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In A. Fogel & G. Melson (eds.), *The Origins of Nurture* (pp. 95-21).
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Another Style of Competence: The Caregiving Child

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“Play is the business of childhood.”
Read, 1971, p. 169.

“Play is how preschool children spend most of their working hours.”
Clarke-Stewart and Koch, 1983, p. 190.

“... play among primates is preparation for adult life . . .”
Rudolph and Cohen, 1984, p. 93.

“I have to play, that’s my job.”
American child quoted in Fein, 1978, p. 268.

These are statements of cultural values. One thing upon which most psychologists and early educators in North America currently agree is the necessity for children to play. *Play* can be defined as nonserious self-motivated activity performed for the satisfaction it brings, not for the end it accomplishes. *Work*, in contrast, may or may not be enjoyable, but is primarily performed to accomplish a useful end.

Although exactly what play accomplishes for the developing child is still not fully understood (Christie & Johnson, 1983), nevertheless authorities seem confident in asserting that play provides unique and irreplaceable opportunities for cognitive and social development. The playing child is seen as the *thinking* child.

The child-rearing folk wisdom of many other cultures, in contrast, puts much less stress on play. Although it is true that play is common to children of all cultures, nevertheless the time that children in different societies have allotted for

free, uninterrupted play varies enormously (Whiting et al., in preparation). For example, parents in many parts of the developing world routinely recruit their children to help with child care and subsistence tasks. Ethnographers have established that parents in traditional, subsistence economies are especially apt to put strong pressure on children to be responsible, obedient, and competent assistants in the household economy (Barry, Child, & Bacon, 1959; B. Whiting, 1974; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Because their livelihoods depend on group effort and the accumulation of valuable resources (such as livestock, land, cultivated produce), they teach their children to attend carefully to responsibilities assigned to them. Far from believing that they are thereby depriving their children of valuable learning time, these parents believe that they are ensuring that their children acquire the capacity for productive and reproductive success in maturity.

Does the experience of caring for others provide cognitive or emotional benefits to the developing child, or merely specific skills? Recently, psychologists and anthropologists have begun to ask systematic questions about competencies that children might acquire during task performance, for example, during caretaking. Not surprisingly, much less theory and data presently exist concerning the developmental effects of caretaking—or other types of task performance—than of play (see Ember, 1973; Gallimore, Tharp & Speidel, 1978; Nerlove & Snipper, 1981; Snipper, 1978; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977; Wenger, 1983; Whiting, 1983; Whiting et al., in preparation).

This paper discusses child and sibling caretaking as an opportunity for the learning of nurturance and responsibility. The focus is on the social-cognitive underpinnings of nurturance, specifically, the *reasoning about “rational” and “conventional” moral rules*, that is given a developmental impetus in the caretaking experience. In other words, the focus is on the cognitive-structural nature of the development of nurturant capacities, and its relationship to particular dimensions of interpersonal interaction.

I shall argue, using case examples from ethnographic material, that children in multiage dyads or groupings negotiate constantly with one another the rights and wrongs of acts and who should do what when. The children's discussions and conflicts focus on types of acts and transgressions that U.S. children in school settings have also been found to frequently discuss—aggression, harming, sharing, justice. These are acts that seem to the American mind to lie close to the heart of morality and ethics. Just as interestingly, however, the children's discussions also frequently focus on types of rules and related transgressions that U.S. children in school settings *do not* as frequently recognize and/or defend, namely, conventional role expectations and setting-specific regulations (Nucci & Turiel, 1978). These are acts from what Elliot Turiel (1975, 1978a) has labeled the “social-conventional” rule domain, regulating interactions within social groups and institutions, including the domestic unit. They concern such matters as sexual modesty, dress codes, etiquette and rules of

respectful address, task assignment and the chain of command, rules regulating the use of social space and property, and age and gender behavior codes.

Thus, the multiage, caretaking situation will be seen to provide exceptionally rich possibilities for the child to develop an understanding of a broad range of rules: not only those having to do with harm-doing, welfare, and justice, but also those related to conformity to other norms of society and the domestic group. Piaget (1932) in his classic study of moral judgment development, argued that peer interaction (occurring primarily in *play*, he naturally assumed) provides the optimal experience of conflict and reciprocity that children need to develop moral autonomy and a sense of justice. Piaget's lead in focusing on peer play has been followed up to the present time by researchers interested in the naturalistic study of moral development. Apparently, it seems intuitively "right" to us American researchers that conscience development should be observed by looking at school children at play (for examples, see Much & Shweder, 1978; Nucci & Nucci, 1982; Nucci & Turiel, 1978). Yet why not look at a broader range of daily experiences? For it would appear that the peer relations of same-age playmates may constitute a severely limited developmental context for fostering conventional reasoning, in particular. Among these playmates there is typically no formal differentiation in authority roles, responsibility, or privileges based on assigned status or marked differences in developmental level. Therefore, an adult is often needed to help the child mediate disputes. No one peer clearly "has the right" or the responsibility to "shape up" the others' social behavior. Furthermore, when peer relations take place at school, the surrounding social system is typically large, complex, and multilayered (relative to the home). Children, especially young ones, may have some difficulty in comprehending and identifying with the goals and rules of school authorities. They may be less inclined to take these goals as their own and seek to help teachers enforce them.

In contrast, the cross-age interactions of caretaking—typical of domestic or neighborhood groupings that contain children of multiple ages and stages—may provide a more optimal environment for understanding conventional rules and norms. In the family setting, especially, sibling order provides a natural hierarchy of authority and competence. Family rules and customary procedures are handed down by persons with whom the children naturally and easily identify—the parents. In the family setting, because of its small size, simple organization, and thorough familiarity to the child, the child may more easily understand the group perspective on problems of social coordination. There, as we shall see, even the youngest child can sometimes be seen to vigorously assert and defend conventional rules and norms. The caretaking child does not focus on moral issues mostly (or only) concerning harm, justice, and welfare, as does the young U.S. child at school.

We shall see, furthermore, that this learning of rules and prosocial norms by the caretaking child is not an automatic, mindless process. Rather it is an active

process, in which the child participates in conversational routines and negotiations and thereby gains a basis for learning and understanding her society's basic rules. The child's rule knowledge is partly self-constructed out of experiences in social interaction, and partly learned (socially-transmitted) by others' "powerful suggestions and occasional correction" (see Shweder, 1982, p. 55). The child constructs and continually revises an understanding of how rules and roles function to constrain and coordinate social action and social life. The responsible, nurturant child becomes not merely a caring and feeling child, but also a thinking child, acquiring his or her own distinctive brand of social-cognitive competence.

RATIONAL VERSUS CONVENTIONAL MORAL RULES AND REASONING

Elliot Turiel (1975, 1978a, 1978b) has made provocative claims concerning the development of social/moral understanding, and we must describe them briefly. Our main concern is with their cross-cultural validity.

First, Turiel has argued that not all rules are of the same type and that even very young children can intuitively appreciate this fact. Rules centered for U.S. children on concepts of harm, justice, and welfare, are called by Turiel "moral" because they are seen as more *important, obligatory, unalterable, and universally generalizable* than other rules. The obligatoriness of rules proscribing physical harm is seen, for example, when children say that hitting other children at school is wrong, regardless of whether there is a specific school rule about it, "because hitting hurts" (Nucci & Turiel, 1978). What Turiel calls "conventional" rules, in contrast, are seen as less important and binding, and more subject to contextual considerations. The relativity of conventional rules is seen when children say that it would *not* be wrong to disobey a school regulation (such as carrying snack food away from the snack table) if there were no specific rule against it (Nucci & Turiel, 1978). The relativity is also seen when children, accused of violating a conventional rule, try to justify themselves by referring to contextual considerations that might disqualify the rule (saying, for example, "It's okay to take my apple away from the snack table because it's not crumbly.") This kind of excusing or accounting occurs much less often with justice or harm-related transgressions (Much & Shweder, 1978).

Empirical studies have supported the hypothesis that American children from preschool age onward differentiate rules along dimensions of importance, obligatoriness, and generalizability (Much & Shweder, 1978; Nucci & Nucci, 1982; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 1981; Smetana, Bridgeman, & Turiel, 1983; Turiel, 1978b; Weston & Turiel, 1980). However, Shweder (1982) has put forward a strong case that both of Turiel's categories have to do with morality. Shweder re-labels Turiel's moral domain as "rational morality." Following

Shweder's criticism, I shall refer to the two domains as *rational morality* versus *conventional morality*.

Furthermore, Pool, Shweder, and Much (1983) have suggested that the cultural domains underlying rules may be more complex and heterogeneous than imagined. Some rules may not be clearly identifiable as rational moral versus conventional, because the domain boundaries may not be clearcut. Moreover, the specific content of rational versus conventional moral categories may vary cross-culturally. For example, sexuality, dress codes, dietary customs, and marriage rules may vary in their moral meaning and status from society to society (Shweder, Turiel, & Much, 1981). Turiel and Smetana (1983; Smetana 1983) have countered this argument with the explanation that specific rules may be supported by both moral and conventional rationales simultaneously. In their view, moral and conventional domains are distinct and nonoverlapping, but particular rules may merge considerations from both sides.

Turiel, Nucci, Smetana, and colleagues make a second claim. They say that rational and conventional moral rules are learned in distinctively different kinds of social interactions. Rational moral rules are thought to be rationally self-constructed from the experience of social interactions involving direct and visible harm to persons, violations of trust and rights, or the distribution of scarce resources. These transgressions tend to be followed by responses that highlight the unfortunate consequences of the transgression (for example, the distress or harm it causes). "The individual's view of the events as transgressions and his formulation of prescriptions can originate from the events themselves" (Turiel, 1978a, p. 10). Conventional rules, in contrast, are thought to be learned through construction of knowledge not about acts' inherent consequences but rather their normative status. They are learned in social interactions in which someone representing the point-of-view of the group or the society (e.g., an adult or older child), focuses the child's attention on (arbitrary) social definitions of situations. In American school settings, for example, conventional transgressions usually lead to reprimands, sanctions, threats of sanctions, commands, and rule-statements. These utterances are said by Turiel and colleagues to call children's attention to social order and regularity, to appropriate role behavior, to sanctions following misbehavior, and to the rules themselves as structuring mechanisms or "rules of this place." Such considerations are said to be not obvious and intrinsic, but rather important only insofar as one learns "society's" arbitrarily defined point of view. Empirical studies in American schools and preschools do appear to find, in fact, that children rarely command or enforce school regulations before they reach age 10 or so, whereas they enforce rational moral rules at early ages.

Turiel and colleagues' theory makes a most interesting starting point for a cross-cultural study of social reasoning-in-action because it is put forward as culturally universal or generalizable. It suggests certain specific ways of looking at social interactions as stimulators of development. Rational moral rules are said

to be learned in one way, conventional moral rules in another. The wrongness of rational moral rules is said to be obvious and intrinsic to the situation—requiring no authority figures to “stand in” for the victim and say the act is wrong. Young children are expected to more readily grasp the wrongness of rational moral transgressions, whose consequences are intrinsic, than the wrongness of conventional transgressions, whose normative status derives from society’s arbitrary rules for coordinating people and groups.

Can this theory be used to describe the development of children in all cultural settings? If not, why not? As we shall see, the theory is in fact culturally limited, but understanding the reason why will lead us to a deeper appreciation of the caretaking situation as a context for social-cognitive development.

NURTURANCE AND PROSOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS ASPECTS OF INTERCHILD BEHAVIOR

To begin to form a theory of how the caretaking situation relates to the development of moral and conventional reasoning, we must lay out the social-cognitive demands of interchild nurturance and responsibility. “Nurturance” and “prosocial responsibility,” as defined by Beatrice and John Whiting (1975), are different but complementary behavior systems. When described in some detail it becomes strikingly evident that nurturance revolves more around the “rational” moral considerations of harm-doing and welfare, whereas prosocial responsibility revolves more around “conventional” moral considerations.

Nurturance is “offering” behavior, the giving of physical or emotional resources by one person to another perceived to be in a state of need or desire. In contrast, prosocial responsibility, as an interpersonal behavior, occurs when one person attempts to influence another to conform to the rules of family or society, either for the other’s own good or for the good of the group as a whole. The distinction between nurturance and prosocial responsibility can be vividly illustrated by contrasting the behavior typically elicited by infants to that typically elicited by toddlers and young preschoolers. Beatrice Whiting has conceptualized this distinction from a comparative cultural perspective.¹

The infant (child under about 15-months-of-age) is a relatively helpless, vulnerable, and fragile social partner. Yet this infant is not powerless, for it seems to have the power to call forth or “elicit” caretaking behavior and entertaining play from the social surround, including other children. Observations of infants in a wide variety of cultural settings (Edwards & Whiting, 1980; Whiting, 1983; Whiting & Edwards, 1973; Whiting et al., in preparation; Whiting & Whiting, 1975) demonstrate that the profile of behaviors directed to infants by children is

¹The following section of this paper draws heavily on Whiting (1983) and Whiting et al. (in preparation). The interested reader may consult these sources for empirical documentation.

highly similar cross-culturally. The positive aspects of the nurturant profile include behaviors intended to *promote the pleasure and welfare, reduce the distress, and prevent from harm* the other. In all societies studied, even the youngest children, aged 2 or 3, respond in a generally nurturant way to infants. They smile, imitate, and make faces to entertain them; they pat, caress, and seek to hold them; they give them objects, tickle them, and play peek-a-boo; and they seek to alleviate their distress by guessing their needs for food, warmth, or maternal intervention. Infants seem to be able to elicit some nurturance even from tired, bored, or reluctant child caregivers. In fact, both Konrad Lorenz (1943) and John Bowlby (1969) have argued that infants are born biologically equipped with physical features and behaviors that serve to inhibit aggression and elicit and maintain proximity and nurturant involvement. Lorenz has claimed that the “babyish” character of infants’ appearance triggers the inhibition of aggression and release of nurturance: their relatively large heads, predominance of brain capsule, large and low lying eyes, bulging cheeks, short and thick arms and legs, and springy, elastic bodies. Bowlby has focused on their attractive and appealing “attachment” behavior—their gazing, smiling, vocalizing, clinging, and following of the caretaker.

The distinctive profile of “nurturant” behavior elicited in children by infants is seen in the following example, drawn from Ann Snipper’s (1978) study of child caretaking in a rural area near Mexico City:

Yolanda [age 9½] is expected to wash dishes and sweep two rooms, but she seems to enjoy child care more than these chores. On two occasions she only relinquished Pablito’s care to an aunt with reluctance after repeated requests from her mother. The following incidents give a flavor of Yolanda’s interactional style. On one occasion, Yolanda and the infant [age 13½ months] were in her aunt’s house. The older cousins were playing records on a record player. Yolanda would alternately bounce or pat Pablito in time to the music or hold him on her lap, watching him, handing him a toy and giving him quick kisses on the top of his head. She remained in physical contact with the baby until the mother asked her to perform another chore. A diapering session was also marked by a variety of physical contact beyond the routine cleaning required, including kissing, tickling and massaging. On two occasions when Pablito was fussy, her tactics to calm him included picking him up, shifting his position, jiggling him in her arms and standing him on the ground encouraging him to walk. (Snipper, 1978, pp. 109–110).

Yolanda behaved nurturantly, in the Whitings’ terms, in that she was responsive to the succorant demands of Pablito and anticipated his desires. These behaviors required that she *perceive and attend to his needs and desires*, as she understood them. Her nurturant acts included a variety of specific “offering” behaviors; she gave both physical and emotional resources, including diapering care, toys, comfort, affection, entertaining play, and motor practice.

Of course, not everything that children do to infants can be called nurturant. Children also overexcite infants, leading to tears, hurt them while exploring their

bodies too roughly, become impatient and aggressive with infants, and even abandon them or take their food away when their own competing needs interfere. Thus, an equally important part of learning consistent and successful nurturance involves gaining self-control over aggressive impulses, that is, acquiring the ability to *inhibit or dampen behavior that distresses or harms the other*.

This learning by the older child to mute and curtail his aggressive impulses toward a baby can be aptly illustrated by the following example. The observation was made in Tarong, Philippines (cf. Nydegger & Nydegger, 1963) of a 7-year-old boy with his 1-year-old brother. The brothers were sitting on a sled in a courtyard. Crescencio, the elder, bored and yawning, was watching other children play tag. To elicit Crescencio's flagging attention, the baby repeatedly dropped his stick and cried for it to be retrieved. Crescencio, in turn hit, insulted, and shouted at the baby, but always to an inhibited degree. In the end, the baby's desires won out and Crescencio was forced to pick up the child to soothe his escalating distress.

Baby Pico starts to fuss. Crescencio turns to look at him, apparently surprised by the fussing, and picks up the stick Pico has dropped.

"This is your toy," says Crescencio, then turns away to watch the other children. He notices Pico crying again and says (annoyed but not yet angry), "Stupid! You keep dropping it! And then you let me pick it up!"

Crescencio picks up the stick and hands it to Pico, who immediately throws it to the ground.

"No! Do not!" Crescencio angrily shouts, and lightly slaps his brother's bottom. Then he breaks into a smile and returns the stick to Pico, who starts to throw it yet again.

"You want me to put you there in the manure pile? I'll slap you, huh?" says Crescencio, lightly slapping Pico's bottom again. Pico starts to cry, dropping the stick.

Crescencio, looking resigned but a little concerned over Pico's crying, hands Pico the stick. Then Crescencio settles himself to look over the yard. Pico again drops the stick.

Crescencio sees the stick fall but does not move to get it. Pico starts to whimper and Crescencio imitates his whimpering sound, "Uh, uh, uh." Then Crescencio pushes Pico the stick with his foot. Pico now fusses loudly and Crescencio resignedly picks up the baby and walks off with him toward the older children.

Toddlers (children aged approximately 15 months to 3 years) differ from infants in being much less vulnerable, helpless, and fragile. Now beginning to walk securely and to understand language, they begin to elicit a distinctive pattern of behavior from both adults and children. Of course, they still receive

much nurturance, too, but now this nurturance is tempered by pressure for more mature behavior on the part of the toddler. The core of this pressuring pattern is commands, reprimands or suggestions to socialize the toddler in appropriate forms of behavior and to control his behavior to coordinate it with the (legitimate) needs of the group. This pattern can be considered "responsible" or "prosocial," in Whittings' terms—akin to nurturance, but more dominant in form, *focused on long-term training and short-term control* of the exploratory, unruly, and self-centered small child.

For example, consider this case example from Snipper's (1978) study, focused on Hilda Y. (age 9). Hilda fires many commands and suggestions at Eloy (age 2), and she is most responsive and friendly to him when he seeks to learn from her and help her with her work.

[Hilda's] interactions with Eloy [age 2] were primarily verbal, telling him to get out of the way, suggesting he play with a certain toy, asking him brief questions. He played by himself frequently. . . . There were two instances of prolonged contact between the two. Once when Hilda was washing dishes, he hung at her side, watching every move. She explained every step to him and then enlisted him to carry the clean dishes from the outside tap into the house. On the other occasion, Eloy sat in a toy car and Hilda pushed him around the yard. She did this with an air of duty, talking only to give short commands—"Wait," "Hang on," "Get out of the car," or to complain—"Ay, ay, ay," "You're too heavy," etc. (Snipper, 1978, pp. 110–111).

Thus, a toddler is pushed by its elders out of the protected and privileged cocoon of infancy. As Nydegger and Nydegger (1963) say of the Tarong, Philippines toddler at weaning: "He who was master of the household is now but a beggar at the gates" (p. 827). In every culture the child as either a toddler or preschool-aged child is expected to modulate some of its demands for constant help and attention and to behave in more mature and appropriate ways. It is expected to begin to *learn and respect certain rules of appropriate behavior*, although which ones and how early depends on the cultural context and the folk theory about what toddlers can reasonably understand and do. In return it can expect its culturally-defined "legitimate" needs to be met and "rights" to be respected, although not necessarily immediately. In all of the cultural communities we have studied (Whiting et al., in preparation; Whiting, 1983), older children are usually stopped by others from physically abusing or harming toddlers, from allowing them to cry inconsolably for long periods when they want to join in or have a turn, and from abandoning them when they move to a new location of play. The young child's desire and needs are respected by older children, but in a way that involves coordination with the desires and needs of the others.

Irritable, pushy children do not exist in Taira, [Okinawa]. Those who try to get things by "walking over others" do not get far, for children ostracize and avoid

them. One 4-year-old, observed over a period of months, altered his methods of acquiring goals from pushing and bullying to socially sanctioned techniques, such as asking, waiting his turn, and sharing. The change was startling (Maretski & Maretski, 1963, p. 494).

In sum, the two profiles, nurturance and prosocial responsibility should not be considered to be mutually exclusive nor only directed to infants and toddlers. Quite the contrary, they are two complementary and overlapping patterns, frequent in all interchild behavior, but especially frequent in multiage dyads or groups where one or more older children are expected to look after or look out for one or more younger children.

THE MATERIAL FOR THIS STUDY

This study attempts to show how rich cross-cultural observations of children's behavior can be as a source of data on social-cognitive development. In what follows, observations of East African children are systematically examined to see what conclusions might be most reasonable to draw concerning nurturant and prosocial reasoning in comparative cultural perspective.

The observational material is drawn from the work of Carol R. Ember, who studied children in a Luo community of about 250 people in the South Nyanza district of Kenya (Ember, 1970, 1973). This community, which shall be referred to as Oyugis (actually the name of the market town 2.5 miles away), is one in which task-assignment is a prominent feature of the daily lives of children. The community that Ember studied was a set of dispersed homesteads whose heads had descended from a common ancestor two to five generations back. Although these dispersed households could not be distinguished as a separate unit from an aerial photograph (because homesteads just dot the countrysides), the people from these homesteads interact frequently and think of themselves as a unit. Households were large, averaging about 10 members each (Bookman & Ember, in press). The women were responsible for most of the agricultural work (except ploughing), and also for the housework, food preparation, and child care. Mothers of necessity delegated a great deal of work to children over about the age of 5. The amount of work assigned to a particular child depended upon his or her age, sex, sibling position, and school attendance. Most girls over age 6 were found to do a great deal of child care and household tasks. Boys without older siblings at home also were seen to do much *feminine* work, whereas boys with available older siblings did far less (Ember, 1973).

Ember studied 28 children aged 7½ to 16 years, to explore the influence of feminine task assignment on the social behavior of boys. Her trained observers (educated Luo-speakers) collected nine 15-min-long running record protocols on each child's behavior and interaction, using a randomizing procedure to ensure that the observations were representative of the children's daytime experience.

The observations were taken in the form of descriptive sentences (including the children's speech to one another), and later coded into social-behavior categories using an adaptation of the Six Cultures code (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Because Ember trained her observers to catch as much of the children's exact speech to one another as possible, Ember's observations provide an unusual corpus of naturalistic, cross-cultural data on children's social reasoning-in-action.

My method has been to analyze the observational material in order to construct an ethnographic description of the children's reasoning-in-action. Most of the reasoning involves moral conflicts or transgressions (actual or potential). We can tell a conflict or transgression has taken place (or was about to) because one person intervenes with a criticism or suggestion toward the other. The transgressor (or potential transgressor) in turn sometimes offers an account or excuse, or he refuses or ignores the suggestion, or he obeys.

My analysis is based on 109 episodes excerpted from the main body of the observations because they were seen as somehow relevant to moral development, considered broadly.² The episodes were coded according to the age and kinship relationship of the enforcing authority (i.e., the person defending the rule or norm) and the person being commanded or corrected. Each episode was further coded for (a) presence or absence of resistance to the commander's authority, by refusing, ignoring, or counter-command; and (b) use of sanctions (or threats of sanctions) by the enforcing authority(ies) to prevent or punish deviance. Finally, each episode was systematically classified according to the nature of the rule or cultural norm at issue, as follows: (1) commands concerning aggression towards small children; (2) commands concerning aggression towards animals; (3) suggestions related to meeting the needs of others; (4) conflicts over turn-taking and sharing; (5) discussions about task assignment; and (6) commands concerning proper social behavior. (See Table 5.1.)

The first three of the categories relate closely to nurturance, as the Whitings conceive it, even though they do not involve direct caretaking acts. Commands seeking to prohibit or stop aggression toward defenseless victims are nurturant in that they are motivated by an intention to protect someone from physical harm. Similarly, suggestions related to meeting the needs of others exemplify indirect nurturance in which children ask or tell others to perform caretaking actions or give others advice as how best to take care of someone else. While these three categories of behavior thus involve only indirect acts of nurturance, nevertheless they are particularly interesting to us because they involve explicitly stated rules or rationales for compliance. Thus, they provide a window into the moral underpinnings of the children's nurturance.

²The excerpting was done by myself over 10 years ago for an entirely different purpose. Recently returning to the excerpted material, I was struck by how it elucidates the problem of the social-cognitive basis of nurturance and prosocial responsibility.

TABLE 5.1
Classification of 109 Moral Episodes (Oyugis, Kenyan Children)^a

Type of Rule/Norm at Issue	No. Episodes	Age of Enforcing Authorities	Authority Meets Resistance/Questions	Authority Uses Threats/Sanctions
1. Aggression toward children	20	3½ to grandparent	6 (30%)	13 (65%)
2. Aggression toward animals	8	3 to parent	3 (38%)	2 (25%)
3. Positive action to meet needs of others	26	2½ to parent	9 (35%)	4 (15%)
4. Conflicts over turns or sharing	7	4 to parent	4 (57%)	2 (29%)
5. Task assignment	34	2½ to parent	18 (53%)	3 (9%)
6. Proper social behavior	14	2½ to parent	8 (57%)	5 (36%)

^aDrawn from the observational data of Carol Ember

The final two categories relate to the Whittings' categories of prosocial responsibility, focused as they are on task assignment and proper social behavior. The fourth category, concerned with conflicts over turn-taking and sharing, is a small set that does not correspond well to the Whiting categories.

AGGRESSION TOWARDS SMALL CHILDREN

Turiel and colleagues have claimed that rational moral rules about aggression are constructed by children on the basis of social interactions in which one person harms another. They suggest that the most important information for the cognizing child is the victim's response, which suggests the intrinsic wrongness of hurting. The theory assumes that human beings are naturally empathic and distressed by injury to others.

Without wishing to discount the role that early empathy may play in moral development, nevertheless, I would suggest on the basis on the Oyugis material that the victim's response is not the main, and certainly not the only, source of information for Oyugis children. To judge from the observations, Oyugis community values include strong prohibitions against the striking of infants and toddlers by older children. Adults clearly communicate to children, first, that infants and toddlers are too little to be beaten no matter what, and, second, that hurting or striking small children is a punishable offence. (Wenger, 1983, has described similar values for a community on the Eastern coast of Kenya.)

Two examples were found that suggest that Oyugis mothers sometimes take the time to carefully explain to their children the importance of inhibiting aggression to babies. These maternal responses would be expected to help children to focus on the intrinsic wrongness of aggression toward infants.

J. (Boy, 3½) to Mother: "I can beat the infant." (1)

Mother: "Never do it, father" (Note to reader: By addressing her small son as "father," she flatters him in a culturally appropriate way and thereby appeals to his most mature self).

J.: "Why is he destroying my book?"

Mother: "I'll buy you a new one."

Infant (8 months old) urinates on the dress of W. (Sister, 6), holding him. W. takes a stick and hits him. (2)

Mother to W.: "Don't beat him. He does not know."

Moments later, infant urinates again and this time W. simply reports it to mother.

Many other examples, however, suggest that adults typically use sanctions and threats of sanctions on older children who hurt small children. The cries or

“tattling” of a small child almost invariably draw a most undesirable form of adult attention.

Grandfather to J. (Boy, 3½, crying): “Who has beaten you?” (3)

J.: “It was G. (Boy, 5).”

Grandfather: “Stop crying. I’ll beat him in turn.” J. stops.

J. (Boy, 3½): “Father N. has hit me.” Father whips N. (Boy, 8). (4)

Oyugis children themselves become early and strong defenders of these rules about aggression. J., 3½, in the example above demonstrated his early “commitment” to the rules by speaking to his mother *before* striking the baby, as well as by informing on his brother. In other observations, older children past the age of about eight enforce the rules on behalf of others, not just themselves. They become protectors of young children, and enforce the rules in the role of sanctioning agents—a role considered culturally desirable for Oyugis children. Other children accept the moral authority of their peers when it comes to acts and transgressions concerning physical aggression (as clearly seen in excerpts (6) to (8) below).

I. (Boy, 16) to J. (Brother, 4): “If anybody plays about with you [i.e., hurts you], tell me and I’ll beat him.” (5)

E. (Girl, 8) to S. (Brother, 2½): “Stop hitting the infant.” (6)

Later, J. (Brother, 6) beats S., and S. cries. Now E. protects little S. She says to J., “Stop beating that boy.” J. stops.

B. (Girl, 6) hits G. (Brother, 2½) on the head for no apparent reason. (7)

G. cries. J. (Brother, 8) hits B. as a punishment. B. suppresses a tear.

J. (Boy, 13) to R. (Brother, 8): “It’s bad to hit people with grass.” (8)

R. stops hitting.

It is striking in the above excerpts that the offender almost always “accepts” the punishment or correction of the intervener without demur. This suggests that intervenor and transgressor agree that the aggressive act is wrong and that others “have a right” to intervene.

AGGRESSION TOWARDS ANIMALS

Aggression toward animals is probably regarded differently in Oyugis from aggression toward human beings. The people of many parts of Kenya do not consider that animals should necessarily be treated with the same kind of consideration as people (B. Whiting, personal communication). While some roughness by children toward animals is expected and tolerated, it appears that needless

cruelty to animals is not considered desirable by the people of Oyugis. The observations suggest that children are not left to construct moral rules concerning cruelty to animals on their own, simply from observing the victim's responses. Rather, aggressive children are assisted in inhibiting action by intervening adults and children.

In eight observational episodes, interveners invariably used commands or threats of sanctions to stop aggressive behavior. These are the kinds of responses that Nucci and Turiel (1978) say typify responses to conventional moral transgressions not rational moral ones. Here are some typical examples:

J. (Boy, 13) and JW. (Nephew, 19) hit a lizard crawling on the roof. W. (Nephew, 22) to others: "Stop killing that innocent creature." They stop. (9)

J. (Boy, 4) tries to throw a stone at the dog. (10)
M. (Brother, 7½): "Stop, or I'll beat you." J. stops.

B. (Girl, 6) pulls cat by the tail. G. (Brother, 3): "Stop that or I'll beat you." (Instead, the older sister picks up a stick and chases younger brother away). (11)

G. (Boy, 3) responds to an observed transgression of sister by informing to older brother: "L. is killing your grasshoppers." (12)

J. (Boy, 9) to L.: "Don't do that. I want to see them alive."

L. (Girl, 4): "G. is lying. I'm only touching them, not killing them."

What do the commands, sanctions and threats mean to the children of Oyugis? What information do they convey? Turiel suggests, for U.S. children that commands, sanctions, and threats of sanctions are part of what children think about in constructing the arbitrariness of conventional rules. For Oyugis children, however, commands, sanctions, and threats of sanctions probably convey a different kind of information. In the Oyugis cultural context, these strong responses convey information about the basic *importance* and *unconditionality* of rules prohibiting aggression. "These rules are not to be taken lightly. Obey them whether I am there or not," is the message conveyed by Oyugis parents.

POSITIVE ACTION TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

Positive action to meet the needs of others is, of course, the essence of nurturance. The Whittings believe that children learn to be nurturant primarily by being assigned to settings where they are close to mothers and infants. There they can imitate the nurturant behavior of caretaking models. Further, when they themselves are put in charge of babies, they automatically become subject to the intrinsic reinforcements of cries and smiles that teach or shape them toward successful and consistent nurturance.

By now this argument has a familiar ring to it. It precisely parallels Turiel's argument about how children construct rational moral rules. The Whittings' and Turiel's theories converge in suggesting that the most important social encounters for helping children to construct norms of positive nurturance are those of direct interaction between children.

Without wishing to dispute the idea that there is something intrinsically "informational" about the cries and smiles of others, nevertheless I doubt that this information by itself is a sufficient basis for the construction of norms of nurturance.

In Oyugis, mothers hold children directly accountable for their care of younger children. This means that children (especially older ones) are threatened with physical punishment for neglect of their child care duties. Furthermore, children occasionally but not frequently receive praise for responsible performance. (In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, praise is considered to spoil children; see Whiting, Edwards, et al., in preparation). Here are two excerpts that show these processes in action.

A group of children are running along together and stop to examine (13)
a hole. A small boy (age 2) tries to look in too. Then J. (Brother, 13) says to him,
"Don't. You'll fall in, and mother will beat me." The small boy stops looking and
slowly walks away.

E. (Girl, 7) helps her mother thresh millet. She says, "Am I not (14)
doing well?"

Mother: "Yes, my daughter. Nowadays, I'll be leaving this work for you to do
in my stead. You are fit."

Furthermore, not only mothers but other children play an active role in the teaching of nurturance, in Oyugis as in many other communities around the world that rely on child caretaking. One of the best descriptions of this process I have seen comes from Tarong, Philippines (Nydegger & Nydegger, 1963). In this example, several people, including a baby, behave in a way to impress upon a child caretaker, age 7½, the positive value of nurturance. Three school-aged children spontaneously come to help the caretaker with the crying baby. Their concern surely underlines to Simeon the importance of the moral norm.

One of our most amusing observations involved such training of a 7½-year-old boy, Simeon, at an informal late-afternoon candy party. Almost all the members of three households were present, among them Simeon's tired, cranky, teething baby brother Pico. Pico was being soothed and rocked by his mother, Marina, who suddenly called to Simeon, "Here, put him to sleep," in a challenging tone. Simeon smiled and swaggered over, took the baby and went into the next room where a hammock was strung up. The eldest girl of the household ran after him, saw to it that the baby was laid down properly in the hammock, and cautioned

Simeon to rock it gently. As she left the room, Simeon began to sing a rousing march in rhythm with his rocking.

In the next room all the adults were grinning. Marina, requesting conspiratorial conversational cover-up by pantomime, sat next to the door where she could hear but not be seen. Despite the singing and rocking, Pico was soon roaring again. Simeon rocked more violently and sang still louder, his voice drowning Pico's wails. At this, a younger cousin, Jose, left the group to join Simeon.

After some consultation with the equally inexperienced Jose, Simeon cradled and patted Pico in his arms as he himself sat in the hammock. Jose pushed the hammock as one would push a swing, both he and Simeon singing loudly while Pico's wails rose above the din. Marina was now peering through the door crack, convulsed with laughter, and the other women joined her, giggling at the peephole. Jose's older brother went to the door where he stood watching critically, finally bursting into laughter too. He then replaced Jose and convinced Simeon, by example, that gentle patting, cooing, and rocking were more effective (Nydegger & Nydegger, 1963, p. 852).

An example, of course, is not proof of anything. It is at most suggestive. Yet the example from Tarong, Philippines, is similar to many of the Oyugis excerpts. Oyugis children also frequently intervene in a supporting or commanding way with one child to indirectly benefit a third, younger child. The conversational discourse that takes place in these scenarios reveal a characteristic persistence on the part of the intervening moralist child. The intervener uses a variety of response types. He may use threats, helpful suggestions, repeated commands, or angry reprimands to make his point, but make it he does. Notice that in excerpt (20), the intervener is only 3-year-old, yet still his older brother feels compelled to respond to his question, even if in a somewhat sarcastic fashion.

J. (Girl, 11) to T. (Brother, 5): "Go and take that baby because he's crying." T. laughs but doesn't go. "I'm telling you to go and you are just playing around with me. Go or else I'll beat you." T. runs to pick up the baby. (15)

J. (Girl, 8, visiting) to E., who is holding her baby sister: "Why is she crying?" (16)

E. (Girl, 7): "I do not know."

J.: "Tie her on your back and she will be all right." E. does so. "Let us go and sit away from your mother. I think that will help the infant stop crying." E. does so.

An infant picks up a tin can being played with by G. (Brother, 3). G. tells the infant, "Stop that." B. (Visitor Girl, 6) to G.: "Give the baby one." G. does not comply. P. (Sister, 5½) to G.: "Give the baby a tin." G. does not. "Please give her one, my father." G. complies. (17)

M. (Boy, 7½) and E. (Brother, 9½) are walking along a path together. (18)

M.: "We better go home. The baby will cry." E., the elder, ignores. M. repeats the command. E. still ignores.

Y. (Girl, 13) goes to fetch water from the waterhole with kids (19) following near her. S. (Boy, 15), reprimands her angrily, "Why have you taken those kids with you there?" Y. does not answer.

S. (Boy, 5) holds a crying infant. L. (Brother, 3½): "Why is she (20) crying?"

S.: "I do not know."

L.: "Does she want food?"

S.: "I do not know because she doesn't talk."

CONFLICTS OVER TURN-TAKING AND SHARING (POSITIVE JUSTICE)

It is a striking fact that few conflicts over turn-taking and sharing occur in the Oyugis excerpts. To the U.S. observer this seems puzzling because we are so used to seeing fairness as a constant topic of dispute among children.

Are the people of Oyugis simply unaware of fairness concerns? That is unlikely to be the case. The few relevant Oyugis episodes sound too "familiar" to us, as if the reasoning behind them is similar rather than dissimilar to our own. Here are three examples.

Children are playing hopscotch. Mother says to daughter, 7½: "Don't (21) interfere with another person's turn." Daughter stops.

J. (Boy, 6) asks E. (Sister, 8) for a lemon. (22)
She tells J. to go bring a knife. He goes. S. (Brother, 2½) asks sister for a piece.

E. to youngest, S.: "It's J.'s turn now. You've had some."

S.: "I haven't." (He has).

E.: "All right." But she does not ever give him any.

E. (Boy, 9½) pulls J. (Brother, 4) around on a "car" (really a wagon). (23)
E. to J.: "Get off. It is the baby's turn." J. does not heed. "Then I won't let you ride again." J. gets off, and E. pulls the infant in the "car."

J. to elder E.: "You come and pull me. It's my turn." E. does not heed. J. charges him with a stick, but E. runs away.

Because so few quarrels about fairness in sharing and turn-taking seem to occur among the Oyugis children, one might wonder whether another issue is of greater concern to them. Task assignment does appear to be that issue.

CHILDREN'S DISCUSSIONS ABOUT TASK ASSIGNMENT

Task assignment—and issues about authority in commanding—are frequently discussed and sometimes hotly disputed among Oyugis children. The same zest

that U.S. children show in talking among themselves about sharing and turn-taking is shown by Oyugis children in talking about tasks. There is certainly little evidence that they consider these conventional moral matters to be less "important" than issues related to welfare, harm, and justice. The excerpts reveal further the Oyugis children are active reasoners, though they may not engage in as prolonged verbal arguments as U.S. children commonly do. Before running off to do someone else's bidding, Oyugis children seem to want to establish two things: first, that the task really needs doing; and second, that the commander has the legitimate right to command. Oyugis children are anything but slavishly obedient to other children. If anything, they seem to enjoy occasional testing of each other. The observations illustrate how cross-age social relations inspire children to become legal experts on the rights and wrongs of prosocial responsibility.

Oyugis children do not question or test adults about these same matters. Oyugis adults definitely do not encourage such questioning by children. Children are expected to simply obey adults. Young children who question the legitimacy of their parents' commands receive a rude awakening, and such conversations as the one below between a mother and her 3-year-old are simply not found with older children.

Mother: "Get me a chair." (24)
 G. (Boy, 3): "It concerns you."
 Mother: "I'll tell father to beat you." Child runs and fetches chair.

We have all the more reason, then, to believe that the conversational discourses among children represent true learning encounters for them, that is, opportunities to construct knowledge about prosocial responsibility.

Consider the following examples. We focus on the learner as the younger child in the interaction. When the "learner" is forced to change her strategy of suggesting or to provide a rationale, or when she argues with the commander's right to command and receives either an acceptance or rebuttal of her argument, she is provided with food for thought.

Many episodes suggest that Oyugis children receiving task commands try to extract rationales for why the task needs to be done. They seem more likely to comply if genuinely convinced that their job is a necessary service or will protect or preserve family property. Compare the resistance of children in the following four excerpts. They put up no resistance in the first two, perhaps because they are provided convincing rationales. They put up strong, more or less successful, resistance in the second two cases.

Two brothers are washing clothes. S. (Boy, 13½): "Draw some (25)
 more water."
 T. (Brother, 5½): "Why?"

S.: "For the final washing." T. fetches the water.

J. (Boy, 6): "Why do you leave soap in the water? Don't you know (26)
it gets used up faster that way?"

S. (Brother, 2½): "I never knew." He takes bar of soap out.

B. (Elder sister): "Go home and find out whether the hens are feeding (27)
on the corn spread out in the sun." (L., Girl, 10) doesn't take heed but goes on
playing. "What are you doing? Do you mean to say you haven't heard my words?
Go quickly, otherwise I'll cane you." She picks up a stick. L. runs away, then
stands by watching elder sister and looking at her angrily.

B.: "I'll be satisfied in only you'll go where I've sent you."

S. (Boy, 14) is making rope for weaving a mat. He tells brother to (28)
divide the sisal in little pieces for him.

M. (Brother, 8): "Certainly not. Don't think I've come here to work for you."
S. backs down, doesn't reply.

Related episodes suggest that children receiving task commands need to be
persuaded not only that the task is necessary, but that it is necessary to be done
now. The child in the first episode below apparently is so persuaded, but the
child in the second successfully refuses his brother's command by questioning its
urgency.

Y. (Girl, 13): "Collect the firewood and shelter it under the eaves (29)
before it rains."

T. (Brother, 8) complies. Sister stands by the door and examines the
[threatening] weather.

L. (Boy, 11): "What are you still doing? Come quickly and help me do this (30)
cloth, quickly." (He has been waiting 4 min).

A. (Brother, 9 rudely): "You have no right to hurry me up."

The expected chain of command in Oyugis is elder child to younger child.
Once a child graduates from the privileged state of infancy, he is expected to
accept the benevolent domination of his elders.

K. (Boy, 3): "G., swing me." (31)

G. (Brother, 5, humorously): "I'm not your employeee."

Younger children must therefore phrase their requests to older ones politely or
submissively if they are not to violate Oyugis norms. In the following observa-
tions, both younger children must modify their initial styles of commanding
before they meet with success.

J. (Boy, 4): "Hold this dish for me so I can sit down." (32)

M. (Brother, 7½): "You can do it yourself."

J. (pleadingly): "Please." M. takes the dish.

Two children are playing together. G. (Boy, 5): "Run quickly to the pond and fetch water." (33)

N. (Sister, 8): "You've no right to tell me that. If you keep playing with me that way, I'll beat you." G. is now silent. N. walks to the pond carrying the tin can in her hand.

It is apparent, finally, that certain kinds of reciprocity considerations figure into children's cooperation or noncooperation with each other's task commands. This might be called the interaction of "nurturance" issues with "authority" issues. In the following excerpt, a boy who refuses his elder sister's command receives the same rude treatment in kind, even though he has a legitimate need for help.

Two children are bathing at home. L. (Girl, 10): "Get me some water to wash my leg." (34)

R. (Boy, 7½): "That's not my concern." Later he requests, "Get me water to wash the soap off my face before it hurts my eye."

L.: "That's for you to do. I did not hold you and force you to put soap on your face."

In his elder sister's remarks, the boy has actually heard in capsule form a theory of respect that I heard espoused by Africans from all parts of Kenya when I conducted research on moral reasoning of university students and local community moral leaders (Edwards, 1974). This theory is that authorities should be obeyed (respected) because of the concrete help (nurturance) they provide those under their command. Elders who are obeyed *should* be nurturant in appropriate ways. Not only do young Oyugis children hear this concept, but apparently they also can articulate it themselves. In one telling episode, a very young boy (5-years-old) actually was seen to manipulate this concept to his advantage against an older cousin. This example is one of the clearest for showing how conflicts concerning nurturance and responsibility can challenge cognitively and morally the children involved.

I. (Girl, 10, visiting the household) calls O. (Boy, 8) to come get the baby because it's crying. O. tries to come but on the way is deliberately blocked by his little brother, G. (5). The girl canes G. to let O. go by. (35)

G. (complaining, wittily): "Can't you remember what I've done for you? I brought the baby from the other house for you, and now you're caning me!"

N. (Sister, 8) offers comfort to G.: "If she can't remember what you did for her, then never help her anymore." The cousin leaves G. alone and withdraws into the house.

Another episode shows an even younger girl, only 4-years-old, demonstrating her working knowledge of the same concept. This girl tells her mother to give her a potato (i.e., maternal nurturance) because she cared for the baby (i.e., obeyed her mother). When her mother stalls on the potato, the daughter seeks and receives nurturance of another sort, namely, praise. This child, like the 5-year-old boy above, shows herself as an active and successful moral reasoner and persuader.

L. (Girl, 4) to Mother: "Give me a potato to eat because I've cared (36)
for the infant long enough."

Mother: "What if I don't have any?"

L: "But you promised me." (Mother doesn't reply). "You see, Pamela doesn't
know how to handle the baby. She didn't cry when I was taking care of her."

Mother: "You know [how to do] it pretty well, my daughter."

COMMANDS CONCERNING PROPER SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The last aspect of prosocial development we consider concerns proper social behavior. Most African cultures, those of Kenya included, put a great deal of stress on proper social forms—etiquette, address, bearing, cleanliness, and other matters related to good manners and presentation. African cultures, in general, emphasize age and sex hierarchies in interpersonal relations (LeVine, 1973). Respectful terms of address, appropriate greetings and blessings, deferential displays, and various kinds of restraint and avoidance are widespread cultural forms that serve to emphasize interpersonal differences in rank, status, or power.

Americans, of course, emphasize the equality of persons and tend to think of manners and related matters as "mere conventions." Turiel (1975) believes conventional rules are usually seen as less important than rational moral rules. To his mind, conventions are not part of the true moral domain. Shweder (1982), on the other hand, considers conventions to be symbolic expressions of the moral order.

We cannot resolve that debate here, but we can examine the conventional discourse among Oyugis children related to conventions of proper behavior, to see what they tell us. They do suggest that Oyugis children early construct a working knowledge of their society's social conventions.

Very young children in Oyugis stoutly assert conventional norms of etiquette, modesty, and protection of property. In most cases, the offenders accept the etiquette and modesty corrections of even younger children without dispute. Never, in fact, do they engage in the kind of legalistic argumentation about conventional rules (whether in this situation they apply, whether an exception

should not be made, etc.) that American children seem so ready to use (Much & Shweder, 1978).

Two girls, aged 4 and 4½, examine the observer's raincoat. G. (Boy, 3) (37) to sister, "Stop touching the visitor's possessions." She stops.

K. (Boy, 3, domineeringly): "Get off my father's chair." J. (Boy, 3½) ignores him. (38)

P. (Girl, 5½): "Ogodo is coming here. Don't come outside unless you (39) put on your dress." B. (Girl cousin, 6) doesn't answer. She does not dress but sits in the bedroom.

J. (Boy, 6) to S. (Brother, 10): "Go and greet the visitor." S. goes. (40)

As with other types of rules, Oyugis children readily resort to physical sanctions to back up their commands. In three episodes found, punishment flows from elder to younger, and is accepted by the younger child.

A. (Boy, 9) hits N. (Niece, 8) for letting the infant defecate on his (41) mother's bed. N. cries.

N. (Girl, 8): "Clean your nose." K. (Brother, 3) ignores. N. repeats (42) command, picking up a cane. K. still ignores. N. repeats, trying to hit him. K. goes off unwillingly and comes back. "It's not very clean," says N. Again K. goes to clean and comes back. A few minutes later, sister N. tells little brother to go wash his face. He refuses by mimicking her rudely.

J. (Boy, 3) tries to uproot a pumpkin in the family garden. (43)

P. (Sister, 11½): "Don't or I'll beat you." J. runs away.

Addressing people respectfully and by the proper titles is an important Oyugis value. Although preschool children receive much correction on such matters, none of the Oyugis excerpts show preschoolers in the act of correcting others. Perhaps these rules are too complex for young children to have mastered. Beyond about the age of 8, however, children are observed doing something rather subtle with the rules of address. In a culturally appropriate manner, they use age/kinship terms as status terms and address age-inferiors with age-superior titles, to flatter them into mature cooperation (also confer excerpts (14) and (17):

J. (Girl, 9½) to P. (Sister, 2½, who had burst into tears for no obvious (44) reason): "What do you want, my mother?"

I. (Boy, 12½) to K. (Brother, 3): "Come, mzee [senior man]. (45) K. runs over.

By age 8, of course, most Oyugis children have spent countless hours in the company of children younger than themselves. They have experienced innumerable occasions on which it was desirable to influence the behavior of a bothersome or out-of-control small child. Having been on both the giving and receiving end of much rude and improper behavior, Oyugis children have had many opportunities to observe how the rules of respect, modesty, and hygiene facilitate pleasant and smooth relations within the group. This process has possibly been facilitated by the fact that the typical Oyugis household is large compared with the typical American household, although still a small enough social system for a child to comprehend. In short, they have many chances to see how conventional rules coordinate the flow of group life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In considering the social-cognitive base of nurturant and prosocial behavior, this chapter has focused on *rules* that children learn about in everyday social encounters. Children in all societies discuss and negotiate with one another about right and wrong, of course, but the content or focus of their discussions may vary greatly. In traditional rural communities, such as those of sub-Saharan Africa, children spend a great deal of time in multiage groups. In these settings, older children are given much formal or informal authority and responsibility over small children. The focus of children's moral commands and accountings to one another in this setting appears to be "conventional" moral rules at least as much as "rational" moral rules of justice, harm, and welfare.

This paper has attempted to defend form claims.

1. First, because toddlers and young children require so much behavioral guidance and elicit so many prosocial commands, they help their caretakers construct knowledge about "conventional" moral rules of respect and propriety. Infants (and animals), on the other hand, mainly require positive nurturance and inhibition of aggression. Caring for them especially helps children construct knowledge about "rational" moral rules of harm and welfare. The multiage caretaking situation, composed of infants, toddlers, and older children, may represent a more broadly stimulating environment for reasoning about morality than does the school peer group, where children may have less stimulation to exercise conventional than rational moral reasoning.

2. Because North American children typically spend so much time in extra-familial settings with same-age peers, and so little time caring for infants and toddlers, their social/moral development may be lopsided, biased on the side of "rational" morality (focused on justice, harm, and welfare). Thus, the findings of American researchers concerning children's moral development may be culturally limited, not universal as is claimed. In particular, the finding that Ameri-

can children consider conventional moral rules to be more trivial and negotiable than rational moral rules appears a good candidate for the culturally-specific.

3. Turiel's theory can be considered a valuable contribution to understanding the development of nurturance and prosocial responsibility because of its delineation of multiple rules domains. Furthermore, by hypothesizing what kinds of social encounters lead the child to construct rules about each domain, it has focused our attention in a most useful way on children's everyday social interactions. However, I would state on the basis of material I have studied on Kenyan children (including the Oyugis data of Carol Ember considered in detail here) that rational moral rules, on the one hand, and conventional moral rules, on the other, are not necessarily learned in different kinds of social encounters. Rather, I believe that both rational and conventional moral rules are based on knowledge of the consequences of acts and their normative status. Just as a child who receives a hit or kick can "see" for himself the purpose of rules prohibiting aggression, so a child who tries to manage and control her occasionally rude and uncooperative younger siblings can see for herself the purpose of conventional rules. Furthermore, just as conventional moral rules are "taught" to children through the powerful suggestions and corrections of their elders, so too rational moral rules require similar enforcing by sanctioning agents to convince children which rules are serious and not to be forgotten. Children pay attention to the distress cries and needs of others not only because it is intrinsically satisfying to do so but also because they have been told that they are accountable for their actions (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979). They obey and enforce conventional norms not only because society defines these norms as right, but also because they can see for themselves that the norms relate to desirable consequences for themselves, others, and the family group as a whole.

4. Finally, this paper has sought to at least convince the reader that cross-cultural observations of nurturant and prosocial behavior offer potentially rich insights into social-cognitive development. Becoming nurturant and responsible involves much more than learning specific skills of caretaking and acquiring role-taking and empathic capacities. Rather, the caretaking child must also develop abilities to *think about* certain kinds of social situations and to *influence and convince others* when necessary. Therefore, we can learn much about the origins of nurturance from the close study of the reasoning-in-action of children "at work," trying their best to satisfy the needs of self and others in multiage, familial groups.

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