Moral Development, Values, and Religion

John W. Santrock
Moral Development, Values, and Religion

- **Domains of Moral Development**
- **Contexts of Moral Development**
- **Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior**
- **Values, Religion, Spirituality, and Meaning in Life**
What Is Moral Development?

- Changes in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding standards of right and wrong
- An *intrapersonal* dimension: regulates activities
- An *interpersonal* dimension: regulates social interactions and arbitrates conflict

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## Piaget’s Theory of Moral Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heteronomous morality</td>
<td>Justice and rules are conceived of as unchangeable properties of the world, removed from the control of people (4-7 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous morality</td>
<td>Becomes aware that rules and laws are created by people; in judging an action, one should consider actor’s intentions as well as consequences (10 years and older)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immanent justice</td>
<td>If a rule is broken, punishment will be meted out immediately</td>
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Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development

• Moral reasoning unfolds in universal stages
  – Moral thoughts constructed as one passes through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood
  – Tested by story with moral dilemma
  – Theory of 3 levels, two stages in each
The Kohlberg Stages

- **Preconventional reasoning** — lowest level
  - Good or bad based on external rewards and punishment
  - **Stage 1. Heteronomous morality** — tied to punishment
  - **Stage 2. Individualism, instrumental purpose, and exchange** — tied to equal exchange
The Kohlberg Stages

- **Conventional reasoning** — intermediate level
  - Individuals abide by certain standards, but are standards of others
  - **Stage 3.** Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity — trust, caring, loyalty to others is basis of judgment
  - **Stage 4.** Social systems morality — judgments based on social order, law, justice, and duty
The Kohlberg Stages

- **Postconventional reasoning** — highest level
  - Individuals recognize alternative moral courses, explore options, and decide own moral code
  - **Stage 5. Social contract or utility and individual rights** — evaluates validity of actual laws and social systems for preserving and protecting fundamental human rights and values
  - **Stage 6. Universal ethical principles** — develops moral standard based on universal human rights
Age and Kohlberg’s Stages

Figure 13.3
Kohlberg’s Stages

- Moral stages appeared later than predicted
- 7th stage added: cosmic perspective
- Peer interaction critical influence
- Kohlberg’s critics
  - Moral reasons (overemphasized) can be shelter for immoral behavior (underemphasized)
  - Faulty research: difficult to measure morality
  - Culturally biased
Families and Moral Development

- Family processes unimportant in children’s moral development: use inductive discipline

- Gender perspectives
  - Korlberg’s theory has justice perspective — focus on rights of individual, one stands alone and independently
  - Gilligan’s care perspective — views people in terms of connectedness with others; girls interpret moral dilemmas in terms of human relationships
Social Conventional Reasoning

- Focuses on thoughts about social consensus and convention
  - Conventional rules
    - Created to control behavioral irregularities and maintain social system
    - Arbitrary and subject to individual judgment
  - Concepts of social organization
Moral Reasoning

- Emphasizes ethical issues
- Moral rules not arbitrary; obligatory, widely accepted, and somewhat impersonal
  - Violations are affronts to ethical standards
  - Involve concepts of justice
  - Not created by social consensus and convention
Moral Behavior

- Basic Processes of reinforcement, punishment, and imitation: behavior is situation-specific

- Resistance to Temptation and Self-Control
  - Influenced by cognitive factors

- Social Cognitive Theory of Morality
  - Distinguishes between moral competence (ability to produce moral behaviors) and moral performance (actually performing them)
Domains of Moral Development

Moral Feeling

• Psychoanalytic Theory
  – Foundation of moral behavior is to avoid guilt feelings
  – Superego: moral branch of personality (2 parts)
    • Ego ideal — rewards for acting ideal standards
    • Conscience — punishes for disapproved acts
    • Children internalize parents’ standards
Empathy

- Reacting to another’s feelings with emotional response similar to other’s feelings
- Cognitive component — perspective-taking
- Develops from infant’s global empathy
- Children’s ability depends on awareness that people have different reactions to situations
Emotion and Moral Development: The Contemporary Perspective

• When strongly felt, both positive and negative feelings contribute to moral behavior
  – Positive feelings: empathy, sympathy, admiration, self-esteem
  – Negative feelings: anger, outrage, shame, guilt
  – Some emotions undergo developmental change throughout childhood and beyond; interwoven with cognitive and social aspects of development
Moral Exemplars

• Emphasizes development of personality, character, and virtue in terms of moral excellence
  – Brave: dominant and extroverted
  – Caring: nurturant and agreeable
  – Just: conscientiousness and open to experience

• The three may be core of moral functioning that includes being honest and dependable
Parenting

- Piaget and Kohlberg discounted parents’ input to children’s moral development
- Parents see themselves in primary role
  - Love withdrawal
  - Power assertion
  - Induction
Schools — The Hidden Curriculum

• Pervasive moral atmosphere in schools

• Character Education
  – Direct moral education approach teaches students basic moral literacy to prevent immoral behavior, doing harm to themselves or others

• Values Clarification
  – Helps clarify what life is for, what to work for
  – Students encouraged to define own values and understand others’ values
Schools — The Hidden Curriculum

• **Cognitive Moral Education**
  – Students should value things like democracy and justice as moral reasoning develops
  – Instructor is facilitator, not director

• **Service Learning**
  – Form of education that promotes social responsibility and service to community
  – Benefits student volunteers and recipients
Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior

Prosocial Behavior

• Altruism and Reciprocity
  – **Altruism**: unselfish interest in helping another person, mostly evoked by empathy
  – Some argue altruism does not exist; everyone benefits from performing the action
  – Many prosocial behaviors involve reciprocity; the obligation to return a favor with a favor
Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior

Prosocial Behavior

• Sharing and fairness
  – Most sharing in first 3 years of life: non-empathic
  – At about age 4: combination of empathic awareness and adult encouragement
  – In elementary years: complicated ideas of fairness
  – Throughout history: involved principles of equality, merit, and benevolence
Gender and Prosocial Behavior

• **Antisocial behavior**
  – **Delinquents**: children or adolescents who commit illegal acts
  – **Juvenile delinquency**: broad range of behaviors
    • **Index offenses** — criminal acts
    • **Status offenses** — less serious acts; illegal only when they are performed by youth
  – More common in males than females
Gender and Prosocial Behavior

• Psychiatrists: **conduct disorders**
  – Age-inappropriate actions and attitudes (externalizing or under-controlled behavior patterns)
  – Violate
    • Family expectations
    • Society’s norms
    • Personal or property rights of others
Antecedents of Delinquency

- Authority conflict
- Covert Acts
- Overt Aggression

- Not exclusively lower-SES phenomenon; characteristics of lower-SES culture can promote delinquency
  - High-status traits for boys
  - Affected by family and peer relationships
Violence and Youth

- At-risk youth
  - Early involvement with drugs and alcohol
  - Easy access to weapons, especially handguns
  - Association with antisocial, deviant peer groups
  - Pervasive exposure to violence in the media

- Prevention programs exist
- Predicting youth violence is complex
Reducing Youth Violence

- Oregon social Learning Center recommends
  - Recommit to raising children safely and effectively
  - Make prevention a reality
  - Give more support to schools
  - Forge effective partnerships among families, schools, social service systems, churches, and other agencies
Values

• Beliefs and attitudes about the way things should be
  – Measured by asking what one’s goals are
  – Self-fulfillment and self-expression can lead to self-destruction, loneliness, and alienation
  – Self-fulfillment and commitment to others can lead to successful adjustment
Changing Freshman Life Goals

Fig. 13.6
Piaget’s Stages of Religious Thought

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preoperational intuitive</td>
<td>up to 7-8 years</td>
<td>Religious thoughts unsystematic and fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete operational</td>
<td>7-8 to 13-14</td>
<td>Focused on details of pictures and stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal operational</td>
<td>14 onward</td>
<td>Abstract religious understanding</td>
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</tbody>
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Parenting and Religion

- Societies use many methods to ensure people carry on religious traditions
  - Most adults adopt religious teachings of upbringing
  - Most religious change or re-awakenings occur in adolescence
  - Positive relationship or secure attachment with parents make adolescents more likely to adopt religious orientation of parents
Adolescence

- Religion important to most adolescents
- Those viewing religion as meaningful are linked to positive outcomes
  - Lower rates of delinquency and drug use
  - Better grades for low-income students
  - Better ability to cope with problems
Religion and Sexuality in Adolescence

• High degree of adolescent involvement with religious organizations linked to
  – Strict premarital sexual attitudes and behaviors
  – Likelihood of having friends with restrictive attitudes toward premarital sex
  – Fewer sexual partners outside romantic relationship
  – Greater awareness of HIV and pregnancy; less likely to have unprotected sex
Religion and Spirituality in Adulthood

- Important to adults around the world
  - 70% of Americans religious
- More important to women than men
- Americans becoming less committed to particular religious faiths
- Individual differences in religion in middle adulthood
Religion and Health

- Religious sect members resist using medical treatments and pain-relieving medications
- Positive link between religious commitment and health
  - Helps moderate blood pressure; less stress
  - Live longer life; have fewer health problems
  - Live healthier lifestyles; more optimistic
  - Involvement in more social connections
Religion in older adults

• Increased spirituality in late middle to late adulthood
  – Increased more for women than men
  – Linked to spirituality in early adulthood
  – Faith is most significant influence in one’s life
  – Put faith into practice more often
  – Highest commitment linked to highest self-esteem
Religion in older adults

- Psychological benefits
  - Derived sense of meaning in life
  - Higher levels of life-satisfaction
  - Face impending death, accept losses of age
  - Find meaningfulness
  - Social community, generativity
Meaning in Life

• Need for
  – Purpose
  – Values
  – A sense of efficacy
  – Self-worth
The End