

# Moral Identity in Chinese Context: Construction and Validation of an Objective Measure

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## Abstract

In this article, we investigated both rule and social concern involved moral traits. Based on these moral traits, we developed a trait-based moral identity scale, examined the psychometric properties of the scale, and investigated the relationship between moral identity and moral behavior. The first study revealed that Chinese people cherished moral traits related to both rule and social concern issues. The second study confirmed the structural validity of moral identity scale. The third study showed that people with higher moral identity conducted less cheating behavior after controlling personality traits and social desirability. Overall, the current research contributes to the knowledge about moral identity in the Chinese context.

**Keywords:** Moral Traits; Moral Identity; Chinese Context; Dishonest Behavior

## 1. Literature review

Traditional moral development research usually takes a cognitive development approach (e.g., Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1969) and makes an implicit claim that cognitive sophistication is the foundation of moral behavior. Though scholars still support the consensus that moral judgment is the fundamental component of moral functioning, empirical research shows that moral cognition alone plays a relatively modest role in explaining the variability in moral action (e.g., Blasi, 1980). This fact implies there are more to morality than mere moral judgment. Several scholars have recognized the limitation of cognitive developmental models and suggested alternative approaches (e.g., Blasi, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Haidt, 2001). Among these additional theories, moral identity is one promising framework that accounts for the unexplained variance between moral function and moral behavior. Aquino and Reed (2002) provided an easy-administered instrument to measure moral identity, thereafter, the field has made a great progress. Their work is the starting point of this research.

People in different cultures have strikingly different representations of self. Comparing with many Western cultures that see themselves as separate from others, many Asian cultures view themselves as connected with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kashima et al, 1995). These different views of self are liable to influence many individual experiences, including which moral values, moral traits they cherished. In this article, the initial aim is to investigate the constellation of moral traits that is important to the Chinese. By linking these moral traits to moral identity, we intend to develop a trait-based moral identity scale that is reliable and valid in the Chinese context. The predictive validity of this instrument will be tested in an experimental study which investigates cheating behavior. In general, this research contributes to our knowledge about moral identity in Chinese context.

### 1.1 Moral Identity as a Self-regulatory Mechanism

Erikson (1994) proposed that identity is rooted in the very core of one's being, which involves being true to oneself in action, and is associated with respect to one's understanding of reality. Erikson's view of identity is the foundation of Hart, Atkins, and Ford's (1998) definition of moral identity as "a commitment to one's sense of self to lines of action that promote or protect the welfare of others". Blasi (1984) emphasized three vital components of moral functioning. The first component which is moral identity, focuses on the significance and salience of moral values in one's self-identity. For some individuals, moral considerations are abundant in everyday living because morality is rooted at the core of their being; whereas for other people, moral standards and values are not that particularly salient in their daily activities and self-concept. The second component refers to individuals' sense of personal responsibility for moral action. The third component is self-consistency. In Blasi's conceptualization, a fundamental motive in personality functioning is psychological self-consistency, a motive that can only be satisfied by congruence between judgment and action. It is this sense of the self's integrity that is at stake in moral action (Blasi, 1984). In general, moral identity acts as a self-regulatory mechanism that regulates individual behavior that is moral and moral identity is regarded as a promising construct that bridges the gap between moral judgment and moral action.

Theory and research on moral identity have established the relationship between moral identity and moral behavior. However, as Aquino and Reed (2002) pointed out that there have been relatively few attempts to measure moral identity and empirically test its connection to moral cognition and behavior. Some scholars, such as Lapsley and Narvaez, suggested that we can integrate cognition and personality within the social cognitive

approach that better explicates moral behavior (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004; Narvaez, Lapsley, Hagele & Lasky, 2006). This perspective conceptualizes moral identity as an organized schema around moral traits (Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008; Aquino et al, 2009). Moral traits are embedded in the memory of individuals and are linked to the concept of “moral” in an individual’s mental representations of self. They referenced Erikson’s identity theory and suggested that, to the extent individual adopts and/or aspires to moral traits the individual is driven to act in a way that is consistent with these traits (Erikson, 1994). Aquino and Reed claimed that this definition capitalizes on the psychological phenomenon of Anderson (1983)’s spreading activation theory. Rather than discovering the entire traits that might compose a person’s unique moral identity, they argued that tapping certain trait stimuli can invoke a broader associative network of connected traits. Guided by this principle, Aquino and Reed (2002) have developed their scale of moral identity based on the social cognitive theory that underpins the concept of moral identity. They invited 228 undergraduate business students to think of personal traits, characteristics, or qualities that a moral person possesses and selected nine traits as identity-invoking stimuli. The traits listed are: *caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, and hardworking, honest, and kind*. Based on these nine moral traits, Aquino and Reed identified two dimensions of moral identity namely: internalization and symbolization. This identification focuses on two related dimensions of identity: private and the public dimensions of the identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Internalization taps the extent of which the traits are crucial to the self-concept (the private dimension) and symbolization refers to the extent of which the traits are reflected in the respondent’s action in the world (the public dimension). Private and public dimensions are well-established standpoints about identity supported by many other scholars (e.g., Cote, 1996). Research demonstrated that these two dimensions of moral identity effectively predict several moral behaviors, including self-reported volunteering and the willingness to minimize harm toward out-group, and cheating behavior (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely 2011; Reed & Aquino, 2003).

#### 1.2 Moral Identity in Chinese Context

Given the large body of empirical evidence on these topics, we acknowledge that moral identity (internalization and symbolization) is a promising concept that helps to bridge the judgment-action gap. We assume that defining moral identity from social cognitive theory is a worthwhile approach and the two components of moral identity would be robust in Chinese context. However, we doubt that the moral traits selected in Western culture will properly trigger a large pool of moral traits that people in China use to define a moral person. Aquino and Reed utilize an inductive process to select their identity-invoking stimuli in Western culture. They assigned relatively less importance of the moral traits stimuli, since the chosen traits might trigger all the morality-related traits among people. However, as the “activation rules” suggests, the more importance the stimuli, the higher its activation potential and the stronger its ability to affect information processing and moral identity (Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985; Higgins & Brendl, 1995). Higgins and Brendl (1995) argued that the activation potential refers to the extent to which a knowledge structure tends to be readily accessible for processing and acting on information. Though Aquino and Reed (2002)’s scale has demonstrated well predicative utility in Western context, there is room left to improve on the activation potential of those moral stimuli in Chinese context. We notice that Aquino and Reed selected the stimuli from an inductive approach, and their list of moral traits perhaps missed some salient traits which were theoretically regarded as essential for being a moral person. For example, their list did not include responsibility and respect which are highly regarded in western culture if taking cognizance of the fact that in “Educating for Character”, Thomas Lickona (1992) emphasized responsibility and respect as the two main characters that are deserving for moral education. One admits that some of their selected traits (e.g., fair, honest) are indispensable, but some of the traits (e.g., hardworking, generous) may not be essential for being a moral person considered in Chinese context. In Aquino and Reed’s own research, participants only considered hardworking and generous slightly above the midpoint of the 5 point Likert-scale. Furthermore, investigating moral identity in Chinese context needs to map onto Chinese people’s perspective of being a moral person. A constellation of moral stimuli from Western culture may not function properly in the Chinese context. Hence, we propose that it is necessary to choose some moral traits that have higher activation potential and are readily accessible for processing as moral stimuli in the Chinese context.

Until recently, two binaries dominate analysis of the culture difference between the Western and the Eastern: individualism vs. collectivism (e.g., Triandis, 1995), independent vs. interdependent (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The current analysis focuses on what people from different cultures would believe about themselves, and how this view would affect their moral self. People in the individualistic culture would hold an independent view of self while people in the collectivistic culture might hold an interdependent view of self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These distinct views of self affect the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and morality. Based on Gilligan’s work (1982, 1988), Callahan (1990) divided moral issues into two different categories, one bases on rule and justice while the other often involves concerns for interpersonal needs and emotional nurturance. We suggest that since Chinese have an interdependent view of self, compared with their Western correspondent, they care more about relationships with others, so the stimuli with social concern

meaning would have the highest activation potential of their moral identity. As Ma (1988) suggested, in contrast to the Western morality emphasis on autonomy, separation, and individualism, Confucian moral development is group or social concerned emphasis. The major concept of Confucian morality is rooted in the deep affection for kin and extends the primary group to all men. Ma (1988) suggested that integrating affective and cognitive orientations would better fit Chinese moral development. Owing to the fact that affective orientation has an immense impact on Chinese moral judgment, it is possible that Chinese people highlight some different traits so that traits selected from western sample would not well suit in Chinese context. For example, filial piety was anointed as an extremely necessary trait as being a moral person. "Hundred good filial first", in a society where filial duty is considered as sacred, it is reasonable to expect that that filial piety may have the highest activation potential when Chinese people need to define a moral person. The culture difference indicates that we cannot employ Aquino and Reed's instrument directly to measure people's moral identity in a distinct context with diverse culture. Actually, some scholars, such as Wan and Yang (2008), tried to use these nine traits as moral stimuli to assess Chinese moral identity. However, they did not get very satisfied results. The original 10 items from Aquino and Reed's scale did not lead to a good fit value of model and they solved the problem by added other new 12 items to increase the psychometrical property of instrument. They suggested that further research should consider the culture factor when measuring moral identity in Chinese context (Wan & Yang, 2008). Yang and his colleagues (2010) used directly Aquino and Reed's moral stimuli and question items to measure Chinese moral identity, Cronbach's alphas were .73 and .74 for the Internalization and Symbolization scales, respectively. Comparing to the result in Aquino and Reed's work which has .73 and .82 Cronbach's alphas for Internalization and Symbolization scale, the internal consistency of the scale was relative low in Chinese context. One possible explanation is that Chinese people do not express themselves in the same way as the Western people, so that the Symbolization scale did not have a high internal consistency. This fact indicates a necessity to refine Aquino and Reed's scale and make it suitable in Chinese culture. One primary objective of this paper is to integrate the cognitive and affective perspectives together and develop a list of moral traits that have the highest activation potential in Chinese context.

On the basis of the discussion above, it is a justifiable claim that we need to build on moral traits with Chinese characteristics as salience-inducing stimuli to measure moral identity in Chinese context. More importantly, we want to investigate whether a moral identity which reflects both cognitive and affective perspectives can predict moral behavior. We believe this study will contribute to the study of moral identity in Chinese culture.

## 2 Studies

### 2.1 Pilot Study: Trait Exploration

Aquino and Reed (2002) took an inductive process to select those identity-invoking stimuli. In this study, we adopted a deductive approach to identify traits that people consider as core traits for a moral person. We formed the moral list from two sources: 1) We retained Aquino and Reed's nine traits in this moral list; 2) We selected another 14 traits from Li and Yang's research (Li & Yang, 1988). Li and Yang intended to explore the traits, characters and qualities of Chinese people, and found that these 14 traits have the heaviest loading on the factor "Kindness/plain vs. Sinister/boastful", considered closely related to moral judgment. For comparison purposes, 5 traits (*cunning, hypocrisy, treacherousness, insidiousness, mean*), which possibly believed to be characteristic of an immoral person, were included here, as well as other two traits (*confident and talkative*), which should be viewed as being fairly neutral in judgments of moral character. In this way, we have formed a list of moral traits with 30 words, posted the survey on a social network site (named QQ Zone, like Facebook) and invited people to indicate on a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (absolutely unnecessary) to 5 (absolutely necessary) the extent to which they believed it was necessary for someone to possess each of the characteristics to be considered a moral person. The sample consisted of people who have varying levels of educational, work, and life experience. Their ages ranged from 17~43, the average was 25 and *SD* is 4.40. Of the 112 participants, 39.3% were male, and 60.7% female; regarding the status quo, 45.5% were undergraduates studying at university, 12.5% were postgraduates and 42% worked in diversifying industries.

On the average, moral traits were judged as being considerably more essential than those presumed to be either fairly neutral or immoral (4.11 vs. 3.04 vs. 1.52,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result indicates that a lot of people considered the selected moral traits as being more necessary for picturing a moral person. Compared with Aquino and Reed's research (Aquino & Reed, 2002), we see the overlap as well as the difference with the proposed traits. Caring, fair, and helpful were rated highly in this research, but generous and hardworking were not considered as essential to be a moral person.

More importantly, we found some traits that did not show up at Aquino and Reed's research but rank highly in the list. For example, filial piety was regarded as a necessary trait for being a moral person. In a society where filial duty is considered as sacred, it is not a surprise to see that Chinese people consider filial piety as an indispensable moral trait. The difference between the selected traits and Aquino and Reed's proposed traits

indicates that we cannot employ their instrument directly to measure people's moral identity in the Chinese context. However, this pilot study has some limitations that we cannot ignore. First, despite the fact that the participants in this study have diversified backgrounds, some of the participants were the researcher's friends. It is argued that there was sampling error here, and the result could be bias. Second, though we took a deductive approach to construct the selected moral traits in the pilot study, the selecting strategy was not guided by any theoretical framework, and we had possibly missed some core traits in the list.

## 2.2 Study 1: Trait Identification

In study 1, we used an online platform named 'Sojump' ([www.sojump.com](http://www.sojump.com)) to collect data. The trustworthiness of this platform was initially recognized by its good reputation in China, coupled with the idea that research using this platform-based data was published in several relatively respected international academic journals (e.g., Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2012). In addition to these participants (n=212) who finished the survey online, 24 undergraduates enrolled in a psychology course, and 28 Master of Public Administration (MPA) students in a Hong Kong local university also participated in this study.

To form a more comprehensive moral traits list, we developed the new list under the guide of Ma's theory (Ma, 2009). Ma (2009) proposed 10 moral characters for moral education: *humanity, intelligence, courage, conscience, autonomy, respect, responsibility, naturalness, loyalty, and humility*. Other than these 10 primary moral characters, within every character, he also complemented several related moral characters. Ma claimed that the proposed ten primary moral characters are universal for all cultures. In reference to Ma's theory, we added 7 notable traits that we ignored in the pilot study and then formed a new list of moral traits used in study 1. These seven traits are: *courage, naturalness, authenticity, pureness, respect, humility, and persistence*. For comparison purpose, we also selected three presumed to be immoral traits (*hypocrisy, insidiousness, corruptness*) and 1 neutral trait (talkativeness). All the participants in this study were asked to fill a 5 point Likert-type scale as what is used in the pilot study.

### Results

#### (1) The mean tabulation of all the traits

The means of all the moral traits, the immoral traits (3 traits) and 1 neutral trait are shown in table 1. On average, the diverse sample judged all the moral traits to be more necessary than those assumed to be immoral traits or neutral traits. This result indicates that the alternative selected moral traits are testable in describing people's moral identity.

#### (2) The top ten moral traits

Since the aim of this study is not to generate an exhaustive list of traits that maps onto every person's moral identity, we only focus on the top ten traits of rank in this study. Other than *caring, fair, helpfulness* and *honest* that were proposed by Aquino and Reed, we found six new traits that are different from their list of traits. Out of the six traits, credibility, authenticity and incorruptness are three traits that relate with honesty. This result echoed Li and Yang (1988)'s claim that honesty is the most basic and most highly honored trait when Chinese people describe a moral person. Responsibility and respect are two missing traits that are also highly praised in the western world, recalling how Thomas Lickona emphasized responsibility and respect as the two main characters that are deserving for moral education (Thomas Lickona, 1992). If we claim that respect and responsibility are the two universal moral traits that Aquino and Reed had missed, filialness and incorruptness are two distinctive traits that are specially honored in Confucian value systems. In classic works, it is noted that Confucian scholars proposed filialness and incorruptness as primary moral traits. Altogether, the selected ten traits also appear to have content validity, as they corresponded to Confucian's so called eight primary traits (e.g.; Tang, 1986). The eight primary traits which are: *filialness, respect, loyal, honest, politeness, fair, incorruptness, and humiliation*, being the selected traits, highly overlap with Confucian proposed traits. From the foregoing, it is justifiable to use the selected ten traits as salience-inducing stimuli to measure moral identity in Chinese context. These ten traits are: *credibility, responsibility, filialness, care, fair, honesty, authenticity, respect, incorruptness, and helpfulness*.

To investigate whether the selected ten traits provide cross-sample validity, other than the sample from Mainland China, a sample consisted of 28 postgraduates and 24 undergraduates from Hong Kong was also reported in this study. It is well known that Hong Kong is a society where the Eastern and c Western cultures meet (Lau, 1992; Lam, Shi & Shi, 2008). It is believed that the moral traits honored in Hong Kong may be different from those in Mainland China. Table 2 shows the ten top traits rated by the Hong Kong and Mainland China samples respectively. As depicted on table 2, though slightly ranked in different order, the top ten traits judged by the Hong Kong people highly overlap with those proposed by the Mainland China people. This result provides evidence that the ten traits have cross sample robustness, and it is justifiable to select them as moral identity salient-inducing stimuli.

#### (3) Two different categories: rule-based traits or social concern traits

For the selected ten moral traits, we classified them into two categories according to the different nature of

morality involved: traits that involve rules and laws (e.g., fair and incorruptness) and traits pertaining to social concern (e.g., helpfulness and care). The former represent the cognitive orientation based on rules and principles and the latter stand for the affective orientation rooted in emotion and feelings. In order to establish structural validity of grouping the traits into two categories, four individuals were asked to divide the ten traits as rule-based traits or social concerned traits. The discrepancy among raters was discussed and solved finally. After that procedure, we conducted a CFA (confirmation factor analysis) to examine the validity. *Credibility, responsibility, fair, authenticity, and incorruptness* were regarded as rule-based traits and *filialness, care, honesty, respect and helpfulness* were classified as social concern traits. The content validity meets the requirement of psychometrics,  $\chi^2(34, 264) = 113.13$ ,  $CFI = 0.88$ ,  $TLI = 0.84$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.09$ ,  $SRMR = 0.06$ . For further statistical analyses, we calculated the mean scores for each of the two categories and abbreviated the mean score for rule-based traits as RULE and the social concern traits as SOCCON. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  were .75 and .71 for the RULE ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) and SOCCON ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.44$ ) scales, respectively.

### 2.3 Study 2: Instrument Development

Study 1 has selected ten traits that may reliably reflect both rule-based and social concerned issues. In Study 2, we intend to develop an instrument measuring Chinese people's moral identity based on these moral traits. The construction of Aquino and Reed's moral identity scale was founded on Erikson's definition of the properties of identity: identity is rooted in the core of one's being meaning to be true to one's actions (Aquino & Reed, 2002, Erikson, 1964)

Aquino and Reed's work provided the premise for this study. Two English-majored experts translated all the 10 items from English into Chinese by using back-translation procedures. At the same time, two similar items which had the highest loading factor in Wan and Yang (2008)'s research were adapted to measure internalization and symbolization respectively (see table 4). We presented study 1's ten traits as moral stimuli and asked subjects all the 12 items. Since we built the items on sound theory and established practice, the psychometric properties of these items would be examined by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

#### Construct validity

##### Method

The sample for this CFA was provided by the platform "Sojump" ([www.sojump.com](http://www.sojump.com)). Of the sample, 52% were male, and 48% were female. Age information showed that 25.65% were below 20 years old, 54.36% were between 20~30 and the rest were over 30. In all, 528 subjects participated in this study, after deleting 6 outliers (e.g., all 12 items score were 5 or 1), 522 valid data remained. All participants were unaware of the purpose of the study.

##### Measures

The introduction for the survey was as followed:

*This study wants to assess your imaginative faculty. Listed below are some characteristics that may describe a person [list of ten traits]. The person with these characteristics could be you, or it could be someone else. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer the following questions (Aquino & Reed, 2002).*

Participants answered the 12 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

##### Results

###### (1) Construct validity of the instrument

Mplus 6.0 was used to evaluate the fit of the proposed models (Muthén, 2004). Table 3 shows the comparison between different models. Firstly, we compared the one-factor model (Model 1) with two-factor models to determine whether all the moral identity items can be better represented by a single underlying construct. Table 3 shows that two-factor models fit the data significantly better than one-factor model did. This result confirms the two-component structure that established in Aquino and Reed's research.

The CFA result shows that the two-factor model (Model 2) suggested by Aquino and Reed fit the data well,  $\chi^2(53, 522) = 344.77$ ,  $CFI = 0.87$ ,  $TLI = 0.89$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.10$ ,  $SRMR = 0.07$ . However, some of the fit statistics failed to reach the recommended levels (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). In practice, deleting deviating items is the preferred solution when a model fails to achieve the goodness of fit. (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In this sense, we deleted the items based on their factor loading and compared the two-factor models systematically.

Model comparison indicated that we could improve fit after deleting the item 4 "I'd like to be a friend with someone has these characteristics." measuring Symbolization and item 7 "Having these characteristics is not important to me" measuring Internalization. The two-factor model with five items in every factor was a satisfying model (model 4), and all of the fit statistics were well within acceptable ranges,  $\chi^2(34, 522) = 157.48$ ,  $CFI = .93$ ,  $TLI = .91$ ,  $RMSEA = .08$ ,  $SRMR = .05$ . Compared with model 5 and model 6, Model 4 includes more items in the scale. Since long items lead to higher reliability of the instrument, we chose model 4 as the ideal model.

###### (2) Reliability of the instrument

The items loading on corresponding internalization or symbolization were combined to form two subscales. The two factors were modestly correlated ( $r=0.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and both showed acceptable internal consistency reliabilities. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  were .81 and .77 for the Symbolization ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=0.81$ ) and Internalization ( $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ) scales, respectively.

Item-total score correlations were all positive and statistically significant ( $p<.01$ ), ranging from a low of .43 to a high of .66. This result generally confirmed that the direction of scoring was appropriate, and all items were indispensable to their relative factor.

#### 2.4 Study 3 moral identity and cheating behavior

Study 2 provides evidence for the construct validity of moral identity. In Study 3, we examined the relationship between moral identity and actual behavioral outcome. We had the intent to investigate whether identity based on both rule-involved issue and social-concern issue traits can be related to actual moral behavior. As the main argument of the article, moral identity should be related to moral action, in this study, we employ moral identity to predict people's cheating behavior when they are provided with an opportunity. We assume that people who are high in moral identity would be less likely to engage in cheating, even when they are offered with such opportunities as compared with those who are low in moral identity.

#### Methods

##### Subjects

We report data from 40 adults (25 females, 15 males, 11 from Hong Kong, 29 from Mainland China, ages 18-32, mean age 22.65years) with diverse backgrounds. In addition to the data reported, data from 3 subjects were discarded for solid reasons (One subject was the researcher's friend. We feared her data was affected by her relationship with the researcher, and two data were deleted as outliers because their reaction time data were over three standard deviations).

##### Procedures

To ensure that subjects were not capturing social desirability concerns, we disguised this study as a study about imagination and intuitive ability. Participants were told that they would engage in three unrelated tasks in the study: first, a prior-experiment survey consisted of two questionnaires (one was used to assess participant's moral identity, the other was EPQ-RSC (Qian, Wu, Zhu, Zhang, 2000), which was used to measure participant's personality, as well as reduce their attempt to connect prior moral identity to later task), then a gambling game (used to assess cheating), finally, a post-experiment survey which consisted of a manipulation check table.

##### Measures

*Moral identity:* The 10 items instrument developed in study 2 was used to measure this construct. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliabilities were .77 and .81 for the Internalization and Symbolization scales, respectively.

*Personality:* We measured people's personality traits by EPQ-RSC. This is the Chinese version of EPQ-R Short Scale, which contained 4 scales and each included 12 items. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliabilities were .67, .88, .80 and .78 for P, N, E and L scales, respectively. The psychometric property of EPQ-RSC indicates that EPQ-RSC is a comparable reliable instrument to test the personality dimensions of Chinese (Qian, Wu, Zhu, Zhang, 2000).

*Cheating behavior:* We used a modified paradigm first developed by Greene and Paxton (2009) to measure people's cheating behavior. Subjects were introduced to use their intuitive ability to predict whether the follow-up dice's number was "big" or "small", 4, 5, 6 was "big", and 1, 2, 3 was "small". Trials appeared in random order in a series of 4 blocks of 36 trials each with 2 blocks composed "Recording Condition" and the rest composed "Non-recording Condition". In "Recording Condition", subjects needed to press "F" key or "J" key which enable the computer to record their prediction, while in "Non-recording Condition", subjects kept their prediction in mind and pressed "space" key to continue. Then the dice appeared, and subjects were required to self-report whether their previous prediction was right or wrong. If their prediction was right, they would gain the same money as the dice number, for example, if the dice was 5, and the self-report showed their previous prediction was right, then subjects would gain 5\$ in the trial. However, if the dice was 4, 5, 6 and self-report showed their prediction was wrong, which meant previous prediction was "small", they would lose 2\$ (average of 1, 2, 3); if the dice was 1, 2, 3, and self-report showed their prediction was wrong which meant their previous prediction was "bigger", they would lose 5\$ (average of 4, 5, 6). Non-recording condition provided subjects with opportunities for cheating, given that the prediction's accuracy was totally based on subjects' self-report result. The self-reported accuracy at the non-recording condition was an index of cheating behavior. Subjects were paid the cumulative value of their gains/losses. Net losses were capped at 40\$, and net winnings were capped at 400\$.

*Manipulation check table.* This was a post-experiment survey that consists of several statements about the experiment, such as "There was an opportunity to cheat" Subjects were asked to rate the statements using a 5-point scale (1=Not agree all, 5= agree Very much).

#### Result

##### (1) Manipulation checks

The post-experiment survey showed that they agreed the statements "There was an opportunity to cheat

( $M=4.14$ ,  $SD=0.75$ )”; “I was not secretly monitored during the task ( $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=0.93$ )”; “My participation was anonymous ( $M=4.59$ ,  $SD=0.69$ )”; “I was supposed to be honest ( $M=4.81$ ,  $SD=0.57$ )”. This result indicates that participants agreed that they were supposed to be honest in conducting a task which provided an opportunity for obtaining dishonest gain anonymously. They did not quite agree with the statement “the task can gauge people’s intuitive ability in some sense ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=0.96$ )”. This indicates the fact that some participants doubted about the purpose of the study. However, this suspicion does not mean they know the true purpose of this study. During the debriefing, we asked participants to describe the purpose of this study in their own words. No one said this experiment was used to assess dishonest behavior. Taken these results together, we confirmed that subjects were led to believe first, that they had the opportunity for dishonest gain anonymously, second, this defect was an inevitable arrangement of the experiment’s design, and third, they were expected to behave honestly during the task.

#### (2) Self-report accuracy at recording condition and non-recording condition

As expected, participants reported significantly high level of accuracy at Non-recording condition than at Recording condition ( $M=.65$ ,  $SD=.11$  vs.  $M=.51$ ,  $SD=.06$ ,  $t=7.59$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cohen’s  $d=1.58$ ). This result identifies the fact that people cheated when they were provided with the opportunity.

#### (3) Moral identity and cheating behavior

Of the two factors of moral identity, internalization (abbreviated as MI\_IN hereinafter) is significantly related with self-report accuracy at Non-recording condition ( $r=-.44$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but not the symbolization (abbreviated as MI\_SY hereinafter,  $r=-.11$ ,  $p>.05$ ). This result supports Aquino and Reed (2002)’s research. In addition, we found that extravert tended to report higher accuracy at Non-recording condition ( $r=.33$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

We conducted a linear regression predicting the self-reported accuracy at non-recording condition. Age, gender, and personality were included as control variables, along with the measures of internalization and symbolization as independent variables. The model predicting self-reported accuracy shows that when enter internalization and symbolization, the  $R^2$  change is significant ( $p<.05$ ). Concisely, there was a significant negative effect of internalization on the self-report accuracy at Non-recording condition. It is regretful to see that symbolization had no significant effect on self-report accuracy. However, it should be meaningful to notice that in study 3, we only examined one actual immoral action: cheating for money. More evidence for predictive validity of moral identity is needed when other moral or immoral behavior outcomes are investigated.

### 3. Discussion

People in different cultures have distinct view of self and this difference can influence their experience of moral values and moral judgment in distinct ways (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). People in Western culture have an independent self and are supposed to be concern more about rule issues while people in eastern culture hold an interdependent self and are more likely to emphasize social concern issues. What is more, when considering moral judgment, the Western culture tends to take a cognitive perspective while the Eastern culture, such as the Confucian model, tend to take an affective perspective (Ma, 1988). These cultural differences indicate that when we want to know the structure of Chinese moral identity, we cannot ignore the characteristic of the Chinese culture. The moral stimuli chosen from Western culture might not be located at the central of one’s moral identity so might not have the proper activation potential. One purpose of this study was to find out those moral traits that have the highest activation potential in Chinese context. And these moral traits serve as moral stimuli which would trigger a large pool of moral traits that the Chinese would use to define a moral person. Based on these moral traits, we refine Aquino and Reed (2002)’s moral identity scale and link this moral identity to moral behavior in the Chinese culture.

The character perspective and social-cognitive perspectives dominate extensively the literature of moral identity for decades (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004; Shao et al, 2008). This research indicates that social-cognitive theory is a considerable approach in conceptualizing moral identity as an organized cognitive schema of moral traits. Moral traits reflect which moral values people hold, and moral identity represent to what extent moral values are rooted at their self-concept. The main contribution of this article is to investigate moral traits cherished by Chinese people as well as to develop a reliable, valid and easily administered method, which could be used for evoking and measuring moral identity in Chinese context.

China is a setting that helps people to incorporate both cognitive and affective perspectives when making a moral judgment (Ma, 1988; 2009). Although many theories and research have described the relationship between moral identity and moral behavior, however, a few, if not none, empirical research has investigated this relationship in Chinese context from a social cognitive perspective. Chinese people cherish moral traits differently from their Western correspondents. Though some moral traits are universal all over the world, traditional Confucian value system still has an immense impact on the Chinese’s perception about being a moral person. Some Confucius traits, such as filialness, are considered essential to be a moral person. The present study supports the notion that moral identity based on these readily accessible moral traits is a promising concept that helps to bridge the

judgment-action gap. Comparing to Wan & Yang (2008) study, the present research has found the moral stimuli with high activation potential in the Chinese context and kept Aquino and Reed's (2002) original scale construct well.

In regards to the construct of moral identity, results confirmed the two components of internalization and symbolization aspects of moral identity, which had emerged in Aquino and Reed (2002)'s research. The stability of these dimensions was tested across samples, suggesting that the public-private distinction is a valid theoretical property of moral identity. However, the data show that only internalization predicted the actual immoral behavior, whereas, the symbolization dimension was only strongly related with the personality dimension of extrovert. One possibility of interpretation of the pattern is the internalization dimension, which seems to reflect self-importance of moral characters, and the symbolization appears to convey the information to the world, as to whether one has these moral traits (Aquino & Reed, 2002). The relationship between symbolization and extrovert was significant because extrovert people usually are more sociable and have a higher propensity to impress people around. Symbolization was not significantly related to cheating behavior since we measured it unobtrusively, and participants thought they were anonymous in the task. This research sheds light on the understanding of the mechanisms underlying people's moral identity that influence their perceptions and actions.

Research of moral identity is also notable for application. During the last two decades, scholars realized that teaching ethics involves developing students' moral character as well as their moral reasoning (Trevino, 1992; Bridgman, 2010). While much has been written on character education programs, comparatively little empirical work has been done evaluating their successes and failures (Matsuba, Murzyn, & Hart, 2011). Moral values and moral personality are the core dimensions for discussions about "character education". The area of moral identity, self, and personality is considered a valuable option for framing the understanding of people's character development (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

There are several limitations of the present article that call for cautious interpretation and further study. Firstly, this finding does not include moral reasoning in the study. (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984). Future study could benefit from investigating the same relationships tested here by integrating moral identity with moral judgment, and if possible moral emotion, which we believe would build a more solid theoretical foundation for moral identity and moral behavior. (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). Secondly, we did not compare the Chinese and their Western correspondents' moral traits directly. Though the difference was implied to some extent by the difference between Hong Kong people and Mainland people, we should not hastily jump into conclusion that cultural differences found in this study could be confirmed if we expand our study to investigate the Western moral traits directly. Thirdly, the moral identity scale includes traits mapping honesty, and thus it is not surprising that its scores can predict cheating behavior. Given that morality is a broad construct, it remains unknown whether the new scale can predict a wider spectrum of moral behavior. Though we can argue that honesty is the most important moral value so that we focus on honesty in this research, the question is still open to what extent can this scale predict other moral behavior, such as generous, or brave. Fourthly, though the studies of Wan & Yang (2008) and Yang et al. (2010) provide some indirectly evidence that the revised scale suited Chinese background better, it is always beneficial to examine both the existing (Western) scale and the newly developed Chinese scale in one study, the evidence will be more convincing if the revised scale demonstrate incremental validity. Finally, the third study is a laboratory study. By taking advantage of random assignment and manipulation, the relationship between moral identity and dishonest behavior was validated in this study. However, due to the resources limitation, the sample size is relatively small. Future research could benefit from testing the same relationships using different methodological approaches and recruiting larger samples.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this article investigated moral traits that had the proper activation potential of moral identity in China. Thereafter, we developed a reliable and valid trait-based instrument to measure the moral identity in Chinese context. It is evidenced that the trait-based moral identity can predict cheating behavior after controlling the personality traits and social desirability.

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*Table 1*  
*Study1: Mean and SD of the moral traits (N=264)*

		Mean	SD			Mean	SD
1	credible	4.70	0.54	18	compassionate	4.25	0.80
2	responsible	4.64	0.59	19	natural	4.19	0.73
3	filial	4.63	0.58	20	hardworking	4.18	0.90
4	caring	4.61	0.64	21	simple	4.09	0.88
5	fair	4.59	0.58	22	kind	4.08	0.95
6	honest	4.55	0.63	23	patriotic	4.07	1.06
7	authentic	4.55	0.66	24	courageous	4.05	0.81
8	respectful	4.52	0.65	25	pure	4.00	0.84
9	incorrupt	4.50	0.66	26	humble	3.95	1.00
10	helpful	4.47	0.67	27	persistence	3.92	0.82
11	loyal	4.44	0.71	28	generous	3.85	0.84
12	friendly	4.32	0.76	29	modest	3.79	0.98
13	devoted	4.32	0.76	30	duteously	3.74	0.93
14	tolerant	4.30	0.76	31	talkative	3.36	1.04
15	self-discipline	4.29	0.67	32	hypocritical	1.74	1.02
16	warm	4.29	0.74	33	insidiousness	1.46	0.95
17	grateful	4.26	0.87	34	corrupt	1.39	0.94

*Table 2*  
*Study 1 Top ten important moral traits in Hong Kong and mainland China, respectively*

Hong Kong(n=52)				Mainland China(n=212)			
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	credible	4.73	0.45	1	credible	4.69	0.57
2	incorrupt	4.65	0.62	2	filial	4.67	0.54
3	fair	4.65	0.62	3	responsible	4.66	0.59
4	authentic	4.63	0.60	4	caring	4.66	0.56
5	responsible	4.56	0.57	5	respectful	4.61	0.54
6	honest	4.44	0.64	6	honest	4.58	0.63
7	filial	4.44	0.73	7	fair	4.57	0.57
8	caring	4.40	0.89	8	authentic	4.53	0.67
9	loyal	4.38	0.89	9	helpful	4.51	0.60
10	helpful	4.31	0.88	10	loyal	4.46	0.66

*Table3*  
*Model comparison in study 2*

Model	Factor	<i>N</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>TLI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
Model 1	1(12)	522	514.61	54	0.80	0.75	0.13	0.08
Model 2	2(6,6)	522	344.77	53	0.87	0.84	0.10	0.07
Model 3	2(6,5)	522	222.56	43	0.91	0.89	0.09	0.06
<b>Model 4</b>	<b>2(5,5)</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>157.48</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Model 5	2(5,4)	522	128.43	26	0.94	0.91	0.09	0.05
Model 6	2(4,4)	522	78.90	19	0.96	0.94	0.08	0.04

*Table 4*  
*CFA of moral identity items in study 2*

Item	Factor loading	Symbolization	Internalization
1 It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics.	.70		
2 Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of whom I am.	.63		
3 The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics.			.64
4 <i>I'd like to be a friend with someone has these characteristics. (New)</i>			<b>.49</b>
5 I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics. (R)	.61		
6 The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics.			.70
7 Having these characteristics is not really important to me. (R)	<b>.54</b>		
8 I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics.			.70
9 I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics.			.56
10 I strongly desire to have these characteristics.	.76		
11 The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations.			.74
12 <i>I don't want to have any relationship with this kind of person. (New)</i>	.72		

*Note: item 4 and item 12 were adapted from Wan & Yang (2009), the rest items were from Aquino & Reed (2002)*

*Table 5*  
*Multiple regression analysis on self-report accuracy at non-reporting condition in study 3*

	<i>R</i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup> Change</i>	<i>F Change</i>	<i>Sig. F change</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Partial r</i>
First enter	.28	.03	.08	1.48	.24			
age						.19	.27	-.20
Gender						.20	.22	.11
Second enter	.44	.03	.11	1.04	.40			
E						.32	.07	-.21
P						-.20	.21	.28
N						.10	.53	.00
L						.17	.34	.09
Third enter	.63	.39	.20	4.55	.02*			
MI_IN						-.42	.02*	-.42
MI_SY						-.14	.46	-.13

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).