Moral Ecology

“Take my hand, my friend, we will go on together.” Gilgamesh to his friend Enkidu
(1989, p. 37)

"It's everyone's fault that she don't have no money. It was stolen because people just don't care about the community .... Everybody should care that she got her money stolen"
(Power, 2004, p. 51)

Overview

The two quotes that begin this chapter anchor our discussion in the antiquity of friendship and in the importance of community concern. This produces a somewhat different approach from the deconstructive critiques of morality (Doris, 2002; Doris & Stich, 2005; Zimbardo, 1982, 2006) that take situational influence primarily as evidence that morality (construed as individual virtue) is not possible. Friendship as a support in moral action is as old as Gilgamesh’s tale from the 18th century BCE. In the quote above, he encourages his friend Enkidu who seems to have lost his nerve just before their epic battle with the giant Humbaba. 1,500 years later, Aristotle recognized the importance of friendship in supporting moral action by including a significant discussion of it in his work on ethics (Aristotle, 1941; Schroeder, 1992). In the second quote, a member of a Kohlberg-style “just community school” makes an argument for collective responsibility, in which all members of a community are responsible for the moral action of the community. These are two of the many varieties of influence on moral action that we will review in this chapter.

A variety of terms has been used to identify social influence on moral action, and most seem too simplistic or limiting. Situational influence (Zimbardo, 2006) makes the influence sound narrowly unidirectional, in addition to limiting the focus to influence, ignoring underlying values, goods, procedures, roles, and other aspects of what Mumford et al. (2003) have called the socio-technical system. Organizational culture (Hofstede, 2001; Leidner, 2006) allows for the complexity we mention, but its disadvantage is similar; culture is at times treated as monolithic, its influence on the individual seems unidirectional, and it seems to occur only in organizations. Organizational climate (Denison, 1996) has the advantage of suggesting how flexible and adaptive influence can be and also encourages the analysis of macro vs. micro-climates (what Brief, Buttram, and Dukerich 2001 have referred to as moral microcosms). But climate still shares the disadvantage of a unidirectional causality.

Ernst Haeckel (1866, p. 286) first used oecologie to revise the unidirectional and hierarchical concept of “food chain” and to describe the interlinked, interwoven, and interdependent lives of plants and animals. Robert Park of the Chicago school of sociology used social ecology to refer to the spheres and environments in which humans exist (Park, 1952). Park viewed this complex interaction as mediated by morality, custom, and law -- unlike the ecologies of all other animals1 (but see the chapter on evolution). In philosophy, Flanagan (2008) has used human ecology with a similar referent to that of Park (1952).

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1 But see the chapter on evolution to see how complicated this claim is.
My colleagues and I (Huff & Barnard, 2009; Huff, Barnard, & Frey, 2008a, 2008b) use the term *moral ecology* because it encourages us to consider the complex web of relationships and influences, the long persistence of some factors and the rapid evolution of others, the variations in strength and composition over time, the micro-ecologies that can exist within larger ones, and the multidirectional nature of causality in an ecology. This approach casts the issue as much larger than the much-publicized debate over whether situational influence makes virtue impossible (Doris, 2002; Doris & Stich, 2005; Mischel, 1968, 2004; Snow, 2010). This enquiry ranges from issues of larger cultural surround to those of intimate personal relations and from situational influence to how individuals shape organizations. I have organized this survey from large (culture) to small (personal relationships), though I make no claim to systematicity or completeness. Instead I think the review will be successful if it shows the richness and complexity of moral ecology and its relation to moral action.

**Culture and moral diversity**

Much of the work on culture and morality has been a catalogue of differences: This group in this culture thinks cutting one’s hair while in mourning is immoral, that group from another culture is puzzled by the judgment (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997, p. 131). The documentation of the diverse ways of being moral is indeed an important first step in understanding how people are moral. It has often been conceptualized in terms of evidence for better or worse morality (Kohlberg, 1963; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). But more recent work has taken to simply documenting the diversity in ways of being moral (e.g. in goals, purposes, principles, skills, values, etc.). The catalogue of diversity has had the salutary effect of making a plausible case that one need not posit a unitary morality, and that doing so makes it more difficult to recognize the multitude of different ways of being good. In this section on culture, I will follow long tradition and give an incomplete catalogue of these different ways of being good or valuing the good. At the end, I will introduce recent work that is asking the question of unity in the diversity: are there dimensions to the diversity or similarities in the processes by which culture has its influence on morality?

**Moral diversity within cultures**

One need not begin with cross-cultural differences in morality to catalogue differences. There is sufficient moral diversity within cultures to make one wonder (Heine, 2010; Kitayama, Ishii, Imada, Takemura, & Ramaswamy, 2006). A long-standing research program on moral development based in Kohlberg’s stage model has identified one of these axes of difference: extensiveness and diversity of social experience. Within cultures, those who have access to a wider variety of social experience (as indexed by such things as age, socioeconomic status, social class, education) tend to think more that moral judgment requires shared standards of judgment, rather than simple obedience to authority. This is a difference found within each of the many different cultures studied by those in the Kohlberg tradition (Gibbs, Basinger, Grime, & Snarey, 2007).

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2 This corresponds to a shift from pre-conventional to conventional moral judgment in Kohlberg’s approach. See PAGE for a short explanation of Kohlberg’s approach.
The Kohlberg tradition sees these differences in moral judgment as evidence of moral development from less complex to more complex cognition. But others have catalogued differences in the reasons individuals give for moral judgment and treated them more as simple dimensions of difference. Haidt and colleagues (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Joseph, 2004) have catalogued differences on five dimensions of judgment: Harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, purity/sanctity. Many studies across a variety of cultures again document a difference within each culture: classical liberals are those who see harm/care and fairness/reciprocity as foundational values and are suspicious of the other three dimensions, since they have been used to unfairly harm minorities and the disenfranchised. Classical conservatives try to balance all five dimensions and refer to all of them in their judgments. Haidt & Kesebir (2010) connect these approaches to ones first described by Tönnes (1887/2001): Gesellschaft, an approach that sees a fair public square as essential in a diverse society, and Gemeinschaft, an approach that values trust, cooperation and mutual aid in tight-knit communities. These differences in approach produce significant political strife and mistrust within societies that host them (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) and correspond to two very different notions of the good.

Others have also catalogued moral diversity that can exist within cultures. Work by Cohen and colleagues (Cohen & Rozin, 2001; Cohen, Rozin, & Keltner, 2004; Cohen, Siegel, & Rozin, 2003) documents the differences in moral thinking between Jews and Christian Protestants in America. The Jews they surveyed viewed practice, what one actually did, as the most central moral aspect of their religious approach, while the Protestants viewed belief and practice to be equally important. Membership in the groups are defined differently (for Jews primarily by descent, for Protestants, primarily by belief), mental states such as temptation matter more to Protestants than to Jews, for whom right action is more important. Any culture that is multi-religious can expect to find similar disagreements about moral issues (and indeed even those cultures that are predominantly of one religion, see Marty and Appleby, 1991).

Cultures with class differences can also expect to entertain moral diversity. In a series of experimental studies, Stellar, Manzo, Kraus, and Keltner (2011) have found that lower class Americans exhibited more compassion than upper-class individuals (e.g. in verbal response to other individuals and even in heart rate). Several studies have also shown that lower class individuals tend to have an interdependent view of the self, while upper-class individuals value independence (Heine, 2010). Complications quickly arise in this picture, since, for instance, Bowman, Kitayama & Nisbett (2009) have found that middle class Americans gave and received more help to each other than did working class individuals, who reported more self-reliance. Like religion, we are likely to find the cultural differences embedded in class to be complex and multi-layered.

Organizations can also provide variation in moral environment within a culture. In interviews with engineers in the Chicago area, Davis (1998) has found that the firms that employ them differ widely in the way they treat the engineering role and thus in their moral ecology. Finance-driven organizations give priority to maximizing financial goals, and engineers in these firms do not participate in decision making, but instead stand outside the process in a consultant-like role, providing information, producing design options, and answering questions. In this environment, engineering values are subordinated to management goals, and the engineer’s ethical
responsibilities are limited to exercising due care when providing advice and services, avoiding conflicts of interest, and remaining loyal to the legitimate interests and objectives of managers. This produces the classic blame-avoidance memo documenting concern about a product or design strategy. In the other two kinds of organization, engineers participate in decision making, and managers seek consensus with engineers. Quality-driven organizations see the achievement of quality products as the defining goal. For instance, one engineer is quoted by Davis (1998, p. 133) as saying, “Cost comes in only after quality standards are met.” And another offers that, “If a customer wants to take a chance, we won’t go along” (Davis, 1998, p. 133). Customer-driven organizations see superior customer service as a defining goal. All three kinds of organization are constrained by financial issues, by quality, and by customer service, but they differ in terms of which goal they see as primary or fundamental. It is these differences that result in differing moral ecologies in the organizations and in differences in the moral roles and moral choices of the engineers in them.

Another kind of moral diversity is evident in the wide diversity of moral goals that individuals set for themselves. The pioneering work of Colby and Damon (1992) in moral exemplars shows great variety of goals among their sample of exemplars, even though their sample was primarily limited to individuals doing social service. Among their exemplars were people who campaigned for justice in civil rights, for health care, for equal economic opportunity. Each exemplar they interviewed had some focus for their efforts, rather than being a “jack of all trades” in moral excellence. They did, however, fall into two large groupings, those whose goals were to reform society or institutions and those who goals were to provide direct service to people in need. Huff and Barnard (2009) found a similar distinction among exemplars in the computing field. The computer scientists, software engineers, and policy advocates they interviewed included a significant number of reformers campaigning for open source software, for privacy policy, for the inclusion of women in the field, for safety standards in software and for other goals. Their sample also included a significant number of individuals who were more interested in providing direct service to their customers, to the handicapped, etc. They also found two who mixed those goals, doing both reform advocacy and service and many who followed more rare roles, such as mentor and institutional leader. Walker, Frimer and colleagues (Matsuba & Walker, 2004; Walker & Frimer, 2007, 2009; Walker & Hennig, 2004; Walker & Pitts, 1998) have done the most systematic work in identifying clusters of goals and personality characteristics that identify highly moral individuals. They have found clusters of “communal” and deliberative (Walker, Frimer, & Dunlop, 2010), just, brave, and caring (Walker & Hennig, 2004), caring/dependable and principled/idealistic (Reimer, DeWitt Goudelock, & Walker, 2009). The work on exemplars is somewhat cross-cultural, including British, Scandinavian, Canadian, and American samples. Still, all these sub-types and different goals of moral excellence are from western, educated, industrialized, rich democratic societies (WEIRD cultures see Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010), and it seems unlikely that the variety will diminish as further research encompasses other cultures.

Thus, even within cultures one can find extensive moral diversity. Most of the work that bears on within-culture moral diversity has been conducted in WEIRD societies (Henrich et al., 2010) though we are beginning to see some within Asian cultures (e.g., Kitayama et al., 2006). The variety of moral sub-ecologies within any culture is likely to be wide, ranging from regional differences, class differences, religious and race differences, organizational differences, and also
the interactions of these. For instance, a national concern that corporations in Japan no longer serve the “household” function they used to has resulted in a recent upswing in interest in ethics among engineering schools and firms in that country (Downey, Lucena, & Mitcham, 2007). In contrast, because of their complicity in WWII, engineering firms in Germany have recently required a strong commitment to ethical practice, but engineering firms in France rarely talk explicitly about ethics, instead concentrating on the role of engineers as the elite vanguard of progress for the nation. In each of these cultures, local history and values have resulted in different ethical/moral approaches to a professional field. We really are just beginning to find our way in this multitude of difference.

Patterns in moral diversity across cultures

There is a much longer history of research in the psychology of cross-cultural differences (see Heine, 2010, for an overview). It is from this work that we will find some pattern in the diversity of cultural difference. We have already covered the convergence across cultures of the early stages of the Kohlberg framework. Extensive work in this area (see Gibbs et al., 2007, for a review) has shown that access to broad social differences can serve as developmental pressure to move individuals from preconventional to conventional moral stages. But this unity falls apart in what Kohlberg hypothesizes to be the higher post-conventional stage of moral development – for Kohlberg, this is a movement to a concern for principles of equal justice. It turns out that different cultures have different preference for the principles that can guide moral judgment. For instance Americans prefer equity as a means of distributing scarce goods, while those from India prefer need and those from Japan prefer equality (Heine, 2010). Some theorists suggest that – instead of the “higher stages” being a Kohlbergian shift to thinking of a particular type – those who question the conventional judgments in their society find, not surprisingly, culturally embedded and supported ways of questioning, supporting, and providing flexibility to conventional wisdom (Gibbs et al., 2007). Thus they are still “post” conventional, but question and modify conventional wisdom in a way that is locally historically relevant and culturally supported.

On a more descriptive level, Schwartz (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002; Schwartz, 2006, 2010) has shown a 2 dimensional organization that defines the value dimensions on which individuals from differing cultures disagree. Work in over 70 countries using a variety of instruments converges on this solution that represents the similarities in the way values relate to each other, and the differences in the emphasis different cultures and individuals make on those values. Thus there is agreement about what dimensions are important, but variation on which ends of the dimensions to emphasize. Figure 1 shows the standard circumplex of these values, with the two dimensions labeled self-enhancement – self-transcendence and conservation – openness to change. Support of any one value on the circle tends to correlate with support for adjacent ones, and less support for those on the opposite pole.
Work by Geert Hofstede (2001) and by Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel (2005) makes similar points about variation in values among cultures.

Distinctions among societies on the individualism–collectivism dimension have a long history in cultural psychology (Triandis et al., 1986) and seem also to be the most psychologically fruitful, encompassing a variety of cross-cultural differences (Heine, 2010). Individualistic cultures emphasize both the self and others as independent, agentic, and interested in self-enhancement. All these differences, and many others relevant to this dimension (see Heine, 2010, for a review) have relevance for how people from within these cultures think about individual responsibility and agency. In an interesting convergence of within- and cross-cultural patterns, Kitayama at al. (2006) have shown that when frontier conditions prevail in a subset of a collectivist country (as in the Hokkaido frontier of Japan in the late 1800s) one finds a more individualist sub-culture emerging. A similar historical mechanism has been theorized to be behind the honor culture in the southern United States (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

All the variation we have seen so far should lead us to be skeptical of work in moral psychology that makes universalistic claims, but is done primarily in WEIRD cultures. But when we look cross-culturally at issues of morality we find both difference and similarity. There are differences in the kinds of values or moral foundations individuals hold (both cross culturally and within cultures). But in addition there are patterns to the differences. Haidt and Craig’s (2004) 5 foundations, Schwartz’ (2010) values circumplex, Hofstede’s (2001) intercultural dimensions and Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005) world values survey all point to patterns in the ways that cultures and individuals both agree and disagree on moral issues.

What has been missing until recently in these analyses is specification of the processes by which these cultural differences have their effects (Heine, 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) point to social and historical patterns that produce the differences (and the convergence) as does Hofstede (2001). Haidt (Haidt, 2001, 2010) has specified non-conscious psychological processes that underlie judgments, and I will cover these in the chapters on Thinking and Feeling. And Schwartz and colleagues (Roccas et al., 2002) have investigated the relationship between the values in his system and personality characteristics. But this work has been somewhat scattered. Fortunately, Markus and Kitayama (2010) have begun to explore a model of what they call the “cycle of mutual constitution” of cultures and selves. They specify multiple pathways through which culture influences individuals and individuals influence culture, including direct power assertion, the construction and maintenance of culturally pervasive ideas, institutions, daily practices, and the construction and maintenance of self and identity. Understanding these processes, and how they differ in different cultures and subcultures, will be crucial to understanding how people live out their morality within their moral ecology.

Organizations

Organizations are important influences on moral action in part because of their influence on individuals working or volunteering within them, and in part because of the profound influence

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3 Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic cultures (Henrich et al., 2010).
they exert on society and culture. For instance, corporate criminal activity accounts for the death of more individuals in the USA than do individual criminal homicides (Clinard, 1979). In addition, the economic costs of corporate crime are 7 to 25 times larger than that of street crime (Donziger, 1996). More recently, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners estimated that unethical conduct in organizations costs the global economy more than 3.5 trillion dollars per year (Examiners, 2012). How are such immoral, illegal activities planned and executed in organizations? In a review of work on organizational corruption, Ashforth and Anand (2003) propose 3 processes by which organizational misbehavior is initiated and perpetuated: rationalization, institutionalization, and socialization. In rationalization, actors in the organization convince themselves that the behavior is legitimate. These acts are then institutionalized as a matter of routine in the organization, and those new to the organization are selected and socialized into the routine performance of the actions. Though these processes have been proposed as ways of supporting bad behavior in organizations, they can also be used to understand how ethical behavior can be rationalized, institutionalized, and socialized. They are, in short, ways of supporting a moral ecology in an organization.

**Rationalization**

There are at least two approaches that individuals can use to separate action from its moral implications. Domain limitations are ways to make moral consideration in a particular situation or domain not relevant. Thus the moral question simply does not arise. Once the moral question arises, then one can use a variety of cognitive strategies or rationalizations to minimize its relevance.

When we say that moral action is domain limited, we mean that it seems relevant in some domains or circles of action but not in others. Colby and Damon (1992) note this in the lives of their moral exemplars: people who give their lives to causes such as racial equality or feeding the poor often treat their families with much less concern than one might expect for such compassionate individuals. In organizations, this occurs in part because of the way the organization defines the situation. Treviño Weaver, & Reynolds (2006) speak of this as “situationally defined identities becom[ing] entrenched within organizations” (p. 962). In one study (Weber & Wasieleski, 2001) managers in were found to respond at lower levels of moral reasoning (in Kohlberg’s scheme) when asked about work-domain issues than asked about non-work domain issues. The salience of the moral aspects of an action, and thus the likelihood of an action being recognized as moral despite domain limitations, is influenced by what Jones (1991) calls moral intensity. Moral intensity is a combination of magnitude of the consequences, concentration of the effect, probability of the effect, its temporal immediacy, social consensus on the moral status of the action, and proximity (see Treviño et al., 2006, pp. 953-954 for a review of research on this concept). Actions with high moral intensity can jar the senses and make it difficult to maintain a definition of the situation. Still, as the Milgram studies (Milgram, 1963, 1974) have shown, a definition of the situation can trap the actor into a situation even when moral intensity is quite high. It is the combination of high moral intensity (giving clearly painful shocks to a helpless, suffering and protesting acquaintance in the next room) and the strong situational definition (being a good subject to help science) that produced the clear stress reactions that Milgram’s subjects experienced.
When high moral intensity threatens to make a domain limitation irrelevant, there are a host of cognitive strategies available to help the individual justify the course of action. Not surprisingly, many of the cognitive strategies to distance oneself from an action as focused on these dimensions. In their article on corruption, Ashforth and Anand (2003, pp. 16-22) list legality, denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim status, denial of status to those who critique, appealing to higher loyalties, metaphor of ledger, and refocusing attention and provide examples of these. Bandura (1999, 2002) has a similar list of “moral disengagement strategies” compiled from a separate theoretical approach: moral justification, advantageous comparison, euphemistic labeling, minimizing, ignoring, misconstruing, dehumanization, blaming the victim, displacement of responsibility, and diffusion of responsibility. The point of all these disengagement strategies is to distance the actor from moral responsibility for an action.4

Though the theoretical structure is taken from work on corporate corruption, both kinds of rationalization, domain limitation and cognitive strategies, can be seen as ways to enhance the moral/ethical ecology of an organization. Domain effects can be countered by a variety of institutionalization strategies that make ethical issues relevant. Cognitive strategies can be used to the advantage of ethical action by using the dimensions of moral intensity to structure institutionalized ways of evaluating decisions. For example, in software design, design procedures that incorporate concern for those affected by the software are available (Leveson, 1995; Nissenbaum, 2011) and are being used. These models systematically take into account various stakeholders and the value and risks that are associated with the software’s use.

**Institutionalization**

When an action is embedded in recurring processes and becomes “standard operating procedure” it becomes institutionalized (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). This means that it no longer requires a decision process, except in the case where it is the decision process and criteria themselves that become institutionalized. In institutionalizing corruption, it is usually the avoidance of a decision process that is institutionalized (Ashforth & Anand, 2003), while institutionalizing ethical action involves requiring a decision procedure as in the proposed procedure of Helen Nissenbaum (2011) for privacy in software or of Nancy Leveson for safety in complex systems (1995). It is not just procedures that are institutionalized, the structure of an organization can be also be affected. Since the adoption of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines for Organizations in 1991 made them a factor in recommended criminal sentences, organizational ethics programs in the USA have become a standard part of organizational hierarchy (often called offices of Ethics and Compliance) (Stansbury & Barry, 2007). Organizations that want to provide plausible deniability for ethical misconduct have been known to establish a position ironically titled by Braithwaite (1989, p. 350) as “vice president responsible for going to jail” allowing others to be willfully blind of misconduct.

In cases of corruption, the organization “comes to expect and then depend on the payoffs from corruption. In time, goals, budgets, information flows, rewards and punishments and so on may be skewed to support the practices” (Ashforth & Anand, 2003, p. 9). The common claim is that,  

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4 A systematic comparison of the Ashforth and Anand (2003) and Bandura (1999, 2002) strategies with the dimensions of moral intensity would be an interesting endeavor and might bring some order to what now stand as lists.
particularly in countries known for corrupt business practice, this sort of activity is required to do business. This claim seems only to be partly true. In a study of 480 of the world’s largest corporations across many different cultures, Healy and Serafeim (2012) show that organizations that report and combat corruption have slower, but more profitable, sales growth and return on investment, but that this difference only occurs in high corruption countries. They speculate that establishing a reputation as corruption free gives an advantage that results in slower sales growth, but increases in return business based on trustworthiness. The corruption-fighting companies establish this reputation in part by institutionalizing policies and procedures that encourage and support reporting (Healy & Serafeim, 2012).

Another form of institutionalization that is quite common is the adoption of an organizational code of ethics. The bad news for such approaches is that across the broad range of codes of ethics in organizations, there seems to be little effect on employee or organizational misconduct (Treviño et al., 2006). The good news is that one approach to such codes does offer some promise: what Treviño et al (2006) call “value internalization” approaches. These approaches are less about enforcing compliance with rules and more about providing support and socialization. They operate through the organizational culture and leadership commitment, and through what Gehman, Treviño, and Garud (in press) call values practices: those activities that embody and shape concern for values in an organization. These practices not only shape employees, they reaffirm and maintain (or challenge and modify) organizational structure and are thus a vital part of institutionalization. As long as employees think basic procedural justice is being served in the organization (e.g. one does not suffer for ethical behavior), these values practices are more effective and more broadly effective than are compliance-based efforts. This pattern is called the paradox of control (Stansbury & Barry, 2007) in which attempts to directly control employees ethical action are viewed as coercive while the socialization approach of value internalization provides flexibility and professional commitment to employees’ ethical goals. This brings us then to the topic of socialization.

Socialization

As implied by the paradox of control, socialization is more than simple passive absorption of the dominant culture. It involves active choice on the individual’s part. Much of the description of socialization here is taken from the organizational psychology literature, but parallels can be found in cultural psychology (Markus & Kitayama, 2010) and developmental psychology (Tomasello & Vaish, 2012).

The attraction-selection-attrition cycle (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) is the gateway to socialization in organizations. Members with similar values are attracted to the organization, the organization seeks out these members, and members who find a bad fit between themselves and the organization often leave. One can find similar effects in cultural psychology (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). In addition to this matching process, it is participation in values practices that helps to educate, influence, and motivate members to adopt the values and practices of the organization. People expect at least not to suffer for ethical behavior, but socialization is not a simple matter of reinforcement, as the relationship of reward to ethical behavior is complex.

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5 In this respect, see references to “Darley’s Law” that any system of coercion will be gamed (Darley, 1994) in proportion to the extent that its metrics are quantitative.
Socialization occurs primarily at the local level, and though influenced by organizational climate and ethics codes, it is identification with veterans (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) and local values practices that carry the day. For instance, the extent to which ethical language is used in a company is a good (though not infallible) guide to ethical behavior within it (Gehman et al., in press). And reintegrative and dis-integrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989; Stansbury & Barry, 2007) involve public attempts to influence those who seem not to understand the local culture (whether that culture supports or opposes corruption) with an eye to inducing them to join in the culture or to leave it. This moral seduction (Moore, Tetlock, Tanlu, & Bazerman, 2006), then, leads the receptive newcomer to view the world through the “moral microcosm” of the local organization unit.

Close Relations in Family and Community

If local units within organizations are the most powerful agents of moral ecology for the individual, then outside of organizations, the most powerful agents should also be local: small communities and personal relationships. In this section we look at the most intimate and smallest scale of moral ecology.

Ironically, one of the pioneers of research on the role of the community in morality is the person most known for championing the cognitive aspects of morality: Lawrence Kohlberg. In part in reaction to his experiences on a kibbutz (Walsh, 2001), Kohlberg helped in founding the first just community school, the Cluster School. This is the school from which the quote at the beginning of this chapter is taken. Though they were designed to be democratic, with students and staff each having only one vote, their primary innovation was the attempt to develop a moral community, “a group that shares an explicit commitment to a common life characterized by norms embodying high moral ideals” (Power, 2004, p. 50). The approach was theoretically based in Durkeim’s (1925/1973) work on moral communities in education. The just community approach recognized that norms and values were important, but also emphasized individual commitment to shared ideals within the framework of a responsible community. As Power explains (2004, p. 52), “The self does not experience a sense of obligation or responsibility to act in isolation but with others within a cultural setting.” The cluster schools and their progeny served as laboratories in which to observe these processes.

But of course, these processes do not occur only in laboratories. They are crucial to the maintenance of all communities. Daniel Hart (Hart, 2005; Hart, Atkins, & Southerland, 2006; Hart & Carlo, 2005; Hart & Fegley, 1995; Hart & Matsuba, 2007, 2009; Matsuba, Hart, & Atkins, 2007) has pursued a research program on moral commitment and volunteerism in neighborhood and community that has charted the ways that individual moral commitment and development are rooted in social groups. He summarizes his work in the statement that

“Moral identity, a commitment to advance the welfare of others that is consistent with one's self-image and moral goals, emerges from the interplay of family background, personality,

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6 Note the irony of Durkheim vs Paiget in regard to morality.
7 In this respect, Kohlberg and Gilligan were much closer together in their approaches than is commonly realized.
moral cognitions and attitudes, self-perceptions and moral emotions, and social relationships and interactions with social institutions. No single element is the keystone; there are multiple routes to moral identity formation.” (Hart & Matsuba, 2009, p. 228).

But one consequence of the embeddedness of moral identity in community is that it then becomes subject to domain limitations. It becomes focused on our obligations to each other, often to the exclusion of others, resulting in moral collapse (Hart, 2005). When identity becomes fused with a limited community in this way, great evil can result (Graham & Haidt, in press; Hart & Matsuba, 2007; Staub, 1999). This approach sees moral identity as an “evolving construction” rather than an enduring developmental/cognitive achievement. It is a fragile achievement that requires constant maintenance and is in part a result of the good fortune and thoughtful choice of one’s social surroundings (Hart, 2005, p. 260).

The smallest unit of social influence in morality is the dyad. Work on the moral psychology of this level of influence has been quite rare until recently. But work on what has been called the Michelangelo phenomenon (MP) has important implications for thinking about how individuals achieve and maintain their moral action. The MP occurs when one member of a dyad helps to shape a close partner’s skills and traits in support of achieving the partner’s ideal self (Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009). Research has mostly concentrated on romantic partners, though Rusbult et al (2009) argue that the effect should equally be seen in family, friendship, and collegial relationships to the extent that these are closely interdependent. It is important to note that this sculpting effect of one partner on the other needs special conditions to take place. First, the partner must be supportive of the other’s ideal self, not just supportive of what the partner thinks is best for the other (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999). In fact, this latter kind of “support” appears to be deleterious for both the partner and the relationship (Rusbult et al., 2009). Second, the support for the ideal self of the other needs to be in the context of locomotion toward the goal of attaining it, and not simply in assessment of the discrepancy (Kumashiro, Rusbult, Finkenauer, & Stocker, 2007). The assessment approach involves a primary focus on evaluation and critique, and when one is the target of the sculpting process (one has a partner who tries to affirm one’s ideal self) have an assessment approach leads one to think the other is not supportive (and elicits less support), to select difficult targets, and to be unreceptive to encouragement. When one is the sculptor, the assessment approach leads one to be less affirming, disapproving of the goals, be less involved in the sculptee’s pursuits. In short, assessment is debilitating to the sculpting process. Locomotion involves a focus on affirmation and moving toward the goal of the other, and shows an opposite effect when locomotion is the focus of either the sculptor or the sculptee. This effect appears to depend on the kind of support matching an American model of self (independent, self-promoting) and may well be culture-dependent (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

Research on the Michelangelo phenomenon has only recently been extended to influence among friends and between supervisor/ supervissee work pairs (M. Kumashiro, personal communication, August 8, 2012), and it appears to hold also in these relationships. Thus, the Michelangelo

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8 Like many of the concepts reviewed in this book, the socially constructed self has a long theoretical history going back to Aristotle’s emphasis on friendship, in social science formulated by James (1890), Cooley (1902), and Mead (1934), and in continental thought from Kierkegaard (1846/1992) to Jaspers (1919) to Gadamer (1975).
phenomenon may provide a window into one way that social influence in communities, organizations, and culture may work. The influence of the local unit in organizations comes through close, interdependent interchanges with coworkers. The influence of culture comes from socialization experiences with close others too. The Michelangelo phenomenon may play a central role in much of the influence that Markus & Kitayama (2010) propose in the “daily situations and practices” aspect of their model of cultural influence on the self (e.g. in the home, school, and workplace). There are, of course other levels to the model of culture and self (language, media, education, pervasive ideas, etc.) for influence to work, but this cooperative sculpting process may play a central role in much of how we become (or avoid, or fail to become) moral.

Influencing the moral ecology

So far in our large-to-small review, we have been concentrating on how the moral ecology affects the individual and their pursuit of moral ideals. But the metaphor of ecology encourages us to think about this influence as reciprocal. We often have the freedom to choose our influencers, to volunteer, to join organizations, to move cultures, to protest our treatment, to encourage moral action in others, to try to change our surroundings or to leave them behind. In short, we often have the freedom to influence the small scale and (less often) the large-scale moral ecology that surrounds us.

One place where we might expect this to happen is in leadership in organizations. In agreement with the emphasis here on ecology, models of leadership have moved from classical great-man and matching approaches to an understanding of the complexity of leadership in an organization. Leadership is now recognized as shared and distributed, even in hierarchical and control-oriented organizations (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). And the process by which leaders influence others has been expanded to include emotion, value, and self-concept variables in addition to classical control models (Avolio et al., 2009). For instance, work by Vianello and Haidt (2010) shows that one way that leaders influence others is through eliciting the moral emotion of elevation in response to the leader’s display of interpersonal fairness and self-sacrifice. Negative moral emotion can also be a mediator of the (negative) effects of bad leadership, and these can spread via contagion to other workers without the need for direct experience (Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Tee, & Tse, 2009). In this respect, moral potency has been suggested as a central measure of a leader’s effectiveness in inducing change, and is the joint effect of courage, efficacy, and ownership (Hannah & Avolio, 2010). This model seems parallel to the PRIMES model of influences on moral action used in this book.

Leadership is the classic example of how the moral ecology is shaped, particularly in organizations, but there are many other informal approaches. The three processes we reviewed in the section on organizational moral ecology – rationalization, institutionalization, and socialization – are also modes of influence to change the moral ecology. One can use cognitive strategies to make stakeholders more visible, risks more considered, and choices more conscious (Messick, 1996). One can institutionalize these strategies in offices of ethics and compliance, or in the process models used in the development of products. And one can socialize individuals into these processes.
When organizations or culture are not to one’s moral standards, one can attempt social change. The work on volunteerism and courageous resistance provide two examples of this strategy that are widely spread across cultures. Much of the work of moral exemplars in social service (Colby & Damon, 1992) and computing (Huff & Barnard, 2009) consists of trying to change moral ecologies, often in face of stiff resistance. In addition, when others offend the moral standards of a community, individuals in that community can take it upon themselves to defend the standards, and the community, by punishing the offender, often at cost to themselves (Bowles, Boyd, Matthew, & Richerson, 2012; Boyd, Gintis, & Bowles, 2010; Boyd, Gintis, Bowles, & Richerson, 2003). Though the effect is disputed (Guala, 2012) it appears to be widespread across cultures and robust (Bowles et al., 2012). Altruistic punishment may serve the community without being motivated by this service. Darley and colleagues (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Darley, 2009; Darley, Carlsmith, & Robinson, 2000) have documented the motivation to punishment and found that even though individuals express a motivation to deter others by punishing them, severity of punishment is almost entirely explained by the desire for revenge. Thus the immediate motivation for an action does not need to be related to its function in the moral ecology.

**Conclusions**

This review of the ways that moral ecology can influence moral action and be influenced by it is admittedly spotty. The point is less to make a comprehensive review than to show the wide variety of ways that moral action can be supported or led astray by the social surround, and the ways that the social surround can be influenced so it is more supportive of moral action. If the review provides windows into the processes of moral ecology and some idea of its variety and importance, then it has been successful. But in addition to this, I do think there are some general principles we can find from the work reviewed so far.

First, one of the pathways for moral ecology to have its effects on moral action is through domain effects. Moral ecology can provide domain information (Is this a moral issue? Are these people I should care about?) and can make moral judgment and action relevant or irrelevant. Cultural institutions, values, and activities, organizational procedures, domains of concern in volunteer organizations, and the moral support of close others can define particular issues as important to the moral self or as irrelevant. It can even make some individuals subject to compassion and others subject to attack (Hart, 2005). Some moral principles (e.g. group loyalty, Haidt & Joseph, 2004) have this domain limitation as an integral part of their structure.

The reality of the domain limitations of moral commitment means that it is unlikely that we will find unitary theories of moral action. For instance, in the organizational literature, theft is strongly linked to perceptions of organizational fairness, but lying is better explained by role conflicts (Treviño et al., 2006, p. 973). Even moral exemplars treat different people differently, and often treat their families less well than those they serve (Colby & Damon, 1992).

A second point to recognize is that many of the moral ecology processes we have covered have, at least, a complex relationship to the content of the moral action they support or hinder. Rationalization, institutionalization and socialization processes can be used to support corruption or ethical action. The limits of the Michelangelo phenomenon have yet to be explored, but it
seems reasonable that it would work for one partner helping another to obtain an ideal self that might harm the self (anorexia) or others (terrorism). It may be that some processes are more likely to result in harm than others (e.g., the moral disengagement strategy of minimizing harm). But surgeons and doctors may need to minimize the harm they do to allow themselves permission to do surgery (Collins & Pinch, 2005). And soldiers in combat need to objectivize the enemy to do their job (Grossman, 1996). In this way, moral psychology is also immoral psychology, the psychology of moral exemplars is also the psychology of evil.

A third point to make in conclusion is that one can describe moral action taken within a moral ecology in alternative ways. If one emphasizes the influence of the moral ecology on the actor, it seems like conformity, or passive socialization, or obedience. If one emphasizes the influence of the actor on the moral ecology it can seem like courageous resistance and leadership. And because of the complexity of moral life within a moral ecology, it is of course both, often by the same people. This is another place to recognize the importance of the domain limitation of moral action. Heroes and villains are not simply a matter of perspective, but they may well be a matter of domain.

A final item to mention in the list of conclusions: cultural difference does not require cultural relativism. The existence of cultural difference is indisputable, as are the patterns of those differences across cultures: cultures agree on which principles they disagree about, and these disagreements have patterns (e.g., values that tend to be endorsed or sanctioned in cultures cluster together, see Schwartz, 2010). These differences may have their origins in evolutionary patterns required for successful group living (Tomasello & Vaish, 2012) and so to that extent they are objective in terms of embodying what is needed for flourishing for the species (Flanagan, 1991; Flanagan et al., 2008). Thus, recognition of these patterns of cultural difference does not require acceptance of cultural relativism or an “anything goes as long as a group endorses it” approach (Flanagan et al., 2008; Taylor, 1982). It is at least compatible with a suitably complex pluralism, a recognition that there is more than one foundational value and that different cultures come to different solutions about the appropriate balance among them. A pluralistic approach like this may help in guarding against the sort of moral objectivism (Goodwin & Darley, 2008; Goodwin & Darley, 2009, 2010, 2012) that tends to demonize those who disagree (Kekes, 1993).

Some remaining questions
In this chapter we have focused on the mutual influence that selves and surrounding moral ecology exert. This has led us to consideration of the complexities of how the various levels of moral ecology interact with each other. Most of these complexities are just beginning to be investigated. For instance:

- It is clear that cultures, organizations, and even friendships are not homogenous. Diversity of goals, values, personality characteristics, skills, etc. has long been recognized in research, but rarely investigated on its own terms. It is at least clear that the reaction to moral diversity is often negative, and we judge harshly those who have moral disagreements with us, particularly when they involve actions of which we disapprove (Goodwin & Darley, 2012). We need to know more about how people think about moral diversity of both negative and positive moral judgments and goals. How do people handle moral tradeoffs (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000) when
diverse values are in play? How do people choose the moral goals they strive to achieve? How do individuals lobby to turn optional moral goals into mandatory goals (e.g., handicapped-accessible design, Huff & Hughes, 2011)? And there are still more questions.

- We have so far talked about moral ecology from the perspective of the individual and his or her role in the moral ecology. But it is possible to move to a group level of analysis. We need better conceptualizations of the group processes involved in moral awareness, judgment, motivation, and action (Treviño et al., 2006, p. 977) that can help drive research at this level.

- Finally, we need to begin thinking about how the different levels interact with each other. Markus & Kitayama (2010) have given a beginning conceptualization of how self and culture mutually constitute each other, and their model involves interactions at all the levels we have reviewed in this chapter. But it does not yet seem specific enough to drive programs of research.

**REVISION NOTES**

Cite Maria Merritt from moral psych reader as a philosophical recognition of “motivational self-sufficiency of behavior”

Cite the anthropology variations based on economic value / friendship value, etc. Tetlock may be a ref that gets you to the original. Also massive cross cultural research papers.

P 377 in moral psych reader cites Chen & Tetlock regarding “groups coalesce around moral beliefs to support them”

Cite Kurt Lewin and his gestalt influenced idea of interdependence with behavior = f(person, situation)

Cite gibbs work on parental influence on moral identity

References


