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EMOTION IN EARLY CONSCIENCE

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Emotions are prominent in classic theories of moral development. From early in life, children are portrayed as being motivated to act morally owing to fear of punishment, anxiety over the loss of parental love, anticipated rewards, internalized guilt, the experience of shame, or other emotional incentives. Perhaps because early morality is usually viewed in terms of compliance to prohibitive expectations, it is important that these emotional incentives are primarily negative: Children comply because of the aversive consequences of failing to do so. This view of emotion in morality is especially apparent for young children, who are portrayed as premoral, externalized, consequentialist, obedience oriented, and egocentric in traditional portrayals of moral growth (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Freud, 1940/1949; Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932/1985; Skinner, 1971).

Recent years have witnessed, however, the emergence of a new view of the emotional foundations of moral growth from an unexpected source: studies of young children. Contrary to traditional portrayals of early egocentrism, this research literature highlights the early-emerging sensitivity of infants and toddlers to others' feelings, needs, and desires; the early growth of a "moral self" and of helping behavior; the positive relational incentives to cooperative behavior; and the influence of the emotional communication in parent-child

conversation that connects moral conduct with the feelings of others. These studies of early socioemotional understanding and conscience development are leading to a new portrayal of early moral development that shares much in common with the more relational and humanistic morality of later years (Thompson, in press)—and also contributes to a more complex and constructive portrayal of the role of emotion in moral growth.

This chapter profiles this research and its implications for the future study of emotion and its role in moral development. We begin by considering the foundations of conscience development in the first 2 years, when infants and toddlers are constructing an understanding of others' feelings and how to respond to them. Studies of social referencing, toddlers' sensitivity to standards, and the emergence of self-conscious emotions and empathy together highlight the importance of emotion to morally relevant appraisals and evaluations. In the subsequent section, we turn to research on conscience development in preschoolers and consider the influence of parent-child relationships and, more specifically, how the emotional communication between parents and offspring is important to the growth of conscience. Taken together, the research discussed in this chapter, including work from our lab, suggests that emotions are significant for the positive—as well as aversive—incentives they offer to moral conduct, that relational experience is central to the early socialization of moral awareness, and that early conscience development shares many of the same constructive emotional incentives that older children and adults experience.

FOUNDATIONS OF CONSCIENCE IN THE FIRST 2 YEARS

What is conscience? *Conscience* can be defined as the cognitive, affective, and relational processes that enable children to construct and act according to internalized standards of conduct defined by experience, personal relationships, and societal expectations (Thompson, Meyer, & McGinley, 2006). Conscience is thus a much broader concept than moral judgment, which has been the longstanding focus of moral development research. Although it would be surprising to portray experiences in infancy and toddlerhood as important foundations to moral judgment, the study of conscience development has shown how the cognitive, affective, and relational foundations of conscience are established very early.

Sensitivity to Emotions and Goals in Infancy

Sensitivity to others' emotions is one of these early foundations. During the early months, infants can readily differentiate positive and negative emo-

tional expressions: vocal expressions (Arterberry, 2000). Infants' ability to appropriately respond to subsequent moral actions (response to objects) with (fulfilled or unfulfilled) understanding, in contrast to other people.

Their early sensitivity to derive intentions or desires (2002) showed that 12-month-olds had gazed and subsequently observed the adult subsequently observed that the adult's emotions toward the object showed that 12-month-olds perceived and perceived emotional signals (Carpenter, Striano, 1-year-olds not only in a manner, but also of the emoter to

Social Referencing

Another important foundation is social referencing, an infant's reliance on a trusted adult's emotional expression according to the adult's expression (Tidball, 2001; 9-month-olds). A mother acts warily more likely to approach to avoid the perceived important because of others' emotions. Infants learn about

Viewed in the context of social referencing can be a behavioral stance

tional expressions in the face and voice and show a preference for facial and vocal expressions that are congruent rather than incongruent (Bornstein & Arterberry, 2003; Fernald, 1993; Walker-Andrews, 1997). Their early capacity to appropriately "read" others' emotional expressions provides a basis in subsequent months for implicit knowledge of how people's emotions occur in response to objects, people, or events in the environment and are associated with (fulfilled or frustrated) goals and desires. Infants and toddlers begin to understand, in other words, how emotions offer a window into the minds of other people.

Their early sensitivity to the meaning of emotional expressions causes infants to derive sophisticated inferences, for example, concerning others' intentions or desires. Experimental studies by Phillips, Wellman, and Spelke (2002) showed that 12-month-olds were unsurprised to find that an adult who had gazed and spoken warmly toward one of two stuffed kittens was subsequently observed to be holding the kitten, but they responded as if the sight of the adult subsequently holding the other kitten was unexpected—suggesting that the adult's emotional expressions led to expectations of the adult's intentions toward the two toys. In a similar manner, Liskowski and colleagues showed that 12-month-olds pointed to the location of an object that a surprised and perplexed experimenter had misplaced, again using the adult's emotional signals to infer a desire that infants helped to fulfill (Liskowski, Carpenter, Striano, & Tomasello, 2006). As these studies (and others) suggest, 1-year-olds not only interpret others' emotional expressions in a nonegocentric manner, but also use them as sources of information about the mental state of the emoter to which they respond appropriately.

Social Referencing

Another important example of early emotion understanding is social referencing, an easily observed behavior in which 1-year-olds look to the face of a trusted adult when they encounter an ambiguous event and then respond according to the adult's emotional expression (Moses, Baldwin, Rosicky, & Tidball, 2001; Sorce, Emde, Campos, & Klinnert, 1985). For example, if mother acts warmly toward an unfamiliar adult or novel object, infants are more likely to approach it; but if mother exhibits fear, the infant is more likely to avoid the person or object and stay close to mother. Social referencing is important because it indicates that infants are good interpreters and consumers of others' emotional cues, and that they use this information to vicariously learn about the emotional meaning of events.

Viewed in this light, it is apparent how the emotional cues of social referencing can become enlisted into young children's understanding of behavioral standards and evaluations. Parents commonly display cautionary

facial and vocal expressions when infants approach potentially dangerous objects, and they exhibit anticipatory cues of disapproval when toddlers are about to engage in forbidden activity. In other circumstances, such as when young children witness another's distress (or have caused it), caregivers use their emotional signals to induce sympathy for another person. Sometimes social referencing is enlisted to communicate evaluations of other people (such as when the family witnesses a sibling's temper tantrum) or even of the child herself, such as when a parent looks disapprovingly at a toddler's intentional disobedience. In these and other ways, social referencing connects behavioral standards to the emotional signals of people to whom the child is emotionally attached to endow certain behaviors, objects, or people with emotional significance. Much more remains to be learned about how social referencing contributes to the young child's acquisition of morally relevant appraisals and evaluations in these ways.

Advances in Emotion Understanding and Helping in the Second Year

Toddlers are psychologically more sophisticated than infants, and one reflection of this is their enhanced understanding of the associations between emotions and goals, desires, and intentions. By 18 months they are much more competent at understanding another person's mental state, especially on the basis of emotional cues. Toddlers will imitate an adult's intended action, even if the action was not completed (Meltzoff, 1995), for example, and they respond appropriately to another's desire even if it is different from their own preferences (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997). In the latter study, 18-month-olds gave a friendly experimenter the broccoli she clearly preferred as a snack (conveyed with evocative expressions of delight while tasting the broccoli) rather than the crackers the child preferred. In doing so, toddlers were capable of interpreting the adult's emotional expressions to indicate preferences, which the child satisfied even though those preferences were different from his or her own.

The view that toddlers are capable of helping other people achieve their goals in this manner is inconsistent with traditional conceptions of early egocentrism, but consistent with new understanding of their sensitivity to the mental and emotional states of other people. In a series of studies, Warneken and Tomasello (2006, 2007) showed that by 18 months, toddlers spontaneously offered assistance more than half the time to help experimenters achieve their goals in experimental trials when the adult's need for aid was clear and children knew how to help. By contrast, toddlers helped infrequently when the adult's need for assistance was not clearly apparent in control trials. For example, toddlers retrieved a marker 65% of the time when the adult accidentally dropped it on the floor and unsuccessfully reached for it, but did so less than 25% of the time when the adult intentionally dropped the marker on

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the floor without reaching (Warneken & Tomasello, 2006). Helping occurred in the absence of any reward for doing so and, indeed, seems to be undermined by extrinsic rewards in 20-month-olds (Warneken & Tomasello, 2008).

The experimenters in the Warneken and Tomasello studies were affectively neutral throughout the procedure to avoid rewarding toddlers for helping with positive emotional expressions or praise. But young children may not require another's manifest dismay or distress to infer sad affect when other cues of apparent need (e.g., reaching for a lost marker) are so apparent, especially in light of their understanding of the associations between emotion, desire, and intention. In an interesting follow-up study, Vaish, Carpenter, and Tomasello (in press) reported that when 18- and 25-month-olds observed an adult who acted harmfully toward another (by destroying or taking away his or her possessions) rather than benignly, they were more likely in a subsequent situation to help the victim, even though the latter showed no emotion in either circumstance. The researchers hypothesized that the young children in this study did so because of rudimentary affective perspective-taking skills. We are currently replicating the Warneken and Tomasello (2006, 2007) study in our lab, with the additional experimental factor that the adult looks either sad or indifferent in the experimental trials. Our findings will provide additional evidence of whether an adult's immediate emotional expressions are an important influence on young children's helping in this situation, or whether basic capacities for affective perspective taking contribute to toddlers' helping regardless of the adult's emotional expression.

Sensitivity to Standards

Although classic moral development theories emphasize the role of parents for instilling standards in their children, contemporary research has shown that young children contribute to their own sense of what is normative on the basis of their everyday experiences. Toddlers sometimes develop their own sense of what is or is not correct independently of parental efforts, manifested in their overregularizations in early word usage and their inflexibility about bedtime or morning rituals. In the moral domain, toddlers have also been observed to react to damaged objects with increased attention, interest, and negative emotional evaluations, reflecting their awareness that these objects deviate from implicit norms of wholeness and intactness (Kagan, 2005; Kochanska, Casey, & Fukumoto, 1995).

Kagan (2005) has reported that 19-month-olds have adverse reactions to broken, damaged, or marred objects, expressing dismay and curiosity about who is responsible for the damage. Kagan attributed these emotional responses to "morally" violated objects to parental socialization: Parents prohibit damaging objects and express dismay when children break things, often cautioning

children against certain actions lest something gets broken. In his view, therefore, toddlers' sensitivity to damaged objects reflects an emergent moral sensitivity to violated standards deriving from parents' sanctions.

In a study conducted in our lab with 14- to 23-month-olds (reported in Thompson, in press), however, Thompson and McGinley found that toddlers responded comparably to objects that were morally violated (e.g., a broken cup, a Teddy bear with one eye missing), objects that were functionally impaired without being broken (e.g., a cup with a finished hole at the bottom, a Teddy bear without stuffing), and objects that simply appeared different from normal (e.g., a cup with a handle at an unusual angle, a Teddy bear with psychedelic colors and wings). Young children responded with comparable interest, emotion, and attention to all forms of atypicality and did not respond to morally violated objects in any consistently distinctive way. This suggests that at this age, emotional responses to atypicality reflect young children's emergent standards for how things should be on the basis of how they typically are, and they are fascinated by deviations from the norm. To the extent to which young children's responses to objects that are damaged or marred reflect an emergent moral sensitivity, therefore, these responses seem to derive from a more general response to atypicality that reflects toddlers' emerging standards for what is normative in their everyday experience.

Self-Conscious Emotions and Empathy

A significant emotional foundation to conscience development is the emergence of self-conscious emotions like guilt, pride, shame, and embarrassment and their association with morally relevant behaviors. Although preschoolers reliably exhibit behaviors reflecting self-conscious emotions, careful observational studies have revealed that toddlers exhibit constellations of guilt-like behaviors (e.g., spontaneous confession, efforts at reparation), shame-like behaviors (e.g., avoidance of the adult, anxious mannerisms), and embarrassment (e.g., gaze-aversion and self-touching) in appropriate situations (Barrett, 2005; Lagattuta & Thompson, 2007). Barrett (2005) showed, for example, that 17-month-olds exhibit predictable expressions of guilt, shame, and embarrassment in response to a rigged mishap in which the experimenter's beloved doll was apparently "broken" by the child. Using the same procedure, Kochanska, Gross, Lin, and Nichols (2002) found similar results in a longitudinal study of guilt in children from 22 to 56 months of age. Individual differences in young children's guilt-like behaviors at 22, 33, and 45 months were stable over time and each predicted independent measures of conscience at 56 months. These findings suggest that self-conscious emotions are early emerging and may provide an important emotional foundation to conscience development.

Early maternal responsiveness to children's disobedience (children's emotional behaviors derived from experimental behavioral reactions) and anticipated parental reactions are theories argue note in the new also important another basis moral compliance

Empathy (Thompson, 1991 and Emde (1991) toddlers often offer assistance emotional responses persons.

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Interim Conclusions

The study surprisingly shows

Early manifestations of pride, guilt, and shame are associated with parental responses to young children's successes and failures, compliance, and disobedience (Stipek, 1995; Stipek, Recchia, & McClintic, 1992). Indeed, children's emotional responses to their morally and achievement-related behaviors derive, in part, from their anticipation of parental reactions. As the experimental studies described above suggest, however, it is unlikely that the behavioral reactions reflecting pride, shame, or guilt are nothing more than anticipated parental reward or punishment, as traditional moral development theories argue. Rather, children's self-generated standards and, as we shall note in the next section, their emergent sense of themselves as moral are also important resources for conscience development and likely constitute another basis for their self-conscious emotional reactions in situations of moral compliance or noncompliance.

Empathy is another important emotional resource for moral conduct (Thompson, 1998; Zahn-Waxler, 2000). Research by Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, and Emde (1992), Spinrad and Stifter (2006), and others has shown that toddlers often look at a distressed person with concern and, more rarely, will offer assistance or comforting. These findings suggest, therefore, that early emotional sensitivity is manifested in empathy-like responses to distressed persons.

However, the low rates of helping by young children in these situations merits further attention. By contrast with the studies of early helping reviewed earlier, experimental empathy probes usually provide toddlers with few meaningful ways of assisting a distressed adult (e.g., if an experimenter hurts her finger in a distress simulation, there is little the child can do to fix the adult's finger, and it is uncharacteristic for a child to provide comfort to an adult). Thus, although empathy may be an early-emerging resource for moral conduct, its association with prosocial behavior is limited both because empathy is a motivationally complex emotional response (toddlers may seek personal comfort rather than comforting another) and because young children must know how to effectively help an adult in the situation. For similar reasons, empathy may not be the curb on aggressive conduct in very young children that it is for older children and adults because of the conceptual challenges of anticipating another's distress on the basis of one's actions. For this reason, it is common for caregivers to respond to a toddler who has been hurt by another's aggression, only to discover that the perpetrator of harm is also seeking comfort for her or his vicarious distress.

Interim Conclusion

The studies described in this section show that infants and toddlers are surprisingly sensitive to the emotional and mental states of other people,

including others' needs, goals, and desires to which young children often respond appropriately. Toddlers exhibit a capacity to act helpfully toward adults when they know how to do so, and emotions are also important to the morally relevant appraisals and evaluations that develop in the early years. Viewed in this light, it appears that contrary to the primarily aversive influence of emotion on young children in classic moral developmental theories, emotional reactions of the child and others are complex, multifaceted catalysts to early moral sensitivity and the motivation to act cooperatively and prosocially toward others. Emotions motivate young children to act helpfully and prosocially as well as compliantly (i.e., resisting acting badly), and these emotions include awareness of others' feelings when they are in need, the emotional evaluations of other people, and young children's feelings of pride in good behavior as well as the aversive emotions when experiencing the consequences of misbehavior.

CONSCIENCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF EARLY RELATIONSHIPS

With these emotional and conceptual foundations established during the first 2 years, conscience fully emerges during the preschool years. But conscience development does not resemble the premoral or preconventional morality of classic moral development theories. Instead, preschoolers develop a moral sense in response to a rich variety of emotions they perceive in other people, their emotional responses to others, and the affective consequences of their own moral conduct.

This is revealed in two recent studies. Wright and Bartsch (2008) analyzed the spontaneous verbal behavior of two young children using the archived CHILDES database, focusing especially on talk related to moral issues by Abe and Sarah recorded between the ages of 2 and 5 years. During this period of developing moral awareness, neither child talked much about moral rules and standards, but each frequently evaluated people's dispositions and actions with reference to feelings and human welfare. Thus at age 3.2 years, Sara commented "my cousin hit me, and she's a bad girl," and at age 2.11 years, Abe said "I think they are mean to that man because they put him in that glue." Positive emotions were also mentioned in the children's comments about approved and disapproved behavior: At age 3.4 years, Abe said, "I'm picking up mine because I want you to be happy." In their greater interest in the internal over the external motivators of good and bad behavior, emotions and emotional inferences were foremost. At age 3.9 years, Sara enlisted affective perspective, saying, "These hits hurts for you," and at 3.1 years, Abe cautioned (when his father threatened to harm a stuffed toy) "don't do that then

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I will get sad." For both children, early moral sensibility was closely tied to positive and negative emotions in themselves and others.

In a second study, Kochanska (2002a) examined 5-year-olds' emerging views of themselves on moral dimensions, building on prior studies showing that children of this age characterize themselves in terms of internal characteristics and traits (e.g., Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 1998). Emotional responses figure prominently in this early moral self: preschoolers with a strong moral component to their self-awareness were more likely to endorse statements describing themselves as someone who feels badly about doing the wrong thing ("when I do something wrong, sometimes I get a funny feeling in my tummy"), responds sympathetically and helpfully to others ("I try to make other people happy when they are sad"), and is concerned about violations of behavioral standards ("it upsets me when others do something wrong"). The validity of this assessment is supported by research showing that individual differences in the "moral self" were predicted by children's observed responses to wrongdoing in the lab and related morally relevant behaviors at earlier ages (Kochanska et al., 2002). Emotional reactions thus are important to children's appraisals of themselves as moral actors.

As noted in the preceding discussion, these emotion-laden evaluations of moral conduct arise from young children's rapidly developing understanding of the internal motivators of behavior together with the salience of emotional reactions in everyday interaction. Young children can thus be viewed as intuitive moral theorists who construct understanding of right and wrong conduct on the basis of their everyday experience (Thompson et al., 2006). But they are assisted in their understanding by adults, who are models, interpreters, and socializers of moral conduct in their interactions with young children and who offer incentives to cooperative behavior through the emotional quality of the parent-child relationship (Laible & Thompson, 2007).

Parent-Child Relationship and Early Conscience

Parent-child relationships offer potentially diverse emotional incentives for the growth of conscience in young children. In addition to the sanctions of the discipline encounter emphasized by some moral development theories, positive incentives arise through the warmth and mutual responsiveness of the parent-child relationship. Consistent with the views of attachment theory, researchers have found that preschoolers in secure parent-child relationships are more advanced in conscience development, reflected in their more cooperative conduct with the parent and their greater willingness to comply with the parent's requests when left alone (Kochanska, 1995; Laible & Thompson, 2000). The reason that attachment security is important

is suggested by further findings of Kochanska (1991, 1995), who has shown that a secure attachment is especially influential for children who are temperamentally relatively fearless, for whom the emotional incentives of a positive mother-child relationship—rather than the anxiety provoked by maternal discipline practices—are motivational. Temperamentally bold children in secure relationships cooperate in order to maintain the warm reciprocity of the mother-child relationship. In addition, as discussed further below, secure attachments provide a forum for exploring emotion in oneself and others, including the emotions associated with good and bad behavior.

Taking a broader view, Kochanska (2002b) argued that a warm parent-child relationship is important to conscience development because it is a preschooler's first experience with the mutual obligations of close relationships. Although young children obviously cannot be equal contributors to such a relationship, the reciprocity of warmth and cooperation in relationships in which adults are positively responsive motivate young children to themselves respond cooperatively and positively to the parent's initiatives. Such a relationship also orients young children to the human dimensions of their conduct (e.g., consequences for the caregiver and others) and makes children generally more receptive to the parent's values and socialization initiatives (for similar views, see also Maccoby, 1984; Waters, Kondo-Ikemura, Posada, & Richters, 1991). Viewed in this manner, therefore, the parent-child relationship is important to conscience development not primarily as a source of the aversive emotional consequences of noncompliance (e.g., punishment, loss of parental love, shame), but primarily as a source of positive incentives for cooperative and, ultimately, self-motivated moral conduct.

In support of this view, several longitudinal studies have found that the mutual responsiveness and shared positive emotion of parent-child interaction early in childhood predict later measures of conscience development (e.g., Kochanska, Forman, & Coy, 1999; Kochanska & Murray, 2000; Laible & Thompson, 2000; see reviews by Kochanska, 2002b, Thompson et al., 2006). When mothers and young children are mutually responsive and positive toward each other, children subsequently are found to score higher on assessments of conscience development (e.g., cooperative compliance; internalized behavioral conduct in the parent's absence). One reason is that in such relationships, mothers use fewer power assertive discipline practices with young children and thus elicit less emotional reactivity from their offspring during discipline encounters (Kochanska, Aksan, Prisco, & Adams, 2008). In another study, Kochanska, Aksan, Knaack, and Rhines (2004) found that for securely attached children (assessed at 14 months), the parent's responsiveness and use of gentle discipline (from 14 to 45 months) predicted conscience development when children were 56 months old. By contrast, for insecurely attached children there was no such association.

It appears that mutual responsiveness and cooperative compliance are correlated, but in light of moral internalization, these findings about child relationships and positive emotion

Emotional Incentives and Parent-Child Relationships

Traditional theories of parental discipline use power-assertive and externalized control as reasons for discipline (Hoffman, 1969). Parental discipline with justification of parental authority, bargaining, and punishment (Kuczynski, 1990; Kuczynski

Parental discipline is an important factor in early intentions of responsibility and social obligations. It may not be as simple as (Thompson, 1999) arousal (which is tied to a specific obligation or moral socialization). Parental mechanisms for how these are

It is important to note that not only the internal research

It appears, therefore, that in parent-child relationships characterized by mutual responsiveness, the positive emotional incentives for preschoolers' cooperative conduct are complemented by fewer aversive parental practices to ensure compliance. Much more research remains to determine whether these are correlated or causal associations between parental socialization practices, but in light of the negative association between parental-power assertion and moral internalization found in studies with older children (Hoffman, 1970), these findings suggest that conscience development is fostered by early parent-child relationships characterized by mutual responsiveness and respect, shared positive emotion, and secure attachments.

Emotional Influences in Parental Discipline Practices and Parent-Child Conversation

Traditional moral development theories emphasize the influence of parental discipline practices on childhood moral development. Parents who use power-assertive discipline have children who are less morally mature and externalized in their reasons for compliance, whereas parents who primarily use reasoning have children with a more mature, internalized orientation (Hoffman, 1970). Studies with young children have also found this to be true: Parental discipline practices that enlist reasoning and provide young children with justifications for cooperation are more likely to foster the internalization of parental values—even though preschoolers are also likely to negotiate, bargain, and initially resist before complying (Crockenberg & Litman, 1990; Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990).

Parental reasoning during discipline encounters may be especially important in early childhood for clarifying the conflicting feelings, motives, and intentions of the people in disagreement, as well as conveying attributions of responsibility, clarifying issues of causality, and instilling an understanding of social obligation. But parent-child conversation during discipline encounters may not be an optimal forum for fostering moral understanding in children (Thompson, 2006b). When confronted with misbehavior, children's negative arousal (whether distress, guilt, anger, or shame) may undermine their attention to and understanding and retention of the parent's values message, which is tied to a specific prohibitive violation rather than a broader message of moral obligation or positive values. In this respect, therefore, emotion enters into moral socialization in another manner: A child's emotional arousal when parental messages are being conveyed may have a significant influence on how these messages are understood and remembered by the child.

It is important to remember, however, that the discipline encounter is not the only conversational forum in which moral socialization occurs. Several researchers have found that early conscience is predicted by the quality

of mother–child conversation about good and bad behavior independently of the discipline context. These situations, which are part of the reminiscing that frequently occurs in parent–child relationships, enable mothers and children to discuss past events apart from the adversarial context of confronting immediate misbehavior. Laible and Thompson (2000), for example, recorded conversations between 4-year-olds and their mothers about events in the recent past in which the child either misbehaved or behaved appropriately. Several features of the mother’s conversational discourse were coded, including the frequency of her references to rules and the consequences of breaking them and references to people’s feelings. Mothers who more often talked about people’s feelings had children who, in independent assessments, were more advanced in conscience development. By contrast, the frequency of maternal references to rules and the consequences of breaking them was never a significant predictor of preschoolers’ conscience development. Indeed, in another study, mothers who recounted the child’s misbehavior in the recent past with a critical or negative attitude or with feelings of disappointment or anger, or who provided reproach or punishment, had preschoolers with lower scores on measures of moral cognition (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003). The content and emotional tone of mother–child reminiscing about good and bad behavior are each important to its broader influence on conscience.

Similar findings were obtained in a subsequent prospective longitudinal study in which maternal references to feelings (but not references to rules and the consequences of breaking them) during conflict with the child at 30 months predicted children’s more advanced conscience development 6 months later (Laible, 2004a; Laible & Thompson, 2002). In another study, 2- to 3-year-old children whose mothers used reasoning and discussed the concerns of other people in resolving conflict with them, and who were more advanced in emotion understanding at 40 months, had a more mature moral orientation in kindergarten and first grade (Dunn, Brown, & Maguire, 1995). Taken together, these findings suggest that contrary to traditional moral theories that emphasize the rules-and-obedience orientation of young children, early conscience is stimulated by conversations with adults that sensitize young children to the human dimensions of misbehavior and good behavior and help children understand the effects of their actions on other people and their feelings. Conversations with caregivers are important to linking the young child’s expanding emotion understanding with moral conduct.

There are other ways that parent–child conversations, even during conflict with the child, can enhance conscience development. Mothers who take the initiative to resolve conflict with young children, using explanations to justify and clarify their requests, are capable of negotiating and compromising, and mothers who manage to avoid aggravating tension (e.g., through threats or teasing) have children who are more advanced in subsequent assessments of

conscience development. In reminiscing, elaborative conversation provides information, a context for otherwise enhanced schoolers with

These conversations and the literature document that for young children, relationships with caregivers (Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 2004) suggest that by parent–child direct experience underlying caution and social helpful to clarify pathetic understanding in other fields with moral commitment may also several studies frequent conversation about Thompson, 2004) promise and cooperation (Panfile, & M: explain why situation understanding a review).

The porous contemporary centric and experience have an early experiences are difficult become the goal. And although tions of caregiver

conscience development (Dunn et al., 1995; Laible & Thompson, 2002). And in reminiscing about past episodes of child misbehavior, mothers who have an elaborative conversational style—which includes providing rich background information, asking the child open-ended questions about what happened, and otherwise enhancing the child's understanding of the event—also have preschoolers with more advanced conscience development (Laible, 2004b).

These conversational influences are consistent with a broader research literature documenting the importance of the quality of parental discourse for young children's understanding of their experiences, themselves, and relationships with others (see Harris & Koenig, 2006; Nelson & Fivush, 2004; Thompson, 2006a; Thompson, Laible, & Ontai, 2003). Together they suggest that young children rely on the secondary representations afforded by parent-child conversation to enrich and clarify their understanding of direct experiences, especially when they are seeking to comprehend the underlying causes of social events. With respect to the development of emotion and sociomoral understanding, conversation with a caregiver can be helpful to clarifying others' feelings, attributing responsibility, inducing sympathetic understanding, suggesting conflict-resolution strategies, and engaging in other forms of shared understanding that link emotion understanding with moral conduct. These conversational catalysts to conscience development may also help to explain the importance of secure attachments, because several studies have shown that mothers in secure relationships make more frequent references to others' feelings and speak more elaborately in conversation about past events with their children (Laible, 2004b; Ontai & Thompson, 2002; Raikes & Thompson, 2006). They also enlist greater compromise and conflict-resolution strategies during disputes with offspring (Laible, Panfile, & Makariev, 2008). These conversational stimulants may help to explain why securely attached preschoolers are more advanced on both emotion understanding and conscience development (see Thompson, 2008, for a review).

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of the development of early moral sensibility yielded by contemporary research is very different from traditional portrayals of the egocentric and externalized young child. Far from egocentric, infants and toddlers have an early and rapidly developing awareness of how others' subjective experiences are different from their own, and by the end of the first year emotion has become the gateway to their understanding of other mental states in people. And although young children are responsive to the incentives and sanctions of caregivers, which influence their early experiences of self-conscious

(self-evaluative) emotions, they are also developing internal standards that derive from their own affectively based evaluations of nonnormative objects and conduct. Perhaps most important, young children's sensitivity to other people's feelings, desires, and needs motivate efforts to offer assistance when they are capable of doing so, providing a basis for positive moral conduct and prosocial behavior. These early emotional foundations for conscience development are expanded in the preschool years, with the conceptual catalysts of parent-child conversation in which discussions of the feelings of others, learning about the other person's intentions, tutoring in conflict-resolution strategies—all in the context of a warm, secure, mutually responsive relationship—provide further catalysts to conscience development.

The studies discussed in this chapter not only offer a new and different portrayal of early childhood morality, but also of the role of emotion in moral development, particularly in the early years. Although it is doubtlessly true that children are motivated to moral conduct by the anticipated sanctions of noncompliance, current research suggests that this is a fairly small part of the emotional picture of early moral socialization. Far more important are young children's natural sensitivity to and interest in the feelings of others, the pride they take in being helpful, their intuitive evaluations of conduct based on people's feelings and welfare, the affective dimensions of their emergent moral self, and the capacity for empathy with another's emotional experience. In these and other respects, the emotional dimensions of early childhood moral sensibility are very similar to those attributed to older children by traditional moral development theorists. Central to these emotional incentives to moral conduct are the feelings experienced and discussed in close relationships. The studies of our lab and elsewhere offer a fascinating picture of how the emotional quality of these relationships, the child's emotional experience in confronting moral issues with relational partners, and the emotion-related discussions with their partners combine to enlist emotional experience centrally into early sociomoral socialization.

The research described in this chapter also provides an agenda for future research. One of the most important questions for further study concerns how the various relational incentives to enhanced emotion and moral understanding fit together in early childhood. Experimental studies will be important to determining, for example, whether altering how mothers discuss misbehavior in the recent past can influence young children's conscience development without changing other incentives of the parent-child relationship (see Wareham & Salmon, 2006). Understanding better the conversational elements that contribute to early moral sensibility is also important. It is not surprising that young children do not particularly enjoy having their past misdeeds recalled for shared conversational analysis, and a recent study in our lab suggested that mothers' efforts to validate the child's emotional experience in a supportive manner can

help to reduce aggression in mothers' disciplines that provide children often diverse positive reactions of attachment. Future research on young children and how early their absence,

It is almost a familiar topic given the view of early childhood development that

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help to reduce child resistance. Likewise, a recent finding that diminished aggression in preschoolers was associated with the increased frequency of mothers' discussion of negative emotion in reminiscing with her child suggests that providing avenues for confronting negative feelings—which young children often experience as unsettling, confusing, and threatening—can have diverse positive consequences for young children, consistent with the predictions of attachment theory (Laible & Song, 2006). Other issues meriting future research inquiry include the influence of social referencing processes on young children's moral appraisals of events and people (including themselves) and how early helping behavior is affected by the emotional expressions (or their absence) in the recipient of aid.

It is almost always true that a renewed theoretical approach to a familiar topic generates renewed research interest. It is long past time for a new view of early childhood morality that takes into account contemporary understanding of early psychological growth and a new view of emotion in moral growth that takes into account its positive and constructive influences.

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