Chapter 3

Developing Moral and Ethical Behavior

Morality - A Few Questions
- Is morality absolute or a creation of mankind?
- If morality is universal, why do some people act in immoral ways?
- If morality is determined by mankind, what factors make certain individuals prone to immoral behavior?

Moral Development - A Few Questions
- Are we born good or evil, or do we become that way through life circumstance?
- How does one acquire moral belief?
- Do moral beliefs determine behavior?
- Question
  - Who has been the greatest influence on your moral development?
Theories of Moral Development

- **Biological** theories propose that we are good or bad because of biological predispositions
  - It’s in the genes!
- **Learning** theories argue that our behavior is based on the rewards we have received
- **Development** theories explain that peoples’ behavior is influenced by their intellectual and emotional stage of development
  - One reaches higher stages of development or not based on one’s environment

Biological Theories

- Theorizes that we are good or bad because of biological predispositions (predeterminers)
  - Most controversial of all theories.
  - Researchers have discovered links between the brain and the predisposition to certain behaviors, as well as (potentially) the development of moral behavior

Biological Theories

- **Sex Differences** (Inherited Trait)
  - Men’s brain function differently than women’s.
    - Statistically, men are more likely to:
      - be antisocial
      - to have serious childhood disorders
      - to commit serious offenses
    - There is evidence that females:
      - Are more inclined to empathy
      - Are more sensitive to human relationships
Biological Theories

Frontal Lobe Damage (Acquired Trait)
- Frontal lobe tied to empathy, shame, and moral reasoning
- Damage may result in:
  - Increased impulsiveness
  - Decreased attention span
  - Difficulty in logical reasoning and following instructions
  - Antisocial behavior

Learning Theory

Learning Theorists believe that children learn what they are taught, including morals and values, as well as behavior
- Right or wrong is not discovered through reasoning—therefore ethics is a function of learning rather than reasoning
- All humans are shaped by the world around them, and they form completely subjective opinions about morality and ethics.

Learning Theory

Two techniques of human learning:
- Modeling
- Reinforcement
**Modeling**
- Values and moral beliefs come from those one admires (modeling) and aspires to identify with.
  - Imitating the behavior of others
  - Parents and other adults provide role models for children through their behavior
    - If a priest – one might develop a religious ethical system
    - If a pimp or sociopath – one might develop an egoist ethical system

**Reinforcement**
- A behavior that is rewarded will be repeated (either through material rewards or more subjective rewards like praise)
- After enough reinforcement, that behavior becomes permanent
- The individual develops values consistent with the behavior

**Learning Theory**
- Socialization/Social Learning
  - The socialization process requires the gradual development of internal control to comply with external demands
  - Individuals can "learn" moral values through the careful granting of rewards
  - When moral acts are rewarded, individuals tend to behave in a morally acceptable manner
  - Individuals who exhibit moral behavior can be created
**Cognitive Dissonance**
- The discomfort that occurs when behavior is inconsistent with beliefs.
  - Results in either:
    - Cessation of the act
    - Change in beliefs

**Developmental Theories**
- Development theories propose that individuals mature physically, cognitively, and emotionally.
  - Moral development, like physical growth, occurs in stages.
  - Development may be stunted by negative environmental influences.

**Developmental Theories**
- Social maturity is marked by:
  - Ability to empathize with others
  - Willingness to compromise one’s desires with another’s needs
**Developmental Theories: Piaget**
- Piaget believed that we all go through stages of cognitive, or intellectual, growth
- These stages parallel moral stages of development
- Together they form a systematic way of viewing the world

**Developmental Theories: Kohlberg**
- Kohlberg built on Piaget’s work to describe this growth
- Described three levels of moral reasoning
  - Preconventional Level
  - Conventional Level
  - Post-Conventional Level

**Characteristics of Kohlberg’s Moral Stages**
- Each stage forms a structured whole
  - Cognitive and moral growth are integrated
- Each stage integrates the stage before it
  - Each stage is more comprehensive and complicated than the preceding stage
- Stages always occur in the same sequence
  - No one bypasses any stage, and not everyone develops to the higher stages
- Stages are characterized by **qualitative** differences in thinking vice **quantitative**
Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development

- **Preconventional Level**
  - Approach to moral issues motivated purely by personal interests
    - What is “right” does not necessarily make sense

- **Stage 1: Punishment and Obedience Orientation**
  - Concerned only with the consequences linked to the behavior, not the behavior itself
    - What is right is what is praised
    - What is wrong is what is punished

- **Stage 2: Instrument and Relativity Orientation**
  - Child becomes aware of and concerned with other’s needs
    - What is right is still determined by self-interest, but broadened to include others based on relationship
      - Emerging concept of fairness and recognition of other’s needs
Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Conventional Level

- Approach to moral issues motivated by socialization
  - People perceive themselves as members of society, and living up to role responsibilities is paramount in believing oneself to be good
  - Children enter this level when they are capable of playing with other children according to the rules.
  - Games are used for moral development
    - Concept of role responsibilities
    - Concept of "fair play"

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Conventional Level

- Stage 1: Interpersonal Concordance Orientation
  - Concerned with views of significant others
    - Avoid hurting other's feeling
    - Avoid being thought of as bad

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Conventional Level

- Stage 2: Law and Order Orientation
  - Concerned with rules set down by society, as well as interpersonal relationships
    - The law becomes all important
Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Post-Conventional Level

- Approach to moral issues motivated by desire to discover universal good beyond own self or own society
- Moves beyond the norms and laws of society to determine universal good-what is good for all societies
- Few people reach this level
- Gandhi - Reached this level because he did not subscribe to the idea that laws must be obeyed, and he carried out peaceful noncompliance against established laws

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Post-Conventional Level

- Stage 1: Social Contract Orientation
  - Person recognizes larger interests than current laws
  - Able to evaluate the morality of laws in a historical context
  - Feels an obligation to the law because of its benefits to society

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development - Post-Conventional Level

- Stage 2: Centers on Universal Principles
  - Person bases moral judgment on the higher abstract laws of truth, justice, and morality
**Importance of Kohlberg’s Work**

- Makes the link between moral development and reason
  - Sheds light on how reason influences moral judgments
- Proposes the possibility of encouraging movement through the stages via exposure to higher-stage reasoning

**Kohlberg: Factors Necessary for Moral Growth**

- Encouragement to examine situations from other points of view
- Exposure to individuals whose thinking is a stage higher than one’s own
- Exposure to conflicts in moral reasoning that challenges one’s present stage
- Engagement in logical thinking, such as reasoned argument and consideration of alternatives
- Responsibility for making moral decisions and acting on them
- Participation in creating and maintaining a just community

**Criticism of Kohlberg’s Work**

- **Justice Bias**
  - Stages centered on justice, ignoring other aspects of morality
- **Value Bias**
  - Emphasis on justice, rules, and rights vice caring and relationships
- **Deontological Bias**
  - Higher stages are based on deontological assumptions about universal ethical principles (Certain stages may be just culturally based beliefs)
Criticism of Kohlberg’s Work

- **Rationality Bias**
  - Emphasizes reason in moral decision; ignores emotional factors

- **Gender Bias**
  - Interviewed mostly boys
  - Emphasized traditionally “male” values and virtues

- **Cultural Bias**
  - Significant cultural differences have been found in the age at which children reach certain stages

- **Lack of Connection**
  - Difficult to link reasoning levels and moral actions in certain situations

Carol Gilligan (student of Kohlberg)

- Theorizes that women may possess a different morality from men.
  - Most men analyze moral decisions with a rules or justice orientation
  - Many women see the same moral dilemma with an orientation towards needs and relationships (Ethics of Care perspective)

Ethics, Behavior, and Criminality

- Are they linked?
  - It is difficult to consistently find a strong linkage between ethical beliefs held and criminality

- Is there a right model?
  - Once can explain behaviors by using either a social learning model or a stage development model
    - Both model have some common ground
    - But neither completely succeeds in explaining human behavior
Predicting Behavior

- It is difficult to predict behavior!
  - Psychologists have found that it is hard, if not impossible, to predict future behavior.
- However, some studies do find a correlation between beliefs and behaviors.
  - Main reasons for conducting background checks
- Main problem – how does one measure moral beliefs and then validate those measurements?

Teaching Ethics

- Many people believe that the general morality of this nation is declining. Reasons given include:
  - The elimination of many of the opportunities for teaching morals.
  - The community is not a cohesive force any longer
  - The authority of religion is not as pervasive as it once was
  - The family is weakening as a force of socialization
  - Educators have abdicated their responsibility for moral instruction.

Transparency International

- Rates corruption around the world
- In 2003, the United States ranked 16th. Behind Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom
Honesty

- Research on the Returned Wallet
- Men - 62% returned the wallet
- Women - 72% returned the wallet

- How many college students admitted to cheating at some point in high school or college?

Strongest Influence

- Administrators and supervisors exert the strongest influence on the ethical climate (culture) of an agency, regardless of whether ethics classes are offered.
  - If leaders are honest, ethical, and caring, there is a good chance that those who work for these managers are also ethical.
  - If administrators and or supervisors are hypocritical, untruthful, and use their positions for personal gain, then workers often march in these same footsteps.
  - Jocelyn M. Pollock, Ethics in Crime & Justice

Morality and Criminology

- Criminology: Concerned with crime or “unlawful behavior” (behavior that is usually judged as immoral)
- Deviance: A Sociological concept that means “behavior outside the norm”
# Origins of Delinquency

## Three Current Theories

- Temperament (biological)
- Attachment (parental child-rearing methods)
- Social Learning (peer influence)

## Origins of Delinquency

Current trend in Criminology seems to be moving back to developmental rather than social force theories. Some researchers suggest that temperament and attachment are interrelated:
- A child’s personality may affect parental interaction.
- Others suggest that attachment may affect age of onset of delinquency, but peer influence may affect continuation or intensity.

## Morality and Corrections

Early corrections concerned with reformation in a religious sense:
- Moral instruction

1950s-1970s: Corrections became more scientific:
- Focused on psychological readjustment (rehabilitation) and personal redemption

1980s-present: Reintroduction of “moral education”:
- Prisoners exposed to moral analysis and discussion
Choosing Behavior - Why be Ethical?

• Everyone would do well to become more aware of the implications of day-to-day choices
  • Small decisions become larger life positions in a slow, cumulative way

Choosing Behavior

1) Examine all possible solutions to the problem and be aware of the direct and indirect effects
  • Often ethical issues arise and are not recognized for what they are
    • Short term problems are addressed
    • Long term issues are ignored
  • Don’t rationalize unethical behavior by explaining that:
    • It only happened once
    • It was the easiest way
    • There was not intention to do wrong

Choosing Behavior

2) Determine whether any solutions would be viewed as unacceptable if made public, and for what reason
  • Unethical behavior is almost always hidden and may be followed by more unethical behavior to cover up what has already been done
Choosing Behavior

3) Reconcile the decision with one’s personal set of values or ethical system

Why Be Ethical?

Ethical systems not only attempt to answer “What is good?” but “Why be good?”

- Under ethical formalism, the answer is that the world works better, and it is rational to do one’s duty
- Under utilitarianism, the answer is that it is better for everyone, including the individual, to do what benefits the majority
- Under the ethics of care, the answer is that we naturally and instinctively have the capacity to care and to be concerned about others

Why Be Ethical?

Short answer: “So you can sleep at night”

Long answer: The dominant theme in all ethical systems is that we are connected to each other in fundamental and emotional ways

- Empathy and caring for one another
- “The reason that we should act ethically can be explained rationally (ethical formalism and utilitarianism) or intuitively (ethics of care and religion).”
  - Pollock