Moral Development, Values, and Religion

Chapter 7

Moral Development, Values, and Religion Chapter 7 Outline

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• Contexts of Moral Development
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• Values, Religion, and Cults
  ➢ Values
  ➢ Religion and Spirituality
  ➢ Cults

Domains of Moral Development

Moral development involves the distinction between what is right and wrong, what matter to people, and what people should do in their interactions with others.

• First, how do adolescents reason or think about rules for ethical conduct?
• Second, how do adolescents actually behave in moral circumstances?
• Third, how do adolescents feel about moral matters?
Moral Thought

- How do adolescents think about standards of right and wrong?
- He proposed that moral development is based primarily on moral reasoning and unfolds in a series of stages.
- A key concept in understanding moral development is internalization, the developmental change from behavior that is externally controlled to behavior that is controlled by internal standards and principles.

Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development

- Kohlberg’s Stages
  - Hypothesized three levels of moral development
    - Each level is characterized by two stages
  - A key concept in understanding moral development is internalization
    - the developmental change from behavior that is externally controlled to behavior that is controlled by internal standards and principles.

Domains of Moral Development

Kohlberg’s three levels of moral development.
Kohlberg's Level 1: Preconventional Reasoning

- Lowest level
- No internalization of moral values
- Controlled by external rewards and punishments
- Stage 1. Heteronomous morality
  - Moral thinking is often tied to punishment
- Stage 2. Individualism, instrumental purpose, and exchange
  - Individuals pursue their own interests but also let others do the same.

Kohlberg's Level 2: Conventional Reasoning

- Internalization is intermediate
- Individuals abide by certain standards (internal), but they are the standards of others (external), such as parents or the laws of society.
- Stage 3. Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity
  - Individuals value trust, caring, and loyalty to others
- Stage 4. Social systems morality
  - Understanding the social order, law, justice, and duty.

Kohlberg's Level 3: Postconventional Reasoning

- The highest level
- Morality is completely internalized and is not based on others' standards.
- Personal moral code
- Stage 5. Social contract or utility and individual rights
  - Values, rights, and principles transcend the law
- Stage 6. Universal ethical principles
  - Highest stage
  - The person has developed a moral standard based on universal human rights
Influences on Kohlberg’s Stages

- Cognitive development
- Exposure to appropriate social experiences
- Peer interaction
- Parent-child experiences

Why Is Kohlberg’s Theory Important for Understanding Moral Development in Adolescence?
- It tells the developmental story of people trying to understand things like society, rules and roles, and institutions and relationships.

Parenting Moral Children and Adolescents

- A recent research view concluded that, in general, moral children tend to have parents who (Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002, p. 134):
  - Are warm and supportive rather than punitive.
  - Use inductive discipline.
  - Provide opportunities for the children to learn about others’ perspectives and feelings.
  - Involve children in family decision making and in the process of thinking about moral decisions.
  - Model moral behaviors and thinking themselves, and provide opportunities for their children to do so.
  - Provide information about what behaviors are expected and why.
  - Foster an internal rather than an external sense of morality.

Schools

- The Hidden Curriculum
  - Conveyed by the moral atmosphere that is a part of every school
- Character Education
  - Teaching students a basic moral literacy
- Values Clarification
  - Helping people to clarify what is important to them, what is worth working for, and what purpose their lives are to serve
- Cognitive Moral Education
  - A concept based on the belief that students should learn to value things like democracy and justice as their moral reasoning develops
- Service Learning
  - A form of education that promotes social responsibility and service to the community.
Religion and Spirituality

- Religious and spiritual issues are important to adolescents and emerging adults (Lippman & Keith, 2006; Oser, Scarlett, & Bucher, 2006; Roehlkepartain, King, & Wagener, 2006).
- Analysis of the World Values Survey of 18- to 24-year olds revealed that emerging adults in less developed countries were more likely to be religious than their counterparts in more developed countries (Lippman & Keith, 2006).

The Positive Role of Religion and Spirituality in Adolescents' and Emerging Adults' Lives

- Linked with positive outcomes for adolescents and emerging adults (Benson, 2006; Cotton & others, 2006; King & Benson, 2006; Oser, Scarlett, & Butcher, 2006).
- Plays a role in adolescents' and emerging adults' health and whether they engage in problem behaviors (Cotton & others, 2006; Dowling & others, 2004; Oman & Thoresen, 2006; Rew & Wong, 2006).
- Many religious adolescents and emerging adults also internalize their religion's message about caring and concern for people (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2003).

Developmental Changes

- Adolescents and emerging adults may question what their own religious beliefs truly are.
- Erikson’s Theory
  - Identity development becomes a central focus
- Piaget’s Theory
  - Provides a theoretical backdrop for understanding religious development
Fowler’s Theory
• Proposed a theory of religious development.
• Focuses on the motivation to discover meaning in life, either within or outside of organized religion.
• Proposed six stages of religious development that are related to Erikson’s, Piaget’s, and Kohlberg’s theories of development (Torney-Purta, 1993):
  • Stage 1. Intuitive-projective faith (early childhood).
  • Stage 2. Mythical-literal faith (middle and late childhood).
  • Stage 3. Synthetic-conventional faith (transition between childhood and adolescence, early adolescence).
  • Stage 4. Individuative-reflective faith
  • Stage 5. Conjunctive faith (middle adulthood).
  • Stage 6. Universalizing faith

Religious Socialization and Parenting
• Introduce certain beliefs to children
• Ensure that they will carry on a religious tradition
• Adults tend to adopt the religious teachings of their upbringing.
• If a religious change or reawakening occurs, it is most likely to take place during adolescence.
• It is important to consider the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and whether mothers or fathers are more influential (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006; Granqvist & Dickie, 2006; Ream & Savin-Williams, 2003; Regnerus, Smith, & Smith 2004).
• Adolescents who have a positive relationship with their parents or are securely attached to them are likely to adopt their parents’ religious affiliation.

Religiousness and Sexuality in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood
• Most churches discourage premarital sex.
• Likely to hear messages about abstaining from sex.
• Involvement of adolescents and emerging adults in religious organizations also enhances the probability that they will become friends with adolescents who have restrictive attitudes toward premarital sex.
• Religion is a pervasive influence throughout the world
CULTS

- Defined in various ways,
  - “dangerous institutions that cause severe emotional harm”
  - “marginal and deviant groups”
  - “fringe, often new, religious movements.”
- Described as being controlled by a charismatic leader,
  - fostering the idea that there is only one correct set of beliefs and practices
  - demanding unquestionable loyalty and obedience
  - using mind-control techniques
  - using deception and deceit in recruiting and interacting with the outside world
  - exploiting members’ labor and finances (Galanter, 1999, 2000).

What is the difference between a cult and a church, a service club, or groups like Alcoholics Anonymous?

- The ultimate goal of the group (Cialdini & Rhoad, 1999).
  - Established religions and altruistic movements focus outward, attempting to better the lives of members as well as non-members.
  - Cults direct their energies inward rather than outward, serving their own purposes and those of the cult’s leader.
  - Religions and altruistic movements usually do not involve overbearing authoritarian control by a leader, the use of deception in recruiting members, coercive influence techniques, or the replacement of a recruit’s identity with a new identity that would not have been freely chosen by the individual before joining the group.

Who joins cults?

- For the most part, normal, average people (Oser, Scarlett, & Bucher, 2006).
  - Approximately two-thirds of cult members are psychologically healthy individuals who come from normal families (Cialdini & Rhoad, 1999).
  - The remaining one-third often have depressive symptoms, in many cases linked with personal loss such as a death in the family, a failed romantic relationship, or career problems.
  - Only about 5 percent of cult members have major psychological problems before joining the cult.
  - Cults prefer intelligent, productive individuals who can contribute money and talent to “the cause,” whatever that might be.
Who joins cults?

- It is possible that timing rather than personality is the determining factor in vulnerability to cults.
- Many individuals who become cult members are in a transitional phase of life.
  - moved to a new city
  - lost a job
  - dropped out of school
  - given up traditional religion as personally irrelevant.
- Cults promise to fulfill most of a person’s individual needs and to make his or her life safe, healthy, caring, and predictable.
- Cult leaders offer followers simple or predictable paths to happiness.