Adolescents’ Attachment Representations and Moral Reasoning

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ABSTRACT. Theoretical speculations and empirical data on the relation between attachment and moral reasoning are presented. An autonomous attachment representation was hypothesized to be an important personality dimension facilitating higher levels of moral (Type B) reasoning in adolescence. A sample of 47 U.S. college students (mean age 19.5 years) completed the Adult Attachment Interview (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993) and the Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992). Although the overall score for sociomoral reflection was not associated with attachment representation, moral Type B reasoning was more prevalent in respondents with an autonomous attachment representation; thus, autonomous attachment may be at the core of mature moral reasoning.

THE BOWLBY-AINSWORTH ATTACHMENT THEORY has led to a considerable body of research on early attachment relationships between parents and infants and the effects of those relationships on later socioemotional and cognitive functioning of children (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). During the last decade a substantial number of studies have addressed the issue of attachment in adolescence and adulthood as well (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, in press).

A large body of theory and research on moral development also exists. Much research in this area has been influenced by Kohlberg’s cognitive-development theory of moral reasoning, which he developed in 1958 and which he and his co-workers have continually refined since then on the basis of theoretical consider-
ations as well as empirical results (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992, Kohlberg, 1981, 1984)

However, no empirical work has been conducted, as yet, to examine the relation between attachment and moral reasoning, although, from the very beginning, attachment theory was conceived to explain—among other things—the affectionless personality of juvenile thieves, for whom the lack of warm and continuous child care had created an absence of concern for others (Bowlby, 1944). In this article we argue that a relation between attachment and moral reasoning is plausible. A preliminary test of this hypothesis is presented.

**Attachment in Children**

In the first volume of his opus magnum, *Attachment and Loss* (1969), Bowlby postulated that, on the basis of continual transactions with the world of persons and objects, children construct increasingly complex internal working models of that world and of the significant persons in it, including the self. An internal working model can be considered a mental representation of attachment, which influences the children’s interpretations of and expectations about the caregiver’s behavior toward them and guides their own behavior in attachment relationships.

Infants display their attachment behaviors in more or less threatening situations, such as when they are in an unfamiliar environment, are left alone, or are in an interaction with an unknown person. In Ainsworth’s strange situation procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978), children experience increasingly stressful circumstances because they are separated from their attachment figure twice in a strange environment. In general, observations of strange situation behavior of several thousand children have uncovered three main strategies they use to deal with the increasing stress of the procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978, Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988).

Children are judged *secure* (B) when they eagerly explore the strange environment in the presence of the attachment figure but show signs of missing the attachment figure when she leaves. When reunited, these infants seek proximity, are comforted by contact, and soon return to exploring the environment. Secure infants appear able to strike a balance between attachment and exploration. Because of their basic trust in the availability of their attachment figure in times of stress, they develop confidence in their own ability to adapt to difficult circumstances (Bretherton, 1985). Furthermore, they are inclined to internalize parental rule systems more easily, and their parents seem better able to create a zone of proximal development for these children, at least in the sociocognitive domain (Bus & Van IJzendoorn, 1988, Stayton, Hogan, & Ainsworth, 1971).

Children who are judged *insecure-avoidant* (A) begin exploring the strange environment at once but show little or no response to being left alone by their attachment figure. Even in the absence of this figure, they continue to explore the
playroom and, when reunited, avoid the parent, looking away and turning toward the toys. The continual focus of these children on the physical environment during the strange situation can be considered a strategy aimed at minimizing attachment behavior. At kindergarten age, insecure-avoidant children show more aggressive behaviors toward their peers and teachers, and they seem to lack close and warm friendships (Sioufe, 1988). These children do not, however, seem to lack role-taking skills, because they are used to monitoring their attachment figures’ moves and plans closely, to maintain a satisfactory proximity without arousing their anger and rejection.

In contrast, insecure-ambivalently attached children (C) have limited ability to take the perspective of others. Their strategy consists of attempting to coerce a reluctant attachment figure to be constantly available by maximizing their attachment behaviors. Children judged insecure-ambivalent often become apprehensive immediately on entering the playroom, and they remain relatively uninterested in exploration. They appear preoccupied with the presence or absence of their attachment figure throughout the strange situation procedure. They show great distress when separated, and when reunited they seek proximity but resist contact with their attachment figure. Insecure-ambivalent children often remain distressed until the end of the strange situation procedure. At kindergarten age, these children appear to be extremely focused on authority figures, such as teachers, and to be unpopular with and rejected by their peers (Sioufe, 1988).

Attachment in Adolescence and Adulthood

Internal working models of attachment continue to exist throughout the entire life span and remain relatively stable over time. When the child grows older, he or she will selectively perceive the environment as confirming his or her mental representation of attachment and of the self, and the environment will react to the child in a selective way (Bowlby, 1969). During development, however, early and simple working models are replaced by more complex ones, and drastic changes in the environment may affect the child’s or adult’s mental representation of attachment (Egeland & Farber, 1984). In adolescence and adulthood, an individual’s internal working models of attachment do not find expression as directly and overtly as is common in infancy. The mental representation of attachment becomes manifest in the way in which adolescents and adults discuss their attachment history in the context of a stressful interview, the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985).

The Adult Attachment Interview is a semi-structured interview that probes for general descriptions of past attachment relationships, specific supportive or contradicting memories, and descriptions of current relationships with parents. Respondents are asked to provide attachment-related memories from early childhood and to evaluate these memories from their current perspective (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). The dual task of the respondents is to recover (some
times painful) childhood attachment experiences and at the same time remain focused on the discourse context of the interview. The coding of AAI transcripts is not based on the respondents' description of childhood experiences per se, but rather on the way in which these experiences are discussed and evaluated. Three main strategies to deal with past attachment experiences have been discovered (Main & Goldwyn, in press).

Individuals described as secure-autonomous (F) value attachment relationships and view these relationships as having been influential in their development. They are able to describe their childhood experiences and emotions in an objective and plausible manner—whether these experiences were positive or negative. In their interviews, they manifest a strong sense of self and a flexible ability to take the perspective of other persons. Autonomous parents have been shown to be most sensitive to their children's attachment signals and emotions (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993).

Individuals classified as dismissing (Ds) dismiss attachment relationships as having little influence or value when they acknowledge having experienced negative childhood events. They also tend to idealize their parents and to deny negative experiences and emotions. Their interviews lack coherence between the general (positive) descriptions of attachment relationships and their reports of specific (negative) attachment events. Dismissing individuals tend to emphasize the material dimension of their biography and to minimize the import of close relationships. Dismissing parents tend to be consistently unresponsive to their children's attachment signals and emotions—for example, they are inclined to delay responses to their children's crying. In the clinical domain, conduct disorders have been associated with a dismissing model of attachment (Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1993). Dismissing individuals seem to be able to take the perspective of others but might use this ability in particular for their own benefit and purposes.

Individuals described as preoccupied (E) demonstrate a continuing involvement or preoccupation with past and current attachment relationships. In their interviews, they often express their feelings of anger in detailed reports of negative childhood events that they seem almost to experience again. Because of their maximization of attachment emotions, they tend to disregard the interview context and the maxims of a coherent discourse. Preoccupied adolescents seem to have low self-esteem (Kobak & Scerey, 1988), and preoccupied parents seem to be too involved with their own problems of attachment to be open and sensitive to their children's attachment signals and feelings. Their perspective-taking abilities may be restricted by their emotional preoccupations. In the clinical domain, the internalization of problem behavior, such as depression, is hypothesized to be related to preoccupied attachment representations (Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, in press).

The internal working models of attachment and their concomitants are presented in Table 1.
TABLE 1
Internal Working Models of Attachment in Childhood and Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childhood attachment</th>
<th>Adolescence attachment</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Self-concept</th>
<th>Perspective taking</th>
<th>Problem behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Avoidant</td>
<td>D Dismissing</td>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Secure</td>
<td>F Autonomous</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Ambivalent</td>
<td>E Preoccupied</td>
<td>Maximization</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Attachment and Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning involves making moral judgments in situations of moral conflict. Kohlberg (1984) postulated that there are six stages in the development of moral reasoning. The stages imply distinct or qualitatively different modes of thinking. Each stage presupposes the understanding gained at previous stages. As a result, each stage provides a more adequate way of making and justifying moral judgments and represents a higher level of moral reasoning. The stages are supposed to form an invariant sequence in individual development, but people can and do differ in rate and eventual level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984).

Kohlberg (1984) grouped the six moral stages into three major levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Stage 1 of moral reasoning is characterized by an egocentric point of view. At Stage 2, moral reasoning is still dominated by one's own interests, but there is also an awareness of other people having their own interests. Stages 1 and 2 form the preconventional level. At Stage 3, there is an awareness of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations that take primacy over individual interests. At Stage 4, moral reasoning is characterized by the consideration of individual relationships, rights, and obligations from the perspective of the social system. Stages 3 and 4 form the conventional level.

The level of postconventional reasoning has been highly controversial. Stages 5 and 6 are supposed to form the postconventional or principled level. Stage 5 implies an awareness of values and rights prior to social bonds and contracts, and Stage 6 is based on universal ethical principles, such as the equality of men and the priority of human rights (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983). Several studies have indicated that the preconventional level is the level of most children under 9 years old, of some adolescents, and of many criminal offenders, whereas the conventional level is the level of most adolescents and adults (Colby et al., 1983). Very few adults, however, seem to reach the postconventional level, and some students of moral development have concluded that there is no sound empirical basis for this level.

Gibbs et al. (1992), for example, argued that the idea of a separate, postconventional, moral level should be discarded, because the principled type of reasoning can already be found at the conventional level, in particular when the dis-
function between Type A and Type B moral reasoning is made (Kohlberg, 1984). Type A judgments imply conventionally expressed interpersonal ideas (Stage 3/Type A) or societal ideas (Stage 4/Type A), whereas Type B judgments concern basic and universalized interpersonal ideas (Stage 3/Type B) or societal ideas (Stage 4/Type B). Gibbs et al (1992) considered Type B reasoning as morally mature and autonomous, and they regarded the postconventional level as an unnecessary and unfounded supplement.

Although moral reasoning develops through an invariant sequence of stages, children need parents, teachers, and peers to move toward a mature level of reasoning. According to Kohlberg (1984), the dynamics of moral development are dependent on cognitive factors, such as abstract-logical reasoning and role taking. Indeed, several studies have indicated that the attainment of a moral stage requires the prior attainment of both the parallel cognitive and role taking stages (for reviews, see Kurdek, 1978, Selman, 1976). For conventional moral reasoning, for example, formal operational thought and reciprocal role taking ability seem to be necessary conditions (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984, Selman, 1971). Kohlberg (1969) suggested that parents facilitate moral development by providing their children with ample opportunities for role taking, but role taking might also be stimulated by participation in social institutions like work, politics, and school, and in interaction with peers. Nevertheless, many studies have documented the important role of the parents in moral development (Boyes & Allen, 1993, Haan, Langer, & Kohlberg, 1976, Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967, Parkh, 1980, Powers, 1988).

In this article we argue that attachment relationships and representations influence the type and level of moral reasoning used by individuals. First, we hypothesized that parents with securely attached children would be better able to stimulate their children's moral development than would parents with insecurely attached children. From studies on the role of attachment in cognitive development, we can conclude that in secure dyads, parents (a) attune more easily to their children's needs and motivations and (b) create an emotional atmosphere in which the children explore the limits of their abilities without anxiety about failure (Van IJzendoorn, Dijkstra, & Bus, 1995). Parents of secure children are better teachers, because their relationship and interactions with their children are less burdened with conflicts and the children are more inclined to freely explore the physical and social environment from their parents' haven of safety (Bus & Van IJzendoorn, 1988).

Second, secure children and autonomous parents have experienced the value of role taking as a vehicle for communication about emotions. They are inclined to use their role-taking ability not only for their own sake, but also to understand other human beings, such as infants. Autonomous individuals have been shown to be more sensitive than insecure adults to their children's needs and anxieties (Crowell & Feldman, 1988). Secure children have learned that their parents have their own lives and plans and that, in a "goal directed partnership" (Bowlby,
1969), they have to take their parents' wishes and goals into account to strike a balance between the justified emotional needs of both partners in the attachment relationship. Insecure-ambivalent children overemphasize their own goals and ignore the motives and wishes of their attachment figures, whereas insecure-avoidant children overemphasize the parental goals at the expense of their own attachment desires. Insecure-avoidant children seem to have learned to take their parents' perspective, but they have also learned that their hints for attachment are not reciprocated. Reciprocal role taking has been found to be an important condition for mature moral reasoning (Selman, 1971).

Third, principled moral reasoning (Type B) is relatively independent of existing conventions and group pressures. This type of reasoning might be displayed in particular by persons who are emotionally autonomous according to attachment theory. Autonomous persons are able both to rely on attachment figures in times of stress and to be alone and disconnected from a group if necessary (Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy, 1988). They have developed a basic trust in significant others, and, as a corollary, they have developed a basic trust in their own capacities. Their concept of self contains confidence in their own judgments and actions, which seems to be a prerequisite for "moral courage" (Gibbs et al., 1992). Autonomous individuals are, for example, able to express a balanced evaluation of their childhood experiences even if those experiences have been negative—for instance, if they had a punitive or even maltreating parent. They are able to reflect on the motives and backgrounds of their parents without being too involved emotionally. They possess a capacity for metacognition (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993), that is, the ability to think about their thinking, and to learn from faults and contradictions in their reasoning. Contradictions within a person's own thinking or between a person's reasoning and other people's judgments \( (n + 1; Kohlberg, 1984) \) may be productive only if the person is able to go beyond the negative feelings and anxieties that arise from those contradictions.

In sum, we expected that attachment representations and moral reasoning would be related. We hypothesized that secure or autonomous attachment representations would be linked to higher levels of moral reasoning, in particular to Type B or principled forms of moral judgment. Insecure attachment representations hamper moral development because the basic trust in others and in one's own abilities is lacking.

**Method**

**Participants**

American students \( (n = 47) \) at the University of California at Berkeley participated in this study. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 22 years \( (M = 19.5, SD = .95) \), and 55% were female. All participants were native speakers. This study was part of a larger investigation concerning the development and valida-
tion of the Berkeley–Leiden Adult Attachment Questionnaire (the BLAAQ), a self-report inventory intended to identify the major AAI categories through a self-report measure (Main, Van IJzendoorn, & Hesse, 1993)

Measures

Adult Attachment Interview The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, George et al., 1985) was used to assess each participant’s mental representation or working model of attachment. After a warm-up question about the composition of the family of origin, the participants were asked for five adjectives that described their childhood relationship with each parent and why they chose these adjectives, to which parent they felt closest, what they did when, as a child, they were upset, hurt, or ill, what they remember about separations from their parents, and whether they ever felt rejected by their parents. In addition, the participants were asked how they thought their personalities were affected by these experiences, why, in their view, their parents behaved as they did, and how the relationship with their parents changed over time. The 15 questions were asked in a set order, and probes were standardized.

The coding of the verbatim AAI transcripts is based not on reported events in childhood, but rather on the coherence of the respondent’s discussion of these experiences and their effects (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993). In an extensive psychometric study, Bakermans-Kranenburg and Van IJzendoorn (1993) found that AAI classifications were stable over a 2 month period and independent of differences between respondents in verbal and performance IQ, autobiographical memory not related to attachment, and social desirability. There were no interviewer effects. The predictive validity of the AAI has been found to be excellent (Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, in press).

The AAI transcripts in this study were coded by Erik Hesse. Coder agreement across 16 cases in another sample was 88%. The distribution of attachment representations across categories was as follows: 14 dismissing participants (30%), 22 autonomous participants (47%), and 11 preoccupied participants (23%). Because it is not plausible to hypothesize an association between unresolved loss or trauma and moral reasoning, we used only the forced classifications—that is, the classifications into one of the three main categories of attachment regardless of unresolved loss or trauma (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993). The distribution in the current sample showed a slight overrepresentation of insecure attachment representations compared with other normal samples (Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, in press).

Sociomoral Reflection Measure To assess the participants’ level of moral judgment, we used the Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form, developed by Gibbs et al. (1992). The SRM-SF is a group administrable, pencil-and-paper production task designed to assess stage of moral judgment. The SRM-SF is a ques-
tionnaire derived from Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview (MJI; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

The SRM-SF consists of 11 items that address several sociomoral values, such as saving a life, not stealing, and keeping a promise. Each item contains a two-part question, and respondents are asked to evaluate and justify the importance of each value. The justifying responses are then scored for stage of moral reasoning. Questionnaires yielding fewer than seven scorable item responses—because of unanswered questions, illegible writing, or other, more subtle, scoring difficulties (such as tautologies)—do not result in reliable protocol scores and are discarded from analysis. The primary SRM-SF protocol score is the Sociomoral Reflection Maturity Score (SRMS), which is simply the mean of the item ratings. Scores on the SRMS range from 1.00 (a questionnaire yielding exclusively Stage 1 ratings) to 4.00 (a questionnaire yielding exclusively Stage 4 ratings). The SRM-SF does not extend beyond the fourth stage.

The moral distinction of Types A and B, which Kohlberg added to his coding system, is also incorporated in the SRM-SF. Every questionnaire is scored as either indicating moral Type A or moral Type B reasoning. A moral Type B individual expresses ethical ideals in thinking, whereas a Type A person indicates an "embedding" of reasoning in social conventions (Gibbs et al., 1992, p. 25). Gibbs distinguished three moral Type B components: balancing, conscience, and fundamental valuing. Moral Type B answers imply clear consideration of both sides of the equation and a balanced perspective. The ideals of mature morality are felt from within; they are more prescriptive or internal. They are also more universal; they extend or generalize values, such as that of life, to all humanity, not merely to people in particular, given relationships or societies, as moral Type A would present. A protocol was designated as moral Type B when the protocol responses yielded at least two of the three Type B components, even if they were mentioned only once.

The SRM-SF has been demonstrated to have acceptable levels of test–retest reliability and internal consistency for 4th through 12th graders, university students, adults, and a delinquent male sample (Gibbs et al., 1992). In addition, the SRM-SF evidenced acceptable concurrent validity with the MJI and convergent validity with the theoretically relevant variables of age, verbal intelligence, and SES for these samples. Also, the SRM-SF evidenced discriminant validity by showing no correlation with a measure of social desirability.

In the current study, John Gibbs—one of the authors of the measure—coded all SRM-SF protocols. All of the 47 students produced scorable protocols. The SRMS scores ranged from 305 to 386 ($M = 344; SD = 17.0$). This means that the level of moral reasoning in this group varied from Stage 3 (7 students) to Stage 4 (only 1 student). There were 20 students with minor-stage usage of Stage 4—transition Stage 3(4)—and 19 students with major-stage usage of Stage 4—transition Stage 4(3)—in their answers. So 40 of the 47 students showed moral judgment development beyond Stage 3—that is, they gave, more or less, evidence of
a societal perspective in their moral reasoning. This result is what can be expected in a group of university students (see Mason & Gibbs, 1993). Thirty-two students (68%) showed moral Type B reasoning.

Results

Sex and age. The scores for SRMS and moral Type B reasoning were independent of sex and age of respondent. The attachment representations were not related to age of respondent. Dismissing attachment representations were, however, overrepresented in men, whereas autonomous representations were over represented in women, $\chi^2(1, N = 47) = 9.87, p = .007$.

Attachment and moral reasoning. The mean SRMS scores for the three AAI groups were similar: dismissing respondents, $M = 343, SD = 18.7$, autonomous respondents, $M = 344, SD = 15.5$, preoccupied respondents, $M = 344, SD = 19.4$. We did not find different results when we controlled for gender.

We tested the association between moral Type B reasoning and attachment representation by dichotomizing attachment (autonomous versus insecure) and cross-tabulating against the moral Type B dichotomous variable (see Table 2).

The value for the likelihood ratio was $\chi^2(1, N = 47) = 3.71, p = .054$. Using the continuous moral Type B variable, which represents the number of different Type B components and is considered an adequate measure for moral ideology (Gibbs et al., 1992, p. 56), we found that the $F$ value was significant, $F(1, 45) = 9.01, p = .004$. The mean value for the insecure attachment group was 1.56 ($SD = 7.7$), and for the autonomous group the mean was 2.23 ($SD = 7.5$). We found similar results when we controlled for gender. The moral Type B components score ranged from 0 to 3 (Gibbs et al., 1992). Because IQ is not related to AAI classifications (Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van IJzendoorn, 1993), we did not include an IQ measure for which a similar statistical control may have been performed.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral type</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Type A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Type B</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note* $N = 47$
Discussion and Conclusions

Moral reasoning seems to be associated with attachment representations in a complicated way. The overall sociomoral reflection score (SRMS) did not reveal differences between the three attachment groups (dismissing, autonomous, and preoccupied). The measures for moral ideality, however, did show significant differences between autonomous and insecure respondents. The differentiation between moral Type A and moral Type B seems to be essential for discovering a relation between moral reasoning and attachment.

The absence of a relation between the SRMS and attachment representations may be explained by the restriction of range in our sample of college students. All respondents reasoned at Stage 3 or Stage 4 and the majority of the students were categorized in the closely linked transition stages 3(4) and 4(3). We speculate that, in more diverse samples in which a broader range of moral reasoning levels are represented, the hypothesized association between overall SRMS score and attachment representations might be found. In a related research project in which young adult criminal offenders completed the Adult Attachment Interview, we found almost no autonomous respondents. The respondents were living in a forensic psychiatric hospital, and the large majority of this group showed extremely disturbed attachment representations. We speculated that their anxious childhood attachment experiences (e.g., separations, maltreatment, rejection) prepared the way for their serious crimes, such as homicides and sexual offenses (Deeks, Verhagen, Phihse, & Van IJzendoom, in preparation).

At a more subtle level, however, moral reasoning is related to attachment, even in our homogeneous sample of college students. We found that moral Type B reasoning is associated with an autonomous attachment representation. The distinction between Type A and Type B pertains to the presence or absence of prescriptive ideals. In Type B thinking, ethical ideals are expressed, whereas in Type A reasoning, social conventions or social arrangements are emphasized instead of universalizable interpersonal and societal ideals (Gibbs et al., 1992). Kohlberg (1984) described moral Type B reasoning as more balanced—that is, as striking a balance between the rights and duties of both partners in a relationship, or between individual rights and system demands. "Because of this balance, B's are more prescriptive or internal, centering more on their judgments of what ought to be. They are also more universalistic, that is, more willing to carry the boundary of value categories like the value of life, to their logical conclusion" (Kohlberg, 1984, p. 185).

In the profile of autonomous adolescents we find many aspects of the personality of moral Type B individuals. Autonomous adolescents, for example, show "a balance with respect to the view taken of relationships, accepting their own part in relationship difficulties when appropriate, setting parents in relevant contexts when criticizing them" (Main & Goldwyn, 1985-1993, p 103).
speculate that moral Type B reasoning presupposes an autonomous personality in the emotional domain. Only individuals with a strong personal identity and a balanced perspective on their personal (attachment) history may have the ability to internalize the ideals of mature morality and to act accordingly. If they fail to live up to the ethical ideals, their self-definition may be at stake.

In this respect, it should be noted that autonomous and insecure parents differ in caregiving behavior, and caregiving behavior can be considered a kind of altruistic, that is, moral behavior (Emde, Johnson, & Easterbrooks, 1987). In several studies it has been shown that autonomous parents are more sensitive and responsive to their children's attachment and distress signals (Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, in press) than are insecure parents. Autonomous parents are more able and willing to take the perspective of the child and to respond to his or her bids for attention adequately. Insecure parents may have the ability to take their child's perspective, but they do not act on this information consistently. In fact, autonomous parents seem to feel more obliged to translate their children's signals into adequate practice. It is striking to note that Kohlberg (1984) developed the distinctions between moral Types A and B to bridge the gap between moral reasoning and moral action. Moral Type B individuals would be more likely than Type A individuals to engage in the moral action they believed to be just, and several studies have corroborated this finding (Kohlberg, 1984). We propose that adolescents with an autonomous attachment representation are more inclined to develop moral Type B reasoning because their basic trust constitutes the adequate emotional and motivational bedrock for internalized and universalistic ethical ideals. Their attachment histories do not hamper the balanced evaluation of moral conflicts, and their attachment representations might facilitate the bridging of the gap between moral reasoning and moral action.

REFERENCES


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