Supplementary Online Materials:

Constraints on Conventions: Resolving Two Puzzles of Conventionality

A Brief History of the Moral-Conventional Distinction and its Critiques

Developmental and cultural variability in judgments and reasoning about conventional concerns has generated much scholarly debate. Some have argued that young children do not distinguish between conventional considerations about authorities or traditions and moral considerations about welfare and rights (Gabennesch, 1990; Kohlberg, 1971). Others have argued that the distinction between moral and conventional considerations are unique to Western liberals, and that individuals from other communities are less prone to make this distinction (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Machery, 2018; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). To understand these debates, and their remaining puzzles about the moral-conventional distinction, a brief historical overview will be useful.

From Piaget to Social Domain Theory

Within developmental psychology, Piaget (1932) provided a precursor to the moral-conventional distinction (1932; see Nucci, Turiel, & Roded, 2017; Turiel & Smetana, 1998). In his seminal work on moral development, Piaget distinguished between *heteronomous* morality, which emerged first, and *autonomous* morality, which emerged later in childhood. In heteronomous morality, judgments of right and wrong were founded on unilateral respect for authority; what adults say defines what is right. Heteronomous morality thus resembles what later became the conventional domain. In autonomous morality, judgments of right and wrong were founded on mutual respect among interactants; what is acceptable for all interactants defines what is right.

Building on Piaget's work, Kohlberg (1971) delineated three developmental levels of moral reasoning. Kohlberg centered these levels on the concept of conventionality: *pre-conventional* reasoning (in which agents' own interest defined what was right), *conventional* reasoning (in which prevailing customs and authority commands defined what was right), and *post-conventional* reasoning (in which universal principles defined what was right). Kohlberg claimed that children initially confuse morality with agents' self-interest and, later, with conventionality. Kohlberg, like Piaget, also held that many adults continue to confuse morality with conventions. The data taken to support these three levels came from classifications of how children and adults reasoned about a series of moral dilemmas in structured interviews (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987a, 1987b).

In a departure from Piaget and Kohlberg, Turiel (1983) proposed that even young children distinguish morality. Turiel's framework, known as Social Domain Theory, rests on the notion that children and adults have evaluative concepts that fall into moral, conventional, and other domains (Killen & Smetana, 2015; Smetana, 2013; Turiel, 2015). Social domain researchers interviewed children about straightforward events involving violations of dress codes or acts of hitting, avoiding the complex demands of Kohlberg's dilemmas (Dahl, Gingo, Uttich, & Turiel, 2018; Turiel, 2008). As described earlier, this research showed that even preschoolers reasoned about issues like dressing, eating, speaking, and playing based on concerns with authorities, consensus, or tradition (Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 1985). In contrast, the children reasoned about issues like hitting or stealing based on concerns with welfare and rights. Subsequent work also showed that preschoolers made judgments about dangerous actions, such as running down the stairs, based on so-called

prudential concerns with the agents' own welfare (Dahl & Kim, 2014; Tisak, 1993; Tisak & Turiel, 1984).

In addition to introducing a new interview paradigm, Turiel (1983) reconceptualized the distinction between morality and convention. Kohlberg had defined post-conventional (i.e., distinctly moral) reasoning in terms of its *formal* properties: the use of abstract, universal principles, such as the Golden Rule or the categorical imperative (Kant, 1785; Kohlberg, 1963). In contrast, Turiel defined the moral domain in terms of its *substantive* properties: concepts of others' welfare, rights, justice, and fairness (Turiel, 1983, pp. 34–35). Accordingly, Turiel defined the conventional domain through substantive conceptions of social organization, tradition, authorities, and consensus. The substantive, as opposed to formal, definitions of the moral and conventional domains enabled research on moral and conventional reasoning in young children. Preschoolers do not usually articulate abstract principles of reciprocity, but they do express (moral) concerns with welfare and rights ("he could get hurt," Turiel, 1983, p. 49) that differ from their (conventional) concerns with authority commands or consensus (Dahl & Kim, 2014; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Schmidt, Rakoczy, & Tomasello, 2012; Smetana et al., 2012).

Although the moral-conventional distinction was fundamentally a distinction among concepts (e.g., welfare vs. authority commands), social domain researchers also applied the terms "moral" and "conventional" to concrete norms and events. For instance, Weston and Turiel write that children "distinguish between moral norms (e.g., those pertaining to the inflicting of harm on people or stealing) and conventional norms (e.g., those pertaining to forms of address, modes of greeting, or table manners)" (Weston & Turiel, 1980, p. 418; see also Dahl & Kim, 2014; Machery, 2018; Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2014; Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig,

1987). Reflecting the same terminology, Turiel and colleagues (1987) refer to the "conventional nature" of "forms of address, customs, table manners" (p. 214).

Social domain researchers have classified norms as conventional based on whether interviews about those norms tend to elicit conventional responses: "[W]ithin our culture, there is a correspondence between certain kinds of events and the domain of reasoning applied" (Turiel et al., 1987, p. 171). Hence, the norm classification is derived from expected or observed patterns in participants' reasoning (for a discussion, see Turiel et al., 1987). Dress codes were classified as conventional norms because when researchers asked why violating dress codes were wrong, children and adults tended to reference conventional considerations. Thus, not all norms and events could categorized as either moral or conventional. Events that elicited considerations from multiple domains were termed mixed-domain events (Turiel, 1983, 1989; Turiel & Dahl, 2019; Turiel et al., 1987).

A central claim of social domain theory is that domain-mixtures prompt individuals to balance competing norms (Dahl et al., 2018; Nucci et al., 2017; Turiel, Hildebrandt, & Wainryb, 1991). This balancing can lead individuals to subordinate one domain to another or to strive to coordinate the competing considerations. In a recent intervention study, Nucci, Creane, and Powers (2015) presented middle-school students with situations in which moral concerns (e.g., others' welfare) conflicted with conventional norms (e.g., authority commands). In one of the situations, a moral concern with promoting education for all genders was pitted against authority commands to keep girls out of school. At the pre-intervention assessment, participants often subordinated one concern to another without acknowledgement, for instance focusing exclusively on gender equality or obedience to authorities. During the intervention period, school teachers implemented history lessons to stimulate students' reasoning about moral and

conventional considerations. At the post-intervention assessment, students were more likely than before to coordinate moral concerns with conventions by acknowledging and seeking to resolve the conflict (for additional detail and discussion, see Nucci et al., 2015). Several lines of research have shown developmental changes in how individuals coordinate competing considerations (see e.g., Helwig, 1995; Killen, Elenbaas, & Rizzo, 2018; Nucci et al., 2017; Smetana, 2013).

The focus of research on cross-domain coordination has been on how individuals balanced existing conventions against non-conventional concerns, not how individuals evaluated those conventions in the first place. For instance, Nucci and Gingo (2011) write "[W]hen overlaps occur an individuals' reasoning will reflect both the degree to which the individual attends to the domain-salient features of the given issue and the degree to which an individual is able to bring elements across domains into coordination or harmony. In some cases conventions merely codify, or are consistent with, morality. In other cases conventions that serve to maintain organization are in conflict with moral concern for what might be objectively considered fair or just" (p. 428). In other words, cross-domain coordination starts with an existing convention that either conflicts or aligns with a moral norm. Consequently, as discussed below, theorizing about cross-domain coordination has not explained how individuals judge that some potential conventions about how to dress, eat, or speak are inherently bad and should not be adopted.

Critiques and Replies about the Moral-Conventional Distinction

The classification of norms or events as moral or conventional has provoked recurrent controversies. At regular intervals since the 1980s, researchers have challenged the moral-conventional distinction by pointing to apparent mismatches between the domain of reasoning and the acts regulated by the norm. Some researchers have found that judgments about harm were influenced by authority commands (Kelly, Stich, Haley, Eng, & Fessler, 2007; Rhodes &

Chalik, 2013). Other critics have claimed that people sometimes treat seemingly harmless acts of dressing, eating, speaking, or playing as moral violations (Gabennesch, 1990; Haidt et al., 1993; Nichols, 2002; Nisan, 1987; Shweder et al., 1987). Both critiques rely on the assumption that social domain theory classifies all harm events as moral and all dressing, eating, speaking, and playing events as conventional. Furthermore, critics often assume that social domain theory views these two categories of events – moral and conventional – as exhaustive of all social events about which people make judgments of right and wrong. This misreading of social domain theory is reflected in the following quote: "According to Turiel and colleagues' moral domain theory […] people distinguish two kinds of wrong action:" acts prohibited by "moral norms" and acts prohibited by "conventional norms" (Machery, 2018, p. 261).

Social domain scholars have replied that critics have misconstrued both the responses of participants and the claims of social domain theory (Helwig, Tisak, & Turiel, 1990; Turiel et al., 1987; Turiel & Smetana, 1998). For instance, some behaviors presumed to be harmless by researchers were in fact perceived to be harmful by participants (Jacobson, 2012; Turiel et al., 1987). In one paper, Nichols (2002) termed spitting in one's napkin before dining as harmless, yet subsequent research found that participants perceived this act to affect other diners negatively (Royzman, Leeman, & Baron, 2009). Similarly, violations of existing dress codes can offend others through symbolic meanings, which is sometimes called a "second-order" moral event (Helwig & Prencipe, 1999; Turiel, 1983; see also Gray, Young, & Waytz, 2012). A famous example second-order moral event involves a person wearing a bikini to a funeral. Given the clothing conventions in most Western countries, wearing a bikini to a funeral would likely be hurtful to others attending the funeral, even if bikinis were customary at funerals elsewhere (for an extended discussion, see Turiel, 1989).

Social domain researchers have also noted that many critics have studied responses to mixed-domain events, rather than purely moral or conventional events (Helwig et al., 1990; Turiel, 1989; Turiel et al., 1987). As noted, social domain theory classifies situations that elicit reasoning from multiple domains as mixed-domain events, not as moral or conventional events. As mixed-domain events do exist, the mere presence of perceived harm does not make an event moral, nor do concerns with authority commands make an event conventional. Mixed-domain situations require coordination between competing concerns with welfare, fairness, and authority commands, sometimes leading individuals to prioritize authority commands over concerns with welfare (Dahl et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2007; Nucci et al., 2017; Turiel & Dahl, 2019; Wainryb, 1991). Hence, social domain theory hypothesizes that judgments and reasoning about mixed-domain events will look very different from judgments and reasoning about purely moral or conventional events (Turiel et al., 1991). For instance, when concerns with welfare are pitted against authority commands, as when soldiers are ordered to kill, judgments and reasoning about harmful actions may incorporate conventional concerns with authorities. These domain-mixtures, however, do not undermine the moral-conventional distinction; in fact, the very notion of domain-mixtures is premised on a distinction between moral and conventional concepts (for further discussion, see Turiel, 1989; Turiel et al., 1987).

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Study 1: Scenario Descriptions

Food: Noisy
John is at a fancy, quiet restaurant. He is speaking and laughing so loudly that guests at tables all over the restaurant can hear him.

Food: Chewing
Mary is eating lunch at a large table in a dining hall. She chews her food with her mouth open so that all the students around her can see it.

Speaking: Laugh
Andy is in a large lecture class. A student near him is clearly struggling with the course material, and gives the wrong answer to one of the questions by the instructor. Andy turns toward the student laughing and makes fun of the students' answer

Speaking: Email
Jenny writes an email to a professor she doesn't know. Jenny's email doesn't include a greeting or a signature and simply says: "Will there be section in the first week of classes?"

Clothing: Sweats
Paul gets a job at the front desk of a nice hotel. On his first day, he shows up to work wearing sweats even though he knows there's a dress code.

Clothing: Barefoot
Briana decides to go to school barefoot on a day when she knows it's rainy and cold.

Study 1: Adjective Checklist

Below are some adjectives that could be used to describe the person's action. Please indicate how much you agree that this adjective describes the person's action.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Dangerous	○	○	○	○	○
Childish	○	○	○	○	○
Disrespectful	○	○	○	○	○
Gross	○	○	○	○	○
Hurtful	○	○	○	○	○
Inconsiderate	○	○	○	○	○
Mean	○	○	○	○	○
Offensive	○	○	○	○	○
Wasteful	○	○	○	○	○
Weird	○	○	○	○	○

Study 2: Scenario Description

Default	**Alternative**	**Affect agents**	**Affect others**
		Sports jersey	
[Protagonist] plays on a basketball team and learns that all the teammates think they should wear red jerseys.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that all the teammates think they should wear blue jerseys.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that all the teammates think they should wear the same jerseys as the other team.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that all the teammates think they should her teammates wear jerseys with white supremacist symbols.
		Making requests	
[Protagonist] is at a dinner and learns that everyone thinks they should say “Please” after asking for something.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should clap hands once after asking for something.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should recite a five minute passage after asking for something.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should threaten to beat the other person up if they don’t pass you something.
		Remaining in classroom	
[Protagonist] is in a class where the teacher regularly tells the students to stay in the classroom after class, and learns that the students think they should remain in the classroom for five minutes.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that the students think they should leave the classroom right away.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that the students think they should remain in the classroom for 30 minutes without speaking to each other.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that the students think they should remain in the classroom for five minutes while ganging up on one student, teasing and beating him.
		Responding to sign	
[Protagonist] approaches a printed sign that says "Do not walk here" and learns that everyone thinks they should follow the sign by crossing the street and walk on the other side.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should go against the sign by continuing past it.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should walk a three-mile detour to avoid the sign.	Imagine that [protagonist] is in a different society and learns that everyone thinks they should avoid the area with the sign by stepping on a person in their way.

Studies 3 and 4: Scenario Description

Default	Alternative	Affect agents	Affect others
		Bathing suit	
In this school, teachers said that kids should not wear a bathing suit to school.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should wear a bathing suit to school.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said that the kids should wear a bathing suit, even though it's really cold outside.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said that the kids should steal clothes from other kids and wear those.
		Toys during lunch	
In this school, the teachers said that kids should not play with toys during lunch.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should play with toys during lunch.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should use toys to eat instead of spoons and forks.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should take toys from other kids during lunch.
		New toys	
In this school, the teachers said kids couldn't play with any of the new toys.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should play with the new toys.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should break the new toys.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should break other kids' toys.
		Speaking in preschool	
In this school, the teachers said the kids should not say anything during lunch.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should talk during lunch.	What if [child] was a school where the teachers said the kids should be quiet all whole day.	What if [child] was in a school where the teachers said the kids should say mean things to other kids.

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