

The Moral Judgment Interview

CI 171 ECE

Moral Judgment Assignment

Spring 2012

	POSSIBLE POINTS	ASSIGNED POINTS
Two children assessed	2	2
Process clearly described	3	3
Responses adequately documented	3	3
Interpretation	2	2
TOTALS	10	10

The two students who were tested for the Moral Interview assignment were Brian and Angel. Brian (5) is in kindergarten and Angel (10) is in fifth grade. The setting for the testing was in a quiet dining room area. The first part of the procedure included me letting the children know that I would be reading some scenarios to them and I just wanted them to give me their opinions about them. After they agreed to this, I asked them the questions. Below are all of the questions that were asked along with the children's exact answers:

IA. Question: Which child do you think was the naughtiest?

? → Lily: John.

Angel: The one with the cookie jar and broken glass.

Why is that one the naughtiest?

Lily: Because he broke 15 cups and Henry only broke one. H

Angel: The other one he didn't know they were there and this one did know. He didn't do it on purpose he didn't know he was going to knock them down. A

IIA. Question: Which of the boys is worse?

Lily: The one that got money.

Angel: The one with the grade.

Why do you think that is?

Lily: It was a lie, why should he get money if it was a lie. H

Angel: He lied his mother; they both lied but the one with the homework was a bigger lie and the other boy was only exaggerating. H

Did the boy with the dog tell a big lie?

Lily: No, it was just a little lie because maybe the dog was a little big but it wasn't as big as a cow. ✓

Angel: No, he just exaggerated.

IIB. Question: Which one of the two girls is worse?

Lily: the one with the car. H

Angel: The first one is worse. A

Is Lily really Brian?

Heteronomous
Autonomous

Why is that one worse?

Lily: Because a little girl cannot drive.

Angel: She didn't want to do the chores and she only made up an excuse. H

What makes her more naughty and the other one less naughty?

Lily: She told a lie that could not happen. The other one told a lie that could happen. ^{good H} response

Angel: She didn't want to do it and she just made her excuse; the other one always wanted it but the mom knew that it wasn't true.

III A. Question: Which one of the boys would lie again?

Lily: let me think about it.....umm....the one that explained to him. H

Angel: The second one would lie. (the mom that explained)

Why would he lie again?

Lily: She just explained it and it didn't hurt him, he didn't get punished in any way. The other one got hurt by the spanking. The mom punished him because she was saying that it was a biiiig BIIGG problem. H

Angel: The one where the mom spanked him he knows what his punishment is gonna be. The other one doesn't have a punishment. He wouldn't really care if he lied again because he is not getting punished at all. Unless it's a kid like "Steven" who likes to get punished. Then he wouldn't care if there was punishment, he would still lie. H

IV. Question: If your mother asked you, should you do both chores?

Lily: ummm...(pause)...umm..yeah, because I want to help. H

Angel: No, because that's not fair, all I'm doing is the job of someone else while they're having fun and playing outside. A

Is it fair for mother to ask?

Lily: no, because one got to play and what if I wanted to play and the other one had to do all the chores. That wouldn't be fair. If both of us work together we can finish fast and then go play together.

Angel: Depends. Fair because the mom is tired and doesn't want to do the other girls job

Not fair because the other girl is doing whatever she wants.

Interpretation/ Assessment:

Piaget proposed two stages of moral judgment. These two stages were either heteronomous or autonomous. In the heteronomous stage, children do things based on the rules that others give them. They believe that these rules are the only rules and they would never imagine violating any of them. The moral decisions that they make are based on the respect that they have for the rules that their authorities have set for them. These children see fairness as black and white. The rules are given, you must do them and the consequences will always be very concrete (moral realism). Autonomous children on the other hand, think very differently. They are more open minded and therefore, follow the rules that are in ourselves. Autonomous thinkers view morality as something that shows mutual respect and equality among everyone. Everyone should be treated equally and everything is considered "fair" or "not fair". These children are also aware of intentionality and consequences for actions. When something is bad or not right, it is because it is not fair.

From the results of my observation, I found that Lily showed more signs of being heteronomous and Angel was more autonomous. Lily was more heteronomous because the responses to the questions were not really based on fairness. For example, the first question I asked, she said the boy who broke more cups was the naughtiest because there were more cups broken. She didn't understand the concept of the story behind the broken cups. She was only focused on the amount of cups. Since there are more cups that are broken, this is the naughtier boy. This can also be referred to as moral realism. It wasn't about the child's intentions; it was solely based on the amount of broken cups. In question 2 (A & B) she showed two different perspectives. In part A, she was able to distinguish between the lies and she knew which one was fair and not fair. Part B, on the other hand, she could only focus on what her experiences have told her. To her, it seemed like a horrible lie to say that a little girl could drive a car because she knows from what people have told her, that it is not possible for a little kid to drive cars. Fairness was not considered in this question. In the third question, she continued to think about punishment as a constant; you do something bad, you get punished every time. She didn't realize that simply talking about a problem might help someone reconsider their lies. She related the last question to herself and didn't consider fairness in the first part. She likes doing chores so she

10K
1✓
1902nd
1✓

didn't care if it was fair or not. In the second part of the question, fairness was very important to her and she understood that it wasn't fair for mother to ask because maybe she wanted to play too. Although a couple of her answers did show some signs of autonomous morality, the majority of her responses showed heteronomous morality. ✓

Angel proved to have autonomous morality. His proof also came from the responses he gave. In the first question, he directly pointed to intention. He said "he didn't know". It didn't matter how many cups were broken. One child was unaware, while the other was fully aware he was doing something wrong. In the second question, he understood the degree of the lies that were being told. While one child was lying to their parents, Angel said the other one was only exaggerating. The dog could have been big, but maybe not that big. He also distinguished the degree of the other lie because he knew that the intentions of the first girl was to go against her mother while the intentions of the second girl had no harm on anyone. In the final question, Angel thought about the position of everyone who was involved. He believed that it was fair for mother to ask because she was too tired to do it herself. On the other hand, he also believed that it was not fair for the girl to do both because the other girl was just having fun. While one girl is working hard, the other girl is simply playing and having fun. Each girl had different feelings and therefore, the situation would not be fair. According to Piaget's autonomous morality stage, a child at Angel's age should be giving very similar responses. The responses he gave pertained to fairness on all sides, the intentions they had, and knowing what was right and wrong. ✓

When I first got this assignment, I really wasn't sure about how effective it would be. I always assumed everyone was born knowing about fairness, intentions, and level of lies. It was interesting to see how Lily's responses were so different than Angel's and how confident she was in her answers. I actually noticed more doubt from Angel than I did from Lily. The first question was my favorite and what seemed to be the one that they were the most confident about. This one was really the proof of how morality and intentionality were thought about in the kids' minds. The questions that the kids had the hardest time with was the one about the boy who broke the plate and either got punished or talked to. This interview seemed to be a good way to measure the morality stages of children. It seemed like a good amount of questions so that they wouldn't get bored fast but would also be able to really think about the scenario. ✓

Cindy - this was
a pleasure to read.
Your thinking on this
was very comprehensive.
JB