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978-0-521-66586-5 - Morality in Everyday Life: Developmental Perspectives

Edited by Melanie Killen and Daniel Hart

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This collection brings together current research on morality in human development. Morality in its various forms is a dominant influence on the conduct and evaluation of day-to-day life. The pervasiveness of the moral domain can be detected in every aspect of social life; moral commitments shape the goals and aspirations of individuals, and moral judgments are apparent in discourse about most forms of human interaction. Two broad themes integrate this book: social context and development. Contexts include interpersonal as well as societal communities and cultures. This volume will appeal to scholars from many disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, education, sociology, law, linguistics, and ethics.

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# Morality in everyday life

## Developmental perspectives

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*For Rob and Sasha (M.K.)*

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## Preface

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Although the psychological study of morality has many aims, ultimately its goal is to understand how moral regulation occurs in the daily lives of individuals. We believe, as do many of our colleagues, that this goal is now being realized in a range of new lines of investigation. The purpose of this book is to bring together discussions of some of the most original research in this area. For researchers and theorists of morality, the various chapters in the volume present the most current advances and consider as well the complex issues revolving around morality. These include fundamental developmental questions, such as: Where does morality come from and how is it acquired (origins)? How does morality change over time (sequence)? How does culture play a role in the acquisition of morality? What does morality look like throughout the lifespan (ontogenesis)? We asked our contributors to address these issues to the extent that they were relevant to their work, and we especially encouraged our authors to consider the two overall guiding themes for the book: everyday life (context) and development.

None of this work would have been conducted without the groundbreaking studies of morality by Jean Piaget in the 1930s (*The Moral Judgment of the Child*) or by Lawrence Kohlberg in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (see Kohlberg's *Essays in Moral Development*, 1984, for a compilation of his writings). Piaget's and Kohlberg's works were important because, among other things, they sought to outline a structural developmental approach to moral judgment and reasoning. Their projects were vast and covered many aspects of moral development. One of the ways in which current research has moved beyond these foundational works is by providing new approaches for studying how morality is acquired and how moral judgments are constructed out of daily experiences. These are among the themes that pervade the research in this book and are, we believe, what make the current research significant and fundamental.

The idea for bringing together a book on the current psychological research in the field of morality began at a symposium (with the same title

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as this book) that we organized at the American Psychological Association conference in 1992. The reception to the symposium was very positive and it reminded us, as participants, that many psychologists outside of developmental psychology are still somewhat unfamiliar with the enormous output of exciting, original research that has been conducted on morality in various social contexts over the past few decades. Moreover, much of the psychological work on morality has been influenced by theories and research in the disciplines of anthropology, philosophy, and sociology. Thus, although the focus of this book is on psychological accounts of morality, most of the authors make references to theorists and researchers in other disciplines; this is part of what makes the topic of morality so compelling, enigmatic, and fascinating.

We wish to thank the contributing authors, all of whom submitted thoughtful, insightful chapters. Their conscientiousness in submitting drafts and revisions in a timely manner was greatly appreciated. Julia Hough at Cambridge University Press provided encouragement and thoughtful suggestions at many points in this project; her help was invaluable. Melanie Killen acknowledges support from the Spencer Foundation and the Ford Foundation for her research. Melanie Killen also thanks Bill Damon, Jonas Langer, Paul Mussen, Larry Nucci, Samuel Scheffler, Judith Smetana, and Elliot Turiel for meaningful and influential exchanges about morality and development, and the many undergraduates and Master's students at Wesleyan University who generously and enthusiastically participated in her various research projects. Dan Hart acknowledges the generous support of the Lilly Endowment's Program on Youth and Caring directed by Joan Lipsitz. Dan Hart also thanks Anne Colby, Bill Damon, Al Patterson, Mark Reinhalter, Larry Walker, and Jim Youniss for useful discussions on morality and everyday life.