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**Comprehension and use of complex moral judgement factors in  
conduct disordered and normal boys**

**Sanvitale, Daniel R., Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1988**

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COMPREHENSION AND USE OF COMPLEX  
MORAL JUDGEMENT FACTORS IN  
CONDUCT DISORDERED AND NORMAL BOYS

by

DANIEL SANVITALE

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate  
Faculty in Educational Psychology in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City  
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1988

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**Abstract****COMPREHENSION AND USE OF  
COMPLEX MORAL JUDGEMENT FACTORS  
IN CONDUCT DISORDERED  
AND NORMAL BOYS**

by

**Daniel Sanvitale****Adviser: Professor Marian Fish**

Forty eight male subjects participated in a developmental study of moral judgement and its relationship to social functioning. Half of the subjects were 5th grade boys while the other half were 8th grade male adolescents. Half of each were selected for frequent acting-out, aggressive behavior (conduct disordered) and half were selected from regular 5th and 8th grade classes, and matched for intelligence. The stories featured good intentions with bad outcome and varied as to whether or not the outcome was foreseeable and to whether or not extenuating circumstances were present. Subjects judged the actions on predetermined

scales and subsequently provided their rationale in a structured interview.

The difference in judgements between foreseeable and nonforeseeable actions, as well as between extenuating and nonextenuating circumstances was greater for "normal" subjects (versus acting-out subjects), and for 8th grade students (versus 5th grade students). In fact, although normal subjects judged foreseeable actions more harshly than acting-out subjects, the reverse was true for nonforeseeable actions. Similarly, while normal subjects judged the actions in stories with extenuating circumstances more leniently than acting-out subjects, the reverse was true for stories with no extenuating circumstances.

The interview revealed that stories with foreseeable outcomes were seen as more intentional than those with unforeseeable outcomes, and stories with no extenuating circumstances were judged more intentional than those with extenuating circumstances. Further, protagonists of stories with nonforeseeable outcomes were liked more by the subjects than protagonists of foreseeable outcome stories. Stories with nonextenuating circumstances were liked less than those with extenuating circumstances. Also, acting-out

subjects seemed to like the protagonists more than normal subjects, in foreseeable and nonextenuating circumstance stories, whereas normal 8th grade subjects liked the "nonforeseeable" protagonist and the "extenuating circumstance" protagonist more.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife, who through her ongoing support and her extreme tolerance during the more arduous periods made it all seem simple. And finally I would like to warmly thank my friends George Ferrigno and Colin Schlossman for making the past six years enjoyable; and never to be forgotten.

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## CHAPTER I

Introduction

The problem of moral reasoning has intrigued empirical scholars since the 19th century (Schallenberger, 1894). Furthermore, it has been considered the fundamental problem of social psychology (McDougall, 1908). Yet, in spite of extensive research in the area (e.g. Hartshorne & May, 1928; Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1964; Maccoby, 1968; Liebert, 1979), most moral judgment inquiries have relied on a somewhat simplistic concept of moral intentionality (with clearly intentional or unintentional outcomes and good or bad motives). Except for a few studies (e.g., Kugelmas & Breznitz, 1968; Sedlak, 1982), little attention has been focused on factors such as extenuating circumstances, foreseeability, controllability, unconscious motivation, and how they affect moral intentionality. Since earlier researchers on moral reasoning tended to focus on childrens' transition from outcomes to motives or intentions, the question of more complex factors was rarely raised. There now appears to be a need to include such complex factors in explaining the role of moral intentionality in social behavior.

The importance of contextual modifiers, that call for a more comprehensive formulation of moral intentionality, becomes more salient when considering such societal issues as negligent homicide, unconscious hostility, carelessness, passive aggression, and reckless endangerment.

Several studies (Breznitz, 1965; Morris, 1958; Werner & Peters, 1973) suggest that the variable of moral intentionality continues to develop beyond the young child, and that greater complexity exists in adolescent moral judgments. Since adolescents appear to consider many factors that modify the simple intentionality variable, one study (Sanvitale, Saltzstein, & Blank, 1987) investigated more complex contextual modifiers of the moral intentionality principle. Specifically, the degree to which the outcome of an act was foreseeable, and the degree to which the outcome rebounded to the (self) interest of the actor were independent variables in this study. This study also examined whether variations in moral judgments do relate to social functioning. Instead of selecting particular social behaviors (e.g., resistance-to-temptation or helping), the study contrasted the comprehension and use of complex moral variables by

groups known to differ significantly in their social functioning (Pine, 1980), namely aggressive acting-out versus non-aggressive adolescent boys.

The major results of this study revealed that modifiers of intentionality (foreseeability and self interest variables) operate in a predictable fashion when systematically manipulated: story actors were judged more harshly when there was evidence that the outcome could have been foreseen or was in the actor's self interest. Also, the study showed that the two groups which function differently in the social world responded in predictably different ways to hypothetical moral situations: adolescent boys who act-out aggressively in school settings discriminated cues of foreseeability of outcome less well than their non-acting-out cohorts.

The current study extends the research developmentally, to include pre-adolescent as well as early adolescent subjects, in seeking a relationship between the acting-out group and a younger non-acting-out group. It will further attempt to replicate the findings of the foreseeability variable, while seeking a reciprocal finding on a new modifier of intentionality variable, extenuating circumstances. While the

foreseeability variable has had the effect of producing harsher judgments, the extenuating circumstances variable was expected to produce more lenient judgments. The previous finding on the foreseeability variable, that normal subjects differentiate more than acting-out subjects between the two extremes of that variable (foreseeable and non-foreseeable) (Sanvitale et al. 1987), were expected with the new variable as well; greater differentiation was expected with the normal subjects than with acting-out subjects between the extenuating circumstance variable and the non-extenuating circumstance variable.

These questions were addressed using the following method: each of the 48 subjects (12 acting-out adolescents; 12 normal adolescents; 12 acting-out pre-adolescents; 12 normal pre-adolescents) was individually tested over the entire series of stories that were constructed systematically to highlight the foreseeability and extenuating circumstance variables. Each subject heard a tape recorded story and was then asked to rate the act of the protagonist along a nine-point scale. After this, the reasons for the rating were elicited. A more comprehensive systematized interview followed, and elicited information regarding

intentionality, foreseeability, causal attribution and affinity to the protagonist. These results were tape-recorded in order to prevent bias in the scoring of the interview responses.

The results of the scaled ratings were analyzed using two, three factor ANOVAs for repeated measures (normal versus acting-out subjects by fifth versus eighth graders by foreseeable versus non-foreseeable outcomes and normal versus acting-out subjects by fifth versus eighth graders by extenuating versus non-extenuating circumstances), as well as planned pair-wise comparisons of hypothesized findings. The interview results were analyzed in a similar fashion, using three-factor ANOVAs for repeated measures (for Group x Grade x Foreseeability, and Group x Grade x Extenuating Circumstances). This was done for two of the four scales (Intentionality and Affinity to the protagonist). Difficulties to be enumerated below ( dealing with misinterpretation of the interview scale judgements by many of the subjects ) prevented statistical analysis of the other two scales ( Causal attribution and Foreseeability).

## Research on Moral Development

Modern empirical investigations of the development of moral judgement can be traced back to the work of Schallenberger (1894), and the importance of this topic was further emphasized by McDougall (1908) who stated that "the fundamental problem of social psychology is the moralization of the individual by the society..." (Hoffman & Hoffman, 1964, p.383). The investigation continued in a more applied arena with the work of Hartshorne and May (1928) who conducted their research by observing children's ability to resist the temptation to break a rule under favorable conditions. They felt that moral character should be assessed from actions rather than from judgments; they placed children in situations where they could cheat and not be detected or punished. Findings revealed that honesty and deceit were situationally specific characteristics, and they concluded that there exists a low predictability of cheating in one situation for cheating in another. Correlations that have been reported between cheating in one type of situation and in others range between .00 and .45 (Hartshorne & May, 1928; Rau, 1964). These conclusions may be qualified by the results of a factor

analysis by Burton (1963) of the Hartshorne and May data that revealed a small general factor in the experimental tests of classroom cheating. It was concluded that part of the variation in cheating is a product of enduring individual differences in attitudes toward classroom cheating. This suggests a certain degree of truth to the common-sense notion of general good character.

The formation of moral character in children has also been addressed by psychoanalytic writers; they introduced the superego and the ego as constructs affecting the development of morality. Freud defined the superego as "the successor and representative of the parents (and educators) who superintended the actions of the individual in his first years of life; it perpetuates their functions almost without a change." (Freud, 1939, Part III -Section 2, p.149). As such, superego strength (or strength of conscience) reinterprets honest behavior as strongly motivated internal rules which prohibit such acts as stealing, cheating, lying, etc.. This, of course is assumed to depend upon the degree of strength of the internalized agency. According to Freud, this depends upon the parents' authority, "essentially that of the all-powerful father, who wields the power of punishment -

that demands instinctual renunciation on the part of the child and determines what is allowed and what is forbidden. What the child calls "good" and "naughty" becomes later, when society and superego take the place of the parents, good in the sense of moral, or evil, virtuous or vicious."(Freud, 1939, p.153). While the logic in such argumentation may seem appealing, research findings on this interpretation are inconclusive; a significant relationship has not been found between conformity to a moral rule and the strength of belief in that rule (Havighurt & Taba, 1949). Furthermore, no significant correlation was found between the resistance to cheating and the stated unwillingness to cheat (Hartshorne & May,1930).

On the other hand, the "ego strength" construct has spurred great research curiosity. This construct involves a more cognitive approach to the explanation of moral development, utilizing attributes such as strength of will, foresight (the capability of predicting long range consequences of one's actions), and empathy. Psychoanalytic theories of ego strength have had a stronger influence on explaining moral behavior than those of superego strength (Hartmann, 1960; Redl & Wineman, 1952;). Some support for these theories was

provided by a factor analysis of ratings of an individual's personality by other individuals (Webb, 1915) that yielded a "will-factor" that included moral and nonmoral traits. More recent factor analysis of personality traits (Cattell, 1950; Peck & Havighurt, 1960) further confirmed the existence of a "will" factor.

Aside from the factor of "will", investigations have also been conducted on the ego strength variable of "foresight". It has been suggested that the tendency to anticipate future events is better developed in nondelinquent than in delinquent youngsters (Borndt & Johnson, 1955). They found that the nondelinquents were better able to utilize "future time" on projective test stories than delinquents. A study by Mischel (1963) also revealed that "cheaters" were discriminated from "non-cheaters", in that the latter preferred a greater reward in the future (large candy bar) whereas the former opted for a lesser reward in the present (small candy bar).

Much of this early theorizing on the nature of moral development was further stimulated by the work of Jean Piaget; he was later to formulate one of the best known, and most focused, theories of hypothetical moral

judgement.

Moral Intentionality & The Contributions of Jean Piaget

Schallenberg (1894) initially addressed the question of moral intentionality by asking, "How do children react, morally, when confronted with a conflict between the intentions of an act and the consequences of the act?" (Liebert, 1979, p.232). Her study consisted of more than 3000 subjects aged 6 to 16 who were presented with a short story about a young girl (Jenny) who painted the chairs in the parlor "so as to make them look nice for her mother" (Schallenberg, 1894, as quoted in Liebert, 1979, p.232). The subjects were asked what they would have done or said to the protagonist (Jenny). Schallenberg's conclusion was that young children judge actions by their results, while older children look at the motives that prompt them.

The theory which has inspired more recent research on moral judgments has been the one offered by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1932). Yet, he has had several predecessors that have refined the topic so that it could be more receptive to empirical study and

observation. Along with the contributions of Schallenberger (1894) and McDougall (1908), individuals such as James Baldwin (1897;1906), Pierre Bovet (1912), and John Dewey (Dewey & Tuft, 1932) developed the idea of moral stages of development which Piaget was later to expand upon, and Kohlberg would attempt to refine. Although Baldwin's (1906) work did not have any empirical foundations, it did introduce many of the constructs that would later be adopted by Piaget. These include the sequential progression of cognitive development through stages, the precursors of assimilation, accommodation, schema, and egocentricity, and most relevant to this discussion, his ethical stages. As reported by Kohlberg (1982), Baldwin posits three ethical stages:

#### I. Objective or Adualistic Stage

1. Value is syntelic. Failure to localize or distinguish for whom a bad event is bad. The value of an event to another person is shared by the self without basis; or the evaluation of the event by the self is believed to be held by others without basis.

2. Value is projective. Failure to see the value of an event as a means to an end, on

which its value is strictly contingent, or as an expression of a purpose which defines its value. Value of an act is dependent on its consequences and on irrelevant perceptual similarities to other valued acts. There is a general failure to differentiate good and right from other meanings of good and right.

3. Duty is perceived as based on objective or external necessity. Duty or right action is identified with that which the self "has to do" or is compelled to do by external forces, authority and sanctions.

## II. Dualistic, Prudential, or Intellectual

### Stage

1. Value is relativistic. Judgments of right and good are relative to self-interest and judgments may be seen as conflicting where interests conflict.

2. Value is instrumental and based on need. The value of an object or act is based on its relation to an actual need or end involved in the particular situation.

3. Duty is perceived as a hypothetical imperative. Direction of action is not by

compelling prescription or external pressure but is advisory and contingent on needs or motives of the actor.

### III. Ethical or Ideal Stage

1. Value is public or synnomic. The moral value accorded by the self to the event is that which it is believed could be accorded to it by anyone. At the same time this value which the public could hold is a value based on the self's own legitimate perspective in the situation. The value is not the opinion poll value but the value which the self perceives when taking the role of "any rational man" in the society, or which we think society ought to take.
2. Value is ideal and objective. Events are valued not in terms of ideal desires which the self does have, but in terms of ideal desires which the self should have. It is felt that objects or events should be valued in certain ways, that value requires an effort of judgment and appreciation. (p.286).

These stages seemed to have established the foundations for what was to follow in stage theories of moral development. They also appear to provide an extensive range; running from the "syntelic" phase of the "adualistic" stage, where the child assumes that his/her values are shared by all, through the "intellectual" stage, where the child acquires an instrumental mode of valuing life, to the "ethical" stage, where it is considered ideal to share one's desires with those of mankind. This search for universality is later reflected in the work of Kohlberg, and was previously seen in the philosophical works of Kant.

Bovet's (1912) contributions are enumerated by Piaget (1932;1965) in attempting to explain the reasons why mere socialization cannot explain the complete moralization of the child. He states that, "According to M. Bovet, on the contrary, the law is not the source of respect. It is respect for persons which causes the commands coming from these persons to acquire the force of law in the spirit that feels respect.". He goes on to explain that, "Thus respect has its roots deep down in certain inborn feelings and is due to a sui generis

mixture of fear and affection which develops as a function of the child's relation to his adult environment."(Piaget, 1965, p.375).

The contributions of Dewey (Dewey & Tufts, 1932 ) to the theories of Piaget are again related to the conception of moral development through stage progression. Dewey offered three levels of moral development: The first level (preconventional) explained behavior as being motivated by social and biological impulses. The second level (conventional) is one in which the child unconditionally accepts the standards of his/her group. The third level (postconventional) includes behavior where one's conduct is guided by his/her own judgments in which one determines the relative goodness of an act (not accepting group imposed standards without reflection).

It is obvious that these theories have influenced the work of Jean Piaget, who through careful observation and interviewing of children from different different parts of Switzerland, discovered three conceptions of the rules for the game of marbles (Piaget, 1965). He found that the rules utilized by young children (below the age of six years) were

almost totally "egocentric" (thus paralleling the preoperational stage). In other words, these children imitated certain aspects of the rules followed by older children or adults without truly comprehending them, or realizing that they were changable. He considered this the second stage since the initial stage of very young children entails "a purely motor and individual character during which the child handles the marbles at the dictation of his desires and motor habits."(Piaget, 1965, p.26). This second stage he borrows from Bove's "unilateral respect" since "it binds on inferior to a superior..."(Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p.124). He terms it egocentric for the following reason:

This stage begins at the moment when the child receives from outside the example of codified rules, that is to say, some time between the ages of two and five. But though the child imitates this example, he continues to play either by himself without bothering to find playfellows, or with others, but without trying to win, and therefore without attempting to unify the different ways of playing. In other words, children of this stage, even when they are playing together, play each "on his own"

(everyone can win at once) and without regard for any codification of rules."(Piaget, 1965/1932, p.27).

The egocentric stage is followed by the stage of moral heteronomy or incipient cooperation (this parallels the stage of concrete operations). Here children between the ages of six and ten years look upon rules as sacred and unchangeable. They feel that rules are absolute truths simply because they are rules. Piaget observed that children obeyed the rules for the game of marbles exactly, even when the rule did not apply to the situation. [It is important to note that at certain points, within the development of his theory, Piaget disavowed the subjective/objective responsibility distinction as staged].

Finally his observations led to the stage of moral autonomy in which the youngster of 11 years and up begins to enter the cognitive stage of formal operations. Here the children begin to realize that rules are intentional and created for everybody's benefit (it logically follows that they are subject to change). Adolescents begin to "regard rules as the result of agreement among contemporaries and accept the

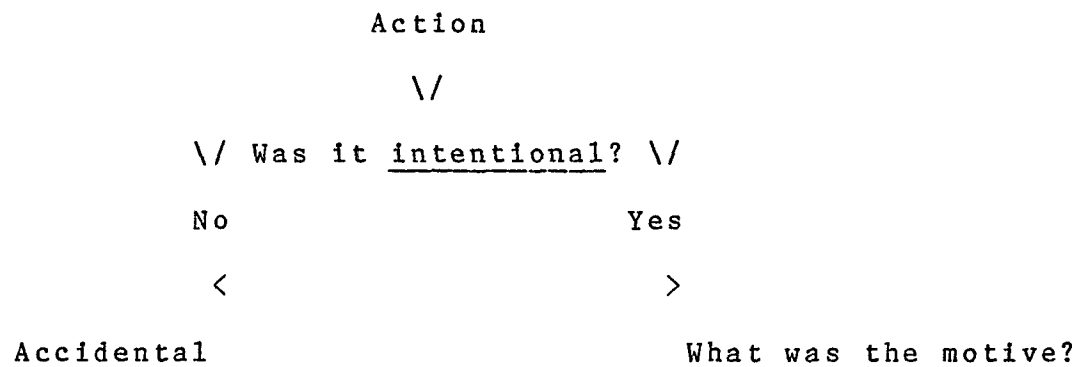
idea that rules can be changed by means of a democratically arrived at consensus."(Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p.127).

Later studies by Piaget elaborated his paradigm (Piaget, 1965). In stories he developed about broken cups, he contrasted a good intention/high damage story with a bad intention/low damage one where a cooperative child accidentally breaks 15 cups and an ill-intentioned child breaks only one. He concluded that as a result of the tendency of younger children (approximately until age ten) to center on one particular aspect of a situation, they often consider the outcome (damage) of an act (while at other times they may center on the intentions), whereas older children tend to "decenter" and thus consider both aspects simultaneously, and often decide upon the intentions as more important. Some difficulties which have clouded these results have been enumerated by various researchers (Chandler, Greenspan & Berenboin, 1973; Costanzo, Coie, Grumet & Farnell, 1973;), and in spite of many replications of Piaget's findings (e.g., Weiner & Peters, 1973), these weaknesses must be considered in the preparation of future research paradigms. Researchers have suggested that the results were due to the nature of the stories, which involve

only negative consequences; they found that when judging stories with positive consequences, no significant age differences were found (with boys of varying ages all considering intentions very important) (Costanzo, Cole, Grumet & Farnell, 1973). Austin, Ruble and Trabasso (1977) suggested that the serial position of the information (whether intentions came first or last) had an effect on the child's emphasis of intentionality. Chandler, Greenspan & Berenboim (1973) have suggested that the mode in which the material is presented could have an effect on the results. More comprehensive reviews of the Piagetian paradigm may be found in Karniol (1978), Keasey (1977) and Gruenreich (1982).

More recently, Keasey (1977) highlighted the importance of the development of intentionality, as well as the previously ignored distinction between intentionality and motives. He observed that intent and motives are quite different concepts in spite of the failure previous researchers to distinguish the two. He feels that "the concept of intentionality does not deal with what the particular motive might have been but rather with whether the action was motivated or accidental; if the action is judged as accidental, then there is no need to consider the concept of motive.

Consequently, the concept of motive should come into consideration only after an act has been judged as intentional" (Keasey, 1977, p.219). In other words the information is processed as depicted below:



Although the above flow-chart may be indicative of the reasoning expected of an average adult, and may be conceptually convenient, Keasey explained that since the multifaceted understanding of the concepts of intentionality and motives requires many years to develop, the above temporal sequence may not be indicative of the actual reasoning process of children.

In studying the relative objective vs. subjective responsibility, Piaget (1932) observed the intentionality and motive variables, but did not attempt to distinguish between the two. Both were considered within the broader concept of subjective responsibility.

Keasey reports numerous replication studies (Boehm, 1962; Boehm & Nass, 1962; Grinder, 1964; Johnson, 1962; McRae, 1954; Tomlinson, Keasey & Keasey, 1972; Whiteman & Kosler, 1964) that present consistent results indicating that the preference of children for subjective responsibility does increase with age. He further comments that objective and subjective responsibility do not necessarily appear to represent distinct stages, but rather two different ways of thinking (Keasey, 1977). These findings not only confirmed Piaget's original observations, but also shed some light on the question of the distinction between moral action and moral thought.

#### Moral Cognition Vs. Moral Action

In his 1932 book The Moral Judgment of the Child, Piaget reports two different sets of data obtained from two distinctly dichotomous paradigms. In one paradigm he merely observes and records the behavior of children, while in the other he manipulates variables (tells stories and asks for feedback) in order to determine certain trends. He was cognizant of the fact that these procedures significantly differ, and that the results of

each may be quite different as well. He suggested that while the contrived method yields information regarding the child's "verbal thinking", the observational method yields information regarding active thinking: Actual actions vs. verbalized thought. While he chose to utilize the experimental method, he realized that "pure observation is the only sure method..."; although it only yields "...a small number of fragmentary facts."(Piaget, 1932, p.107). Of particular concern to the current research is the relationship between what an individual provides as a verbal judgment, and his/her true actions (behaviors) when faced with similar situations (all else held constant). Can it be reliably inferred that if a person makes a verbal judgment, it will be consistent with the manner in which he/she would behave under similar circumstances? Piaget seemed to indicate that in children "verbal thought simply lags behind concrete thought" (pp.112-113). In reality it appears that the relationship is more complex, and dependent on the interaction between the two; as explained by Keasey (1977) "the conscious realization reflected in verbal moral judgments represents a reconstruction and consequently a new and original construction superimposed on the constructions already

formed by concrete actions" (p.221).

Before this issue may be resolved (if indeed it can), one must be cognizant of the differences between the major proponents of each view. The two major views dictate the following: "Moral action has been viewed either as the immediate result of action tendencies and of their interplay or as mediated by such cognitive processes as moral definitions, moral beliefs, and moral reasoning." (Blasi, 1980, p.2). A brief outline of the major contributors to these views will be presented before specific contributions to the topic of moral thought versus moral action can be provided.

#### The Structural View:

The "structural developmental" perspective is briefly summarized by Elliot Turiel (1972): "(1) development refers to the individual's progress through a series of organized structures of thought and action, which (2) are transformed in an ordered way in ontogenesis through (3) interaction with the social and physical environment, and (4) that the process of developmental advance is self-constructed and self-

regulated. A structural developmental approach to the study of moral thought and action implies that such development takes place through a universal sequence of stages which represent forms of thinking and interacting with the environment. Such stages define the ways in which the child actively organizes his own experiences and it is out of efforts at active organization of experience that stage change occurs."(Turiel, 1972, p.1-2).

A major contributor to this view was Lawrence Kohlberg, whose attempts at refining and validating the moral developmental theory of Piaget began with his comprehensive doctoral dissertation (1958), and was followed by numerous articles geared toward extending and generalizing his findings (Kohlberg; 1964; 1968; 1969; 1971; 1976). The general doctrine of his cognitive stages are as follows:

1. Stages imply distinct or qualitative differences in children's mode of thinking or of solving the same problem at different ages.
2. These different modes of thought form an invariant sequence, order, or succession in individual development. While cultural factors may speed up, slow down, or stop development,

they do not change its sequence.

3. Each of these different and sequential modes of thought form a "structured whole". A given stage-response on a task does not just represent a specific response determined by knowledge or familiarity with that task or tasks similar to it. Rather it represents an underlying thought-organization, e.g., "the level of concrete operations", which determines responses to tasks which are not manifestly similar.

4. Cognitive stages are hierarchical integrations. Stages form an order of increasingly differentiated and integrated structures to fulfill a common function. (Kohlberg, 1969, pgs. 352-353).

His original six stages of moral development (which were developed from an all-male sample) are broken down to three levels; the pre-moral level is one in which the child is responsive to cultural rules and labels which are interpreted in terms of physical or hedonistic consequences of actions, or in terms of the physical power of those who put forth the rules. Stage 1 "obedience and punishment orientation" is merely as its name indicates, and finds the youngster making

judgments of right and wrong in terms of obedience and punishment. The child is unable to distinguish between the moral - social world and the physical world. [ A phenomenon called realism by Piaget (1965)]. Stage 2, "naively egoistic orientation" or "instrumental hedonism", finds a youngster who distinguishes between the physical and the moral -social, but confuses individual need and right and wrong; and does not coordinate rights and obligational duty. Thus right action consists of that which satisfies one's own needs (and occasionally the needs of others). Reciprocity is seen in terms of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" as opposed to gratitude, loyalty or true justice. The second level, morality of conventional role - conformity, focuses on the maintenance of expectations of the group (family, nation). Within this level is stage 3, "good boy/girl orientation", where a consideration of the welfare of others begins to appear, and approval seeking is paramount. Good behavior is that which pleases and is approved by others. Stage 4, "authority and social order maintaining orientation", finds the individual capable of separating particular emotional ties to others from moral rules and obligations. In the final, or third, level the

individual equates morality with self-accepted moral principles. In other words, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity apart from the authority of the groups holding these principles. In stage 5, "contractual legalistic orientation", the moral is differentiated from the social. There is an emphasis upon the legal point of view, although the possibility of changing the law in terms of rational considerations of social unity is a viable option. Stage 6, "conscience or principle orientation", involves "orientation not only to actually ordained social rules but to principles of choice involving appeal to logical universality and consistency." (Kohlberg, 1969, p.376). In other words, this stage is ultimately based on the concept of justice, human rights, and respect for human beings as individuals. This stage was later discarded as an integral part of the sequence, thus making his more recent adaptation a five stage theory of moral development.

Numerous longitudinal, cross-sectional, and experimental studies have confirmed that the stages of moral reasoning appear in the order that was described above (e.g., Kohlberg, 1963; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969;

Turiel, 1966). While the order is said to be "invariant", it has been found that the rate of developmental progress may vary with social and cultural setting (Kohlberg, 1959). Yet much criticism has been offered regarding the rationale behind Kohlberg's invariant sequence hypothesis. For instance, the above cited study by Turiel (1966) has been criticized by Kurtines and Grief (1974) as failing to statistically support his predictions that children are more apt to move one step up the moral reasoning scale than two steps up or one step down. More recently, Halstein (1976), utilizing a written questionnaire method of assessment, found substantial evidence, not only of a lack of stepwise progression in stages, but of stage regression: while other researchers, utilizing Kohlberg's interview method, did not (Kuhn, 1976; White, Bushnell, & Regnemer, 1978).

Kurtines and Grief (1974) also disclaim Kohlberg's assertion that moral development is cross-culturally universal. They state that Kohlberg (1968) has failed to provide evidence that children from other cultures (e.g., Turkey, Yucatan, and Taiwan) can achieve stage 6 moral reasoning at the same rate (or at all) as American and Mexican children. Yet this distinction does not

appear to be contradictory to Kohlberg's claims since he has stated that, "While cultural factors may speed up, slow down, or stop development, they do not change its sequence" (Kohlberg, 1969, p.352). A more global problem that this critique addresses is the difficulty that other researchers have encountered with the Kohlbergian belief that his post conventional level of moral reasoning is supposedly a universal principle (e.g., such as Kant's categorical imperative). For instance, Gibbs (1972) has revealed that there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to support the existence of stages 5 and 6; as pointed out by Kurtines and Grief (1974) they are completely absent in many cultures. This criticism is logical enough to have prompted Kohlberg's abandonment of the claim for stage 6 as a "natural" stage.

In spite of the criticisms, it is obvious that Kohlberg's work has had the effect of stimulating much research.

### The Functional View

The most recent empirical and theoretical influence

on the issue of moral development has come from the social learning school. Social learning theorists (Bandura, 1969; Liebert, 1979; Maccoby, 1968) propose an extension of the behavioristic approach to moral development. Their view is that development is a process of learning (internalizing) values through social reinforcements, vicarious learning, identification and general conditioning. As Maccoby (1968, p 229) defines it, "...moral behavior is behavior a social group defines as good or right and for which the social group administers sanctions. Moral values are beliefs, again shared in a social group, about what is good or right.". This point of view derives from the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, William James, and Ralph Perry that held that different things will be good for different individuals or groups. Empirically, it was investigated by Hartshorne and May as early as 1928 (see above). Although this theory bases its investigation of moral development upon the assumption that there is nothing about moral learning to distinguish it qualitatively from other forms of learning (Hoffman, 1970; Mowrer, 1960), there are more complex factors that do differentiate this theory from traditional operant accounts of learning. Since the vast majority of human

learning occurs observationally through modeling, new behaviors can be acquired by an observer of the behaviors and its consequences. This form of learning is aided by the symbolic abilities of human beings, and allows for the abstraction and representation of information, as well as efficient means of retaining such. As a result of these human capabilities, social learning perspectives accept that the anticipation of reinforcement may serve as a stimulus to direct attention to a model's behavior; thus, although reinforcement may facilitate learning, it need not be a necessary condition for it, since through self regulating processes individuals are selective about the aspects of their environment to which they attend (Bandura, 1976). This theory places great emphasis on vicarious, symbolic, and self regulatory processes, thus accenting the need to take into account cognitive development, since changes in cognitive functioning will influence changes in these processes (e.g., as children develop greater ability in manipulating symbols they become better able to attend to, represent, manipulate and retain observational experiences). This functional approach differs from the previously enumerated structural approaches, in a general sense, in that it

deals with molecular aspects of more directly observable behaviors; whereas, as Zimmerman and Whitehurst (1979) state "Structuralists are mainly interested in molar properties of behavior such as age trends." (p. 19). They go on to explain that "Functional accounts tend to be much more conservative theoretically, advancing limited theoretical principles only when functional relationships between stimuli and responses are firmly established." (p.19). The five principle characteristics that Liebert (1979) cites as distinguishing the functional approach to moral development are:

- (a) an emphasis on what the person does rather than merely on what the person says;
- (b) a keen awareness of the effects of culture and subculture on all aspects of moral thought and personal conduct;
- (c) an emphasis on situational determinants of both expressed moral reasoning and actual behavior;
- (d) conceptualization of age - correlated changes within the moral sphere in terms of age - related increases in knowledge and experience; and
- (e) a focus on actual and expected consequences as a major determinant of all moral arguments, issues and

actions. (Liebert, 1979, p.247).

Returning to the issue of the relation between moral behavior and moral cognition, we can see how the dogmatic version of the functionalist view would dictate that judgment and action are unrelated; whereas the dogmatic version of the structural view would dictate that there is a definite causal and sequential relationship between judgment and action. Nevertheless the contentions of each view (under less dogmatic versions) merely insists that research be aimed at either the observable actions of individuals, or the underlying cognitive processes. Less dogmatic versions of the functional approach clearly state that, "Determining and explaining the actual relationships that exist between moral reasoning and personal conduct is a major goal of the cognitive-behavioral approach." (Liebert, 1984, p.185). This indicates that some sort of relationship is evident. In fact, Liebert (1984) explains that due to the interplay of cognitive development and social experience, humans can achieve a profound grasp of both the immediate and the long-term, as well as the direct and indirect, effects of their words and their actions. He goes on to explain that the knowledge that is acquired is integrated into

different levels of practical understanding, which then determine our behavior. Likewise a less dogmatic version of the structural view would not advocate a single causal direction between moral judgment and moral action. In fact, Piaget emphasizes the effect of (practical) action on (theoretical) thought throughout his theory. As reported above, the Piagetian view seemed to indicate that conscious realizations that are exhibited in verbal moral judgment represent a novel reconstruction superimposed on the constructions that were already formed by concrete actions (Keasey, 1977). It appears that in spite of the acknowledgement that the connection between moral thought and moral action is so complex as to be virtually unanswerable (at the present time), the fact that a connection exists would not be beyond the scope of any but the most dogmatic view. In fact, Kohlberg's question regarding an act's ability to be considered moral independently of the actor's thoughts about the action, his admittance that he (according to the Kantian philosophical view) "holds moral reason as necessary and sufficient for moral action" (Kohlberg, 1984, pp.54-55), and his interpretation of the social behaviorist's view that "morality can be determined without reference to the

actor's thoughts", leaves room for the more salient view that moral reasoning may be necessary without being sufficient for action. His initial question, which is also addressed by Blasi and generates the statement that "without judgment, an action, no matter how beneficial, would not be moral" (Blasi, 1980, p.4) should not be inconsistent with Liebert's (1984) previous statements, since the interplay of cognitive development, social experiences and current situational factors are included in the formation of a judgment. As James Rest (1984) eloquently puts it:

The psychologist's interest in "moral behavior"

should be understood to be an interest in the patterns of behavior in real-life contexts with attention to the inner processes that produced the behavior. Without knowing the inner processes that gave rise to the behavior, we cannot call it "moral", nor can we know how it is likely to generalize to other situations.

This concern with situational contexts and the inner processes that produce the behavior is not just an academic nicety, but is essential to

understanding predicting, and influencing moral behavior. (p.26).

Besides the current attempt to bridge the gap between apparently opposing views on the relationship between moral thought and moral action, it is important to determine the current status of research findings concerning this topic. As concluded in a very comprehensive review of studies that related moral cognition to moral action (Blasi, 1980), the body of research "seems to offer considerable support for the hypothesis that moral reasoning and moral action are statistically related." (p.37). Yet it is reported that under closer scrutiny, there are valid qualifications to that statement. For instance, Blasi explains that empirical support varies from area to area, being strongest for the hypothesis that moral reasoning differs between delinquents and nondelinquents. These findings are encouraging, given that the population of the study being proposed is similar to those of the reviewed studies with delinquents.

### A Reconciliatory Comment

Following from the specific similarities enumerated above between the two apparently dichotomous views (functional vs. structural), it appears that these two approaches need not be mutually exclusive in working together toward a common goal of greater awareness and knowledge.

While there are philosophical differences between these two approaches, some sort of complementary synthesis appears to be feasible. As indicated in the following passage, real distinctions are apparent, but there is a sense of hope for amalgamation:

No functionalist or structuralist holds an extreme position on the nature-nurture controversy. All acknowledge the interaction of genetic and environmental factors. There are, however, real differences in emphasis. Since the functionalist is forced to look for functions relating input to processing operations to output, the natural focus is on the area where input variables are to be found, the environment. Since structuralists are intent

on describing abstract patterns of behavior that are freed from situational and individual variables, there is a tendency for structural accounts to assume a maturational tinge. One should not, however, interpret those pragmatic consequences as philosophical biases. One can be a functional-nativist and a structural-empiricist. One can, but one seldom is.

(Zimmerman & Whitehurst, 1979, p.16).

In fact they state that, "Although structural and functional orientations are easily discernible at this metatheoretical level, individual theories in both traditions seldom adopt either view in total."(p.16). Their recognition that each theory 'reviewed can be illustrated along a continuum between the functional and structural poles' may be construed as indicative of a new wave toward a transactional approach.

This trend appears to have been adopted by other theorists (Gibbs & Schnell, 1985) who also suggest that, 'the existing dichotomy between the "individual-cognitive" and the "societalistic-affective" theorists may be a false one, since in effect neither is at an extreme position; and both accept a sort of amalgamation

of both views'. As explained by Zimmerman and Whitehurst (1979), Gibbs and Schnell (1985) also suggest that as long as the proponents of both approaches realize the interdependence of the contrasting but complementary views, then a more comprehensive theory of sociomoral development may be achieved. It appears that through a sort of 'regression toward the mean' apparently opposing views are considering broader scopes (e.g., Youniss, 1981); and as such, a greater acceptance of more complex theories, with all their ramifications, are becoming apparent.

## CHAPTER II

Current Research Emphasis:

Although there is a considerable amount of research in the area of children's moral intentionality, there is relatively little research explicitly in the area of adolescent moral intentionality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1964; Kugelmas and Breznitz, 1967, 1968; Kugelmas, Breznitz, and Breznitz, 1965; Morris, 1958; Weiner and Peters, 1973). These studies suggest that the variable of moral intentionality continues to develop beyond the young child, and that greater complexity exists in this area of judgment. As has also been substantiated in a previous study (Sanvitale, Saltzstein and Blank, 1987) (as well as through a recent pilot study), adolescents appear to consider many factors that modify the simple intentionality variable. They often appear to take into consideration factors such as carelessness, negligence, unconscious motivation, and egocentric interests, and thus expand the meaning of intentionality.

One recent study that has examined the complexities of moral intentionality focused on the foreseeability of an unintended outcome and its source - whether accident or mistake (Sedlak, 1982). Although the study was conducted with second and fourth grade children and

adults, as opposed to the adolescent and pre-adolescent population being focused on in the present research, the findings shed light on the need for more discriminating research in examining the moral intentionality variable. Sedlak's results revealed that moral evaluations are sensitive to both the foreseeability of an unintended outcome and to whether the outcome arose from an accident or a mistake. An interaction effect was also found between the two factors, with mistakes eliciting harsher judgments than accidents only in foreseeable circumstances (Sedlak, 1982). The need to further examine this modifier of intentionality variable (foreseeability) with an adolescent population seemed evident.

Before justification of the "extenuating circumstance" variable is provided, a synopsis of the aims and results of the previous study is in order. Sanvitale, Saltzstein, and Blank, (1987) recognized the lack of research in moral intentionality with adolescents; given the newly appreciated complexity of the intentionality variable, as well as the conflicting information regarding the acquisition of moral thought, they incorporated these issues in a study comparing normal and emotionally disturbed adolescents. The main

problems that needed clarification were the following:

1) Do emotionally disturbed (acting-out) adolescents differ from normal adolescents in their judgments of moral problem situations?, and 2) Is there a difference between the groups in their use of intentionality modifiers; such as the foreseeability of an outcome and the resultant gain of the actor (self-interest) that makes sense given the description of the functioning of acting-out youngsters? It was predicted that normal and acting-out adolescent boys would differ in their comprehension and/or application of contextual modifiers of moral intentionality (foreseeability and self-interest). Acting-out adolescents are often described as lacking in the ability to anticipate the consequences of their own actions and in recognition of how moral responsibility is judged according to the foreseeable consequences of their actions (e.g., Pine, 1980). Thus they are reported to disclaim responsibility because 'they didn't mean for it [outcome] to happen.'. It was hypothesized that they would be less responsive than normals to variations in foreseeability of the outcome in morally evaluating those who commit acts with unintended outcomes.

With regard to the second kind of modifier of moral

intentionality, hidden motivation (self-interest), the reasoning is somewhat more complex. Inferences about its role in forming an intention are often made when information is provided that the ostensibly unintended outcome has rebounded to the advantage of the actor. Such information may contribute to suspicions about motivational sincerity which may or may not be warranted by a particular situation. Dodge and his colleagues (Dodge and Frame, 1982; Dodge, Murphy, and Buchabaum, 1984) have reported that "sociometrically rejected" boys, who are typically found to be aggressive to peers, often attribute hidden and malevolent motives to others when the outcome of the action was clearly unintended. Such attributions may serve as a justification for the adolescent's own breach of moral norms, and thus help the adolescent defend against recognition of responsibility and guilt. Acting-out adolescents were therefore expected to be suspicious of the motives behind such "unintended actions" and more responsive to whether the outcome was in the actor's self-interest than normal adolescents when making moral judgments.

A third issue in Sanvitale et al. (1987) dealt with the differences between the groups in their attribution of judgments to adults. The aim was to determine

whether differences between normal and acting-out adolescents in the use of foreseeability and self-interest as moral cues depends on whether or not they believe adults use these same criteria in making moral judgments. This question was explored by asking subjects, in addition to giving their own judgment, to give the judgment they think adults would make of the same situation. In a series of prior studies with children (ages six to twelve years of age) employing stories with simple intention/outcome information i.e., without explicit elements of foreseeability and self-interest, (Saltzstein, Weiner, Munk, Supraner, Blank, and Schwarz, 1982; Saltzstein, Weiner, and Blank, 1984), attributed judgments of acts with bad outcomes were harsher than the children's own judgments, and their own reasons justifying the judgments stressed the intentions behind the act more than reasons justifying attributed judgments. This pattern of findings suggests that young children's own increasing emphasis on intentions is not primarily based on a growing recognition of an adult moral "norm" that stresses the intentions of an act in forming judgments. This finding has never been systematically explored with adolescents, nor with situations involving more complex moral intentionality

issues, such as foreseeability.

In short, the hypotheses that were tested in that study (Sanvitale, Saltzstein and Blank, 1987) were as follows: 1) adolescent boys use a complex moral intentionality standard in judging actions with ostensibly unintended outcomes. That is, an actor committing an act with a bad outcome will be judged more harshly if the outcome was foreseeable and/or in the self-interest of the actor than if it was not. Further, subjects will justify harsher judgments by making verbal reference to the foreseeability of the outcome, as well as to possible hidden, devious motivation for the act. The latter would be inferred from the self-interest that the actor had in the "unexpected" outcome. It was considered likely that the self-interest factor would be especially critical when judging stories with ostensibly foreseeable outcomes. It was predicted that the two groups of subjects would differ in the weight given to these two modifiers of intentionality: 2) The normal subjects would give greater weight to the foreseeability of the outcome than would the acting-out subjects, but 3) The acting-out group would give greater weight to the self-interest of the actor in the outcome.

More specifically, the difference between normal

subjects' judgments of the foreseeable and nonforeseeable acts would be greater than the difference for the acting-out subjects. On the other hand, the difference in harshness of judgments of acts in the self-interest vs. those not in the self-interest of the actor would be greater for the acting-out than the normal subjects. 4) Owing to the dearth of relevant data and theorizing, no definitive predictions concerning the own-attributed judgment differences were made.

The results of that study revealed that young adolescents did give weight to information about the foreseeability of the outcome and the actor's self-interest in the outcome in morally evaluating acts with unintended outcomes. Further, subjects from normal and emotionally disturbed (acting-out) classes appear to use the foreseeability information differently in making moral judgments. The normal subjects' judgments differentiated more sharply between the foreseeable and unforeseeable (bad) outcomes than did the acting-out subjects'. In fact, while the judgments by the normal subjects of the foreseeable acts were harsher than those by the acting-out subjects, the reverse was true for the unforeseeable acts. The last finding implies that

differences between moral judgments made by normal and acting-out adolescents may be better described as differences in the aspects of the moral situation to which they pay attention or how they weigh these factors, and less as differences in overall strength of their moral standards.

The results did not show the predicted interaction between group and the self-interest story factor. That is, the acting-out subjects gave no greater weight to self-interest in blaming the story character than the normal subjects. The protocols revealed that, though the acting-out subjects often demonstrated awareness of the self-interest factor, that inference was typically used to exculpate or justify the act committed by the story protagonist, e.g., stating that "it was okay for him to have done that because he got the girl", or that "I would have done the same thing.". This is consistent with other findings (e.g., Hudgins and Prentice, 1973) showing that delinquent adolescents typically reason at Kohlberg's stage 2, which is characterized by an equating of self-interest with moral justification.

Less clear were the results offered for the more difficult questions of (a) whether the group differences in moral judgment derive from the subject's

comprehension of or from their weighing of the psychological factors in the story (e.g., foreseeability, devious motivation), and b) whether the group differences rest upon attributions of moral judgments to adults. While these data do not provide definitive answers to the questions, they suggest that a) the group differences may be due to the differential weight given to the factors rather than the differential comprehension of them, but (b) might be due, in part, to differential attributions to (perception of) adult norms.

The first conclusion (a) is based on the lack of significant group differences in answers to the questions concerning foreseeability, preventability, causal attribution, hidden motivation, etc. The only clear group difference in responses to the detailed interview was in liking for the protagonist; it was higher for the acting-out adolescents, as they often indicated that they might have done the same thing as the story character.

Regarding the second question (b), the data suggest that the normal adolescents' greater emphasis on foreseeability in judging the actor might be due to differential perceptions of (or attributions to) adult

norms. This was based on the observation that the interaction between group and the foreseeability story factor was not modified by a further interaction with own-attributed mode of judgment. That is, the difference between own moral judgments for the foreseeable and nonforeseeable stories by the normal (diff. = 2.35) and by the acting-out subjects (diff. = 0.99) was paralleled to the difference in judgment attributed to adults by the normal (diff. = 2.35) and by the acting-out group (diff. = 0.70). The differential weight given to foreseeability as a moral factor in own judgment by the two groups of subjects is consistent with the difference in the weight they think adults give. It is also possible that the attributed judgments are derivative of own judgments, rather than the reverse. At the very least, it can be concluded that the group difference in attention given to foreseeability as a moral factor is not independent of their attributions to adults.

The study began with the question of whether groups known to differ in their social functioning would also differ in relevant aspects of their moral judgments. The results demonstrate the importance of foreseeability and self-interest as factors in formation of moral

judgments by young adolescents. The acting-out adolescents, who are typically reported as unrealistic in predicting the social consequences of their own behavior, also appeared less discerning than their more normal peers in gauging the relevance of foreseeability when judging others in hypothetical moral situations. This finding adds to the increasing evidence (e.g., Blasi's 1980 review) that moral judgment and reasoning are related to social functioning and behavior.

These results have spurred the current study, which attempts to further investigate the relationship between normal and acting-out youngsters (adolescents and preadolescents) in their ability to apply contextual modifiers of moral intentionality in judging the "goodness" or "badness" of an act. Two factors were dropped and two added (from the previous study) in an attempt to refine, and further clarify the previous results. First, the scale judgments that were attributed to adults were discarded, since in spite of an interest in the topic of the etiology of moral judgment, it appeared to confound the more relevant aspect of the study (namely the difference between the groups in their sensitivity in judging different social situations). Secondly, the self-interest variable,

which did not prove fruitful in differentiating between the two groups of subjects, was also eliminated; and in its place is incorporated another modifier of intentionality variable: "extenuating circumstances".

The rationale behind the use of this variable is in its function: Whereas the foreseeability variable is used to condemn the actor, the extenuating circumstance variable should be utilized (by the subject) to exculpate the actor. If such is the case it will be suggested that it is not merely a characteristic of the age, or clinical, group to generally condemn individuals when a deleterious outcome is apparent. Furthermore, it is expected that the group differences will be the same on both modifiers of intentionality variables (normal subjects will differentiate more sharply between the two extremes of both dichotomous variables than the acting-out subjects). The other addition is that of a new age group (fifth grade), so that developmental predictions can be made regarding the use of modifiers of intentionality, as well as between group differences.

One major reason for consideration of this variable is the supposition that acting-out subjects may be behaving at a less developmentally advanced level than the normal subjects (as inferred from the findings of the previous

study, as well as Blasi, 1980; Dodge and Frame, 1982; Dodge, Murphy, and Buchabaum, 1984; & Pine, 1980).

The first general set of hypotheses is one of main effects; and predicts that acts with "foreseeable" outcomes will be judged harsher than those with nonforeseeable outcomes, replicating Sanvitale, Saltzstein & Blank (1987). Acts with "extenuating circumstances" will be judged more leniently than those with no extenuating circumstances. The former is inferred from the findings of the previous study (Sanvitale, et al., 1987) and those of Sedlak (1982); the latter is extrapolated from those results and seems to make logical sense.

The second set of hypotheses is derived from the clinical observations of Pine (1980) as explained above, as well as the results of the previous study, and predict that the moral judgments of acting-out subjects will be less responsive to variations in the foreseeability factor than those of normal subjects.

Likewise, moral judgements of the acting-out subjects will be less responsive to variations in the extenuation circumstances variable. This later prediction follows from the general hypothesis that acting-out subjects are less sensitive to more advanced

modifiers of intentionality, either due to differences in the ability to recognize cues in the complex variables and/or to their inability or disinclination to use their inference in making moral judgments.

The last hypothesis derives from the belief that acting-out adolescents are less developmentally advanced in moral reasoning than normal adolescents. Blasi's (1980) review reveals that delinquent adolescents tend to use developmentally lower modes of moral reasoning. In the hope of testing this inference, it is hypothesized that the younger age group will be less sensitive to both modifiers of intentionality variables, thus appearing like older acting-out groups. In other words the older normal subjects' judgments will differentiate more sharply between foreseeable and nonforeseeable outcomes, as well as between extenuating circumstances and nonextenuating circumstances, than the younger normal subjects (as well as the older acting-out subjects).

Formally stated the hypotheses for the present study are as follows:

1. Acts with foreseeable outcomes will be judged quantitatively higher (harsher) than those with non-foreseeable outcomes.

2. Acts with extenuating circumstances will be judged quantitatively lower (less harshly) than those with no extenuating circumstances.
3. Acting-out subjects will be less responsive to variations in the foreseeability variables than normal subjects (as determined from the interaction between group [normal vs. acting-out] and foreseeability).
4. Acting-out subjects will be less responsive to variations in the extenuating circumstances variable than normal subjects (as determined from the interaction between group and extenuating circumstances).
5. Younger (10 year old) subjects will be less responsive to variations in the foreseeability variable than older (13 year old) subjects (as determined from the interaction between age and foreseeability).
6. Younger subjects will be less responsive to variations in the extenuating circumstances variable than older subjects (as determined from the interaction between age and extenuating circumstances).

## CHAPTER III

## Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 48 male subjects; 24 subjects were from the fifth grade, approximately 10 1/2 years of age, and 24 subjects were from the eighth grade, approximately 13 1/2 years of age. Half the subjects at each grade level were recruited from regular classes, and half from special education classes. Since the special education classes often combine students together according to several criteria (e.g., age management needs, classifications, etc.), grade and age will serve as the current criteria. Parental consent was obtained for all participants. In selecting the final sample of acting-out (A-O) subjects, the following criteria were used (in replication of the previous study): (1) The student is classified as "emotionally disturbed" by the Committee on Special Education of the school district. This precludes designation as mentally retarded, learning disabled, culturally deprived, etc.. The decision is based on the results of batteries of intellectual, academic, and psychological tests; (2) The acting-out subject has been involved in at least five instances of verbal and/or physical aggression to peers or teachers according to the student's record, an

(3) there is no evidence of thought disorder, psychosis or severe organicity as determined by examination of psychological and medical records. The final sample, in meeting the stringent criteria, also fit the DSM III-R classification of Conduct Disorder. As explained in the DSM III-R manual, "The essential feature of this disorder is a persistent pattern of conduct in which the basic rights of others and major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated. The behavior pattern typically is present in the home, school, with peers, and in the community." (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, p.53). The acting-out subjects in the present sample meet at least three of the criteria necessary for a classification of Conduct Disorder. Some of the behaviors that were reported in either discipline file, social history, psychological evaluation, or other school records, which fit the DSM III-R criteria are as follows: "...often lies (other than to avoid physical or sexual abuse)"; "often initiates physical fights"; "is often truant from school"; "has run away from home over night at least twice while living in parental or parental surrogate home"; "has stolen without confrontation of a victim on more than one occasion" [other DSM III-R behaviors may

also have been present but had not been recorded by the school]. The 24 A-0 subjects were randomly selected from pools of such subjects in existing special education classes (three such classes in the junior high school with approximately 36 students, and two in the elementary school with approximately 24 students).

The other group of 24 subjects were randomly selected from four regular ("mainstream") eighth grade classes in the same junior high school (12 adolescent subjects), and from two regular fifth grade classes in the same elementary school (12 pre-adolescent subjects). These students were taken from the middle tracks of the fifth and eighth grade classes (the fifth grade has five tracks and the junior high school has fourteen); honor classes and the lowest tracks were excluded at each grade to permit a rough control on the subject's intellectual level (IQ score), which will quite likely fall within the average range since the middle track will exclude slow learners. Furthermore, the Special Education students have undergone intellectual assessments that are required to yield not lower than low average scores (or range of scores) for a classification of emotionally disturbed to be warranted. To further assess the comparability of intellectual

levels between the groups, post-testing perusal of the subjects records will provide IQ scores based on a form of the group-administered California Test of Mental Maturity (CTMM, short form, level 1 for the preadolescents, and level 2 for the adolescents). WISC-R IQ scores are also available for the special education students.

All subjects were residents of a small town in a suburb of New York; their families have been judged to be lower middle class in socioeconomic status: Besides confirmation from the Town Hall Clerk's office, youngsters from families receiving Social Service assistance were omitted

All randomly selected subjects were asked if they wished to participate in the study, and were only allowed to participate if such agreement was acquired. Prior to this, parental consent forms were obtained from a large pool of potential candidates for the study (see appendix IV for parental consent form). Further, all subjects were treated according to the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists" (American Psychological Association, 1981).

### Materials

Eight moral judgment stories were constructed tape-recorded, and presented to each student (four of the stories were utilized previously in Sanvitale, Saltzstein, and Blank (1987), and have been validated; validation procedures explained below). The four new stories have been validated in a similar fashion. The stories were constructed according to two uncrossed 2 X 2 designs (theme x foreseeability and theme x extenuating circumstances). The reason that this design was utilized and that the variables of complex moral intentionality were not crossed was for the purpose of not confounding the study with excessively difficult stories. Furthermore, in preserving four of the original stories, replication of previous findings would be achieved. [The design is displayed below].

		FORESEEABILITY		EXT.CIRCUMSTANCE	
		Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence
		stereo	vacuum	pool	B.B.Q.
	<u>SOCIAL</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
THEME		video	Atari	bike	handball
	GAMES	_____	_____	_____	_____

Two themes were used in order to insure generalization across related but different content areas; a competitive game with a prize, and social rivalry (the previous study also used a sexual rivalry theme; this was omitted due to its inappropriateness with the younger age group). One story within each content area featured a "foreseeable outcome" and one a "non-foreseeable outcome", as well as an "extenuating circumstance" and a "non-extenuating circumstance". Both foreseeability and extenuating circumstances are within subject variables.

All stories feature protagonists of the same sex as the subject (male). The story themes have been chosen as a result of informal pretesting (as well as the results of the previous study) to maximize interest in and relevance to the subjects. Furthermore, the stories were pretested with a group of seven graduate students, four school psychologists, and ten school teachers who rated them along 10-point scales for intentionality, foreseeability, extenuating circumstances, degree of rivalry, interest level and comprehensibility (see Appendix I). The results indicated that the stories varied as expected, were simple enough to be understood by all subjects, and were of adequate interest level.

Pretesting of the stories with similar populations (fourth through eighth grade students) in different schools further revealed that the most recent draft of the stories were understood and were of moderate to high interest.

#### Procedures and Design

Each subject was individually tested by an adult male experimenter over the entire series (eight stories). Prior to the presentation of the tape recorded stories, the subject was informed of his option not to participate, and a standardized introduction was provided. In brief, the introduction informed the participants that the study was being conducted to gather information concerning the way students think about certain social situations. They were further informed that no one (parents and school staff specifically mentioned) would know of their individual answers and that their names would not appear anywhere (on the scoring sheet or elsewhere). They were also told that there are no right or wrong answers and that they will not be individually compared to others.

A practice story that was utilized in Sanvitale, Saltzstein, and Blank (1987) for the purpose of

familiarizing the subject with the task, was again administered at the beginning of the sequence of the story presentation. The reason for its inclusion is due more to a recent finding during piloting for the present study rather than its usefulness in familiarization with the task. In the pilot it was found that if the practice story was missing, subjects' responses to the initial story (which varied according to the controls for serial effect, as explained below) were often markedly different than their responses to other equivalent stories. The reason for this phenomenon was that on the initial story (regardless of which story that may have been) the subject was not sensitized to the type of stories that would be presented (unlike all other stories, where there had always been some other story preceding it). Thus, they may have responded in an overly harsh or lenient fashion, and may not have allowed for future variances in the stories, given the limitations of the scoring scales. The practice story featured neutral motives (neither altruistic nor malevolent) and an outcome resulting in some material damage, thus eliciting more neutral judgements from the subjects than was the case in the other stories. The original stories were constructed to highlight the

variables in question, and thus would hope to elicit more discrepant results, as explained above.

To control for serial effects, the order in which the stories were presented was randomized for each individual subject. The first story contained one of two randomly selected themes (social or game), one of two randomly selected modifiers of intentionality variables (foreseeability or extenuating circumstances), and one of two randomly selected levels of that variable (presence or absence). The other level of the same theme and modifier followed. The remaining theme was then utilized with the remaining modifier and the first level, and so on (e.g., the "game" theme is randomly selected, as is the "foreseeability modifier and the "presence" (foreseeable) level; it is followed by the absence level - not foreseeable; then by the remaining theme - social - the remaining modifier -extenuating circumstances, and again the initial level of the modifier -presence of extenuating circumstances).

After hearing each story the subject was asked to rate the act of the protagonist along a nine-point scale with levels ranging from "very, very good" to "very, very bad" and then was asked about the reasons for his rating (e.g., "What do you think about what Eddie

did?"). The scales were constructed in order to systematically quantify the results. They were developed through work with youngsters of the same ages as the subjects in order that they be understood by the selected sample. They were initially pretested and subsequently utilized in a previous study (Sanvitale, et al., 1987 utilized the initial nine-point scale). Following the scale judgment and reason, a more structured interview was conducted where the responses of the subject were tape-recorded (so as to safeguard for bias in scoring), and scale judgments were elicited. The interview was utilized to tap other reasons for the judgment, and have the subject elaborate upon the intentionality variable. The interview consists of the following questions:

Intentionality (Did [actor] mean to [perform the act]?)  
(Why do you say that?)

Foreseeability (Could [actor] have known [outcome] would happen if he [performed the act]? Do you think he did know?)

Causal Attribution (What caused [outcome to happen]?)

Affinity to protagonist (How do you feel about [actor]?)

(See Appendix III for complete interview scales and

record booklet)

The actual questions refer to the name of the actor and the specific outcome (e.g., Could Eddie have known that the stereo would "blow"?).

The format that was utilized was two 2 X 2 X 2 factorial designs with repeated measures (normal vs. A-0 subjects by fifth vs. eighth graders by foreseeable vs. non-foreseeable outcomes, and normal vs. A-0 subjects by fifth vs. eighth graders by extenuating circumstances vs. non-extenuating circumstance), with two between subject variables (grades and clinical groups) and two within subject variables (foreseeability and extenuating circumstances). Graphically represented the design appears thus:

		Fore.		Ext. Circ.	
		Y	N	Y	N
Norm.	5th	:		:	
	8th	:		:	
	A.O.	:		:	
A.O.	5th	:		:	
	8th	:		:	

The ratings were analyzed using 2 three-factor ANOVAs for repeated measures, since each modifier of intentionality variable represents a separate (independent) measure. In fact each of these variables can stand alone, and the study can thus be viewed as two separate studies (since no comparison shall be conducted between these two variables). Planned pair-wise comparisons were utilized to seek specific relationships relevant to the hypotheses.

The reasons were analyzed in a similar fashion, using three-factor ANOVAs for repeated measures (for groups x grades x foreseeability and groups x grades x extenuating circumstances). This procedure was conducted for two of the four scales ("Intentionality" and "Affinity" to the protagonist). One of the other scales ("Causal Attribution") was not statistically analyzed since it was noted, while the study was under way, that it was misinterpreted by a large number of subjects. The misinterpretation was due to the vague wording in the Causal Attribution scale (see record booklet question # 4, appendix III ). Specifically, the phrase "completely caused by the person" while understood by all subjects during pre-testing (piloting), as well as many subjects during the present

study, other subjects commented during the inquiry that they had referred to characters other than the protagonist when stating that it was caused by "the person". In one particular instance the subject stated "it was caused by the little kids playing games...that was the persons" (see Bike story, appendix II). As a result of this type of interpretation, which was noted in some few other inquiries (but may have been apparent in other cases where the inquiries did not reveal them), these results were unfortunately rendered useless. The other scale ("Foreseeability") was found to be confusing and, for the most part, was considered useless by the subjects ( who later explained that the meaning was unclear and their answers were often random).

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

## Scale Judgments

The repeated measures ANOVA for the foreseeability variable yielded three significant main effects. First, acts with foreseeable outcomes were rated more harshly than those with unforeseeable outcomes,  $F(1,44) = 96.69$ ,  $p < .0001$ , supporting the first hypothesis. Secondly, 5th grade subjects were harsher in their judgments than 8th grade subjects,  $F(1,44) = 4.83$ ,  $p < .05$ . There was a first-order interaction between grade and foreseeability,  $F(1,44) = 4.65$ ,  $p < .05$ , supporting the fifth hypothesis stating that the younger subjects would be less responsive to variations in the foreseeability variable than the older subjects (see Table 1 and appendix V).

TABLE 1  
 Mean Moral Judgments of Foreseeable  
 and Nonforeseeable Stories by 5th and 8th  
 Grade Students  
 Story

Grade	Foreseeable	Nonforeseeable	(diff.)
5th	6.52 <sup>a</sup>	5.59 <sup>a</sup>	+0.93 <sup>c</sup>
8th	6.19 <sup>b</sup>	4.74 <sup>b</sup>	+1.45 <sup>c</sup>

Note. The judgments may range from 1 (lenient) to 9 (harsh).

Note. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

The third main effect revealed that acting-out subjects generally made harsher judgements than did the normal subjects on the foreseeability variable,  $F(1,44) = 17.01$ ,  $p < .001$  (marginal means of 5.20 for normals and 6.32 for acting-out). There also was a first-order interaction between group and foreseeability,  $F(1,44) = 35.42$ ,  $p < .0001$ , supporting the third hypothesis and replicating the earlier finding (Sanvitale et al., 1987); that acting-out subjects would be less responsive to variations in the foreseeability variables than normal subjects. This interaction revealed a greater judgment difference between foreseeable and nonforeseeable

stories by the normal subjects (1.91) than by the acting-out subjects (.47), as had been expected (see Table 2 and appendix V).

TABLE 2  
Mean Moral Judgments of Foreseeable  
and Nonforeseeable Stories by Normal and  
Acting-out Subjects

Group	Story		(diff)
	Foreseeable	Nonforeseeable	
Normal	6.16 <sup>a</sup>	4.25 <sup>a</sup>	+1.91 <sup>b</sup>
Acting-out	6.55	6.08	+0.47 <sup>b</sup>

Note. The judgements may range from 1 (lenient) to 9 (harsh).

Note. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

The other first-order interaction, between group and age,  $F(1,44) = 14.27$ ,  $p < .0005$ , while not offered as a hypothesis, revealed that there is a greater difference between the younger and older acting-out subjects (-1.63) than between the younger and older normal subjects (+.43) (see Table 3 and appendix V). In fact, while the older normal subjects judged more harshly than the younger normal subjects, the older

acting-out subjects judged more leniently than the younger ones.

TABLE 3

Mean Moral Judgments of Foreseeable and Nonforeseeable Acts Between Normal and Acting-out Subjects, and 5th and 8th Graders

Grade	Group	
	Normal	Acting-out
5th	4.99 <sup>a</sup>	7.13 <sup>a, c</sup>
8th	5.42	5.51 <sup>c</sup>
(diff)	-0.43 <sup>b</sup>	+1.62 <sup>b</sup>

Note. The judgements may range from 1 (lenient) to 9 (harsh).

Note. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

Further elucidation of this phenomenon is offered by the significant three-way interaction between Group, Grade and Foreseeability,  $F(1,44) = 11.90$ ,  $p < .01$ , and planned comparisons which reveal that while the means of the Normal 8th grade subjects (5.42) and the Acting-out 8th grade subjects (5.51) are similar when collapsed on foreseeability (actins), a significant difference existed between the judgments on the foreseeable and

nonforeseeable stories by the Normal 8th grade subjects,  $F(1,44)=114.40$ ,  $p < .0001$ ; with foreseeable stories being judged more harshly than nonforeseeable ones (Foreseeable 6.7; Nonforeseeable = 4.1), but not for the acting-out 8th grade subjects,  $F(1,44) = 1.67$ ,  $p = .20$ ; (Foreseeable = 5.7, Nonforeseeable = 5.4).

The repeated measures ANOVA for the extenuating circumstances variable also yielded three significant main effects. The first one supported the second hypothesis; which stated that an act with extenuating circumstances would be judged less harshly than those with non-extenuating circumstances,  $F(1,44) = 80.52$ ,  $p < .0001$  (with marginal means of 5.46 for extenuating circumstances and 6.76 for non-extenuating circumstances). The second main effect revealed that 5th grade subjects were harsher in their judgments than 8th grade subjects,  $F(1,44) = 28.46$ ,  $p < .0001$  (with marginal means of 6.65 for the younger subjects and 5.57 for the older ones). The significant first-order interaction between grade and extenuating circumstances ( $F(1,44) = 9.98$ ,  $p < .005$ ) supports the sixth hypothesis, that younger subjects would be less responsive to variations in the extenuating circumstances variable than the older subjects (see Table 4 and appendix V).

TABLE 4  
 Mean Moral Judgments of Extenuating  
 Circumstances and Non-extenuating circumstances  
 by 5th and 8th Grade Subjects  
 Story

Grade	Ext. Circ.	N-Ext. Circ.
5th	6.23 <sup>a</sup>	7.07
8th	4.69 <sup>a</sup>	6.45
(diff)	1.54 <sup>b</sup>	0.62 <sup>b</sup>

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

The third main effect revealed that acting-out subjects made harsher judgments than did normal subjects for acts characterized by extenuating circumstances variable,  $F(1,44) = 19.46$ ,  $p < .001$  (with marginal means of 5.66 for normal subjects and 6.56 for acting-out subjects). The first-order interaction between group and extenuating circumstances,  $F(1,44) = 31.35$ ,  $p < .0001$ , further elucidates this finding, confirming the fourth hypothesis, that acting-out subjects will be less responsive to variations in the extenuating circumstances variable than normal subjects; revealing a greater judgment difference between extenuating circumstances and non-extenuating circumstances by the

normal subjects (2.12) than by the acting out subjects (.49) (see Table 5 and appendix V).

TABLE 5  
Mean Moral Judgments of Extenuating  
Circumstances and Non-extenuating Circumstances  
by Normal and Acting-out Subjects  
Story

Group	Ext. Circ.	N-Ext. Circ.
Normal	4.60 <sup>a, b</sup>	6.72 <sup>a</sup>
Acting-Out	6.31 <sup>b</sup>	6.80
(diff)	1.71 <sup>c</sup>	0.08 <sup>c</sup>

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

A comparison of normal and acting-out subjects on the foreseeable and nonforeseeable outcome stories replicates the findings of Sanvitale, et al. (1987); in again revealing that while normal 8th grade subjects judged the foreseeable stories significantly more harshly than did the acting-out 8th grade subjects, the reverse was true for the nonforeseeable stories:

$F(1.44) = 5.58$ ,  $p < .05$  for the normal vs. acting-out 13 year old subjects on the foreseeable stories; and,

$F(1,44) = 9.68$ ,  $p < .005$  for the normal vs. acting-out 13 year old subjects on the nonforeseeable stories (see Table 6 and appendix V).

TABLE 6  
Mean Moral Judgments of Foreseeable and  
Nonforeseeable Stories by  
5th and 8th Grade, Normal and Acting-out Subjects  
Story

Group	Grade		Fore.	N-Fore.
Normal	5	<u>M</u>	5.6 <sup>a,d,g</sup>	4.4 <sup>a,i</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	1.55	1.09
	8	<u>M</u>	6.7 <sup>b,d,h</sup>	4.1 <sup>b,j</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	.88	1.21
Acting-out	5	<u>M</u>	7.4 <sup>c,e,g</sup>	6.8 <sup>c,f,i</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	.87	.69
	8	<u>M</u>	5.7 <sup>e,h</sup>	5.4 <sup>f,j</sup>
		<u>SD</u>		

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

On the other hand, the younger subjects do not reveal such a reversal; acting-out 5th grade subjects made harsher judgments than normal 5th graders on both

foreseeable,  $F(1,44) = 17.28$ ,  $p < .0005$ , and nonforeseeable,  $F(1,44) = 38.07$ ,  $p < .0001$ , stories.

A similar shift occurred in the extenuating circumstances data. Here the results with the 8th graders revealed that while the normal subjects judged the non-extenuating circumstance stories more harshly than did the acting-out subjects,  $F(1,44) = 5.09$ ,  $p < .05$ , the reverse was true for the extenuating circumstance stories ( $F(1,44) = 21.15$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Again the reversal was not noted with the 5th graders, where the acting-out subjects judged more harshly than the normal subjects under both extenuating circumstance and non-extenuating conditions,  $F(1,44) = 19.18$ ,  $p < .0005$ ; and  $F(1,44) = 7.69$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively (see Table 7 and appendix V below)

TABLE 7

Mean Moral Judgments of Extenuating Circumstance  
and Non-Extenuating Circumstance Stories by  
5th and 8th Grade, Normal and Acting-Out Subjects

Group	Grade	Story		
		Ext. Circ.	N-Ext. Circ.	
Normal	5	<u>M</u>	5.4 <sup>a, e, e</sup>	6.6 <sup>a, g</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	.86	.93
	8	<u>M</u>	3.8 <sup>b, c, f</sup>	6.8 <sup>b, h</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	1.31	.89
Acting-Out	5	<u>M</u>	7.1 <sup>e, i</sup>	7.5 <sup>d, g</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	.77	.75
	8	<u>M</u>	5.6 <sup>f</sup>	6.1 <sup>d, h</sup>
		<u>SD</u>	.67	.54

Note. Means with same subscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

### Reasons

These results were analyzed individually for two of the three variables examined (due to reasons explained above)

#### Intentionality:

The repeated measures ANOVA for the foreseeability variable yielded one clearly significant main effect: Acts with foreseeable outcomes were judged as more

intentional than those with nonforeseeable outcomes,  $F(1,44) = 38.33, p < .0001$ . While no main effect was obtained for the grade contrast a first-order interaction was obtained between grade and foreseeability,  $F(1,44) = 4.49, p < .05$ . This interaction revealed a greater difference in intentionality between foreseeable and nonforeseeable outcomes made by the 5th grade subjects (.80) than by the 8th grade subjects (.39). Furthermore, the significant three-way interaction ( $F(1,44) = 4.26, p < .05$ ), along with pair-wise comparisons reveals that the only group which saliently fails to consider the differences in intentionality between the foreseeable and nonforeseeable stories is the 8th grade acting-out group (see Table 8 ). This was due to their tendency to rate the nonforeseeable stories as more intentional than any of the other groups. In fact, they significantly differ from their more normative peers in their intentionality rating of the nonforeseeable acts,  $F(1,44) = 9.83, p < .005$ .

TABLE 8

Mean Intentionality Ratings of Foreseeable and  
Nonforeseeable Stories by 5th and 8th Grade,  
Normal and Acting-Out Subjects

Group	Grade	Story	
		Fore.	N-Fore.
Normal	5	2.2 <sup>a</sup>	1.5 <sup>a</sup>
	8	2.0 <sup>b</sup>	1.5 <sup>b, c</sup>
Acting-Out	5	2.5 <sup>c</sup>	1.6 <sup>c, d</sup>
	8	2.1	2.0 <sup>d, e</sup>

Note. The ratings may range from 1 (unintentional) to 5 (intentional).

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

On the extenuating circumstances variable one main effect was also apparent: Acts with no extenuating circumstances were judged to be more intentional than those with extenuating circumstances,  $F(1,44) = 10.83$ ,  $p < .01$ . The two groups most responsible for this difference were the 8th grade normals and the 5th grade acting-out, whereas the 8th grade acting-out group completely failed to consider differences in intentionality between extenuating circumstances and non-extenuating circumstances stories (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

Mean Intentionality Ratings of Extenuating Circumstances  
and Non-Extenuating Circumstances Stories  
by 5th and 8th Grade, Normal and Acting-Out Subjects

Group	Grade	Story	
		Ext.Circ.	N-Ext.Circ.
Normal	5	1.6	2.0
	8	1.3 <sup>a, c</sup>	1.8 <sup>a</sup>
Acting-Out	5	1.6 <sup>b</sup>	2.0 <sup>b</sup>
	8	1.75 <sup>c</sup>	1.8

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

Affinity to the protagonist:

Results of a repeated measures ANOVA for the affinity scale within the foreseeability variable yielded two significant main effects: The protagonists of the foreseeable outcome stories were liked less than those of the nonforeseeable outcome stories,  $F(1,44) = 8.97$ ,  $p < .005$ ; and acting-out subjects tended to like the protagonist to a greater degree than the normal subjects,  $F(1,44) = 10.26$ ,  $p < .005$ .

A significant first-order interaction effect, between the groups and the foreseeability variable, revealed a greater rating of affinity difference

between foreseeable and nonforeseeable stories by the normal subjects (0.67) than by the acting-out subjects (-0.06),  $F(1,44) = 13.07$ ,  $p < .001$ . This finding is further clarified by the significant three-way interaction effect ( $F(1,44) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and visual inspection of the means (see Table 10). This reveals that the most conspicuous difference is apparent for the normal 8th grade group, who apparently make up the largest part of the variance between foreseeable and nonforeseeable normal subjects. This appears to be due to their tendency to "like" the protagonist on nonforeseeable stories to a greater degree than the other groups. On the other hand, acting-out subjects, regardless of age, did not indicate a preference for the protagonist in the two stories.

TABLE 10

Mean Affinity Ratings of Foreseeable and Nonforeseeable  
and Nonforeseeable Stories by 5th and 8th Grade,  
Normal and Acting-Out Subjects

Group	Grade	Story	
		Fore.	N-Fore.
Normal	5	3.3 <sup>a</sup>	2.9 <sup>c</sup>
	8	3.2 <sup>b, d</sup>	2.2 <sup>b</sup>
Acting-Out	5	2.5 <sup>a</sup>	2.5
	8	2.5 <sup>d</sup>	2.6

Note. The ratings may range from 1 (like) to 5 (dislike).

Note. Means with same superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

Within the extenuating circumstances variable two significant main effect were found: The protagonists of the non-extenuating circumstances stories were liked less than those of the extenuating circumstances stories,  $F(1,44) = 22.82$ ,  $p < .0001$ ; and acting-out subjects tended to like the protagonists to a greater degree than normal subjects,  $F(1,44) = 5.06$ ,  $p < .05$ . Yet qualification of these findings are noted in the significant three-way interaction effect. For instance,

the group showing the greater difference in affinity toward the protagonist between extenuating circumstance and non-extenuating circumstance stories was, once again, the normal 8th grade group (see Table 11). Furthermore, this group also differed from the normal 5th graders in affinity ratings for the stories with extenuating, but not for the nonextenuating, circumstances. Another group showing the difference between extenuating circumstance and non-extenuating circumstance was the acting-out 5th graders. And finally, a difference between normal and acting-out 5th grade subjects was noted in the extenuating circumstance stories, and for 8th grade subjects on the non-extenuating circumstance stories.

TABLE 11

Mean Affinity Ratings of Extenuating and Non-Extenuating  
Circumstance Stories by 5th and 8th Grade,  
Normal and Acting-Out Subjects

Group	Grade	Story	
		Ext.Circ.	N-Ext.Circ.
Normal	5	2.8 <sup>a</sup>	3.1
	8	2.1 <sup>d, c</sup>	3.4 <sup>d, e</sup>
Acting-Out	5	2.4 <sup>b, a</sup>	3.1 <sup>b</sup>
	8	2.5	2.6 <sup>e</sup>

Note. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at  $p < .01$ .

## CHAPTER V

Discussion

This study has demonstrated that pre-adolescent boys and young adolescent males consider information regarding the foreseeability of an outcome and extenuating circumstances in morally evaluating acts with unintended outcomes. Further, it shows that there are salient differences between normal and acting out youngsters in the way that they utilize such information. Age differences in the use of these complex modifiers of intentionality were also found. Finally, an interaction effect between group (normal/acting-out) and age revealed that while normal subjects become harsher with age the opposite is true of acting out subjects (these findings are qualified by a three-way interaction, expanded upon below).

Specifically, the more general finding replicated the results of Sanvitale et al. (1987) in revealing that young adolescents do indeed give weight to information about the foreseeability of an outcome in morally judging their peers. Story protagonists were judged more harshly when there was evidence that the bad outcome could have been foreseen (as per the first hypothesis). The present study further revealed that pre-adolescents, while also aware of the

"foreseeability" information, do not seem to be as responsive to variations in this variable as the older adolescents (as suggested in the fifth hypothesis). Does this signify a developmental progression in the ability to differentiate between different levels of (moral) intentionality? The evidence suggests that it does. In fact, a similar finding was also apparent on the second modifier of intentionality systematically introduced (extenuating circumstances); where in general, acts characterized by unintended bad outcomes occurring in the context of extenuating circumstances were judged less harshly than those without extenuating circumstances being present (as per the second hypothesis). Further, and parallel to the findings for foreseeability (cited above), the difference between was more salient for older subjects than for younger ones (sixth hypothesis). These findings suggest a developmental progression in sensitivity to modifiers of moral intentionality as a principle of judgement. It should be noted that, in contrast to foreseeability, extenuating circumstances acts to reduce harshness of judgements. That is, while acts with foreseeable outcomes are judged more harshly than those without, acts with extenuating circumstances are judged more leniently than those without. The advantage of this

pattern lies in its demonstration that the age differences are not merely due to an overall increase or decrease in harshness, but rather to a greater awareness or use of complex moral judgment factors with increasing age. Further substantiating the fact that youngsters do not merely judge more harshly with increasing age is the finding that while older subjects are harsher on foreseeable stories than younger subjects, they are more lenient on nonforeseeable stories.

Also in replication of Sanvitale et al. (1987) the normal subjects' judgments differentiated more sharply between the foreseeable and nonforeseeable outcomes than did the acting-out subjects' (as predicted in the third hypothesis). Further, like in the earlier study, while the judgments by the normal subjects of the foreseeable acts were harsher than those by the acting out subjects, the judgments by the normal subjects of the nonforeseeable acts were more lenient than those by the acting out subjects. Since younger subjects differentiate less between different levels of these complex modifiers of intentionality than older subjects, then the above findings seem to indicate that acting-out subjects may be characterized as less developmentally advanced than normal subjects in this capacity. In fact the judgment means on foreseeable outcome stories of the

normal 10 year olds (5.6) are remarkably similar to those of the acting out 13 year olds (5.7).

The findings for the extenuating circumstances variable substantiates the claim that normal subjects differentiate more sharply between different levels in this modifier of intentionality variable (as per the fourth hypothesis). In this case the judgments by the normal subjects of the acts with extenuating circumstances were more lenient than those by the acting out subjects, while the acts without extenuating circumstances were judged more harshly by normal subjects. Further substantiating the developmental lags of acting out subjects is again the remarkable likeness in the mean judgments of acts with extenuating circumstances between normal 10 year olds (5.4) and acting-out 13 year olds (5.6).

In examining overall patterns, it is interesting to note the three way interaction (see Table 6); which reveals that while normal subjects become harsher with age on foreseeable stories, the opposite is true for acting-out subjects. For the nonforeseeable stories no age difference was noted with normal subjects, while acting out subjects again became more lenient with age. Thus, the acting-out subjects become less harsh in

judgment regardless of whether the "unintended" outcome was foreseeable or not, while the developmental progression depends on this variation in the nature of the outcome. Within the extenuating circumstances variable, for stories highlighting the extenuating circumstance of an act, both normal and acting out subjects become more lenient with age, whereas on stories without extenuating circumstances no age difference was noted for the normal subjects, while the acting out subjects again became more lenient with increasing age.

These interactions are indicative of the intricate underpinnings in the use of complex modifier of intentionality. Certainly it cannot be denied that the information provided by these variables (as well as possibly numerous others) are considered by children, and especially adolescents, in their justifications of moral reasoning. With regard to a major question underlying the present investigation - whether groups known to differ in their social functioning would also differ in relevant aspects of moral judgments - the above findings clearly demonstrate the importance of these complex variables, which modify simple intentionality, as factors in forming the moral

judgments by children and young adolescents. Furthermore, the results reveal that acting-out adolescents, who are typically reported as unrealistic in predicting the social consequences of their own behavior, also appeared less discerning than their more normative peers in considering the relevance of foreseeability and extenuating circumstances when judging peers involved in hypothetical moral situations. As in Sanvitale et al. (1987), this finding adds further confirmation to the increasing evidence (c.f., Blasi's 1980 review) that moral judgment/reasoning are related to social functioning and behavior.

As revealed in the "reasons" phase of this study, especially within the intentionality scale, many other variables are at play in the moral decision-making processes of youngsters. The manner by which they draw conclusions regarding intentionality is quite interesting. Clearly acts with foreseeable outcomes were considered more intentional than those with no foreseeable outcome, although this was not the case for older acting-out subjects, who apparently felt that acts without foreseeable outcomes were as intentional as those which were foreseeable. It is possible that as they get older these youngsters become more critical of

seemingly benign situations due to a general hypersensitivity to bad outcomes. In fact, they also seemed unaware of differences in stories with and without extenuating circumstances in regard to intentionality; while overall results revealed a greater tendency to view the stories with no extenuating circumstances as more intentional. This may be due to the nature of the stories to highlight greater gain for the protagonist than for the victim. Whereas the normal subjects tended to be very sensitive to the modifiers of intentionality variables (foreseeability and extenuating circumstances), the older acting-out subjects appeared to be more concerned with the ultimate outcome, which as mentioned above was a greater gain for the protagonist who was involved in directly or indirectly causing the negative outcome for the victim. These findings are similar to the qualitative reasons offered by the acting out subjects in Sanvitale et al. (1987), where the subjects did not see the protagonist of the self-interest stories as more culpable, since they "would have done the same thing" (thus demonstrating awareness of the self-interest variable but using it to exculpate or justify the act committed by the protagonist). This was explained in reference to the findings of Hudgins

and Prentice (1977) which showed that delinquent adolescents typically reason at a lower level of moral reasoning and thus equate self-interest with moral justification. In the present case, it is the authors opinion, that it appears that the 8th grade acting-out subjects again centered on the self-interest of the protagonist and failed to take into account the nuances of the modifiers of intentionality variables (foreseeability and extenuating circumstances).

In the same light, the findings on the affinity scale, revealed that the acting out youngsters liked the protagonist in foreseeable stories more than the normal subjects; and whereas normal subjects (especially older ones) showed a difference in their degree of affinity toward the protagonist between stories with foreseeable outcomes and those without, acting-out subjects did not. Again it is quite possible that the acting-out subjects were centering on the actual outcome rather than the foreseeability of the outcome, thus showing them to be less developmentally advanced. It is also possible that they were identifying with the protagonists in stories where self-interest may have provoked the act in spite of the ability to foresee the outcome, thus indirectly exculpating themselves.

It is obvious that more research is needed to clarify these latter findings which were not directly addressed in the present study. Such research should focus on the subtle nuances involved in the decision making processes of these groups. One difficulty which was encountered in the present study was the use of scales to better quantify the results of the interview. While they were successful in achieving this end, they reduced the depth of qualitative reasons offered to more open ended interview questions. Perhaps it would be better not to compromise on such richness of responses for the mere purpose of obtaining more clear quantitative results, on future studies .

### Implications

This study has examined the differences between normal and acting-out adolescent and pre-adolescent male subjects, in their ability to judge systematically manipulated modifiers of moral intentionality principles. This population (emotionally disturbed/acting out subjects) is ideal for an investigation of moral judgements (and hopefully action as well), since their lack of appropriate behaviors has earned them the classification of handicapped and a special education placement (by the Committee on Special Education, according to State and Federal regulations). Also, this conduct disorder apparently leaves them educationally disabled, and often socially inept (many times resulting in further delinquent behaviors, and ultimately a possible criminal status).

If we begin to understand some of the differences between these youngsters and their more normative peers, we may learn how to better provide for them educationally and psychologically. For instance, as implicated in the findings of the present study, if acting-out youngsters are less aware of subtle clues in variables of intentionality, we may be able to educate them, or at least accent these modifiers of

intentionality characteristics so that they may become adept at noticing them, monitoring them, and considering them in their own (moral) actions, and thus, hopefully reducing their degree of acting out behaviors and making them better able to learn (not only social skills, but also the academic materials for which they have been placed in a special educational environment in the first place). Of course, although the acting-out subjects did not reveal the differences between the variables to the same degree as the normal subjects, it is possible that they may have been aware of these differences but, for some reason, the knowledge was not utilized. In using the stories in this study to stimulate discussion with groups of youngsters it may be possible to better understand whether there is actually a lack of knowledge (thus some sort of delayed development) or a reluctance to use the knowledge. Regardless of the reason for not utilizing (or noticing) environmental clues, discussions with youngsters who do, may broaden the understanding of normal moral decision making for all youngsters and their teachers. On a small scale, such a feat may enable an individual youngster to progress through the educational system in a less hampered fashion, and to become more socially accepted. On a large scale, this

study may have implications for society at large; since it may well be these youngsters that seem to slip through the cracks of the educational system, and then become the adults who continue to misjudge the "goodness" and "badness" of an act, and contribute to our continually growing incidence of criminal injustice.

Education does not entail the inculcation of academic materials alone, but also the teaching of the subtle awarenesses of social interactions. This does not signify that the school is omniscient and should provide hard rules of social/moral interactions, but rather it should explore alternatives of behaviors so that flexibility, and the ability to perceive different perspectives, may be achieved. It is believed that the current research may reveal how important it is to incorporate such social-educational teachings (as well as the awareness of teachers of the differences that exist between their students) in the curriculums of special education classes (and eventually in all of education). It is sincerely hoped that this research does not remain within the realm of academia (as much important research has), but has a chance to filter through to applied education. In the current capacity of the author, the needs of special education teachers

are constantly being devulged; and as such the utilization of some of these principles seems feasible. Furthermore, given the tumultuous state of State regulations some of these principles may be offered as an alternate fashion of reducing the learning difficulties of the youngsters in question.

## Appendix I

Please rate these stories on the following variables  
(place X on the continuum)

Intentions (of the protagonist).

1-----10  
(good) (bad)

Foreseeability (to what extent could the protagonist  
foresee the outcome)

1-----10  
(easily) (not at all)

Extenuating Circumstances (to what degree were they  
present)

1-----10  
(clearly present) (not present)

Degree of Rivalry (how much rivalry exists between the  
two main characters)

1-----10  
(none) (much)

Interest Level (for 5th. and 8th. grade students)

1-----10  
(none) (much)

Comprehensibility (could 5th. & 8th. grade students  
understand story)

1-----10  
(easily) (not at all)

**Other comments:**

## Appendix II

## STORIES

	FORE.	N-FORE.	EXT.CIR.	N-EXT.CIR.
SOCIAL:	Stereo	Vacuum	Pool	B.B.Q.
GAMES:	Video	Atari	Bike	Handball

## Appendix II (continued)

Stereo story (foreseeable-social):

Eddie and his friend wanted to throw an end of the school year party, but each of them wanted to have the party at his own house. Although Eddie really wanted the party to be at his house, he realized that his friend had a better stereo system so he agreed to have the party at his friend's house. The day before the party, while they were choosing records and tapes, they noticed that the stereo wasn't working quite right. Eddie told his friend not to bother taking it to the store, which was far away. Eddie took the stereo apart and started to repair it; but without realizing he crossed the wires and the power in the stereo blew. It could not be repaired in time for the party, so they had to have the party at Eddie's house.

## Appendix II (continued)

Vacuum (Non-foreseeable - Social)

Bob was thinking of throwing a party for Halloween. His friend told him that he was also planning a party. Bob had never had a party at his house and was looking forward to having this one, but he knew that his friend had never had one either. So he agreed to join his friend's party and offered to help him clean up the house for the party. The day before the party his friend suggested that Bob do the vacuuming while he put up the decorations. When Bob plugged in the vacuum cleaner, he did so in an outlet that wasn't working right. This caused a short-circuit and all the electricity went out in the house. They couldn't have the party at his friend's house, so they had to have it at Bob's house.

## Appendix II (continued)

Pool (Extenuating circumstances - Social)

John was helping his friend set up for a pool party at his friend's house. Even though he wanted to have the party at his own house, he realized that his friend's swimming pool was larger and that more people would come. His friend had to leave for a few minutes to run an errand so he asked John if he would turn off the pool filter in 5 minutes because it could otherwise get jammed. John was waiting patiently for 3 or 4 minutes, then he heard what appeared to be the sounds of someone trying to break into the house. He called out but no one answered, so he ran into the house to see what was going on. He looked in 3 rooms before he found his friend's little brother climbing in the window (because he had forgotten his key). Realizing that he had to shut off the pump, he ran back to the pool but it was too late; the pump had jammed. Since it could not be repaired in time they had to hold the party at John's house.

## Appendix II (continued)

B.B.Q. (Non-extenuating circumstances - Social)

It was the middle of summer and Bill and his friend were preparing for a Bar.B.Q. for all their friends. Although Bill would have liked to have had the party at his house, he realized that his friend's backyard was much larger and decided to help his friend set up for the B.B.Q.. Since his friend had to go to the store, Bill volunteered to continue cleaning the backyard as well as take care of the dog. Since the dog was big and clumsy he had to make sure not to leave him alone outside. While Bill was cleaning the B.B.Q. grill, he decided to listen to music. He went inside to turn the stereo on, and when he came back out he saw that the dog had knocked over the B.B.Q. grill. Since it could not be repaired in time, they had to have the get-together at Bill's house.

## Appendix II (continued)

Video (Foreseeable - Game)

Jack and his friend were both in the finals of a neighborhood video game contest. Jack had the cartridge for the game at home to practice with. Since his friend didn't have that particular game, Jack offered to lend him his own cartridge the night before the contest. Jack said he'd drop it off at his friend's house, so his friend didn't try to get the cartridge from anyone else. In his rush to get ready to go out, Jack picked up the wrong cartridge and dropped it off at his friend's house before he got home. When his friend inserted the cartridge in the set, the set got jammed. Although he later got the cartridge out, his friend could not practice for the contest, and he didn't even place within the top five in the contest, but Jack came in third.

## Appendix II (continued)

Atari (Non-foreseeable - Game)

Sal went with his friend to a computer store to buy an Atari system. The store was offering some free game cartridges to the highest scorer in a video contest being held the following day. They both signed up for the competition. Sal, who had just gotten his own Atari system, offered to come over to his friend's house to show him some important things about the video games so that his friend could get ready for the contest. When Sal finished connecting the set and went to turn it on, he pushed a switch and the electricity in the house was short circuited. Later they found out that the set was defective and the store replaced it. That night his friend could not practice and so he did very poorly in the contest but Sal won several game cartridges.

## Appendix II (continued)

Bike (Extenuating circumstances - Game)

Bob and his friend were riding their bicycles around the neighborhood preparing for a bike race, and had stopped to get a drink. His friend saw a store and wanted to go buy something, so Bob was watching his friend's bike for him. As Bob was watching his friend's bike he heard what he thought was his little brother calling for help. He quickly rode his bike up the block, but realized it was some other little kids playing games. He quickly returned to the store front but his friend's bike was gone. Although his friend got his bike back several days later, it was not in time for the race so he could not enter; while Bob took third prize.

## Appendix II (continued)

Handball (Non-extenuating circumstances - Game)

Joe and his friend were playing handball in the schoolyard after school, preparing for a neighborhood handball tournament. When his friend realized that he had to pick his little brother up from school, Joe volunteered to watch his bookbag since he knew there was an important assignment that his friend had to hand in the following day. While watching his friend's stuff and practicing on his own, Joe saw another of his friends in the distance and decided to go talk to him. When he returned he could not find the bookbag. His friend was punished for not having the assignment completed on time and was not allowed to compete in the handball tournament; Joe came in third place.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Story \_\_\_\_\_ Order \_\_\_\_\_

-----

Very, Very Good A little Not A little Bad Very Very  
very very good good good and good bad bad bad very  
good good good and not bad bad bad bad bad

Q.

Appendix III (continued)

Yes  
Definitely

Probably

Maybe

Not really

Not at  
All

2.

3(a) Yes  No  ... Q? ...

(b) Yes  No

Appendix III (continued)

Completely  
Caused by  
Something Else

Mainly  
Caused by  
Something Else

A little  
of both

Mainly  
Caused by  
The Person

Completely  
Caused by  
The Person



A.

Q?

Appendix III (continued)

Dislike him  
A lot

Don't Like  
Much

Don't Care  
One way or other

Like him  
Some

Like him  
A lot

5

Dear parent,

I will be conducting a study of social reasoning of students. The aim will be to discover general dispositions of adolescents and pre-adolescents, and thus the youngsters will not be individually compared to one another. Furthermore, the study will be conducted so that anonymity of all youngsters will be maintained. I will be using a random sample from the school population, of which your son is a part, and am thus asking your permission for his participation. In the past, youngsters have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I will also make sure that the youngsters will not miss any important school work while participating in the study.

I give permission for my son to participate in this study.

---

Parent's signature

Please return to me as soon as possible.  
Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sanvitale  
Reed School Psychologist

P.S. The results of the study will be available to you upon request. If you have any further questions, please call me at 348-5118, Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday during school hours.

## Appendix V

Summary of the Analyses of Variance:

Repeated Measure Factor(R): Level 1 = Foreseeable  
 Level 2 = Nonforeseeable  
 Independent variable (A): Group (Normal/Acting-out)  
 Independent variable (B): Grade (5th & 8th)

<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
A Var.	29.82	1	29.82	17.01	.0003
B Var.	8.46	1	8.46	4.83	.0313
A x B	25.01	1	25.01	14.26	.0007
<u>ERROR 1</u>	77.14	44	1.75		
R	33.84	1	33.84	96.69	.0000
A x R	12.40	1	12.40	35.42	.0001
B x R	1.63	1	1.63	4.65	.0344
A x B x R	4.17	1	4.17	11.90	.0015
<u>ERROR 2</u>	15.40	44	.35		

xx

Repeated Measure Factor(R): Level 1 = Extenuating  
 Circumstance  
 Level 2 = Non-extenuating  
 Circumstance  
 Independent variable (A): Group (Normal/Acting-out)  
 Independent variable (B): Grade (5th & 8th)

<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
A Var.	19.35	1	19.35	19.45	.0001
B Var.	28.28	1	28.28	28.42	.0003
A x B	3.60	1	3.60	3.62	.06
Error 1	43.77	44	.99		
R	40.56	1	40.56	80.17	.0000
A x R	15.93	1	15.93	31.48	.0002
B x R	5.09	1	5.09	10.06	.003
A x B x R	4.33	1	4.33	8.57	.0055
Error 2	22.26	44	.51		

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