The Culture of Morality

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, CONTEXT, AND CONFLICT

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The social and moral development of individuals, and the relations of cultural contexts to individuals' thought and actions are broad topics that have been approached in a variety of ways. Especially with regard to morality, there have and continue to be sharp differences and heated controversies about their defining features, how they are formed during childhood and adolescence, the role of judgments and emotions, and relations of individuals and society. In the early part of the twentieth century, some of the major social scientific theorists, including psychologists like Jean Piaget (1932), Sigmund Freud (1930), and those of the behavioristic movement (John Watson, 1924, but later articulated more explicitly by B.F. Skinner, 1971), addressed issues of morality and its development in different ways. Emile Durkheim (1925/1961), a sociologist, also presented a point of view that included propositions about children's development.

One perspective on the development of morality was that it entailed the construction of judgments about justice, equality, and cooperation. In line with his general theoretical approach, Piaget proposed that children's moral development stems from their reciprocal interactions with others, including adults and peers. He also theorized that individuals and society are in reciprocal relationship, and individuals make judgments that are both in accord with society's traditions and accepted practices and that serve to potentially transform those traditions and practices (Piaget, 1950/1995). Alternative perspectives were presented by Freud, the Behaviorists, and Durkheim. Although there are significant differences among these three approaches, they share the viewpoint that moral development primarily involves

accommodations to, and internalization of, the norms, standards, and practices of society. In those approaches, it is important to mention, the role of biological factors is also taken into account. The most elaborated form of this is in Freud's theorizing that societal norms place severe restrictions on biological needs and instincts. As a consequence, social life involves a good deal of conflict for individuals. Durkheim's position, as another example, included the assumption that there are "natural" propensities for individuals to become attached to social groups. In Durkheim's view, as a consequence of these natural propensities social life is mainly harmonious for individuals.

In general, views of morality as entailing the construction of judgments or the acquisition of societal norms have continued to be debated during the last part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. In each approach, there have been extensive modifications and extensions of the early work. The approach I present in this book is based on the proposition that individuals construct judgments through their social interactions and that they form several different kinds of judgments about a multifaceted social world. The approach is consistent with philosophical conceptions of morality as entailing judgments about welfare, justice, and rights. Within this approach, I account for relations between morality and culture. Morality can be a source of social harmony since it concerns how people ought to relate to each other. Societal arrangements, social norms, and cultural practices do embody ways for people to relate to each other with fairness, and to respect the welfare of others. Societal arrangements, social norms, and cultural practices, at the same time, can embody ways that allow for injustices and can be detrimental to the welfare of groups of people, especially those situated in lower positions on the social hierarchy. Under those circumstances, morality is a source of conflict because people make judgments about injustices and inequalities embedded in the social system.

The approach I present is grounded in analyses of the psychology of the development of moral and social judgments of individuals, and how those judgments are applied to societal arrangements and cultural practices and can result in harmony, conflict, and opposition in people's social lives. In the course of discussing the approach my

colleagues and I have taken to social and moral development, I consider several alternative approaches, including ones that presume that morality is formed through either accommodation to or identification with one's culture. In those approaches, cultures are seen as entailing generally shared beliefs that make for social harmony. In those perspectives, conflicts and tensions arise mainly when people have not adequately acquired the morality of the culture.

Social conflicts, tensions, and moral failings are matters that in the United States have been very much part of public discussions during the last half of the twentieth century. These discussions about morality and society, engaged in by politicians, social leaders, and social scientists, often have taken two forms. Especially in the latter part of the century – during the 1980s and 1990s – many have maintained that American society is in decline and facing a serious moral crisis stemming from the failure of many people, especially the young, to adequately incorporate the moral values and ideals of the society. Often, the era of the 1960s is identified as contributing to the moral decline because of an abandonment, at the time, of traditional values.

Others attribute social conflicts not to a decline in the morality of the society, but to long-standing social injustices having to do with matters like racial discrimination, the rights of women, and economic inequalities. From that perspective, the 1960s was an era in which issues of social justice were confronted and discussed publicly. I believe that the social and political events, as well as public discussions that have occurred during the last half of the twentieth century – especially as articulated in the 1960s and 1990s – inform our understanding of some important differences in social scientific thinking about morality, development, social conflicts, and the relations of individuals to society. The events and discussions also highlight different views of social opposition. To provide an overview of the contrasting approaches, in this chapter I consider perspectives put forth in the 1960s and in the latter part of the century.

A salient characteristic of the 1960s in the United States, as well as in other parts of the world, was social and political protest against governmental policies and social practices considered unjust. One issue that galvanized public protests and demonstrations was the

engagement of the United States in the war in Vietnam. Large numbers of people labored greatly to have the U.S. government end its involvement in the war. A second issue resulting in social and political activities, including public protests and demonstrations, was the treatment of black people. Many people strived to end racial discrimination, unequal treatment, and the lack of economic opportunities. A third issue, the role of women in the larger society and within the family, did not often involve large public demonstrations. Instead, this issue was the topic of discussion and debate in political arenas, the workplace, the family, and in written expositions.

The antiwar movement mainly pertained to events occurring at the time in that it focused on the perceived injustices of the Vietnam war (though issues were raised regarding war in general and the long-term actions of the United States as a powerful nation). Both the civil rights and the feminist movements were not solely limited to events occurring at the time. Attention was given to matters pertaining to long-standing practices of discrimination, prejudice, inequalities, injustices, and poverty. Martin Luther King, Jr., the universally acknowledged leader of the civil rights movement, articulated the moral and long-term goals of the protests and demonstrations in a well-known letter he wrote while in jail in Birmingham, Alabama, in April 1963. King, who had been jailed for leading a nonviolent demonstration, wrote his letter in response to a public statement from eight Alabama clergymen. The clergymen wrote that the demonstrations were unwise and untimely and violated the principles of law and order and common sense. They also complained that the demonstrations were directed by outsiders (King resided in Atlanta, Georgia).

In his lengthy letter, King made it clear that he viewed the demonstrations as necessitated by the injustices of racial prejudice, unjust laws supporting racial discrimination, and freedoms denied to some because of their color: "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here . . . Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963, p. 3). Moreover, King regarded the civil rights movement as part of a historical process entailing oppression and struggle: "History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily . . . we know through painful experience

that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed" (p. 6). And inevitably freedom will be demanded: "Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what happened to the American Negro" (p. 12). Oppression produces discontents among those oppressed and leaves society in a state of tension. Tension can also be used for positive ends: "I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive tension that is necessary for growth . . . to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood" (p. 5).

King's perspective, along with that of many others concerned at the time with the war in Vietnam, civil rights, and the treatment of women, reflects an orientation to society, culture, morality, the psychology of moral behavior, and the acquisition of morality. In this orientation, morality is not equivalent to adherence to existing or traditional societal values or norms. Rather, the principles of justice, equal respect for persons, and freedom from oppression are the standards by which individuals and society should be guided. Indeed, in his letter to the clergymen, King was critical of those in authority within established social institutions, such as the church, for their acceptance of existing ways: "Where were their voices of support when tired, bruised, and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest . . . Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are" (King, 1963, p. 15). Nor is it the case that moral wisdom necessarily resides in traditions or established practices. In his famous address at the March on Washington (August 28, 1963), King called for transformations in the ways blacks had been treated since the end of the Civil War: "Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of social injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood."

Similarly, the movement for the rights of women was seen by its proponents as an attempt to correct past wrongs of injustice, inequalities,

and exploitation. Feminists regarded the power structure of many communities, societies, and cultures that were controlled by men as perpetuating injustices and, in some cases, involving oppression.

It was implicit in the feminist and civil rights movements that acceptance of the ways of society or the practices of a culture is not always beneficial. King himself made this explicit in social scientific terms when he addressed the annual convention of the American Psychological Association in 1967. Recognizing that psychologists often cast psychological health in terms of adjustment to social conditions and arrangements, he urged them to think otherwise: "There are some things concerning which we must always be maladjusted if we are to be people of good will."

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, public social activities and much public rhetoric has taken a different turn from the 1960s. This is not to say that people, in general, had different ways of making moral judgments during the two periods. Rather, different perspectives were more or less frequently espoused in public activities and discourse. One contrast is that there has been less in the way of public social and political protest. To be sure, many issues of justice and rights engage people – including the rights of women, sexual harassment, civil rights, gay rights, abortion, and euthanasia. However, a good deal of the political and social commentary, and in many instances the analyses of social scientists, have involved laments about the dire moral state of the nation and the lack of civility in people's social interactions, a nostalgia about times past, and implicit or explicit critiques of the events of the 1960s. The tone has been that too many have failed to incorporate the traditional values of the society (often referred to as family values), so they are unable to form the appropriate traits or habits of character and are unwilling to sacrifice personal freedoms and desires for the good of the society. Embedded in these perspectives is the idea that adjustment to, or acceptance of, the norms, mores, standards, and practices of society is good and necessary.

These assessments of moral failings have been made by politicians and by social scientists. The pronouncements of politicians, though perhaps also aimed at obtaining benefits in the electoral process, are

informative of the perspective on individuals, society, and morality. An interesting example comes from responses to large-scale demonstrations in 1992 that took place in the inner city of Los Angeles, which included rioting, looting, and burnings. The demonstrations were, themselves, in reaction to the acquittal of four white Los Angeles policemen in their trial on charges of severely beating a black man upon arresting him after a car chase. The beatings had been captured on videotape, broadcast nationally, and discussed on television news shows and in the newspapers. As a consequence, the trial of the policemen received a great deal of attention in the media and by the public – as, of course, did the reaction by blacks in Los Angeles to the acquittal of the policemen.

Several politicians attributed the demonstrations and riots to a lack of "traditional values" in communities of the type that had taken part. They claimed that the events reflected "a poverty of values" in the inner cities, where there is a breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility, and social order. The poverty of values, it was said, resulted in such moral ills as the bearing of children outside of marriage, drug use, and dependence on welfare. More generally, the view has been espoused that there has been a decline of morality by virtue of permissiveness and changes in the structure of families. A common theme has been that there is a connection between family values and traditional values. It is thought that the underpinnings of morality are due to the preservation of a set of values or ideals in the traditions of society handed down from generation to generation. It is presumed that the process of transmitting the traditions occurs within the family. Therefore, the family structure must be maintained so that each generation can learn from previous ones. Another common theme is that the process went awry in the era of the 1960s because traditional values were overthrown in favor of self-interest, unbridled freedoms, casual sex, drug use, evasion of responsibility, disrespect for authority, a rejection of morality by relativistic attitudes, and a devaluing of marriage and the heterosexual family. The prevalence in the inner cities of single mothers has exacerbated the situation. To properly acquire moral values, children need to be part of intact families, with a mother and a father. One group that has been negatively affected is

the so-called underclass from the inner cities, since they fail to develop the appropriate values derived from society's traditions.

The causes of moral decay also presumably stemmed from another group in society – a class of elites who themselves have the wrong values, espouse relativistic positions on morality, and steer others into improper directions. The media have been singled out for blame. Back in 1992, one of the most vocal politicians was then Vice President Dan Quayle. In one of his speeches, the vice president criticized a popular weekly television program ("Murphy Brown") for depicting its lead character as bearing a child while unmarried (A. Rosenthal, "Quayle Says Riots Sprang from Lack of Family Values," *New York Times*, May 20, 1992). Quayle's suggestion that a fictional television character contributed to the nation's moral decline by "mocking the importance of fathers" (p. A20) was itself mocked by many. Nevertheless, part of Quayle's message in this regard is shared by many. It is the message that there are elites in the society, represented by those in the media, intellectuals, and academics, who contribute to the decline of morality by criticizing traditional values. Ordinary people, with their common and moral sense, stand in between the elites and the underclass of the inner cities.

Several aspects of these messages are mirrored in positions taken by people who try to account for social scientific evidence and who include scholarly analyses that go beyond political rhetoric. In one instance, a direct link was made to the pronouncements of politicians through the very title of the essay, "Dan Quayle Was Right" (Whitehead, 1993). Dan Quayle was right, according to Whitehead's interpretations of social scientific evidence, in his claim that the absence of fathers in the family has very negative consequences for children. Whitehead, too, traced the problem to a rapid rise, in the 1960s, in the rates of divorces and out-of-wedlock births. These trends were supported by a set of new beliefs that emerged from American cultural orientations: that it would be better economically for women to join the work force, that divorce would not be harmful to children, and that diversity in the structure of families would be better for the nation. These beliefs, argued Whitehead, are in accord with American orientations to individual choice, freedom, self-expression,

and social progress. However, the changes in family structure resulted in regress rather than progress because "the social arrangement that has proved most successful in ensuring the physical survival and promoting the social development of the child is the family unit of the biological mother and father" (Whitehead, 1993, p. 48). Moreover, the family is a needed communitarian institution that serves to teach children self-restraint, responsibility, and right conduct. As shown by social scientific evidence, these goals cannot be accomplished within single parent or divorced families. The consequence of the changes in families has been greater poverty and a greater likelihood that children will have emotional and behavioral problems, drop out of high school, get pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, be in trouble with the law, and be at much higher risk for physical and sexual abuse. Movies and shows on television provide children with models to emulate who display improper and destructive behaviors and life styles.

Several other writings have appeared that convey the themes in Whitehead's essay. Whitehead's writings were directed to the public at large, citing social scientific evidence. The writings of two others, Allan Bloom and William Bennett, have also reached a wide readership. Bloom, a philosopher from the University of Chicago specializing in ancient Greek philosophy, wrote a tome (1987) about the highly negative influences of the culture of the 1960s especially on American universities and, in turn, on society as a whole. *The Closing of the American Mind* (with the subtitle, *How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*), in spite of its scholarly tone and somewhat obscure language, reached a large audience. It was a national best-selling book. For Bloom, too, the 1960s created a crisis for the nation. His focus was on the lowering of standards and capitulation to militant students in universities during that period, and an associated doctrine of moral relativism. A major consequence is that decades later university students, and older people, embraced a radical individualism that leaves them narcissistic and preoccupied with themselves, with a psychology of separateness or detachment from others. Bloom also attributes a major cause of the decline to feminism, which, he believes, is contrary to the natural attachment of

mother to child that is a foundation for family life. Family life, however, has experienced a breakdown, as evidenced by the high divorce rate, due to the feminist turn against the attachment of mother and child. The breakdown in family life contributes to individualism and detachments, which in turn has negatively affected university life and the moral state of society.

William Bennett, too, is a philosopher by training (with Ph.D. from the University of Texas). He has straddled the academic and political arenas, putting forth similar moral messages and critiques of society in each persona. He is best known to the general public for his governmental and political activities as first, Secretary of Education in President Ronald Reagan's administration during the 1980s, and then as director of drug policy in the administration of George Bush. Less well known is that Bennett was Director of the National Humanities Center at Research Triangle Park (North Carolina), during which time he wrote extensively about moral education and critiqued those psychological theories of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969) guiding the implementation of programs of moral education in the schools (Bennett, 1980; Bennett & Delattre, 1978, 1979). In those writings, as well as in the later periods, Bennett, (1992, 1993, 1995, 1998), put forth the views that morality consists of dispositions or traits of character consistent with cultural traditions and the "memory of society," and that children need to incorporate habitual virtuous behaviors through firm control on the part of adults (see also Kirkpatrick, 1992; Ryan, 1989; Sommers, 1984; Wynne, 1979, 1985, 1989).

Bennett and his colleagues took great issue with the ways children were taught morality in the schools because, they argued, such programs typically were designed to stimulate changes in moral judgments, deliberation, reflection, and the consideration of alternative moral choices and decisions. In this view, morality neither involves judgments (as claimed in theories of moral development like those of Piaget, 1932, or Kohlberg, 1969) nor making choices in values (as claimed in the values clarification approach of Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972). Judgment, reflection, and decision making were deemed largely tangential to morality and, therefore, detrimental to its acquisition because they divert children from learning to behave in

habitual ways consistent with traditions and virtues. Bennett (1980, p. 30), for instance, has proclaimed that "emphasis on morality as 'cognition' can lead to a serious error in a child's understanding of what a moral life consists." Moreover, "it is often the case that the more a person has a fixed and steady disposition, the less, not the more, he has to make a decision at all" (Bennett, 1980, p. 30). The emphasis needs to be on following rules and the inculcation of traits in children, with a focus on influencing how they act and not on their "states of mind" (Wynne, 1985). Character traits are to be taught or transmitted not only through rewards and punishments, but especially, through example: most important, example as provided in the constant and consistent actions of adults practicing the values and in the telling and retelling of stories or narratives about people habitually behaving in accord with those values. The moral life entails "developing good habits, which come about only through repeated practice" (Bennett, 1995, p. 12). Bennett and others provide a lengthy list of traits presumably shared by the vast majority of Americans, part of a common world, which reflect the ideals of the nation: honesty, compassion, courage, perseverance, responsibility, loyalty, kindliness, fairness, self-discipline, and love of country.

The idea of inculcating traits of character is a long-standing one, and a variety of methods to accomplish this goal have been proposed. A common thread in the various proposals is that practice makes perfect. For example, in nineteenth century America handwriting was connected to character (Thornton, 1996). A person's handwriting (usually that of males) was seen by some to reflect trustworthiness, industry, and self-discipline. Instruction in handwriting presumably contributed to character formation through the triumph of the student's will over his body. Penmanship instruction was viewed as a way of inducing obedience, compliance, and conformity to rules and authority. Instruction was especially needed for those who would otherwise act in antisocial ways. As put by Thornton (1996, p. 55): "Because writing was conceptualized as an act in which the will masters the body to conform to a standard prototype, penmanship was a natural for creating the model male self of Victorian America, the generic man of character."

In late twentieth century America, practice of good deeds and repeated exposure to stories of virtue is connected to the formation of habits of character (Bennett, 1993). Perhaps stating it in the strongest terms, Bennett proclaimed that there has been a steep decline in the state of morality in the nation. In a seeming paradox, in 1992 Bennett maintained, on the one hand, that traits of character reflected in American ideals are ingrained in cultural traditions and held in respect by the majority of the American people and that, on the other hand, American society had lost its moral compass. In *The De-valuing of America*, Bennett juxtaposed the two themes by contending that there is a discrepancy between the beliefs and values of the majority of Americans, who constitute the mainstream, and a highly influential minority of "elites," who "have waged an all-out assault on common sense and the common values of the American people" (Bennett, 1992, p. 13). Beginning with the culture and politics of the 1960s, elites from universities, as well as from the literary and artistic communities, Hollywood, the media, and some religious leaders, have sufficiently dominated the major institutions, including the schools, and exerted enough influence to bring to the fore beliefs and values producing the moral decline of society. The elites have rejected the time-honored values and traditions of America, perpetuating nihilism and relativism (see also Himmelfarb, 1994). Even though the American people had maintained their good common and moral sense, they had not done enough to counteract vocally the views counter to American ideals of the elites. There have been serious negative effects on social institutions, especially on the schools: "Contemporary education needed, and yet had drifted away from, a firm belief in traditional moral values: right and wrong, the importance of character, a concern for the hearts of children as well as their minds" (Bennett, 1992, p. 215).

Political events of much interest to the American people led to some reappraisals by Bennett a few years after he wrote about the devaluing of America by the elites. In 1998 the president of the United States, William Clinton, was the subject of an intensive investigation by an independent counsel. The investigation focused on President Clinton's sexual affair with a young woman and accusations of perjury in a deposition and in testimony to a grand jury, as well as obstruction of

justice. The independent counsel's report resulted in impeachment by the House of Representatives, but acquittal by the United States Senate (in January 1999). These events were followed very closely by much of the American public, and many held strong positions on the merits of the intense investigation and the resulting impeachment. The majority of people opposed the impeachment and, and in a number of public opinion surveys, the president received high approval ratings for his performance in office.

For Bennett (1998), Clinton's actions and especially the reaction of the American public constituted another example of how the elites had undermined the morality of the nation – as put forth by Bennett in *Death of Outrage: Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals*. He argued that Clinton's actions had implications for the lessons taught to youth, and that it was imperative that Clinton be removed from office, primarily because the president had committed perjury and obstructed justice. According to Bennett, Clinton's deviation from sexual norms was also relevant since "sex is a quintessentially moral activity" (1998, p. 18).

Bennett's position, as conveyed in the book's subtitle, was unequivocal. Clinton's actions, as well as those of his supporters, constituted an assault on the society's core ideals and traditions. The main title of the book conveyed another aspect of the situation, namely that the American people were not outraged at what was going on. Bennett regarded the approval of the president to reflect an ominous shift in the sentiments of Americans, such that they no longer maintained their good common and moral sense. They had succumbed to the relativism and nonjudgmentalism of the elites. In turn, because of relativistic attitudes they were willing to accept the president's moral failings, for reasons of self-interest, since the country was experiencing economic prosperity.

According to Bennett, an example of the shift to relativism and the failure to judge others is reflected in differences in public attitudes toward Clinton and toward President Richard Nixon at the time of the Watergate events in the early 1970s. In contrast with Clinton, the majority of people thought that Nixon should have been removed from the presidency in the aftermath of a failed burglary aimed at

influencing the presidential election. In 1974, Nixon resigned from his office instead of facing certain impeachment and conviction. Bennett argued that Clinton's actions were equally as serious as those of Nixon because each involved lying and obstruction of justice. Bennett attributed the differences in public opinion to a decline in the morality of the American people during the intervening years "since during the last thirty years we have witnessed a relentless assault on traditional norms and a profound shift in public attitudes" (Bennett, 1998, p. 170).

However, the perspectives of the majority of the American people to the two events are more complex than Bennett thought. Public opinion surveys indicate that people drew distinctions between the two events. A burglary aimed at influencing the presidential election was viewed differently from events instigated by sexual activities. People were less judgmental about sexual activities than they would be about the circumstances around Nixon's actions. It was evident from public discourse and public opinion surveys that the attitudes of many people were influenced by various facets of Clinton's actions and the ways people who opposed him acted. With regard to the impeachment, the attitude of the public was influenced by the fact that the president's fabrications were related to consensual sexual activities. Although people were troubled that Clinton had not been entirely truthful, they were also troubled by an investigation of what they considered a personal and private matter. It is also the case that people did not always accept the morality of Clinton's behavior. His sexual activities were viewed differently from accusations of possible illegal activities to obtain financial benefits for himself or for his political causes. American people were, indeed, judgmental in nonrelativistic ways about the latter types of events. They were also judgmental about what they thought were heavy-handed and partisan activities of the independent counsel and those leading the impeachment process.

These reactions and the distinctions people drew between different actions are in line with a great deal of research showing that Americans, as well as others, maintain distinctively different types of social judgments. Different types of judgments are made about arenas of personal jurisdiction, matters of social convention, and the morality of welfare,

justice, and rights (Turiel, 1998a). The research has shown that many people regard sexual norms to have a large conventional component, and that sexual activity is personal and private. In contrast with the view of morality as entailing a fixed set of traits reflecting the incorporation of traditional values, the research demonstrates that individuals make complex moral, social, and personal judgments that often entail taking into account the context of people's activities. Research also has demonstrated that in their moral decisions people take circumstances into account – not in the relativistic sense nor simply as accommodation to the situation. Rather, people often weigh and struggle with different and competing moral considerations, as well as try to balance nonmoral with moral considerations.

Particularly suggestive of people's applications of moral judgments to societal events are findings of public opinion polls of Clinton's behavior and job performance by black and white respondents (polls taken from February to August in 1998 and reported in K. Sack, "Blacks Stand by a President Who 'Has Been There for Us'," the *New York Times*, September 19, 1998, p. A1). The results of these polls, too, suggest that blacks (and probably whites) were not indifferent to or relativistic about the moral issues involved. They took strong positions in the face of the long investigation of President Clinton and in the context of highly morally charged race relations in the country. As discussed in the *New York Times* article, black people evaluated the president's reactions to his sexual activities in conjunction with other issues that they judged of great importance. Those other issues included Clinton's defense of affirmative action for minorities, his long record of appointments of black officials and judges, his critical stands on racism, and the social and economic gains made by blacks during his administration. Insofar as economic prosperity did influence people's judgments about Clinton's actions, it is likely that they considered both the pragmatic and moral consequences of the economy on people's well-being – especially for people of poverty or those fearing unemployment. In addition, blacks judged in nonrelativistic ways the investigation and prosecution of the president as unfair. They believed that the tactics were similar to ones used historically to persecute and oppress black Americans.

The reactions of the vast majority of black people, as well as the majority of white people, to the investigation and impeachment of President Clinton reveal that many of the concerns of the 1960s with civil rights, racial injustice, and poverty had not gone away at the end of the twentieth century. People still were critical of social leaders, institutions, and societal arrangements. In my interpretation, people's perspectives on social and moral matters generally are discrepant with the positions put forth in the 1980s and 1990s by politicians and scholars like Whitehead, Bloom, and Bennett. In any event, very different views of moral and societal problems were expressed by leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1960s and in some of the discussions of the 1990s. In these views, the power structure and the complacency of some social institutions can perpetuate long-standing societal injustices. People's concerns with justice, equal treatment, rights, freedoms, and the wrongs of oppression lead to tensions, discontents, and efforts to transform society into new arrangements and practices. In the views of Whitehead, Bloom, and Bennett, a failure to promote the values and traditions of the society has resulted in moral decay. From their perspective, it is renewed accommodations to traditional societal values, rather than permissiveness and assertions of self-interest, that will revert society to its earlier and better moral state.

These issues do not pertain solely to social and political movements. Often the issues addressed the everyday lives and activities of the citizenry, and large numbers of people have been involved with the social problems. Moreover, these issues are not unrelated to explanations of morality and its development in psychological and other social scientific analyses. Embedded in the two perspectives are different ways of explaining the bases of moral functioning, the relations of individuals to society, the ways children develop socially, the dynamics of social systems, and the nature of changes in cultures. In one perspective, morality entails judgments about human welfare, justice, equal treatment, and rights. This view of morality has been articulated by a number of contemporary moral philosophers (e.g., Dworkin, 1977; Gewirth, 1978, 1982; Habermas, 1993; Okin, 1989, 1996; Nussbaum, 1999, 2000; Rawls, 1971, 1993, 2001). The proposition that morality involves judgments, which can result in conflicts, discontents, and efforts

to transform societal practices and arrangements, has implications for explanations of development. If morality involves judgments, then it would be expected that moral development would involve a process of constructing such judgments. The theoretical perspective I present in this book, consistent with the philosophical view of morality as entailing judgments, is based on the proposition that children construct ways of thinking about welfare, justice, and rights through a variety of social experiences. In addition, it is proposed that social development involves the formation of other domains of social judgments. Alongside moral judgments, people develop ways of understanding social systems, with their conventional regulations or uniformities, and judgments about arenas of personal jurisdiction. In this view, moral development does not involve accommodations to the social system, and existing or past social practices are not necessarily the sources of the moral. In coming to understand social, personal, and moral matters, children begin to evaluate social norms and practices. They form judgments about situations that require the weighing and coordination of different domains. With the development of a multiplicity of social judgments, individuals are part of their culture and can stand apart from it, scrutinizing societal arrangements and cultural practices. Therefore, tensions and conflicts exist within societies insofar as their arrangements and practices perpetuate injustices and unequal distribution of rights. A primary source of conflict comes from social hierarchies of greater power and status among groups that entail norms and practices favoring some over others and allowing for relationships of dominance and subordination. Although at certain points in history tensions and conflicts become public and take the form of organized protests (as in the United States in the 1960s), the tensions and conflicts exist at other times in less public ways. I discuss in later chapters how this is so in people's orientations to cultural practices and societal arrangements in circumstances that do not necessarily involve public or organized protests. The analyses of judgments about societal arrangements and cultural practices presented in this book are connected to analyses of development proposed to entail constructions of judgments in the moral, social, and personal domains.