TWO

Crime and Punishment

Parenting and the Disobedient Child

Bringing Children Back into the Study of Childrearing

On a hot day in August 1959, two boys from different families got into a fight. The physical conflict started from some playful greeting and teasing with research assistant MC, "Older Sister Chen." Because of her intimate relation with these children, MC became a character in their moral development journey, over the two years of dutifully and meticulously documenting her observations. As this observation started, she greeted children in a common manner, asking them: "Have you eaten (*jia ba bue*)?"[1] One protagonist of this episode,[2] a nine-year-old boy named Wang Ching-Chi, meant to answer that he had eaten, but mispronounced the words and instead said "I ate *two halves* (*nng bua*)." Liang Wei-Lin, an eight-year-old boy from a neighbor's family, started teasing him, yelling his comments repeatedly. All the bystander kids started laughing at him too. Ching-Chi finally got angry, hit Wei-Lin lightly and requested him to stop those comments. Wei-Lin didn't stop though. Instead, his teasing escalated into a new version, a song that mocked Ching-Chi as "Big Forehead." Amid Wei-Lin's singing, Ching-Chi angrily chased him, threatened him, and then hit him with a slingshot.

[1] This is a common greeting in Taiwanese, which figuratively means "Hello/How are you?"

[2] CO #28, 08/03/1959.

Wei-Lin ran home and Ching-Chi chased after him, hitting him with a stick. At this point, Ching-Chi's mother heard them fighting and intervened: "Are you two still fighting in there?" They both left the house, but resumed teasing, chasing, and hitting. Wei-Lin's grandmother Mei-Chin came out too. Ching-Chi tattled to Mei-Chin about her grandson teasing him. Mei-Chin scolded Wei-Lin. His mother called from the house: "Quit fighting." But Wei-Lin ignored her command.

MC's observation ended here. Reapproaching these fieldnotes more than six decades later, we do not know how exactly this incident ended, after the eight-year-old boy ignored his mother's command. We do know, however, from ethnographies on Taiwanese families in that region at that time, that parents took children's fights seriously (Xu Forthcoming). In other words, there was a widely shared cultural model of prohibiting children's fights in those communities: Preventing such fights was a central parental concern because fighting among children could lead to estranged relationship between adults and disrupt social harmony. Parents did not hesitate to punish children, and sometimes resorted to harsh means. But previous works rarely mentioned how children reacted to punishment. In the Wolf Archive, however, I encountered numerous episodes like this, where children easily got into physical conflicts, readily tattled to available adults, but also defied parental commands. Child fighting attracted attention not only from the ethnographers present at that time but also from me, the reinterpreter of these fieldnotes. Machine-learning algorithms, applied to the entire Child Observation (CO) corpus, also automatically identified it as a salient topic, even without any input from the human researcher. In fact, the opening vignette was part of an episode that algorithms calculated as "the most representative document" under this topic. Materials from this archive suggest that children understood the norm of no fighting. They knew that they would be punished for violating it. But their practice often contradicted this norm, and parental punishment did not seem to be particularly effective. Why? And what does it tell us about the

nature of moral development, as well as the making and unmaking of "cultural models" in cultural transmission processes?

Prior research on Chinese childrearing tends to fixate on parenting, assume a simplistic, behaviorist reward–punishment mechanism, and rarely concern children's mental and social worlds (for a critique, see Xu 2022b). In particular, scholars in anthropology, psychology, and education have elaborated on the folk concept of *guan* – parental control and discipline – and established it as the dominant method of child training in the "traditional Chinese family" (Chao 1994; Fong 2004; Ho 1986; Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989; Wu 1996). Relatedly, training obedience was found to be the primary goal of traditional Chinese parenting (Wu 1996). These works told us a lot about what values were taught and how – by parents, educators, or caregivers. But from a cognitive anthropology perspective, this paradigm misses a crucial part of the story – the learners' perspective. What did children actually learn and how did they learn it (Stafford 1995: 11)? To address this problem, to understand the cultural models and realities of childrearing, we need to take a more critical look at parenting. We need to incorporate children's own complex social inferences and emotions. We need to look at how children's collective minds, including both intrapersonal processes and interpersonal communication, play a vital role in the transmission of moral norms in intergenerational dynamics. In other words, we need to bring children back into the study of childrearing.

Through the case of child fighting, I examine adult caregivers' cultural models and practices and contrast them with children's narratives and behavior. This case allows us to compare and integrate multiple types of textual data, such as Child Observation (CO), Child Interview (CI), Mother Interview (MI), Mother Observation (MO), and projective tests with children. I also triangulate different methods to make sense of such texts in a systematic manner, including ethnographic "close-reading," NLP (natural language processing) techniques and quantitative behavioral analysis. Such systematic analyses reveal how children's attitudes

and practices departed from the most important parental cultural model in their community and deviated from the parental ideal of training obedience. Moreover, I probe into parental discipline and its discontents, highlighting children's moral judgment, social knowledge, and emotional experience in the communicative process of punishment.

Against Children's Fighting: A Cultural Model of Parenting

Cultural models are generic mental representations or schemas, both factual and value-laden assumptions about the world, shared in a particular social group (D'Andrade and Strauss 1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997). Ethnographic records of Martial Law Era in Taiwan noticed a common priority in parenting among rural Han Taiwanese communities, that is, the prohibition of children's fighting. Parents in these communities took such fights seriously, and readily intervened if they witnessed these conflicts or were called upon to help. In this sense, the prohibition of children's fighting is a salient cultural model for regulating interpersonal relations. Scolding and beating children at home or in public was a frequent scene in several Hoklo villages across different regions of Taiwan: Norma Diamond, who did fieldwork in Southern Taiwan in the early 1960s, observed adults tying children up for a beating to punish children's aggressive misconduct (Diamond 1969: 33, 42). Emily Martin, during her 1969 fieldwork in a village not too far from her teacher Arthur Wolf's fieldsite, wrote vividly about scenes of little children being harshly punished. For example, two little boys, aged one-and-half and three, got into a fight with each other. Their grandfather ordered them to kneel down, scolded and hit them, with a crowd of adult and child spectators laughing and joining in the scolding (Martin 1973: 214). The Wolfs also noticed this cultural model of parenting in Xia Xizhou. Margery Wolf noted: "No matter what aspect of child training we discussed with mothers the conversation always turned to the control of aggression. … When we asked a mother to describe a good child, the first characteristic was always 'one

who does not get into fights'" (M. Wolf 1972: 74–75). Arthur Wolf gave a sociological explanation that prohibiting children's fighting was driven by Taiwanese villagers' concern for maintaining harmony with neighbors in a close-knit, interdependent community (A. Wolf n.d.):

> M[m]ost Taiwanese mothers … were extremely anxious about their children's getting into fights with their neighbors' children. Children were never encouraged to fight back. To the contrary, they were severely punished for fighting regardless of whether or not they had instigated the fight. The most likely explanation is Minturn and Lambert's suggestion (Minturn and Lambert 1964: 159) that "relative anxiety about peer group aggression is related to the intimacy of social and economic bonds among members in the community, and the degree to which children can disrupt these adult relationships."

Neighborly harmony, no doubt, is an all-encompassing meta-norm, or a higher-order cultural model, in a community like this. But in light of abundant observational and interview materials, I want to qualify Wolf's general statement in two directions, differences in the actual consequences of children's fights and variations in actual parental interventions: First, as many examples from Wolf's notes together illustrate, "the disruptive potential of child conflicts is far from uniform, suggesting that relatedness, relative affluence or influence all may be mediating factors in determining a situation's volatility" (Duryea 1999: 95).[3] In some cases two families could reach agreement in the situation of their children's fight so it did not spill over to affect the adult relationships in the long run.[4] But in other cases even sisters-in-law quarreled frequently after their children's (first cousins) squabbles and other women in their neighborhood group had to act as mediators.[5]

[3] Maria Duryea's dissertation, based on revising Wolf's original fieldsite, focused on social transformations of that community, including its drastic urbanization and economic development and the impacts of those changes on childrearing practices (Duryea 1999). She had access to Wolf's general observation notes of village life (data type "G") and drew from those notes to make this conclusion.

[4] For example, Wolf fieldnotes type G, page 900, see Duryea (1999: 95).

[5] See M. Wolf (1972): 46.

A related point is that, although parents shared the concern to prohibit children from fighting and were ready to intervene, actual interventions varied by person and were contingent upon the situation. Such variations, ironically, could contribute to negative sentiments between adults. For example, on a June day in 1959, while research assistant MC was asking a twenty-seven-year-old mother about her marriage, her four-year-old son got into a fight with a three-year-old girl, his second cousin living next door. The two children both wanted to sit on the same rock, but the boy got there first and sat down, leaving no room for the younger girl. The girl cried and said, "I want to sit down, too!" and hit him. He hit her back, and she cried harder than ever. At first the boy's mother just asked what the trouble was, and the girl said she wanted to sit down, and the boy would not let her. The boy insisted that he had gotten to the rock first. The boy's mother then told them to only sit on half the rock, but still the boy refused to let the girl sit down. The girl sat on the ground and cried until her grandmother came out of the house and asked what the trouble was. The boy's mother said, "Oh, nothing, they just wanted to sit on the same rock." The grandmother picked up the girl, hit her fairly hard on the face, and dragged her off, beating her on the way. As she did this, she scolded her granddaughter saying, "You always are wrangling with people for things!" The boy's mother laughed and said, "Go ahead and hit her, I don't care."

MC's comment was inserted in this fieldnote:

> She [the grandmother] looked mad, probably because [the boy's mother] had not done anything about the fight. The meaning of the mother's last words is that the grandmother could go ahead and hit her granddaughter, but "I am not going to hit my child." The mother then turned to her son and said, "Next time she has something first, you better not take it away from her, understand?" Her son protested saying, "I didn't take it. I had it first." She just smiled and didn't say anything more to him, resuming her conversation with MC, albeit this time on the topic of parental interventions into children's conflicts.[6]

[6] June 1959, Wolf fieldnotes type G (pages 842–43), quoted from Duryea (1999: 93–94).

The boy's mother, having witnessed how the entire drama evolved from its beginning, thought it was mainly the girl's fault because her son indeed got the spot first and the girl hit him first. The girl's grandmother, however, expected the other party to punish the boy perhaps as harshly as she had punished the girl. This sense of unfairness might reflect the grandmother's personal belief that one has to punish one's child no matter who started it. Or it might be a misunderstanding because she only saw what happened at the end of the conflict and wasn't aware of the cause.

Schematic cultural knowledge tends to have a network structure, consisting of interconnected concepts and/or precepts (Strauss and Quinn 1997). Systematic, standardized interview data allow us to discern what are the shared, core elements of the cultural model or schema, that is, the most strongly connected units, and what are the more varied, peripheral elements affected by situational factors. Wolf's team interviewed forty-three mothers (MI) in early 1959, and several interview questions tapped into parental attitudes and beliefs regarding children fighting. First, question 11a in MI asked: "How about when P [the interviewee's child] is playing with one of the other children in the neighborhood and there is a quarrel or a fight – how do you handle this?" Among the forty-three respondents, all of them said they would intervene, except for one who did not provide an answer. Some elaborated on their interventions and rationale, which give us information on the contingent and varied elements: Twenty-five mothers mentioned disciplining their children right away. Thirteen answered they would call them home, talk to them to figure out what had happened and whose fault it was. Four said they would call them home but did not mention further details in their responses. Interventions included scolding, hitting their own children, or when other kids were at fault, telling them not to play with those who hit them.

A few mothers said they would scold the other child or tell the child's mother, but several considered reporting to the other child's mother a bad solution, precisely out of the concern not to disturb neighborly

harmony. For example, Huang Lin Shu,[7] a twenty-eight-year-old mother of four answered:[8]

I call my children home and scold them. If the others are in the wrong, I tell my children not to play with them. [What if some other children hit your children and they come home crying?] I tell them not to cry. And when I see the other children again I tell them that if they hit my children again I will cut their hands off. I don't like to tell adults because there might be a misunderstanding and a long argument.

Additional fieldnotes provide further insights into Huang Lin Shu's parenting approach and her neighborly and kin relations. The following is an excerpt from an MO episode:[9]

MC: "What would you do if someone came to you and told you that your children had been fighting?"
LIN SHU: "No one would do this except those people in House 2. Everybody knows that there's nothing that you can do about that family."
MC: "What would you do if you saw your children fighting with some other children?"
LIN SHU: "Tell them to come back. Huang Shu-feng (a 5-year-old boy) fights more than the others [my other children]."

If parents or other adults handled children's fighting badly, it became a frequent topic in these village mothers' gossip. For example, in another MO episode, two mothers, Chang Chu-hui and Pai Wu Chan told MC about the problem with an old man Wang Chuang-yu of another household. This grandfather often bullied other families' children, instead of disciplining his troublemaker grandchild Wang Chia-fu. Pai Wu Chan told a story about her own daughter Pai Yan-yan once being chased home by the old man. Yan-yan had been scratched and was hurt very

[7] According to Hoklo Taiwanese naming custom, Lin is her maiden name. That's why I kept it separate from her first name Shu.
[8] MI #0, 05/01/1959.
[9] MO #0, 10/31/1960.

badly. Chu-hui believed that when children got into a fight, each parent should take one's own children away from the fight. Below is Chu-hui's testimony:[10]

Once Chia-fu and Ah-yin (my girl) had a fight. I was told of it so I went to find out what was really the matter. Chia-fu hit my girl hard, caught a hold of her front clothes and would not let go.

I went over and pointed to Chia-fu's head, saying: "You, dirty boy. Get your hands off. Do you mean your grandpa will fight for you all the time?" Then I brought Ah-yin home.

No sooner had I reached home than the old man Chuang-yu, Chia-fu's grandpa, walked towards me saying: "Come here, come out here."

I said angrily, "What for?"

He said, "I'll beat you for scolding my Chia-fu."

I paid no attention. Fortunately his other grandchild (a teenager) came to take him home.

Besides the general consensus on intervening in a fight and managing one's own children, age difference is an important factor when calculating children's moral responsibility in a fight. An older child bullying a younger one was considered really bad. Margery Wolf noticed the principle that older children ought to yield to younger ones (M. Wolf 1978: 245). This concern emerged in MI questions and answers about children's wrongdoing. For example, question 12a asked: "Some parents have trouble keeping their child from being mean to smaller children and bullying them. How have you managed this with P?" Thirty-seven out of forty-three mothers (86 percent) explicitly disapproved this behavior: Among these, twenty-three mothers said they told their children not to bully smaller kids, using a normative, prohibitive tone such as "can't" and "shouldn't," eight mentioned they would beat their children up if this happened, and six mentioned scolding. Of the other six mothers, three said their children seldom bully younger ones, and three didn't

[10] MO #63, 08/03/1960.

answer. Question 12d asked: "What do you do when P (your child) hits or kicks another, younger child?" Among the thirty-four mothers who gave an answer, twenty-three said beating/hitting the child and ten said scolding the child. The only mother who did not mention "hit," "beat," or "scold" answered in a hypothetical manner: "My child seldom hits others. If this does happen, I tell her she can not hit others."

Third, like "Intervene when one's child gets into a fight" and "Older children bullying younger ones is particularly bad and deserves punishment," the prohibitive imperative "Do not fight back" is another core notion in this cultural model of parenting. Question 11c asked: "Do you ever encourage P to fight back?" Among the remaining thirty-nine mothers,[11] thirty-eight of them answered "No." And many of them used normative expressions, such as "I can't," "you can't," "you mustn't," or "parents can't," or absolute terms "I never" before the phrase "encourage children to fight back." Only one answered differently: "If the other child is the same age as my daughter, I tell her to fight back." That she considered age in assigning moral responsibility is consistent with her response to the previous question, how to handle it when one's child gets into a fight. This mother's rationale of handling a child's fight, after all, partly conforms to the precept against older children bullying the young: "It depends on who is right. If the other child is bigger and is in the wrong, I tell the other child's mother. If my child has done something wrong, I scold her."

Mothers' answers to the next question suggest that "Do not fight back" applies even if one's own child were the victim. To this question (11d), "What do you tell P to do when another child hits him?" only two mothers out of thirty-five who provided an answer said they would tell their children to fight back because they didn't want theirs to be bullied by bad children. Among those who did not want their children to fight back in this situation,

[11] Two respondents didn't give an answer, and one said something not directly informative. This one answered: "I am always worrying that he will fight with others. When he fights with others then he comes home crying" (MI-54, date unspecified).

their responses were one or a combination of the following: to call the child home, to tell the child not to play with the bully, to scold one's own child (i.e., "Why do you go out to play?"), to scold the other child, or to tell the other child's mother. Also, the concern of not letting children's fights cause bad feelings between adults reemerged in some answers.

Mothering practices largely converge with these interview responses. Compared with the responses elicited by MI, according to Arthur Wolf (n.d.: 19), "they [Mother Observation episodes] have a verisimilitude of the kind that distinguished great novels from popular romances. One need not worry that they reflect ideals rather than actual behavior." Research assistant MC was the key to ensure the quality of these observations and interviews with mothers, as she was liked and trusted by all. Interview and observational records illuminate this shared cultural model of parenting, that is, prohibition and disapproval of children's fights, with the underlying rationale to maintain neighborly harmony. To intervene promptly in children's fights, to prohibit children from bullying younger ones, and not to encourage children to fight back constitute the core elements of this cultural model, although the concrete intervention methods vary by situation and person.

To Fight or Not to Fight: Children's Narratives

While the cultural model against child fighting was well established and widely shared among mothers, children's own narratives pose a challenge to it: They understood the parental belief of no fighting, but only paid lip service. When presented with hypothetical scenarios of being hit by another child or when asked to interpret ambiguous pictures of two children, fighting back or fighting became children's default response.

First, just as MI analysis illuminates mothers' cultural model of parenting, results from standardized CI with seventy-nine children (ages 3–10) shed light on children's own attitudes. One question in CI used a first-person, hypothetical scenario to probe into children's reasoning

Table 2.1 *Answers to the physical assault scenario in Child Interview Question 8a*

Question	Revenge/intervention Coding	Number of children	Percentage (%)	Binomial test
8a	Yes	57	76	$p < 0.001$***,
	No	18	24	Cohen's g
	Total	75	100	= 0.26

"Yes" means the child would seek for revenge or intervention. "No" means no revenge or intervention. *** means $p < 0.001$.
Source: Adapted from Xu (2020b): Table 1.

about physical fights. The main prompt was: "Suppose another child (O) your age comes up and hits you: What would you do?" Out of seventy-nine children, only four did not give an answer, I excluded those four and coded the remaining seventy-five answers as a binary variable, whether or not P (the protagonist, the interviewee) seeks revenge/intervention (Yes/No), directly or indirectly. Specifically, "Yes" answers include two types: (1) direct revenge, such as "hit him," "fight with him," and "hit back" and (2) indirect revenge – for example, tattling and enlisting help from authority figures (parents and teachers) or older brothers to potentially scold or hit O. "No" answers mainly include avoidance ("Run back home") and ignoring ("It doesn't matter"). The results (see Table 2.1) reveal a general preference for revenge/intervention in the scenario of being hit. Among the fifty-seven "Yes" answers, thirty-seven were direct, tit-for-tat revenge, to fight back physically, and twenty were indirect revenge, to tattle. Children's audacious responses to questions about fighting stand in contrast to their mothers' insistence on no fighting and no fighting back.

While CI revealed children's actual attitude, what they *would* do, their narratives in another context showed that they knew what they *should* do: Children were not supposed to fight back. Based on CI, Arthur Wolf later made a written questionnaire to test more children in elementary schools. He and his assistant Mr. Huang Chieh-Shan brought the questionnaire to two schools, Shalun elementary where Xia Xizhou children

attended and another school on the opposite side of Shulin town. In the classroom, Wolf asked the teacher to first wrote the categories on the board and then read the questions aloud, in Mandarin. For example, there were six responses categories for each of the aggressive questions: "hit him," "curse him," "tell my friends," "tell my mother," "tell his mother," and "do nothing." Although the original questionnaires are still yet to be found and I do not have the actual results, Wolf's own conclusion was quite clear: "[I]t was obvious that most of the children were not telling me what they would really do" (n.d.: 22):

> In one class a boy sitting in the front row read aloud the responses to the aggression questions, "hit him, curse him," etc. shaking his fist as he read, but he always checked the last category, "do nothing." I asked the teachers in the Sha-lun school to leave the classroom and let me[12] administer the questionnaire, but this made no difference. Even when I diluted the response categories to "feel like I might hit him, feel like I might curse him," etc. the great majority of the children would not admit to responding to aggression in kind.

The contradiction between School Questionnaire and Child Interview results has to do with methodological differences. This contrast reflects, as I discussed in Chapter 1, children's sensitivity to communicative contexts, partners, and linguistic cues in fieldwork. The interviews were administered by children's trusted figure MC in a familiar, informal setting, and in Taiwanese, so children did not hesitate to say they would fight back. The questionnaires were administered by what they called "the foreigner" ("Big Nose") or by their teacher, both intimidating figures, in a formal classroom setting, and in Mandarin, actually the only language children were allowed to speak in that authoritarian context (Klöter 2004). So children were smart enough to merely give socially desirable answers, suggesting that they were aware of the prescribed norm.

[12] It remains unclear how exactly this was administered. In my phone interviews with Mr. Huang (spring 2021 and spring 2022), he proudly emphasized that he went along with Wolf and assisted with administering School Questionnaire.

Moreover, beyond the explicit attitude expressed in interviews, data from one projective test TAT shed light on children's implicit attitude on fighting. When encountering ambiguous scenarios about social interactions, or when speculating what the characters would do in these scenarios, "fighting" emerged as a dominant theme in children's narratives: Using NLP techniques to aggregate all ninety-two children's responses to all nine pictures, I found that the word "打架"/fighting ranked the 6th highest, appearing 694 times, only after the quantifier "一个"/one (1,239 times), a character's name "B1 (Boy #1)" (897 times), the nouns "孩子"/child (858 times) and "母亲"/mother (817 times), and the pronoun "他们"/they (701 times).[13] A closer look at these responses shows that "fighting" emerged either as an interpretation of what two or more child characters in the picture were doing, or as an antecedent of what the adult character was doing to the child character in the picture. In the latter case, children interpreted the adult–child interaction as punishment and automatically inferred that fighting was the reason. Bear in mind that children were nervous at the TAT testing scene, which has to do with the setting and the researcher Mr. Huang's personality, as I mentioned in Chapter 1. But because they were asked to tell stories about other people in the pictures, instead of about themselves, they did not have to suppress the intuitive idea of "fighting" that was against the social norm. Their interpretations demonstrate the saliency of "fighting" in their mental world, which leads us to examine this in their actual world.

The Reality of Child Fighting

Observational records provide rich information on the reality of fighting. Among over a hundred available episodes of "situation-based observations," children's disputes and fights were a focal topic, ranging from light hitting to more severe incidents, and immediate revenge

[13] I included these Chinese characters as they appeared in the original transcript.

Figure 2.1 A boy in a fighting pose
Source: Photo by Arthur Wolf.

(e.g., hitting back) was quite common (Figure 2.1). Beyond these, CO data are especially suitable for a systematic evaluation. These observations were not guided by a set of focal topics but were designed to collect randomized snapshots of children's life as it spontaneously unfolded, including its most undramatic moments, for example, when a child idly looked at other children playing and felt bored. Therefore, I focused on CO texts, using both machine "distant reading" – NLP techniques – and "close reading" – granular-level behavioral analysis, to extract general patterns of children's fighting.

Natural language processing techniques work well to analyze linguistic patterns of these systematically collected texts. A machine-learning method called "topic modeling" can discern latent patterns of thematic structures in a corpus, based on word distribution probabilities. Topic modeling has become increasingly popular in digital humanities (Du 2019). In particular, I used unsupervised LDA (Latent Dirichlet

Allocation) (Blei 2012) to spontaneously identify a set of latent "topics" otherwise difficult to extract through manual coding. One caveat is that these statistical algorithms are agnostic to the actual meanings of tokens, words, sentences, or a document ("bag of words") (Fuller 2020). Therefore researchers need to infer the meanings of machine-generated "topics" – in the form of word clusters, and sometimes these "topics" don't make intuitive sense to the human eye. The LDA topic-modeling algorithms identified a total of fourteen topics in the CO corpus, some of which, fortunately, did make immediate sense in the context of children's life (see Appendix for more details).[14] One topic, ranked as the seventh salient, features these top ten keywords (in the order from the #1 highest probability to #10): "hit," "mother," "hard," "angry," "back," "head," "copulate," "laugh," "angrily," and "fight." This likely depicts scenarios of children's physical conflict (verbs like "hit" and "fight"), usually accompanied by some cursing ("Copulate[15] with your mother!") – very common among children, accentuated with the emotion of anger and interspersed with some laughing from the aggressors or spectators. The fact that this topic emerged from an unsupervised machine-learning exploration of CO corpus suggests the prevalence of children's fighting in their daily life.

Bear in mind that these results are all probabilistic estimations. What's more, naturalistic observations of young children are especially fuzzy and messy, and the boundary of an observation, or the beginning and ending of a text, was seldom demarcated by a single event. In the middle of an observation, children might be doing one thing at this moment, but switched to something else completely different. Or some incident suddenly happened at the next moment. They might be distracted by a noise, or called by their caregivers to run an errand, and ran away from

[14] I used Python's Gensim package to perform LDA topic modeling, implemented in Mallet tool.

[15] This is the standard word used in the English fieldnotes, although there might be other more suitable swear words.

the observer. Therefore, one episode of spontaneous observation, or one "document" in topic modeling terms, might contain several, sometimes unrelated "topics." Topic-modeling algorithms assigned each document a distribution of probabilistic "weights" of all topics, and the topic with the highest weight was selected as the "dominant topic" in this document.

These algorithms also identified what's called "the most representative document" under each topic, that is, the document with the highest percentage of contribution from this particular "dominant topic." I used an excerpt of this "most representative document" grouped under the topic of what I call "child fighting" as the opening vignette of this chapter. The dominant topic, "child fighting," contributed to 39.0 percent of this particular episode, a fairly high number.[16]

The algorithms then calculated the number of documents grouped under each "dominant topic." What I call "child fighting" was the dominant topic in 107 episodes, about 6.4 percent of the entire CO corpus. A good reference framework is the range of these numbers across all fourteen topics: minimum seventy-four episodes (4.4 percent of the entire CO corpus) and maximum 195 episodes (11.6 percent), so "child fighting" lies somewhere in the middle. In fact, children's fights might have appeared in many more episodes, but it was not the "dominant," or the most salient topic.

Beyond the probabilistic distributions generated by algorithms, I completed the granular-level, manual coding of the corpus, what I call "behavioral grading," to gain a more precise understanding of children's fights. Among all 1,678 CO episodes, I found that children's physical conflict happened in 324 episodes, about 20 percent of the entire corpus.[17] Furthermore, connecting behavioral grading of CO with demographic data, I found that 176 children were involved in physical conflict (in at least one episode), about 81 percent of all 218 children (ages 0–12) that appeared in CO texts.

[16] Across all fourteen topics, this statistic ranges from 31.3 percent to 50.1 percent.

[17] Physical conflict consists of two behavioral themes: physical aggression (scores 0.5 or 1) and dominating (score 1 only), and these two behaviors overlap in some instances but not all. For example, a child hit another child out of pure anger or as self-defense,

Table 2.2 *Older children dominating younger children through coercion, according to behavioral grading of Child Observation texts*

Behavior	Type of instances	Number of instances	Percentage (%)	Chi-square test of independence
Dominance through physical coercion	An older child to a younger one	100	72.5	$X^2 = 36.535$, $p = 1.166e\text{-}08^{***}$, Cohen's $W = 0.8348$
	A younger child to an older one	24	17.4	
	Two children of same age (by year)	14	10.1	

*** means $p < 0.001$.

Many scenarios that children described, when answering the hypothetical questions on physical assault in CI, indeed appeared in CO episodes. A few examples include: "Hit him with a bench," "Hit him with my fist," "Slap him," "Call older brother to hit him," "Take a rock and hit him," and "Hit him with a slingshot." Furthermore, many children's behavior violated the expectation of older children yielding to younger ones, an important doctrine in the local cultural model. In particular, when it comes to dominance through physical coercion, 100 out of all 138 instances (72 percent) involve an older child bullying a younger one (Table 2.2).

Parenting and Its Discontents: The Disobedient Child

Parents considered children's fighting as a major moral transgression and were ready to intervene and punish. However, not only did children's attitudes toward and actual practice of fighting defy the parental cultural model of no fighting, they did so *in spite of* parental discipline

not for dominating purposes. Specifically, 167 children were in "physical aggression," 120 children involved in "score 1" dominating. A total of 176 children were observed in physical aggression or "score 1" dominating behavior. The behavior "physical aggression" was observed in 238 episodes and "score 1" dominating observed in 121 episodes. A total of 324 episodes had one of these behaviors or both.

and punishment. In many families mothers were in charge of disciplining children when they misbehaved. Among the thirty-three mothers who responded to question 13g: "Who disciplines P when he is especially naughty," twenty-three of them said mother (self) was the one in charge (70 percent), five said the child's father (15 percent), three said multiple caregivers (9 percent), and two said it depended on who was present in that situation (6 percent). Corporal punishment was quite common, both for mothers and for fathers who were less involved in childrearing but whose beating could be frightening to children. When mothers hit their children, many of them tended to hit persistently. Thirty-eight mothers responded to question 14b: "Did you ever spank P?" Thirty-three said yes (87 percent), five said they seldom or never spanked their children (13 percent), but used other means, like scolding, making the child standstill, or slapping the child. Thirty-eight mothers responded to question 14o: "When you punish P, do you stop as soon as P begins to cry or do you punish P a definite amount whether P cries or not?" Thirty-four (89 percent) mothers said they would not stop when P began to cry. Many said they didn't care about the offender child's crying. They were so mad that they kept hitting P until the anger receded. The remaining four mothers (11 percent) said they seldom or never hit P.

One mother, across multiple questions in MI, insisted that she never hit her stepson, because being a stepmother put her in a difficult situation. "If he were my own child it wouldn't matter." The child's biological mother died when he was young. Unlike a biological mother, if a stepmother exerted too harsh punishment, people would cast doubt on her intentions toward the stepchildren. But her complaint tells us, again, that mothers in this village, in general, were expected to punish their children who got into fights:[18]

To be a stepmother is very difficult. I never hit P. I only scold him. Other people who don't have anything to do after they eat like that talk about me. If

[18] MI #4, 05/24/1959.

P fights with other children the children's mother will say to me, "When his grandmother was here she punished him, but you don't care about it." I am very angry.

Children also anticipated that their parents would punish them if they got into a fight. CI question 9e asked: "What if your parents know about it (your misbehavior)? What would they do to you?" Among the sixty-three children who answered this question, fifty (79 percent) said their parents would punish them, through scolding, hitting, or both.[19] The older a child became, the more likely the child would expect parental punishment.[20]

But many children did not expect parental punishment to be really useful. Sixty-four children responded to CI question 10a: "What do you do when your mother scolds you for something you've done wrong?" I coded the answers into two broad categories, actively submitting to parental discipline or not, and found twenty-three "yes" (36 percent) versus forty-one "no" answers (64 percent), which means that children would not submit.[21] In the order from high to low frequency, "yes" answers include: changing their behavior, feeling bad for their wrong-doing, and even just superficially, crying to their mothers, pleading for forgiveness or promising they would not dare to make the same mistake again. The "no" answers are escaping/running away, ignoring (e.g., "Doesn't matter"), enduring but not doing anything (e.g., "Let her scold"), reasoning with mom (e.g., "arguing"), or scolding mom back.

Question 10c in CI, "What do you do when your mother spanks you for something you've done wrong?" elicited a similar pattern of responses, that spanking did not deter children. I coded according to a binary criterion of submitting to discipline or not and the result was twenty "yes" answers (32 percent) versus forty-three "no" answers

[19] Binomial test, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $g = 0.29$.
[20] Binomial logistic regression, $p = 0.01$.
[21] Binomial test, $p = 0.03$, Cohen's $g = 0.14$.

(38 percent).[22] Among the "yes" answers, compared to the scolding question, even fewer children said they would change their behavior. But some were smart enough to come up with a new solution, "Take care of the children for her," as a way to make amends and please their mothers. Among the "no" answers, some children upgraded their revenge from arguing, for example, "Ask my mother why she hits me," to hitting back, for example, "Ask my father to hit her." Some answers were particularly striking, for example: "Hit her. Not be afraid of her. If she used the broom to hit me, I would take it away from her and hit her back."

One might wonder, were these interview responses merely children's fantasy? Did they actually dare to disobey or rebel when being punished for fighting? Indeed, snapshots of children audaciously maneuvering against punishment spread over MO, systematic data on caregiver–child interactions. For example, naughty boy Wang Ching-fu often got into conflict with other children. His mother was quite annoyed by him and hit him a lot, sometimes using a big vine. In one incident, this seven-year-old and his neighbor's four-year-old boy Wu Chia-lin had a face-off, Ching-fu looking mad. An adult bystander reported to Ching-fu's mother. Mom yelled at him repeatedly. It started with scolding, "Stop it, you early death child!" Then she escalated, threatening to beat him up: "Do I have to beat you up again the way I beat you yesterday? Do you hear me?" That scolding and threatening, however, did not deter Ching-fu at all. He kept mumbling angrily and then hit Chia-Lin again.[23]

Besides disobeying their own parents, children also dared to argue back and scold other adults. A young mother Cheng Shi-lin was scolding an eleven-year-old boy Huang Chin-che for scaring her child Cheng Ling-lin and making the little boy cry. She complained: "This Huang Chin-che! Whenever there is no school or he gets out early, he always

[22] Binomial test, $p = 0.002$, Cohen's $g = 0.18$.
[23] MO #48, 9/2/1960.

makes the children cry!" Chin-che kept arguing back. The woman got more agitated: "Whenever you say something to him, he always talks back." Chin-che countered: "It's my mouth! You can't stop me from talking."[24] I burst out laughing when I spotted this conversation, as if I heard my own eleven-year-old boy talking.

Some children even took advantage of the punishment situation and turned it into an opportunity for bargaining, especially over pocket money. One afternoon, old lady Wang Huang Yu was sitting on a dead limb in the yard, napping, and didn't pay any attention to young boy Cheng-jin's whining for some money. Another little boy Te-long was poking and teasing the observer MC, and Cheng-jin got into a conflict with him, bullying him. At this point, Te-long screamed and woke up the old lady. She scolded Cheng-jin, "You this child, how can you be so completely without good in you?" Cheng-jin paid no attention, and the old lady fell back napping. Then Cheng-jin took away Te-long's stick and they two started pinching and pushing each other, both of them very mad. Their noise woke up the old lady again. She yelled at them, commanding them to move away from each other. Cheng-jin did not obey at all. Instead he countered her: "Why don't you give me fifty cents then?"[25]

More generally, among all 215 scenarios of "obey" in CO, only in eight scenarios children fully complied to adults' commands or disciplinary measures (behavioral score = 1). In 124 scenarios children were hesitant or reluctant to comply (behavioral score = 0.5): In these scenarios, the adult had to repeat their commands or escalate their scolding or threats before the child in question finally listened. Moreover, in eighty-three scenarios children completely ignored adults' commands (behavioral score = 0). Training obedience, in order to achieve the ideal of filial piety, has long been considered the quintessential goal of traditional

[24] CO #355, 12/01/1959.
[25] MO #130, 9/4/60.

Chinese childrearing (Wu 1996). These Xia Xizhou children's words and deeds, however, shed light on the rarely studied side, drawing our attention to the "disobedient child."

Punishment and Its Inefficacy

Why, then, wasn't parental punishment effective in deterring children from fighting? That strong parental punishment was not enough to change children's behavior points to the limit of a behaviorist, reward-reinforcement model of learning. The orthodox view is that punishment incentivizes people to adopt desired behavior through basic, negative-reinforcement mechanism of maximizing reward (desired behavior). Recent work in moral psychology, however, calls for appreciating the inferential and signaling processes of punishment that people respond to punishment as a communicative signal to be interpreted (Sarin et al. 2021).[26] I examine children's complex social cognition and the specific kinds of emotions children experience in the moment to understand what the punished actually learns from punishment. I argue that, in learning morality, young children, the target of parental punishment and (dis)-approval, bring in their own reasoning of and emotional experiences at the situation. They not only *interpret* the punisher's intentions, but also *evaluate* those intended messages and even judge the punisher's moral status.

First, let us look at parents' folk theory of punishment. Mothers saw punishment as necessary and beneficial for raising a good child – a child who listens to parents and obeys their commands. Thirty-eight mothers answered this question (14p) in MI: "What is your attitude towards punishing children?" Twenty-one (50 percent) said it always good to punish, mostly using normative expressions, for example, "Children should

[26] New research suggests that people in the context of receiving help also evaluate the sender's moral status (Yu, Zhou, and Nussberger 2022).

be punished," "You have to hit children," and "You must punish a bad child." Eleven mothers (29 percent) said it was good to punish sometimes, for example, in the right context – when a child misbehaved, or punish to the right degree – not too often, otherwise the child wouldn't be afraid and the punishment would lose its deterring power. Only six mothers (16 percent) did not think punishment necessary or good at all, stating that their children were quite well behaved thus did not need punishment.

Notably, this folk view by default understands "punishment" as physical – hitting children, and it can be quite harsh. As one mother said, "when I hit them [my children] I don't worry about whether they die or not." Many mothers pitted hitting – inflicting a cost – against what they called "teaching" – communicating with children to explain why certain behavior was bad. As part of "parental ethnotheories" (Harkness et al. 2015), this view of punishment reflects adults' naïve imaginations about children. They believed that hitting was necessary especially when children were young because (1) young children didn't have the ability to reason or understand much (see also M. Wolf 1978) and (2) hitting could induce fear in a child and thereby ensure *guan* (control), an important Chinese concept of socialization (for a critical review, see Xu 2017: 149–53). If children were trained this way at a young age, when they grew older, they would not need harsh punishment, and parents could reason with them.

Not only did many parents assume that young children lacked reasoning, they also thought little about young children's emotional reactions (Ward 1985: 195). Take anger as an example. Question 11e in MI asked: "Sometimes, children get angry at their parents when they are being criticized or scolded. How do you handle this with P?" Thirty-eight mothers responded, but only one mother said she would explain to her children why they had to be punished, so they understood and wouldn't get mad. Among the other respondents, twenty mothers would ignore P's anger, ten would punish P more (scold, or beat, or make P stand up), and eight said P wouldn't get angry.

Contrary to these mothers' naïve assumptions, their young children had a more complex mental world: They were able to reason about right and wrong, and their rich emotional experience – although only partially documented in ethnographic notes – astonished me as I plowed through these notes. Ethnographies across cultures have identified emotional arousal as a universal method in childrearing (Quinn 2005). But we still need to closely examine the specific emotions aroused in children and what children learn from those embodied emotional experiences.

Arthur Wolf left this comment about projective tests (n.d.: 24): "A few of the stories reveal emotions that are not apparent in either the child observations or the child observations. Shown a picture of a child dropping a bowl one girl burst into tears, crying, 'Her mother will beat her! Her mother will beat her hard!'" Indeed, in TAT children were presented with several ambiguous scenarios about adult–child interactions and almost all of them interpreted them as parental punishment. Many children did express a sense of fear when narrating these punishment stories. However, instead of internalizing the conveyed doctrines or appreciating adults' righteousness, what children had inferred from these stories, or learned from similar situations in their real life, might have been adults' domineering status, coercive power, bad temper, or unfair treatment toward children.

Fear is not the only emotion aroused in punishment scenarios. Several mothers confessed that sometimes their punishment was more contingent upon *qi* – their anger or bad mood, than by children's misbehavior *per se*. Correspondingly, anger was another salient emotional reaction of children. For some children, such anger was out of a sense of injustice, directed toward the adult exerting punishment. For others it was directed toward the self, related to shame, an important emotional socialization goal and strategy in Taiwanese families (Fung 1999). Also, when a child witnessed another child being beaten by parents in public, a pained expression was documented in several episodes. In one episode, While MC was observing a four-year-old boy Wang Jun-hsian, a teenage

girl nearby burst out screaming because her mother wanted to wash her hair. A crowd of children soon gathered, standing around watching the girl getting spanked for refusing to have her hair washed, and the girl screamed and cried louder. The bystander boy Jun-hsian looked very distressed. He might have been frightened. But as young children develop a sense of empathy and sympathy very early on,[27] the "distressed look" might also indicate the bystander's sympathy toward the punished. Children might have felt quite stressed in situation of severe punishment. In fact, during the last three months of Arthur Wolf's stay in Xia Xizhou, he managed to take the urine sample of children and safely transport it back to the U.S. Then his team found some positive correlation between mothers' harshness in punishment, according to the 1959 MI results, and boys' adrenaline level tested in 1960.[28]

Moreover, whatever signals the adult was communicating via punishment – power, righteousness, and/or a concrete moral norm, some young recipients rejected or perhaps even resented that signal. For example, instead of fear and/or compliance, children sometimes openly expressed their discontent with punishment and disagreement with adult-prescribed moral norms, asserting their own moral judgment of the situation. A seven-year-old boy Wang Yi-kun got into a fight with a younger boy. The boy's father Li Kuo-liang learned about this. He scolded Yi-kun for violating the moral norm of older children yielding to younger ones. He then cursed Yi-kun and threatened to beat him up. Yi-kun defiantly confronted him and articulated his own reasoning:[29]

[27] For a brief review of the emergence of empathy in early childhood and how it relates to their everyday life, see Xu (2017): 73–95.

[28] The details of this study were included in an unpublished mimeograph presented at the Seminar on Personality and Motivation in Chinese Society, Bermuda, January 1964, entitled "Aggression in a Hokkien Village: A Preliminary Description." Unfortunately, I didn't find it in Arthur's private library, therefore cannot make any valid judgment on the coding criteria and measurement of mother's harshness or the statistical procedures of the correlation analysis.

[29] MO #119, 08/11/1960.

Li Kuo-liang scolded him loudly, "Kan.[30] Why did you hit a boy smaller than you? You should give way to a boy who is smaller than you. You should. Didn't you know it? You hit him so hard that you hurt him. I'll call the policemen and let them seize you."

Yi-kun held his head high up looking aimlessly around showing that he was not at all scared. Kuo-liang stopped to breathe and Yi-kun took the chance, saying, "He tried to take my thing away by force. He even pushed me down to eat the mud. Why shouldn't I beat him for it."

Kuo-liang cursed, "Kan. If you hit him again I'll surely beat you to death. Try it and see. Kan."

Then he walked away talking to Lin Liu-yan (a mother from another household), who happened to pass by, and telling the story angrily. This mother said, "He (Yi-kun) really is a bad boy."

What did the repeated scolding and cursing in the particular situation signal to Yi-kun? Instead of learning a moral lesson, Yi-kun might have interpreted the adult man's intention as selfish – to defend his own son and perhaps also to dominate Yi-kun, and Yi-kun did not like that communicated intention. Yi-kun thought he was righteously defending himself, because it was the other child who initiated the conflict and bullied him. He rejected the moral precept taught in this community that older children shouldn't hit younger ones. He defended another principle of reasoning, that hitting was justified when it was defensive and reciprocal. The emotion Yikun was experiencing in that situation was anger, rather than fear or guilt. Above all, that adult man probably failed to establish himself as a moral authority in the youngster's eyes.

Children also gossiped among themselves about adults. For example, a six-year-old girl Wang Su-chun, while playing with Wang Yi-kun, complained to him: "Bei-guang (her grandfather's older brother) is very mean. One day his grand-daughter Chang Ah-ying was just standing under the guava tree, Bei-guang came and hit her." Yi-kun extended his moral judgment and expressed his sympathy: "He shouldn't have

[30] A common swear word in Taiwanese.

hit her. She was just standing there. She didn't do anything." Su-chun agreed: "That's right. He's not supposed to hit her."[31] These children judged adults' behavior in clearly normative terms, with their own sense of justice and fairness.

"I Am Your Father!"

Ethnographic records of "the Chinese family" from past to present have said a lot about parental cultural models and disciplinary measures. Their analytical focus, nonetheless, was skewed toward adults – the punishers. This paradigm rarely focused on the feelings and reactions of the punished, and therefore underestimated the limits and limitations of "parenting." When I encountered scenarios of fighting and punishment in these fieldnotes, I couldn't help but wonder: What did these little ones think and feel about that, when they were disciplined by parents, or observed other children being scolded and shamed? When they pleaded to parents, did that deter them from misbehaving, or was that more of a negotiation strategy? When Wang Yi-kun rejected the adult man's accusation and defended himself for hitting that man's child, we are prompted to ask: How do children develop their own understanding of what is right and wrong, which might be at odds with what adults taught or demonstrated? How do they act, in concrete situations, against the prescribed cultural models?

During the past decades, although more and more anthropologists have made morality and ethics an explicit theoretical focus (for a comprehensive review, see Fassin 2012; Laidlaw 2017; Mattingly and Throop 2018), this new scholarship has rarely examined the perspective of learning, namely, how young children develop moral sensibilities.[32] On the other hand, psychological anthropologists have long emphasized the

[31] CO #69, 08/13/1959.
[32] See a similar critique in Xu (2019).

role of early socialization in transmitting cultural models and moral values.[33] Parental approval/disapproval and emotional arousal are universal mechanisms in shaping children into competent members of their communities (Quinn 2005; Strauss and Quinn 1997: 104), although concrete strategies and processes vary across societies.[34] What many have overlooked, however, is the fact that the very efficacy of parental approval and disapproval hinges upon children's cognitive, emotional, and moral predispositions. For example, training obedience is a primary childrearing goal in many agrarian societies (LeVine and LeVine 2016), but not many ethnographers put children's own perspectives at the center of analysis. The Wolf Archive provides a rare window into children's actual experience. I highlight "the point of view of those who are punished" (Stafford 2010: 206) and examine the communicative dynamics of punishment. More broadly, this perspective opens up a new direction to understand a central question in anthropology, the intergenerational transmission of cultural models, as cultural transmission and human development are, to a large extent, mutually dependent.

A classic study that illustrates children's experience is Jean Briggs' ethnography of traditional Inuit society. Instead of scolding or physical punishment, adults playfully tease little ones, presenting them with interrogations and dramas about real-life dilemmas, in order to cause children to think about the world and themselves (Briggs 1999). As Briggs closely traces the "mindsteps" of a three-year-old girl Chubby Maata in her day-to-day experience, we get to understand how children process the messages and manage the emotions prompted in interactions with adults.

Parenting approaches vary greatly across cultures.[35] Standing in stark contrast to the Inuit people, mid-twentieth century Taiwanese parenting,

[33] For a review, see Chapin and Xu (Forthcoming).

[34] For example, Chapin (2014) provides a fine-grained ethnographic analysis of emotional and moral lessons through which children in Sri Lanka are trained to disavow their own desires and incorporated into local social hierarchy.

[35] For a recent synthesis on parenting in a variety of cultural contexts, see LeVine and LeVine (2016).

or more generally, parenting in those preindustrial societies with high levels of social stratification, was much harsher in general, for example, using corporal punishment (Ember and Ember 2005). Punishment has long been seen as a key mechanism for maintaining parental authority and training children's obedience in traditional Chinese societies (Wu 1981). Severe discipline was quite common in Martial Law Era Taiwan, that is, through a combination of corporal punishment and public shaming. Anthropologist David YH Wu, who grew up in Taiwan, had this observation: "In rural Taiwan it is not uncommon to see a boy running and crying aloud, pursued by his mother with a stick in hand, while bystanders watch with amusement" (Wu 1981: 156).

But just like Chubby Maata was encouraged to think about existential dramas in life, the feelings and reactions of Xia Xizhou children at moments of punishment must have, in some way, prompted them to think about their own situations. We have some records in this regard, but mainly in the form of adults' retrospection, when such punishment experience has become part of their childhood memory. For example, in the late 1970s, an adult Taiwanese woman remembered that at the age of nine, she had to kneel by the door facing the street so that passersby could see her. She remembered such humiliation, rather than the physical punishment itself, as causing most pain (Wu 1981: 156). While the audience watching the public beating and shaming felt a sense of pain and distress, probably a combination of fear and sympathy, the most unforgettable part for the child, the bearer of such punishment, was a sense of humiliation. This memory immediately resonates with me. Although I never had the same experience, having to kneel down and facing a crowd of spectators, I do remember, as a young girl, the feeling of humiliation and anger after punishment. Yes, humiliation and anger, more than fear. I never understood why I deserved certain punishment. Nor have I ever believed in the Chinese saying *gunbang zhixia chu xiaozi* (English counterpart "Spare the rod spoil the child"), a precept that my father, like many in his generation, kept preaching. I was

always somewhat skeptical about "the obedient child" archetype, which is popular in Chinese discourse and integral to American stereotypes about Asian parenting.

Now that I have become a mother, my sympathy toward parental discipline grew tremendously. I understand that harsh punishment does not contradict deep love. Even though I never used physical punishment toward my own child, in countless occasions I was really tempted to spank him. I feel for those annoyed Xia Xizhou mothers, who had to juggle between caring for multiple children and working in and outside the house to make ends meet. But I also realize that, no matter what, children are going to have their own feelings and perspectives, which can turn out quite different from what parents have expected. Children's discontents toward parental authority will always be there, going hand in hand with the parental desire for control and obedience, and with, of course, mutual love and attachment. While this archive provided me a precious opportunity to peek into the actual experience of disobedient children, in the process of working on this project, I have also become more attuned to my own child's voices of discontents. One evening in 2021, when I was reading a research article on my computer, my eleven-year-old son entered my room, glanced at my computer screen, and started taunting me: "Haha! 'Punishment: One tool, many uses' [the title of the article]! What do you want? All that you think about is how to punish me, huh? You stinky mom!"

On another occasion, without any warning, he broke into my room and burst out: "Little Jing! I am your father!" This absurd statement channeled his discontents toward parental authority, perhaps a mixture of fear, anger, and perhaps also contempt, into humor, sarcasm, and amusement. It also echoes a particularly hilarious episode in this archive, where a group of defiant children were mocking parents in pretend play. Chapter 3, shifting from parent–child relation and dynamics to children's world, will begin with that episode and explore how children navigate cooperation and conflict and build their own moral world through playing with peers.