behavior in a supportive community appear to foster deeper moral reasoning and more constructive behavior.

Overall, democratic family and school systems are much more likely to promote the development of internal self-controls and moral growth than are authoritarian or permissive systems. Permissive systems fail to instill any controls, while authoritarian systems instill only fear of punishment, which is not an effective deterrent unless there is a real chance of being caught (punishment can even become a reward for immoral behavior when it is the only attention a person ever gets). True moral behavior involves a number of internal processes that are best developed through warm, caring parenting with clear and consistent expectations, emphasis on the reinforcement of positive behaviors (rather than the punishment of negative ones), modeling of moral behavior by adults, and creation of opportunities for the child to practice moral reasoning and actions.

As previously stated, there is disagreement as to the exact motivations involved in moral behavior. Whatever the motivations, however, the internal processes remain the same.

The Four Component model describes them as follows:

1) moral sensitivity = empathy (identifying with another’s experience) and cognition of the effect of various possible actions on others;

2) moral judgment = choosing which action is the most moral;

3) moral motivation = deciding to behave in the moral way, as opposed to other options; and

4) implementation = carrying out the chosen moral action.

According to personal (social) goal theory, moral (or prosocial) behavior is motivated by the desire to satisfy a variety of personal and social goals, some of which are self-oriented (selfish), and some of which are other-oriented (altruistic). The four major internal motivations for moral behavior as presented by personal (social) goal theorists are: 1) empathy; 2) the belief that people are valuable in and of themselves and therefore should be helped; 3) the desire to fulfill moral rules; and 4) self-interest. In social domain theory, moral reasoning is said to develop within particular social “domains”: 1) moral (e.g., welfare, justice, rights); 2) social-conventional (social rules for the orderly function of society); and 3) personal (pure self-interest, exempt from social or moral rules).

Most people in fact have more than one moral “voice” and shift among them depending on the situation. In one context, a person may respond out of empathy and place care for one person over concern for social rules. In a different context, that same person might instead insist on following social rules for the good of society, even though someone may suffer because of it. People also show a lack of consistent morality by sometimes choosing to act in a way that they know is not moral, while continuing to consider themselves “moral” people. This discrepancy between moral judgment (perceiving an act as morally right or wrong) and moral choice (deciding whether to act in the morally “right” way) can be explained in a number of ways, any one of which may be true in a given situation:

• weakness of will (the person is overwhelmed by desire);

• weakness of conscience (guilt feelings are not strong enough to overcome temptation); or

• limited/flexible morality (some latitude allowed in moral behavior while still maintaining a “moral” identity).

The Moral Balance model proposes that most humans operate out of a limited or flexible morality. Rather than expecting moral perfection from ourselves or others, we set certain limits beyond which we cannot go. Within those limits, however, there is some flexibility in moral decision-making. Actions such as taking coins left in the change-box of a public telephone may be deemed acceptable (though not perfectly moral), while stealing money from an open, unattended cash register is not. Many factors are involved in the determination of moral acceptability from situation to situation, and the limits on moral behavior are often slippery. If given proper encouragement and the opportunity to practice a coherent inner sense of morality, however, most people will develop a balanced morality to guide their day-to-day interactions with their world.

Dianne K. Daeg de Mott

Further Reading


Christiana Drummond Morgan

1897-1967
American clinician who co-created the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Christiana Drummond Morgan grew up living the life of a debutante and may well have become no more than a society figure. Because she came of age at a time of social upheaval throughout the world, and because her life crossed paths with many influential scientists and intellectuals, she was able to expand her talents and make important contributions to behavioral therapy. Her unorthodox romance with the behaviorist Henry Murray no doubt opened many doors for her, and she served as an inspiration for much of Murray’s work as well. Yet the affair also kept her, in large part, in Murray’s shadow. Combined with often precarious health, as well as the skepticism male psychologists harbored toward female psychologists, it is not merely a platitude to say that she possessed a store of untapped potential.

Born in Boston on October 6, 1897, Morgan was the second of three daughters of William and Isabella Coolidge Councilman. William Councilman was a physician who served as a professor at Harvard Medical School. Young Christiana and her sisters were raised like many well-to-do girls and attended private schools. In 1917 she met William Morgan, a Harvard student; they became engaged shortly before he went to fight in the First World War. She went to New York, where she enrolled in a nursing program and received a nurse’s aide certificate. When the war ended, William Morgan returned, and the two were married in 1919. A year later Christiana Morgan gave birth to a son, Thomas.

Embarks on research career

The family moved to New York, where Morgan studied at the Art Students League from 1921 to 1924. Around this time the Morgans became increasingly close to Henry Murray and his wife. Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan were quickly drawn to each other but were reluctant to begin an affair. Both allowed themselves to be analyzed in Switzerland by the psychiatrist and former Freud disciple Carl Jung, who encouraged the affair as a way for both to unlock their unconscious. Although both Morgan and Murray remained married to their respective spouses, (her husband died in 1934; Murray’s wife in 1964), the two were together until Morgan’s death. In the 1930s Murray and Morgan were part of the group that created the Harvard Psychological Clinic; later, Morgan was named a Radcliffe Research Fellow, a title she held for the rest of her career.

Co-creates Thematic Apperception Test

Morgan’s analysis with Jung led to a series of “visions” experienced in a semi-hypnotic state. Jung encouraged her to draw these visions, which he used in his ongoing research into the unconscious mind. Morgan’s visions eventually became less psychologically provocative to Jung, but her experience set the stage for what she and Murray would develop together in the 1930s in Cambridge, Massachusetts—the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

The TAT was a series of pictures (the test today consists of 31 pictures), each depicting some sort of interpersonal problem between people. Subjects are asked to create a short narrative story to go along with each picture. Different pictures can be used for men, women, and children. The idea behind the TAT is that as a person composes a story to accompany each picture, he or she will unconsciously reveal information that would not otherwise be shared. Based on this information, a trained psychologist can determine some of the dynamics of the individual’s personality. Morgan and Murray first published their description of TAT in 1935. Initially, the TAT was known as the Morgan-Murray Thematic Apperception Test. Later, Murray was given primary credit for the test, along with “the staff of the Harvard Psychological Clinic.” Why Morgan’s credit was downplayed has been the source of speculation, but apparently she did not question this move.