Theories of Moral Development

Moral development = children’s reasoning about morality, their attitudes toward moral lapses, and their behavior when faced with moral issues.

Several theoretical approaches have evolved
THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

- PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY
- COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY
- OPERANT AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES
- DAMON’S VIEW OF MORAL IDENTITY
What makes for “Morality”? 

1. Concern for others 
2. Shame/guilt? 
3. Cognitive factors --- Understanding 
   1. Role-taking 

- BEHAVIORAL FACTORS 
  - Not just “thinking” about the “right” thing to do, but acting on it.
Developmental stages in “morality”

- Infant: Amoral- young infants do not understand right from wrong.
  - Child: Moral training
    - Shame and guilt
    - Impulse control
    - Internalize rules
  - Sensitive, responsive parents
    - Discuss issues
    - Firm but not harsh
PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

- A SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG IS FORGED IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHLY CHARGED, CLOSE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

- IN CLASSICAL THEORY, THE SENSE OF MORALITY DEVELOPS BASED ON THE TYPE RESOLUTION ACHIEVED DURING THE OEDIPAL/PHALLIC PHASE.
Children’s understanding of right and wrong develops in line with their understanding of other problems to be solved.

Thus, thinking about right and wrong is related to sensorimotor, pre-, concrete-, and formal operational thinking.
Cognitive-Developmental (Continued)

• Piaget
  ● Preschoolers are premoral-
  ● Age 6-10
    – Consequences important
    – Rules external
  ● Age 10-11
    – Intentions important
    – Rules internal

• Kohlberg: Reasoning by school age- theories based on Piaget
Heteronomous Morality

- 4 to 7 years
- Initial stage of moral development
- Rules seen as invariant, unchangeable, and beyond child’s control and/or influence
- Intentions not considered
- Believe in immanent justice (immediate punishment for infractions)
Piaget

AUTONOMOUS COOPERATION STAGE

- Beginning at 10 years
- Become fully aware that rules may and can be modified if people playing agree
Cognitive Development and Morality

- Adolescence
  - Shift to conventional reasoning
  - Identity includes morals, values

- Adulthood
  - Kohlberg: Postconventional is possible
  - Religion: Religious beliefs tend to change developmentally in a manner similar to other moral developments.
Kohlberg’s “levels” of reasoning

*Preconventional Morality* (stages 1 & 2): follow unvarying rules - rewards and punishments

*Conventional Morality* (stages 3 & 4) approach problems in terms of their own position as good, responsible members of society

*Postconventional Morality* (stages 5 & 6) universal moral principles – bigger than societal concerns
## Differences between Men’s Moral Voices and Women’s Moral Voices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Men</strong></th>
<th><strong>Women</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating everyone fairly and the same</td>
<td>Caring about everyone’s suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply rules impartially to everyone</td>
<td>Preserve emotional connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility toward abstract codes of conduct</td>
<td>Responsibility toward real individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Differences between Men’s and Women’s View of the Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relatedness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Emotional connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separateness</td>
<td>Responsiveness to needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Web of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules guide interactions</td>
<td>Empathy &amp; connectedness guide interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles establish places in the hierarchy</td>
<td>Roles are secondary to connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Gilligan’s Three Stages of Moral Development in Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Initial concentration is on what is practical and best for self. Gradual</td>
<td>A first grader may insist on playing only games of her own choosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation toward individual</td>
<td>transition from selfishness to responsibility, which includes thinking</td>
<td>when playing with a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survival</td>
<td>about what would be best for others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Initial view is that a woman must sacrifice her own wishes to what other</td>
<td>Now older, the same girl may believe that to be a good friend, she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness as self-sacrifice</td>
<td>people want. Gradual transition from “goodness” to “truth,” which</td>
<td>must play the games her friend chooses, even if she herself doesn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>takes into account needs of both self and others.</td>
<td>like them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>A moral equivalence is established between self and others. Hurting anyone—</td>
<td>The same girl may realize that both friends must enjoy their time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality of nonviolence</td>
<td>including one’s self—is seen as immoral. Most sophisticated form of</td>
<td>together and look for activities that both she and her friend can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reasoning, according to Gilligan.</td>
<td>enjoy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 11.2 Gilligan’s Three Stages of Moral Development for Women
What is the role of parents and peers in moral development

- Piaget and Kohlberg: Parents play only a small role
  - Peers are important
  - (a) Parents adapt their moral reasoning styles to those of their children;
  - (b) Children evidence higher level of moral reasoning during family discussions than in a standard interview (Vygotsky);
  - (c) Parental discussion style, particularly regarding the child's real-life moral dilemma, predicts the future growth of the child's moral reasoning.
- The most beneficial style entails a high level of representational and supportive interactions
  - Representational=Socratic; eliciting child opinions, clarifying, checking for understanding
  - Supportive=positive affect, encouragement to participate, humor)
Learning Theories

- **Operant**
  - Our sense of right and wrong is learned through a history of reinforcers and punishers, much as any behaviors or traits are learned.

- **Social-Cognitive**
  - Our expectations and beliefs influence which behaviors are learned. Vicarious reinforcers (as learned by observing peers, media, parents, and others) influence our sense of right and wrong as well as our actual behaviors.
Social Cognitive Theory Emphasizes

- Moral Behavior is what counts
- Observational Learning plays a key role
- Moral Behavior is situation specific
What is fair? The development of sense of fairness.

William Damon: Research on positive justice

How shall we divide up resources? (pizza, winnings, global federal revenue)

The stages:

Level 0 (under 4, 4-5)

* I should get it
* We should get it because we are girls

Level 1 (5-7, 6-9)

* Strict equality
* Reciprocity; merit, deserving

Level 2 (8-10, 10 and up)

* Moral relativity; special needs vs. deserving
* Equality, reciprocity, needs -- all coordinated and integrated
Damon's Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age period</th>
<th>Nature of empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early infancy</td>
<td>Characterized by global empathy; the young infant's empathic response does not distinguish between feelings and needs of self and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years of age</td>
<td>Undifferentiated feelings of discomfort at another's distress grow into more genuine feelings of concern, but infants cannot translate realization of other's unhappy feelings into effective action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood</td>
<td>Children become aware that every person's perspective is unique and that someone else may have a different reaction to a situation. This awareness allows the child to respond more appropriately to another person's distress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 12 years of age</td>
<td>Children develop an emergent orientation of empathy for people who live in unfortunate circumstances—the poor, the handicapped, and the socially outcast. In adolescence, this newfound sensitivity may give a humanitarian flavor to the individual's ideological and political views.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role Taking Skills

- Understanding thoughts/emotions
- Able to compare them to their own.
- Empathy slowly develops – begins at around 2 years.
- Characteristics of children’s role taking skills overall
  - Age 3-6: Egocentric
  - Age 8-10: Concrete thinking
  - Age 12+: Multiple perspectives
  - Important for moral questions
Figure 13.4

Early childhood
- Poor parental discipline and monitoring
- Child conduct problems

Middle childhood
- Rejection by normal peers
- Academic failure
- Commitment to deviant peer group

Late childhood and adolescence
- Delinquency
Factors that Promote moral Growth

- Cognitive development; stimulation; exposure to conflicting views
- Relevant social experience – interact with people who have different points of view – promotes “cognitive disequilibrium”
- Opportunities to sort out differences with peers.