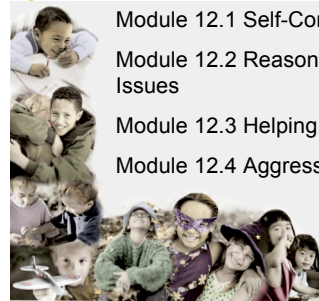


Moral understanding

IIE 366: Developmental
Psychology
Greg Francis
Lecture 28

Chapter 12: Moral Understanding and Behavior



Module 12.1 Self-Control

Module 12.2 Reasoning About Moral Issues

Module 12.3 Helping Others

Module 12.4 Aggression

Children and Their Development, 4/e by Robert Kail

12.1 Self-Control

Self-control: the ability to control one's behavior and inhibit impulsive responding to temptations



Beginnings of Self-Control

Influences on Self-Control

Improving Children's Self-Control

12.1 Beginnings of Self-Control

- 1 year: aware that others impose demands, and that they must react accordingly
- 2 years: have internalized some controls. Capable to self-control in parents' absence
- 3 years: capable of self-regulation. Can devise ways to regulate their own behavior
- Self-control develops gradually during elementary school
 - 1/3 of 6-8 year old children are willing to wait 1 day to get a larger reward
 - 1/2 of 9-11 year old children will wait
 - Almost all 12-15 year olds will wait

12.1 Beginnings of Self-Control

- Ability to maintain self-control is consistent over other situations (e.g., confessing to misdeeds, do as asked at home)
- Also related to behavior much later
 - Measure self-control in 4 year olds (how long will they wait in a room for the experimenter to return)
 - Track down children when they are 15-18 year olds. Longer waiting durations were related to
 - » Higher SAT scores ($r=0.42$)
 - » More attentive
 - » Better planners
 - Similar when retested 10 years later (better educated, higher self-esteem)

12.1 Influences on Self-Control

- Parental models are important:
 - Self-control more likely when parents have control themselves
 - Well-defined limits on child behavior
 - Warm and loving disciplinary style
- Children have less control when parents are very strict:
 - Giving children more opportunities to regulate own behavior fosters self-control

12.1 Influences on Self-Control

- Temperament is related to self-control
- Emotional toddlers and preschoolers have less self-control
- Children who are naturally fearful respond to parents' requests to comply with rules
- Children who are not naturally fearful respond to parents' requests to cooperate that are based on the attachment relationship

12.1 Improving Children's Self-Control

- Remind children of the need to resist temptation (e.g., long-term goals more important than short-term goals)
- Make tempting events less attractive
- Appropriate self-instruction and diversion
 - Some 3-5 year olds will use these approaches
 - Concrete approaches work best
 - » Avoid looking at tempting object
 - » Reminding of rules against touching a tempting object
 - » Activities to divert attention away from tempting object

12.2 Reasoning About Moral Issues

Piaget's Views

Kohlberg's Theory

Beyond Kohlberg's Theory

Promoting Moral Reasoning

12.2 Piaget's Views on Moral Reasoning

- Before age 4, children have no defined ideas about morality
- Between 5 and 7 years, children are in a stage of *moral realism* (rules must be followed and cannot be changed)
- *Immanent justice* (belief that breaking a rule always leads to punishment) is characteristic of moral realism
- At about 8 years, *moral relativism* (understanding that rules are created by people to help them get along) begins
 - And that rules can be changed if desired

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- 3 levels of moral reasoning beginning with obedience to authority and ending with decisions based on moral principles
 - Preconventional level: obedience to authority, reward, punishment (most children, many adolescents, some adults)
 - » Stage 1: Obedience orientation
 - » Stage 2: Instrumental orientation
 - Conventional level: social norms (adolescents and most adults)
 - » Stage 3: Interpersonal norms (act as others think they should)
 - » Stage 4: Social system morality (social roles and laws exist to promote the general good)
 - Postconventional level: personal, moral principles (some adults older than 25)
 - » Stage 5: Social contract orientation (like stage 4, but with a recognition that rules can change if need be)
 - » Stage 6: Universal ethical principles (abstract principles like justice, compassion, equality form the basis of a moral code)

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- Support for the theory: people progress through the stages in sequence and moral reasoning is linked to moral behavior
- Test reactions to a moral dilemma story
 - Judy was a twelve-year-old girl. Her mother promised her that she could go to a special rock concert coming to their town if she saved up from baby-sitting and lunch money to buy a ticket to the concert. She managed to save up the fifteen dollars the ticket cost plus another five dollars. But then her mother changed her mind and told Judy that she had to spend the money on new clothes for school. Judy was disappointed and decided to go to the concert anyway. She bought a ticket and told her mother that she had only been able to save five dollars. That Saturday she went to the performance and told her mother that she was spending the day with a friend. A week passed without her mother finding out. Judy then told her older sister, Louise, that she had gone to the performance and had lied to her mother about it. Louise wonders whether to tell their mother what Judy did.

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- Then follow up with questions to probe morals

- 1. Should Louise, the older sister, tell their mother that Judy lied about the money or should she keep quiet? 1a. Why?
- 2. In wondering whether to tell, Louise thinks of the fact that Judy is her sister. Should that make a difference in Louise's decision? 2a. Why or why not?
- 3. Does telling have anything to do with being a good daughter? 3a. Why or why not?
- 4. Is the fact that Judy earned the money herself important in this situation? 4a. Why or why not?
- 5. The mother promised Judy she could go to the concert if she earned the money. Is the fact that the mother promised the most important thing in the situation? 5a. Why or why not?
- 6. Why in general should a promise be kept?
- 7. Is it important to keep a promise to someone you don't know well and probably won't see again? 7a. Why or why not?
- 8. What do you think is the most important thing a mother should be concerned about in her relationship to her daughter? 8a. Why is that the most important thing?
- 9. In general, what should be the authority of a mother over her daughter? 9a. Why?
- 10. What do you think is the most important thing a daughter should be concerned about in her relationship to her mother? 10a. Why is that the most important thing?
- 11. In thinking back over the dilemma, what would you say is the most responsible thing for Louise to do in this situation? 11a. Why?

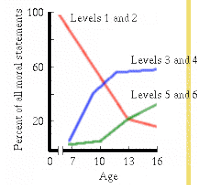


Figure 2 - Moral stage as a function of age
From Gleitman [2], p. 660

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- Longitudinal studies show that people progress from lower to higher stages, not the other way around
- Moral reasoning is linked to moral behavior
- Delinquent adolescents are more likely to emphasize punishment and reward in moral reasoning
- Criticism: tends to emphasize Western definitions of morality
 - Focus on rights of individuals
- African and Asian cultures often focus on *duties* of people to community
 - Stress interdependence among people
 - Taoist traditions describe individualism and competition as evil
 - Hindu religion stresses duty and responsibility for others

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- How would you choose in the following?
- Ben was in Los Angeles on business. When his meetings were over, he went to the train station. Ben planned to travel to San Francisco in order to attend the wedding of his best friend. He needed to catch the very next train if he was to be on time for the ceremony, as he had to deliver the wedding rings. However, Ben's wallet was stolen in the train station. He lost all of his money as well as his ticket to San Francisco. Ben approached several officials as well as passengers at the train station and asked them to loan him money to buy a new ticket. But, because he was a stranger, no one was willing to lend him the money he needed. While Ben was sitting on a bench trying to decide what to do next, a well-dressed man sitting next to him walked away for a minute. Looking over at where the man had been sitting, Ben noticed that the man had left his coat unattended. Sticking out of the man's coat pocket was a train ticket to San Francisco. Ben knew that he could take the ticket and use it to travel to San Francisco on the next train. He also saw that the man had more than enough money in his coat pocket to buy another train ticket.

12.2 Kohlberg's Theory

- Choice 1 (emphasizes rights and justice)
 - Ben should not take the ticket from the man's coat pocket even though it means not getting to San Francisco in time to deliver the wedding rings to his best friend.
- Choice 2 (emphasizes caring for others)
 - Ben should go to San Francisco to deliver the wedding rings to his best friend even if it means taking the train ticket from the other man's coat pocket.
- Americans prefer choice 1 (60%)
- Indians prefer choice 2 (80%)

12.2 Beyond Kohlberg's Theory

- Gilligan: caring and responsibility to others is more important than justice in moral reasoning
 - Argues that Kohlberg's theory is based on *male* reasoning
 - Moral development involves stages of understanding of caring and responsibility
- Studies suggest that justice and care both serve as a basis for moral reasoning depending on the nature of the moral problem
 - No real differences between men and women
- Eisenberg: most moral dilemmas involve choosing between self-interest and helping others
 - So the Kohlberg dilemmas that involve breaking laws may not capture children's true moral views

12.2 Beyond Kohlberg's Theory

- Turiel: moral judgments represent one of several domains that make up social judgments
 - Morals: Brian kicks or pushes his younger brother when their mom isn't looking.
 - Social conventions: Kathryn never puts her toys away when she's done playing with them.
 - Personal domain: Brad likes to wear his underpants inside out.
- Children learn to distinguish between these domains during the preschool years
 - Based on how parents respond to different kinds of transgressions

12.2 Promoting Moral Reasoning

- Reasoning becomes more sophisticated after discussions about moral issues and exposure to higher levels of reasoning
 - Children need freedom to express their opinions on moral reasoning
- Just Communities* (special groups of students and teachers within public high schools) foster discussion and provide exposure to higher levels of reasoning
 - Participating children showed more advanced moral thinking

12.3 Helping Others

Development of Prosocial Behavior
 Skills Underlying Prosocial Behavior
 Situational Influences
 Socializing Prosocial Behavior

12.3 Development of Prosocial Behavior

- Prosocial behavior: actions that benefit others
- Altruism: prosocial behavior that helps others with no direct benefit to the individual
- By 18 months, simple acts of altruism can be seen
 - E.g., comfort upset peers
- During preschool years, children gradually understand others' needs and learn appropriate altruistic behavior, but early altruism is limited
- Prosocial intentions and strategies for helping both increase with age

12.3 Skills Underlying Prosocial Behavior

- Perspective-taking: children help when they can imagine another's situation
- Empathy: children help when they can feel as another person is feeling
- Moral reasoning: As children mature and make moral decisions on principles rather than on the basis of reward and punishment, they become more prosocial

12.3 Situational Influences

- Setting helps determine whether children act altruistically or not
- Children help when:
 - > they feel responsible for the person in need
 - > they feel competent to help
 - > they are in a good mood
 - > the cost of helping is modest

12.3 Socializing Prosocial Behavior

- Model prosocial behavior for children
- Use reasoning when disciplining children because it leads to perspective taking and seeing how actions affect others
- Routinely give children and adolescents the opportunity to help and cooperate with others, which sensitizes them to needs of others and gives them the satisfaction of helping

12.4 Aggression

Change and Stability

Roots of Aggressive Behavior

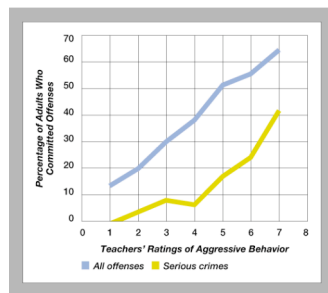
Victims of Aggression



12.4 Change and Stability

- *Hostile aggression*: unprovoked aggression with the goal of intimidation or harassment
- *Instrumental aggression*: used to achieve specific goal (e.g., toy)
- *Reactive aggression*: one child's behavior leads to another's aggression
- *Relational aggression*: try to hurt others by undermining social relationships (often verbal aggression)
- Forms of aggression change with age, but individuals' aggression is moderately stable

Relation of Childhood Aggression to Adult Crime



12.4: Change and Stability

12.4 Roots of Aggressive Behavior

- Some children inherit factors that place them at risk for aggressive behavior
 - Temperament
 - Testosterone levels in boys
- Parents contribute, particularly through use of harsh physical punishment or lack of monitoring
- Media contributes when children watch violent TV shows or play violent video games
- Cognitive processes affect how children interpret social situations and select responses
- Roles of aggressive peer group and poverty
- More next time

12.4 Victims of Aggression

- Victims of aggression are often lonely, anxious, depressed, dislike school, and have low self-esteem
- Youngsters are likely to be victims of aggression when they are aggressive themselves
 - Easy bait: Overreact, restless, easily irritated
 - Often from hostile, punitive, or abuse families
- or are withdrawn and submissive
 - Boys: overprotective mothers
 - Girls: controlling mothers

12.4 Victims of Aggression

- Children can avoid being victims by learning new ways of responding to aggression, by raising their self-esteem, and by fostering friendships
- Turn to peers for support (ask for help)
 - Not for boys: peers shun boys who ask for help
- Ignoring the victimization
 - Benefit: peers like the more
 - Cost: victim is more anxious
- For victims who are themselves aggressive
 - Learn to not react aggressively

Next time

- Focus on aggression
- Effects
- Causes