Executive Summary of Doctoral Thesis Titled:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *DHARMA* IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS OF VADODARA CITY: EMBEDDING MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN MORAL WORLDVIEWS

Submitted to the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

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Rationale

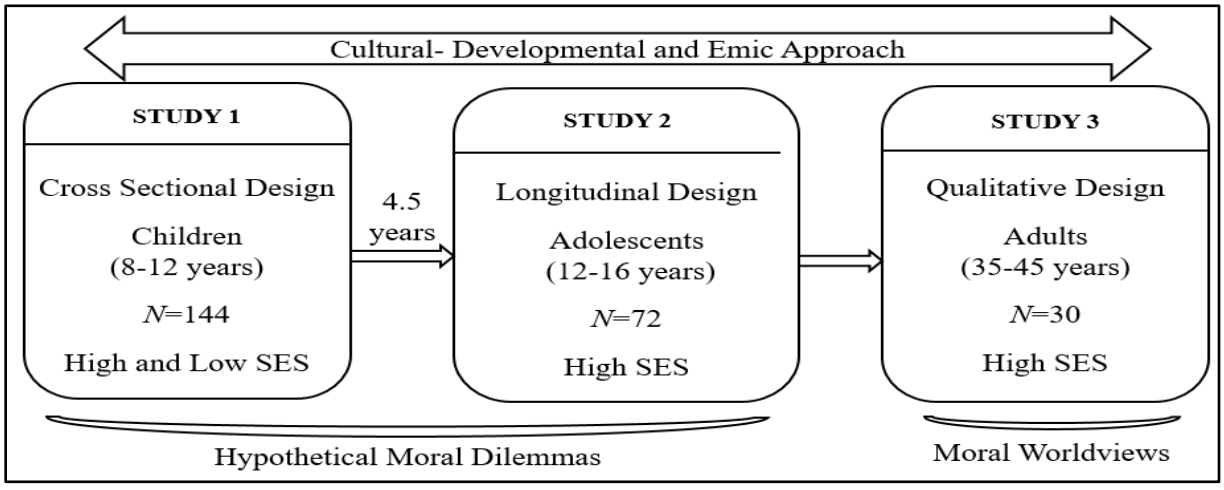
The literature review highlights the need to examine developmental trajectories for the three ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity among Indian participants across the life span, as well as the types of moral concepts used in Indian moral reasoning. Additionally, contemporary literature also asserts the need for emic approaches that study indigenous moral worldviews with the aim of expanding the scope of morality.

The present study, therefore, uses the cultural-developmental approach to study moral reasoning among children, adolescents and adults in India. The approach allows for the intersection of culture and development in the study of moral reasoning. Additionally, it enables the use of both etic and emic approaches, depending on the choice of research design.

This dissertation project is organized in three parts. The first two studies were mixed methods studies that tested the cultural-developmental template hypothesis (Jensen, 2008, 2015). As depicted in Figure 2, Study 1 employed cross-sectional analysis to understand the use of the three ethics among children from high- and low- SES backgrounds. Since developmental change is best studied using longitudinal designs, longitudinal analyses was done as part of Study 2, where the same participants from high SES who participated in Study 1 formed the sample for study 2, following a time gap of approximately 4.5 years. Lastly, in response to the increasing need for indigenous, emic perspectives, Study 3 was conceptualized as a qualitative study with adult participants with the aim of examining the use of indigenous moral worldview and related concepts. The following section contains details about research questions, hypotheses and method for each study.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework of the Dissertation



Method

This chapter describes the research design used for all three parts of this dissertation. It includes a description of the research approach chosen, its fit with research questions and hypotheses, the participants' backgrounds, the role of the researcher, sampling techniques, methods of generating and handling data, methods of analyzing data and ethical considerations. Specific procedures for seeking informed consent are described with each study. All parts and procedures of this dissertation received approval from the Departmental Research Ethics Committee.

Study 1- Moral Reasoning among Children in India: A Cross-Sectional Study

The present study was a cross-sectional interview study. The aims were to test hypotheses about use of the three Ethics of Autonomy, Community and Divinity, using the cultural-developmental approach; and to gain qualitative insights into the type of moral concepts used in Indian children's moral reasoning.

Research Questions:

1. What are developmental trajectories for the use of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity among children in India?
2. How do Indian children from high- and low- SES backgrounds use Autonomy, Community and Divinity in their moral reasoning?

Hypotheses for Age:

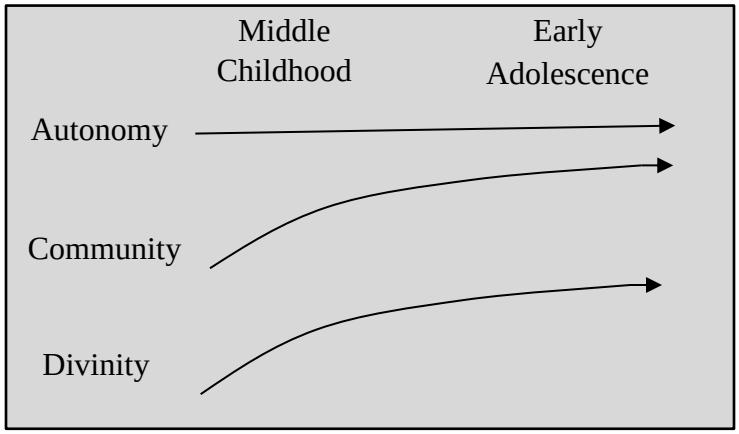
1. The use of Autonomy will be similar among participants in middle childhood and early adolescence.
2. Community and Divinity will be used more by participants in early adolescence compared to those in middle childhood.

Hypothesis for Social Class:

1. Participants belonging to the low SES will show greater use of Community and lower use of Autonomy compared to participants belonging to the high SES.
2. The degree of use of Divinity will be similar among participants from both SES groups.

Figure 3

Hypothesized Expression of the Template among Indian Participants in Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence

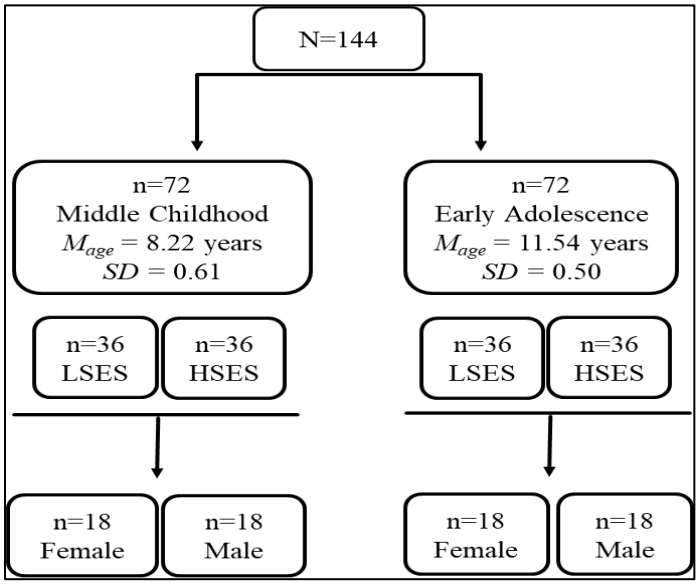


Participants

The sample consisted of 144 children in the city of Vadodara, Gujarat, India (Figure 4). It was divided evenly (n = 72) between children in middle childhood (*M* = 8.22 years, *SD* = 0.61) and early adolescence (*M* = 11.54, *SD* = 0.50). Each age group had an equal number of children from high- and low-SES backgrounds (n = 36). There was also an equal distribution of boys and girls within each age and SES group.

Figure 4

Sample Distribution for Study 1



Procedure

Signed consent was obtained from parents of participants who formed the sample for Study 1. High-SES children were interviewed at school, and low-SES children were interviewed at home. Children decided whether to be interviewed in English, Gujarati, or Hindi. In-depth interviews were employed because they are conducive to the establishment of trust, and they provide detailed insight into participants' reasoning as well as choice of words and expressions. As such, interviews—while time-consuming—are helpful for generating ecologically valid and nuanced knowledge. Interviews were tape recorded.

Materials

First, a demographic information questionnaire was used to gather information about the participants. Next, children participated in an interview about five scenarios that involved moral dilemmas. The scenarios were developed through an extensive process aimed at ensuring that they were: 1) rooted in the everyday experiences of the children in the present Indian context, 2) readily understood by children across age and SES groups, and 3) sufficiently diverse to elicit all or most of the children's different types of reasons.

The scenarios were constructed with the aims of capturing as many of children's different and indigenous moral reasons as possible. The first step in developing the scenarios involved a survey of research in India and elsewhere to identify common moral issues and dilemmas. Next, informal discussions were conducted with children representing the present age and SES groups about their familiarity with these issues and dilemmas, as well as additional moral experiences they wished to describe. Children spoke of real-life experiences and concepts that they deemed as moral in their everyday lives. Therefore, the focus was on emic concepts that were relevant to children's lived cultural experiences rather than a priori etic concepts.

Briefly, one scenario described a child going for an important football match. On the way, the child finds an injured kitten. The dilemma is whether to help the kitten or proceed to the match. In a second scenario, a child stops in the park to play with friends and loses a packet of sweets intended for guests at home. The question is whether the child should take money from a wallet lying in the park to purchase new sweets. A third scenario takes place during the time of an Indian festival- *Ganesh Chaturthi* when a child unintentionally breaks the *Ganesh* idol made for the occasion. The dilemma is whether to tell adults in the neighborhood or remain quiet. In a fourth scenario, a child has to decide whether or not to pass on their homework to a needy friend

while the teacher is not looking. In the fifth scenario, a child eats some *prashād* before it is offered to God. *Prashād* is food that is supposed first to be offered to God in order to receive a divine blessing, and only subsequently to be eaten by worshippers. The dilemma is whether to tell the mother or to let her offer previously tasted *prashād* to God.

The scenarios were structured in a narrative form to keep the children's interest. The order of presentation of scenarios and the gender of scenario protagonists were randomized. The scenarios and probe questions were developed first in English and translated to Hindi and Gujarati using a collaborative and iterative approach to translation.

For every scenario, children were asked to indicate the right moral action for the protagonist (moral judgment), and to explain why (moral reasoning). Follow-up questions encouraged children to discuss all their moral reasons and to elaborate. For example, if participants spoke of duty, they were asked to explain who had a duty to whom, and the nature of the duty.

Coding

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and interviews in Gujarati and Hindi were subsequently translated into English. Some Gujarati and Hindi terms and phrases were retained in the English transcripts to preserve notable indigenous concepts.

Moral reasons were coded with the manual for the three Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity (Jensen, 2008, 2015). The original development of the coding manual was based on a comprehensive review of cross-cultural literature on moral reasoning that included research in India. The manual consists of the three major codes or ethics. It also contains 44 "subcodes:" 15 for Autonomy, 13 for Community, and 16 for Divinity. Subcodes are the equivalent of specific *types* of moral reasons.

The coding manual provides a definition for each ethic and type of reason. Additionally, examples are provided for each type of reason. Classifying every moral reason both in terms of an ethic and a type aids in: 1) ensuring that all stated reasons are coded, 2) differentiating among reasons, and 3) determining that a reason is sufficiently well-elaborated to decide which one of the three ethics is invoked.

For study 1, the transcribed interviews amounted to an average of 10 pages per participant, for a total of 1,140 pages of text to code. A total of 1,104 reasons were coded. Inter-rater reliability was assessed for two independent coders on 20% of randomly selected

interviews. For the three ethics, Cohen's Kappa was .97. Differences between the coders were resolved through discussion. Results of study 1 are in section 1 of the results chapter.

Study 2- Moral Reasoning in Childhood and Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study

Compared to cross-sectional design, a longitudinal design is more definitive in examining developmental change over time. Additionally, as mentioned in the review of literature, there have not been enough longitudinal examinations of moral reasoning in India, and the world. Therefore, the aim for Study 2 was to conduct longitudinal analysis to determine developmental trends in the use of the Ethics of Autonomy, Community and Divinity in childhood and adolescence. Participants for the longitudinal study were interviewed at two age points separated by approximately 4.5 years (more details are in the following section).

Research Question:

1. What are developmental trajectories for the use of Autonomy, Community and Divinity through childhood and adolescence in India?

Hypotheses:

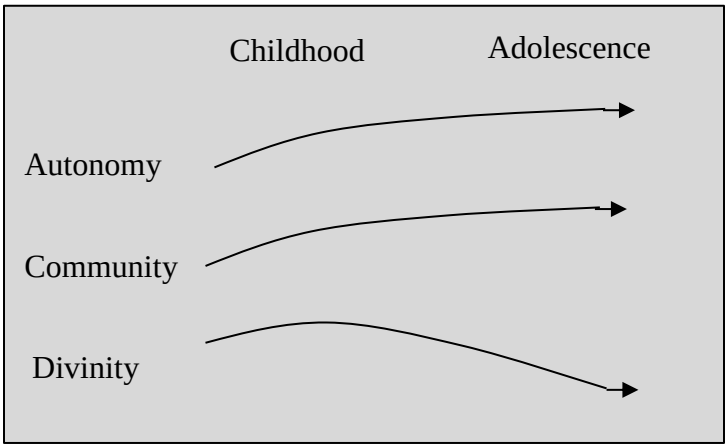
1. The use of Autonomy will increase from childhood to adolescence.

2. The use of Community will be low in childhood and will increase with age during the course of adolescence.

3. The use of Divinity will begin early in development however its use in moral discourse will recede during adolescence.

Figure 6

Hypothesized Expression of the Template among Indian Participants in Childhood and Adolescence



Participants

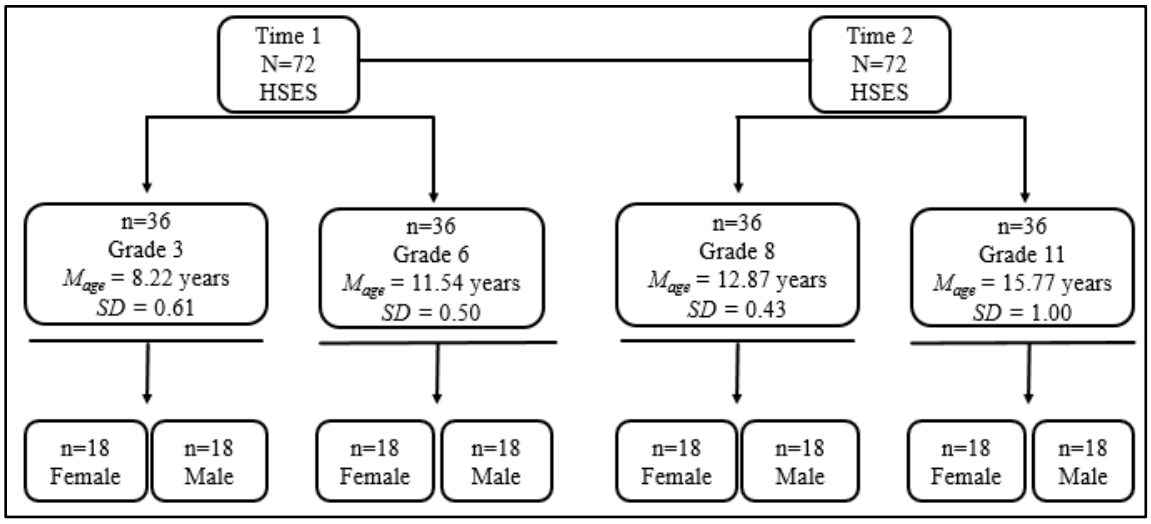
First, attempts were made to locate participants from the low SES who had participated in Study 1. However, none could be located for pilot interviews. As described in the Method for

Study 1, a majority of the low-SES participants belonged to families who were daily wage workers, vendors or unskilled laborers (10% were unemployed). These families lived in rented homes in slums of Vadodara and perhaps moved often, in search of employment opportunities or more affordable living conditions (such as lower rent for a home). For these reasons, it was not possible to locate and conduct follow up interviews with them for Study 2. A decision to interview only high- SES participants for Study 2 had to be made.

As shown in Figure 7, the sample for Study 2 consisted of the same 72 participants from study 1 who belonged to the high SES. These participants responded to the same five hypothetical scenarios from Study 1 at two different age points (Time 1 and Time 2), separated by approximately 4.5 years.

Figure 7

Sample Distribution for Study 2



Adolescents were approached through the same private, English-medium school that was contacted to recruit child participants for Study 1. At Time 1, participants were in grade three (M_{age}= 8.22 years, *SD* = 0.61) and grade six (M_{age}=11.54 years, *SD* = 0.50). At retest all 72 children from the high SES were able to participate in the follow-up study (Time 2) and by then they were adolescents in grades eight (M_{age}= 12.87 years, *SD* = 0.43) and eleven (M_{age}= 15.77 years, *SD* = 1.00). Twelve participants from Time1 had moved to other schools within Vadodara but could be located. Their participation was crucial for the longitudinal study. These participants were located using their contact information gathered at Time 1 and with some help from the school/past classmates, when needed. There was equal distribution of boys and girls in

the final sample. Participants from Time 1 were given a letter describing the study and a consent form to show their parents. Subsequently, the researcher contacted parents by phone. Children were interviewed in school after they returned consent forms signed by their parents.

Procedure

Individual pilot interviews were conducted with adolescents before the final interviews for the study. A majority of (84%) participants were interviewed in school. The remaining (16%) who had changed schools were interviewed in their homes. Children decided whether to be interviewed in English, Gujarati, or Hindi. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Interviews in Gujarati and Hindi were subsequently translated into English. Some Gujarati and Hindi terms and phrases were retained in the English transcripts to preserve indigenous concepts.

Materials

First, a demographic information questionnaire was used to gather information about the participants. Adolescents participated in in-depth interviews about the same five scenarios with moral dilemmas that were used in Study 1. The procedure for data collection was retained from Study 1.

Coding

Moral reasons were coded with the manual for the three Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity (Jensen, 2008, 2015). The coding procedure used at Time 1 was retained at Time 2. The transcribed interviews amounted to an average of nine pages per participant, for a total of 581 pages of text to code. A total of 923 reasons were coded. Inter-rater reliability was assessed for two independent coders on 20% of randomly selected interviews. For the three ethics, Cohen's Kappa was .80. Differences between the coders were resolved through discussion before coding the complete set of interviews. Results for study two are detailed in section two of the results chapter.

Study 3- Moral Reasoning among Adults in India: A Qualitative Study

Over the last two decades, the department has engaged in a series of research projects examining moral reasoning in India (Bhangaokar & Kapadia, 2009; Kulkarni, 2007), particularly research using the cultural-developmental approach (Kapadia & Bhangaokar, 2010, 2015; Pandya, 2009; Pandya & Bhangaokar, 2015), emphasizing the usefulness of cultural approaches to study moral development. These studies have brought to light several indigenous concepts in moral reasoning including *karma* and *dharma*.

Evidence from these studies corroborates well with the rising interest in indigenous psychology and its contributions to global psychology (Bhawuk, 2011), thereby providing the main impetus for Study 3. The aim of this study was to examine Indian moral discourse using a qualitative lens, from the standpoint of the Indian moral worldview, and without the use of the Big Three Ethics framework. While Study 1 & 2 included children and adolescents as participants, we approached adults for participation in Study 3. This was mainly to have the opportunity to examine developmentally mature moral discourse wherein cultural worldviews were better articulated (compared to children and adolescents) and grounded in personal experiences.

Research Objective:

To examine indigenous concepts and elements of the Indian moral worldview in moral discourse among adults in India.

Participants

The sample consisted of 30 married adults in the city of Vadodara, Gujarat, India. It was divided evenly (n=15) between women (M =42.66, SD = 4.27) and men (M = 44.40, SD = 4.37). The sample represented the upper socio-economic class (Kuppuswamy, 2019), with an average monthly family income of Indian ₹ 2, 2,000 (approximately US $2,953). A majority (73%) had nuclear families, while the rest (27%) had extended families.

Materials

First, a demographic information questionnaire was used to gather information about the age, sex, highest level of education, family structure/type, work status and family income of the participants Next, an open-ended interview schedule was used to ask questions about worldviews held by participants, particularly about personhood, God and suffering. The first part of the interview on worldviews entailed probes and questions about human nature and personhood.

More specifically, they explored whether humans, by nature were conceptualized as good or bad; and whether men and women were perceived as similar or different. Probes were administered to elicit reasoning regarding the same. The second part looked at God-concepts, including beliefs about the existence of God, God's characteristics, power, and whether there is an antithesis to God such as a devil or an evil force. Lastly, we explored the idea of suffering—what is suffering, why people suffer, the meaning of suffering in life, and whether it is possible to eliminate suffering.

Procedure

Pilot interviews were conducted with 20% of the sample size to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions and their formulations. Minor corrective changes and adjustments were made in the final interview protocol before proceeding with in-depth interviews for the study.

Participants were recruited in two ways- First, a description of the study and a consent form was sent to parents of children attending the same private English- medium school in Vadodara that was approached for high-SES participants of Study 1 and 2. The sample for the present study (Study 3) did not include any parents of participants from Study 1 or 2. Subsequently researcher contacted adults through phone. Parents who returned signed consent forms were approached for the final interview. Second, parents who participated in the final interview were requested to suggest other adults in their social and familial networks who may be willing to participate in the study. Only adults who met the age requirements of the study and belonged to the upper socioeconomic class were interviewed for Study 3.

Adults were interviewed at home (73%) or their work (27%), depending on their preference. They had the choice to respond in English, Gujarati or Hindi. The latter two are the common local languages. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Inter-rater reliability was assessed on 20% of randomly selected interviews and a Cohen's Kappa values of .95 was achieved. Differences between the two independent coders were resolved through discussion.

Qualitative Analysis

For the present study, a two-step process was used to understand participant responses using a qualitative approach. First, thematic analysis was done using Dedoose-- a qualitative data analysis software. Thematic analysis is a foundational method of qualitative analysis that has the

potential to provide a rich account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using open coding, ideas and concepts that emerged in participant responses were categorized. Related themes were first formed, followed by codes and sub codes to determine key findings for the study. Lastly, verbatim responses for all major codes and sub codes were culled from the interviews and representative excerpts are presented. These excerpts are used to explain how adults spoke about worldviews related to personhood, God and suffering. Results for study three are presented in section three of the results chapter.

RESULTS

Study 1- Moral Reasoning among Children in India: A Cross-Sectional Study

There was no significant difference in the degree of use of Autonomy among participants in middle childhood and early adolescence. However, social class impacted Ethic of Autonomy reasoning. High-SES children used this ethic more than low-SES children and conceptualized the individual in independent and psychological terms; in contrast, low-SES children's view of Autonomy often invoked fear of physical punishment.

1. Participants in early adolescence reasoned in terms of a remarkably rich set of indigenous duty concepts, contributing to their using the Ethic of Community more than participants in middle childhood. However, participants from the high and low SES did not differ significantly in their degree of use of Community.
2. Children in middle childhood already reasoned substantially in terms of the Ethic of Divinity, likely due to the many ways that Indian culture incorporates divinity into everyday beliefs and behaviors. There was a significant trend in the degree of use of Divinity, where the high-SES participants used this ethic more frequently than their low-SES counterparts.

Study 2- Moral Reasoning in Childhood and Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study

As expected, the degree of use of Autonomy increased in the course of adolescence. While Punishment Avoidance was a popular sub code used in childhood, virtues, conscience, psychological wellbeing and other individual's interest were emphasized in adolescence.

1. The degree of use of the Ethic of Community remained stable in childhood and adolescence, even while there was an increase in the variety of moral concepts employed in adolescence. These findings suggest that aspects of social membership, expectations and obligations emerge early in Indian children's moral reasoning and remain important through adolescence, although the types of concepts used differ.
2. The use of the Ethic of Divinity was prominent by middle childhood and its use decreased in adolescence. While much of the reasoning in childhood was dominated by a concern for punishment avoidance from God, by adolescence customary traditional authority (of spiritual/religious nature), God's authority, virtues (divinity-oriented) and other's physical well-being gained prominence.

Study 3- Moral Reasoning among Adults in India: A Qualitative Study

The results of thematic analyses for the worldviews data are presented in three parts: (1) Personhood, (2) Ideas about God, and (3) Suffering.

1. Ideas of selfhood that emerged from participant responses reflected a fluid sense of self, one that is not fixed but evolves in response to changing time, circumstances, social roles and *dharma* in different stages of life.
2. Participants spoke of an inherent interface between the self and the divine, with organic linkages between the self, mind and *shraddhā*.
3. Lastly, results show that suffering was perceived as intrinsic to the human experience—impossible to avoid and in fact, undesirable to eliminate. It was seen as a necessary transformative process for the self. Doing good *karma* (deeds), performing one's *dharma* (duty), keeping *shraddhā* (trust, faith) and a positive mindset were crucial to alleviate suffering and enhance general wellbeing.

Implications

Following section outlines implications of the present findings for future research.

Examining More Indigenous, Non-Western Worldviews Using Emic Approaches

The first implication of the present findings is to examine indigenous worldviews and concepts using emic approaches, especially of non-WEIRD and underrepresented cultures to broaden the scope of moral psychology. The Indian worldview is centered on duty. Within the worldview, duty is at the very core of *dharma* (Bhangaokar, 2020). The *Mahābhārata*, describes a wide range of duties from following universal principles pertaining to truth and nonviolence to specific principles based on one's life stage and social roles (Radhakrishnan, 2008). According to Western moral worldviews, an individual is fundamentally free to act, as long as their actions don't hinder the liberties and rights of others. In contrast, the Hindu concept of *dharma* or duty implies inherent obligations, sacrifices and righteous action towards individuals in their social networks (Bhangaokar & Kapadia, 2019; Mascolo & Bhatia, 2002; Miller, 1994) and beyond (Bhangaokar, 2020).

Children, adolescents and adults in the present study used indigenous concepts of duty such as *faraj, zimmedari, kartavya* and *jawābdari.* Future research on these concepts would contribute important knowledge about their respective meanings and development, as well as interconnections among these indigenous concepts (Mistry, 2011; Raeff, 2011). For example, do children, adolescents and adults in India attribute the same meanings to these concepts? How are these duty concepts differentiated and integrated over the course of development? Research on the meanings and development of fairness, for example, is abundant. Duty, however, has received far less attention in general even though it is integral to several cultural worldviews. For example, research suggests that adults in non-Western cultures (vs. Western cultures) were more likely to associate moral obligations towards others with positive emotions, a sense of personal agency and an opportunity for self-development and refinement, rather than as a compulsion (Buchtel, 2020; Miller et al., 2011; Tripathi et al., 2018). Similarly, the indigenous concept of *beizzati* (loss of honor) is understudied. While much research has focused on the study of honor in the other cultures (Gul et al., 2021; Uskul & Cross, 2019, 2020), there is a lacuna in research conceptualizing honor, its psychological processes and behavioral outcomes in India. Yet, these are concepts that may well be important across cultures for varied meanings and their implications on moral behavior.

Including more Socialization Contexts in the Study of Moral Reasoning

While Study 1 was designed to provide in-depth insight into the nature and development of children's moral reasoning in India, the analyses also pointed to ways that socialization contexts were both similar and different for the high- and low-SES children. The moral development literature has overwhelmingly focused on the micro-contexts of parents, schools, peers, and friends (DiBianca Fasoli, 2021; Jensen, 2015). The present findings, however, highlight the need to broaden this focus. Urban and high-SES children in many majority world countries are significantly influenced by globalization, which the present findings along with other recent research have shown to promote Ethic of Autonomy reasoning (McKenzie, 2018, 2019). For low-SES children in majority world countries, neighborhood and work are often important socialization contexts. The present low-SES children lived in close-knit neighborhoods. Mutual dependency and close living quarters, at least in part, explain why both the younger and older low-SES children (but not the high-SES children) reasoned in terms of social sanctions as a majority type. In their neighborhood, as they explained, someone will see what you are doing. If you transgress, neighbors may talk about you in negative ways, or shame you, or beat you. You may lose honor, "*beizzati ho jaaegi*". Understanding the importance of neighbors and work to low-SES children's daily lives and livelihood casts new light on their moral reasoning and development.

Additionally, participants from the low SES used Punishment Avoidance as a major subcode in middle childhood and early adolescence. This finding is striking and merits attention. It highlights that the fear of authority and punishment are imbibed as primary determinants of moral choices and reasoning among the low- SES participants. Such a great emphasis on punishment not only limits the use of other moral concepts but also has potential developmental consequences beyond moral development. As mentioned in the Method, children from the low SES were not used to sharing their own ideas and opinions. While moral judgment was not difficult, reasoning beyond Punishment Avoidance was negligible. It is also important to note that this fear of punishment was reported for various socialization contexts such as the school, family, neighborhood and society in general. These institutions will benefit from reviewing their practices and policies decisions to provide a more conducive environment for healthy development. More research on processes and contexts of socialization (Raeff et al., 2020) will therefore, benefit the understanding of moral development within and across cultures.

More Research on the Use of Divinity in Childhood and Across the Lifespan

The Ethic of Divinity, as expected, was already used by middle childhood. The analysis of majority types and the children's quotations lend support to the argument presented in the Introduction that this early emergence is tied to the way that divinity is conceptualized and practiced in India. The children echoed long-standing Indian religious and philosophical traditions that merge material and immaterial conceptions (Tripathi & Ghildyal, 2013). Thus, the children regarded divinity as immanent in nature when they explained how divinity is imbued, for example, in the self, other persons, and animals (such as kittens). The children's moral reasoning also showed how they drew upon ways that religious devotion commonly finds expression in tangible activities that are part of everyday life. The children's discussion of indigenous concepts of *paap* and *kartavya* further supports this argument. However, there is not much research available on the use of Divinity, let alone the understanding of Divinity in the early years of life. In recent years, moral development researchers have overwhelmingly focused on concepts within the Ethic of Autonomy, such as harm, rights, and fairness. Perhaps because so many of the research participants have come from wealthy Western societies, research has seldom addressed the extent to which autonomy concepts are significantly premised on having economic resources (Henrich et al., 2010). Nor has this mainstream literature delved into diverse duty concepts or younger children's ability to address moral issues in terms of divinity. The present results suggest that such research in the future could fruitfully include Indian samples.

Implications for Applied Interventions and Policies

The final implication for the present findings pertain to applied developmental programs, interventions and policies in India. First, interventions and policies need to be attuned to and implemented in the contexts of relevance to individual lives. For example, certain media, such as radio and television, provide a compelling context or means for applied interventions because most Indian families are exposed to some media whether at home, work, school, or other places. Additionally, applied programs for development and social change will greatly benefit from using indigenous terms and concepts salient to the people's thoughts, feelings and everyday behaviors. For example, the concept of duty, which is integral to the Indian moral worldview, will resonate well and therefore, prove to be effective in bringing about social and behavioral change. For example, an advertisement by an Indian radio station uses a popular Bollywood movie dialogue that centers on one's *kartavya* as a family member and citizen to urge all Indians

to get vaccinated and comply with COVID norms for the sake of a healthy family and society. Such purposeful use of indigenous moral concepts in health, education, and social campaigns can have a powerful impact on individuals, thereby initiating positive change.

Another example pertains to programs for adolescent development. India has seen a steady increase in mental health concerns and wellbeing issues among adolescents. There is a simultaneous increase in the need for effective counseling, therapy, rehabilitation and life skills programs for this age group. However, these programs are largely based on Western theories and intervention models where there is an inherent emphasis on the ideal of the autonomous self, the need for individual freedom, self-esteem, self-confidence and associated life skills among adolescents. However, the lived realities and worldviews of Indian adolescents are vastly different from that of the West.

Based on the findings of the present study, we can suggest that adolescent development programs in India need to be contextualized such that they strengthen the idea of the self in relation to others, create awareness of roles and the understanding of how best adolescents can use virtues in everyday life and circumstances to become functional and well-adjusted in the Indian society. An accurate understanding of *Dharma* includes *kārmic* efficiency and intelligent discernment (*vivek).* These are highly individuated concepts that do not always conceptualize the self exclusively in social relationships. Rather, a stable sense of self is a prerequisite for a person to become capable of relating harmoniously with others for greater good. Programs should encourage and enable adolescents to engage with the idea of *dhārmik* self in their immediate contexts such as families, schools, and communities to develop clarity and confidence in their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, building an awareness of civic responsibilities, civic habits and providing opportunities for active social engagement among Indian adolescents has the potential for positive development, grounded in the pursuit of *dharma* and therefore, relevant to their selves and realities (Bhangaokar & Mehta, 2012).

Lastly, mature adult responses from the present study indicate that the interface of the self and the divine, where the performance of one's *karma,* by fulfilling one's *dharma* and upholding firm *shraddhā* can result in individual happiness and wellbeing. Programs for intervention in India will benefit from adopting such indigenous, culturally relevant frameworks of development to facilitate change in behavior, wellbeing and healthy development. For example, employers/organizations can facilitate workplace spirituality based on principles of

Karma Yoga, *Swadharma* or the *Trigunā*s (Pandey, 2017; Pardasani et al., 2014) to ensure the wellbeing of their employees and therefore, facilitate better work outcomes and relationships at work. While work place spirituality is gaining popularity in management sectors and corporates, they are not included in areas of intervention involving the family. Family therapy and counseling, for example, can benefit from using principles of *Karma Yoga* and *Antaranga Yoga* (yoga for inner transformation) to enhance individual and familial wellbeing and deal with stress. Similarly, programs that elevate one's *shraddhā* in one's own efforts may help raise confidence in one's abilities and build an optimistic frame of mind for individuals.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present results suggest that to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of moral development among Indian children, adolescents, or adults, future methods and analyses would benefit from the inclusion of an emic approach. Both, scenarios that are salient to participants' everyday lives and participants' real-life moral experiences represent such emic approaches. Additionally in-depth, qualitative examinations and methods such as discourse analysis may help capture the complexities of the Indian moral worldview in participants' moral reasoning and throw light on how an indigenous worldview manifests itself in moral reasoning, behavior and thought.

In the present thesis, Study 1 employed cross-sectional analyses to examine the degree of use of the three ethics (Autonomy, Community, and Divinity) among participants in middle childhood and early adolescence. Longitudinal designs are more effective in addressing developmental change. Keeping this in mind, the researcher employed longitudinal analyses for Study 2. Although expensive and time consuming, longitudinal analyses is preferred for to study developmental change. While moral reasoning has been studied longitudinally in Europe and North America, there is a lacunae in this regard in India. Further, future research with a larger sample would increase the power of quantitative analyses. Here, many of the analyses came out significant. Research using the present data collection and analysis approaches are highly time consuming, and this needs to be balanced against increasing sample size.

Future research on participants' real-life moral experiences would provide additional insight into their moral reasoning. The present scenarios, as described earlier, were created through an extensive process to be highly salient to the everyday lives of all the children

included here. Also, the use of scenarios meant that all children responded to the same moral issues, unlike what happens when participants are asked to discuss their own real-life moral experiences. As the interviews showed, children often discussed the scenarios by speaking of "I" and what they would do. Nonetheless, research on children's own moral experiences would provide additional insight into their actual lives and socialization contexts, and it would show the extent to which their reasoning depends on whether an issue involves the self or a protagonist in a story.

Finally, there is a need for research that includes different socio-economic groups within a culture. Social class continues to be a defining element of Indian society. In order to represent the Indian population it is crucial to involve all sections of the society in research and to have their representation in the academic world. Through Study 1, we attempted to do the same. However, some populations such as the present low-SES Indian children in Study 1 were virtually impossible to track longitudinally for Study 2. Nonetheless, they merit careful developmental research, even if such research cannot be longitudinal.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the corpus of current literature on moral development, the present cultural-developmental study with Indian children, adolescents and adults contributes unique findings to the field of moral psychology. Findings present distinct developmental trajectories for the use of the Big Three Ethics of morality across childhood and adolescence using cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. Additionally, in-depth qualitative analysis of adult responses to questions on personhood, God and suffering using an emic approach illuminates fundamental aspects of the Indian moral worldview, more specifically the indigenous concepts of *karma, dharma*, and *shraddhā*.

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