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RELATIONSHIP REPRESENTATION IN THE PROCESS OF REAL-LIFE MORAL JUDGMENT[1]

Abstract

In this article we have focused on the topic how relationships are represented in the process of moral judgment. We have argued that both Kohlberg (1973, 1984) and Gilligan (1982) pointed out different types of relationship representation in moral reasoning. In so-called care-based reasoning, principles are subordinated to relationships; in so-called justice-based reasoning, relationships are subordinated to universal principles. The research sample consisted of 261 adolescents (mean average = 17.3, 46% girls and 54% boy). A dating-dilemma situation with ten different items was offered to participants in a questionnaire. Every item indicated a different solution (to date or not to date), different levels of reasoning (preconventional, conventional, or postconventional) and a different relationship representation (justice-based or care-based). We found the elimination of care-based reasoning and justice-based reasoning on both the conventional and postconventional level, in both girls and boys. This means that persons differ in preference of these types of reasoning, yet regardless of gender.

Key words: moral judgment, care-based reasoning, justice-based reasoning, real-life moral situation

In this article we focus on the topic how interpersonal relationships are represented in the process of moral judgment. There are different understandings of relationships within the cognitive-developmental theories.

Kohlberg (1973, 1984) concentrated primarily on cognitive structures that he supposed to be important for reasoning. He talks about three important levels in moral development: preconventional, conventional and postconventional. According to this theory, only the highest level deals with hierarchy, rule, formal logic, rationality of solving and justice. That is why he understood reasoning dealing with specific relationships and responsibility as typical for the conventional level of moral development. In fact, real relationships were viewed as subsidiary, because they are not universal, but context-dependent.

On the other hand, Gilligan (1982) argued that real relationships are crucial for moral judgment. She argued that Kohlberg's theory describes only the moral de-

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velopment of men, who understand moral dilemma as a conflict between the self and other persons. In contrast, women tend to view moral dilemmas as a conflict of personal relationships. According to Gilligan, women are more care-oriented and more concentrated on specific relationships; their judgments are based on empathy, compassion and responsibility toward other persons.

We argue that both Kohlberg and Gilligan pointed out different types of relationship representation in the process of moral reasoning. Relationships in general, specific relationships or the logic of relationships are key factors for reasoning in so-called care-based reasoning. In this type of representation, principles are subordinated to relationships. In so-called justice-based reasoning, relationships are subordinated to universal principles. This means that justice and formal logic are viewed as more important than specific non-universal relationships.

Whereas Gilligan hypothesized gender differences (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988), later research could not confirm this assumption. Walker (1984) carried out a meta-analysis and found out that the effect of gender on moral reasoning is minuscule. Also Jaffee & Hyde (2000) found in their meta-analysis no strong support for the claim that care orientation is used predominantly by women and justice orientation is used predominantly by men. Wark & Krebs (1996, 1997, 2000) pointed out the importance of situational factors. They found out that some situations, especially antisocial ones, usually evoke more justice-based reasoning, whereas other situations such as prosocial ones usually evoke more care-based reasoning both in girls and boys.

In our previous research (Jelínková & Tyrlík, 2003), we found out that when reasoning about hypothetical dilemmas, people could prefer care-based or justice-based reasoning, yet regardless of gender. We found this elimination on the conventional level of moral reasoning. In this research we suppose that when reasoning about the same type of real-life situation, both girls and boys could prefer care-based or justice-based reasoning at both conventional and postconventional level of reasoning.

Method

This research is part of an extensive research project. The research sample consisted of 261 adolescents (mean average = 17.3, 46% of girls and 54% of boys). All participants were students at different types of grammar schools.

We created a dating-dilemma situation from the real life of adolescents. This dilemma is concerned about whether a participant should or should not date her/his friend's ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend[2]. This situation was described in de-

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2   Verze pro dívky: Tvoje výborná kamarádka se po roce rozešla se svým klukem, který se ti vždy velmi líbil a vlastně jsi ho své kamárádce trochu záviděla. Zároveň jsi jí však její štěstí přála, a proto jsi se nijak nepokoušela jí ho „přebrat". Tvoje kamarádka je z nastalé situace velmi zoufalá, se svým klukem se rozejít nechtěla a doufá, že se opět dají dohromady. Bývalý kluk tvojí kamarádky tě teď častěji vyhledává, chce si s tebou povídat o jejich rozpadlém

tail in a questionnaire and ten different items were offered to participants. Every item indicated a different solution (to date or not to date), but also different levels of reasoning (preconventional, conventional, postconventional) and different types of reasoning (justice-based or care-based).

Results

The variance as a whole concerning every variable indicating the way participants thought about the dating-dilemma situation expressed (except error variance): (a) general opinion – e.g. to date or not to date a friend's ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend, (b) reasoning – e.g. the rate of agreement/disagreement with the given reason.

In order to clear out the variance expressing general opinion, which is independent on the reasoning, we counted the accumulated variables for items expressing dating and not dating. We used these as a regression factor for each separate item. We found out that variance expressing general opinion (i.e. dating or not dating) ranged from 32% to 65% of the variance as a whole, which means that general opinion plays a very important role in moral judgment.

Calculated regression residuals were consequently used for factor analysis, separately for girls and boys. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Factor loadings and communalities in girls

Level of reasoning	Type of reasoning	Solution	1	2	3	4	5	6	Com
1. postconventional	justice-based	not to date	**-.85**	-.12	.10	.05	-.09	-.35	.88
2. postconventional	care-based	not to date	**.77**	-.16	.22	-.05	-.18	-.28	.77
3. conventional	justice-based	not to date	**.47**	.45	.40	-.07	.22	-.07	.64
4. conventional	justice-based	date	.07	**-.92**	-.09	.01	-.08	.10	.87
5. postconventional	care-based	date	.22	**.59**	-.44	.08	-.55	.10	.90
6. preconventional		not to date	-.12	-.05	**-.87**	.00	.10	-.18	.83
7. postconventional	justice-based	date	-.09	.12	.32	**-.87**	-.09	-.13	.91
8. conventional	care-based	date	-.24	.13	.36	**.80**	-.08	-.08	.86
9. preconventional		date	.03	.10	-.11	.04	**.93**	-.01	.89
10. conventional	care-based	not to date	.02	-11	.16	.04	-.04	**.97**	.97
Variance: 85%			17	15	14	14	13	12	

In girls, factor analysis revealed six factors with a total explained variance of 85%. We found the elimination of care-based and justice-based reasoning in Factors 1, 2, 4. When care-based reasoning was more preferred, justice-based

vztahu. Zjišťuješ, že tě pořád hodně přitahuje a z vašich setkání se zdá, že i ty jsi mu sympatická. Jsi v nezáviděníhodné situaci, máš ráda svou kamarádku a nechceš jí udělat takový podraz. Jsi si jistá, že ona by to tak brala. Na druhé straně se nechceš tohoto kluka jen tak lehce vzdát.

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reasoning was less preferred and vice-versa. We also found the elimination of conventional and postconventional reasoning in Factors 1, 2, 4.

Table 2. Factor loadings and communalities in boys

Level of reasoning	Type of reasoning	Solution	1	2	3	4	5	Com
1. postconventional	justice-based	not to date	**-.76**	-.06	-.50	-.14	-.16	.88
2. conventional	care-based	not to date	**.68**	.05	-.09	-.18	.04	.51
3. preconventional		date	**-.64**	.17	.38	.01	.40	.74
4. preconventional		not to date	.16	**.73**	-.10	.16	-.03	.60
5. postconventional	care-based	not to date	.12	**-.71**	-.10	.12	.14	.56
6. conventional	justice-based	not to date	-.01	-.01	**.88**	.06	.04	.78
7. conventional	justice-based	date	.22	.40	**-.50**	.19	.49	.73
8. postconventional	justice-based	date	.23	-.17	.01	**-.89**	-.01	.88
9. postconventional	care-based	date	.16	-.55	.12	**.66**	.03	.77
10. conventional	care-based	date	.02	.26	-.06	.01	**-.90**	.88
Variance: 73%			16	16	15	14	12	

In boys, factor analysis revealed five factors with a total explained variance of 73%. We found the elimination of care-based and justice-based reasoning in Factors 1, 4. When care-based reasoning was more preferred, justice-based reasoning was less preferred and vice-versa. We also found the elimination of conventional and postconventional reasoning in Factor 1 and the elimination of preconventional and postconventional reasoning in Factor 2.

Discussion

In our research we used a dilemma situation from the real life of adolescents to test their moral reasoning. We concentrated on the levels of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1973, 1984) as well as on the way relationships are represented in the process of moral reasoning. As in our previous research (Jelínková & Tyrlík, 2003), we found the elimination of care-based and justice-based reasoning on the conventional level. In this research, we also found this elimination on the postconventional level. This means that when an individual agrees more with different types of reasoning based on relationships, responsibility and care for others, then this individual agrees less with different types of reasoning based on justice and principles and vice-versa.

We do not know yet whether this eliminating tendency is stable across different situations. In our previous research (Jelínková & Tyrlík, 2003), we used a hypothetical situation, in this research an antisocial situation from real life was offered to our participants. We could suppose that different types of reasoning can be evoked in dependence on the content of a specific situation. In this way we do agree with current research emphasizing the effect of situational factors (Wark & Krebs, 1996, 1997, 2000).

Our findings do not correspond with Gilligan's assumption about relationship between moral orientation and gender (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). She supposed that care orientation is more typical for women, but we found the elimination of care-based and justice-based reasoning in both girls and boys. Our results correspond with Walker's research on the typology of moral exemplars (Walker & Pitts, 1998). In their research, six distinct clusters were found, such as (a) principled-idealistic, (b) dependable-loyal, (c) has integrity, (d) caring-trust-worthy, (e) fair and (f) confident. According to Walker, principle-idealistic and fair cluster resonate with justice-based reasoning, whereas caring-trustworthy, dependable-loyal and integrity cluster resonate with care-based reasoning.

We also found the strong effect of general opinion on moral judgment. This finding corresponds with our research regarding differences between solving and reasoning in the process of moral judgment (Jelínková, Tyrlík & Macek, 2003).

Conclusion

Relationships can be represented in different ways in the process of moral reasoning. Relationships can be viewed as a key factor for reasoning in so-called care-based reasoning or they can be viewed as subordinated to universal princi-pals in so-called justice-based reasoning. People can use both types of reasoning on both conventional and postconventional level. They differ in the preference of these types of reasoning, yet regardless of gender.

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REPRREZENTACE VZTAHU V PROCESU MORÁLNÍHO USUZOVÁNÍ

Souhrn

V tomto článku jsme se soustředili na problematiku, jak jsou vztahy reprezentovány v procesu morálního usuzování. Argumentujeme, že jak Kohlberg (1973, 1984), tak Gilliganová (1982) poukázali na odlišné typy reprezentace vztahu v morálním zdůvodňování. Při usuzování orientovaném na péči jsou principy podřízeny vztahům, zatímco při usuzování orientovaném na spravedlnost jsou vztahy podřízeny univerzálním principům. Výzkumný soubor se skládal z 261 dospívajících (věkový průměr 17.3, 46% dívek a 54% chlapců). Respondenti v rámci dotazníku posuzovali dilema týkající se situace chození, a to na deseti položkách. Každá položka nabízela odlišné řešení (chodit nebo nechodit), odlišnou úroveň zdůvodnění (prekonvenční, konvenční, nebo postkonvenční) a odlišný způsob reprezentace vztahu (orientace na spravedlnost nebo péči). U dívek i chlapců jsme zjistili, že usuzování orientované na péči se vylučuje s usuzováním orientovaným na spravedlnost, a to jak na konvenční, tak na postkonvenční úrovni. Lidé se tedy liší v preferenci jednoho typu zdůvodnění, nicméně bez ohledu na rod.

Klíčová slova: morální usuzování, usuzování orientované na péči, usuzování orientované na spravedlnost, morální situace z běžného života