

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-27305-3 - The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention

Elliot Turiel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

**Cambridge Studies in Social and Emotional Development**

*General editor:* Martin L. Hoffman

*Advisory Board:* Nicholas Blurton Jones, Robert N. Emde,  
Willard W. Hartup, Carroll E. Izard, Robert A. Hinde,  
Lois W. Hoffman, Jerome Kagan, Franz J. Mönks,  
Paul Mussen, Ross D. Parke, and Michael Rutter

**The development of social knowledge**

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-27305-3 - The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention

Elliot Turiel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# The development of social knowledge

**Morality and convention**

ELLIOT TURIEL

*University of California, Berkeley*

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Cambridge*

*London New York New Rochelle*

*Melbourne Sydney*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-27305-3 - The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention  
Elliot Turiel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1983

First published 1983

Reprinted 1985

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Turiel, Elliot.

The development of social knowledge.

(Cambridge studies in social and emotional  
development)

Includes index.

1. Socialization. 2. Social ethics. 3. Convention  
(Philosophy) 4. Social interaction. 5. Cognition and  
culture. I. Title. II. Series

HQ783.T9 1983 303.3'2 82-14762

ISBN 0 521 25309 8 hard covers

ISBN 0 521 27305 6 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

## Contents

Preface	vii
1 Introduction: Approaches to the study of social knowledge	1
<i>Domains of social judgment</i>	2
<i>Social understandings or social control</i>	4
2 Structure and development	8
<i>Interaction, construction, and structure</i>	9
<i>Stages, developmental synchrony-asynchrony, equilibration</i>	15
<i>Domains of knowledge and partial structures</i>	20
<i>Methods of research</i>	21
3 Social experience and social knowledge	33
<i>Morality and social convention</i>	34
<i>Social interactions</i>	40
4 Dimensions of social judgments	50
<i>Criterion judgments, justification categories, and social events</i>	52
<i>Research on criterion judgments</i>	55
<i>Criterion judgments, justification categories, and familiarity with the issue</i>	63
<i>Discontinuity or continuity in the domain distinction</i>	68
5 Rules and prohibitions	75
<i>Research on concepts of social rules</i>	81
<i>The systematic nature of social rule concepts</i>	97
6 The development of concepts of social convention and coordination of domains	100

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-27305-3 - The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention

Elliot Turiel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi		<i>Contents</i>
	<i>Affirmations and negations: equilibrium and disequilibrium in concepts of social convention</i>	102
	<i>Affirmation-negation and developmental transformations</i>	112
	<i>Domain combinations</i>	114
7	The development of moral judgments	130
	<i>Classification of events and issues used as stimuli</i>	131
	<i>Analyses of the development of moral judgments</i>	136
	<i>Elements of the heteronomous orientation</i>	137
	<i>Does heteronomy precede autonomy?</i>	145
	<i>Modifications in analyses of heteronomy</i>	153
	<i>Age-related changes in moral judgments</i>	157
8	Noncognitive approaches to moral development: internalization and biological determinism	161
	<i>Superego formation</i>	166
	<i>Behavioristic-internalization approaches</i>	173
9	Social judgments and actions: coordination of domains	187
	<i>Research on the relations of moral judgment and action</i>	188
	<i>Consistencies and inconsistencies in judgment and action</i>	193
	<i>Domains of judgment and action</i>	201
10	Conclusions: Interaction, development, and rationality	211
	<i>Rationality and nonrationality in social domains</i>	214
	<i>Categories of social knowledge</i>	222
	References	227
	Index	237

## Preface

The development of social knowledge in children and adolescents is a broad topic requiring some choices regarding the focus of analysis. Those choices are naturally guided by one's theoretical orientation to social reasoning and its formation and transformations in the process of growth. My orientation, which is structural and developmental, has led me to a focus on categories of social reasoning. Much of the research for the theory presented in this book had its origins, about ten years ago, in close analyses of delimited domains of social knowledge. The research was aimed at discerning the differences and similarities in moral judgments and concepts of the conventions of social systems. It quickly became apparent that moral reasoning and concepts of social organization constituted two fundamental and separable aspects of children's understanding of the social world.

In the intervening time my research on morality and convention has gone beyond the original focus to include other important aspects of social development. Moreover, the analyses of categories of social knowledge have provided the framework for an understanding of children's social interactions with peers, their relations with adults, their processes of development, and the relationship between social judgments and actions. A central thesis of this book is that social life is guided by rational processes and that the construction of fundamental and distinct categories of social knowledge begins in early childhood. The idea of distinct categories of reasoning does not imply a dualism of thought and action or of individual reasoning and cultural content. Rather, it is proposed that the separation of domains of knowledge provides a basis for understanding the interrelations among thought, action, and cultural content. The theory of social development is interactive. It proposes that social development evolves through children's reciprocal interactions with the social environment.

In part, this book is aimed at bringing together the various components of the research programs undertaken during the past ten years. Some of the research findings are being presented for the first time. There is also extensive discussion of relevant findings from a set of previously published studies. Much of that

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-27305-3 - The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention

Elliot Turiel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Preface*

research was conducted by colleagues (in collaborative and in independent efforts) who have shared an interest in issues related to the development of domains of social knowledge. They include Allen Black, Philip Davidson, Larry Nucci, and Judith Smetana.

The book has two main goals. One is to further understanding of how people reason about morality and convention and how those domains of reasoning develop from early childhood through adolescence and early adulthood. The second goal is to provide – through extensive and detailed analyses of morality and convention – documentation for the proposition that individuals form stable systems of social knowledge that are organized around domains. In this sense, the present volume is meant to build an empirical foundation for some other theoretical propositions to be presented in a subsequent volume. To achieve these goals, the book is organized in the following way. I have begun with definitions, hypotheses, and theoretical assumptions regarding social knowledge and development. This is followed by discussion of research findings bearing on the hypotheses and propositions. Last, there is a consideration of the implications of this research for a general view of social development.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to those who have assisted me in the writing of this book. The early stages of the research were facilitated by a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The actual writing of the book was aided by a fellowship period at the Van Leer Jerusalem Foundation in Israel. The Foundation provided time and a very stimulating setting for thought and writing. Thanks are due to Raphaella Bilski and Yehuda Elkana at Van Leer. Throughout the past few years I have been given research support by the Institute of Human Development at the University of California, Berkeley; I thank the past director of the Institute, Paul Mussen, and the present director, Ed Swanson.

Paul Mussen also provided helpful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript. I also thank Carolyn Hildebrandt, Melanie Killen, and Larry Nucci for their comments. Finally, thanks to Helen Clifton for her excellent work in typing and retyping the manuscript.

*Berkeley, California*  
*October 1982*

Elliot Turiel