

## Abstract

The primary objective of this research was to examine how the manipulation of a lexical label of lie would affect children's evaluative judgment of antisocial and prosocial lie, and whether the effect was qualified by children's mentalizing capacities. 52 children were recruited from two Cantonese-medium local kindergartens in Hong Kong. Results showed that children's evaluation of antisocial and prosocial lies are positively correlated. Children's evaluation of prosocial lie was significantly lower when it was told with a lexical label of lie than without the label. Second order reasoning was negatively correlated with rating on prosocial lie in the non-labeling group; while interpretative ToM capacity was negatively correlated with rating on antisocial lie in the labeling group. The current findings suggest that the lexical label of a lie constrains children's thinking in a way that they would evaluate the lie by the strong negative moral connotation carried by a realist definition of "lie" which override the children's ability from appreciating the speaker's intention.

*Keywords:* lexical label, verbal lie labeling, prosocial lies, antisocial lies, second order false belief, interpretive theory of mind