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Ethics and Us: A Review of the Moral Psychology Field

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Abstract

The field of moral psychology is a field of growing interest as psychologists become more interested in the study of how people make decisions about right and wrong. Research from several different disciplines has contributed to the study of moral psychology, making it inherently interdisciplinary. Moral psychology finds its roots in philosophical theories, before finding its place in developmental psychology. More modern research includes contributions from anthropology, evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and more. Future moral psychology research may discover more disciplines that can contribute to the research and explain the real-life implications of people's moral systems. This paper traces the history of moral psychology research in a chronological review of the related literature. With several suggestions for future research, this review first presents an overview of the literature before providing ideas for the future of moral psychology research.

"In an ideal world, we'd all transform ourselves into experts and make judgments based on

extensive knowledge. Given that this will never happen, our next best option is to emulate the

wisdom of Socrates: We become wiser when we acknowledge our ignorance."

- Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them*, 2013

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Preface

On the one hand, I'm not a good person.

I've cheated on tests, I've lied to my parents. I've walked past the bell-ringing charity workers while trying not to make eye contact and I've sought revenge on my enemies (my grandpa always used to say, "Don't get mad, get even"). I believe the ends justify the means and will do anything it takes to get where I want to be.

On the other hand, I am a good person.

I've never committed mass murder, or murdered anyone at that. I've never robbed a bank or a house and I've never enslaved or tortured anyone because of differing political or religious beliefs. I try to understand other perspectives and help my classmates and friends whenever I can.

So maybe I'll leave it up to you to decide whether I'm a good person or not and end the thesis here. Case closed. Or maybe there's a way to figure out once and for all what kind of person I am. Enter moral psychology: a small facet of the psychology field that few people know about but describes how people make their moral decisions. Moral psychology studies how people make decisions about right and wrong and can tell us why two people make opposing decisions in the same moral situation. By understanding people's moral values and how these impact their decisions and behaviors, we can be better at seeing other perspectives and understanding just where people with opposing views are coming from.

Religion was what really sparked my interest in moral psychology. In high school, I can remember pondering how some of the most religious people I knew were also some of the worst people I knew. One day they'd be selfish and rude and exclusive, and the next day they'd be submerging themselves in water wearing T-shirts committing themselves to their belief in a

perfectly moral being (Just to clarify, not *every* religious person was the worst person I knew. My best friend was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and she was the *best* person I knew.). It made me wonder how rubbing ash on their foreheads once a year alone qualified them for "goodness," despite their actions over the rest of the year. It just did not seem, well, fair.

That was around the time I started studying psychology. I was interested in how the way that we think changes our perceptions and behaviors in the outside world. When I started taking psychology and sociology classes in high school, the world made so much more sense to me. I saw concepts like confirmation bias and fundamental attribution error everywhere around me and felt like I was in on a big secret about tricks the rest of the world did not know they were falling for. However, my high school education was not enough to answer all of the questions I had about psychology, so I continued to college to major in the field.

When I got to DePauw, I became involved with The Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics, which had a team of student interns that did work on something called "ethics." We did not have any ethics (or philosophy) classes at my high school, so I was not really sure what I was getting myself into. For the first year, there was a lot of talk about things like "virtues" and "utilitarianism" and "Kant," which certainly found freshman year Jillian lost in the back of the classroom.

Then the world broke. A global pandemic struck and we were all sent home from school, confused and missing the taste of freedom we had barely gotten. And people were *mad*. About everything. The best you could do was stick close to those you knew would not try to argue with you (also known as your echochamber) and could relieve a little of the tension surrounding the country. There were two clear sides to every issue, and if you did not commit yourself to one

side, you were a traitor to both. Suddenly, you could tell everyone's respective political party just by what they were wearing (or not wearing) on their faces. Even your hairdresser all of a sudden had strong opinions about how the liberals were trying to ruin the country with a fake pandemic to scare everyone into submission by the government. The world was black and white, you were this or you were that. You believed this or you believed that. You either made masks with your at-home sewing kit or you bought them off of Etsy and burned them in your backyard. There was no in between.

I came back to school to a single room and virtual classes, one of which was a class on evolutionary psychology. It was here that I discovered moral psychology, which combined both my psychology interests as well as the work I was starting to do more of at The Prindle Institute. Starting with Jonathan Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory, I was set on identifying how people decide right from wrong, both at an intuitive level and a reasoning level. I was drawn to the idea of moral foundations, or moral frameworks, that describe the ways in which people interpret moral situations.

Thus, my senior thesis projects were born. For my psychology major project, I am conducting a study to identify the common moral considerations college students use in their moral reasoning. Participants will read ten different moral situations college students face (underage drinking, cheating on assignments, lying to professors, etc.) and indicate what decision they would make and why. Borrowing from The Prindle Institute's Six Ethical Dimensions, I will use the frameworks to code the moral reasoning responses and see if particular frameworks appear more often than others (perhaps college students tend to use a consequences-based approach when making a moral decision, or a virtues-based approach). This can then tell us

about the moral values college students have, which could be different from middle school students or adults, and may even vary internally such as between the male and female students.

Then, for my Honors Scholar thesis, comes this paper. This 60-some page paper is a review of the moral psychology field as a whole. It reviews the most relevant moral psychology research and emphasizes their importance and implications. To understand some of the modern moral psychology theories, though, I had to start from the beginning, focusing on the heavy philosophical work that laid the groundwork for modern moral psychology. As a growing field, there is a lot of innovative research happening, with big holes begging to be filled. The future of moral psychology research is wide open and offers infinite paths to follow to fill these holes. Moral psychology is a highly interdisciplinary field, inviting researchers from many different disciplines to add to the literature. The name itself is interdisciplinary, highlighting the prominence of philosophy and psychology in the research.

Now that I've recognized the events that got me here, I need to recognize the people. Thank you to my parents, my dad for showing me how the world works practically as black and white, and my mom for showing me all the gray areas in between that make the world messy and fun. My sister, for always being there as I tried and failed while exploring all the different colors of the world and my Nana for helping me through that. Thank you to my sponsor, Kevin Moore, for even introducing me to the vibrant world of moral psychology, and for supporting me in my research and future endeavors. Also to my other committee members, Ted Bitner and Mercy Corredor, for guiding me through the specifics of the heavy literature. It always takes a village.

A full understanding of the moral psychology field requires that we look at where it came from, where it is now, and options for where it might go in the future. Because of this, that is how I decided to structure this paper. I will start with the philosophical roots of the discipline,

look at modern theories and research, and go over possibilities for future research and what we still need and want to know. I also wanted to highlight the disciplinary nature of moral psychology, so I review the relevant literature in philosophy, developmental psychology, anthropology, evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology. Other inherent disciplines can be deciphered from the implications of the research as well, such as sociology and political psychology. My hope is that by reading this review of moral psychology, readers can have a full understanding of what kind of research is out there on this topic and what the research findings mean for their personal lives.

And from there, it's up to you. Am I a good person? Are you a good person? How can we be good people? Moral psychology can help lead us to the answers to these questions, as well as bring up new questions to ask when navigating this world of right and wrong.

Introduction

Moral psychology is a facet of psychology that often gets ignored or looked over. Psychologists may have a limited understanding of the field of study from their work in social psychology, developmental psychology, or even evolutionary psychology, but few have a good understanding of the research that has been done within moral psychology. With this being the case, the average person has no knowledge on the subject, despite it having significant implications for their life. How one makes decisions in moral situations depends on the individual's moral psychology, and can explain how two people could make completely different decisions with the same knowledge in a moral situation.

Our moral systems determine little actions such as whether to let a friend copy homework to big actions such as who to vote for in an election. Moral psychology is a field that calls for much more attention and exploration, both on how our moral systems work and the implications of these systems in the real world. This paper will attempt to give a full overview of the field, beginning with where moral psychology came from, current research in the field, and suggestions for the future of moral psychology research and implementation.

In order to understand what moral psychology is exactly, we will start with the "moral" in moral psychology. The study of morality is central to the philosophy discipline, so much of the moral psychology literature draws from philosophical ideas. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy presents two definitions of morality: a descriptive and a normative (prescriptive) definition (Gert & Gert, 2020). Descriptively, morality is defined as "certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her own behavior." Here, morality outlines the way people live their lives and make decisions about right and wrong, often dictated by social norms and rules. This definition describes a version of the

study of morality that tells what *is* and does not take an objective stance on what is right or

wrong. Normatively, morality is defined as "a code of conduct that, given specified conditions,

would be put forward by all rational people." This definition of morality does describe what is

objectively right or wrong, and studies the tools and strategies one should use to distinguish

between the two.

There is much debate in the philosophy field surrounding the difference between

"morality" and "ethics." Many researchers use these terms interchangeably, while others strongly

believe in the difference between the two. For many, ethics defines the study of the broader field

of morality, searching for the objective truth of what is right or wrong (Lee, 1928). Here, where

morality studies the codes of conduct individuals carry with them, ethics aims to find the rational

and researched basis for the principles that should dictate one's morality. Ethics is the study of

whether particular moral principles are right or wrong, primarily based in ancient philosophical

thought. Someone's individual morality may be based on their religious or cultural values, and

ethics allows philosophers to evaluate these values. Many scholars argue that morality is

descriptive, while ethics is prescriptive, dividing the definitions from the Stanford Encyclopedia

of Philosophy between the two terms (Gert & Gert, 2020). The difference between the terms

"morality" and "ethics" vary depending on which scholar you are reading, and are often used

interchangeably, especially in disciplines outside of philosophy. For the purposes of this paper,

and to be consistent with the psychology literature, these two terms will be used interchangeably

to avoid further muddiness.

With a better understanding of morality, its psychological application becomes more

clear. Moral psychology, then, is "the study of human thought and behavior in ethical contexts"

(Doris et al., 2020), or, the study of how people make decisions about right and wrong. This line

of psychology studies how people practically make distinctions between right and wrong in their daily lives. This is different from moral philosophy, which instead proposes how people *should* make distinctions between right and wrong in their lives. Of course, moral psychology is in a lot of ways at the intersection of the broader psychology and philosophy fields, but finds its place in psychology because of its more pragmatic and experimental nature. Moral psychology draws on the abstract concepts suggested by the philosophy field to perform empirical research on people's moral systems.

The interdisciplinary nature of moral psychology does not stop there, though. Information from other fields like developmental psychology (Hamlin et al., 2007; Kohlberg, 1958), anthropology (Shweder et al., 1997), evolutionary psychology (Darwin, 1871; Haidt, 2012), neuroscience and cognitive psychology (Damasio, 1994; Greene, 2013; Kahneman, 2011), and more have all contributed to the modern understanding of the field. By studying childhood development, people, our evolutionary backgrounds, and how our brains work, moral psychologists have developed an elementary understanding of our moral systems, but much more research is needed. This leaves moral psychology open to contributions from other disciplines as well that could help inform where our moral systems came from and how they impact aspects of our everyday lives.

This paper will illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of moral psychology with a general overview of the field. Beginning with its philosophical roots, this paper will discuss early philosophical theories relating to modern moral psychology, review the current moral psychology literature and how it has been informed by different disciplines, and finally discuss where the field is headed and possibilities for the future. The field of moral psychology is rich in research, but still has some major holes. This comprehensive overview will inform any moral

psychologist, and others in related disciplines, of where moral psychology stands while also

providing suggestions for future research.

Past

In order to understand where moral psychology is today, we must acknowledge its philosophical roots. Born in 469 BC, Greek philosopher Socrates believed that the quality of our souls determines the quality of our lives, so we must work to improve our souls (Cooper, 2016). He sought after virtues that would indicate forms of knowledge and outline how to lead a happy and "good" life. As a follower of Socrates, Greek philosopher Plato agreed that it is important to work toward improving the quality of the soul, but disagreed with Socrates on how one should do that (Schofield, 2016). Instead of identifying virtues as forms of knowledge that apply to every person, Plato believed that we can best improve our souls by practicing reasoning skills, humanity's unique function. Plato also branched out to other fields of study in his philosophical works, such as mathematics and psychology.

Finally, Aristotle entered the Greek philosophical scene with his study on the virtues and vices of the soul (Irwin, 2016). According to Aristotle, people should align themselves with virtuous decisions, always striving to do the "right" thing, such as being honest instead of dishonest, fair instead of unfair, kind instead of unkind, etc. These three ancient philosophers set the scene for the further development of philosophical frameworks to guide moral decision making. In fact, one of the most well-known modern western ethical theories started with Aristotle himself: virtue ethics. Just as the name suggests, this theory focuses on the virtues one must acquire in order to live a good life. Aristotle (2002) focused not on the moral action of a situation, but rather the moral character of a person. He emphasized activating the right level of personal virtues such as honesty, courage, justice, generosity, and more. It would not be good character to express too much honesty, or too little, but a good person should practice just the

right amount of honesty. Virtue ethics places virtues and vices at the center of the theory, asking what the most virtuous person would do in a given situation (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022).

Another popular modern ethical theory is consequentialism, which focuses on all of the potential consequences of a moral act (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2019). In consequentialism, it does not matter what the most virtuous person would do in a situation, but rather it identifies all of the possible consequences and suggests that the action with the most positive outcome should be taken. A popular form of consequentialism, utilitarianism, gives specification to "the most positive outcome" by suggesting that the most positive outcome can be defined by the outcome that produces the most happiness for the greatest number of people (Driver, 2014). Philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham (1789), John Stuart Mill (1863), and Henry Sidgwick (1874) were all early proponents of utilitarianism. Mill explains this theory, stating that "[a]ctions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1863, p. 77). Consequentialism is a moral framework that examines all of the possible consequences of an action and weighs the positivity of the outcomes, and utilitarianism decides the most positive outcome based on what action will produce the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

The final prevalent modern ethical theory, deontology, is an ethical theory that often stands in opposition to consequentialism. Instead of focusing on all of the consequences of an action, deontology instead focuses on the individuals involved and suggests that not all moral actions can be justified by the consequences (Alexander & Moore, 2020). Deontology can be divided into two subcategories: agent-centered and patient-centered. The agent-centered approach focuses on a person's moral agency, and the idea that we have a duty to not cause harm to others. The patient-centered approach highlights the rights of others, and how those inherent

rights (such as the right not to be killed) should not be violated. Immanuel Kant (1998) is the philosopher most commonly associated with deontological theory, making his focus the weighing of duties and rights of a given moral situation.

Kant also proposed what is known as the categorical imperative, which states that an action is moral so long as it can be universalized without contradiction. What this means is that for every action, one should consider what would happen if everyone chose that action. For example, if you are thinking about stealing, you might imagine what would happen if *everyone* stole. If everyone decided to steal, presumably there would be nothing left to steal eventually, leaving people with no reason to steal. This is where the contradiction lies, for if there is nothing to steal, there would be no use for stealing, therefore stealing is an immoral act (The same goes for lying. If everyone lied, there would be no trust, and then no reason to lie. Thus, lying is also immoral.) On the flip side, if everyone respected their teachers, there would be more respect, and nothing would lead us to stop respecting, so respecting teachers is a moral act. Another part of the categorical imperative states that people should never be used as a means to achieve an end, but must only be treated as the end itself. Therefore, where a consequentialist might propose that using someone as a means is moral as long as it leads to the best consequences, a deontologist would disagree, claiming that people should never be used as a means in any situation.

It is important to note here that Greek philosophy, which became the basis for modern western philosophy, does not hold the only set of ethical theories and frameworks out there. In fact, western, educated, industrialized, religious, and democratic (WEIRD) states are the outliers of the world (Henrich et al., 2010). Eastern philosophy is based on Chinese philosophy, which focuses less on rational reasoning and ideas of good over evil, and looks instead to religious and spiritual teachings and good and evil coexisting. Additionally, western philosophical thought

emphasizes finding truth, whereas eastern philosophy emphasizes the protocol or way of becoming a moral person. Where in western philosophy, knowledge is gained through reasoning, Chinese philosophy interweaves knowledge with morality. For eastern philosophers, morality is necessary for acquiring knowledge, thus linking what is good with what is true (Rošker, 2021). Another notable difference is how western philosophy deals with an objective reality separate from the subject of philosophical thought. Chinese philosophy approaches knowledge as a relational epistemology, which views the world as a complex structure composed of relations and interactions.

One significant eastern philosopher was Laozi, who is thought to have been the creator of the Daoism philosophy. Daoism highlights a central difference between western philosophy and eastern philosophy with the Chinese *dao*, or, way or path (Hansen, 2007). *Dao* was at the center of early Chinese philosophy, where truth would be its western counterpart. This eastern thought also included different linguistic theories, such as *ming* (name). This concept was expanded on to describe a sort of contrast-theory of naming. It suggests that everything that can be named comes with an opposite complement in its denotation. Because of this inconstancy, the *dao* will therefore be inconstant. Confucius, arguably the most well-known Chinese philosopher, disagreed. He believed that there was a common *dao* for all cultures to follow to be a moral person. Similar to Aristotle, Confucius is said to have spoken about virtues, and how these ideal moral behaviors allow one to follow the "way of the gentleman" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020). The five main virtues Confucius spoke on were benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness. He also linked filial piety in the family life with loyalty in the political sphere, suggesting that those who were loyal to their families would be loyal to their political superiors.

Ethical theory and ethical frameworks are about as far as philosophy takes us in the field of moral psychology. Moral psychologists and philosophers differ in their approaches to morality in a significant way. While philosophers tend to ask questions about what someone *should* do in a situation, moral psychologists ask questions about what someone *does* do (some philosophers do this when studying morality in the descriptive sense). Moral psychologists are not interested in recommending that people follow virtue theory in their lives, but rather use virtue theory to analyze how people are already making their moral decisions. By framing early ethical theories like virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology in terms of modern moral decisions, psychologists can illuminate the origin of differing perspectives and internal tension when it comes to moral situations. The philosophy is certainly present in moral psychological thinking, but it may be more or less relevant when put to practical use.

Where our moral decision-making skills come from has been highly debated in the literature. In psychological studies in general, a common question that arises is whether the results were due to nature (what we are born with) or nurture (what we learn from experience). In the philosophy and moral psychology fields, this is better described as the nativist-empiricist debate (Samet & Zaitchik, 2017). The tension in understanding how we acquire knowledge is split on ideas such as how we acquire our moral intuitions. The nativist approach claims that moral intuitions are pre-programmed without having to learn them. A notable nativist was the philosopher Descartes (1901), who argued that we are born with certain forms of knowledge, and this knowledge directs how we live and see the world. Many studies across multiple disciplines have found evidence supporting the nativist perspective on moral intuition, such as with studies on compassion, empathy, and altruism in humans and primates, the neurocognitive roots of moral judgment, and moral universals (Mikhail, 2020).

The empiricism approach, on the other hand, claims that moral intuitions are learned and cultivated through experience. Philosopher John Locke (1690) is known for his assertion that the mind is a blank slate (tabula rasa) at birth, and is then filled in through lived experiences. Similarly, research on the empiricist perspective on moral intuition has held up, pointing out that certain emotions important for moral reasoning are difficult to develop if not learned in childhood (Slote, 2014). With both approaches contributing literature that supports their position, it is quite possible that they both play a role in morality, much like how nature and nurture both play a role in psychology. However, whether one aligns themselves with nativist or empiricist views informs where they believe a person's moral psychological thoughts come from, and therefore how they conduct their research on moral psychology.

Ancient philosophers have also made the distinction between moral intuition, our automatic moral inclinations, and moral reasoning, our more thoughtful and rational approach to a moral situation (Dellantonio & Job, 2012). This dichotomy of the mind has been explored further in psychological studies, notably with Kahneman's (2011) description of System 1 processing (intuition) and System 2 processing (reason), which will be discussed further later in the paper. These two systems are often in conflict, with System 1 thought encompassing fast, instinctual notions and System 2 thought encompassing slow, deliberate notions. Competing notions of which system should take control have long dominated the moral discourse. The aforementioned ancient philosopher Plato (2008) was one who wholeheartedly believed that reason was the most important part of the mind to use when it comes to making decisions to live a happy life. For Plato, moral reasoning was a powerful tool that humans possess that can give us all of the answers we need to do the right thing.

Conversely, the philosopher David Hume (1739) famously argued that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions." For Hume, the sole purpose of moral reasoning was to serve and obey our moral intuitions by providing mere explanations for why we feel the way we do. Our moral intuitions, then, are what lead us to do the right thing. Other philosophers like Thomas Jefferson argued for a coexistence of moral intuition and moral reasoning, claiming that they are both important for different reasons (Lewis et al., 1999). The current literature on moral thought is undergoing a great shift from what was previously an emphasis on moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1958) to now putting more weight on moral intuition (Haidt, 2012). This epistemological shift in how researchers understand morality is impacting how research is being conducted, and leaves room for new thought and interpretation on what studies in morality should and do look like.

Historically, philosophers and moral psychologists have focused on the moral reasoning process of morality, but the literature has seen a shift to a focus on moral intuitions in more contemporary research (Haidt, 2012). Developmental psychology has taught researchers a lot when it comes to how morality evolves throughout childhood. Jean Piaget (1932) came out with research on the subject, studying the turn in moral development in children from heteronomous morality, or, moral realism, to autonomous morality, or, moral relativism. Heteronomous morality occurs in children around 5-9 years old, and demonstrates that children base their interpretations of right and wrong on other's rules and laws. Then, Piaget notes a shift to autonomous morality at around 9-10 years old, which is where children start to base their interpretations of right and wrong on their *own* rules. Again, these early models of morality focus on the moral reasoning of children in order to understand how they make moral decisions and where they get their sense of right and wrong.

More modern research in developmental psychology suggests that children have a sense of right and wrong from birth, suggesting some kind of innateness to our understanding of morality. Hamlin et al. (2007) tested this with 6- and 10-month-old infants, who were found to prefer helpers over hinderers. The researchers presented the infants with a climber, often a red circle with googly eyes, who is trying to get to the top of a hill (as indicated by its eyes looking upward and unsuccessful attempts to push itself to the top). This personified circle would move up a shallow incline of the hill and sit on a landing, unable to push itself up a steeper incline. Next, the infants were shown alternating scenes featuring a helper and a hinderer. These characters were played by either a blue square or a yellow triangle with googly eyes, which the researchers mixed up between the helper and hinderer between trials to control for color or shape preference in the infants.

In the helper scenes, the shape came in near the bottom of the hill and pushed the circle up the steeper incline to the top of the hill. In the hinderer scenes, the shape came in at the top of the hill and pushed the circle off of the landing and back to the bottom of the hill. After being shown these alternating scenes for a certain period of time, the researchers came out with the puppets of the helper and hinderer and offered them to the infant. The infants overwhelmingly chose to take the helper over the hinderer, indicating a preference for the "good" helper shape over the "bad" hinderer shape. According to these studies, there are certain intuitions we are born with that give way to preferences for good over bad and these preferences develop as we gain moral reasoning skills throughout childhood.

Piaget (1972) is also known for his stages of cognitive development in children, describing how people learn as they develop throughout childhood. His first stage is the sensorimotor stage, which occurs in children between 0-2 years old. In this stage, children learn

about their environment with their senses and other motor activities. Next is the preoperational stage, occurring between 2-7 years old. Here, children start to learn to use mental abstractions and mental representations as opposed to mere physical representations. The following concrete operational stage describes children 7-11 years old. Cognitive development is great at this age, allowing children to become better problem-solvers with the ability to consider numerous consequences and perspectives in situations. Finally, the formal operational stage includes anyone over the age of 11 (even adults). This stage highlights the advanced ability to think abstractly about any situation, real or not real. Piaget's model influenced moral reasoning models that would become popular decades later.

One of the most popular developmental psychology moral reasoning models came from Lawrence Kohlberg's (1958) subsequent work on moral stages, with a cognitive and developmental perspective on morality. Compared to Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, Kohlberg's stages of moral development outlines moral development in three stages: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Each of these stages is then broken down into two substages, focusing on a different age group. The pre-conventional stage, focusing on children 3-7 years old, claims that moral reasoning is based on simple rewards and punishment. Children in this stage decide right and wrong based on what they are rewarded for, and conversely what they get in trouble for. The conventional stage, looking at children 8-13 years old, states that moral reasoning is based on external factors such as social rules and their relationships to others. Children in the conventional stage decide right and wrong based on what makes them seem like a good person to the people around them.

Finally, the post-conventional stage is broken down between teens and adults. This, according to Kohlberg, is where people start to base their perceptions on right and wrong on their

own personal ethical systems. Teens start to think about ethical issues in a utilitarian way,

figuring out what decisions produce the best overall outcomes. In adulthood, Kohlberg suggests

that people base their moral decisions on universal principles that indicate right and wrong. This

moral development outline, rooted in research on the moral reasoning skills of children at

different ages, sparked further interest in how moral reasoning develops in the moral psychology

literature.

  In order to test how people use moral reasoning in practical situations, Rest et al. (1974)

developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT). The DIT reworks Kohlberg's stages of moral

development to identify what stage of reasoning the participants used in their moral reasoning.

Originally, the DIT(1) was made up of six different dilemmas, but has been reworked into the

DIT2 (Rest et al., 1999), which is made up of five different dilemmas. Participants are asked to

read a dilemma (a father thinks about stealing food from a rich man for his starving family, a

doctor has to decide whether to give an overdose of a painkiller to a suffering patient, etc.),

choose a course of action, and then determine which moral issues are most important in the given

dilemma. For example, the dilemma where the father contemplates stealing food from a rich man

raises issues such as "Isn't it only natural for a loving father to care so much for his family that

he would steal?", "Does the rich man deserve to be robbed for being so greedy?", and "Would

stealing food bring about more total good for everybody concerned or wouldn't it?" All twelve of

the issues are possible thoughts people might have during their moral reasoning through the

moral dilemma.

  Participants are then asked to rank the issues in terms of importance on a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from "No" importance to "Great" importance. After, participants rank their top

four most important issues when considering the case. This allows participants to face a moral

dilemma, choose what they would do in the situation, and then consider which issues they

thought most relevant during their moral reasoning process. The researchers can then code the

responses based on which issues people deemed most important, and determine whether they

align with Kohlberg's preconventional stage (issues of personal interest), conventional stage

(issues of social norms), or postconventional stage (issues concerning more advanced moral

development). The DIT1 and the DIT2 are among some of the first morality tests of their time,

teaching researchers how to assess how people make moral decisions.

   A student of Kohlberg's disagreed with the descriptions of his stages. Gilligan's (1982)

moral model followed Kohlberg's stage theory approach, but narrowed it down to women and a

focus on the ethic of care. In some of Kohlberg's research, women scored lower than men, which

Kohlberg used to suggest that the women were less morally developed than the men. Other

psychologists such as Sigmund Freud (1971) also believed that because women were more

attached to their mothers, they were morally deficient. Gilligan asserted that, in opposition to

Kohlberg's male-focused moral stages that focus on justice, women's moral stages focus instead

on care, or what the most caring thing to do would be. Rather than women's moral systems being

focused on rules and justice, Gilligan found them to be based on connections and care toward

others. Gilligan separates her stages in the same way that Kohlberg did: preconventional,

conventional, and postconventional, but the goals of her stages are what differ from Kohlberg's

model.

   In the preconventional stage, Gilligan argues that the goal for women is individual

survival. This would presumably be from around birth until around 7 or 9 years old. Next,

Gilligan suggests a transitional phase where women shift in their morals from focusing on what

is selfish to their responsibility to others (family, friends, etc.). In the conventional stage,

focusing on the tween and teen years, women start to see self sacrifice as what is "good" or "right." This is in stark contrast to the preconventional stage. Another transitional period occurs next in Gilligan's model, showing a shift from self-sacrifice as goodness to an understanding of the woman as a distinct individual with needs. This is seen in Kohlberg's post-conventional stage, where teens start to base their moral decisions on their own ethical beliefs.

Finally, in Gilligan's post-conventional stage, women follow the principle of nonviolence, to not do harm to others or to oneself. This could be seen as a "universal principle" that Kohlberg suggests at the end of his moral development stages. The universal principle of nonviolence makes moral decisions that hurt others seem wrong in both morality theories. This theory of moral development proposed by Gilligan suggests that people with different moral systems (such as one with an emphasis on care) develop those systems differently from other moral systems (such as Kohlberg's, which emphasizes justice).

While past models focused on the development of moral reasoning as one ages, current models focus more on moral intuition and possible explanations of that. As social psychologist Jonathan Haidt suggests in his book on moral psychology, "[r]easoning can take us to almost any conclusion we want to reach" (Haidt, 2012, p. 91). Because of this, moral psychologists are shifting to focus on moral intuitions rather than moral reasoning. Psychologists such as Haidt are turning away from learning how people can make up post hoc reasonings to justify a moral feeling, and turning toward those initial moral feelings. Moral intuition research has added cross-cultural and evolutionary research as well as new neuroscience findings to the moral psychology literature, which has enhanced our understanding of how people make moral decisions.

Present

One of the earliest attempts to identify a set of common moral intuitions came from Shweder et al's (1997) anthropological study of the people of Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. In this study, Shweder et al. interviewed residents of Bhubaneswar to identify what they considered to be breaches of morality or transgressions in their culture. Examples of these transgressions included, "A letter arrived addressed to a fourteen-year-old son. Before the boy returned home, his father opened the letter and read it," "After defecation, (making a bowel movement) a woman did not change her clothes before cooking," and "A brother and sister decide to get married and have children." In order to code these incidents and find commonalities between them, the researchers listened to the rationales behind why certain incidents were right or wrong. These rationales included issues of harm, rights, justice, duty, hierarchy, interdependency, sacred order, natural order, and personal sanctity. Once these rationales were outlined, Shweder et al. were able to group them together and define their "Big Three" of morality: the ethics of autonomy, the ethics of community, and the ethics of divinity.

The ethics of autonomy was described as the cluster that relies on concepts such as harm, rights, and justice to protect an individual's will in their pursuit of their own personal preferences. Autonomy would be a strong ethic of societies that promote individualism in their people. The ethics of community, on the other hand, relies on concepts like duty, hierarchy, and interdependency to protect the society as a whole. Community would be an ethic of societies that promote more collectivism and strengthening of the entire group. Finally, the ethics of divinity is made up of sacred order, natural order, and personal sanctity ideas. Divinity aims to protect the spirit and soul from degradation. These "Big Three" then outline the basic moral thoughts of being an individual, being part of a larger group, and keeping one's spirit clean. After identifying

The Big Three, Shweder et al. were able to go back to their initial list of Oriya-identified

transgressions and identify where they fell between issues of autonomy, community, and divinity.

A more modern research call has been made to the evolutionary psychology field to help

study where we get these "ethics" or moral frameworks. The father of evolution, Charles Darwin

(1859), famously proposed his "survival of the fittest" theory, claiming that natural selection

would favor the traits that were best suited for survival and reproductive success. Perhaps then

evolution favored those *moral* traits that were best suited for survival and reproductive success

throughout our evolutionary history. Darwin (1871) believed that our evolutionary ancestors

learned preferences for feelings of sympathy and submission to authority because these traits

gave our ancestors a better chance at survival. Due to the tribal nature of the lives of our

evolutionary ancestors, they needed to learn how to work in groups and be loyal to one another.

Thus, perhaps evolution can inform moral psychologists on the reasons people believe traits like

care, respect, and loyalty are good morals. Actions like ignoring someone in need of help, rising

up against an authority figure, and cheating a friend are then seen as bad morals, which would

not have been ways our ancestors could have ensured survival.

Similar to Shweder et al's (1997) moral outline, Haidt and Joseph (2007) developed five

evolutionarily-based moral foundations that seem to hold true to an array of different people and

cultures: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and

sanctity/degradation. Following a traditional nativist view, Haidt explains how each of these

foundations may have been adapted, as Darwin suggested, through evolutionary means. To

begin, the adaptive challenge for the care/harm foundation would be that of protecting children

from harm and caring for them. This foundation was most likely triggered by one's children

suffering, but is triggered today by childlike creatures, cartoon characters, etc. People who value

the care/harm foundation most likely also value compassion and the qualities of being caring or kind. Fairness/cheating was most likely developed in order to reap the benefits of reciprocity and was triggered by people who were either cheating or cooperating. Today, this foundation is seen when people cheat each other (like infidelity), or when someone does not get something they believe they deserve. It elicits feelings of anger, guilt, and gratitude, and those that value the fairness/cheating foundation most likely value others that are fair, just, and trustworthy.

The loyalty/betrayal foundation was most likely developed to face the challenge of forming cohesive coalitions and alliances, and was triggered by a threat or a challenge to the group. Today, it is similarly triggered by threats to groups such as sports teams or one's nation. It may bring about emotions such as group pride and rage or anger at traitors to the group, and those that value this foundation also value loyalty, patriotism, and self-sacrifice for the good of the group. Authority/subversion was adapted to forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies and determine who was in power and who was not. It was originally triggered by signs of dominance and, conversely, submission, and it is triggered today by relationships like bosses and employees or professionals and the public. Some emotions associated with the authority/subversion foundation include respect or fear, and people who value authority/subversion value people's obedience and deference to those in authority positions. Finally, the sanctity/degradation foundation was adapted to avoid contamination as well as certain triggers like waste products and diseased people. Today, this foundation might be triggered by taboo ideas such as communism and racism, or even more progressive values that contradict spiritual or religious beliefs. It brings about emotions of disgust, and those who value the sanctity/degradation foundation will value virtues of temperance, chastity, piety, and cleanliness.

These immediate flashes of approval or disapproval in moral situations studied by Shweder et al. (1997) and Haidt and Joseph (2007) are the closest emotions moral psychologists have found to study moral intuitions. Before their five moral foundations, Haidt and Joseph (2004) initially suggested four basic clusters of moral inclinations that they identified as suffering, hierarchy, reciprocity, and purity. It is worth noting that Shweder et al. identified all four of these to some extent within their ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. The research seems to suggest the possibility of an innate set of moral foundations including these traits (and possibly others) that can be activated by people cross-culturally. However, the moral transgressions described by the Oriya people were very different from the moral transgressions suggested by Haidt. As Haidt and Joseph point out, different cultures do face similar problems such as how to divide power and resources, how to care for children, and how to resolve disputes. It is still likely, though, that other moral foundations are developed by experience differently depending on the culture.

To test people's moral intuitions based on their Moral Foundations Theory, Graham et al. (2012) (involving the contributions of Haidt himself) developed the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). This test measures which of the five moral foundations people closely align with. The MFQ contains a list of 32 statements (two of which are attention check questions) for the participant to rate how relevant each moral statement is (for the first 16 questions) or how much they agree with each statement (for the second 16 questions). Statements like "Whether or not someone suffered emotionally" are used to indicate a preference for the care/harm foundation, "Whether or not some people were treated differently than others" for the fairness/cheating foundation, "Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country" for the loyalty/betrayal foundation, "Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect

for authority" for the authority/subversion foundation, and "Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency" for the sanctity/degradation foundation.

Participants' responses to the moral statements they find relevant and the statements they agree with highlight the particular foundations they most likely consider in their own moral situations. For example, if a participant were to indicate that "Whether or not someone suffered emotionally" and "Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable" are extremely relevant to their moral thinking and "Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency" and "Whether or not someone did something disgusting" are not at all relevant to their moral thinking, their moral decisions would most likely align with the care/harm foundation and not align with the sanctity/degradation foundation.

Haidt's moral foundations and the MFQ have become useful to other research on beliefs and emotions. In Graham et al's (2009) study, the researchers found that American liberals and conservatives align with different moral foundations. Liberals appeared to put more emphasis on the foundations of care/harm and fairness/cheating (known as the individualizing foundations), where conservatives appeared to put more emphasis on loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation (known as the binding foundations). Thinking about this, it makes sense. Democrats seem to care more about the fairness or equity of the political system (especially for oppressed groups), and Republicans seem to care more about loyalty to the country and the sanctity involved in religious beliefs. What's more, liberals saw a big distinction between the two different sets of foundations (individualizing and binding), but conservatives saw the individualizing and binding foundations more equally (while still preferring the binding foundations).

This indicates that, as Haidt suggests in his book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (Haidt, 2012), conservatives are better at appealing to a wider audience by appealing to all of the foundations, whereas liberals come up short by only appealing to two. When was the last time you heard a liberal base their campaign rhetoric on our duties to our country or living a pure life? These moral foundations might be the reason liberals and conservatives have so much trouble seeing eye to eye on political issues as they intuitively align with different moral frameworks. In Graham et al's (2009) study, they found that conservatives closely align with the sanctity/degradation foundation, where liberals did not. This particular foundation has been found to be related to political conservatism outside of the 2009 study. With a cross-cultural sample of over 31,000 participants, Inbar et al. (2012) found a positive relationship between disgust sensitivity and conservatism, especially contamination-based disgust (a concern for diseases and pathogens).

Following the ideas of this study, Beall et al. (2016) looked at voting intentions of U.S. voters before and after the 2014 Ebola outbreak, as well as correlated Internet searches containing the word "Ebola" and voting intentions. They found that the psychological prominence of Ebola in an individual was associated with an increased voter intention to vote for Republican candidates in the House of Representatives and Senate elections. Another study by Brenner and Inbar (2015) found in a sample of Dutch participants that disgust sensitivity is linked to political ideology. This sensitivity to disgust was associated with the desire for physical and spiritual purity, and was also associated with an increase of voter intention for the conservative "Freedom Party" of the Netherlands. The more disgust the participants experienced, the more they desired purity, and thus the more likely they were to vote conservatively. Further research needs to be done on this subject, but the replication of the findings seems to suggest

there might be emotions like disgust that are modern triggers for moral intuition frameworks like sanctity.

Haidt's Moral Foundations Questionnaire is not the only method of measuring morality, although it is one of the most well-known in the modern literature. Building off of the Kohlberg and Gilligan dichotomy of justice- and care-based ethics, respectively, many researchers have created models that center around these two moral values. The Measure of Moral Orientation (1992) is an 89-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure the ethics of care and justice in participants. The Moral Justification Scale (2000) presents vignettes about moral dilemmas in childhood that contain issues of care or justice to measure these moral constructs. Yet another example is The Moral Orientation Scale (1990) that presents childhood moral dilemmas and offers care-based and justice-based solutions for participants to choose from. As to be expected from Gilligan's research, studies like this one have found that men orient more towards justice-based moral reasoning and women orient more towards care-based moral reasoning. These scales and more demonstrate the common belief in the moral psychology field that care and justice are the only true moral foundations, which are sometimes referred to as harm and fairness foundations (Haidt (2012) refutes the claim that harm and fairness are the only moral values). Whether there are two true moral foundations, or six, or sixty, is yet to be agreed upon in moral psychology research.

Different morality scales have equipped moral psychological researchers with a tool to use to analyze how moral systems work in practical situations. These methods are not the only tools we have used to learn about moral psychology in recent literature, though. Cognitive psychology and neuroscience in particular have contributed to the field in a number of ways. One issue contemporary moral psychologists have with moral reasoning models is that moral

reasoning does not always explain where initial moral feelings come from. In a series of four experiments, Kajsa Hansson (2022) and colleagues demonstrated how cognitive biases affect moral actions and lead to misguided moral conclusions. She likens these misguided conclusions to optical illusions, where the eyes somewhat "trick" us into seeing things that are not there. Similarly, the brain can trick us into assuming things that affect our morals with moral illusions.

For example, one of Hansson et al's (2022) studies showed that moral illusions tend to occur in competitive situations where people are competing for the same reward. Her first study had two people compete against each other in a competition. After finding out whether they won or lost the competition, the participant was either informed that the competition was a fair, even competition or they were not told anything. The participant was then asked to decide how much prize money should be distributed to the winner and how much to the loser. Hansson and her team found that losers who were not informed about the fairness of the competition were significantly more selfish with their money distributions than participants who were informed that the competition was a fair one. In other words, the losers had a moral illusion of unfairness in the game when no one told them it was fair, and thus made more selfish moral actions. Because they did not have all of the information, they inferred unfairness and acted more selfishly.

How can moral psychologists acquire data to prove that outside forces affect our decision making? For this, the field has begun to turn to neuroscience. Antonio Damasio's (1994) book, *Descartes' Error*, focuses on the neuropsychology of rational thoughts and decision-making. This book demonstrates the role the brain can play in our emotions and moral decisions. He begins the book by discussing the well-known psychology case study of Phineas Gage. This story follows a middle-aged railroad worker who, after an explosion at work, was shot upwards

through the skull with an iron pipe. After the accident, Gage seemingly had no issues with things like attention, memory, and language, but his entire personality had changed. Once described as temperate, smart, and successful, Gage suddenly became disrespectful, apathetic, and offensive. His previous understanding of social conventions and ethical rules were suddenly gone and replaced with the brain of someone who did not uphold the same values. Damasio points out that this was an extremely significant case for the study of moral reasoning, as it demonstrated how previously understood ethical values could be erased with brain damage.

He summarizes four other case studies that demonstrate how damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex can impair reasoning and emotions. For example, one patient who was a professional New York stockbroker developed a brain tumor which pressed on his frontal lobes. By the time they were able to remove the tumor, it had already done extensive damage to the prefrontal cortex. While the patient had normal perception, as well as consistent language and motor skills, his personality changed and his emotional life suffered greatly. He seemed to lose the ability to experience basic emotions such as sympathy and sadness, and never returned to work. This is consistent with the Phineas Gage findings, where damage to the prefrontal cortex appears to have a great impact on the emotional capacity of patients.

Damasio claims that case studies such as this demonstrate how damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex in particular affects the reasoning/decision making and emotions/feelings in one's social and personal life. The values and social understandings one achieves can be negated with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. Additionally, he points out that if the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is also damaged, patients not only experience negative effects on their reasoning and emotional skills, but also attention and working memory. This research is significant for the moral psychology literature, as it demonstrates how our moral

understandings can be heavily impacted by damage to certain brain areas, notably the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. When our ventromedial or dorsolateral prefrontal cortexes are damaged, we may make very different moral decisions than when our brains are undamaged.

The more recent neuroscience literature has further informed the field on the parts of the brain involved in moral reasoning. One of the most popular neuroscience pieces in the moral psychology literature is a paper that studied brain activity in emotion-related brain areas with an fMRI. Joshua Greene (2001), a leading neuroscientist in moral psychology, concluded that we use our moral emotions (or intuitions) more often with a moral dilemma that feels personal as opposed to dilemmas that feel impersonal. When the moral dilemma presented in the studies had a personal implication, the researchers found neural activity in the emotion-related brain area of the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. However, when the moral dilemma was more impersonal, the neural activity was found in the more reason-related brain area of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

Greene points out that we have two different ways of approaching moral dilemmas, one of which is the emotional route, and one of which is the rational route. This explanation explains why there are times we can reason through a moral situation, and other times where we just have a gut feeling that something is right or wrong, but cannot explain why. Greene presents this take on moral decision making as a dual process theory, coined by psychologist Daniel Kahneman (2011) and part of the "automaticity revolution" (Haidt, 2013), suggesting the brain has two cognitive processes for moral decisions. One process is our intuition, which is fast and emotionally driven, as seen in the fMRI scans of the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. The other is

our reasoning, which is slow and consciously driven and takes place in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

As mentioned above, this dual process theory was formalized by Daniel Kahneman (2011), which he elaborates on in his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Dual process theory is the neuroscientific explanation of the System 1 (intuition) and System 2 (reasoning) processing methods that have become more popular in recent psychology literature. System 1 processing defines our automatic and intuitive processing that is driven by instincts. This is the intuition that Hume (1739) suggested dictates our decision making, and that Haidt (2012) relies on in his Moral Foundations Theory. System 2 processing is the slower and more deliberative processing that is conscious and more logical. Plato (2008) argued for this rational process being dominant, and it is what is being studied in moral reasoning studies like with Kohlberg (1958) and the Defining Issues Test (1974). However, neuroscience researchers like Kahneman and Greene are not suggesting an either/or of emotions and reason, but rather an interplay between the two. Dual process theory says that the brain relies on both System 1 and System 2 in different situations and for different reasons, much like Jefferson (Lewis et al., 1999) proposed.

When it comes to System 2 reasoning skills, studies in cognitive psychology have told us a lot about how we have adapted these skills to our practical lives. The Wason Selection Task (1968) first presents participants with four cards with a different letter or number on each card. Participants are then given a rule such as, "If a card has a vowel on one side, then it has an even number on the other side." The participants then have to figure out which two cards should be turned over to determine whether the rule is true or false. This is an example of System 2 processing at work, as it is the rational system trying to reason which cards should be turned over. While this seems like a fairly straightforward task, only about 4% of the participants figure

out the most logically correct answer without turning over any logically irrelevant cards (Wason & Shapiro, 1971).

The second part of the Wason Selection Task presents participants with a different set of four cards, two with the phrases "beer" and "coke," and the other two with numbers, one of which a number under 21, and the other a number over 21 (the legal drinking age in the United States). Rather than these four cards being random words or numbers, participants are told that each of these cards represent a person at a bar. The card tells the age of the individual on one side, and what the individual is drinking on the other. Participants are then given the rule that if a person is drinking a beer (it says "beer" on the card), then they are over 21 (the other side of the card is a number that is 21 or greater). Now participants must turn over the relevant cards that will determine whether this rule is true or false. As opposed to the mere 4% who picked the correct cards in the first part of the experiment, about 72% picked the correct cards in this part (Wason & Shapiro, 1971).

This is significant, as it shows the difference between our reasoning skills in abstract situations (random letters and numbers) and our reasoning skills in social contract or thematic situations (who is legally/illegally drinking alcohol at a bar). When asked to reason through a social contract situation, most participants are quick to figure out the correct answer. However, in abstract situations that we are not used to using our reasoning skills for, we have a significantly more difficult time coming to the correct conclusion. The bottom line is that we are much better at using our reasoning skills in situations we have experience with than situations in which we are unfamiliar. This has a lot of implications for moral psychology, showing that our moral judgments are much quicker in dilemmas we face regularly, whereas new dilemmas may take us longer, and also may be based on factors other than pure logic (such as moral illusions).

One of these factors outside of logical reasoning that seems to impact moral decision-making is, of all things, foreign languages. Researchers have discovered that people make more utilitarian decisions (maximizing happiness) when they read a dilemma written in their second language (Costa et al., 2014). Additional research has found that this is due to the distancing and blunting of emotional reactions to dilemmas, allowing participants to see them in a more unemotional way (Hayakawa et al., 2017). Our emotions can impact our moral decisions, and it seems that situations without an emotional factor lead us to more calculated utilitarian decisions. Someone may make a different moral choice when understanding the situation from their native language than they would have when understanding the situation in their second language due to the emotional reactions we have hearing (and fully understanding the implications of) moral dilemmas spoken in our own language.

Further studies have even shown that even just foreign *accents* lead people to make more utilitarian decisions (Foucart & Brouwer, 2021). When given the trolley and footbridge dilemmas, participants made more utilitarian decisions listening to a speaker in the same language but a foreign accent compared to a speaker in the same language and the same accent. The study suggests that factors as small as someone having an accent, even if it is in the same language, can impact moral decisions. These researchers provide three possible explanations for this phenomenon, emotion reduction, increased cognitive load, and psychological distance, that could all play a part in this research. The Wason Selection Task suggested that situations that seem less familiar make it more difficult to use effective reasoning skills in tasks (Wason, 1968). It seems an accent is just unfamiliar enough to complicate our moral reasoning skills.

A lot goes into the moral psychology of a person, and a lot can impact the moral decisions someone makes. A person's moral system may be the product of evolution, or they

may be strictly culturally developed. Most likely, the answer is a mix of both. These moral

systems have implications for every area of life, and are being activated automatically in

response to situational cues. The brain plays a significant role in our moral decisions, which can

be altered with damage to specific brain areas. When it is harder for the brain to process

something, it affects our reasoning abilities and therefore, our moral resolutions. Many external

factors have been found to influence moral decisions, such as reading a moral dilemma in a

second language or hearing a moral dilemma in an accent. There is a lot still to learn about moral

psychology and how people make moral decisions, which can be taken in many different

directions in the future of moral psychology research.

Future

The future of moral psychology is wide open, but it is clear it is a field that is in need of more research. One way this can be developed is through more attention and resources to the World Values Survey (WVS), a questionnaire distributed annually since 1981 to measure differences in values over time and across cultures ("World values survey," n.d.). Inglehart and Welzel have found through analysis of the WVS that there are two dimensions of cross-cultural variation across the world: traditional vs secular-rational values and survival vs self-expression values. The traditional values include values of religiosity, nationalism, and respect for authority and obedience. Countries like Qatar, Ghana, and Tanzania have scored highest in traditional values in recent years. Secular-rational values emphasize values that are the exact opposite of the traditional values. Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea are countries with strong secular-rational values.

Survival values involve values of economic and physical security over liberty and a distrust and lack of tolerance for outsiders. Countries that score high in survival values include Egypt, Zimbabwe, and Moldova. Self-expression values, then, emphasize values that are the opposite of survival values, including a high priority for environmental protection and a growing tolerance for foreigners. Sweden, Norway, and Iceland have scored highly in self-expression values in recent years. These two major dimensions of traditional vs secular-rational values and survival vs self-expression values have been used to evaluate the cultural differences across countries for more than forty years now, and can be even further developed and improved in the future.

In fact, the World Values Survey is now including questions from Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory in the UK questionnaire for the first time (Atari & Haidt, 2022). Atari and

Haidt argue that the values tested in Moral Foundations Theory can be found in different

countries in different capacities, and is therefore a reliable set of values to include in the WVS.

This worldwide questionnaire can continue to be critiqued and developed based on more

research in the field and become a significant and useful tool for detailing how morality has

changed in a country over time, as well as how moral values differ and compare in different

areas of the world.

It might be interesting to pursue further research on common moral values found in

existing literature, as some researchers are starting to wonder if there is a universal moral system

for all humans (Dupoux & Jacob, 2007). Nicholas Christakis' (2019) book on our evolved

psychology of morality and cooperation proposes a "social suite" of morals that lie at the center

of every society. One of these is the preference for one's own group, or an in-group bias that is

also described in Greene's (2013) theories on tribalism. Additionally, Gilligan's (1982) research

on an ethic of care and Haidt's (2012) care/harm foundation both find the moral value of care to

have significance, which is described as a love for partners and offspring in Christakis' book.

Kohlberg's (1958) ethic of justice has found itself in other significant philosophical works

(Rawls, 1971), and is incorporated in Haidt's fairness/cheating foundation. Shweder et al's

(1997) ethic of divinity and Haidt's sanctity/degradation foundation as well as Shweder et al's

ethic of community and Haidt's loyalty/betrayal foundation also see similarities. What's more,

these values of care, justice, and loyalty are reminiscent of Aristotle's virtues in his virtue theory

(2002). Is there something to be said for these common threads in moral psychology research?

Perhaps these values are indicative of a universal moral framework, or maybe they are prevalent

in some cultures and not others, begging for more cross-cultural research.

Moral Foundations Theory itself has already seen new developments to better its

foundations set. In addition to the five foundations initially proposed, a sixth liberty/oppression

foundation has been researched (Iyer et al., 2022). This foundation appeals to libertarians in their

shared value of liberty, and speaks to the desire for liberty from governmental intrusion of

conservatives and the opposition to oppression of minority groups of liberals. Because the

liberty/oppression foundation is appealing to both liberals and conservatives in different ways,

that brings the current research to showing that liberals orient toward the care/harm,

fairness/cheating, and liberty/oppression foundations, whereas conservatives appreciate all six

foundations (Haidt, 2012). Other possible future foundations include honor (Atari et al., 2020),

honesty, ownership, and efficiency (Graham et al., 2012). The Moral Foundations Questionnaire

also has a revised form, the MFQ-2, that divides the fairness/cheating foundation into

foundations of equality and proportionality (Atari et al., 2022). Moral Foundations Theory is still

usually taught as the original five moral foundations, but these adaptations demonstrate the

flexible nature of foundation sets like MFT, and how the future of research of this type can vary

greatly and change over time.

Some studies are exploring measuring morality through questionnaires where participants

dictate what they would do in a moral situation. Shelton and McAdams (2012) proposed a

Visions of Morality Scale that includes three dimensions of morality that appear in everyday life.

Participants are scored on how prosocial their responses are to what they would do in a moral

dilemma in the private, interpersonal, and social moral dimensions. The researchers propose

these three dimensions as a rethinking of the human moral experience that is not as dependent on

rational thinking like Kohlberg's (1958) model suggests. Their Visions of Morality Scale

provides a categorization guideline for young adults and measures participants' tendencies toward or against prosocial moral behaviors.

A current project of mine is aiming to do this with a sample of college students. The participants will read ten moral dilemmas and respond with what they would do in the situation and why. We will then code the explanations using DePauw University's Prindle Institute for Ethics' Six Ethical Dimensions (consequences, intentions and motivations, principles and rights, care and relationships, virtues, and fairness). After this, we will be able to report which moral considerations college students utilize in their moral decisions, suggesting frameworks that seem essential to the decisions made by college students, and perhaps others. This area of moral psychology research can use more development, especially with the establishment of moral foundations or frameworks that are prevalent across different cultures.

My project as well as Shelton and McAdams' (2012) Visions of Morality Scale face the limitation of being based on moral dilemmas merely observed by the researchers. It would be more useful to start where Shweder et al. (1997) began, by interviewing their population about what moral transgressions they face in their lives. Some of the moral transgressions of the people of Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India are similar to western moral transgressions such as, "You went to a movie. There was a long line in front of the ticket-window. You broke into line and stood at the front." However others, such as, "The day after his father's death the eldest son had a haircut and ate chicken" would not show up on a western participant's list of moral transgressions. Surveying people on the moral transgressions of another culture does not say much about their moral intuitions and reasoning.

This also raises the question of what determines that something is a moral dilemma as opposed to a decision unrelated to morality. Typically, moral dilemmas are "situations in which

the decision-maker must consider two or more moral values or duties but can only honor one of them…The individual will violate at least one important moral concern, regardless of the decision" (Kvalnes, 2019). Someone might think deciding which outfit to wear to a party is not a moral dilemma, but it might turn into one for someone else (perhaps it elicits their sanctity/degradation framework as they decide whether to wear something scandalous or not; maybe they are considering the consequences of wearing each outfit). The only way researchers can tell what is or is not a moral dilemma is through research of people and what a particular culture generally considers to be a moral dilemma.

Another issue with current measures of morality involve the distinction between *should* versus *would* statements. In what has been the most widely used measure of morality, Rest et al's (1999) Defining Issues Test measures morality based on Kohlberg's moral stages. However, the DIT asks questions about what you *should* do and which actions you favor instead of what you practically *would* do. McGeorge (1975) conducted a study to test responses to the DIT, where he split participants into three groups. The first group was instructed to "fake good" and respond to the dilemmas in the most socially desirable way, or how they *should* act. The second group was instructed to "fake bad" and respond to the dilemmas in the least socially desirable way, or how they *should not* act. The third group served as the control group and filled out the DIT like normal.

McGeorge's first finding that the second, "fake bad" group scored significantly lower (less moral) than the other two groups was expected. However, he also found that there was no difference in the scores between the "fake good" group and the control group. Because the DIT is worded in a way that leads people to report on what they *should* do, participants tend to respond with the most socially desirable answers, not necessarily what they *would* do. This is significant,

as a measure of morality does not say much if it merely measures what people believe they *should* do in a moral situation. What is more important in moral psychology research is what people actually *would* do in a situation in which their moral values might differ from their neighbor's.

Some contemporary moral psychology researchers have taken a different approach that addresses this issue in the DIT. Instead of another dilemmas-based questionnaire, the Moral Foundations Questionnaire proposes a list of statements that participants judge based on relevancy and agreement levels (Graham et al., 2012). This approach eradicates the *should* versus *would* issue by simply asking how much participants believe a given moral statement is relevant and true for them. My current research project presents ten moral dilemmas to participants and makes a point to ask what they *would* do in the dilemma as opposed to what they *should* do. Future research should keep this dichotomy in mind when developing morality questionnaires based on moral dilemmas.

Another feature of the MFQ that differs from the DIT is its divergence from dilemma-based questionnaires. While participants tend to be consistent across Kohlberg's moral dilemmas (about 90% consistency), in practicality people are less consistent in real-life dilemmas (68-75% consistency) (Wark & Krebs, 1997). Gilligan (1982) herself suggested that while everyone is able to use both care and justice foundations in a moral situation, most people will have a tendency to favor one foundation over the other. This aligns with Haidt's (2012) theory that all five (or six) moral foundations can be prevalent in a person, but different foundations are elicited at different times. The MFQ reflects this, as it suggests that people can have more than one moral value, as opposed to Kohlberg's singular focus on justice.

Future morality questionnaires should take this into account, and perhaps approach their research in a way that allows for several different moral values that can be elicited in different variations depending on the situation. Single-focus theories like Kohlberg's justice-oriented approach and Gilligan's care-oriented approach can be useful, but do not say much about moral decisions in more practical, real-life situations where people wrestle with internally competing moral values. The MFQ clearly addresses this, as it provides five moral approaches that reveal their respective moral relevance on a scale.

The MFQ and DIT differ in one more crucial way. While the DIT provides a measure of moral reasoning, the MFQ provides a measure of moral intuition. As Haidt (2012, p. 91) argued, "[r]easoning can take us to almost any conclusion we want to reach," which is therefore why moral reasoning is not wholly indicative of a person's core moral values. The moral psychology literature is seeing this "intuition revolution" (or, affective revolution [Haidt, 2013]) as researchers search for intuitive moral values, as opposed to ones that manifest in post hoc reasoning. Perhaps there is still value in studying moral reasoning, as most moral actions come after moral reasoning. It may still be indicative of core moral values, but the possibility of other influences altering the decision is high. The future moral psychology literature will be faced with this dichotomy in the research, most likely favoring new moral intuition research. However, it seems more straightforward how to conduct research on moral reasoning (as it has been done many times before) than research on moral intuition, so the moral reasoning side of the literature will most likely remain full.

One limitation of the current moral psychology literature is that the research is almost exclusively based on questionnaires as opposed to real-life situations. In measures of morality like the DIT, how participants report that they would handle a moral situation can differ greatly

from how they would actually handle a moral situation. There are also many response biases that

can occur in a self-reporting method like a questionnaire. This calls for a different

methodological approach to moral psychology research that has not been explored but may be

more insightful compared to self-reports. Maybe there is a way for researchers to place

participants in moral situations and observe how they actually act in these real-life simulations.

There might be a way to observe moral intuitions in participants in these situations and then

interview them after to observe their moral reasoning processes. This approach has not been

explored in the field, but would be a great opportunity for further research.

Utilizing more empirical research in moral psychology would also take social influences

into account that might not have been present in a self-report questionnaire. Participants may act

differently depending on who is watching them and who they believe they will actually be

helping or harming in the situation. It might be easy for participants to say they would not let a

friend cheat off of their homework on paper, but harder to actually say no to the friend in real

life. Social influences play a huge role in psychological studies (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991), but

the current moral psychology research misses these influences by restricting the methodology to

self-reports. Future moral psychology research should explore different methods and compare

the results to results of other self-report studies such as the DIT and the MFQ to gauge the

accuracy and consistency in these tests. This empirical research could inform the field of factors

that have not been conceptualized to date based on the different limitations of self-report

questionnaires.

As highlighted in this paper, moral psychology is a largely interdisciplinary field, tying in

contributions and ideas from many different disciplines. Haidt explains that "at scientific

conferences on morality nowadays, one finds not just neuroscientists and evolutionists but also

social and developmental psychologists, primatologists, economists, philosophers and historians,

all of whom know and cite each other's work" (Haidt, 2013). Future research may explore these

aforementioned disciplines that have already been linked to morality research further, as well as

search for other disciplines that can inform our understanding and perspectives on the moral

psychology field.

Developmental psychology, for one, has informed the moral psychology field both on

moral intuition and moral reason. Hamlin et al's (2007) study showed that 6- and 10-month-old

infants have a preference for helpers over hinderers, suggesting that we have innate moral

preferences for good over evil. Further developmental psychology research is needed to better

understand the moral preferences we may have at birth to confirm the existence of moral

preference innateness. Paul Bloom's (2013) developmental and moral psychology book, *Just

Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*, provides an excellent synthesis of the developmental

psychology literature in regards to moral psychology, showing that many questions about

morality can be answered by studying the development of humans. Kohlberg's (1958) research

on the stages of moral development in childhood is still one of the most popular psychological

studies discussed in psychology classes, but is outdated and often contested (Gilligan, 1982).

More research is needed on moral development to understand the extent to which our life

experiences develop our moral reasoning skills.

Anthropology often focuses on field study methodologies, which is something the moral

psychology research is lacking. Shweder et al's (1997) study utilized an anthropological

approach where the researchers interviewed participants in Orissa, India on what they consider to

be moral digressions in their culture. This kind of research is extremely informative to the moral

psychology field, addressing cross-cultural differences in what is considered a moral situation

and what is considered generally morally good or bad. Field studies common in anthropology research can also address the issues of social influences discussed previously. Future moral psychology research should incorporate more anthropological approaches like this to better understand how people view morality in their cultures.

Haidt's (2012) moral foundations are based on the issues our evolutionary ancestors faced and looks at how those issues manifest themselves today. This unique approach ties in an evolutionary psychology perspective to suggest that people have innate moral intuitions that have been cultivated and shaped through our evolutionary history (Darwin, 1871). Further research may expand on this idea and determine the legitimacy of the evolution of moral values and where they may have come from. More empirical research is necessary for exploring this, which is an area Haidt's original research lacks. As Haidt suggests, reasoning can take you wherever you want to go, so mere reasoning about how moral values can be tied to evolution is not truly indicative of an actual connection. Empirical research, however, might be the missing piece for moral psychologists and evolutionary psychologists to prove that this interplay exists in people's moral values. Some current evolutionary psychology research looks for links between evolutionary-based motivations and morality or personality traits in people, (Kerry et al., 2022), while other research looks at the more broad impact of evolution on moral thought (André et al., 2022). It will be interesting to see the role morality plays in this research, and the relative impact evolution has had on moral systems.

More is discovered by the brain every day, allowing neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists to connect brain activity to life events. Further neuroscientific research on brain functions and morality is warranted for a better understanding of brain activity during moral events. Damasio (1994) and Greene (2013) have begun significant research of this kind,

identifying the ventromedial and dorsolateral prefrontal cortexes as important to emotions/feelings and reasoning/decision-making, respectively. Dual process theory is also being utilized in the field to understand how different brain systems lead us to make different moral decisions (Kahneman, 2011). Future research may look to more brain areas or use different methods of morality prompts to identify more connections and explanations of how to understand morality in the human brain. Current neuroscience research is looking at what happens in the brain when there is a conflict of moral values in a situation, highlighting how moral frameworks might compete in the brain to influence moral decisions (Fornari et al., 2023). With the literature now shifting to a focus on moral intuition rather than moral reasoning, the moral psychology neuroscience studies may follow suit and try to understand moral intuition and the brain.

Future moral psychology research may also look backwards in time for a reincorporation of philosophy into the field. How can this moral intuition revolution inform ancient philosophical ideas on morality? Was intuitionist Hume (1739) completely right and reasonist Plato (2008) completely wrong? More research is needed for the field to better understand the moral intuition vs moral reasoning dichotomy, and perhaps to determine which is more worth studying. Moral foundation research can also be informative to compare with early philosophical teachings. Some theories seem to be prevalent in a lot of research, such as a utilitarian approach of determining which decision will harm the least amount of people (Mill, 1863). Researchers are using philosophical theories like utilitarianism and deontology to better understand neurodivergent moral reasoning development, finding that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders rely on utilitarian judgements more as they age compared to typically developing issues (Labusch et al., 2022). The philosophical dichotomy of care vs harm has been reflected in Shweder's (1997)

ethic of autonomy and Haidt's (2012) care/harm foundation. Other theories, such as Haidt's

authority/subversion foundation, come up less often, but may be discovered when searched for in

earlier philosophical teachings.

This brings up another question of what disciplines moral psychology is failing to

incorporate. Are there impacts of social expectations on moral choice that could be informed by

sociology? Could moral psychology influence the aspects of the business discipline, and vice

versa? Some scholars have used history to learn more about philosophy and human knowledge

(Foucault et al., 2006). Biology shows up in some evolutionary psychology research, but more

research is being done showing its connection to philosophical ideals (Haidt, 2012; Queller &

Strassmann, 2013). Other moral psychologists have started to make connections between

economics and morality (Greene, 2013; McCullough, 2020). Research in the public health

discipline has made some interesting moral connections with decision-making as well as

COVID-19 (Azevedo, 2022; Greene, 2013).

Many connections can be made between moral psychology and religious studies, as many

use religion to define their moral systems, such as the "Authentic Christian morality" used to

evaluate ethical issues in mass media (which also includes a communication component)

(Haselden, 1968). Current research is studying the way people moralize gods, or turn to their

religious deity for answers on right and wrong and act according to these rules (Lang et al., 2019;

Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Purzycki et al., 2016). While some believe religion and morality

are completely separate concepts, others believe they are one in the same. Some scholars are

looking into the idea that religion does not dictate morality, but morality dictates religion

(Wright, 2009). What else is moral psychology missing for a complete understanding of the

human morality system? Additionally, what disciplines can be synthesized to form new

understandings of moral psychology? David Redish (2022) combines behavioral economics,

sociology, and neuroscience to inform his theory of morality as a technology. Are there other

combinations of disciplines that could lead moral psychologists to new findings?

      The last bit of suggestions for future research involve ethics education. There is a big gap

in both ethics education (another discipline to pull from) and ethics education research.

Conversations about morality and right vs wrong are not happening in public education in the

United States, so students never learn *how* to have those conversations. At a time where the

United States' political system is growing more and more polarized, these conversations about

different perspectives and values are crucial ("Pew Research Center," 2014). However, if

children are not taught how to have these conversations, they become adults who cannot

sympathize and understand another's perspective, cultivating a completely polarized society.

Students need to be educated about moral values and perspective in order to understand the

positions of others.

      Part of the reason ethics education is not prevalent in education systems is because ethics

education research is lacking as well. Future research should study the best methods for bringing

ethics to the classroom. Thomas E. Wartenberg (2009) has done some great research on Teaching

Children Philosophy, where children are taught philosophy through children's books. For

example, children could read a story like *Peter Pan* and discuss the concepts of bravery,

imagination, and revenge. Perhaps the children are asked whether they have ever sought revenge

for something. Is it okay to be mad at someone? Is it wrong to stand up for yourself? This makes

philosophical questions of right and wrong accessible to students as young as elementary

schoolchildren, and can carry on up through high school. However, more research is needed to

assess the best methods for conducting ethics education, searching for what works and what does

not work for certain age groups. The literature is wide open for future research on the

effectiveness of ethics education.

A Critical Analysis of Moral Psychology

In order for the moral psychology field to progress, there must be an emphasis on the dual process theory proposed by Kahneman (2011) and supported by Greene (2013). Many studies have supported the fact that the brain has two functions: the fast, automatic intuitions and the slow, conscious reasoning. Because of this, our moral decisions come from both moral intuition and moral reasoning. Haidt (2012) might be onto something with the suggestion that these intuitions come from our evolutionary psychology in regards to the behaviors that benefited our ancestors. However, there are many situations in which people do not act based on their moral intuitions. Rather, they use the moral reasoning studied by Kohlberg (1958) and Gilligan (1982) to rationalize how a moral person would act. Both moral intuition and moral reasoning are worth studying, as they both contribute to the overall moral psychology of a person and the study of moral acts.

Haidt and others have already begun to share with the world the implications of differing moral systems, such as the way in which liberals and conservatives evaluate moral situations differently (Graham et al., 2009). With the newfound understanding of how different moral values offer different perspectives, perhaps people might be more inclined to try to understand the other side's point of view. This could benefit disagreements in the political sphere as well as society as a whole. I would also like to see more studies on the idea of a universal moral system, a set of ethics that applies to all human beings. Like I talked about earlier, good candidates for this moral system might include ethics of care, justice, sanctity, and loyalty. Perhaps there are a set of moral codes all human beings follow, with other moral codes that differ between cultures and individuals. These kinds of findings could be the key to truly understanding the nature of right and wrong in humanity.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of time people have discussed the meaning of life and how to be happy. These discussions led to decisions about the "right" and "wrong" ways to live in order to be the best person you can be and have the happiest life possible. Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates (Cooper, 2016), Plato (2008), and Aristotle (2002) laid the foundation for modern western moral thought with ideas about how to improve the soul. These different ideas led to the development of modern western ethical theories such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory (Aristotle, 2002; Kant, 1998; Mill, 1863). However, many other ethical theories exist around the world as influenced by eastern philosophers like Laozi and Confucius (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020; Hansen, 2007). All of these ideas and theories are what make up modern moral philosophy, which is distinct from moral psychology in that moral philosophy answers questions about what people *should* do, while moral psychology answers questions about what people *practically* do.

There is much debate about how the moral psychology of a person is formed, be it through moral values we are born with, as proposed by the nativist perspective, through moral values we learn, as proposed by the empiricist perspective, or a combination of both (Samet & Zaitchik, 2017). There is also a divide in beliefs on how we make moral decisions, with some suggesting that moral reasoning is where moral decision-making happens, where others insist that moral intuition drives our moral decisions (Dellantonio & Job, 2012). Early moral reasoning research in the developmental psychology discipline highlighted a dichotomy in ethical consideration with the ethics of justice researched by Kohlberg (1958) and the ethics of care researched by Gilligan (1982). This marked the beginning of modern moral psychological research, which has since been strengthened by the contributions of other disciplines.

One such discipline that has contributed to modern moral psychology research is anthropology, with Shweder et al's (1997) research on The "Big Three" of morality: the ethics of autonomy, the ethics of community, and the ethics of sanctity. Similar research with the contributions of evolutionary psychology has incorporated ideas from Darwin's (1871) suggestion that natural selection will favor the traits that are best suited for survival. This idea inspired Haidt and Joseph (2007) to develop Moral Foundations Theory, which describes five moral foundations that have helped our survival throughout time. These foundations include care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation, and research on these foundations have told us a lot about the political implications of different moral systems, as well as how certain emotions like disgust activate our moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Inbar et al., 2012). The Moral Foundations Questionnaire (2012) has since been developed to score participants on these moral foundations, but it is not the only measurement of morality. Other scales like The Measure of Moral Orientation (1992), The Moral Justification Scale (2000), and The Moral Orientation Scale (1990) measure the justice and care dichotomy brought up by the research of Kohlberg (1958) and Gilligan (1982).

Moral psychology has also been recently informed by the cognitive psychology and neuroscience disciplines. We have been able to see that our moral systems can be tricked much like optical illusions, suggesting that moral illusions can activate moral feelings or values in unexpected situations (Hansson, 2022). Neuroscientific research has confirmed this, while also contributing research on the dual process theory of the brain, where the ventromedial prefrontal cortex is involved in quick and unconscious System 1 moral decisions, and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is activated by more deliberate and conscious System 2 moral decisions (Greene et al., 2001; Kahneman, 2011). This has implications for the ways that we make moral

decisions, as seen in the Wason Selection Task (1968), as well as in other moral illusions that impact how we make moral decisions, such as foreign languages and accents (Costa et al, 2014; Foucart & Brouwer, 2021). With the new contributions of different disciplines that answer questions about how people make moral decisions, the future of moral psychology research offers many opportunities for new and significant research.

Future research in moral psychology might look at the moral values held by people all over the world, as the World Values Survey has done and continues to improve on ("World values survey," n.d.). These values also might be illuminated by the incorporation of different disciplines and their respective research on morality. Current moral psychology research is aiming to find the foundations or moral values that people base their moral decisions on to gain a better understanding of the theories or frameworks individuals rely on to make moral decisions. To do this, an interesting area of study is the search for universal moral values that apply to all humans, which could be informed by the current interdisciplinary research on moral values.

This brings up questions about the way that we do moral psychology research, however, as morality means different things to different people. For example, the situations one culture might consider moral situations could be totally different from another culture's conception of moral situations. Additionally, researchers are starting to turn away from asking questions about what people "should" do in a moral situation and instead emphasize asking what people "would" do in a moral situation. Moral psychologists also face the decision on whether to study moral reasoning, moral intuition, or both, as it has become clear that with the dual process nature of the brain, moral reasoning and moral intuition work in different ways and can lead individuals to different moral decisions.

While many measures of moral psychology include questionnaires that present moral

dilemmas to participants, this kind of research faces the limitation that what people *say* they

would do could be completely different from what they actually *would* do. Future research might

explore different methods for studying the moral psychology of people, such as with more

natural anthropological research methods. That being said, moral psychology is an inherently

interdisciplinary field, and the future of its research should reflect that. With current major

contributions from philosophy, developmental psychology, anthropology, evolutionary

psychology, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience, researchers are asking what else there

might be to learn about moral psychology through these disciplines. Also, what other disciplines

can inform the moral psychology field? History? Economics? Religion? Future moral

psychology research will almost certainly explore the findings of other fields to better understand

the overall moral systems of people. With this knowledge, perhaps we can better educate

children and the wider world on ethics and how to understand moral issues from an opposing

perspective.

The field of moral psychology has come a long way, but still has far to go. Its

philosophical past has provided theories and concepts that have cultivated the foundation of

moral psychology research. More modern ideas like Moral Foundations Theory and other

framework-based approaches are becoming more prevalent in general psychology research and

open the doors to new ways of thinking about morality. Research methods in moral psychology

need to be revisited in order to find more valid and reliable ways to test these new ways of

thinking about morality, while also exploring how moral psychology can be applied to other

disciplines. Moral psychology is a growing facet of the larger psychology discipline, leaving it

wide open for groundbreaking research. People hold many differing moral values that impact

much of how they live their lives, from small, personal decisions to big, societal decisions. Understanding where these moral values come from and how they influence moral decision making in a practical sense is crucial to the general understanding of human thought and behavior.

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