Mapping the MORAL DOMAIN

Edited by
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with Betty Bardige

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A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education

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Mapping the Moral Domain

Dedication by Marilyn Brachman Hoffman to the memory of Margaret Collins Sullivan, teacher of English and Dean of Girls, McLean Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, from the 1940's through the 1960's,

Herself the embodiment of the highest moral development, and for generations of her adolescent students, a role model for their development of the ethic of care and responsibility.

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PREFACE

Carol Gilligan

In the fall of this year, a woman from Memphis sent me a letter with a newspaper clipping. Children had been asked to write essays on how to improve their city, and the journalist noticed a difference between essays written by boys and by girls. To the boys, improving the city meant urban renewal as we generally conceive it: more parks, new buildings, renovations, better streets, more lighting. Girls, however, wrote about improving the city in a way the reporter found surprising. They suggested strengthening relationships between people: responding to people in need and taking action to help them. Now a professor of law, the writer of the letter explained that she had read *In a Different Voice* at Yale Law School and thought I would appreciate the illustration.

Such evidence, sometimes called "anecdotal," sometimes "naturalistic," poses a quandary for psychologists: how to interpret this difference or what to make of such observations? Differences in the way people speak about themselves, their lives, or their city may make little difference in how they live or have little impact on what they do. But the example contained in the newspaper clipping raises a further question: why do the same words (such as "improving the city") have different meanings for different people? Whose meanings will prevail and be taken as "right" or definitive? What are the implications of seeing or speaking in what is considered to be the "right" language?

The essays brought together in this volume examine a difference in moral voice and moral orientation. This shift in voice and perspective, initially described in *In a Different Voice*, affects the language of psychology and education. What is at stake is the meaning of such key words as "self," "relationship," "morality," and "development." The differences between a "justice perspective" and a "care perspective" are explored here in a variety of studies undertaken in different contexts. A common finding of these studies is that two voices can be distinguished by listening to the ways people speak about moral problems. These voices suggest different ways of experiencing oneself in relation to others. The observation that only one voice is acknowledged and well delineated within the fields of psychology and education as presently constituted draws attention to the fate of the other. The association of moral voice with gender, as in the opening example of the children's essay contest, renders the subject matter of these essays both political and controversial.

The papers here represent a collaborative effort to bring to bear considerations of moral voice and gender on discussions of psychological development and education. Identifying a justice perspective and a male speaker as normative within the fields of psychology and education, we sought to explore the implications for theory and practice of listening to girls and women and including a care perspective. For this purpose, we formed a center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The work of the center as it evolved over time--one study building on another--suggests a new mapping of the moral domain, a new framework for theories of psychological development, and new directions for the practice of psychotherapy and education. But it also suggests a variety of questions for future research and points out the need for new research approaches and strategies.

In presenting the work of an ongoing research project, we hope that others will benefit from our insights and learn from our errors. To this end, we have included here both reports of individual studies and essays summarizing these studies and considering their implications. Throughout, the relationship between justice and care voices or perspectives is examined and reconsidered, and the relationship that emerges between moral voice, moral orientation, and gender becomes progressively clearer and more refined.

The essays in Part I demonstrate how the voices of justice and care define the coordinates for a new theoretical framework. These two moral voices draw attention to the vulnerability of people to oppression and to abandonment--vulnerabilities which are built into the human life cycle and constitute grounds for moral concern. The first essay, "Remapping the Moral Domain," establishes the close relationship between conceptions of self and conceptions of morality, linking the ethics of justice and care to different ways of imagining the self in relation to others. These different images of self in relationship create a genuine sense of moral ambiguity. In the essays that follow, two moral voices and perspectives are explored systematically in an effort to create a standard method for assessing moral voice and establishing moral orientation. Lyons' work represents the first step in that direction, a breakthrough which opens the way for subsequent work. Johnston carries this effort further by demonstrating that a person's spontaneous response to a moral problem is not necessarily the one which she or he deems best or preferable. By the age of eleven, most children can solve moral problems both in terms of rights (a justice approach) and in terms of response (a care approach). The fact that a person adopts one approach in solving a problem does not mean that he or she does not know or appreciate others.

The essay, "Two Moral Orientations," carries this discussion further by delineating the "focus phenomenon," the tendency for people to focus either on considerations of justice or considerations of care when describing an experience of moral conflict and choice. This work clarifies the "different voice" phenomenon. A care focus in moral reasoning, although not characteristic of all women, was almost exclusively a female phenomenon in three groups of educationally advantaged North Americans. Bardige's essay then raises the question: is a care perspective at risk in early adolescence, during the shift from primary to secondary education? Bardige's work suggests that girls who *appear* to exemplify lower levels of cognitive functioning in early adolescence, in fact, may be *resisting* the detachment which characterizes abstract or formal reasoning. In Bardige's study, this resistance consists of taking evidence of violence at face value. The issue of violence remains central in the final essay of Part I: "The Origins of Morality in Early Childhood Relationships." The skepticism with which psychologists greet reports of sex differences in empathy or moral reasoning

is examined here against the evidence of stark sex differences in such morally relevant behavior as the incidence of violent crime and the care of young children. A new theoretical framework is seen as necessary if psychologists are both to embrace sociological facts and general observations and yet not promulgate a simplistic view of "male" and "female" behavior. Justice and care as two ideals of human relationship provide the coordinates for a new theory of human development. Two ways of thinking about moral reasoning and moral emotions when taken together can account for observed similarities and differences between males and females.

In Part II, the two-voice framework defines a new approach to the question: what constitutes development in adolescence and adulthood and to the related question: what are the goals of secondary and professional education? The initial essay, "Exit-Voice Dilemmas in Adolescent Development," written as part of a *festschrift* for the economist, Albert O. Hirschman, notes the parallel between theories of economic development and psychological development. Hirschman's analysis of different responses to decline in social organizations is transposed to the domain of adolescence where the drama between "exit" and "voice" solutions draws attention to new meanings of loyalty. The concern with faulty models of development then becomes directed to the consideration of inner city youth. Psychologists typically report a correlation between social class and moral development--a correlation that has been passionately attacked by Robert Coles. Here Ward's study of urban adolescents' reflections on violence they have witnessed provides evidence that urban teens reason in terms of both justice and care and that these moral voices carry different perspectives on violence. Ward's study opens the way to further research, by providing new categories of analysis (combinations of care and justice) and by suggesting that care reasoning may forestall violent responses to violence or violation.

Two chapters on adult development by Attanucci and Willard focus specifically on the experience of mothers. These essays examine the nature of care as well as misrepresentations of care, especially the concept of care that is linked to conventional conceptions of feminine "goodness." Both essays stress the terms in which mothers describe themselves as mothers, underscoring the difference between mothers' "own terms" and the terms of mothering which are embedded in current cultural scripts for women, such

as psychologists' scripts for good or "good enough" mothers and media images of modern "superwoman." In the final two chapters, issues of care and justice are considered within the current practice of law and medicine, and questions are raised about the practice and the goals of medical and legal education. Both essays challenge the developmental model which equates adulthood with a justice perspective, and maturity with separation, self-sufficiency, and independence. Medical students and lawyers, speaking from a care perspective, with its underlying premise of connection or interdependence between self and others, draw attention to the ways in which people affect and are moved by one another--both wittingly and unwittingly. The vulnerability or openness of people to one another enables people to wound one another and also creates a powerful channel for help. Such openness, thus, is both a mark of human frailty and a source of human strength.

A word, finally, about the politics and the controversy of this research. The stark fact of the all-male research sample, accepted for years as representative by psychologists studying human development, in one sense speaks for itself. That such samples were not seen long ago as problematic by women or men points to different blindnesses on the part of each sex. The fact that these samples passed the scrutiny of peer review boards, and that studies of adolescence, moral development, and identity formation using all-male samples were repeatedly funded and widely published in professional journals indicates that the psychological research community needs to reexamine its claims to objectivity and dispassion. If the omission of half the human population was not seen, or not seen as significant, or not spoken about as a problem (by women or men), what other omissions are not being seen? On the simplest level, this collection of essays can be read as one answer--and a preliminary one at that--to the question: was anything missed by leaving out girls and women? The contribution of women's thinking, explored here in a variety of research contexts, is a different voice, a different way of speaking about relationships and about the experience of self. The inclusion of this voice changes the map of the moral domain. Listening to girls and women, we have come to listen differently to boys and men. And we have come to think differently about human nature and the human condition, and in turn, about psychology and education, disciplines devoted to understanding and improving human life.

PROLOGUE

ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT RECONSIDERED

Carol Gilligan

In an essay, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature," Lionel Trilling writes of his discomfort in teaching the course in modern literature at Columbia College. No literature, he observes, "has ever been so shockingly personal as ours--it asks every question that is forbidden in polite society. It asks us if we are content with our marriages, with our family lives, with our professional lives, with our friends . . . It asks us if we are content with ourselves, if we are saved or damned." How is one to teach such literature? After addressing the technicalities of verse patterns, irony, and prose conventions, the teacher must confront the necessity of bearing personal testimony, "must use whatever authority he may possess to say whether or not a work is true, and if not, why not, and if so, why so" (Trilling, 1967, pp. 164-165). Yet one can do this only at considerable cost to one's privacy. What disturbs Trilling is that in the absence of such personal confrontation the classroom lesson exemplifies the very problem displayed in the novels--the costs of detachment and dispassion in the face of what is most intensely passionate and personal.

To talk about the health of adolescents raises a similar problem. Once we have covered the technicalities of physical disease and psychic mechanisms, how will we respond to the adolescent's questions, or the questions behind the questions: What is true? What is of value? Who am I now? and Where is my home? I have studied identity and moral

development by listening to the ways in which people speak about themselves and about conflicts and choices they face. In this context, I have thought about the nature of psychological growth as it pertains to questions of truth and of value. Adolescence is a naturally occurring time of transition, a period when changes happen that affect the experience of self and relationships with others. Thus, adolescence is a time of epistemological crisis, an age when issues of interpretation come to the fore. The turbulence and indeterminacy of adolescence, long noted and often attributed to conflicts over sexuality and aggression, can also be traced to these interpretive problems. In this chapter, I will join concerns about the development of contemporary adolescents with concerns about questions of interpretation within psychology. I will begin by specifying four reasons for reconsidering the psychology of adolescence at this time and then offer a new framework for thinking about adolescent development and secondary education.

FOUR REASONS FOR RECONSIDERING ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

The first reason for reexamining adolescent development is that our view of childhood has changed. Since adolescence denotes the transition from childhood to adulthood, what constitutes "development" in adolescence hinges on how one views the childhood that precedes it and the adulthood which follows. Recent research on infancy and early childhood reveals the young child to be far more social than psychologists previously imagined, calling into question most descriptions of the beginnings or early stages of cognitive, social, and moral development. Daniel Stern's recent book, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (1985), and Jerome Kagan's *The Nature of the Child* (1984) document the interpersonal capabilities and the social nature of young children: their responsiveness to others and their appreciation of standards. Previously described as "locked up in egocentrism," as "fused" with others, as capable only of "parallel play," the young child now is observed to initiate and sustain connection with others, to engage in patterns of social interaction with others, and, thus, to create relationships with them. Robert Emde's research shows that nine-month-old babies prefer mothers to respond to their actions rather than to mimic or "mirror" their behavior (Emde *et al.*, 1987). In addition, infants by this