoting himself to learning. Yun reports neither but a cognitive problem in thinking “No, because when I hurry to think about this, then I’ll forget that.”

The next few exchanges (not shown) reveal that Yun actually likes his nature class but still does not seem to do well. Moreover, he tries to help the teacher after class and ends up receiving a social progress award from the teacher. Now the mother knows that it is neither the class being boring nor the teacher being unkind that are causes, but really Yun’s own lack of concentration on the learning, she focuses more directly on instilling this learning virtue. She asks how Yun can improve gradually.
juncture, Yun is no longer defensive, dodging the topic; instead he says “Do more practice.” Although practice is a common learning virtue, it is not the right kind for what the mother has been talking about. She steers him back with “Would you agree to concentrate better in class?” Yun gives an unequivocal yes. The mother offers a familiar peer example for Yun to emulate, Little Brother Wei, who achieves well in school and is great all around because he concentrates well in class. Yun ends the exchange by acknowledging that this is how one is recognized as a good child.

Although this example is about learning, a topic that might be regarded as a more cognitive domain in the West, it is imbued with moral significance in Confucian-heritage cultures. This example illustrates that the mother is invested in addressing her son’s lack of concentration, a very important learning virtue (Li, 2003). As discussed previously, much parental effort is directed toward cultivating learning virtues in their children. Concentration on learning simply means dedicating oneself to learning wholeheartedly, as learning in this culture involves not only cognitive development, but more importantly moral and social self-perfection (Lee, 1996; Li, 2012). Throughout this excerpt, the mother rarely touches on cognitive reasons for her son’s problem in class. She remains unconnected to (or perhaps uninterested in) mental functions even when her son clearly points out his flawed thinking. Instead, the mother focuses on ruling out external causes for her son’s continuous chatting problem, and returns to the need to concentrate persistently. At the end of this exchange, she brings out the idea that concentration is the real underlying reason for the consistently positive behavior of Little Brother Wei and therefore also the right virtue for her son to acquire.

Communicative framing

Much of moral messaging is achieved by what we call “communicative framing.” It is how the socializing agent sets up a structure to talk about the topic with the child. Although a structure, the parent may not go about it formally such as executing a classroom lesson plan. Instead, the parent may use what is familiar to him or her from the cultural model of parenting for various domains (e.g., knowing and feeling shame and learning). Undoubtedly, there are many ways to structure moral talk even within a given culture. We discuss two structures of communicative framing that occur frequently.

Past transgression as a mirror to be reflected upon

In the disciplinary encounters, triggered by the precipitating transgression, a specific past misdeed committed by the child or her habitual
breach similar to the here-and-now situation can be brought up by the
caregiver as a reminder of the rule or the possible consequence caused
by her misdeed (Fung, 1999; Fung & Chen, 2001). Indeed, only lan-
guage has the power not only to explicitly convey messages and instruc-
tions, but also to connect the temporal and spatial worlds in the past,
present, and future. As such, the present and future are not regarded
as only a temporary continuation of the past, but also as built on the
past. Talking about past experiences also appears to be a commonly
shared socializing practice in European-American and other European-
heritage families (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003; Laible, 2004,
2006; Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002). Nevertheless, how the child’s
past transgressions are framed and interpreted may vary cross-culturally
(Miller, Sandel, Liang, & Fung, 2001; Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang,
1997). The analysis of longitudinal observations on narrative prac-
tices in the same Taiwanese families reveals that, in contrast to their
counterparts in Chicago, they are much more likely to foreground the
child’s past transgression in storytelling (33 percent versus 5 percent),
which are more likely to be occasioned by precipitating transgressions
as well (29 percent versus 14 percent). Moreover, qualitatively, while
the Chicago families tend to downplay the child’s past transgression in
these rarely occurring transgression stories, Taiwanese caregivers tend
to use these stories didactically as a shaming and disciplinary strategy
(Miller et al., 2012).

Below is an example drawn from the first study. Angu, a girl, at age
2;9, is with her primary caregiver, her aunt (whom Angu calls “Mama”),
in their living room. Angu and her aunt are playing “zoo” with animals
made of cardboard that can stand. Her aunt suggests that they put one of
the cards as the first in a series. Angu rejects her aunt’s suggestion. When
asked why, Angu says that she will cry and cry very loudly. This triggers
her aunt to recount Angu’s difficult incident that took place at church the
day before. While retelling the story, Angu misbehaves again by kicking
down the cards, a rude behavior to her aunt. So she continues the story,
asking if Angu wants to be spanked again.

AUNT (A): [points to the “zero” on a card] Let’s make this first, okay?
C: [slowly] No.
A: No, why not, tell me.
C: Because I’d cry.
A: Why?
C: Uh, loudly, loud, loud, loud cry.
A: Tell Auntie (R), did I spank you yesterday? Have you told Auntie whether I
spanked you yesterday? [raises voice] Have you? Tell her, why I spanked you?
[C kicks the standing cards]
A: Do you want me to take you out and spank you again?
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C: [kicks down another card] No.

A: If not, don’t be so rude, right? Why are you rude?

C: [puts down a standing card] Put it like this.

A: It’s alright to do it like this, but don’t kick. Tell Auntie, why I spanked you yesterday.

[C starts to tell that they went to church and her aunt spanked her because she made trouble. The next turns tell how other church people came to “rescue” her by giving her candies …]

A: [to R] Sometimes she is really troublesome … So I told her that she couldn’t go into that office. Last week … she was thrown out (by church people) twice. [R laughs]

A: So it was embarrassing (buhao yisi); I felt very embarrassed. And also she, she calls names.

[R laughs during Aunt’s storytelling, but Angu is very quiet, drinking her milk]

A: She speaks dirty words. She calls names. So it’s very losing-face (hen diulian).

R: So, yesterday she went in (the office room) again, and you …

A: Yes, I did throw her out once, and she went back in again.

[C starts walking around]

R: Oh.

A: [looks at C] And she was rowdy. [R laughs]

C: [makes a strange sound] Hm … [looks at M]

A: See, she admitted. [M walks away with R and laughs]

C: [follows M] I won’t do it next time (wo xiaci bugan le).

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

[Aunt goes on to prompt Angu to repeat the rule again and asks her to remember it]

Clearly, Angu’s kicking down the cards in an everyday adult–child play setting is regarded as a transgression by the aunt. The link between the narrating context in the here-and-now and the narrated context in the past is Angu’s bad record of “not following rules” (bu shou guiju). There are three past transgressions being invoked here: interrupting the church meeting, being thrown out from the office by church people, and saying dirty words, which all happened at church (but at different times) the day before, last week (twice), and the habitual past. Due to their shared experience and memory, the aunt launches the pointed communicative framing with rhetorical questions persistently (“Tell Auntie, did I spank you yesterday?” “Have you told Auntie whether I spanked you yesterday? Have you?” “Tell her, why I spanked you?” “Tell Auntie, why I spanked you yesterday?”). In her effort to teach Angu, the aunt holds up the mirror, so to speak, in two ways. First, she introduces the link between Angu’s present rudeness and her past rudeness by focusing Angu’s attention to her repeated misbehaviors as the cause of the ensuing discipline. This is meant to lay bare for Angu the worsening of her own behavior. Second, the aunt turns her recounting of the incident to the researcher, stressing how Angu’s rudeness and other misdeeds make her aunt feel: losing face and
embarrassed. This in turn is also holding up the mirror, but the purpose is to point out the possible consequence (not cause) of Angu’s transgression. It is not only negative for Angu herself, but it is also very shameful for her aunt (for not being a responsible parent to raise a well-behaved child). By highlighting unfavorable consequences for both the child and the adult, the caregiver gives Angu an opportunity to look at herself again. Based on research described in the introduction conducted with European-heritage dyads (e.g., Laible & Thompson, 2000, 2002; Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007), children may be guided to self-reflect. In turn, such reflection on one’s past misdeeds may help the child to self-improve.

Notice that during this retelling to the researcher, Angu is quiet but highly attentive. She stays by, listening and waiting for her aunt to finish the story. Neither does the aunt lose track of Angu’s learning. Instead, she engages in nonverbal communication by looking at Angu, who apparently understands that her aunt is, in fact, sympathetic to her (in another retelling of the same story later in the same session, the aunt commented that although she did not completely agree with the church people’s interpretation of Angu’s behaviors [except for saying dirty words], she had to discipline her in front of those people). Angu’s idiosyncratic response in the retelling is interpreted by the aunt as her confession (“See, she admitted”). Immediately after that, Angu utters the long anticipated response of the whole teaching: “I won’t do it next time.” Marked by the movable adverb of time (xiàci), this future-oriented resolution shows her willingness to engage in self-improvement. Unsurprisingly, Angu’s response is met with enthusiasm from her aunt: “Yes, yes, yes, yes.” For reassurance, she reminds Angu of the rules once again.

Shaming and disciplinary events as shown in Examples 1 and 3 certainly emphasize the asymmetrical power relationship between caregiver and child – the former has much greater access and control over cultural resources than the latter (Miller & Goodnow, 1995). Nevertheless, with mutually strong commitment to sustain their communication as well as interpersonal bonds, the caregiver and the child collaboratively examine and reflect upon the child’s thoughts and behaviors across the multiple contexts in different spatiotemporal worlds. These routinely occurring discursive journeys aim to enable the child to learn lessons from his or her past and present in order to cultivate a better self for the future – the true essence and the ultimate goal of knowing shame.

**Tracing the formation of learning virtues**

The second type of communicative framing is tracing the formation of learning virtues. In their attempt to teach learning virtues, parents depart
from the good learning outcome in the present and go back to help the child trace the emergence and formation of learning virtues. Based on our analysis from the full 118 dyadic conversations, European-American mothers tend to probe first children’s affective responses to good or poor learning (see Li, 2012 for more analysis). In contrast, Taiwanese mothers tend to probe first the steps that led to the learning attitude or behavior. The following example takes place between a mother and her eight-year-old son Ming.

M: My boy, I’d like to talk about your swimming because I think that you are great at swimming. Am I right?
C: Uh-uh.
M: Yes, you are very good at swimming, but why did you say you were scared, afraid of touching water? How come you were not afraid of water anymore later?
C: I don’t know.
M: … Uh? Now there is another kid who is also afraid of water, how’d you help him, uh? If he is also afraid of water, but he also really wants to swim, how’d you help him, uh? …
C: I think … I’d first teach him how to hold breath …
[M and C continue to talk about how to hold breath]
M: … I think that you are great at swimming, how did you overcome that …?
C: It was the coach … who taught me how to hold breath …
M: But initially you didn’t want to get into water … how come you wanted to learn then?
C: Because … it’s fun in the water …
[M and C continue a few turns about fun in the water]
M: That was why you make an effort to learn! But how about your fear of water, how’d you overcome that?
C: That I don’t really know.
M: Were you afraid at the beginning?
C: At the beginning … I was very afraid.
M: How did you become less and less afraid?
C: Because … I learned how to hold my breath.
M: Uh-ah! Someone taught you, right? You knew how to do it, you used it, then you weren’t afraid anymore, right? Then you practiced and practiced, and then you got better and better, right?
C: That’s right!
M: OK, did you feel like it was too hard [xinku, exhausting] to practice holding breath at the beginning?
C: Not really.
M: How can that not be hard [exhausting]?! Then, is it hard [exhausting] to learn other things?
C: Yes, how can it not be hard?
M: So, can you be lazy?
C: No … no!
M: Then other things … don’t you think that you need to make more effort, not be so lazy … would you?
C: OK, OK …

The mother first recalls with Ming this good learning incidence. With his acknowledgment, she very quickly departs from Ming’s accomplishment and goes to Ming’s fearfulness at the very beginning of this learning experience. She asks him to think about how he changed from fearing water to not fearing water anymore. When Ming says he does not know, the mother sets up a concrete scenario of a peer who fears water, but also wants to swim (just like Ming at the beginning) for Ming to tap the real cause of his good learning. Instead of getting into learning virtues, however, Ming mentions a technical skill, “holding breath.” Apparently, his mother is not satisfied with his response and probes further, but Ming gives an even more technical recount of learning the technique from the coach. Seeing that her son is not going where she wants him to go, the mother asks about his motivation for why he wanted to learn. Ming, being a typical child, mentions fun as his initial motivation. Because Ming is drifting further from learning virtues, the mother simply connects Ming’s desire for fun to the necessity of making a great effort to learn: “That was why you make an effort to learn!” Right after this link, the mother probes again how his effort was responsible for helping Ming overcome his fear of water. But Ming does not seem to extend his mother’s idea any further. After a few back-and-forth turns, his mother seizes Ming’s idea that the coach successfully taught him and elaborates on learning virtues: “Uh-ah! Someone taught you, right? You knew how to do it, you used it, then you weren’t afraid anymore, right? Then you practiced and practiced, and then you got better and better, right?” She finally makes Ming see her point, “That’s right!”

This event would not be worthy of such a discussion if what Ming did applied only to swimming. The mother wants Ming to grasp how learning virtues are the real foundation for learning beyond swimming. Therefore, she acknowledges that working hard is hard/exhausting, which calls for hard work as a virtue. But Ming does not think learning how to hold breath is that hard. The mother then categorically denies Ming’s dismissal of personal virtues required to learn how to hold one’s breath and moves on to ask him to think about learning in general in the same turn: “Then, is it hard [exhausting] to learn other things?” Now, Ming has completely entered his mother’s frame of reference and concurs with her: “Yes, how can it not be hard?” Finally, his mother returns to the issue that she mentions to the interviewer at an earlier time, namely that Ming does not make enough effort in learning despite being very bright.
“So, can you be lazy?” followed by Ming’s agreement. The mother ends her probing by extending the importance of effort (i.e., not being lazy) into a general virtue for any learning.

In this example, the mother steers her son away from learning a skill that is mostly technical, viewed objectively, to learning virtues. First, she succeeds in making her son see the point of learning virtues that can defeat challenges such as fear, lack of motivation, unwillingness to practice, and falling into laziness. Second, the mother tries to link for Ming the learning virtues from this specific learning (swimming) to a general principle for learning anything.

With regard to communicative framing, we discern three further socialization features that should be elucidated. First, from the parent’s perspective, it is not enough for the child to have acquired learning virtues or even to have used them successfully in learning, which Ming obviously did. Moreover, Ming’s mother ensures that her child gains metacognition of how learning virtues come about, what they are needed for, how they operate throughout learning, and how her child needs to hold and build on that to continue to self-improve. Second, the mother leads the child step-by-step to relive and thereby review the virtue-dependent process in order to model how the child himself can learn this way of self-examination. The idea is that the child will become his or her own observer and monitor of virtuous learning, with parents gradually playing a less directive role, as the mother demonstrates. Third, the review of the process is also imbuing learning virtues with positive affect so as to engage the child both in thinking and feeling about learning virtues. In light of this multifaceted approach, parental socialization is likely to be effective.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we argued first that socio-cultural contexts are important for studying moral development across the world. We further suggested that the details of parent–child communication provide insights into the socialization process. These aspects add to current research on the socio-emotional foundations of morality that has emphasized parent–child relationships, parent–child reminiscing, and shared emotions. Consistent with Western moral socialization, our research demonstrates that the socio-cultural as well as socio-emotional processes begin early in life. Parents are key socializing agents who try their best to bring up moral children guided by their cultural values and beliefs. Although some values and processes may be shared with Western and other cultures, Taiwanese culture may prioritize certain values and associated socialization efforts.
A significant part of parental socialization in this culture centers around teaching children to know and feel shame and to acquire learning virtues as a lifetime commitment to self-cultivation.

We demonstrated these processes by outlining two kinds of moral messaging and two kinds of communicative framing, respectively. These examples illustrate what parents do as transmitters of their cultural values and shapers of children’s moral development. They guide and teach as the need arises in their daily interactions with their children. They surely reason, persuade, negotiate with children, but they also discipline and punish children for their transgressions. Furthermore, their socialization practice is full of frustration, anger, and disappointment about their children’s misdeeds, but they also create ways out for their children after teaching and expression of moral emotions are achieved. When their children show willingness to self-rectify and self-improve, parents express enthusiasm and embrace them back.

Our results underscore that parent–child conversation in daily life is a treasure trove for the study of moral socialization and development. Such communication about moral topics is an essential context for children’s moral growth, but at the same time it also embodies actual moral sensibilities being taught. Parent–child conversations about morals have many facets. Much of moral socialization involves communication about the here and now, but also about related events, feelings, and misbehaviors in the past as well as future hopes and expectations.

As the examples in this chapter show, understanding moral development from daily communication requires in-depth data collection and analysis. Although such data are difficult to obtain and challenging to analyze, they provide a rich and specific picture and process of how human children acquire their moral sensibilities. We join other researchers in arguing that moral socialization in real time and through parent–child communication offers a great advantage beyond traditional surveys, interviews, hypothetical dilemmas, and scenarios. We may never capture the full scope and process due to limited time and resources. However, we can glimpse much more of the ubiquitous but enigmatic nature of parental moral socialization across cultures if we look at the details of such communication.

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