

Moral Lives Across Cultures: Heterogeneity and Conflict

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Foundations:

Perspectives on Moral Development and Moral Diversity

The propositions that persons develop in cultures and that cultural arrangements frame their moral lives are not controversial. Deep disagreements do exist, however, concerning what cultures are like and what it means to say that culture frames moral development. Divergent views on those issues translate, in turn, into critically different understandings of the nature of the diversity of moral experiences across cultures.

Our perspective on moral development in culture is grounded in a developmental theory that posits that persons develop moral and other social concepts through participation in and reflection on social interactions of different kinds (Turiel, 1998). It is also informed by a view of cultures (e.g., Gjerde, 2004) as historical constructs created and sustained in the context of collaborations, disagreements, power clashes, and contested meanings among individuals — men and women, adults and children, haves and have-nots. We thus hold that cultures are multifaceted environments that offer people opportunities for diverse kinds of social interactions. Rather than being products of their culture and exchangeable copies of other members of their culture, people in cultures try to make sense of their experiences, disagree with one another about the meanings and value of these experiences, assume critical roles towards them and, at times, attempt to resist or subvert their culture's norms and practices, and may even succeed in changing them.

This perspective contrasts with propositions centered on the cultural determination of development — propositions typically grouped under the broad umbrella of “cultural psychology” (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2007; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). Although those propositions differ from one another in meaningful

ways, they also share key assumptions about culture and development which are of consequence to the study of moral development in culture. From the viewpoint of cultural psychology, cultures are all-embracing constructs that form relatively coherent patterns of thought and action, with the patterns of one culture differing from another. Persons are predisposed to participate in culture and to accept and reproduce their culture's main features. Thus the psychology of individuals is said to be structured in accord with the culture's dominant pattern or orientation. The dominant cultural pattern is communicated to the members of a culture via a number of mechanisms, such as explicit instruction (Kitayama, Conway, Pietromonaco, Park, & Plaut, 2010), exposure to cultural messages conveyed through avenues such as the media and literature (Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008), and participation in cultural practices and socially prescribed forms of behavior (Rogoff, 1990). The end result of these processes is assumed to be that members of cultures form a shared commitment to goals and values—indeed, a shared “culture”.

The notion of coherent patterns of cultural organization is best exemplified by the proposition that societies can be broadly sorted into individualistic or collectivistic cultures. According to this formulation, cultures with an individualistic orientation (e.g., United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand) structure social experience around autonomous persons, relatively detached from their relationships and community, and motivated to attain freedom and personal goals. Cultures whose core is collectivistic (e.g., much of Asia, Africa, and South America) are thought to structure social experience around collectives such as the family or the community; thus members of collectivistic cultures are identified largely by their interdependent roles and by the duties prescribed to them by the social system (Kitayama et al., 2007; Triandis, 2007). Individualistic and collectivistic cultures are also thought to maintain fundamentally divergent conceptions of morality (Miller, 2007; Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano,

Levine, Markus & Miller, 2006). Morality in individualistic cultures is said to be rights-based and structured by concerns with furthering and protecting the independence and personal choice of the individual. Collectivistic cultures are thought to have an interdependent and duty-based morality structured around the expectations, rules, and duties stemming from a person's role in the social system.

Although the construct of individualism/collectivism has enjoyed tremendous popularity as a model of cultural variability in human thought, emotion, and behavior, and generated a great deal of research across many societies and across a wide array of domains (for reviews, see Oyserman & Sorensen, 2009; Triandis, 2007), its focus on differences between cultures has led to the downplaying of differences within cultures. Entire societies (indeed, entire continents) have been characterized according to their presumably uniform orientation to individualism or collectivism, to rights or duties, or to independence or interdependence. This emphasis on cultural homogeneity has become the target of criticism by anthropologists and developmental psychologists, who argued that autonomy and interdependence are not mutually exclusive but interwoven in development, coexisting in the thoughts and actions of people in all societies (Gjerde, 2004; Spiro, 1993; Turiel, 2002; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000; Wainryb, 1997, 2004). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of both cross-national research and research conducted in the United States between 1980 and 2001 (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002) confirmed that differences between "individualistic" and "collectivistic" societies are neither large nor systematic and that societies and individuals cannot be accurately characterized in terms of a single orientation.

Over the years, descriptions of cultures as either individualistic or collectivistic gave way to portrayals allowing a mixture of individualistic and collectivistic elements. In one formulation,

cultures are depicted as reflecting particular setpoints on each of the dimensions of individualism and collectivism. For example, Asian societies are characterized as high on collectivism and low on individualism, and Latin American societies are characterized as high on both individualistic and collectivistic values (Oyserman & Sorensen, 2009).

In another increasingly common formulation, *group* differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures are tempered by simultaneous references to individual variability within cultures as measured by *individual* scores on measures of individualism and collectivism (Oyserman & Uskul, 2008). For example, in a recent study, Genyue, Heyman, and Lee (2011) reported that, as would befit members of a collectivistic culture, intent on deflecting attention from the individual and promoting harmonious group relations, Chinese adolescents and adults judged lying in the service of modesty more favorably than their American counterparts. Nevertheless, within each cultural group, individuals who scored higher on collectivism and lower on individualism were more likely to make more positive evaluations of this type of modesty-promoting behavior.

Whereas both these types of formulations wrestle with the complexity of societies in a way that the individualism/collectivism dichotomy did not, they nevertheless retain the original top-down assumption about the transmission and acquisition of values. For example, to the extent that cultural analyses recognize heterogeneity within societies, they tend to account for this variability by pointing to smaller cultural communities or subcultures within societies (e.g., urban vs. rural, working class vs. middle class, liberal vs. conservative; Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, & Ditto, 2011; Wiley, Rose, Burger, & Miller, 1998), but these smaller subcultures are still viewed as having a dominant and relatively homogeneous core of shared meanings, values, traditions, and practices (or “cultural syndromes”; Oyserman & Sorensen,

2009), and individual psychology continues to be organized primarily in line with dominant (though potentially more varied) cultural frameworks. In other words, persons are still locked into enacting their cultures' scripts.

Furthermore, despite the emergence of these more nuanced formulations, the field continues to rely largely on global characterizations of societies in terms of dominant individualistic and/or collectivistic cultural orientations. Over 1000 studies have cited Triandis' (1995) seminal work on individualism and collectivism; in the last 10 years alone, over 650 studies examining various aspects of children's and adolescents' experiences and nearly 300 studies examining morality have been published that included references to "individualism" and/or "collectivism". Thus, because much research in this area continues to rely on the premise that the goals and perspectives of individuals within culture are shaped by their culture's dominant orientation, theme, or syndrome, the possibility that individuals within a culture may develop contradictory perspectives and enter into significant conflict with each other is rarely a central consideration. And, most important, although cultural psychologists often speak about human agency (e.g., Miller, Das, & Chakravarthy, 2011; Shweder, 2003), their analyses neglect to specify the developmental processes by which individuals might come to resist, or even disagree with, cultural norms and practices. This tendency is unlikely to be an oversight, as the emphasis on the cultural shaping of psychological processes necessarily overestimates the power of culture to dictate meanings and underestimates individual agency.

And yet, as we shall show below, the view of cultures as characterized by a tendency towards a shared voice is not consistent with evidence pointing to the substantial plurality of concerns of persons within cultures, to the conflicts and disagreements among persons within cultures, and to the multiple interpretations and critical judgments that persons make about their

culture's norms and practices. Importantly, moreover, this type of heterogeneity cannot be fully accounted for by formulations emphasizing the cultural determination or patterning of development – not even those that allow for the coexistence of multiple cultural templates. As discussed more fully in the next sections, explanations of cultural heterogeneity require more than estimating where cultures fall on the collectivistic-individualistic continuum or identifying particular cultural subgroups within societies, because those explanations do not provide an adequate developmental account of the emergence and presence of substantial variability both within and between persons within societies. Thus in the developmentally-grounded perspective on morality and culture we present below, the analysis shifts *away* from the cultural patterning of development to focus instead on the diverse experiences of persons within culture.

But before we leave them behind, it is important to acknowledge that propositions emphasizing the cultural patterning of social and moral development are often seen as an essential response for countering the presumed ethnocentricity and Western biases of explanations that emphasize universal characteristics. Indeed, it is likely that the persistent popularity of explanations based on cultural differences is tied to the fact that these explanations are often perceived as advancing a richer view of human development. And yet, propositions focused exclusively on differences between cultures fail to account for the full range of human diversity and cannot plausibly constitute a robust basis for the promotion of respect for human diversity and justice. Indeed what is seldom acknowledged by those concerned with the cultural patterning of development is their tacit presumption that each culture has only *one* distinctive point of view, *one* insider perspective, *one* local voice. Those propositions, furthermore, highlight *participation* in culture and *acceptance* of cultural norms and practices, including those dictated by hierarchical arrangement, while inevitably making light of the possibility that some

members of cultures might dislike, resent, oppose, resist, and wish to change some aspects of their culture, and may even serve as agents of cultural change. Inescapably, therefore, the reliance on the notions of culture and cultural differences as the main anchors of human diversity leads to overlooking the experiences of some of the very groups and individuals within cultures that the notion of culture is presumed to give voice to.

In what follows, we present an alternative perspective that points to developmental processes in contested cultural landscapes as the source of the multiple and conflicting social and moral points of view found within cultures. We conclude by considering how an acknowledgement of heterogeneity and conflict within cultures can generate new questions about divergent moral-developmental trajectories in different societies.

Review of Research:

Moral Life in Contested Cultural Landscapes

Within all societies, people, including children, participate in social interactions that bear on matters as diverse as justice, social roles, individual rights, interpersonal obligations, and friendship. In the process, they develop distinct concerns and understandings about their social world. Because social interactions and social systems are often conflict-ridden, persons occupying different social positions often develop goals, interests, and perspectives that come into conflict with each other. A large body of research has yielded reliable evidence concerning the multifaceted social and moral experiences of children and adults in different cultural settings. Although research was first conducted largely in North America, to date studies have been conducted in many countries in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. Two distinct, though related and mutually informative, sets of findings provide evidence that bears on the heterogeneity of moral life within cultures and to the developmental roots of such heterogeneity.

One set of findings documents the multiple social and moral concerns that persons across cultures develop, and the diverse ways in which persons weigh those concerns as they make sense of specific social contexts within their cultures. The other set of findings points to conflicts between individuals within cultures that stem from differences in perspectives, agendas, and power. A view of persons — including children — as agents capable of reflection and interpretation, likely to engage in cooperation with others as well as in conflict and subterfuge, underlies both sets of findings.

Individuals Across Cultures Develop Multiple Social and Moral Concerns

The diversity of children's social and moral concerns has been amply documented in a large number of societies around the world. Extensive research carried out in North America has demonstrated that children begin to form differentiated social concepts at an early age. Starting in the preschool years, children develop concerns with autonomy, entitlements, and rights (Nucci, 2001) — concerns that might be thought of as individualistic. Further, in studies conducted in the United States, Canada, and Europe, children as young as 6 or 7 years conceptualized freedoms of speech and religion as universal moral rights which hold across cultural contexts even in the face of laws denying these rights, and they explained these judgments on the basis of human agency and personal choice (Helwig, 2006; Helwig & McNeil, 2011).

Yet in spite of the centrality that notions of personal autonomy and rights have for children in Western societies, research has reliably shown that children are also concerned with issues that cannot be characterized as individualistic, such as the wellbeing of others, justice, and fairness (Turiel, 1998). Moreover, children in these cultures also develop collectivistic-like concerns with authority and obedience, social roles and conventions, as well as with

interpersonal obligations (Smetana, in press).

When social interactions bear simultaneously on concerns with the individual (personal choice, rights, autonomy) and the collective (obedience, group interests), North American children do not merely place individualistic goals ahead of group goals. Instead, they appraise the features of specific contexts and make judgments that give priority to “individualistic” concerns in some situations and to “collectivistic” concerns in others. North American children (and adults) often upheld personal autonomy and rights, but are also responsive to other features of social situations and, in many contexts, subordinate concerns with autonomy and rights to considerations with the prevention of harm to others (Helwig, 2006), interpersonal obligations (e.g., Smetana, Tasopoulos-Chan, Gettman, Villalobos, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2009), and group goals (Killen, 2007).

Similar findings were observed among members of so-called collectivistic societies where one might have expected that concerns with autonomy and individual rights would be systematically subordinated to the maintenance of social harmony, hierarchy, and traditional roles and duties. A substantial body of research in Asia (e.g., China [Helwig, 2006; Yau, Smetana & Metzger, 2009]; India [Neff, 2001], Japan [Crystal, 2000]), the Middle East (Wainryb, 1995), and Africa (e.g., Benin [Conry, 2004]), has demonstrated that children in these societies form a mixture of judgments on the dimensions of morality, social convention, and interpersonal obligation, while also maintaining concepts of persons as autonomous agents with choices and rights.

The conceptualization of persons in these “collectivistic” cultures as autonomous agents, with personal choices and entitlements is of particular importance because of the common presumption that members of such societies form sociocentric and interdependent judgments that

override concerns with personal autonomy and independence. In contrast to this view, research has demonstrated that persons in societies that are described as collectivistic or interdependent develop concepts of personal agency including a sense of self and personal goals and interests. For example, 4- and 6-year-olds in Hong Kong systematically distinguished between realms of experience over which they thought parents should have authority and realms which they thought should be outside parental and societal regulation and subject exclusively to personal discretion (Yau & Smetana, 2003a); similar findings were obtained with children and adolescents in Chile (Darling, Cumsille & Loreto Martinez, 2008), India (Neff, 2001), Japan (Crystal, 2000), and China (Helwig & McNeil, 2011). Furthermore, research has shown that children and adults in such societies also develop concepts of individual rights and freedoms, and uphold those rights even in the face of authority and other collective concerns (Helwig, 2006; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). Indeed, the surge of revolutionary demonstrations, protests, and uprisings erupting at the end of 2010 across Northern Africa and the Middle East (termed the “Arab Spring”) dramatically illustrates that a desire for democracy and protection of individual rights are far from being concerns that are exclusively held by individuals in Western societies.

When considered as a whole, research indicates that persons in cultures that are described as collectivistic do judge in accord with roles, duties, and traditions in the social system, but also have a pervasive sense of persons as independent agents, with autonomy, entitlements, and rights. They draw boundaries on the jurisdiction of authority, and are aware of personal choice and rights as components of their social interactions. In exercising personal autonomy, they weigh their freedoms against other social considerations, such as the goals of the group, the welfare of others, and the hierarchical roles in the cultural system — revealing a complex picture of priorities and preferences.

The findings considered in this section indicate that children and adults across societies develop multiple social and moral concerns, and that they apply those concerns differently in different social contexts, giving priority sometimes to autonomy and rights and sometimes to tradition and social harmony. This within-culture variability can be best explained by recognizing that children (and adults) across cultures actively appraise the features of the social contexts in which they participate, and make judgments that vary systematically in accord to the meanings and interpretations they attribute to those contexts. In support of this view, research demonstrates that when children (and adults) make social and moral judgments, they do so in reference to their interpretations of specific features of social contexts. For example, when children consider experiences of harm and injustice, their moral judgments vary as a function of their perspective as victim or perpetrator (Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005; Wainryb, Komolova, & Brehl, 2011), their interpretation of the relevant facts of the event (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010; Shaw & Wainryb, 2006; Wainryb & Brehl, 2004; Wainryb, Shaw, Langley, Cottam & Lewis, 2004), or their relationship history with particular interaction partners (Recchia, Wainryb, & Pasupathi, in press). Although much of this evidence comes from research conducted with children and adolescents in North America, recent studies of youth in Eastern Europe (Daiute, 2010), Latin America (Posada & Wainryb, 2008), and the Middle East (Hammack, 2011) reveal similar patterns of variability in youths' perspectives across contexts which can similarly be explained by accounting for how young people make sense of particular interpersonal experiences.

In sum, an accumulating body of evidence suggests that, rather than passively absorbing and enacting cultural scripts, children (and adults) across cultures are active agents who strive to make sense of their experiences. For this reason, we argue that children across cultures can be

characterized as *flexible* in their approach to their social experiences and relationships (Turiel, 2002): weighing and attempting to coordinate concerns with autonomy and rights, with group goals, harmony, and tradition, and with human welfare and justice, thus arriving at varied understandings as they construct meanings about the wide range of experiences that they encounter in their everyday lives.

In addition to accounting for persons' varied reasoning and judgments across situations, the view that people within cultures flexibly construct understandings of their social worlds also implies that, in some situations, different individuals within any one culture will arrive at divergent interpretations or evaluations of particular experiences, practices, cultural arrangements, and historical events. In the next section, we elaborate on how these conflicts may stem from differences in agendas, perspectives, and power within cultures.

Individuals Within Cultures Develop Conflicting Perspectives

Cultural practices and traditions are not authentic representations of the past handed down from one generation to the next; they are continuously shaped, contested, and changed in the context of overt and covert conflicts (Gjerde, 2004; Wikan, 2002). Thus, social life in cultures includes not only identification with and harmonious participation in cultural practices, but also disagreements about what is right and valuable. As mentioned above, persons across societies carve up a realm of personal goals and interests, and strive to achieve and maintain control over their own goals and interests even in the face of competing social considerations. It makes sense, therefore, that in addition to developing shared understandings about aspects of their culture, persons occupying different roles or positions would interpret some of their experiences differently, develop competing goals, interests, and perspectives, and sometimes find themselves in conflict with each other. Indeed, research in a variety of societies reveals a

plethora of sources of conflict within cultures, including disagreements and clashes that stem from perspective and power differences related to age, gender, race, and economic circumstances, to name just a few examples.

First, the literature described above on children's development of social and moral concerns amply reveals that their expanding sphere of personal autonomy and choice is demarcated largely in the context of conflicts, tensions, and negotiations with authority figures such as parents. Even at the age of 4 or 5 children negotiate with parents over issues they believe to be within their own personal jurisdiction, and view adult rules and intervention surrounding these matters to be illegitimate (Smetana, *in press*). By adolescence, youths increasingly challenge the legitimacy of their parents' control over matters such as their personal appearance, cleaning their room, and curfew (Smetana, 2005) and tend not to disclose to their parents issues they consider to be in the personal domain (e.g., Smetana, Villalobos, Tasopoulos-Chan, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2009). And although overt conflict between children and their parents in some societies may be more muted (i.e., less frequent and less intense) than that observed in North American samples (Smetana, 2002), children around the world have conflicts with their parents about similar issues (e.g., Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011; Yamada, 2008; Yau & Smetana, 2003b), following from their beliefs that some issues should be outside parental regulation and subject exclusively to personal discretion.

Conflicts between younger and older people within cultures may also concern issues implicating rights, discrimination, and respect for persons. Young people in Western societies have disagreements with their parents' generation about issues related to homosexuality (Savin-Williams, 2005), abortion (Scott, 1998), economic inequality (ter Bogt, Meeus, Raaijmakers, Van Wel, & Vollebergh, 2009), and environmental protection (Blanchet-Cohen, 2010), to name

just a few examples. Indeed, a well-established literature on youth agency and political activism recognizes that young people have the capacity to be engaged citizens with their own unique views on political issues that are not necessarily concordant with those of their parents (e.g., Gordon, 2008), and which are often discrepant with mainstream political views (e.g., Lax & Phillips, 2009). Research in so-called collectivistic societies similarly reveals youths' capacity for critical views of the political actions and beliefs of their parents' generation, as well as their involvement in activism, leading to clashes with both their parents and the established authorities of their societies (Barber, 2009; Daiute, 2010; Hammack, 2011; Wainryb, 2011a). Indeed, observers of the wave of political protests in the Arab world that began late in 2010 have commented that youth played a central role in many such uprisings (Hvistendahl, 2011).

In addition to clashes between parents and children and between younger and older generations, research further reveals that different groups of people within cultures construct divergent meanings of the same experiences. Research has shown, for example, that groups of children who are habitually the targets of unfair or hurtful treatment are particularly sensitive to the consequences of such behavior. For example, in studies conducted in the US, African-American children were more likely than European-American children to explain their negative judgments of exclusion by referring to the undesirable consequences for society when individuals discriminate on the basis of race (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin, & Stangor, 2002; see also Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009), and girls were more likely than boys to be concerned with fairness and equal access to groups (Killen & Stangor, 2001). Not inconsistent with the patterns observed within children's peer groups, the construction of divergent meanings about the circumstances of different groups of adults within cultures are fundamentally intertwined with political, economic, and social implications that follow from the

prestige, power, and influence that are associated with particular roles within specific cultures. For this reason, conflicts between adults within cultures often take the form of disagreements between the dominant views of those in power and individuals in more subordinate positions.

In Western societies, these types of clashes are evident in the ubiquity of social movements challenging existing arrangements bearing on racial, economic, and gender relations (Appiah, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Nussbaum, 2010; West, 2004). Yet the presence of organized protest is certainly not limited to Western societies (e.g., Broadbent & Brockman, 2010; Petras, 2011; Stephan, 2009; UNESCO, 1994), and discontent or dissent with cultural practices across all cultures may also take less organized forms, whereby persons challenge cultural meanings in everyday life through overt and covert activities (Turiel, 2002). As examples, Bumiller's (1990) account of the perspectives of women in India, Goodwin's (1994) interviews with women in Islamic countries, and Mernissi's (1994) account of women's life in a harem in Morocco, show that women in these societies are aware of the burdens and injustices they experience as a consequence of cultural practices that accord men control over them. Abu Lughod's (1993) ethnographic studies of Bedouin women in Egypt and Chen's (1995) work in Bangladesh and India illustrate the many ways in which persons in these societies deliberately disobey and subvert practices they consider unfair, such as arranged marriages, polygamy, and traditions restricting employment for women and people of lower social castes. Research with youths and adults in the Druze community in northern Israel (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994) shows that girls and women in this patriarchal and hierarchically organized society often adhere to cultural practices not only out of commitment to their culture or endorsement of its values, but also out of fear of the consequences likely to ensue from failure to do so. For example, Druze women and girls expressed their fear that a disobeying wife might be thrown out of her house, divorced against

her will, or prevented from seeing her children. These examples, in turn, suggest that even participation in “shared” cultural practices and traditions may conceal struggles over meaning, disagreement, or discontent.

Altogether, this research shows that to understand moral and social development it is not sufficient to attend to the perspectives that are predominant in a culture's public discourse; rather, the heterogeneity of perspectives present within a culture must be represented. Doing so serves to document the contested nature of social and moral life within cultures. Clearly, although most people across societies like and identify with many of their culture's practices, expectations, and traditions and willingly participate in them, people — including children — also often dislike, disagree with, and even resent some of their culture's practices, expectations, and traditions. At times they defy them openly and other times they subvert them covertly; at times they go along out of fear, and other times they get together with others and fight to bring about changes. Whereas some of these disagreements, conflicts, and deceptions carry only the risk of temporary distress or relatively minor physical or material consequences, in other cases resistance can entail very serious risks or long-term repercussions. Dissenting individuals and groups in all societies sometimes endanger their livelihoods and lives by openly defying restrictive practices, traditions, and expectations, making demands, forming alliances with others, and engaging in confrontations, including physical confrontations. Furthermore, while one might minimize the relevance that disagreements and conflicts between parents and their young children have for understanding cultural heterogeneity by referring to the fact that youths are not yet fully socialized into their culture, it would be harder, and indeed misguided, to use such an argument to dismiss the significance — to individuals and cultures — of generational disagreements and conflicts (Ginwright & James, 2002). And referring to incomplete socialization would clearly not

do away with the significance of disagreements among adult members of a culture.

Cultural psychologists, however, have made light of opposition and resistance, particularly in the context of societies said to endorse collectivistic or interdependent values. Indeed, although they acknowledge that persons in dissenting or subordinate positions in these societies sometimes express discontent with their life, complain about the burdens imposed on them because of their social position, and engage in behaviors meant to communicate their dissatisfaction, cultural psychologists often deny that such behaviors implicate genuine concerns or opposition, and especially deny that they are meant to challenge or subvert fundamental aspects of cultural norms and practices (Menon & Shweder, 1998; Miller, 2001). In this respect, cultural analyses trivialize the perspectives and experiences of those who occupy dissenting positions, especially in so-called collectivistic societies. They overlook the very real pain afflicting them, the genuineness and legitimacy of their resentment and anger, the seriousness of their engagement, and the complexity of their moral commitments. Dismissing or minimizing the perspectives of those in dissenting positions, however, might be an unavoidable element of psychological theories that view participation in culture, and identification and compliance with culture, as explanations for development. The judgments and behaviors of diverse persons and groups within societies, including the evidence pointing to discontent, resistance, opposition, and subversion, reveal the deep understanding that persons across the world have of their personal goals, entitlements, and autonomy as well as their concern with justice and rights. They also reveal the willingness and readiness, on the side of those in dissenting positions, to participate in the life of their communities while also engaging in cultural critique.

Current and Future Directions:

Cultural Differences Revisited

Collectively, the research reviewed in the previous sections underscores that social and moral development is not merely “determined” by culture. Children and adults do not uniformly endorse the values and practices characteristic of their own societies; even when a culture’s public discourse elevates the collective over the individual, or vice versa, people across all cultures develop a variety of social and moral goals and concerns that reflect a consideration of both individual and collective interests. For this reason, although children and adults typically participate in their culture’s traditions and accept many of their culture’s norms and practices, they also reflect on these traditions, norms, and practices. They may resist and try to change some of them and even come into conflict with other members of their culture over their differing perspectives or agendas vis-à-vis issues regulated by their culture. This body of research also demonstrates that these differing positions about cultural values and practices are not simply resolved as youths grow up and become successfully “enculturated”, but are encountered over and over again (albeit in different ways) as children become adult members of their societies. Following from this, as children grow up, they do not move progressively closer to becoming interchangeable members of their society, embodying the same culturally-determined ideals, values, practices, and norms, but rather remain capable of opposing, contesting, and subverting (in addition to sometimes accepting, endorsing and even enforcing) cultural meanings and traditions.

In this respect, people’s moral engagements and moral lives within their cultures embody the sort of complexity and heterogeneity that is not captured by a unidimensional cultural orientation to individualism or collectivism, or even by depictions of cultures as comprising a combination of individualistic and collectivistic elements. The perspective on within-culture heterogeneity presented in this chapter also diverges from recent cultural psychology models that

measure the extent to which different individuals within societies endorse dominant cultural values such as individualism and collectivism. Instead, our perspective considers the implications of multifaceted experiences that inevitably occur in everyday life, as individuals (young and old) engage in flexible attempts to weigh concerns for both self and others, with their own rights as well as duties, and with both social-conventional norms and the desire for autonomy.

As we have reviewed above, the body of research devoted to understanding social and moral development in cultures has thus far focused its attention on delineating these universal sources of heterogeneity within cultures, in an effort to establishing the constructive developmental processes at work in all societies. We have documented here that people's moral lives within all cultures are complex and heterogeneous. The question that this research has not yet addressed is whether it matters to a person's moral life and engagement whether she or he grows up in New York City, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, or Mumbai. We believe the short answer to this question is, yes. We also believe that this question charts a critical future direction for research that recognizes multiple sources of heterogeneity within cultures. Importantly, future research that poses these questions in a developmentally-grounded way need not throw us back into the cultural determination of meanings and development: rather, such research can help us to better understand what it means for active and reflective agents to grow up and live and function and make decisions in very different societies, under very different circumstances.

As discussed above, our own and others' research has shown that people growing up in societies that constrain personal autonomy and individual rights do, nevertheless, develop personal goals, are aware that their societies' traditions and norms impose constraints on their autonomy, and even judge these restrictions to be unfair. And yet this same research also

demonstrates that people's decisions and experiences are influenced by these restrictions, and thus their life courses and opportunities are fundamentally affected by their societies' mores. For instance, adult men and women from all strata of Indian society (Mines, 1988) describe themselves as having occupational interests and economic goals separate from the goals of their social group, and many describe such goals as being in clear opposition to societal expectations; yet most report postponing pursuing their goals until later in life, when the consequences of asserting their autonomy were less extreme (e.g., when disinheritance was no longer a threat). Similarly, even when they judge the greater restrictions imposed on them to be unfair, Druze women describe deferring to the wishes of their husbands and fathers to avoid the dire consequences to their own welfare that they fear might follow from their failure to acquiesce (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994). Another example concerns the patterns of adolescent-parent conflict that characterize different groups of American families. Although all adolescents report desiring more autonomy from parents, especially surrounding personal issues (Yau & Smetana, 2003b), adolescents from Chinese and Mexican backgrounds tend to discuss these issues with their parents less frequently than adolescents from European background, because of their awareness of the potential consequences of disclosing such information to parents, including lack of understanding and strong disapproval (Yau, Tasopoulos-Chan, & Smetana, 2009). As a whole, these various lines of research suggest that although concerns with justice and with autonomy are present in all societies, in societies that are organized more restrictively, these concerns become manifested differently in the range of choices that people perceive to be prudent, practical, or even possible.

Our argument, however, is that it is essential to go further, by asking how such differences might alter the socio-moral developmental trajectories of children and adults. For

instance, to the extent that people perceive that they cannot make and enact their choices, and judge that they have limited opportunity to experience the rights and freedoms that they desire and that they often feel they should be entitled to, might this have implications for their continued sociomoral development? In what ways, if any, are children's and adults' developing sense of themselves and others as moral agents impacted by their perception of a fundamental disconnect between how things are and how they ought to be? Might these processes have implications for how children and adults use the variety of moral and social concepts at their disposal to make sense of their own and others' behavior? And, assuming that a culture curtails the freedoms or range of choices of only some of its members, it also bears asking about the implications of this for others who are free to enact their own preferences but witness on a daily basis the consequences for those — their mothers, their sisters, their classmates, their neighbors — who do not enjoy the same degree of freedom.

None of these moral-developmental questions have been directly addressed in an empirical fashion with regards to societies that differ in the extent to which they regulate and constrain the autonomy of individuals. Nevertheless, a number of studies provide suggestive evidence that specific features of societal contexts may in fact influence in nontrivial ways children's moral understandings of their own lived experiences. To draw on an example from our own work (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2008), we have observed distinct moral understandings among displaced youth in Colombia who have been directly affected by their ongoing experiences of war, political violence, and injustice. In line with the body of research reviewed in this chapter, war-displaced children in Colombia *did* develop moral concepts similar to those espoused by youth from community samples in the US; they made noncontingent and universal negative moral judgments about the undesirability of stealing and

hurting others, and justified these judgments on the basis of concerns with justice and welfare. Yet these youths also thought these principles were largely inconsistent with the pervasiveness of stealing and hurting that they observed and experienced in their everyday lives. Thus, although they had a sense of what was right and wrong, they did not expect others (and perhaps not even themselves) to behave in ways reflecting such principles. In some important respects, this finding is wholly consistent with the above body of work suggesting that people develop a variety of concerns, including prescriptive and generalizable moral concerns, even in cultural contexts that might ostensibly impede such development. However, these studies also reveal troublingly distinct patterns of moral reasoning with regard to revenge. In particular, when asked whether people might seek revenge against an individual from a group responsible for their family's displacement, not only did they expect that people would rely on stealing or physical harm in an effort to gain retribution, but they also stated that they would not feel guilty about having done so. Perhaps most tellingly, an unusual number of these young people also judged such vengeful actions to be morally acceptable.

To the extent that these findings for children's interpretations and judgments of revenge diverge from those observed in community samples in the US (e.g., Astor, 1994; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Yell, 2003), they suggest that growing up in a context in which one's experiences stand in stark contrast to one's own moral principles *does* have implications for moral developmental processes, including individuals' ability or motivation to trust both others and themselves to honor moral commitments and to control their own aggression (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2008). In similar ways, it has been suggested that children's moral functioning might be compromised when their social experiences are characterized by a deep lack of reciprocity and caring, or when they perceive that their societies

are characterized by systemic inequalities and unfair distributions of power and privilege (Arsenio & Gold, 2006; Wilkinson, Beaty, & Lurry, 2009). Specifically, when growing up in such societal contexts, children are likely to eventually conclude that caring and fairness are not organizing features of their daily interactions, but rather that power and domination are more central concerns for understanding and adapting to one's social world.

Similarly, our own research looking at youth in various war-torn countries suggests that being chronically exposed to societal violence and injustice (Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010) and participating in socially-sanctioned violence (Wainryb, 2011b) are associated with distinct disruptions in youths' abilities to make sense of their experiences of moral wrongdoing and to construct a sense of their own (and other people's) moral agency. For example, in our data we have observed that when furnishing narrative accounts of their own experiences of moral conflict and moral wrongdoing, war-exposed youth often construct a uniquely impoverished sense of their own moral agency and of other people's moral agency. That is, their accounts tend to be devoid of references to what they and others felt, wanted, and thought, suggesting that these youth struggle to consider their experiences in relation to their own and others' motives, cognitions, and emotions and to provide psychological explanations for their own or others' behaviors. It is not clear whether this pattern in narrative accounts results from a passive deadening of moral agency, or from youths' more active strategies for avoiding the implications of their actions; it may be that both processes are at play (Recchia & Wainryb, 2011; Wainryb, 2010, 2011b). Regardless, the numbing of moral agency suggests that these young people may be less able to acknowledge their own status as agents responsible for their actions—a deficit that has been linked to unregulated, aggressive behavior and poor psychosocial adjustment (Fonagy, 2003). Another prevalent disruption observed in the ways war-exposed youth construct

their own moral experiences involves a relative imbalance in the articulation of their own versus other people's moral agency. In our war-exposed samples, many children's accounts of their own moral conflicts and transgressions include rich representations of their own moral agency but omit references to the mental states of those who were the victims or targets of their behaviors. In other words, youths often construct a restricted moral universe wherein only they and members of their own group are represented as moral agents whose actions are guided by goals, intentions, beliefs, and emotions. Such imbalanced or polarized construal of moral agency tends to facilitate interpersonal aggression and to carry the risk of perpetuating cycles of harm and injustice (Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010; see also Hammack, 2011).

While these patterns stand in stark contrast to the narrative accounts of adolescents in less violent environments (Wainryb et al., 2005, 2011), it is worth noting that it is not necessarily the case that experiences in a violent or unjust society are unequivocally linked to disruptions in moral development; for instance, in the context of clashes between young people and their broader communities, research on youth protest and activism suggests that such experiences may serve to support enduring commitments to the needs of minorities and civic involvement (e.g., Barber, 2009; Flanagan, 2004). In this respect, making sense of systemic violence and injustice in one's society may be linked to *both* risk and resilience vis-à-vis sociomoral developmental processes, albeit in complex and varied ways that depend on the particular social and political realities that are faced in specific cultural contexts (Recchia & Wainryb, 2011; Wainryb, 2010).

Collectively, this research suggests that living in a society where violence and injustice have become widespread does account for long-term outcomes in the realm of socio-moral development. In what ways might children's and adults' moral sense be affected by living in a society in which they perceive that their autonomy or rights are severely or unfairly restricted or

that their access to societal and economic resources is limited? To be sure, we are far from the first to ask about the psychosocial consequences of excessively limited personal autonomy or of social or economic disenfranchisement. Many of these consequences appear to be negative. For instance, across a variety of cultures, when adolescents perceive that their parents exert excessive control in personal or private areas of their lives, this is linked to negative outcomes, including internalizing symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and interpersonal sensitivity, as well as lower academic achievement (Hasebe, Nucci, & Nucci, 2004; Qin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009; see also Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, & Yau, 2009). Similar patterns can be observed among adults who perceive that their society places restrictions on their autonomy (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan 2003). Furthermore, research reveals the negative psychological impacts on children of belonging to a racial, ethnic, socioeconomic or gender group that is the target of systematic discrimination, marginalization or disenfranchisement within a society (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). Recent social epidemiological research highlights the widespread social and psychological effects of relative levels of income inequality among developed nations, including consequences for child well-being, mental illness, trust in others, and levels of violence (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). On the other hand, experiencing adversity and becoming cognizant of injustice may also be linked to some positive developmental outcomes, such as wisdom or personal strength (e.g., Masten & Wright, 2010).

This body of research provides evidence of links between more and less hierarchical relations in regards to individual, economic, or social power, and a variety of psychosocial outcomes. However, psychological research has not yet adequately charted the extent to which *moral-developmental processes* across cultures are implicated in these findings. Such research could provide an important complement to existing work, in that it can elucidate how divergent

moral understandings (e.g., perceptions of the extent to which everyday interactions are organized in terms of reciprocity and caring or in terms of power, domination, and revenge) contribute to the apparently profound consequences of growing up in a society in which the rights and opportunities for certain groups of individuals are systematically constrained, or in which people routinely behave in hurtful ways. We are making a strong pitch for the importance of research looking at the effects that unique cultural arrangements may have on children's and adults' socio-moral development and socio-moral lives. Even as we do so, however, we still also emphatically argue that such research should continue to recognize the multiplicity of individuals' concerns within societies (including how they understand and struggle with issues related to norms, reciprocity, harm, entitlements, and justice); we contend that such analyses are better placed to provide answers to questions about the distinct developmental patterns in different cultures than is research focusing on dominant cultural values or templates.

Concluding Thoughts:

On the Complexity of Moral Lives in Cultures

A particular discourse about culture has enjoyed a sort of conceptual and communicative hegemony in the world of psychological research. This discourse has centered on an understanding of culture stamped with assertions of holism and integration. But this view of culture conceals the varied and complex experiences of individuals within societies and ignores systems of inequality. It overestimates the power of society to dictate meaning and underestimates individual agency, rendering the process of development as one of conservative adaptation to culture. Adopting a more critical understanding of culture implies discarding the language of coherence and harmony, and acknowledging that cultures are made up of individuals who have diverse concerns and goals and are capable of reflecting on values, practices, and

traditions, embracing some and rejecting others. It also implies acknowledging that, in any community, persons, especially those in unequal positions, are bound to develop different and often conflicting perspectives. Hence, the study of social and moral development in culture must attend to the many contexts of social life in cultures and to the varied ways in which individuals make sense of their experiences in those social contexts.

This is not to say that the social and moral lives of persons in culture are devoid of pattern. Rather, within cultures, multiple partial and overlapping patterns assert themselves to varying degrees, in different social contexts, and in different realms of experience. Thus speaking about the pervasive heterogeneity within cultures does not imply that differences among cultures do not exist or are trivial. To be sure, historical, social, and political circumstances shape and frame extremely different developmental contexts for people in different parts of the world. Moreover, societies differ substantially in regards to the realms of life that are organized around hierarchical relations (e.g., economic, family, religious), the extent to which hierarchical differences are sanctioned and institutionalized, and the opportunities for individuals to gain (or lose) power and status. We have thus urged that, while attending to the complexity within societies and the constructive processes that are universally relevant to understanding moral development, research must remain alert to ways in which specific cultural arrangements inform pathways of moral development.

Urging sensitivity to contextual specificity and cultural conditions, however, is not the same as posing distinct, essential, moral sensibilities, or arguing for moral relativism. To capture the diversity of social and moral life across cultures while both steering clear from dangerous essentializations and giving voice to the multiple and dynamic perspectives that coexist within cultures, research on social and moral development should focus its attention on the “local” ways

in which goals and concerns with matters of justice, autonomy, friendship, mutuality, and tradition are played out in harmony or conflict, in distinct contexts, within different cultures. Research must also question presumptions about children's and adults' acceptance of cultural norms and practices and, instead, set out to identify the local forms that cooperation, submission, opposition, and subversion take in different societies. In moving away from the construct of culture as the main anchor of human diversity, research on social and moral development has the potential for documenting the range of diversity in human development – not the different moral outlooks of different cultures, but the multiple and conflicting outlooks of different people within different cultures.

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