Cognitive Development 35 (2015) 122–136

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Cognitive Development

Judgments of gender norm violations in children from the United States and Korea

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 6 August 2014
Received in revised form 11 April 2015
Accepted 11 April 2015

Keywords:
Gender norms
Fairness
Culture

ABSTRACT

Children's judgments of gender norm violations in the U.S. ($N=71$) and Korea ($N=73$) were examined at ages 5, 7 and 9 years. Children made judgments of hypothetical children violating gender norms when the violation was performed for a helping goal and when no helping goal was presented. When there was no helping goal, American children were more accepting of violations than Korean children, and older children were more accepting than younger children. However, when the norm was violated in order to help someone, there were no differences between the countries and age differences were diminished, with the majorities of children at each age judging the violation as acceptable.

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1. Introduction

Many studies have shown that children in several countries make a distinction between moral issues related to welfare, justice, and rights and conventional issues related to variable rules coordinating social interactions (e.g. Kim & Turiel, 1996; for a review see Turiel, 2006). People around the world value protecting others' welfare and promoting fairness. However, the content of the conventional domain, including issues related to gender norms, may differ in different contexts, and conventional gender norms may be more or less strongly endorsed in different situations, even to the

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2015.04.002
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point that conventions regarding gender may be given priority over moral issues like helping. This is especially possible when gender norms are particularly strong, as they are in some cultures (Conry-Murray, 2009), and at some points in development like early and middle childhood (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012). The current study examined how children in early and middle childhood in two cultures judge gender norm violations when the violation helps others and when it does not. The purpose is to examine whether some situations may lead children to be more flexible or accepting in their judgments of gender norm violations, and whether there are age or cultural differences in flexibility.

Therefore, the study examined whether the patterns of inflexibility and flexibility regarding gender norms are the same or different in Korea and the U.S. Korea has been found to have strict social norms (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002), especially with regard to women's roles (United Nations, 2002). If age differences in how children understand gender norms are similar in two different cultures, it would provide theoretically important initial evidence that the development of judgments about gender involves social cognitive processes in development, and are not only determined by the strength of their endorsement in the social environment. The issue also has applied implications since flexibility in judgments of gender norm violation could have important implications for how children treat peers whose gender-norm related expressions differ from the norm.

Research in the United States shows that age is related to interpretations of gender norms (Katz & Ksansnak, 1994). Blakemore (2003) has shown that awareness or knowledge of gender norms increases with age through the preschool years, with most preschool age children correctly identifying which sex is associated with gendered activities. However, flexibility about the *possibility* that someone could engage in violations of gender norms increases through middle childhood. Judgments about the possibility of a violation may be affected by the content of the norms. In Blakemore's (2003) research, some behaviors related to gender norms, including wearing atypical gendered clothing and acting in atypical gendered ways (specifically, girls engaging in rough play), are judged to be less possible around age seven before children become more aware of the possibility of norm violations as they get older.

Flexibility is operationalized differently in different studies, but several studies show that around the ages of 4–7 years of age, children are less likely to demonstrate cognitive flexibility, defined as endorsements of the possibility of gender norm violations (e.g. when asked "Who could play with. . .?" in Katz & Walsh, 1991, or "Can girls also play with. . .?" as in Blakemore, 2003). Other research examined children's judgments of a hypothetical island where a boy is raised entirely by females or a girl is raised solely by males to see if children judged that the child would grow up to have sex typical traits or traits learned from the environment (Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995). Still other research assessed children's judgments of the flexibility of gender norms by asking whether gender norms can be enforced with school rules (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012).

Despite differences in methodology of various studies, most of the research in North America shows that children are most inflexible in their thinking about gender norms around the ages of 4–7 years, and that by around age eight they begin to become increasingly flexible (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012; Kalish, 2012; Levy et al., 1995; Rhodes & Gelman, 2009; Taylor, 1996; Taylor, Rhodes, & Gelman, 2009; Trautner et al., 2005). The current study examined children between the ages of five and nine to investigate their judgments of whether gender norm violations are acceptable (e.g. "Is it OK or not OK for a boy to wear a dress?"). The purpose was to examine flexibility of judgments differs across cultures and to see if age-related patterns are similar in the two cultures.

Inflexible judgments of gender norm violations may have implications for peer relationships. Peers of children who display atypical gender-related behaviors may be critical of violations and this could impact children's peer acceptance. The current study also included an assessment of children's judgments of the likability of a child who violates gender norms. Levy et al. (1995) call this evaluative rule flexibility, a measure of how much the child would like to be friends with someone who violated a gender norm or other type of rule. Levy et al. found that males liked those who transgress rules less than females, but there were few age differences in this measure of likability. This assessment was included here because it is important to examine how judgments about gender may lead to actions that could influence peer relationships. Judgments about the acceptability of violations may be a lower standard than judgments of likability, especially in cultural settings where gender norms are strict and there may be more stigma to being friends with someone who violates gender norms.

There is some indication that the development of concepts of gender norms varies in different cultural contexts. Rhodes and Gelman (2009) found that children in a politically liberal community in the U.S. were more flexible about gender after age seven, measured by assessing whether children judged that it was possible that photos of boys and girls are the "same kind," while children from a more conservative community were inflexible about gender as old as the age of 17 years. Other research finds similar patterns in different cultures. Lobel, Gruber, Govrin, and Mashraki-Pedhatzur (2001) found that boys in Hong Kong were more critical of violations of gender norms than boys in Israel. Lobel et al. suggest that the difference may be partly due to collectivistic notions of adhering to group norms as compared to individualistic ideals of self-expression. One of the major goals of the current study was to examine whether the pattern of inflexibility regarding gender is the same in Korea and the U.S., since Korea is more conservative in regard to gender norms. It may be that seeing examples of people who do not fit traditional gender norms challenges children to expand their ideas about gender and to become more flexible. In this way, children in a more conservative community may have fewer opportunities to become flexible about gender.

Korea was chosen for the study because it is a relatively conservative culture in regard to gender. According to the Gender Empowerment Measure (United Nations, 2002), Korea placed 61st out of 66 countries in women's empowerment. In 2002, women occupied only 5.9% of positions in Parliament and 5% in administration and management. Although Korea has undergone rapid social changes, including increasing the number of women in the workforce, by many accounts its traditional hierarchical structure regarding gender roles has been maintained (Baek, 2009). With regard to gender roles in the family, the traditional tendencies are still found to be pervasive (Chin & Chung, 2010; Eun & Lee, 2005). In addition, some regard Korea as collectivistic, emphasizing deference to social norms and authority and thus less accepting of counter-stereotypic behavior (Lobel, Bar-David, Gruber, Lau, & Bar-Tal, 2000; Oyserman et al., 2002). Therefore, children in Korea may be less likely to judge that gender norms violations are acceptable than children in the U.S.

Although studies have not previously addressed whether children become increasingly accepting of gender norm violations with age in Korea, a study with older children in Korea (Park, Lee-Kim, Killen, Park, & Kim, 2012) examined judgments about counter-gender norm choices (e.g. a boy doing ballet and a girl playing soccer) and found that the youngest children tested (10 year-olds) more often judged these choices to be unacceptable than the older children of around 13 years of age. This may be an indication that, similar to the pattern in the U.S., younger children in Korea are less accepting of gender norm violations than older children. We investigated whether American and Korean children judge gender norm violations as acceptable after age seven to see if a period of inflexibility is evident in two different cultures, both in their judgments of the acceptability of gender norm violations and in the likelihood that children in both cultures would judge that a child who violates norms is a potential friend.

To examine the extent of the phase of inflexibility in two cultures, we investigated how children judge a conflict between adhering to gender norms and a goal of helping others. During the same period when gender norms are judged as inflexible, children have formed moral concepts such as the need to protect or enhance the welfare of others. Research shows that even very young children have formed judgments about issues of welfare, rights, and justice (Turiel, 2015). From about the age of 3 years, children distinguish between moral and conventional issues, judging moral issues similarly regardless of context (e.g. it is wrong to hit at home and at school), while judging conventional issues to be contingent on contexts (e.g. it is acceptable to chew gum at home but not at school). Conventional issues can also differ in different cultures; an issue that is regulated by convention in one culture may be a matter of personal choice in another. In the current study we focused on helping behaviors, which enhance others' welfare, and are thus moral, but are not obligatory (Kahn, 1992; Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Turiel, 2014). We assessed how children make judgments about a multifaceted situation where someone chooses to help others at the expense of adhering to conventional gender norms (Killen, McGlothlin, & Lee-Kim, 2002).

Research shows that children can be inflexible about gender, even when it is in conflict with moral concerns like fairness (Conry-Murray, 2015). However, research in the U.S. suggests that young children can be flexible about gender in some circumstances, depending on how flexibility is measured. Conry-Murray and Turiel (2012) found that the majority of American children at ages 4–8 years judged

that children should be allowed to make personal choices that are inconsistent with gender norms (e.g. a boy should be able to choose to wear a ballet costume to school for Halloween) and they judged that it would be unfair if schools made rules that enforce gender norms.

There is some evidence that Korean children are also critical of unfair treatment based on gender. Park et al. (2012) found that 9 and 12 year old Korean children judged that treating boys and girls differently is unfair under some circumstances. Given past research showing that children give priority to fairness and personal choice over adherence to gender norms in the U.S., it can be asked whether children in a more conservative culture also give priority to moral concerns. Some findings suggest that children in Korea do not always accept authority mandates. Kim (1998), and Kim and Turiel (1996) found that Korean children judged moral issues to be independent of authority demands. Their findings showed that Korean children sometimes consider moral imperatives to override conventional demands from an authority figure. It may be that children are able to be flexible about gender norm violations to achieve a goal, like helping others. If so, it would indicate that the period of inflexibility is context dependent and that children make judgments about the different features of particular situations, even in judgments about seemingly inflexible gender norms.

1.1. *Current study and hypotheses*

The current study examined how children ages 5–10 years in the U.S. and Korea judged the acceptability of violating gender norms when (a) the gender norm violations were presented in the absence of other goals (e.g. "A boy is wearing a skirt. Is that OK or not OK?"), and (b) when gender norms were violated because of a helping goal (e.g. "A boy is wearing a skirt. The skirt is part of a clown costume to cheer up kids in the hospital. Is it OK or not OK for him to wear the skirt?"). The purpose of this design was to examine judgments when no reason is given for the behavior and thus it may have appeared that the individual chose to violate the norm, perhaps because of an internal desire. The helping condition allowed us to compare this to a situation where the norm was violated for the purpose of helping others.

We examined whether age and cultural differences existed within judgments of the acceptability of both types of gender norm violations ("Is that OK or not OK?"). We also asked children to judge whether they would like to be friends with someone who violated each norm ("How much would you like to be friends with this child?"), as a measure of the effect of gender norm violations on social relationships.

Based on previous research, we expected to find that younger children (ages 5 and 7 years) would exhibit the most inflexibility, defined here both in terms of judgments that violations were not acceptable and in terms of judgments that violators were not likable (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012; Levy et al., 1995; Park et al., 2012; Rhodes & Gelman, 2009; Taylor, 1996; Trautner et al., 2005).

We expected to find less flexibility in Korea than in the U.S. when no information was given for the goal of the gender norm violation since past research has shown that children in more conservative communities are less flexible (Rhodes & Gelman, 2009). The gender norm violations without a helping goal involve judgments about conventional practices, which often vary in terms of their endorsement in different cultures and which may also be seen as under personal jurisdiction in some cultures (Turiel, 2006). Thus, we expected that children would use justifications referring to gender norms or personal choice for these judgments. However, we were interested in whether Korean children would become more accepting of gender norm violations before age 10 or whether flexibility would not appear until later since past research provides mixed findings (Lobel et al., 2001; Park et al., 2012; Rhodes & Gelman, 2009).

We expected that children in both cultures would give priority to the goal of helping others over adhering to gender norms by judging a gender norm violation that helps others as acceptable. This expectation is based on the previous research showing that concern for the welfare of others is prominent in both cultures (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012; Kim, 1998; Kim & Turiel, 1996). We expected that children's justifications would refer to moral concerns regarding the need to help others.

Lobel et al. (2001) found that Taiwanese children rejected a boy with an interest in a traditionally feminine toy but were most accepting of and liked best a boy who was interested in a traditionally masculine toy. There were no such differences for girls, indicating that norms may be most inflexible

Table 1
Numbers of children in each age group, by sex and country.

Age group		Korea		United States	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
5	Mean age (and SD)	5.64 (.34)	5.68 (.35)	5.62 (.45)	5.66 (.33)
	n	11	13	11	11
7	Mean age (and SD)	7.90 (.29)	7.57 (.23)	7.37 (.34)	7.42 (.34)
	n	11	14	12	12
9	Mean age (and SD)	9.52 (.27)	9.67 (.35)	9.73 (.36)	9.66 (.57)
	n	11	13	14	11

for boys. Masculine norms for boys tend to be less flexible in the United States as well (Biernat, 1991; Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006). Levy et al. (1995) found a similar pattern where children and adults were less likely to want to be friends with a boy who violated masculine norms than a girl who violated feminine norms. The current study also examined whether norms affect boys and girls differently, with the expectation that children would judge boys' masculine norms as more inflexible than they would judge feminine norms for girls.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 144 children in three age groups: 5 (M = 5.65, SD = .35), 7 (M = 7.56, SD = .35), and 9 (M = 9.65, SD = .39) years, in the United States and South Korea. Participants were approximately evenly divided among these ages and between male and female children within both countries. See Table 1 for mean ages and numbers by age, sex and country. The American children were from a middle class, suburban community in the mid-west. They were primarily white (97%); 3% were African American and 1% were Hispanic. All the Korean children were native Koreans from a middle class, urban community. In both communities, children were recruited by sending home information about the study through their elementary schools. Children whose parents signed and returned the consent forms were interviewed.

Although the focus of the current study was on children's reasoning, parents completed the Old Fashioned and Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) as a measure of local gender norms to assess whether the Korean children interviewed came from more gender-conservative families than the American children. The scale included 13 items such as "Women often miss out on good jobs due to sex discrimination" (reverse scored) and "Men are generally smarter than women." Alpha over both countries was .72 indicating acceptable internal consistency. Parents of the children in the U.S. (N = 53) scored significantly lower on an average of both parts of the scale than Korean parents (N = 73), $F(1,124) = 90.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .42$. On a scale of 1–5, where 5 indicates the most conservative responses regarding gender norms, Korean parents averaged 2.61 (SD = .43), while U.S. parents averaged 1.87 (SD = .43), confirming our expectation that our Korean participants came from families with more conservative gender norms than the U.S. sample of children.

2.2. Procedures and assessments

In both countries, children were interviewed individually at their schools, or in a private room in their homes or a library. The interviews took approximately 20 min. Audio files of the interviews were transcribed for coding. Children in Korea were interviewed in Korean, using a Korean version of the interview that was translated by the second author, who is fluent in English and Korean. In the interview, children made judgments about a series of gender norm violations. Norms were selected through discussion among the authors, including the second author who is native to Korea. Twelve norm violations were selected. One interview question assessed whether each norm was judged to

Table 2
Judgments that the activity is usually performed by the expected sex by age and country (proportions and SDs).

Activity	Korea			US		
	5	7	9	5	7	9
War	.70 (.46)	.96 (.20)	.83 (.38)	.50 (.51)	.54 (.51)	.52 (.51)
Fix	.58 (.50)	.80 (.41)	.79 (.42)	.41 (.50)	.17 (.39)	.24 (.44)
Suit	.87 (.34)	.96 (.20)	.83 (.38)	.81 (.40)	.71 (.46)	.64 (.49)
Doll	.67 (.48)	.80 (.41)	.96 (.20)	.91 (.29)	.61 (.50)	.76 (.44)
Skirt	.95 (.20)	1.0 (.00)	1.0 (.00)	.86 (.35)	.79 (.42)	.88 (.33)
Barrette	.92 (.28)	.84 (.38)	.92 (.28)	.77 (.43)	.79 (.42)	.88 (.33)

Note. 1 = consistent with norm (i.e. typical sex usually does this), 0 = not consistent (i.e. both do this or atypical sex does this).

apply primarily to the expected sex ("who usually [performs this action]?"). To ensure that norms were appropriate for our purposes, only the most gendered violations were analyzed. Six of the norms were judged by an average of at least 50% of respondents to be associated primarily with one sex, including three feminine activities (playing with dolls, wearing a skirt, and wearing a barrette), and three masculine activities (fixing things around the house, wearing a suit, and playing war). Blakemore (2003) found that girls who engage in masculine activities that are rough are judged harshly, and boys who appear feminine are judged harshly, a finding that is consistent with the violations that were most gendered in our sample (i.e. out of the top three most gendered items for each sex, two appearance items were judged most gendered for boys and two activities items were judged most gendered for girls). See Table 2 for proportions of participants who reported that the expected sex usually performs the activities. The three feminine activities were averaged and the three masculine activities were averaged for ease of analysis. Although assessments for all 12 initial activities were collected, only assessments using these six norms are reported below.

After children reported on the norms, the remainder of the interview was presented in two parts. In part 1, children were introduced to a simple line drawing of a child violating the norm and a violation of the norm was described. Children were then asked to evaluate the norm violation (e.g. "A boy is playing with Barbie dolls. Is that OK or not OK?"). The order of the options OK and not OK was counter balanced, as was the order of the activities that violate norms. Responses were coded as 0, not OK or 1, OK. Judgments were followed by a request for a reason or justification (i.e. either "why?" or "why not?"). Coding for justifications is described below. Finally, children were asked how much they would like to be friends with the actor in the picture: a lot, a little, or not at all, coded as 2, 1, or 0, respectively.

In a within subject design, participants completed all initial judgments of violations in part 1 and then judged the same violations again in part 2 when the violations were presented as helping someone. Thus, part 2 involved the same violations, but these descriptions and pictures depicted a child violating the norm with a helping goal. See Table 3 for the specific wording of the norm violations and helping goals. Within-subjects design was used as a conservative measure of any differences in judgments of violations with and without a helping goal. We expected that any response bias would remain consistent, perhaps consistently negative at these ages as in Okanda and Itakura (2011), since the questions were asked in two different parts of the interview and were not expected to be seen

Table 3
Gender norm violations described as part of the assessment.

Part 1: Gender norm is violated without helping goal	Part 2: Helping goal for norm violation
A girl playing war	As part of activity in babysitting her younger brother
A boy playing with Barbie dolls	As part of activity in babysitting his younger sister
A girl replacing a light bulb	So her sibling can see to do their homework
A girl wearing a suit and tie	As part of her part-time job as a waitress where she makes money for a sick family member
A boy wearing a skirt	The skirt is part of a clown costume he wears to cheer up sick kids in the hospital
A boy wearing a barrette	Because he is pulling a thorn form his friend's finger and he wants to see clearly

as a correction on the first response. Thus, predictions regarding a change in judgments were tested conservatively using within subject design. All part 1 questions preceded all part 2 questions since part 2 included the helping goal, and once it was given, it could have influenced later judgments.

In part 2, the descriptions of the norm violations that helped others were followed by a question asking the children to evaluate the norm violation, and to justify their evaluation (e.g. "Is it OK or not OK for her to play war? Why or why not?"). Finally, children were asked how much they would like to be friends with the actors in these pictures: a lot, a little, or not at all. Coding of responses to questions in part 2 was the same as the parallel question in part 1.

The coding scheme for justifications was developed on the basis of categories derived from previous studies (e.g. Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012) and from a small sample of interviews from this study. Table 4 shows all the categories and provides examples and descriptions of each. The categories were collapsed to include gender norms, gender-related preferences, and gender-related capabilities in an overarching category called *Gender-related* justifications. *Moral* justifications include welfare, rights, and helping. *Personal choice* includes both references to personal choice and statements that no harm can come of the activity. Finally, *Conventional* justifications include references to the culture, authority, or statements that the activity would be weird. These categories were the only ones that included at least 10% of responses within either part (with rounding for the conventional category, which included 9.6% of justifications in part 2); thus they were the only categories included in analyses. Justifications were coded as 1, justification was used or 0, justification was not used. Up to two justifications were coded, and if a participant used two justifications, they were each coded as .5.

Reliability was calculated for 12% of the interviews, which were coded by the first two authors. The part of this subset from the Korean sample (approximately half) was translated into English by the second author, who coded the remaining Korean interviews. Cohen's kappa was calculated as a test of inter-rater reliability. Kappas were .96 for evaluations and .73 for justifications.

3. Results

Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVAs with Bonferroni corrected alphas in follow-up analyses with restricted samples. Interactions that were not significant in follow-up analyses are not reported. Main effects that were qualified by interactions are also not reported. ANOVAs are appropriate for use with dichotomous data if the proportion of the responses in the smaller category is over .20 or the degrees of freedom are over 40 (Lunney, 1970). All the results reported meet at least one of these criteria, and no analysis had to be excluded because of these criteria.

3.1. Judgments of gender norms violations

Initial analyses found no effects for participants' sex so it was excluded from subsequent analyses. Within each condition, means were calculated for the three judgments of violations of feminine norms, and the three judgments of masculine norms. Judgments of whether gender norm violations were acceptable in parts 1 and 2 were analyzed with a 2(condition: with or without helping goal for violation) × 2(protagonist: boy or girl violates norm) × 2(country) × 3(age of participant) repeated measures ANOVA with condition, and masculine/feminine norm as repeated measures. Several interactions indicated that responses differed when the violation was for the purpose of helping someone compared to when it was not for any stated purpose (Table 5 shows the means for each condition in each country by age).

A condition × country interaction, $F(1,134) = 47.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$, indicated that, as expected, Korean children were less accepting of norm violations than American children when no helping goal was given ($p < .001$). However, when the norm was violated in order to help someone, there were no differences between the countries (as Fig. 1 shows). Therefore, cultural differences were found only for the gender norm violations with no helping goal.

A condition × age interaction, $F(2,134) = 6.38$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .09$, indicated that, as expected, older children were more flexible than younger children, although all children judged gender norm violations as more acceptable when they helped someone. When there was no helping goal, children were less likely to be flexible, especially at young ages (5 year olds, $M = .44$, $SD = .33$, were less flexible than 9 year olds, $M = .74$, $SD = .26$, $p < .001$, but 5 and 7 year olds, $M = .57$, $SD = .31$, did not differ significantly in flexibility, $p = .070$). In the condition where children were violating a norm to help others, there was only a marginal effect of age given Bonferroni corrections. In fact, the majorities of children at each age (73–89%) indicated that the violation was acceptable, as Table 5 shows.

A condition × protagonist interaction, $F(1,134) = 73.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$, indicated that when no helping goal was given for violating a gender norm in part 1, participants evaluated gender norm violations differently for boys and girls ($p < .001$). Consistent with our hypothesis that boys experience stricter gender norms than girls, boys violating gender norms were evaluated as less acceptable ($M = .46$, $SD = .38$) than girls violating gender norms ($M = .71$, $SD = .35$) when the norm violation was without a helping goal. However, when the norm was violated for a helping goal, the difference was not significant, given Bonferroni corrections (boy violated norm: $M = .85$, $SD = .28$; girl violated norm: $M = .80$, $SD = .28$).

Table 4
Justification categories.

Category	Justifications	Definitions and EXAMPLES
Gender-related	Gender norms	References to traditional gender norms. Others' preferences for how we should act that are in accord with traditional gender roles. Can also be based on observations of the frequency of actions by gender. EXAMPLE: "Everyone wants girls to be babysitters." "Boys do that more."
	Gender-preferences	References to preferences that are inferred from traditional gender norms. The idea that preferences are in line with traditional norms. EXAMPLE: "Boys don't like dolls."
	Gender-capabilities	References to abilities that are inferred from traditional gender roles. The idea that someone would be more capable because of their gender. EXAMPLE: "Boys are better at fixing things."
Moral	Fairness/equity	A comparison implying equality or very similar treatment/opportunities/abilities. References to being the same, sharing, turn-taking. EXAMPLE: "Because girls can play what boys can "We're all the same."
	Rights	References to a right that applies to the whole gender or human category, use of the word "right(s)." EXAMPLE: "Girls have the right to choose how they dress."
	Helping	Reasons are associated with preventing harm, and helping others. Mentions a positive outcome. EXAMPLE: "It will help cheer up the kids and they will feel better."
Personal choice	Choice	Personal preferences. Individuals should be able to choose about this issue. Gender-related preferences that are not based on norms. The issue is not legitimately regulated. EXAMPLE: "Everyone (even boys) likes dolls." "Her parents didn't tell her not to play war."
	No harm	Lack of harm to anyone. EXAMPLES: "It's just a toy gun so it can't hurt anyone."
Conventions	Cultural norms	Culture specific norms that could change. Traditions that are tied to a specific location or context. Work requirements. EXAMPLES: "It's part of her job to dress that way."
	Authority	Authorities or consensus make rules and they should be followed. EXAMPLE: "It's OK because it's the rule." "Her mother wanted her to do it that way."
	Unusual	Something is not OK because it is unusual. EXAMPLE: "It looks bad." "It is weird."
Teasing		Concerns with teasing, loosing friends, aggression. EXAMPLE: "He shouldn't wear that or kids will call him names." "People will laugh at him."
Embarrassment		Self imposed embarrassment—no mention of others. EXAMPLE: "Because he will feel weird."
Benefit to self		This kind of reasoning is not focused on helping others but on benefitting oneself. Also avoiding harm to self. EXAMPLE: "He's not old enough to use the stove."
Pragmatics		No mention of a benefit, just a job to be done. EXAMPLE: "Because their parents are not around but the light bulb needs to be changed."
Personal experience		A reference to participants' own experiences. EXAMPLE: "My dad also cooks.""I saw someone on TV do that."
0 Unelaborated		Uncodable responses, but the interviewer did ask the question. No answer to a question that was asked. EXAMPLE: "The sky is blue." "I don't know why she did that."
99 Missing		The question was not asked by the interviewer.

Table 5
Proportion of participants who judged the gender norm violation acceptable by country, age and condition.

Condition	Korea			U.S.		
	5	7	9	5	7	9
No helping goal	$.32_a$ (.26)	$.39_a$ (.26)	$.63_b$ (.25)	$.58_a$ (.34)	$.75_{a,b}$ (.24)	$.84_b$ (.23)
Helping goal	.76 (.25)	.88 (.21)	.83 (.23)	.73 (.33)	.85 (.18)	.89 (.18)

Note. Subscripts that differ within each country indicate that means differ significantly, $p < .01$.

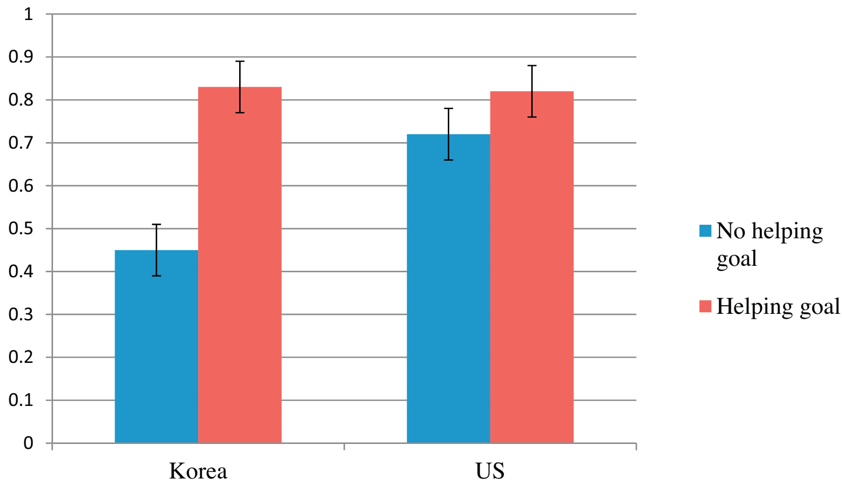

Fig. 1. Proportion of participants who judged the gender norm violation as OK by country.

Finally, given the hypothesis that age differences in judgments of the gender norm violations could differ in the different cultures, we tested for age differences within the condition with no helping goal in each country. When there was no helping goal, older children in both countries judged that violating a norm was acceptable more than younger children. In the United States, age was significant, $F(2,67) = 5.55$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .14$, and it indicated that 5 year olds were less flexible than 9 year olds ($p = .005$), but that 7 year olds did not differ from either the older or the younger group, an indication of a gradual pattern of increasing flexibility. In Korea, age was also significant, $F(2,70) = 9.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$, and it indicated that 5 year olds and 7 year olds were similarly inflexible, while 9 year olds were significantly more flexible than both younger groups ($p = .007$), an indication of increasing flexibility beginning after age 7. See Table 5 for means by age within each country.

3.2. *Justifications*

Justifications for evaluations of violating a gender norm in both conditions were analyzed within each justification category with a 2(condition: with or without reason for violation) × 2(protagonist: boy or girl violates norm) × 2(country) × 3(age of participant) repeated measures ANOVA with condition, and masculine/feminine norm, as repeated measures. Table 6 contains the means and standard deviations for each justification by age, condition and protagonist.

Gender-related justifications. A condition × protagonist interaction, $F(1,139) = 22.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, indicated that the gender justifications were used more in the condition with no helping goal given when the protagonist was a boy ($M = .35$, $SD = .36$) than any other condition or protagonist (no helping goal, girl breaks norm: $M = .16$, $SD = .25$; helping goal, boy break norm: $M = .08$, $SD = .22$; helping goal, girl breaks norm: $M = .03$, $SD = .11$). A condition × age interaction, $F(2,139) = 9.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$, indicated that the gender justifications were used more by the younger age groups than the oldest age group within both conditions, although the differences were larger in the condition with no helping goal ($p < .001$) than in the condition with a helping goal ($p = .001$); see Table 6. Finally, a country × condition interaction, $F(1,139) = 6.79$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = .05$, indicated that the gender justifications were used more by Koreans when there was no helping reason (Koreans: $M = .30$, $SD = .26$; U.S.: $M = .21$, $SD = .27$). There was no country difference in the use of gender justifications when there was a helping goal (Korea: $M = .05$, $SD = .12$; U.S.: $M = .06$, $SD = .15$).

Moral justifications. As shown in Table 5, the majority of justifications in the condition where the gender norm was violated to help someone were moral. A condition × age interaction, $F(2,139) = 10.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$, indicated that when the protagonist aimed to help someone, the oldest group used more moral justifications than either younger group but when there was no helping goal, the moral justification was used rarely by all age groups. A protagonist × condition interaction, $F(1,139) = 12.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$, indicated that participants used moral justifications more for the helping goal condition when the norm was

Table 6
Justifications (proportions and SDs) by age, condition and sex of protagonist.

Justifications	No helping goal					Helping goal				
	Age			Protagonist		Age			Protagonist	
		7	9	Boy violated norm	Girl violated norm	5	7	9	Boy violated norm	Girl violated norm
Gender	.40 (.28)	.25 (.25)	.11 (.18)	.35 (.36)	.16 (.25)	.12 (.18)	.04 (.12)	.02 (.06)	.09 (.22)	.03 (.11)
Moral	.01 (.05)	.02 (.06)	.04 (.08)	.01 (.05)	.04 (.12)	.51 (.30)	.57 (.25)	.77 (.24)	.65 (.34)	.58 (.32)
Personal choice	.19 (.24)	.38 (.29)	.56 (.27)	.31 (.35)	.44 (.35)	.06 (.15)	.10 (.16)	.05 (.14)	.03 (.13)	.11 (.21)
Convention	.08 (.12)	.10 (.15)	.10 (.16)	.11 (.21)	.08 (.14)	.08 (.11)	.13 (.13)	.08 (.11)	.06 (.13)	.14 (.16)

being violated by a boy than a girl ($p = .008$). However, in the condition with no helping goal for the violation, the reverse was true: they used the moral justification slightly more for the girls violating norms than for the boys violating norms ($p = .003$).

Personal choice justifications. Across all ages, children used personal choice justifications more in the condition where a norm was violated with no helping goal. An age × condition effect, $F(2,139) = 24.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$, indicated that in the condition with no helping goal, age was also a factor. When no helping goal was given for the norm violation, all age groups differed ($ps \leq .002$), with the younger groups using the personal choice justification significantly less than older groups, consistent with our hypothesis that the younger children would be less flexible about gender norms (see Table 6). A condition × protagonist × country interaction, $F(1,139) = 16.88$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, was followed up and it was found that when children were reasoning about a gender norm violation with no helping goal and the protagonist was a boy, then children in the U.S. were more likely to use the personal choice justifications than children in Korea (U.S.: $M = .40$, $SD = .39$; Korea: $M = .22$, $SD = .28$; $p = .001$). No other differences between the countries were found for this justification.

Convention justifications. As shown in Table 6, participants used the convention justification rarely, but a protagonist × condition interaction $F(1,139) = 22.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, indicated that it was used more when referring to a girl violating a norm for the purpose of helping someone, perhaps due to the question regarding wearing a suit to work as a server in a restaurant (see Table 6). A country × protagonist interaction, $F(1,139) = 13.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$, indicated that when the protagonist was a boy, Korean children used the convention justification more than U.S. children (Korea: $M = .11$, $SD = .14$; U.S.: $M = .05$, $SD = .12$; $p = .016$).

3.3. Judgments of friendship

Initial analyses found an effect for sex of the participant in judgments of friendship, so this variable was included in the analysis. Judgments of whether participants would like to be friends with the child who violated a gender norm were analyzed in a 2(condition: with or without a helping goal for violation) × 2(protagonist: boy or girl violates norm) × 2(country) × 3(age of participant) × 2(sex of participant) repeated measures ANOVA with condition, masculine/feminine norm and activities as repeated measures. A main effect for age, $F(2,122) = 6.38$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .10$, indicated that older children were more likely to say they would like to be friends with the child who violated the norm than did younger children (age 5: $M = .97$, $SD = .47$; age 7: $M = 1.17$, $SD = .36$; age 9: $M = 1.30$, $SD = .47$).

A protagonist × participant sex interaction, $F(1,122) = 12.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$ indicated that both male and female children judged that they would like to be friends with a boy who violated a norm about the same amount: “a little” ($M = 1.03$, $SD = .49$; $M = 1.09$, $SD = .52$, respectively). However, when the child violating the norm was a girl, female participants ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .49$) were more likely than males ($M = 1.10$, $SD = .50$, $p < .001$) to state that they would like to be friends “a lot.”

A condition × protagonist interaction, $F(1,122) = 73.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .38$, indicated that participants liked boy protagonists more when they violated norms for a helping goal ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .62$) than when there was no helping goal given ($M = .81$, $SD = .53$, $p < .001$). Girl protagonists were liked a little less whether the norm violation without a helping goal ($M = 1.21$, $SD = .58$) or for a helping goal ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .56$, $p = .023$).

4. Discussion

Children’s beliefs and judgments about gender norms are important because they reflect their understanding of the acceptability of expressing themselves and pursing opportunities that may be contrary to some gender norms, as well as accepting peers with atypical preferences. Our findings indicate that children can be flexible about gender but that this depends on the situation. The children differed between the cultures in their judgments of gender norm violations with no reason provided and this is evidence that children are not always open to individual differences regarding gender. In addition, age differences indicate initial evidence for a developmental pattern of increasing flexibility about gender, albeit one that may be affected by the strictness of social norms related to gender within the culture. However, when gender norms were violated for the goal of helping someone, children’s judgments in both cultures were generally positive. Each of these findings is discussed in more detail below.

Cultural differences found here indicate that children’s acceptance of gender norm violations are influenced to some degree by their setting. There was evidence that children in Korea were less flexible about gender norm violations than children in the U.S. when there was no helping goal. This is an indication that strict social norms as in Korea (Oyserman et al., 2002) can influence children’s judgments, as has been found in other cultures (Lobel et al., 2001; Rhodes & Gelman, 2009).

With no helping goal presented for violating gender norms, children in both cultures often used references to gender norms to justify judgments, especially when the protagonist was a boy. In previous research, the content of issues in the conventional domain has been shown to differ in different cultures (Turiel, 2006). Considering that American children were more likely to use the personal choice justification when a boy violated a norm than Korean children, and Korean children were more likely to use convention or gender-related justifications when it was a boy who violated the norm, gender

norms may be seen as more personal and less conventional in some circumstances by Americans than Koreans.

Similar to past research (Taylor, 1996), flexibility about gender norm violations increased with age in each culture. The oldest children were the most flexible both in terms of their judgments of the acceptability of gender norm violations and their judgments of the potential for friendship with a child who violates norms. This indicates that children not only judge others who violate norms but those judgments may affect how they treat others, including whether they would be friends.

Justifications for the judgments of gender norm violations with no helping goal also showed age effects. In both cultures, younger children used the gender justification more while older children were more likely to use the personal choice justification when reasoning about a violation with no helping goal. Thus, the older children were less focused on gender norms and more focused on personal choice for this condition, a sign of greater flexibility about gender norms.

Although an overall pattern of increasing flexibility with age was found in both cultures, as mentioned above, the age when children showed evidence of flexibility was later for Korean children than American children. In the United States, 9 year-old children were more accepting of gender norm violations but only the youngest (age five) and the oldest (age nine) were significantly different. This pattern is consistent with a gradual shift toward flexibility beginning at early ages. In Korea, flexibility was evident later: the oldest group's judgments differed from the two younger groups but 5 and 7 year-old children's judgments did not differ from each other, indicating a later shift toward flexibility. Research in other cultures has also found that the period of inflexibility lasts longer in more conservative cultures (Lobel et al., 2001; Rhodes & Gelman, 2009). This pattern did not appear in ratings of the likelihood of friendship. We did not find cultural differences in judgments of potential friendship.

However, when gender norms are violated for the goal of helping someone, children's judgments in both cultures were generally positive. Older and younger children, and Korean and American children reasoned positively about violations that helped others, perhaps because of the moral aspect of these scenarios. Although it is possible that small cultural differences remained undetected because of the sample size, it is noteworthy that a majority in both cultures and at all ages judged it acceptable to violate gender norms when the goal was to help others.

At all ages, the majority of the judgments of gender norm violations to help others were justified with references to moral concerns. Acts in the moral domain are often seen as prescriptive, and may have taken precedence over concerns with violating conventional norms about gender-related activities. This is consistent with other research that shows that Korean and American adolescents do not approve of authority dictates that are contrary to moral concerns (Kim, 1998; Kim & Turiel, 1996) and that early adolescents do not approve of peer rejection based on group membership, including nationality and gender (Park & Killen, 2010). It seems that children give priority to moral concerns with helping others over gender norms and that gender norms are inflexible only under certain circumstances.

A limitation of this study is that we cannot exclude the possibility that the reason children judged violations differently when they helped was for reasons other than that they gave priority to the moral goal over conventional gender norms. It may be that participants were more accepting of violations for a helping reason because they provided an external reason for the behavior, instead of reflecting an internal preference. For example, children may judge violating norms for practical reasons (e.g. a boy riding a pink bike so as not to be late for school) or because of authority dictates (e.g. a girl dressing up as a boy for a school presentation) to be more acceptable than choosing these items because of a personal preference. These types of goals were not tested in the current research, so while this explanation cannot be excluded, it also cannot be confirmed with the current data.

However, past research in the U.S. has found that the majority of children ages four to eight judged that a stated atypical personal preference should be respected (Conry-Murray & Turiel, 2012), indicating that an internal reason for violating a gender norm may not be judged negatively. In addition, the findings suggest that children considered helping as a moral and not only a situational issue since they often used moral justifications. However, future research should examine how personal preferences

that violate gender norms are judged in Korea, and how other reasons for violations affect judgments across cultures.

Across cultures, boys were judged more harshly than girls for violating gender norms when there was no helping goal. Judgments of boys in this condition were justified with references to gender norms more than judgments of girls. Judgments of friendship were also affected by the gender of the child violating the norm. Children were accepting of boys who violated a norm only if it was for the purpose of helping others. Girls, on the other hand, were judged to be worthy friends in both conditions. Ruble et al. (2006) suggest that gender norms are stricter for boys and this is consistent with other research (Levy et al., 1995; Lobel et al., 2000). Therefore, boys who violate norms without a helping goal may be especially vulnerable to social consequences.

Justifications also indicate that a girl violating gender norms with no helping goal was seen as a matter of personal choice more so than for judgments of a boy, and this effect was especially strong among Korean children. This difference in judgments between male and female protagonists in Korea is an indication that Korean children do not uniformly focus on group norms more than personal choice. Korean children used personal choice justifications for girls violating norms just as frequently as American children did. Children may reason about what is appropriate for boys and girls on the basis of their observations and interpretations of aspects of culture like the salience of gender norms in classrooms (Hillard & Liben, 2010) and the frequency of seeing each sex engage in atypical activities. In addition, children may observe that male norms are indicative of a higher status and therefore, engaging in masculine activities raise one's status while feminine activities would lower a boy's status (Ruble et al., 2006).

People who violate norms may sometime do it to help others, but they often do so because it is their personal preference. Therefore, inflexible judgments in these cases may have implications for those who want to violate norms as a personal expression or to take advantage of opportunities for themselves. Findings of friendship judgments could have implications for whether children who violate gender norms are accepted by their peers. Some research shows that children are aware that violating gender norms in some settings can lead to ridicule (Conry-Murray, 2013). In addition, Miller, Trautner, and Ruble (2006) found that children's preferences are affected by their inflexibility about gender. Future research should examine whether the phase of gender inflexibility has implications for peer acceptance and for children's self-expression.

The current study was limited by the fact that gender norms differ in their meaning in different cultures. It is very difficult to find norms that are exactly equivalent across cultures. Male and female norms are also difficult to compare because they are not exactly equivalent. For example, although it is possible to use norm violations regarding clothing for both boys and girls (as in a boy wearing a skirt and a girl wearing a suit), people judge clothing norm violations differently for boys versus girls (Blakemore, 2003). Gender norms may also have different meaning in different cultures. Although we found cultural differences, our study cannot determine whether judgments differed because norms have different meaning in the two cultures or because the cultures affect reasoning differently.

Overall, the current study shows that there were differences between the two cultures, with Korean children, even at older ages, making less flexible judgments of the acceptability of violations of gender norms when there was no helping goal as compared to the judgments of American children. In addition, younger children judged children who violated gender norms to be less likable, indicating that judgments may impact peer relationships. However, when given a helping goal for the violation, children in both cultures and at all ages accepted gender norm violations. This research shows that gender norms may not always be prescriptive and that even young children make judgments about gender norms in complex situations that can be flexible.

Acknowledgement

This study was supported by 2013 Research Fund of Myongji University.

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