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## TOWARD A CULTURAL THEORY OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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"Let the jury consider their verdict," the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

"No, no!" said the Queen. "Sentence first—verdict afterwards."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Alice loudly. "The idea of having the sentence first!"

—Lewis Carroll (1960, p. 161)

Trials, as even the child Alice knows, follow well-established legal guidelines, and we learn about these formal rules and laws that are "on the books" in numerous ways. Black-letter law is extensive in its scope, explicit, and widely publicized and accessible (e.g., Alvarado, 1999), particularly in modern Western societies, and growing increasingly so at the international level. However, black-letter law does not always provide an effective avenue for understanding *commonsense rights and duties* (after Finkel, 1995), those rights and duties in informal, everyday social life. Unlike the explicit and publicly acknowledged nature of formal rights and duties, commonsense rights and duties remain, for the most part, implicit. The research of symbolic interactionists, ethnomethodologists, ethnogenicists,<sup>1</sup> and others in microsociology and social psychology traditions (see Moghaddam & Harré, 1995) has highlighted numerous rules regulating social relationships in everyday life, and underlying such rules are informal rights and duties, such as those operating in family relations, as in "Mary,

the oldest child, can drive the station wagon," and "Joe, the youngest child, must take out the trash."

Some attention has been given, albeit indirectly, to rights and duties in the lives of children as part of a much larger body of literature on moral development and the acquisition of rules by children (Bennett, 1993; Eckensberger & Zimba, 1997). Rules pertaining to a broad array of domains in the lives of children have been studied, including chores and responsibilities in everyday family life (Goodnow, 1988), disagreements with siblings and violations in the rights of the self and others (Ross, Filyer, Lollis, Perlman, & Martin, 1994), and also differences between children and parents in the types of rules emphasized in relationships (Piotrowski, 1997). However, there is need for more attention to be given specifically to the development of commonsense rights and duties among children, and particularly the learning of certain practices by children that can be interpreted through culture as involving rights and duties.

Our point of departure in this discussion is the proposition that well before children learn about formal law or about rights and duties as abstract ideas, they learn to carry out certain *primitive social relations*, or universal social behaviors such as turn taking that are essential for the survival of a child, and these are later interpreted for children as involving rights or duties, depending on cultural conditions. For example, children learn to practice turn taking in conversations, and later they learn that a person can have a right or a duty to a turn to speak. Rights and duties, we argue, are not so much complementary as they are replaceable: A right can become a duty, and a duty can become a right depending on cultural conditions. However, there are a few exceptions to this general "law."

The relationship between children and adults, and particularly parents, is characterized by change. Children grow older, and the rules and norms for correct behavior appropriate to them continually change. The rules and norms that apply to a 5-year-old do not necessarily apply to a 9-year-old. This ambiguity is associated with tension, as well as potential or actual conflict about rules and norms for correct behavior for children. In such situations of flux, we argue, the child gives priority to rights that push the envelope in the hope of increasing freedom ("I want to play with my friends and stay up until 10 tonight"); parents, however, give priority to duties that restrict behavior ("No, tomorrow is a school day and you have to finish your home work and go to bed by 9").

We argue that the relationship between children and parents reflects a much broader trend, whereby in relationships characterized by potential or

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<sup>1</sup>Symbolic interactionists study mediating processes in everyday social interaction; ethnomethodologists study the creation of moment-by-moment interpersonal order; ethnogenists study the dynamic structure of interpersonal episodes.

actual conflict, those with less or equal power give priority to their personal rights and those who enjoy greater power give priority to the duties of those underneath. Thus, shared constructions or *interobjectivity* (Moghaddam, 2003) is limited by different power positions. This is particularly so in times of change, when rules and norms become ambiguous. For example, a variety of minority movements, including those involving African Americans and women, highlighted demands for equal rights during the 1960s, a time of social, economic, and political change. Majority group representatives and central authorities gave priority to the duties of the less powerful, such as the duty of everyone to obey existing laws, which of course supported the status quo.

This chapter is divided into two major sections. In the first section, we outline a cultural theory of the development of rights and duties. Our goal is to explore the development of children with reference to some particular types of rights and duties arising from particular primitive social relations. Thus, in the present discussion we are not concerned with all the possible varieties of rights and duties. In the second section, we discuss three empirical studies as examples of research on central aspects of our theory. Studies 1 and 2 explore attitudes among samples of American and Iranian adults toward the rights and duties of adults and children. We postulate that adults will give priority to the duties of children but will give priority to the rights of adults. These two studies highlight certain fundamental differences in the way rights and duties are applied to adults and children, thus focusing on discontinuity rather than continuity in the world of adults and children. Study 3 involves American, Chinese, and Russian adult samples and highlights cross-cultural similarities in certain features of rights and duties, in contrast to the traditional bias toward highlighting cross-cultural differences (Moghaddam, Taylor, & Wright, 1993). In this study, we test the proposition that in relationships that are potentially or actually adversarial, rights will be given greater priority, whereas in less adversarial relationships duties are emphasized more.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We begin by noting there are as yet few universals in the domain of formal law and rights and duties of the child. Despite some efforts to establish universal formal law standards, there continue to be major differences across cultures on basic questions, such as the chronological age definition of a child. Second, where there are attempts to establish universals, commonsense law intrudes in major ways. For example, Section C of Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (accepted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989) states that the education of the child shall be directed to, among other things, the develop-

| Nature of constraints | Universal consequences    | Behavior of individual      |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Biological condition  | Innate capacity           | Imitating                   |
| Functional condition  | Primitive social relation | Turn taking                 |
| Cultural condition    | Interpretation of actions | Practicing rights or duties |

Figure 4.1. Schematic representation of the development of rights and duties.

ment of respect for his or her own cultural identity and the national values of the country in which the child is living. Clearly, this gives high priority to local practices, which in some cases directly conflict with democratic values and supports rather than challenges cultural variation. Our move toward a cultural theory of rights and duties of children acknowledges the powerful impact of the same cultural practices.

### Toward a Cultural Theory

Our goal in this section is to move toward a cultural theory of the development of rights and duties by outlining the basic elements of a theory that depicts behavior as constrained by three different types of conditions with each type of condition leading to a different type of universal consequence and individual act (see Figure 4.1).

Clearly, not all cultural and functional conditions arise out of biological constraints, but given the necessity to be selective in our discussion, we focused on a major example that clearly is linked to biological constraints. The individual acts we have selected as a focus for our discussion are *imitation*, an innate capacity arising out of biological condition; *turn taking*, a socially learned primitive social relation arising out of functional condition; and *practicing rights and duties*, a cultural activity arising from the interpretation of actions circumscribed by cultural conditions (Figure 4.1). Using these specific examples, we formulate arguments for the following propositions:

1. Common to the human experience are a number of biological and functional conditions that give rise to primitive social practices, social behaviors that are universal and essential for the survival of individuals.
2. The development of language in children is associated with the learning of cultural interpretations of primitive social relations, such as turn taking, as involving rights and duties.

3. In relationships that are (a) changing, so that the norms and rules of behavior are uncertain or (b) adversarial, so that conflict is actual or very possible, those with equal or less power will give priority to rights and those who enjoy greater power will give priority to duties.

#### *Proposition 1*

Human beings everywhere have been confronted by a number of basic common challenges arising out of the interaction between their biological makeup and their physical environment. One of the most important of such challenges has been to develop means through which useful knowledge and skills can be effectively communicated to others, particularly from parents to children. In this regard, language has served a unique function. However, other means have been developed that are available even before the development of language, imitation being chief among these. Imitation shares with language the feature of turn taking: Turn taking arises from imitation and leads to the development of language.

In the last two decades of the 20th century a fundamental shift took place in how researchers conceptualized the role of imitation in human development (Nadel & Butterworth, 1999). Although earlier research hinted at this new direction (Zazzo, 1957), the impetus for the more recent change was a series of pioneering studies demonstrating that newborns only a few minutes old can imitate certain adult facial and gestural behaviors (Meltzoff & Moore, 1977, 1983). Imitation was shown to be an innate human capacity, not dependent on mechanisms envisaged in Piagetian, Skinnerian, Freudian, or other major models. Given the recent dominance of Piaget's stage model, it is particularly important that deferred imitation, in which infants reenact behavior on the basis of their representation of the past, has been shown in 6-week-olds (Meltzoff & Moore, 1994) and 6-month-olds (Barr, Dowden, & Hayne, 1996), posing a very strong challenge to the Piagetian idea of a shift from sensorimotor to representational functioning at 18 months of age.

A major implication of the "new look" research on imitation in infancy is that the demarcation between sensorimotor, cognitive, and social development, as well as the notion of developmental stages, is in major ways flawed (see also Moghaddam, 2002). Such traditional classifications may help researchers categorize and label behavior in a way that seems "neat," but actual behavior does not fit into such convenient boxes. With this viewpoint, we turn to consider the development of turn taking.

We argue that turn taking is not itself innate but builds on imitation, an innate capacity. Second, turn taking appears very soon after imitation, and certainly within the first six months of life. Imitation involves alternation (see reports in Nadel & Butterworth, 1999). At the simplest level, only one turn takes place: For example, a mother makes a facial gesture and the

infant imitates. When additional steps are added, turn taking takes place: For example, a mother makes a facial gesture, the infant imitates, then the mother repeats the same gesture, the infant imitates again, and so on. We have known for some time that such turn-taking sequences play an important role in the development of communications skills, even before verbal communications (Brazelton & Tronick, 1980). Next, we consider in greater detail what seems to happen when infants take turns and the cultural interpretation of such turn taking.

### *Proposition 2*

Children learn to participate in certain primitive social relations before they can truly conceptualize the idea of rights and duties. These social relations are essential for the successful functioning of children and in the course of development become understood by children within the format of rights and duties. One such primitive social relation is turn taking. Turn taking appears early in a child's development and is vital to acquiring language, which is itself an absolute necessity to functional competency. Learning to communicate involves first mastering such alternation, with the later addition to that basic construction of language structure, rules, and appropriate social use. The knowledge of these factors depends largely on the child's progressive procurement of the cultural interpretations of the rights and duties involved, for example, understanding that a person may or may not have a right to speak. This process evolves as an integral part of the learning of communications skills in both informal (e.g., family) and formal (e.g., day-care and school) settings.

*The Centrality of Turn Taking in Adult Life.* Turn taking is central to human behavior, as evidenced by the literature on social linguistics, at both the adult level and the developmental level. Research in the adult realm primarily concerns the characteristics of successful communication, and turn taking is considered essential to the process. Research suggests that to manage the taking of speaking turns and thereby to communicate effectively, there exists a routine communication mechanism (e.g., Duncan, 1972). This mechanism is arbitrated through behavioral cues, which, in turn, are governed by rules. The rules vary by culture, but the act of turn taking is universal. Two of the most common rules for successful dialogue are first not to interrupt the speaker (alternation or turn taking) and second to maintain continuity in the subject matter of the conversation (coherence) (Collis, 1985). Adult communication is thus characterized by smooth coordination, as there is an orderly alternation of speaking with little overlapping speech or hesitation. Nonverbal signals such as making eye contact may aid in this process. Usually, speakers look away when they begin speaking, and then at the end of their utterance, they tend to look at the auditor, showing that they are finished and the listener may now have a turn. In between, brief glances at the auditor are made looking for feedback, and the auditor signals

his or her attention with long, steady gazes (Rutter & Durkin, 1987). Such actions as gesticulation, changes in pitch and loudness, head movement, pausing, and audible inhalation have also been implicated as signals to coordinate alternation (Duncan, 1974). In this manner, the ability to communicate effectively in adult conversations requires the mastery of turn taking.

*The Development of Turn-Taking Skills.* Linguistics research also suggests that the learning of alternation begins early in life during mother-infant interaction (Barrett, 1985). The ability to cooperate in such a way is crucial to social development as a whole, and interacting with one's parents is fundamental in building this skill. The rudiments of turn taking can be established as early as six weeks of age as infants interact with adults. These exchanges, or *protoconversations* (Collis, 1985), tend to include brief vocalizations, gazing, and head and postural movement. From such interactions single-word speech and then full-blown verbal exchanges may develop. The fact that parents and their babies commonly exhibit coordinated sequences of vocalizations and gazes, even from the earliest weeks of life, is generally attributed to the skill of the parent in molding his or her own behavior to that of the infant rather than to a genuine reciprocity between the two. That is, mothers tend to structure the interactions with their children through their own vocalizations, which also serve as reinforcement and motivation for the infants to partake more actively in the exchanges. Moreover, mothers who respond contingently to their children, paying attention to what the infant is focused on or involved with, have children with a greater range of referential and symbolic language skills (Reissland & Stephenson, 1999). Similar trends have been found with parent-infant gazes, and generally, during the early stages of the infant's life the behavior depends on the action of the mother. In the child's second year, a pattern of development similar to the action of adults emerges wherein infants use the *terminal gaze* to signal the end of their turn as well as begin to interrupt less often (Rutter & Durkin, 1987). By the third year, children are quite active in controlling their exchanges with parents, having mastered the art of alternation.

*The Cultural Interpretation of Turn Taking and Language Practices.* Clearly, turn taking is essential to parent-child interactions as well as adult conversations. Simultaneous speaking is highly detrimental to communication, for it obscures the meaning of what each player is saying. Alternation is thus a fundamental and universal rule of communication on which other not necessarily universal rules of communication build. Conversation gains meaning from these rules with the qualification that they must be consensually held. The rules applied in communication are used to encode and decode the input of the conversation, and culturally created symbols and symbol systems aid this process. Symbols carry the information to be communicated as well as manage the use of the rules to be applied with the goal of evoking the correct interpretation by the receiver of the message. In this way, to success-

fully communicate, there must be an agreement between parties about what symbols signify in a particular context. The meaning varies between cultures and groups and must be taught to children through imitation and experience. The effective use of symbols depends on turn taking, for when one conversationalist uses a symbol, she or he expects a certain rule-governed response from the other, which she or he will respond to in turn (Cushman & Whiting, 1972). Using communication rules effectively therefore depends on internalizing the cultural interpretation of those rules, such as turn taking, and involves grasping the idea that such rules involve rights and duties. For example, one conversationalist has a duty to defer a speaking turn to the other, who has a right to speak next.

A working knowledge of alternation, among other linguistic rules, is a rudimentary part of communication (Schegloff, 2000). In acquiring language, however, a child must learn more than such constructions. She or he must ascertain when and where certain communication routines are appropriate, which varies by culture. The cultural difference in attitudes toward speaking freely is an example. In some cultures, certain members of the population are denied the right to speak their mind, whereas in others, the right to voice one's opinion is considered a basic privilege.

To take an extreme example, in India untouchables would not have a right to speak unless spoken to in the presence of individuals from higher castes. To take a more widespread example, consider the practice of free speech. Although the right to speak freely on political matters is accepted as normative in most Western societies, this right is in practice denied to several billion people around the world, including those in communist states such as China and Islamic states such as Iran. Individuals are socialized from an early age to function according to such local normative systems, so that a child is taught what to say and when in private and public domains. Part of this socialization involves learning rights and duties involved in such practices as turn taking and the application of communication rules. This socialization therefore includes the development of specific language routines, which, once learned, lead to socially appropriate behavior.

Another example of language routines is saying "thank you" at the closing of conversations. Thanking is a politeness convention, and caregivers give special attention to teaching children the appropriate use of thanking. How and when to initiate or accept a thank you, that is, the rights and duties of thanking, varies cross-culturally (Aston, 1995), although the need for such politeness is universal. The differences in thanking style stem, in part, from cultural differences in the perception of relative power, social distance, and degree of indebtedness. However, thanking also plays a role in directing conversation, which relates to turn taking. That is, saying "thank you" appropriately can serve to bring to a close the current topic, to make possible the (re)introduction of additional topics, and to temporarily bring turn taking to a close. Thus, thanking is motivated not only by situational



factors but also by the need to manage the conversation. The preference for certain procedures over others inherent in such management also varies by culture, for example, preferences regarding the use of turn taking. Children learn these skills through observation and experience and then later understand them to involve rights and duties as they internalize the social appropriateness of the acts. That is to say, in thanking someone, the speaker has a duty to thank and the auditor a right to be thanked, and that understanding develops after the practice of thanking does itself, as influenced by the child's culture.

A study by Margaret Wilhite about end-of-meal routines further supports our proposition. The study involves the development of a language routine seen in Cakchiquel-speaking Indians in Guatemala (Wilhite, 1983). At the end of a meal when a person wishes to depart, he or she is expected to cross the arms in front of the chest, engage in eye contact with the person of highest status in the room, and say "thank you." The person addressed is then expected to respond, stating "God gave it to you." Eye contact is broken, and the person to depart repeats the routine with everyone else, in hierarchical order, according to Wilhite's study. The involvement of rights and duties in this procedure is clear, for the person departing has a duty to thank everyone in the correct manner and order, and the people to be thanked have a right to be acknowledged appropriately. Wilhite's research also showed that the routine as such develops progressively in young children, with the setting and nonverbal elements appearing first (crossing the arms and gazing), followed by the verbal elements (receptive response, then productive thanks, then productive response), and finally the socially appropriate use of the language routine (status hierarchy). These elements are governed largely by turn taking as they involve an action-response-counterresponse format. Children learn their duty to perform this specialized turn taking gradually, coming to a complete comprehension of the rights and duties inherent in the routine by the time they master the social rules of appropriate use. Wilhite also noted that parents concentrate mostly on coaching the more complex verbal-response and status-hierarchy elements, that is, the appropriate form of response and the appropriate order of turns, thus emphasizing the finer details of the child's duty to ensure that she or he will acquire the language routine correctly.

When a child acquires such rules and routines as delineated in the preceding paragraph, the child is socialized into the expectations of the culture and comes to grasp what is his or her duty to do in certain social situations. That is to say, using language appropriately in a wide variety of circumstances entails adhering to communication rules and routines and comprehending the rights and duties among the players involved. Children first seize upon the basic building blocks of language use, most important turn taking, and upon mastery of that structure. Next they develop the linguistic rules and routines that they have a further duty to perform before they can communi-

cate successfully. Culture influences this comprehension, for what is a right or a duty in one place may not hold in another.

However, the significance of alternation extends well beyond the boundaries of linguistics; learning to take turns is a fundamental part of social development in general and typifies much of human behavior. It can be categorized as a primitive social relation necessary to successful existence in society as a whole, from mediating communication to regulating traffic. Indeed, turn taking is a universal of human behavior, although its practice is influenced by cultural interpretations. Once alternation has been elicited, it undergoes interpretation on the cultural level, being judged to involve rights or duties depending on the norms of the society. That process is certainly essential to the development of language but functions in other social contexts as well: Depending on the cultural ethos, people have a right to a turn, whether it be a turn to speak or a turn at the bank, and a duty to let others have theirs as well.

### *Proposition 3*

Proposition 3 states that priority will be given to rights by those who have less or equal power in relationships that are changing or adversarial.

### **Child-Parent Relations as Characterized by Conflict and Change**

Contemporary developmental science underscores the view that the world of the child is characterized by physical, social, cognitive, and other changes in the behavior of the child as well as by the relationships the child has with others (National Research Council, 2000). During the initial phase of this development, the child is completely dependent on adult caretakers; but very soon the child begins to assert some measure of independence and to embark on a struggle central to which are negotiations about resources, fairness, feelings of deprivation, and rights and duties.

From the perspective of a number of major theories, the developing child is in some ways in an adversarial relationship with parents and other authority figures. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the infant at least initially acts according to the pleasure principle, driven by instant gratification and maximum pleasure. In the language of rights and duties, infants give exclusive priority to their own rights, and directly or indirectly, to the duties of caretakers to serve them. But caretakers gradually place restrictions on infants, limiting and redirecting the ways in which they can attain pleasure. The process of education, then, involves harnessing the child's energies and directing the child toward duties rather than rights, which inevitably implies diminishing personal pleasure, "Unpleasure remains the only means of education" (Freud, 1886-1899/1966, p. 370). In this process, adults can be viewed as superiors and oppressors, "There is little that gives children greater pleasure than when a grown-up lets himself down to their level, renounces his oppressive superiority and plays with them as an equal" (Freud, 1905/1960, p. 227). Thus, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, relationships between chil-

dren and parents are in important ways antagonistic with the child as the less powerful of the combatants.

From a number of other theoretical perspectives, also, the parent-child relationship involves potential conflict. For example, parent-child conflict can be interpreted on the basis of realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) regarding resources (Child: "I have to have that toy, buy me that toy." Parent: "We can't afford to buy you that, we need money for other things."); social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) regarding the nature of social identity (Child: "I don't want to wear that shirt; it's not for me." Parent: "As long as you live in this house, you have to make yourself presentable in front of family."); relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1982) regarding feelings of deprivation (Child: "How come I have to go to bed now and Sara can stay up?" Parent: "Don't compare yourself with her, she's older."); and equity theory (Messick & Cook, 1983) regarding judgments of fairness (Child: "It's not fair that I have to share my toys with John." Parent: "Yes it is fair, either you share or I take all your toys away.").

An important influence on the adversarial relationship between parents and children is that the relationship is continually changing because parents and, in particular, children are changing, growing more capable of independent thought and action. More specifically, the norms and rules regulating parent-child relations are continually shifting, and with each passing month, the child is pushing toward greater independence and revised rules and norms. In many ways the norms and rules that children have to follow are special to the world of the child.

### The Margin of Generational Development

Most children are influenced by socialization processes to eventually become integrated into the normative system of the adult world, but this does not mean that the normative system guiding children is a simplified version of the normative system guiding adult behavior. There are fundamental rifts between the worlds of children and adults, and the size of this rift reflects the *margin of generational development* (Moghaddam, 2002; after Fine, 1987; Opie & Opie, 1972).

The margin of generational development is sometimes planned and made explicit. For example, in the domain of knowledge and experience about sexual behavior, adults often go to great lengths to maintain discontinuity between the experiences of children and those of adults. Children are explicitly kept ignorant about sex, particularly in middle-class Western families. In cases in which adults expect children to conform to norms that are fundamentally different from those applied to adults, the margin of generational development is wide, but not necessarily explicit. That is, the discontinuity between the normative system of adults and children may still not be acknowledged. Consider, for example, the norm that "children have to share."

David and George are 4-year-olds playing in George's house. David is playing with a toy car, and George tries to grab it from him, crying, "That's my blue car! Mom, David won't give me my blue car!" George's mother responds by saying, "It's David's turn to play with the blue car." "But it's my blue car," complains George. "You have to share your toys with friends," his mother tells him, "David will give it to you when it's your turn."

Now consider the relationship between George and David when they become 24-year-olds and are driving real cars. Will George's mother insist that George share his car with his friends? Not at all. Private ownership, personal responsibility, and personal property are now given the highest priority. George will be seen to have every right in the world if he now refuses to let David or any other friend drive his car. Clearly then, the margin of generational development is very large in one of the most fundamentally important domains of modern Western societies, that of ownership of property.

One of the most important areas in which the margin of generational difference is significant is that of rights and duties. In parent-child relations specifically and adult-child relations generally, parents and adults focus on the duties of the child, whereas children give priority to the rights of the child. The socialization of children in the informal social world, as well as the formal context of education, involves emphasizing duties more than rights. The vast part of training children has traditionally involved setting constraints on what they are not allowed to do and on what they are duty bound to do, and less on what they have a right to do. Often, caretakers make explicit the boundaries of duties ("You have to be back by 9 p.m.; you have to do your homework; you have to clean your room."), and rights are implied as anything outside the forbidden boundaries.

A number of studies provide empirical support for the view that children give priority to their rights and parents give priority to their children's duties. In studies of dual-parent families with two young children, Lollis and her associates found that whereas parents tried to solve sibling conflicts more through a "care" orientation that emphasized responsibilities, younger children in particular gave priority to a "justice" orientation that emphasized rights (Lollis, Ross, & Leroux, 1996; Lollis, Van Engen, Burns, Nowack, & Ross, 1999). A series of other studies have found that mothers in particular act as guardians of the social order by giving priority to the duties of children to follow rules (Piotrowski, 1997; Smetana, Schlagman, & Adams, 1993). These studies underscore the idea that there is a continual negotiation between children and parents about rights and duties with children constantly pulling toward personal rights and liberties in their tug-of-war.

### **The Primacy of Duties in Education and Traditional Conceptions of Human Nature**

This priority to the duties of children on the part of parents, educators, and adults generally can be traced to the negative view of human nature

dominant in many cultures. That view dictates how society conceptualizes basic human tendencies, and therefore, influences how society trains children to manage those tendencies. Because humans are commonly assumed to be self-centered, personal rights seem more in keeping with their natural inclinations than do duties, and it appears easier to stray toward selfish behavior. To keep children on the right path, society must therefore stress their duties.

This view of humans as largely selfish beings has carried over from religion into other realms, including economics, politics, and the sciences. The major religions depict humankind as inclined to lean toward the evil side of their dual nature, although the good and evil parts are constantly battling for dominance. The social sciences adopt a similar negative perspective on human nature. Psychological domains are no exception, as illustrated by the work of such thinkers as Freud (1886–1899/1966) and Piaget (1952) as well as the literature on altruism. We have already mentioned Freud's depiction of infants as dangerously pleasure seeking, striving for instant gratification without thought of consequences. Civilization's role is to tame this savage and self-satisfying human tendency. Piaget carried similar ideas into the domain of cognitive development, particularly by highlighting the child's assumed egocentrism. Kohlberg (1963) made the same assumption in the domain of moral development, postulating that only a minority of people grow beyond moral thinking based on selfishness and arrive at principled moral thinking.

The vast majority of the contemporary literature on altruism adopts a similar negative view of human nature (Moghaddam, 1998). Almost all of the major theories of helping behavior assume that people are essentially guided by self-serving motives; these include social exchange theory (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981), the negative state relief hypothesis (Cialdini, Schaller, Houlihan, Arps, Fultz, & Beaman, 1987), the image-repair hypothesis (Cunningham, Steinberg, & Grev, 1980), the empathy-joy hypothesis (Smith, Keating, & Stotland, 1989), the just-world hypothesis (Lerner, 1977, 1991), equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), and various sociobiological explanations (e.g., Rushton, 1988, 1991). Among these pessimistic theories of altruism exists only one major hypothesis, the empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson, 1995), that posits that humans have a genuine desire to help others. Thus, most major models of altruism assume that all motivation arises with the egoistic goal of increasing one's own well-being. Human nature is presented as fundamentally self-serving.

This assumption implies that individual rights are more in harmony with natural tendencies than are duties. Humans more "naturally" understand what they have a right to almost by default, whereas the concept of having a duty to perform is less "natural" and harder to accept. Thus, teaching children their responsibilities in regard to personal rights ("I have a right to play with my toy") will be easier than teaching them their responsibilities

in regard to personal duties ("I have a duty to share my toy"), and the latter must be emphasized in education. Indeed, society appears to do just that as it sets up prohibitions on human action. Consider, for example, the Ten Commandments and many of our basic laws. All restrict humans ("Thou shalt not. . ."), rather than delineating what we are allowed to do. The implication is that humankind's largely self-centered inclinations must be controlled and its duties to others stressed to create a moral world. Thus, at a young and impressionable age, humans are taught to disregard their self-serving proclivity for rights and to embrace the idea of duties.

### **Implications of the Cultural Theory to the Development of Rights and Duties**

The cultural theory outlined in the preceding discussion has two implications: first, the replaceability of rights and duties, and second, universals in the priority given to rights and duties.

#### *Replaceability or Renaming a Behavior as a Right or a Duty*

We have proposed that primitive social relations, such as turn taking, are common to all human social life, and after they arise, are culturally interpreted as a right or a duty (see also Moghaddam, 2000). Most, and perhaps all, rights can be reconceived as duties, and most, if not all, duties can be reconceived as rights. That is to say, a right can be renamed as duty and a duty as a right. There are no objective criteria by which an act such as giving or taking a turn to speak is a priori a right or a duty for an interlocutor. It could be either or it could be both, depending on cultural conditions.

#### *Priorities Given to Rights and Duties*

In practice, however, we find that some acts are more likely to be interpreted as rights, whereas others are more likely to be interpreted as duties. These trends are strongly related to the situation of the person doing the interpreting. We have argued that in parent-child relations, children emphasize their own personal rights, but parents emphasize their children's duties. More generally, in situations involving conflict or change, those with less power emphasize their own rights and those who enjoy more power emphasize the duties of the less powerful. This is almost a universal trend. However, we can also find exceptions to this trend.

Consider, for example, the duty to serve one's country at times of war. Both authorities and citizens tend to emphasize "the duty to serve." But even in this situation, the label *rights* is not far away. For example, during World War II thousands of Japanese Americans were interned and lost their right to serve in the United States military. More recently, gays have complained of being excluded from the U.S. military, which has been denying them their right to serve. This harkens back to the replaceability issue, although the

situation of the person doing the interpreting influences whether rights or duties are prioritized.

## EXPLORATORY STUDIES

In the first section, our first proposition is that biological and functional constraints of the human condition necessarily lead to certain social behaviors termed primitive social relations and that these are universal across cultures, arising early in life through the interactions of infant and caretaker. Our second proposition is that these primitive social relations are later interpreted for the child as being either rights or duties, depending on cultural conditions. In this second section, we empirically bolster these propositions through several exploratory studies. The first two studies delve into the rift between the normative world of the child versus that of the adult and support the idea that there exists a wide margin of generational development between the priority given to rights or duties, depending on one's age and power alignment in relation to others. The third study highlights cross-cultural similarities and universals in the domain of rights and duties and reflects the existence of primitive social relations common to all human societies. In particular, this study examines the idea that priority will be given to rights by those who are in potentially adversarial relationships, thus testing an aspect of Proposition 3.

### Studies 1 and 2

#### *Priority Given to Rights and Duties in Changing Relationships: Property Rights and Duties of Children and Adults*

We have argued that in parent-child relations, characterized as they are by change and power inequalities, adults give priority to the duties of children. In this respect, we have highlighted differences and discontinuities in the worlds of adults and children. In certain domains, the normative system regulating the behavior of youngsters functions only in childhood and therefore cannot strictly be considered "an early form of" the normative system that regulates adult life. As evidenced by the studies briefly reported in the following paragraphs, there is not a consistent trend in the relative weight given to rights and duties from 3-year-olds to 23-year-olds; rather, the scheme used by adults when comparing "the right to use one's belonging versus the duty to share it" deviates from that used in childhood.

The first experiment involved 49 native Iranian parents (41 women, 8 men), between the ages of 19 and 44 years old. Each had at least one child below the age of 7, the majority of their children being 3 to 4 years old. The research instrument was a questionnaire involving four short story lines. In each story, there were two characters whose gender was matched to the gen-



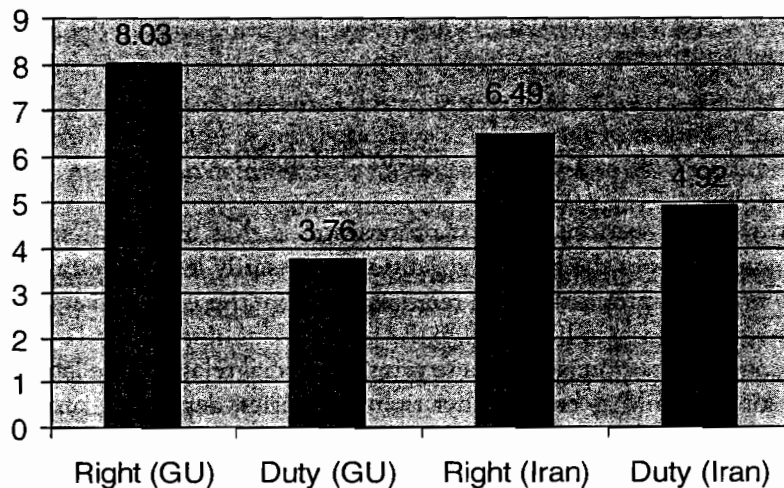


Figure 4.2. Adult means for both the Georgetown University (GU) data and the Iran data.

der of the participant's child. The scenarios varied in the age of the characters, either both 3-year-olds or both 23-year-olds. In each story, one character wished to borrow something from the other character. When they were 3, it was a toy, and when they were 23, it was a car, and the two began to fight over that object. The participants, on being presented with the four stories, were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 9 (1 = *lowest priority*; 9 = *highest priority*), the priority they believed the parents of the toy or car owner would give to (a) the character's right to play with the toy or use the car and (b) the character's duty to share the toy or car with the other character.

The second study involved 37 Georgetown University undergraduate students. Again, participants completed questionnaires. This time, however, each student analyzed only two of four possible story lines. All of the scenarios included one character, G, who wanted to borrow something from another character, M, leading the two characters to fight over that object. Again, both characters were either 3-year-olds or 23-year-olds. When M and G were 3, the object of their desire was a toy, whereas at 23 it was a car. After reading the stories, each participant was asked to rate the level of priority they believed the parents of M would give to (a) M's right to play with the toy or use the car and (b) M's duty to share the toy or car with G.

Rights were consistently given higher priority than duties in the scenario involving the 23-year-olds, especially by the Georgetown students. Looking at individual cases, 42 out of 49 Iranians gave higher or equal priority to rights in the scenario involving two adults, and 34 out of 37 Georgetown students did the same. However, a different pattern emerges for the scenario involving 3-year-olds: Rights and duties were rated at similar levels of priority, with duties edging out rights by a small margin. In terms of individual cases, 26 (out of 49) Iranians gave higher or equal priority to rights in the



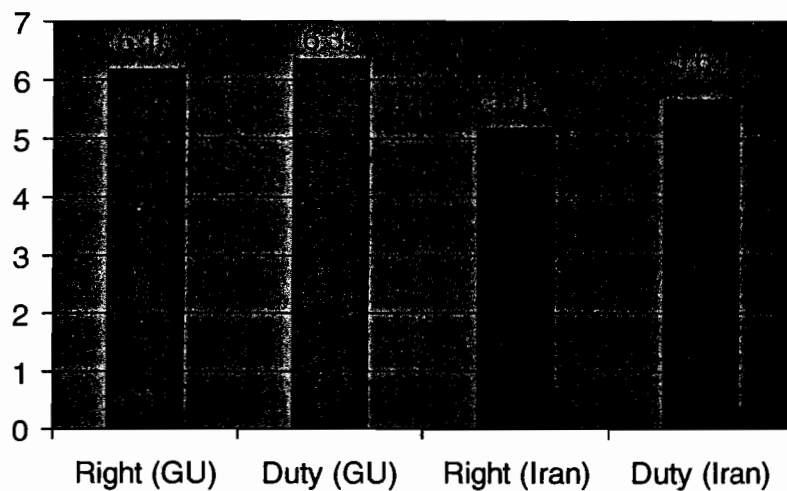


Figure 4.3. Child means for both the Georgetown University (GU) data and the Iran study data.

scenario involving two children, and 23 (out of 37) Georgetown students did the same. See Figures 4.2 and 4.3 for a comparison of means in both studies.

Clearly, these results support our notion of a rift between the respective normative systems that guide the behavior of children and adults, and that rift exists, we believe, almost universally across cultures. Our explanation for the disparity is the different functional conditions experienced by children and adults, for such conditions ultimately direct the practice of rights and duties. That is, the primitive social relations arising out of the different age-dependent constraints differ accordingly between the two age groups, each being interpreted in its own way as practicing rights or duties. Thus, the domain of rights and duties is differentiated according to age. Furthermore, although most children are socialized to eventually incorporate the normative system of adults, the normative system guiding children is not simply a reduced version of that guiding adult behavior. We have argued for and our exploratory studies have supported this fundamental incongruity between the world of children and adults, terming the extent of the dissimilarity the margin of generational development. The rights and duties determined by the different normative systems can be considered complementary, but they also replace one another as the relationship between parents and children changes.

We have already argued for the evolution of the relationship between children and adults. As children grow, the normative rules from which they mold their behavior continually change, and children are constantly pushing toward the more liberal and liberating of these rule systems. Parents, conversely, give priority to duties that restrict the behavior of their children. Thus, parents are in a continual state of flux vis-à-vis their power alignment, which is often associated with tension and discord. To further explain the

rift in normative system, we consider how the relationship between children and parents reflects a much broader trend: In any relationship characterized by potential or actual conflict, those with less or equal power (e.g., children) give priority to their personal rights, whereas those who enjoy greater power in the relationship (e.g., parents) give priority to the duties of those with less power. Study 3 further explores this general pattern.

### Study 3

#### *Priority Given to Rights and Duties in Less and More Adversarial Relationships: Attitudes Toward Family, Friends, and Neighbors*

We have described the parent-child relationship as adversarial in some ways, given that the child is continually developing and exerting pressure for greater rights and independence. In such relationships, we have argued that adults place more emphasis on children's duties. But what about other relationships that are potentially adversarial? How general is this tendency to emphasize one's own rights in adversarial relations? Is there any consistency across cultures? As an exploratory foray toward addressing these questions, we conducted a study of the importance given to rights and duties in relations with family, friends, and neighbors among samples of American, Chinese, and Russian participants.

Despite the priority given to finding cross-cultural differences in traditional cross-cultural psychology (Brislin, 2000; Matsumoto, 2000), research has unearthed surprising consistency in attitudes toward human rights. For example, the research of Doise and his associates (Doise & Spini, chap. 2, this volume) suggests that the fundamental tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see Appendix for full text) are similarly evaluated by young people in approximately 40 different Western and non-Western societies around the world. In examining possible cross-cultural consistencies, we look back to the concept of primitive social relations, particularly those involving groups of people present in most societies, such as family, friends, and neighbors.

Although family structure varies considerably around the world, the concept of family relations is present in all societies. Similarly, although friendship patterns and even the nature of friendship varies from culture to culture, most human cultures do have relationships that we understand as friendship. The same holds for neighbors; that is, although neighbors are different for different cultures, even nomadic tribes do have experiences of interacting with others who might resemble "mobile neighbors." In all societies, individuals have relationships with other individuals in these three categories. Even in the case of the Tiwi of Northern Australia (Hart, Pilling, & Goodale, 1988) and other groups who lived for long periods of their history in isolation, people still created neighbors through imaginary out-groups, that is,

groups of people and humanlike creatures imagined to exist in the unexplored regions beyond the known world. Thus, in all human societies relations seem to exist between people we would recognize as family, friends, and neighbors.

The nature of relations within these three groups seems to involve some cross-cultural consistency. Family and friends are involved in less formal and nonlegalistic relations with one another compared with neighbors (of course, in some cases a neighbor might also be a family member or a friend). Neighbors typically have rights in relation to scarce resources such as land. In most modern societies, the property rights of neighbors are formally regulated through deeds and other documents, but this does not prevent conflicts between neighbors over property and privacy issues. The study we report was conducted to explore possible *etics*, behaviors common to most or all societies, and *emics*, behaviors common to one or a few societies, in human rights and duties in relationships involving family, friends, and neighbors (the data reported are from Moghaddam, Slocum, Shand, & Ward, 2000). The study involved comparable samples of young adult Americans ( $n = 182$ ), Chinese ( $n = 122$ ), and Russians ( $n = 355$ ). Participants were presented with three scenarios, the first concerning family, the second friends, and the third neighbors. The scenarios involved social situations that could be interpreted as a matter of rights or duties for the self or others. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which in this situation they would give importance to their own rights and duties as well as the rights and duties of the others (family, friends, or neighbors) involved.

The scenario involving neighbors was as follows:

A very large tree on your neighbor's property has grown to partially block your ocean view. In order to expose your scenic view, the entire treetop would need to be removed, which would decrease the beauty of your neighbor's garden.

The scenario involving friends was as follows:

Your best friend has just been hospitalized and is close to dying. You would like to visit your friend, but you have to give a job presentation that requires much preparation and offers you the chance for a new and much better position. If you visit your friend you will most likely do poorly on your presentation, but your friend's condition is dire.

The scenario involving family was as follows:

This weekend is your mother's birthday. Your father and mother have a big party planned, and they expect you to come home from school for the weekend. However, you are in the middle of doing a project that is due on Monday. You need to stay on campus to have access to the library and so must choose between going home and having sufficient time to do an excellent job on the project.

Each of the above three scenarios was followed by six questions: In this situation, I give (on a rating scale of 1-9, where 1 represents "very little importance" and 9 represents "a lot of importance")

- \_\_\_ importance to my duty to my neighbor
- \_\_\_ importance to my duty to myself
- \_\_\_ importance to my neighbor's rights
- \_\_\_ importance to my rights

Overall, in this situation, I give \_\_\_ importance to rights and \_\_\_ importance to duties.

The results show remarkable consistency across cultures (see Table 4.1). Looking first at ratings on the question "Overall, in this situation, I give \_\_\_ importance to rights and \_\_\_ importance to duties," the consistent pattern is that all groups give higher importance to duties in relations with close family and close friends but higher importance to rights in relations with neighbors. The only nonsignificant finding is in the case of the Chinese in relations with close family, but the trend of the results in this case also is in line with higher importance being given to duty.

Regarding the first four more specific questions, in the case of relationships with close family members and close friends, the Chinese, Russian, and American participants all gave higher priority to duty to the self and duty to others than they did to rights of the self and rights of others. Even in the four cases in which the difference between priority given to duty and that given to rights was nonsignificant (Table 4.1), the trend of the differences was in the direction of higher priority being given to duty.

Exactly the opposite pattern emerges on the first four specific questions with respect to relationships with neighbors: The Chinese, Russian, and American participants gave higher priority to rights of the self (vs. rights of others) and rights of others (vs. duty to others). The only exception to this trend is for the Russian participants, for whom there is a nonsignificant difference between rights of self and duty to self. The consistency across Chinese, Russian, and American groups in the priorities given to rights and duties, and the shift in priorities across neighbors versus friends and family is all the more remarkable when we consider that the study was conducted using different groups of interviewers and different languages in very different parts of the world.

The results of Study 3 indicate that in relationships that are potentially adversarial, such as those involving neighbors, individuals generally give priority to rights rather than duties. More specifically, particular importance is given to one's personal rights. In relationships not characterized by conflict, such as with family and friends, it is one's duties, and particularly one's duties to others, that come to the foreground, whereas one's rights are allowed to fade into the background. One interpretation of the difference between ratings for neighbors versus family and friends is that the scenario we used for

neighbors relates to property, whereas the scenarios for family and friends involved personal careers and studies. It may be that personal property issues are more likely to bring to mind rights rather than duties. However, it may also be that relationships with neighbors are more formal and legalistic in the minds of members of all three samples.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this final section we turn directly to apply our theoretical perspective to address a number of questions raised in the introductory chapter.

*Question 4. How do children come to acquire notions relating to duties and rights?*

Children acquire notions relating to duties and rights first through the training they receive from adults, particularly parents, other caretakers, and teachers, and second through being taught by other children, particularly those just ahead of them developmentally. The research of Opie and Opie (1972) and Fine (1987) suggests that each generation of children passes on certain knowledge and skills in the domain of rights and duties to the next generation of children without adults necessarily being involved in this process. Both this information passed from child to child within the self-regulated world of children and the teaching of children by adults about notions of duties and rights serve to continue the rift between the normative system of the child and that of adults.

A common feature of the different ways in which children learn about rights and duties is that already encountered segments of the social world are culturally interpreted for the child as a right or a duty. Among the earliest of such experiences is the labeling of primitive social relations, such as turn taking, as a right or a duty. This kind of labeling is intimately related to the characteristics of the larger society, such as the nature of the economic system.

Children learn about rights and duties in the context of the larger social and economic system. On the surface, it may appear that Iranians and Americans have very different social and economic systems as well as different views regarding rights and duties relating to ownership. After all, the political rhetoric of the Iranian and American governments is often fundamentally different. However, underlying this rhetoric is a deeper similarity: Both are capitalist societies organized around free enterprise and respect for private property. Consequently, perhaps it is not surprising that both Iranian and American samples showed the same rift in applying rights and duties to children and adults: Children should share, but when they become adults, the rights of the property owner trump duties to others. In answering our question, then, we argue that children adopt ideas about rights and duties

TABLE 4.1  
Rights and Duties to Self and Others Across Ethnic Groups and Relationships

| Ethnicity of participant | Relationship | Reference       | M    | Direction of difference | p     |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| Chinese                  | Close family | Right of self   | 6.14 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 6.57 | -0.43                   | 0.001 |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.61 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 7.25 | -0.64                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Rights          | 6.60 |                         |       |
| Russian                  | Close family | Duties          | 7.15 | -0.55                   | ns    |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 6.86 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 6.81 | 0.05                    | ns    |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.85 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 7.35 | -0.51                   | 0.000 |
| American                 | Close family | Rights          | 6.78 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duties          | 7.34 | -0.55                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 6.39 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 7.14 | -0.75                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.01 |                         |       |
| Chinese                  | Close friend | Duty to others  | 6.83 | -0.82                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Rights          | 6.15 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duties          | 7.15 | -1.00                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 5.23 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 5.88 | -0.65                   | 0.000 |
| Russian                  | Close friend | Right of others | 7.44 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 8.05 | -0.61                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Rights          | 6.39 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duties          | 8.22 | -1.84                   | 0.029 |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 6.54 |                         |       |
| American                 | Close friend | Duty to self    | 6.25 | 0.29                    | ns    |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.63 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 8.06 | -1.43                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Rights          | 6.51 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duties          | 8.01 | -1.50                   | 0.000 |
| Chinese                  | Neighbor     | Right of self   | 4.71 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 5.00 | -0.29                   | ns    |
|                          |              | Right of others | 7.08 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 8.54 | -1.46                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Rights          | 5.40 |                         |       |
| Russian                  | Neighbor     | Duties          | 8.02 | -2.62                   | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 6.88 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to self    | 6.52 | 0.36                    | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.09 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duty to others  | 5.82 | 0.27                    | 0.035 |
| Chinese                  | Neighbor     | Rights          | 6.89 |                         |       |
|                          |              | Duties          | 6.07 | 0.83                    | 0.000 |
|                          |              | Right of self   | 6.26 |                         |       |
| Russian                  | Neighbor     | Duty to self    | 6.34 | -0.08                   | ns    |
|                          |              | Right of others | 6.02 |                         |       |

TABLE 4.1 (Continued)

|          |                 |      |      |       |
|----------|-----------------|------|------|-------|
| American | Duty to others  | 5.41 | 0.61 | 0.000 |
|          | Rights          | 6.51 |      |       |
|          | Duties          | 5.95 | 0.56 | 0.000 |
|          | Right of self   | 6.99 |      |       |
|          | Duty to self    | 6.32 | 0.66 | 0.000 |
|          | Right of others | 5.91 |      |       |
|          | Duty to others  | 5.33 | 0.58 | 0.000 |
|          | Rights          | 6.69 |      |       |
|          | Duties          | 5.84 | 0.85 | 0.000 |

through interactions with both adults and peers, but that rights and duties applied to children are in some important domains, such as ownership, fundamentally different from rights and duties applied to adults.

*Question 5. Are there universals regarding rights and duties, and if there are universals, what is the source?*

The tentative move we have taken toward a cultural theory of the development of rights and duties has, on the one hand, postulated rights and duties as replaceable, and on the other hand, claimed that there are a number of very basic universals in rights and duties. It may appear that we endorse a relativistic view of rights and duties, and at the same time, we claim there to be universals. In this section we provide further clarification of this position and argue that our position is not relativistic but supports a small number of basic universals.

Rights and duties, we claim, are cultural interpretations of actions. As such, in theory any action can be interpreted as a right or a duty. However, in practice, commonalities in functional and biological conditions of human life lead to similarities in interpretations across cultures. For example, during the course of their development, children tend to give priority to the rights of children, whereas parents give priority to the duties of children. We have argued that this relationship is common to other situations characterized by change and potential or actual conflict within a relationship, such as between ethnic minorities and Whites in North America.

The priority given to rights or duties depends on the power alignments of the relationship. In relationships marked by change and adversity, such as the caregiver-child dyad, the normative world of the more powerful player differs from that of the less powerful player. The less powerful child constantly attempts to push his or her way into the adult normative realm in the hopes of garnering more rights and independence. When such rearrangement occurs so that the players' positions in relation to one another have changed, the priority given to rights and duties will change as well. That is to say, the child who gives priority to rights of the child will later give priority to duties of the child when he or she becomes a parent and has a child to train.



Similarly, rebels and revolutionaries give priority to rights before they gain power, but after they gain power themselves and become the central authority, they shift emphasis and give priority to the duties of citizens to obey the laws of the land (Moghaddam, in press). This cycle of change in priority to rights and duties has been discussed by Pareto (1935) among others and is well documented in discussions of revolutions starting with the French revolution (Schama, 1990). This trend toward legitimization of the existing order and the reemergence of inequalities led some revolutionaries, most notably Mao Zedong (1893–1976), to call for a “perpetual revolution” so that new elites do not become established in a way that the duties rather than the rights of the masses become emphasized. However, in practice Mao himself has been shown to behave more in line with the ancient emperors and to be less of a revolutionary (Mao was dubbed one of the “New Emperors,” see Moghaddam, Hanley, & Harré, 2003). Thus, the cycle of new elites coming to power and emphasizing the duties of citizens rather than the rights of citizens has so far remained the rule rather than the exception (e.g., Moghaddam, 2002, chap. 2; Moghaddam & Crystal, 2000).

Such common trends in the human condition give rise, we argue, to a few basic but important similarities in the ways in which acts are interpreted as rights or duties. In this discussion of rights and duties in development, we have focused particularly on conditions characterized by change and potential conflict and have found that priority given to rights or duties depends on the relative power of the players involved. We have also discussed the need for communication as a universal human condition, and how imitation begets turn taking, which is essential to language and the successful exchange of ideas. Rights and duties, we argue, are deeply ingrained in language processes and routines because turn taking is interpreted to involve rights and duties. That is, when conversing with another person, one has a right to take turns speaking and a duty to defer turns to the other interlocutor. This is a universal feature of human communication, although local cultures influence who has a right to a turn and when. In this way, we support the idea of universals in some aspects of rights and duties arising from universalities in biological and functional conditions across cultures.

*Question 17. What are we to make of the affective distinction between rights that are generally happily embraced by individuals who have them and duties that seem imposed and even burdensome?*

It is useful to address this question at two levels, a general level relating to all humans and a more specific level relating to majorities (who enjoy greater power) and minorities (who have less power). At the general level, we discussed the tendency in social science research, in major psychological models, and more specifically the literature on altruism, to assume that humans are selfish and self-serving in both cognition and overt behavior. From this perspective, humans embrace rights because rights most directly fulfill



their "naturally" selfish motives. In cases in which priority is given to duties rather than rights, such as in relationships with family and friends, this may also be self-serving because of the expectations individuals have that family and friends will help them in times of need.

With respect to a second more specific level of assessing the embracing of rights and duties by groups with different levels of power, we have argued that personal rights are in general emphasized by children and others who have less power, whereas the duties of children and others with less power are emphasized by those who enjoy greater power. The child who at the age of 10 has to be in bed by 8:30 p.m. happily embraces the right to stay awake until 9:00 p.m. when she is given such an opportunity. Similarly, minorities generally seek to add to their rights, including increased rights in education and employment domains. Minorities happily embrace rights; for example, women and African Americans embraced the right to vote in national elections in the United States when offered this right in the 20th century. Rights empower children and others in similarly powerless positions.

Duties, however, are generally used by those in power to control the less powerful. Parents, teachers, and others involved in the training of children emphasize the duties of children, as in "You have to hand in your homework tomorrow"; "Make sure your room is clean"; and the like. Duties seem imposed and even burdensome because children, and others who are less powerful, view duties as primarily targeted at them and designed to limit their freedoms. Duties serve to uphold the status quo, and because the status quo maintains the disadvantaged position of those with less power, duties seem to them to be an imposition and burden. However, those in power typically see duties as fundamentally important, even imperative, because when people fulfill their duties, as duties are normatively defined, the position of the more powerful is safeguarded (Moghaddam, in press).

Thus, the observation that *rights are generally happily embraced by individuals who have them, whereas duties seem imposed and even burdensome* reflects a tendency for rights to be the focus of children and others with less power and duties to be the focus of parents and others with more power. The explanation for this trend relates to the perceived interests of the parties involved. When the perceived interests change, so does the relative priority given to rights and duties. We clarify this issue in discussion regarding the next question.

*Question 18. How is it that rights need not be exercised or can be waived, whereas waiving duties is not so easily done?*

Again, the answer to this question becomes clear when we consider that in practice rights and duties are associated to different degrees with different groups. Typically, rights are demanded by children and others who are less powerful from parents and others who enjoy greater power. A child who has the right to stay up until 8:30 p.m. may choose not to exercise this right.

If the child decides to go to bed at 8:00 p.m. instead of 8:30 p.m., parents typically do not object. However, if a child wants to stay awake until 9:00 p.m. instead of the customary bedtime of 8:30 p.m., then parents typically do object and remind the child of a duty to be in bed by 8:30 p.m. Similarly, when ethnic minorities do not exercise their right to vote, the authorities typically do not object; but minorities face opposition when they seek to extend their rights.

But this relationship changes when the interests of minority and majority groups demand a change. For example, when minorities already enjoy a right but are denied the opportunity to exercise that right, then they typically resort to raising issues of duties rather than rights. For example, when a child "has a right" to \$2 a week pocket money, and her parents have forgotten to provide the money for several weeks, the child will most likely remind them of their parental duty to pay up. Similarly, when African Americans faced challenges in officially registering their vote in parts of Florida during the 2000 presidential elections, they demanded that the authorities do their duty and create conditions that would allow African American voters to exercise their democratic voting rights. But those in power may choose to waive their duties in such circumstances.

Thus, we agree that in general rights need not be exercised or can be waived, whereas waiving duties is not so easily done, because in most cases it is minorities, children, and the less powerful generally who need to enforce rights, whereas it is the majority group, parents, and the more powerful who enforce duties. Rights can be waived, because the less powerful have fewer resources to uphold their own rights. It is not easy to waive duties because those with power have the resources to enforce the duties of those with less power.

### CONCLUDING COMMENT

We have taken tentative steps toward a cultural theory of the development of rights and duties. We have implicated both biological and social factors to this end, claiming that certain practices that later are interpreted as a right or a duty according to local normative systems are rooted in biological constraints. We have also articulated that normative worlds are in some ways distinct for adults and children and that children are socialized to their normative world by both adults and peers, progressively changing the framework of their ideas regarding rights and duties as they develop. We used this relationship between adults and children to exemplify a broader trend in the priorities given by more and less powerful groups on duties and rights. That is to say, in relationships that are changing or conflicted, those who enjoy greater power emphasize duties and those with less power emphasize rights. In our experimental examination of this (Study 3), we found that interlocutors with equal power but in relationships involving potential con-

flict emphasized rights. This represents one of a small number of possible universals in the realm of rights and duties, although the possibility of exceptions was noted. Finally, we argued that rights and duties are replaceable, although in practice the interests of the more powerful groups dictate under which conditions a behavior will be interpreted as a right or a duty. Because of the tendency for such interests to remain fairly stable, the labeling of behaviors as rights or duties also remains fairly stable.

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