

Chapter 9

The “Unhappy Moralists” Effect: Emotional Conflicts Between Being Good and Being Successful

Fritz Oser, Evi Schmid and Lisa Hattersley

“The moral law however doesn’t promise happiness” (I. Kant)

Morality and Success: Two Interfering Worlds

In recent years moral developmental research has gone beyond classical questions on stage, structure and phases; it is becoming more and more situated. This is why in this chapter – as one of many possible questions – we would like to ask why some people feel so unhappy when they are trying to keep up moral standards, whereas others do not. On the other hand we often see that immediate success related to a necessary good, which is not attainable if someone does not go against some ethical principles, makes people self-confident and at times even happy. Thus the questions we raise are:

- What is the relationship between having success and being moral?
- Does morality inhibit success?
- Why do moral persons often feel unsuccessful?
- What does it mean to combine morality and success?

These questions stand in relation to the so-called good life metaphor, which states that virtue-oriented behaviour yields to a satisfaction with respect to general subjective well being. Morally good persons feel satisfied that they are embedded in an environment, which expects them to be good in every field. According to Aristotle, apart from good situational conditions and apart from having leisure time, the good life comes out of the fact that one acts according to virtues and thus, as a result, feels complete happiness. Other philosophical paradigms see morality as only one aspect of happiness; yet sometimes question even the basis of this

assumption. Thus we can trace the following thinking patterns:

- Whereas Aristotle connects morality with happiness, Kant assumes that if all aspects of life are submitted to practical reasoning some persons can become happy but others cannot.
- The utilitarianism connects these two opposing elements differently: Good is what is in the best service of others. Happiness becomes not only a by-product, but also a central goal of life.
- In a post-modern world morality is connected to financial independence, which guides and supersedes this morality and thus can be interpreted only according to success (communitarism).
- If morality concerning important issues is embedded in practical decision making it can lead to what we call moral unhappiness, which can be prevented by connecting morality to success in a new interpretative way. Success must be submitted to moral reflection (Seel, 1999).
- Today we can see the following thinking pattern: “In confronting the question of the good life and the successful society, we encounter the vexatious question of cultural relativism. If societies have different sets of values, people in them are likely to consider different criteria relevant when judging the success of their society” (Diener & Suh, 2003, p. 3).

As helpful as these reflections may be, the question we raise goes – at least partly – beyond philosophical analyses. We want to know why some people stay moral in most difficult situations, even if they feel unsuccessful (moral resilience) and even if things are negatively related to the way they act. This question bears on the field of educational psychology. We found that individuals, who have decided to be moral, might be unhappy and might even face being excluded from the group. This is especially the case when success depends on being immoral and when the status of the underlying norm is not very strong, that is to say if the respective transgression belongs to the realm of the so-called weak negative behaviour (Nisan, 1986).

We have so far described the problem of the ‘unhappy moralist’. The rest of the chapter is outlined as follows: Section 2 describes a study on fare-dodging, in which youngsters feel happy about cheating and unhappy by not doing so. Section 3 briefly introduces a further study on cheating and happiness. In section 4 a study on negotiation (see Oser & Reichenbach, 2000) with great importance for the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect is introduced.

Section 5 discusses the phenomenon of the ‘happy victimizer’, which is a kind of ‘mirror image’ of the ‘unhappy moralistic’ effect. A ‘happy victimizer’, like a person happy about cheating, has done wrong, and children believe that he/she feels good about it. Section 6 and 7 describe in detail a new study, in which the attribution of emotions in the moral sphere is addressed from a developmental psychology angle (see Schmid, 2003). In section 8 attention is given to new questions in the field with a special focus on different groups of norms and their possible effect on the phenomenon of the ‘unhappy moralistic’. Some educational reflections are discussed in the final section.

Happy Cheating: Never Be Excluded From a Group

In an experimental study (Oser, 1999, p. 168-219), each student of an apprentice class was influenced by two other trained students (a girl and a boy) *not* to use the offered money received for a tramway fare to another fare away located university building in order to participate in a course, but rather to keep the money to buy a drink after the course with his/her friends and companions. The experimental conditions were such that the young protagonist did not know that if the students had been caught, the ticket would have been in the possession of the seducers because all fares for the tramway company were paid in advance. What are the results regarding the fare-dodgers? Many of them did cheat, whereas others did not. Six out of 11 students were fare-dodgers, 5 resisted to cheating (6 students of the class were trained as seducers). Results of this pilot study show that in general the fare-dodgers were on a fixed moral stage; the non fare-dodgers were on transition, all this measured on the Kohlberg test. The fare-dodgers were rather stable emotionally, and more reality based, they had a higher self-worth, and were rather modest in their general behaviour (polarity profile). They were less severe in their judgment towards others, but more sensitive, and they rejected illusions to a lesser extent. They appeared to be less frustrated and were viewed as more popular by the group, relative to the non-fare-dodgers. On the other hand, they were less dependent on the group and even preferred working in the group more than the non fare-dodgers. In regard to the life satisfaction-scale we did find – due to the small N – only a tendency towards fare-dodgers having a higher satisfaction value than the non-fare-dodgers ($m_1=1.43$; $m_2=1.25$, on a scale of -2 to +2). All in all it seems that the ‘immoral’ persons, because they were successful in respect to cheating in a concrete ‘small’ situation, felt more integrated, happier, more satisfied with regard to their actions and especially more

integrated within the group of the other 16-year-olds than the moral ones. Conversely, the non fare-dodgers did not feel very accepted, nor stable and indicated dissatisfaction with their decision; especially in regard to the qualitative data (interviews after the happening), they felt less free in their decision-making process and were too afraid of being caught. In addition some of the non-fare-dodgers said that ultimately they felt the decision was OK, but that they also felt unhappy about not being accepted and even had ill feelings toward the others. On the other hand the fare-dodgers were more satisfied they had overcome the fear of being caught; they felt they were somehow heroes in consideration of the fact that the State was already demanding too much money from students, too much tax fare, etc. They also had many other stories about having been successful with other types of adolescent cheating behaviour.

This was the first time we discovered that people with a strong moral point of view often feel dissatisfied with regard to the success in normatively loaded situations. As mentioned earlier, we called this phenomenon ‘the unhappy moralist’ effect. It depicts an emotional reaction to the fact that in some situations the conflict between morality and success cannot be balanced out. Of course in this example of cheating regarding tramway tickets, we can suggest that the reactions of the fare-dodgers are typical for stage 3 persons according to Kohlberg. Stage 3 persons stress a relational morality. Good is if I am doing what the group or my friends want me to do. However, most of the non-cheaters were also around stage 3 so that this argument does not apply fully. If we accept – as Solomon (2000) does – that subjects are not simply at the mercy of their emotions but also actively design them, then emotions are personal judgments that say something about the moral motivation of a person. According to recent research, emotions do not only happen to us, they are parts of our acts, even if these acts are mere judgments. In relation to the unhappy moralists these emotions show that persons who act morally and give profit second priority, feel dissatisfied with their act and will not experience moral happiness or a ‘warm-glow-effect’ (see Nunner-Winkler, 2001, p. 182) as would have been expected. This dissatisfied reaction stems – as suggested – from a conflict between a moral demand and a personal need, respective a personal gain. In contrast to the ‘unhappy moralists’, ‘happy victimizers’ (see paragraph 5) give priority to direct personal needs or personal gains. They accept a moral transgression and believe that the wrongdoers are satisfied afterwards. Children believe that the victimizer can only be happy, whereas the victim can only be unhappy, but both dimensions are related to moral emotions, and of course thus to different aspects of such emotions. Op ’t Eynde and De Corte (2002, p. 14) state that “First, emotions are based on students’ cognitive interpretations and appraisals of specific situations. Second, students construct interpretations and appraisals based on the

knowledge they have and the beliefs they hold, and thus they vary by factors such as age, personal history and home culture. Third, emotions are contextualized because individuals create unique appraisals of events in different situations. Fourth, emotions are unstable because situations and also the person-in-the-situation continuously develop”.

Applied to our phenomenon, ‘unhappy moralists’ are dissatisfied with their moral decision; cognitively they view the decision as ‘right’, but do not gain success from it. In addition students construct a so-called ‘information availability bias’. Since information is not balanced, and the societal and cultural norm accepts both success and morality, the student constructs a disequibrated form of moral decisiveness. Thirdly, this is only the case when – as we said – the situation is related to a so-called weak norm and the appraisal of an event goes together with an internally or socially expected second norm system, which is related to a financial or law-oriented gain. Finally, this emotional state can change as soon someone supports the subject with regard to his/her decision. The non-‘unhappy moralist’, in comparing this gain with acting morally, denies the moral necessity and thus devaluates the consequences of his/her action as being negative for someone else.

Cheating on Mathematics: Who is Unhappy?

As we mentioned previously, not all situations in which someone acts morally lead to the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon. It is necessary that a material gain stands against the morally worthwhile act. It is also essential that the norm character is weak rather than strong. (A weak norm is less absolute compared to a strong norm, which should be kept in most cases. A weak norm concerns for instance a speed regulation, a strong norm the commandment not to kill.) In addition the chances of the outcome of the act becoming public have to be relatively small. Sometimes it is also a clear cut ‘information availability bias’, in the sense that we believe that the other person knows what he or she is doing, and that we do not ask enough and so the hidden information stands against the not openly given information. As a justification for the behaviour, people might say: “They did not ask me; why should I give them more information.” “They did not ask me” becomes an excuse for not saying what should have been said and as such, becomes a fully justified response. Hiding information is interpreted less severely as directly lying and as stressing a kind of ‘first order’ desire. This kind of ‘first order’ desire is in so far different from the above-mentioned judgment of children, as adults fully and consciently have knowledge of the conflict between

morality and success. Within certain situations, only morally resilient people resist the temptation to hide if hiding is deemed ‘easy’ and is viewed better for the individual’s gain or success. Examples of such situations are an act of selling a product or a negotiation process.

An interesting study with respect to this issue was carried out in Vienna. Although it was the main objective of the study to measure mathematical writing performances, it revealed interesting findings on cheating behaviour as well (Hanisch, 1990). In Austria, the German word for cheating is ‘Schummeln’. By definition ‘Schummeln’ is a minor form of cheating that refers to unacceptable behaviour but is not considered a criminal act. Only 7 of 191 students between 16 and 19 years reported that they did not cheat at all. There were indications that these 4% either did not need to cheat or were unhappy and somehow socially excluded from the others. This research did not focus on the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon but rather on cheating methods, cheating forms, cheating motivation, reactions of the teachers, feelings of being caught and similar issues. The findings of this study indicated that cheaters, whether girls or boys, were happy cheaters. They even see helping others through cheating as a social responsibility act and consider the risks of being caught as a ‘Kavaliersdelikt’ – a type of offence, which leads to a form of group acceptance (group morality).

Typical of the research in this field, not enough is said concerning the non-cheaters. This and similar studies could broaden our horizons with respect to mathematically related beliefs (see also De Corte, 2003). We can imagine that the task-oriented beliefs for instance could be supplemented: instead of saying “the most satisfying thing for me is to learn the course material in this math class,” one could also say, “the task can be better resolved if I prepare a crib sheet.” With respect to self-efficacy beliefs, instead of saying “I’m confident that I can understand even the most difficult part of the math course”, one could propose an alternative such as, “I am sure that cheating gives me more security with respect to a high stakes exam in math”. Although research in this area has not yet been done, it could provide insight into intercultural differences.

Moral Resilience and What it Means to not Be Unsuccessful

Probably the most convincing study with respect to the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon deals with hiding and devaluating information in negotiation processes (see Oser & Reichenbach, 2000). This study investigates moral resilience and the respective emotional reactions where

in a negotiation case one party – besides having the task of winning and fighting for the best solution in the service of their respective clients – has to deal with morally negative information. This information is such that it speaks against oneself. Moral resilience in this case means “a) resistance to gain or accepting a good when there is an indication that the procurement of that good is connected to something negative; b) to resist public pressure even when acting in favour of weak or persecuted people will probably lead to the consequence that this act will damage the moral subject, i.e. him- or herself, and c) to not bear witness against others when this testimony only yields an advantage for the one who is in possession of a so-called evidence but not for the one whose future is at stake” (Oser & Reichenbach, 2000, in press). Moral resilience is a precondition for the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon. Subjects choose the right thing to do because their moral conscience supersedes the material gain without giving the person a moral self-worth or a high moral self-esteem. An example may help understand this: A teacher in a philosophy class discusses the question about legitimating the death penalty with a 17-year-old. The student is opposed to the death penalty, whereas the teacher is in favour. Instead of defending the teacher’s view in an exam, the student maintains his view in opposition of the death penalty. He receives a poor grade. He then feels unhappy about his decision to adhere to his own moral beliefs instead of adopting the teacher’s view. Only many years later does his decision make him feel proud, enhancing his self-esteem. Thus the student’s moral resilience was accompanied by the fact that it hindered success and made the protagonist unhappy. In the moment of the event, the student’s lack of moral self-esteem was crucial (Heid, 2004, personal communication). This is only an example that illuminates that truthfulness does not often lead to felt success.

Returning now to the negotiation study, in the respective simulation divorce case on Winter vs. Winter, two lawyers defended the claim of the husband, two others the claim of the wife. Both parties received relatively clear general information. However, in the additional confidential information given to each party, Paul’s lawyers received positive information: Paul still loves his wife, he wants her to come back, he cares about the children etc. Conversely, the lawyers of Barbara received negative information: She leaves the children alone, she hits them if they wet their beds, she flirts with the boyfriends of her older daughters, she spends money for her unnecessary lessons that is intended for the children etc. The most important information, however: not one of the five children wants to stay with her if the divorce takes place, as well, all the neighbours think that Paul would be a better custodian for the children. What is the problem? Barbara’s lawyers have information that speaks against her. She wants the children, she wants to win, she wants the money, but as her

defender you know that the future lives of these children depend on your decision. From the information received you know that her husband could look after them much better than Barbara would.

In our study we found that 30% of the subjects (N=110 adults in management or higher political positions or lawyers) decide to give all the children to Paul, 12% give the custody of all the children to Barbara, 28% give the two older children to Barbara, 10% give the two older children to Paul, and 20% do not find a solution. The most challenging result is that the quasi morally resilient persons, those who use their information against the interests of their client and therefore indirectly help the attorneys of the opposite party, are largely unsatisfied with the result of their negotiation. They feel that they have done the right thing but are not convinced that their decision makes the world any better or that they are successful negotiators. “They feel not really successful even when they are convinced that they have done the right thing. One of them said, ‘I am so exhausted; I will never become a good negotiator. I think it was the right thing to do but I am wondering how we could have brought things together’. And precisely this seems to be the key issue of what we are discussing here: On the one hand the negotiator should be a winner with good tactical and economical abilities, on the other hand he should have a moral stand” (Oser & Reichenbach, in press). The following data supports this first effect: “Persons who decide to give the children to Barbara show a highly significant correlation between the statement ‘Morally, I completely did what was right’ and ‘I am satisfied with the outcome’ (.707*). When the children were separated (e.g., the older children to Barbara, the younger children to Paul), the correlation was less high (.459*). When the children were given to Paul, there was no significant correlation (.219). This again leads to the assumption that a complementary phenomenon to that of the ‘happy victimizer’ exists, namely the resilient ‘unhappy moralist’. Why resilient? It means that these persons keep their moral standards even if it is against their feeling of being unsuccessful. In other words, they work against themselves, the people who act morally correct do not show positive correlations with being content about the solution they reached. This can be sustained with another significant correlation: ‘The solution is in the interest of all concerned parties’ correlates positively with ‘We were lying’ if the children were allocated to Paul” (.389*), but negatively if the children were given to Barbara (-.637*). That means that for Paul’s defenders there is a positive relationship between lying and interests. They believe that lying could help, whereas the ‘true liars’ do not believe that. There is no significant correlation between the ones who do not find a solution” (Oser & Reichenbach, in press).

What are the reasons for such lying behaviour, respectively for the behaviour to force the other party to give the children to the person with the bad record? As mentioned above, we believe there are two qualitatively distinct effects. The first is what we called an ‘information availability bias’, and the second is an ‘information devaluation bias’. The information availability bias states that subjects – especially on Paul’s side – believe they have all the necessary information and that both parties have the same balanced problems. The information devaluation bias states – especially on Barbara’s side – that the negative information given is not so important, they believe that in general both parties are guilty and the misbehaviour of the wife is due to the overload of work and responsibility. These are precisely the reasons for giving the children to Barbara, reasons that illustrate that people want to avoid the ‘unhappy moralist phenomenon’. For the 30% who allocated all children to Paul the emotional feeling is “we have done the right thing but we have not been successful negotiators”. Thus the relationship between morality and success is never equally balanced. This leads to the question of how we can educationally strengthen the moral resilience and the moral courage on the one hand, and how we can build up a powerful moral self esteem on the other.

The Happy Victimizer: A Kind of Mirror Image

Twice already we mentioned the notion of the ‘happy victimizer’ effect. In the next section we will provide some more details on the phenomenon based on experimental studies.

Using a longitudinal study carried out by Weinert and Schneider (1986), Nunner-Winkler and Sodian analysed the emotions that children attributed to a moral victimizer when confronted with hypothetical situations of moral violations. The focus of the study was on showing that moral development is a process consisting of two phases. This is contradictory to Kohlberg’s supposition of cognitive-affective parallelism, which implies that both aspects develop at the same time and in the same way. But many research groups have questioned Kohlberg’s assumption (see Nunner-Winkler, 1989; 1999). Contrary to Kohlberg, Nunner-Winkler assumes that in a first universal phase, moral rule understanding is acquired. The second phase consists of a slow individual learning process, in which moral motivation is built up. Moral motivation can be understood as the readiness to do what is right; this may occur not only because one wants to do it, but also when doing what is right requires renouncing from the satisfaction of hedonistic desires (see Nunner-Winkler, 1993).

Thus, Nunner-Winkler and Sodian conducted their studies based on the hypothesis that attribution of emotion can be taken as an indicator for moral motivation (see Nunner-Winkler, 1993). In one of their studies 4, 5-, 6, 7- and 8-year old children were presented with picture stories in which a child protagonist is confronted with a conflict between a moral rule and a hedonistic desire. After questioning the children about their knowledge and understanding of the moral rule in question, the story figure was shown violating the rule and satisfying his or her hedonistic desire. The children were then asked which emotions they would attribute to the moral victimizer. Their answer would either focus on the rule violation (“feels bad, because he/she has done something wrong”) or on the satisfaction of the hedonistic desire (“feels good, because he/she got what he/she wanted”). According to Nunner-Winkler’s assumption, this attribution can be seen as the indicator for moral motivation. The results showed that in spite of having the necessary moral rule understanding, younger children focus on the successful outcome of the violation, judging a moral victimizer to experience positive emotions (60% of the 4- and 5-year-olds and 50% of the 6- and 7-year-olds). A majority of younger children believe a person will feel good if he/she does exactly what he / she wants to do, regardless of whether a moral rule is violated or not. Older children attributed negative feelings to the story figure, focusing on the rule violation and the moral value of the victimizer’s action¹. Even if we could argue that there is a desirability effect with respect to older children, the readiness of younger children to attribute positive emotions to a moral victimizer is a strong effect; which is referred to as the ‘happy victimizer phenomenon’ (see Nunner-Winkler, 1993; 2001). Nunner-Winkler and Sodian also presented children with a story, in which the story figure abides by the moral rule and in doing so resists the temptation to satisfy his or her desire. When asked how the story figure must feel, children assume the person will feel bad, because he or she could not satisfy his or her hedonistic desire. It therefore appears that children not only expect a person to feel good if a hedonistic desire is satisfied, but conversely, they also expect a person to feel bad if (s)he does something (s)he does not want to do or if (s)he does not do something (s)he wants to do (see Nunner-Winkler, 1999).

Keller, Lourenço, Malti, and Saalbach (2003) observed similar results concerning the attribution of emotions to a hypothetical victimizer in a study with German and Portuguese children. Younger children strongly favoured hedonistic desire satisfaction in spite of their

¹ From the age of about 10 all children, like adults, attribute negative emotions to a moral victimizer; therefore such attribution of emotion can only be seen as an indicator for moral motivation in younger children (see Nunner-Winkler, 2001, p. 178).

understanding of moral rules. Older children, on the other hand, gave priority to the moral rule as opposed to the hedonistic desire of the story figure (see Keller et al., 2003).

It would appear that there is a phase (happy victimizer) in which moral rule understanding is present but moral motivation is not yet established. The question arises whether the other phenomenon (the ‘unhappy moralist’) can only occur once moral motivation exists. It would appear that the readiness to sacrifice hedonistic or ‘first-order’ desires in favour of what is morally right provides a possible basis for the characteristic emotions of an ‘unhappy moralist’. Should this be the case, then moral motivation would be a precondition for the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon to occur and the ‘happy victimizer’ a preceding phenomenon to the ‘unhappy moralist’. Based on the research, our assumption is that there are two types of the phenomenon: a) a situation-specific form which is independent of moral stage development, and b) a form which is related to a lack of moral reversibility in which not being able to be successful makes people unhappy. In our studies we concentrated on the first form.

A Developmental Psychology Perspective on the Attribution of Emotions in the Moral Sphere: A New Study

Until now the phenomenon of the ‘unhappy moralist’ itself was circumscribed. Demonstrating the effect through empirical evidence using a broader age range still remains to be analysed. Preliminary evidence exists in the observations that Oser and Reichenbach made of participants in negotiation courses (see section 4): people who behaved morally, were often unsatisfied with the result of their negotiation technique. As a consequence, the losses that were commonly suffered as a result of moral and honest conduct proved to be more important for the emotional equilibrium of the negotiator than his/her proven moral strength. A second source of information that we discussed was Nunner-Winkler’s investigations into moral motivation, (see section 5). Findings demonstrated that with the aid of attributions of emotions made by children in relation to a hypothetical moral wrongdoer, until a certain age, children are prepared to attribute only positive emotions to a wrongdoer (see Nunner-Winkler, 2001). The aim of the study (described below) was to investigate whether the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon as well as, the ‘happy victimizer’ effect can be detected in both children and teenager attributions.

In the study, a random sample of participants ranging in age from 7 to 15 years old was selected. As various studies (see Hascher, 1994; Nunner-Winkler, 1999; Keller et al., 2003) were able to show that a development takes place in children regarding the area of attribution of emotions in general, as well as, in the area of the attribution of emotions within the moral sphere. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to approach this study from a developmental psychology angle, using a broad age range of participants. Accordingly, participants were interviewed in order to investigate differences in the structures of their answers. At each age level (7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 years) half of the interviewees were girls and half were boys. In addition, of the 13 to 15-year-olds half attended junior secondary school ('Realschule'), and the other half secondary school. This factor allowed educational background to be used as a between variable.

The design of the study consisted of each child being told two stories. Of the two stories, each had two versions. Although the structure of the stories were the same within each group of participants (younger/older children), the story figure was modified in order to guarantee that the children identified as closely as possible with the story figure, of which was either a child or a teenager of approximately the same age as the children/teenager listening to the story. All the stories were about a child or teenager who wanted to buy something. The two versions of the story were then presented. In the first version, the sales assistant withholds information that would indicate that the object being sold is not brand new or has already been repaired. By withholding the information, the sales assistant makes a larger profit because the consumer believes the object to be new. In the second version the sales assistant does not withhold any information; she is totally honest and therefore loses out financially. Each participant was presented with the two stories, with both a female and a male protagonist. These deliberately gender-specific stories were intended to indicate possible gender-related differences.

After the 40 children and teenagers had been told the stories, they were asked questions about them. The first three questions were intended to investigate the dimension of 'success'. Moreover, how the interviewees assess both the fair and the unfair sales assistant as regards to her gain. With the two subsequent questions on the dimension of 'morality', participants were first asked which form of conduct of the two sales assistants they regarded as being good and why, and secondly they were requested in a more open question to assess how each of the two sales assistants might feel. The final question was intended to explain the dimension of 'happiness', in which interviewees were asked which person they regarded as more happy, the one who had behaved in a moral manner or the one who had concealed

important information and had thus earned more money. The last question related directly to the hypothesis of the researchers, which was that *the younger children regard money as the criterion for success, satisfaction and happiness, whereas the older children are torn between the criteria of ‘financial profit’ and ‘honesty’*. Although we believed in advance that the criteria of ‘morality’ and ‘honesty’ become of increasing importance with age, data of a pilot study already showed that there was no direct shift in fixation from financial criteria to moral criteria. The older children appeared to be aware of the difficult relationship between the two dimensions and as such, attempted to find what they deemed to be a good solution.

The second hypothesis states *that a development takes place in the area of emotion attribution in children and young people between the ages of 7 and 15: as they grow older, the number of positive emotions attributed to the immoral sales assistant declines, while the number of negative emotions increases*. The second hypothesis relates primarily to the previously mentioned studies by Nunner-Winkler and Sodian concerning the ‘happy victimizer’ phenomenon. In their longitudinal study they were able to show that four and eight-year-old children fundamentally differ in the emotions they attribute to a fictitious rule-breaker. Whereas younger children mainly focus on whether the story figure has been able to satisfy his needs, older children show that they allow themselves to be more strongly affected by moral criteria in their attribution of emotions.

The third hypothesis indicates *that despite the amoral attribution of emotions, children and teenagers identify the conduct of the sales assistant who acts morally as correct and not the conduct of the immoral sales assistant*. This hypothesis is also based both on Nunner-Winkler’s research and on the results of the aforementioned study, Nunner-Winkler was able to show through various investigations that knowledge of moral rules is found even in very small children, but that children may not always act in accordance with such knowledge (see Nunner-Winkler, 1999). Already seven years old declared that the sales assistant who acted in a moral manner was deemed to have been the one who acted correctly.

Results of This Study

In this section the most important results obtained are presented and discussed.

The first hypothesis, which stated that the younger children would be closely focused on financial criteria, while the older children would base their decision using the moral criteria, may be regarded as confirmed by the results. The responses to all the questions clearly

indicate that a change of this type takes place between the ages of seven and 15. Both the participants' assessment of the success of the two sales assistants, as well as, the assessment of the level of satisfaction regarding the sale and of the happiness of the sales assistants, indicate a clear shift in the assessment criteria from financial to moral as seen with the increasing age of the participants. In addition, confirmation was obtained that the older children and teenagers not only use moral criteria as a basis for decision making, but also that with increasing age there is an ever greater tension between morality and success. For example, the answers to the question of how the fair sales assistant feels show very clearly that almost without exception younger children focus on the financial aspects, whereas ambivalent feelings can be attributed to increasing age. While the younger children still think in a very polarized way and conclude that the fair sales assistant either feels satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of her/his honest behaviour, the older children and teenagers increasingly try to describe the situation of emotional tension in which the sales assistant finds herself/himself. As Figure 1 shows, there are no answers among the statements made by the seven-year-olds that would allow a conclusion of ambivalent feelings regarding the fair sales assistant. On the other hand, a large number of the older children interviewed describe being torn between the desire to act honestly and morally, and the necessity to be financially successful. This also seems to indicate that the older children perceive moral situations and feelings differently and possess a different vocabulary of emotions as compared to the younger children.

Figure 1 about here

In all age groups both an 'unhappy moralist' and a 'happy victimizer' phenomenon were detected. The majority of the children and teenagers interviewed stated that they regarded the fair sales assistant as unhappier, less successful and more dissatisfied with the sale, whereas, they viewed the unfair sales assistant as being happier, more successful and more satisfied with the sale. However, it is also clear that in the area of emotion attribution and the assessment of moral and immoral situations, a development takes place between the ages of 7 and 15; as Figures 2 and 3 show, the amoral attribution of emotions becomes less frequent as the children grow older, and the moral attribution of emotions becomes more common.

Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 about here

Whereas the younger participants still almost exclusively assume that the fair sales assistant is less successful, less happy and more dissatisfied with the sales situation, with increasing age more children and teenagers assess the fair sales assistant as more successful and happier, as she/he acted honestly. The second hypothesis, which states that the amoral attribution of emotions becomes less common as one grows older, while moral attribution becomes more common, can therefore also be confirmed.

The third hypothesis was confirmed too. As Figure 4 shows, the vast majority of the children and teenagers identified the conduct of the person who acted in the morally correct manner as the correct way to act, even if they attributed negative emotions to this person.

Figure 4 about here

In sum, these results support on the findings reported in the studies by Nunner-Winkler’s studies on moral motivation. They found that the knowledge younger children have of moral rules does not necessarily mean that they also feel motivated to act in accordance with these rules. The findings also support the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon, which states that the good person is ambiguous in regard to the balance between financial gains and the morally good decision.

This research is important because it is the first time that the phenomenon of the ‘unhappy moralist’ was empirically confirmed in both children and teenagers. Major developmental effects in the area of moral development between the ages of 7 and 15 were also established via the research described in this chapter. In other words, the phenomenon of the ‘unhappy

moralist' has been confirmed, meaning that, for the most part children attribute negative feelings to a person who acts in a morally correct way. This attribution of emotions is primarily made by focusing on the satisfaction of basic fundamental needs (first or second order desire) and not on the basis of moral criteria. Individuals are more satisfied and happier if they possess more and if they have what they want. Those who do not have what they really want are dissatisfied and unhappy, even if they have deliberately refrained from acquiring what they want on the basis of moral criteria. Children and teenagers thus do not assume that a person who acts in a morally correct way feels good and satisfied because of his clear conscience and honesty. They rather assume that the fact of not being able to satisfy needs and desired gains due to the application of moral principles leads to dissatisfaction and furthers the feeling of being unsuccessful.

With this study it was also possible to show, as was expected on the basis of Nunner-Winkler's investigations into the 'happy victimizer', that an 'unhappy moralist' phenomenon is not present in the same intensity at every stage in the moral development of a child. The results show very clearly that as children grow older, moral aspects as opposed to needs-related aspects play a more influential role in their assessment of moral and immoral persons and situations. In their answers, the younger children focused on financial and needs-oriented criteria. The older children and teenagers, however, tended to account for the moral aspects of the stories and used honesty and a clear conscience as factors in their arguments. This shows that most 13 and 15-year-olds appear to ask themselves what is 'good' and 'just', while younger children remain very one-sidedly interested in selfish and hedonistic goals. The question thus remains how influential the intensity of the first or second order desire is. In the negotiation situation many of the subjects forget the moral part when they are in the winning flow.

New Questions in the Field: Different Groups of Norms in Relation to the 'Unhappy Moralist'

Many open questions still remain regarding the 'unhappy moralist' phenomenon. One central question concerns the circumstances in which the phenomenon occurs. Future research may focus on norms or more specifically on different areas or groups of norms. The assumption is that the 'unhappiness' of an 'unhappy moralist' is connected to the strength of a norm. Garz (1999) discusses five different groups of everyday norms; two of these groups concern strong

and weak norms. According to Garz, practically everyone abides by strong norms. They are generally understood to be binding and – if violated – high consequences must be assumed. In general, the violation of a strong norm is not even taken into consideration. Weak norms however are not given as much importance and the potential consequences are not as high, which is why many smaller violations can be found in this area. It is “easier” to give priority to a hedonistic desire if the violation in question concerns a weak norm. A potential violation is also more easily justified.

Due to the nature of certain norms, they are adhered to without questioning and this does not entail unpleasant or bad feelings. Conversely, choosing the moral action in order to abide by a norm can result in negative emotions, such as those of an ‘unhappy moralist’. For instance, how will I feel if a bad grade replaces my good one because I mentioned a major mistake the teacher missed while correcting my exam? Will I be content if I point out to the shop assistant that he has given me far too much change? And will I be “unhappy” if I receive a good grade in an essay, which I copied from my older sister? The following questions therefore arise: – Within which norm groups does the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect occur? – And can differences be found regarding strong and weak norms? – Can further differences be found within the weak norms?

Apart from the differentiation between strong norms and weak norms, a further possible distinction concerns moral and legal norms (see Hattersley, 2005). These two groups do not seem to have the same level of obligation, just as strong and weak norms do not. To allow for more accuracy the moral and legal norms can be divided into three groups, partially based on the Domain-Theory (e.g., Nucci, 2001; Turiel & Smetana, 1986); moral-legal norms, non-legal moral norms and non-moral legal norms. *Moral-legal norms* can be considered both from a legal and from a moral point of view (e.g., theft). They follow from moral demands and prohibitions, but are legally defined and enforceable. *Non-legal moral norms* are known to be morally correct or incorrect, but contrary to moral-legal and non-moral legal norms they cannot be legally enforced. They can often be found in daily interpersonal situations (e.g., standing someone up). *Non-moral legal norms* concern actions, which are not essentially right or wrong unless they are governed by specific rules, i.e. they depend on the respective social system. For instance, driving on the right hand side of the road, as for example in Switzerland, is not a question of morality. In Switzerland it is correct to drive on the right hand side of the road; in England driving on the left hand side is correct (see Hattersley, 2005). Thus, as shown in Figure 5, six possible norm groups can be established:

Insert Figure 5 about here

The assumption is that the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect will only occur in the area of the weak norm groups (4, 5 and 6). Since in the weak norm groups the consequences following a violation are lower, and the hedonistic desire or potential personal profit is often stronger than the norm in question, more violations occur in these norm groups. If however the norm is abided by in spite of a strong hedonistic desire, it can be expected that the person will feel discontent, or in other words, the person will be an ‘unhappy moralist’. In the strong norm groups (1, 2 and 3) on the other hand, it is clear which action should and will be chosen, which is why generally no decision has to be taken about whether to give priority to the hedonistic desire or to the norm in question. Since the norm is stronger and therefore no conflict results, the assumption is that the characteristic emotions of an ‘unhappy moralist’ will not occur in the area of the strong norm groups. The question is of course when one considers a norm as strong or weak. In the Winter-Winter case many see the attribution of the children to one or the other side as a strong norm (children’s right) but others evaluate this norm as a weak one.

It is conceivable that further distinctions may be perceived within the weak norms. For instance, it may be that the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect will more likely be found in the norm groups, which are to some extent moral. These would include the weak moral-legal and non-legal moral norm groups. As norms belonging to the non-moral legal group are not essentially wrong, they are expected to be violated more easily. Therefore it is less likely for a conflict to arise between the hedonistic desire and the norm, and therefore also less likely that a basis exists for the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect to occur.

To summarize: distinctions between different norm groups are assumed in regard to the ‘unhappy moralist’ effect. The effect is expected to occur predominantly in the weak norm groups as opposed to the strong norm groups and within the weak norm groups it is expected to occur particularly in the moral-legal and non-legal moral norms. Thus one of the aims of further research on this topic is to test these assumptions and to ascertain in which areas of norms the ‘unhappy moralist’ phenomenon is likely to occur.

Educational Consequences

What about educational consequences? At present it is not at all clear how – on the basis of these findings – education can be conceived. We believe that two goals are central, first teachers must choose situations and vignettes that contain issues of need/gains in contrast to issues of being moral or immoral. These situations must be as much as possible ethically loaded. Second, students – especially in adolescence – should learn that being moral has positive long-term effects, but in the short run humans often lose the strength for overcoming the immediate want and for resources to suppress a desire in order to keep morality alive. They must develop a notion of how internal and external pressures can inhibit the moral point of view. Since the ‘happy moralist’ effect produces a high emotional disequilibrium, we might teach our students that morality is only morality if it is in conflict with personal needs/gains that would precisely hurt this morality. They need to understand that it is this conflict that is at the core of moral emotions and that this disequilibrium is also the main source for moral education.

References

- De Corte, E. (2003). Mainstreams and perspectives in research on learning (mathematics) from instruction. *Applied Psychology: An international Review*, 53(2), 279-310.
- Diener, E., & Suh, E. M. (2003). Measuring subjective well-being to compare the quality of life of cultures. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and subjective well-being* (pp. 3-11). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Garz, D. (1999). “Also die Annahme, dass die Welt gerecht ist, das wäre sehr irrational”. Urteilen, Handeln und die Moral des Alltagslebens. In D. Garz, F. Oser, & W. Althof (Eds.), *Moralisches Urteil und Handeln* (pp. 377-405). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Hanisch, G. (1990). *Problematik der Leistungsfeststellungen durch schriftliche Arbeiten am Beispiel der Mathematik*. Habilitationsschrift. Wien: Universität Wien.
- Hascher, T. (1994). *Emotionsbeschreibung und Emotionsverstehen. Zur Entwicklung des Emotionsvokabulars und des Ambivalenzverstehens im Kindesalter*. Münster/New York: Waxmann.
- Hattersley, L. (2005). “Unhappy Moralists”: *Doing right and feeling wrong. Eine empirische Arbeit zum Phänomen des unglücklichen Moralisten in Zusammenhang mit verschiedenen Normbereichen und anderen möglichen Einflussfaktoren*. Lizentiatsarbeit. Freiburg, Schweiz: Universität Freiburg, Departement Erziehungswissenschaften.
- Keller, M., Lourenço, O., Malti, T., & Saalbach, H. (2003). The multifaceted phenomenon of ‘happy victimizers’: A cross-cultural comparison of moral emotions. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 21, 1-18.

- Nisan, M. (1986). Die moralische Bilanz. Ein Modell moralischen Entscheidens. In W. Edelstein & G. Nunner-Winkler (Eds.), *Zur Bestimmung der Moral. Philosophische und sozialwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Moralforschung* (pp. 347-376). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Nucci, L. P. (2001). *Education in the moral domain*. Cambridge, New York, Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunner-Winkler, G. (1989). Wissen und Wollen. Ein Beitrag zur frühkindlichen Moralentwicklung. In A. Honneth, T. McCarthy, C. Offe, & A. Wellmer (Eds.), *Zwischenbetrachtungen. Im Prozess der Aufklärung* (pp. 574-600). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Nunner-Winkler, G. (1993). Die Entwicklung moralischer Motivation. In W. Edelstein, G. Nunner-Winkler, & G. Noam (Eds.), *Moral und Person* (pp. 278-303). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Nunner-Winkler, G. (1999). Moralische Motivation und moralische Identität. Zur Kluft zwischen Urteil und Handeln. In D. Garz, F. Oser, & W. Althof (Eds.), *Moralisches Urteil und Handeln* (pp. 314-339). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Nunner-Winkler, G. (2001). Freiwillige Selbsteinbindung aus Einsicht – ein moderner Modus moralischer Motivation. In J. Allmendinger (Ed.), *Gute Gesellschaft? Verhandlungen des 30. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Köln 2000* (pp. 172-196). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Op 't Eynde, P., & De Corte, E. (2002, April). Accepting emotional complexity: A component systems approach of emotions in the mathematics classroom. *Paper presented at the symposium "Motivation and emotion research in education: Theoretical frameworks and methodological issues" at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New Orleans, Louisiana.*
- Oser, F. (1999). Die missachtete Freiheit moralischer Alternativen: Urteile über Handeln, Handeln ohne Urteile. In D. Garz, F. Oser, & W. Althof (Ed.), *Moralisches Urteil und Handeln* (pp. 168-219). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Oser, F., & Reichenbach, R. (2000). Moralische Resilienz: Das Problem des "Unglücklichen Moralisten". In W. Edelstein & G. Nunner-Winkler (Ed.), *Moral im sozialen Kontext* (pp. 203-233). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Oser, F., & Reichenbach, R. (in press). *Moral resilience. What makes a moral person so unhappy?*
- Seel, M. (1999). *Versuch über die Form des Glücks*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Schmid, E. (2003). "Unhappy Moralist": Das Phänomen des unglücklichen Moralisten. Eine entwicklungspsychologische Arbeit zur Emotionsattribution im moralischen Bereich. Lizentiatsarbeit. Freiburg, Schweiz: Universität Freiburg, Departement Erziehungswissenschaften.
- Solomon, R. C. (2000). *Gefühle und der Sinn des Lebens*. Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins.
- Turiel, E., & Smetana, J. G. (1986). Soziales Wissen und Handeln: Die Koordination von Bereichen. In F. Oser, W. Althof, & D. Garz (Eds.), *Moralische Zugänge zum Menschen. Zugänge zum moralischen Menschen* (pp. 108-135). München: Peter Kindt Verlag.
- Weinert, F. E., & Schneider, W. (1986). *First report on the Munich longitudinal study on the genesis of individual competencies. (LOGIC)*. München: Max Planck Institute for Psychological Research.

List of figures

Figure 1: How does the fair sales assistant feel?

Figure 2: Which sales assistant is more successful?

Figure 3: Which sales assistant is happier?

Figure 4: Which sales assistant acted correctly?

Figure 5: Norm groups.

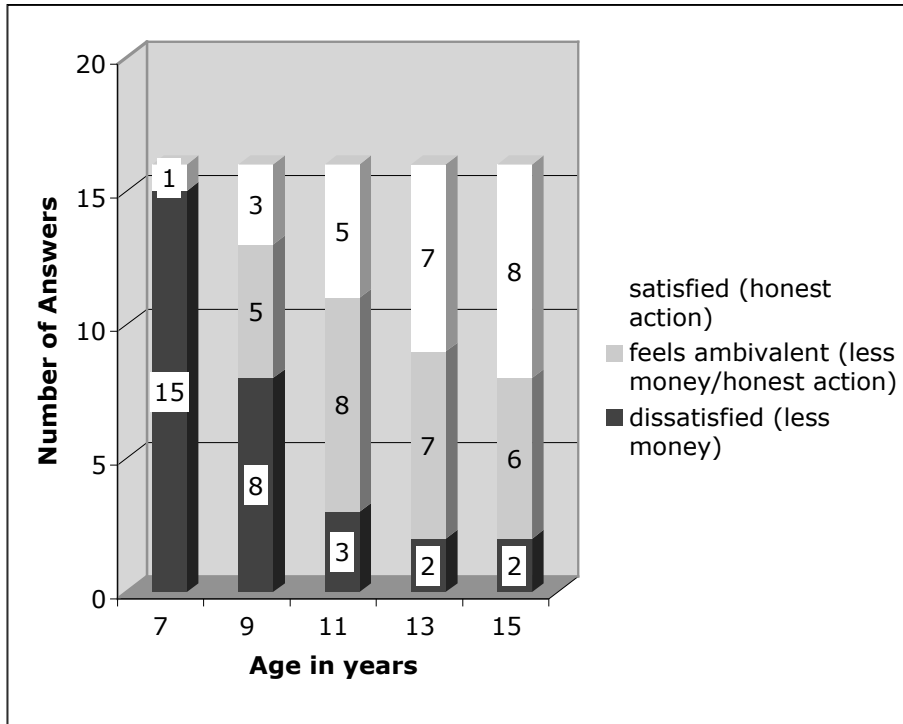


Figure 1: How does the fair sales assistant feel?

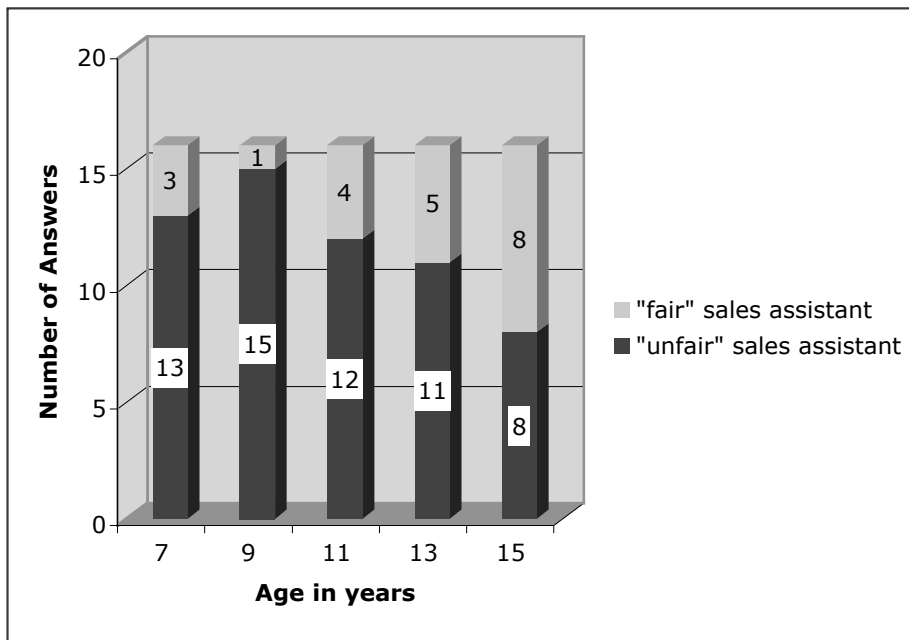


Figure 2: Which sales assistant is more successful?



Figure 3: Which sales assistant is happier?

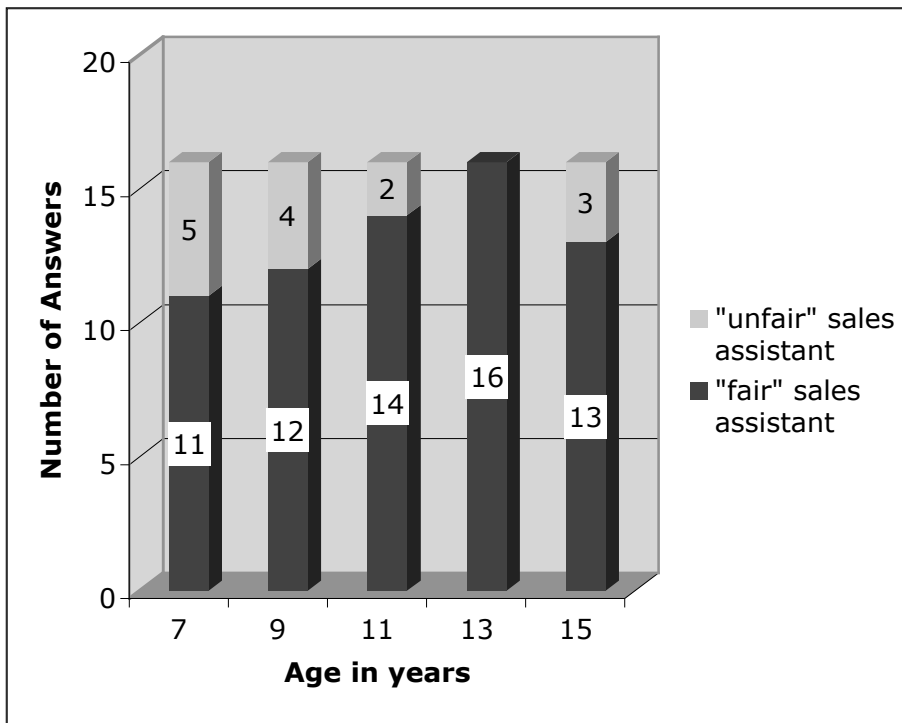


Figure 4: Which sales assistant acted correctly?

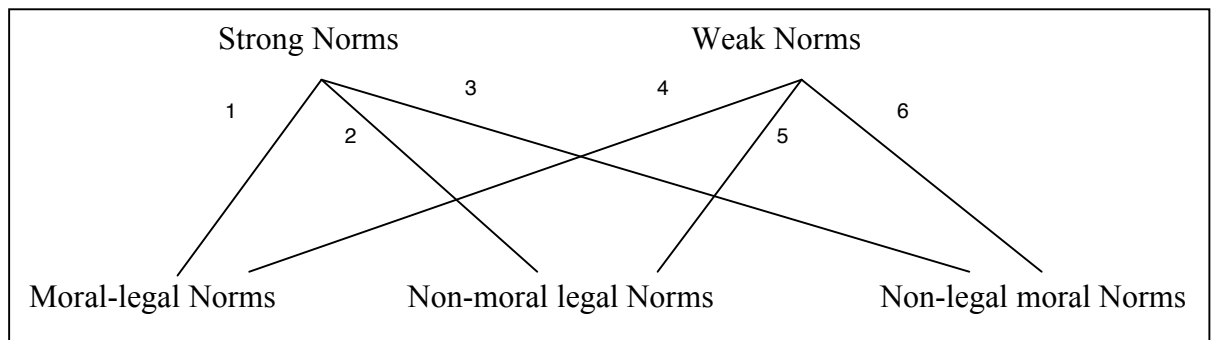


Figure 5: Norm groups.