

Relations between adult developmental conceptions of the beautiful and moral development (Behavioral Development Bulletin. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2015-20028-008.html>). Wendy Chen & Albert Erdynast

The cross-sectional study with 180 adult subjects researched structural-developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful and also studied their relations with structural-developmental levels of moral development. Measures of moral development that are considerably beyond the scope of Kohlberg's conception of justice-reasoning were used. Six levels of conceptions of the beautiful were studied. The highest level, not discerned in previous studies, was established from some responses to Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*. Six structural-developmental conceptions of the beautiful across four Picasso paintings and one Michelangelo sculpture meet the criterion of generality which supports the claim to finding hierarchical structures within a domain of their own. Distinctions are made about the domain of the issues under study among four domains: I) the real, II) the good, III) the just and right, and, IV) the beautiful. The beautiful, domain IV, involves the contemplation, or, appreciation, and fashioning of beautiful objects. Data were collected and analyzed in two domains and two subdomains of moral development characterized as: 1) conceptions of the good, 2) judgments of justice-reasoning (obligations, liberties and duties), and 3) compassion as a supererogatory act which a person does for the sake of another's good at considerable cost or risk to the self. The moral domains and subdomains used as a framework for the measures of moral development in these studies are based on the framework of Rawls's social contract philosophy and the psychological study of conceptions of the beautiful is based on Kant's philosophy of the beautiful. The relations between the developmental level of conceptions of the beautiful and the structural-developmental levels of moral decisions were studied through standardized justice-reasoning dilemmas and administration of a fidelity/infidelity structural interview. The data suggest that as the level of moral development rises, there is a tendency for the levels of conceptions of the beautiful to also rise. In 91% of instances, there was plus or minus a half level correspondence between the level of conceptions of justice-reasoning and the level of conceptions of the beautiful. In 98% of the analyzed cases, the levels of conceptions of the good and the levels of conceptions of the beautiful are within one level of one another. The study also contributes toward resolving the unsettled question about the number of developmental domains and subdomains that exist.

KEYWORDS: moral development, beautiful, adult development

STRUCTURAL-DEVELOPMENTAL CONCEPTIONS OF the beautiful have not been previously established as general hierarchical structures within a domain of their own. Also, the number of developmental domains and subdomains that exist is an unsettled question. This study addresses both sets of issues. The existence of a distinct domain of the beautiful and the issue of the number of domains and subdomains into which to organize developmental theory has considerable import on central concepts that are used, types of research methodologies that are effective in structuring studies, organizing findings and deriving pedagogic practices that stimulate further development. If the number of domains is plural, they cannot be conflated into just a

single one. In the domain of factual reality, claims are proven or not proven, or, facts are inferred from evidence. Moral judgments and judgments of the beautiful do not derive from proofs. Principled conceptions of the good are relative to the individual's aims, ends, worthwhile

interests and attachments to individuals and associations. In the subdomain of justice-reasoning, principles that meet the criteria of generality, universality, ordering, publicity and finality (Rawls, 1971) to resolve competing claims are chosen. In the domain of the beautiful, principled appreciation of works of art govern judgments of the beautiful as these are independent from personal judgments of tastes, likes, and dislikes or cultural relativity.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal objectives of the study are:

To directly study conceptions of the beautiful and to examine whether there is an existent developmental level that is higher than the five levels (or stages) identified in the Erdynast, Armón and Nelson (1978) study and in the Parsons (1987) study.

To study the relations between structural-developmental conceptions of the beautiful and structural-developmental conceptions of moral development.

In the view of Giri, Commons, and Harrigan (2014), there is only one single domain with several subdomains. In the view of Kohlberg and Armón (1984) and Piaget (1965), there are only two domains with "hard structural-developmental stages," which are the stages of factual reality (Piaget, 1965), and those of justice-reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969). These hard stage theories can be viewed in contrast to numerous "soft" stage theories such as those articulated by Erikson (1959), Kegan (1979), Levinson, (1978), Loevinger (1976), Perry (1968) and Selman (1980).

Some theories are single domain theories such as Kohlberg's theory of justice reasoning (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hower, 1983), and Commons and Richards' theory of factual reality (2003). Other theories are multi-domain theories. Perry's 1968 study *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* researched across two domains: epistemological and meta-ethical development. Erdynast, Armón and Nelson's 1978 study *Cognitive-Developmental Conceptions of the True, the Good and the Beautiful* researched across three domains: conceptions of factual reality, conceptions of the good, and conceptions of the beautiful.

Snarey, Kohlberg, and Noam (1982) refer to single domain theories as a mono-domain approach, and refer to multi-domain theories as multi-subdomains. In the view of Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978), and in the conceptual framework of this research study, there are at least four theoretically distinct domains. These four domains are: 1) the real, 11) the good, HI) the just and right and iv) the beautiful (Table 1).

CONCEPTIONS OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Conceptions of the beautiful, Domain iv, are the contemplation, appreciation, and fashioning of beautiful objects. In the aesthetic development domain of art, the fundamental question (Adler, 1981) is: Is the work of art itself beautiful? The works of Immanuel Kant and Meredith (1911), Baldwin (1915) and Dewey (1934) propose aesthetic principles for analyzing artistic beauty. Empirical studies of developmental

levels of conceptions of the beautiful, however, are exceptionally sparse. Studies of Kantian conceptions of the beautiful as an irreducible category of judgment that cannot be conflated with other categories of judgment (Marshall, 1922; Baldwin, 1915) are rare. Piaget and Kohlberg, who conducted extensive cognitive developmental studies, did not include the arts in their studies as noted by Gardner, Winner, and Kircher (1975) who studied children's conceptions of art works. In that cross-sectional study, 121 children ranging in age from four to sixteen were shown works of art and administered an open-ended Piagetian clinical interview with inquiries about reasons for the children's tastes such as, "Did you like it?" and their opinions—"Do you think everyone would like it?" Three general developmental levels of responses were found. These responses were characterized in a quasi-rating system as immature responses among the 54, four- to-seven year olds; intermediate or transitional responses among the 51 eight-to-twelve year olds, and mature responses among the 16 fourteen-to-sixteen year olds. Parsons (1987) examined understanding of art and presented over three hundred children, adolescents, and adults with 7 questions about 8 paintings. The questions are about art and aesthetics as they are philosophically conceived (Collingwood, 1958; Danto, 1981; Dewey, 1934; Langer, 1953). The statement and questions included:

Describe this painting to me.

What is it about? Is that a good subject for a painting?

What feelings do you see in the painting?

What about the colors? Are they good colors?

What about the form (things that repeat)? What about texture?

Was this a difficult painting to do? What would be difficult?

Is this a good painting? Why?

Parsons' questionnaire, administered to over 300 subjects ranging from pre-school children to art professors, was effective in identifying cross-sectional developmental conceptions of the good as applied to art works. The works of art for the study included:

Renoir: *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*, 1881.

Ivan Albright: *Into the World Came a Soul Called Ida*, 1930.

Picasso: *Guernica*, 1936.

Paul Klee: *Head of a Man (sometimes called Senecio)*, 1922.

George Bellows: *Dempsey and Firpo*, 1924.

Goya: *Lo Mismo*, from *The Disasters of War*, 1810-1820.

Picasso: *Head of Weeping Woman with Hands*, 1936.

Chagall: *La Grande Cirque*, 1927.

The stages of understanding art were determined by examining responses about 1) the subject, 2) expression, 3) the medium, form and style, and 4) judgment. The developmental stages of understanding art identified in the study are: Stage One) Favoritism, Stage Two) Beauty and Realism, Stage Three) Expressiveness, Stage Four)

Style and Form, and Stage Five) Autonomy. However, the question "Is it beautiful?" was not asked. Parsons (1987) states the five stages identified in the study generally parallel Kohlberg's stages of moral development, but the study did not present quantitatively correlated results. Parsons does not address any differences between an individual's developmental reasoning about one work of art and the other works, either qualitatively or quantitatively. Parsons does not describe how conceptions of the understanding of works of art and conceptions of justice-reasoning relate to one another at each stage, nor does he calculate empirical correlations between the two domains at each stage or level. Commons (1998) and Erdynast (1974) find that the nature and stage of the task presented to subjects have a very strong influence on the stage of

problem-solving that is elicited.

Erdynast, Armón and Nelson (1978) studied the structures of conceptions of the beautiful using a single lithograph by Picasso, asking the central question in aesthetic theory (Adler, 1981), "Is it beautiful?" along with the clinical interview structural reasoning probe question, "Why or why not?" A reproduction of Picasso's four line etching of buttocks from an illustration for Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (1931) was used to elicit judgments of whether the etching is beautiful or not. Results of the study organized the responses into cognitive-developmental levels (also called structural-developmental levels), ranging from egoistic judgments of taste to principled judgments of the beautiful.

The current study uses four paintings by Picasso and one sculpture by Michelangelo to research structural-developmental conceptions of the beautiful. The particular paintings by Picasso were selected to enable researchers to distinguish higher level conceptions of the beautiful from lower ones. Picasso's *Woman*

Ironing (1904) was selected for its depiction of the state of resignation. Unlike Degas' *Woman Ironing* (1884) or *Women Ironing* (1884) where the women ironing use their strength to do so and which are period pieces, Picasso's subject has no strength and her hands are set in opposing directions so that she cannot iron. Picasso's painting represents a woman without hope, completely devoid of energy, indifferent to how disheveled she looks. She is only able to remain standing because she holds the iron with one arm completely extended so as to prevent her collapse. Picasso depicts extreme extension of her left shoulder, even beyond Van Gogh's extended limbs and depicts her with barely the strength to preserve her upright position.

Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (1937) is depicted as not experiencing any relief from her grief through crying. It is the expression of a mother's heart-rending grief as was depicted in the woman holding her dead child in *Guernica*. The painting goes beyond the specifics of the senseless, inhuman bombing of a peaceful Basque

town by Nazi planes in support of General Franco by its generality to any circumstance of a mother's suffering for her children who have been kidnapped as victims of human trafficking or sexual slavery. The painting is self-sufficient in conveying the vehemence of the loss. The intensity of the colors heightens the intensity of her distress and her unavailing grief.

Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* (1907) involves Cubist representations, not images of actual persons. It is a painting that involves artistic originality and the discovery of new limits in the geometric analysis and representation of female form (especially faces, torsos, breasts and noses), the mask, and includes multiple viewpoints integrated into a single viewpoint for the viewer. Picasso has examined the limits of being revealing and exposed, from minimum to maximum in the various poses adopted by the women while preserving their genital privacy. The anatomy of the figures is represented geometrically in *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* with the use of the triangle, curve, cone, circle, square, cylinder, rectangular plane, and a trapezoidal form. The painting is a study of five women in the reception room of a working-class brothel, four of them vying for a client. The painting involves dynamic sequences of progression of representation from the most naturalistic to the most abstract one.

Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1498-1500) sculpture at St. Peter's Basilica depicts Mary's resignation and acceptance of Christ's death. Since Mary is able to hold a body with only one arm, not even underneath the body to hold it up, it is sculpted to convey minimum mass of Christ's body. The *Blind Man's Bluff* (1903) depicts an individual who is enormously strong as characterized by the largeness of his shoulders and arms, and especially by the strong well-defined muscles of his neck. He reaches with the most delicate touch possible for his wine goblet so as to not overturn it. Maximum is represented by strength that is conveyed by the neck muscle and minimum is conveyed by the absence of force and gentleness of his reach.

RELATIONS BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTIONS OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Marshall (1922) and Moore (1995) address relations between aesthetic and moral judgment, but not as empirical or cognitive-developmental studies with actual data. Two empirical studies have been conducted to examine relationships between structures of moral and aesthetic development among adult subjects, as they

resolve moral dilemmas and articulate their contemplations of works of art (Erdynast, Armón & Nelson, 1978; Parsons, 1987). Both of these empirical studies identified five levels of aesthetic

development related to Kohlberg's stages of justice-reasoning (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987).

Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978) examined the structures of judgments of the beautiful with 50 subjects ranging in age from five to sixty-eight, and identified conceptions of the beautiful into levels ranging from egoistic judgments of taste to principled judgments of the beautiful. Insufficient but necessary conditions

between structural-developmental levels of moral development (Kohlberg, 1969), and developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful seem to be present. Those conditions require attaining certain levels of moral development, which also contain types of thinking that have effect on the construction of particular levels

of conceptions of the beautiful. The Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978) study found that adulthood conceptions of the beautiful were never higher than adulthood conceptions of the good (the domain of worthwhile final aims, ends, interests and attachments, i.e., the good) and the just, but were sometimes lower, though

supporting quantitative data were not presented. Developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful seem to fit Piaget's criteria for developmental structures (Piaget, 1965). The subjects were interviewed on one or more standardized justice-reasoning dilemmas to assess their justice reasoning level. Subjects were also interviewed within the domain of worthwhile final aims, ends, interests and attachments through an interview questionnaire about conceptions of the good that included questions about conceptions of good

work, good friendship and good intimate relationships.

The Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978) study had several limits: 1) the presented problem, the four line etching, was insufficiently complex to elicit potentially higher level capacities in subjects, if they did indeed possess them; and 2) plural works of art were not presented, so it was questionable whether the identified conceptions of the beautiful were specific to just that work of art, or were general conceptions applicable to numerous works of art. The problem presented to the subjects along with the question "Is it beautiful? And "why or why not" was "solved" by higher level capacities within Stage 5 principled art analysis capacities. Capacities higher than that were not elicited if subjects possessed them by that particular work of art. Picasso's four line etching of buttocks is "attractive" or "pretty" by most conventional standards. But a painting such as Picasso's Weeping Woman, used in the current study, which is not a "beautiful subject," can be viewed as "beautiful" in its representation and depiction of her grief and distress. Discernment of the beautiful and its distinction from the terms "attractive" and "pretty" may not be made by subjects

if the representation and depiction of the subject by the painting is insufficiently complex to elicit complex conceptual analysis of the work of art. The Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978) study had another major limit 3) it used a conception of moral development that Kohlberg later revised (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer,

1983), and did not use the Rawlsian philosophical framework and separation of domains and sub-domains used in the current study (Erdynast and Rapgay (2009) see Figure 1 and 2 and Appendix B).

Results of the study identified distinct hierarchical adult conceptions of the beautiful and conceptions of the good. At younger ages, subjects only demonstrated attainment of the lower conceptions of the good and of the beautiful. Developmental levels tend to rise with chronological age; however, this tendency follows a

necessary but insufficient condition, wherein higher stages do not necessarily increase with older age. Several distinct adulthood levels of attainment, which were not found during childhood or adolescent years, were identified. The adulthood developmental conceptions of the good and the beautiful seem to be homomorphically parallel to adulthood conceptions of justice reasoning. In other words, there seem to be five levels of conceptions of the good and five levels of conceptions of the just, along with five levels of conceptions of the beautiful that are somewhat parallel to one another, but also distinct from one another.

THE DOMAIN OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The domain of justice and right, Domain 111, is the domain of competing claims between individuals or between individuals and society. Illustrative examples of studies

in this domain are those of Kohlberg's longitudinal and interventional studies (Kohlberg, 1969,1973,1984). Kohlberg's research uses hypothetical allocative justice-reasoning dilemmas focusing on competing claims between individuals to study the development of justice-reasoning. Competing claims are resolved through six hierarchical structures of

justice-reasoning. At the highest levels, these structures are principles of equal liberty for all individuals and the principle of fairness for individuals. The study of what is called or titled "justice-reasoning development" by Kohlberg is partly determined by the specific meta-ethical categories involved in the presented problem and the types of response by the subjects (Dewey & Tufts, 1932). Four sub-domains of moral development can be characterized as: 1) conceptions of the good, 2) judgments of justice-reasoning (obligations, liberties and duties), 3) supererogatory acts which a person does for the sake of another's good at considerable cost or

risk to the self. Illustrative supererogatory virtues are: compassion, magnanimity, and forgiveness, and 4) judgments of moral character and worth, i.e., judgments of approbation and disapprobation of

moral actions and character (Figure 1).

However, Kohlberg, the most influential and seminal researcher in the field of the development of moral judgment, initially declared his research was "moral development," but later retracted this broader title and narrowed his claim to a more constrained view of the development of justice-reasoning as the study of duties,

obligations and liberties involved in allocative justice (Kohlberg, Levine & Hower, 1983).

The domain of justice-reasoning involves questions that address moral requirements (Rawls, 1971) that are specified by issues of obligations or natural duties (Figure 2). The issues of justice are determined by fairness and fidelity. Rawls specifies the natural duties as ones that branch into two types: positive duties and negative duties (Rawls, 1971, p. 107; Figure 2). The positive natural duties involve upholding justice, mutual aid, and mutual respect. The negative natural duties are not to injure and not to harm the innocent. Colby and Kohlberg's interview protocols are largely compatible with these meta-ethical categories (1987). Dilemmas

address moral requirements, and their related probe questions are constrained to these moral categories. When dilemmas and probe questions go beyond justice-reasoning they invoke philosophically

more inclusive types of conceptions of right and moral development that involve the supererogatory virtues such as compassion, benevolence, and magnanimity (Figure 2).

As a consequence of revising his claim from having studied justice-reasoning rather than moral development, Kohlberg's (1987) scoring system should be understood to be constrained to measure justice-reasoning, not the development of a broader conception of right, though the standard research protocols include questions about relative moral worth and meta-ethical questions and punishment as well. The implications of the revision for the Colby and Kohlberg (1987) scoring manual is that the following categories in the table of The Elements and Norms for Classifying Content are not applicable since they do not apply to justice-reasoning types of moral

judgments: the Modal Elements of blaming and retributing, and the Value Elements of upholding character, upholding self-respect, and serving human dignity and autonomy (Table 2). In Kohlberg's Heinz dilemma, levels of justice-reasoning involve competing claims and a judgment of which claim is right to select, such as stealing or not stealing (standard dilemma HI), ordering the demolition expert or using a lottery to select which soldier is to go on a suicide mission (dilemma v), and providing an assisted suicide or declining to do so (dilemma iv). The content choice of alternatives is an important matter, not just the identified level of perspective being used by the interview subject (Selman, 1980). Without deciding on what the right course of action might be through a content choice, a level of perspective merely identifies the types of considerations a subject is contemplating. With the same developmental level held constant, subjects sometimes shift their content choice when asked to select a choice based on compassion rather than based on duties or obligations (Erdynast & Rappagay, 2009). The shift is accounted for by motivation emanating from the love of humankind upon which compassion is based, in contrast to the requirements of obligations, duties and liberties that are based on conceptions of justice.

» SUBJECTS

Three groups were studied involving 180 subjects, with nearly an equal number of males and females. The age range was largely from 15 to 63. The subjects' formal education ranged from high school to doctoral level studies. Group I is a convenience sample of adult individuals who are returning to college to complete their Bachelor of Arts degree, taking a psychology course, and also other adult individuals who were willing to be interviewed by the students for additional units of academic credit.

Group II involves a similar population of adult students involving 19 subjects who responded to a standardized stealing dilemma (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, Dilemma hi) and a reproduction of Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*, 1907. Group III is also a convenience sample of adult individuals who are returning to college to complete their Bachelor of Arts degree, taking a psychology course, and also adult individuals who were willing to be interviewed by the students.

Group III involves Picassos contemporaries, who had published their commentaries, analyses and critiques of *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* or expressed their reactions in interviews. A Museum of Modern Art publication on the painting *Rubin, Picasso, Seckel and Cousins* (1994) contains these analyses, interviews and critiques. The number of subjects for Group hi is 25.

METHOD OF SAMPLING

A convenience group of subjects was used for Group 1 and Group 2. The subjects are undergraduate students in several psychology classes taught by the primary researcher. Students were invited to participate in the studies as part of their term projects for the academic credit. For an additional unit of credit, students were invited to interview someone whom they know who was not a student as long as that individual also consented. The research objectives, and the findings do not make any claims about representative generalizations of mean, modal, average or range of levels expected to be exhibited by similar individuals. The research projects have been aimed at a

discovery phase of levels of conceptions of the beautiful that are characteristic of adult development. The convenience samples differ from preponderant majority of convenience samples with undergraduates. The age range in most of those undergraduate research samples is 17-21. The average age of the sample used in these studies is older, since the age range of the sample groups in these studies is 15 to 63 and above. Additionally, secondary subjects whom the primary subjects interviewed included 5 individuals with masters degrees and 2 Ph.D.'s, and 4 LLB degrees as well.

The 25 analyses, commentaries and critiques selected for Group I were all of the ones that had sufficiently lengthy expressions that could be scored as data that could be matched to representative data at various levels of conceptions of the beautiful using the scoring manuals used in this study.

STUDIES

Study 1 involves research subjects' responses to whether four works of art are beautiful, using works by two artists, Picasso and Michelangelo. Reproductions of four works of art were presented: 1) Picasso's *Blind Man's Meal*, 1903, 2) *Woman Ironing*, 1904, 3) *Weeping Woman*, 1937, and 4) Michelangelo's *Pietà at St. Peter's Basilica*, 1499-1500. Group I responded to a modified standard moral judgment interview (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Erdynast, 1974) which involves two alternative procedures for selecting a soldier to go on a suicide mission to save the lives of the remaining Marines (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, Dilemma V). This group involved 91 subjects who responded to reproductions of 3 Picasso paintings and a Michelangelo sculpture of a *Pietà*; 77 subjects responded to the modified Korean Dilemma, and 83 subjects responded to a second moral development instrument—the fidelity/infidelity questionnaire.

In order to identify general conceptions of the beautiful, subjects' responses are first examined for developmental level consistency across multiple works of art; and second, for developmental level consistency across two artists' works, specifically, three paintings by Picasso and a sculpture by Michelangelo.

Study 2 involves research subjects' responses to Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*, a painting theoretically at a level of aesthetic complexity above all the other paintings used in this study and the sculpture in Study 1 used as tasks for developmental research purposes in the domain of the beautiful. These subjects also responded to a justice-reasoning dilemma.

Study 3 involves the analysis of developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful, inherent in the 25 published analyses of *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* and reactions elicited in interviews of their reactions to the painting (Rubin, Seckel & Cousins, 1994).

MORAL REASONING DILEMMAS

The study examines structural-developmental levels of: 1) whether subjects think a painting is beautiful or not beautiful (the content-choice), and why or why not (developmental structures of conceptions of the beautiful); 2) the relations between developmental level of conceptions of the beautiful and structural-developmental levels of moral decisions specified by a) conceptions of justice-reasoning and b) conceptions of compassion.

At least one standardized moral dilemma was administered orally or distributed on paper to subjects for their responses. These particular dilemmas are modifications of three of the Colby and Kohlberg's (1987) Standard Moral Judgment Interview (MJJI) dilemmas that can elicit high levels of moral reasoning (Erdynast, 1974). These MJJI dilemmas were modified so that there would be a justice-reasoning component (specifically the administration of questions of obligation and duties) and a supererogatory component (specifically compassion). These components are stringently matched to the meta-ethical categories (Appendix based on Rawls' theory (Rawls, 1993,1999). Within the domain of the just and right there are: 1) a set of requirements specified by 1a) the obligations and 1b) the positive and negative natural duties, and 2) supererogatory excellences or virtues, such as compassion, magnanimity or forgiveness. Meta-ethical judgments, commutative justice judgments, and comparative moral worth judgments have been removed from the measure of justice-reasoning, since all of these are distinct from justice-reasoning itself and contrary to Kohlberg's own theory (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983).

In addition to standardized dilemmas, subjects in Group 1 were administered a fidelity/infidelity structural interview. Interviewing subjects on their developmental conceptions of fidelity and infidelity examines conceptions emanating from Domain 11: conceptions of the good and Domain hi conceptions of duties and obligations rooted in justice-reasoning, and also conceptions of compassion rooted in the morality of the love of humankind. Particular questions that seem central to issues of fidelity and infidelity are addressed in these questionnaires: 1) Is fidelity a duty or obligation in a marriage? 2) Can adultery emanate from a duty to self? 3) If a spouse has engaged in adultery, is there a duty to inform the other spouse? 4) Should the adultery

be revealed if the individual is motivated by compassion? Administration of questionnaires that address issues in the domains and subdomains of the good, and the just and right enable the study of these domains in their relation to the domain of the beautiful.

The moral judgment instrument for the levels of conceptions of fidelity/infidelity was devised empirically. The results of a correlational analysis indicated that levels of justice reasoning elicited from the Korean Dilemma were positively correlated with those elicited from the Fidelity/infidelity questionnaire, $r(js) = .6js, p < .01$.

Similarly, levels of compassion reasoning were correlated between the Korean Dilemma and the Fidelity/infidelity questionnaire with almost an equally strong positive correlation, though based on a somewhat smaller sample of respondents, $r(54) = .596, p < .01$.

This study presumes the capacity for several distinct developmental levels of conceptions of the good, conceptions of the justice, conceptions of compassion and conceptions of the beautiful within individuals and across different individuals. Gathering data for assessment of a subject's developmental conceptions has two interrelated components: 1) administration of moral dilemmas designed to elicit an individual's high-level conceptions of moral thinking and conceptions of the beautiful, and 2) probing questions designed to elicit an individual's reasons for choices of what is good, just, compassionate and beautiful (Erdynast, 1974; 1984).

The research engaged in three similar-theme studies examining conceptions of the beautiful, with works of art of increasing degrees of complexity. The research studies were based on standardized analysis of data provided by three cross-sectional groups of subjects. A repeated survey was administered two times with

cross-sectional groups of subjects. Standardized questions were asked of the first two study groups using first a single art work, and then four works of art by two artists, Picasso and Michelangelo, then *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* by Picasso.

The research study engaged in a discovery phase examination. In a parallel with Kohlberg's dissertation study which, at the discovery phase, identified stages of justice-reasoning in a cross-sectional sample of males (Kohlberg, 1958). The objectives of findings at discovery phases are to identify and characterize each of the stages or levels of development. Subsequent phases of research study various representative samples of populations including, children, adolescents, adults and specialized groupings and make generalizations

about the various categories of subjects.

SCORING MANUALS

Scoring manuals were constructed in order to obtain reliability in scoring data. The scoring manuals for Picasso's *Blind Man's Meal*, 2) *Woman Ironing*, 3) *Weeping Woman*, 4) Michelangelo's *Pietà at St. Peter's Cathedral*, and 5) *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* are organized into three types of content or sections for each level of conceptions of the beautiful. These levels include: 1) the structural response to whether the painting is beautiful or not, 2) the characteristic misconceptions or deforming assimilations, and 3) the typical attributions that cannot be objectively supported

within the painting.

The moral development scoring instruments utilize the scoring manuals from the Erdynast and Rappagay (2009) study of developmental conceptions of compassion, which are more encompassing than Kohlberg's Moral Judgment scoring manuals of justice-reasoning development. These scoring manuals separate justice-reasoning and compassion from 1) meta-ethical reasoning, 2) commutative justice punishment theory, and 3) judgments of moral worth.

Interview responses were scored at either discrete levels such as Level 2 or Level 3, or at mixed levels such as Level 2.5, which indicates the subject used some combination of both Level 2 and Level 3. Highest manifested level and lowest manifested level were recorded for each subject without calculating a weighted mean based on frequency of each level utilized by the subject. The theoretical premise at the basis of such scoring procedures is that in any real-world decision-making the subject makes a moral judgment at the highest level of moral reasoning capacity available to that subject, or alternatively the subject can revert to

lower level constructions.

RELIABILITY

Two raters independently scored conceptions of the beautiful data. The inter-judge reliability was 82% unanimous consensus across the five works of art, and 86% of responses scored within a half level or the same level as one another.

Two raters independently scored the moral judgment interview data. The inter-judge reliability is high: 86% of the interviews were assigned identical scores and 96% interviews were scored at the same level or within half a level of each other.

RESULTS

The research study successfully: 1) identified a highest level conception-principled basis for judgments of the beautiful that had not been identified in previous studies, 2) characterized six developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful, 3) constructed scoring manuals for analysis of data and 4) found relations between developmental levels of moral reasoning and developmental conceptions of the beautiful. The number of subjects studied is 180. Since the questionnaires were distributed for subjects to respond to, it was found that a good number of interviews were only partially answered. Among all interviews that were answered some had data that could not be scored on certain dilemmas or questions.

I: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Results of the study identified the following 6 adult levels of conceptions of the beautiful:

Level 1 pre-aesthetic

Not beautiful: Beauty cannot be associated with the painting *Les Demoiselle dyAvignon*, 1907, since it cannot be comprehended by the viewer. It is viewed as strange. Individuals guess what the painting is about, when it does not make sense to them.

Level 2 egoistic tastes

Beautiful: The beautiful is equated with one's personal tastes. Individuals either like a painting or they do not like it. Not beautiful: Absence of beauty derives from not liking the shapes, the looks of the faces or an overall global feeling about a painting.

Level 3 cultural views of the beautiful

Beautiful: The beautiful is equated with attractiveness and positive emotions such as depictions of happiness.

Not beautiful: Absence of beauty derives from qualities of sadness and unhappiness. Disturbing aspects include ugliness, strange angularity, disproportion and dissonance.

Level 4 formal art analysis

Beautiful: There is comprehension of the subject matter but without comprehension of Cubist representation of geometric form. The beautiful incorporates formal aesthetic properties such as: order, definition, perfection, brightness unity among the disparate parts, symmetry, integrity, and due proportion or harmony.

Level 5 principled art analysis

Beautiful: Comprehension of the aesthetic principles utilized in major artistic works. The critically evaluation of various works of art, their excellences, their limitations and

their weaknesses in relation to other artists and other artistic styles across major schools of artistic thought.

conceptions of beautiful exhibited

Level 6 content-dependent principled

conceptions of the beautiful, e.g., Cubism

Beautiful: The famously known painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* should be understood with a different title, the one Picasso gave to it (*My Brothel*) rather than the title by which it is universally known. *Les Femmes d'Alger*, *Alger* involves Cubist representations, not images of actual persons. It is a painting that involves artistic originality and the discovery of new limits in the geometric analysis and representation of female form (especially

faces, torsos, extended elbows, breasts and noses), the mask, and includes multiple viewpoints integrated into a single viewpoint for the viewer. Picasso has examined the limits of being revealing and exposed, from minimum to maximum in the various poses adopted by the women. The anatomy of the figures is represented

geometrically in *Les Femmes d'Alger* with the use of the triangle, curve, cone, circle, square, cylinder, rectangular plane, and a trapezoidal form. The painting is a study of five women in the reception room of a working-class brothel, four of them vying for a client. The painting involves dynamic sequences of progression of representation from the most naturalistic to the most abstract one. The figure on the lower right, illustrates with completely Cubist geometric multiple perspectives best, depicted simultaneously with a three-quarter back view from the left, another from the right, and a frontal view of the head.

conceptions of beautiful exhibited

The mask in *Les Femmes d'Alger*

Women working in a brothel are not indifferent to who is chosen. The women have good reason to be wearing masks. The *Femmes* either wear actual masks or masked expressions—faces that are fixed, blank and expressionless. Picasso had an insight about the mask; that the mask is used historically, as a fetish to ward off the unknown—“the evil spirits”. The painting presents a timeline of the history of the mask from ancient times through early history to the present. The ancient Africanized mask on the figure in the top right characterizes a fierce baboon and is used as a fetish to ward off dangers. A mask may help to preserve self-respect and self-esteem and help avert descending into cynicism and despair. The mask on the figure the most to the left, in an Egyptian type stance, is Carthaginian. The Cubist mask originated with this painting. No one had previously seen such a mask because it was just invented by Picasso. It is the very first Cubist mask ever.

The figure in the top right is a design, paralleling Matisse's *Blue Nude*, wearing an African type derived mask. But tribal art is not based on content-dependent Cubist conceptual principles. Cubist noses are noses seen from two perspectives and presented in a single one. The noses are presented with simultaneous lateral and frontal views.

II. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Structured wholes

Different individuals in Study 1 responded to the four works of art as beautiful or not, with developmental level consistency across various works of art by the two different artists. These structural-developmental responses of conceptions of the beautiful have hierarchical characteristics. For example, subjects who used level 2 conceptions of the beautiful on one art work, tended to use the same level on the others, or a proximate level of 2.5, which is a mixed combination of level 2 and level 3, or a level 3 at the most. When subjects possessed level 4 conceptions of the beautiful, they tended to use that developmental level and proximate levels to express their appreciation of all, or most of the four works of art. Appreciating a work of art as beautiful is not merely a situation-specific judgment about a particular style or artist, or the content of the subject of the work of art, such as a beautiful subject.

Range of exhibited variability

Task complexity is evident in the level elicited for “no” responses to the paintings and for “yes” responses to the paintings as well. Where the response is “not beautiful” or “ugly,” there are a few instances of developmentally lower reasons for that aesthetic judgment, due to inability to comprehend the level of the task complexity of the aesthetic issues addressed in the complex paintings. For those who comprehend or understand the painting there is a monotonically increasing percentage of individuals who respond that the painting is beautiful with each increasing level.

Education and conceptions of the beautiful

Usable data from subjects were examined. The relationship between subjects’ level of formal education and their conceptions of the beautiful were examined. There is a significant association between education and hierarchical developmental conceptions of the beautiful, $p=.007$. As individuals’ level of formal education level rises, their developmental level of conceptions of the beautiful tend to rise to higher levels as well, but higher levels of formal education do not necessarily result in higher levels of attainment of conceptions of the beautiful.

levels of conceptions of the beautiful

Developmental of conceptions of the beautiful and moral reasoning

Relations between highest level conceptions of the beautiful exhibited, conceptions of the good, and conceptions of justice-reasoning were examined for 144 subjects. 83.4% of the subjects exhibited the same level or 0.5 level variation of development for both moral development and conceptions of the beautiful.

Justice-reasoning and conceptions of the beautiful

Results of a paired samples ttest ($t(91) = 1.472, p=.145$) indicate that the mean developmental level for the conceptions of justice-reasoning is not significantly greater than the mean developmental level of conceptions of the beautiful.

Relations between conceptions of justice-reasoning and the conceptions of the beautiful

Relations between the conceptions of justice-reasoning and conceptions of the beautiful were examined. As the level of justice-reasoning development rises, there is a tendency for the level of conceptions of the beautiful to also rise.

Highest conceptions of the beautiful

Relations between highest level of conceptions of justice-reasoning and mean of highest level of conceptions of the beautiful exhibited by subjects were examined. As the level of justice-reasoning rises, there is a tendency for the mean of level of conceptions of the beautiful to also rise.

levels of conceptions of the beautiful

DISCUSSION

The domain of conceptions of the beautiful

The finding of general consistency of the use of developmental structures with the same or proximate levels of conceptions of the beautiful across multiple works of art and across two artists is of considerable import. Finding consistency across multiple works of art was not achieved in the Erdynast, Armón, and Nelson (1978) study since only a single work of art was then used to elicit structural-developmental conceptions of the beautiful. Conceptions of the beautiful could therefore conceivably have been those of work of art-specific or artist-specific responses.

The finding of consistency in the first two studies supports the premise that levels of conceptions of the beautiful are not just situation specific judgments of the beautiful, but are, rather, general structures of thought and feeling that are invoked in generating all judgments of the beautiful. The structures thus meet the criterion of generality. The study also finds that 73 of the 148 subjects, 49%, exhibit multiple hierarchical levels of conceptions of the beautiful. Most of the subjects, 94%, exhibit proximal developmental level

consistency, plus one or minus one on other works experienced as beautiful and 51% of 148 subjects use their highest level of conception of the beautiful across various works of art, paintings or sculpture by more than one creative artist. In 85% of instances, the difference with the predominant modal level is only .5. In

only 10% of instances do subjects manifest 1.5 differences with the predominant modal levels. These findings imply that the developmental levels of conceptions of the beautiful are not a set of mere typologies where individuals switch between types of judgment without a particular order, but, rather constitute an ordered and directional hierarchical sequence of invariant structures.

Relations between domain of conceptions of the justice, domain of the conceptions of the good and the domain of conceptions of the beautiful

As the level of moral development rises, there is a tendency for the levels of conceptions of the beautiful also to rise. Increasing age is a necessary but insufficient condition for attainment of the higher levels of conceptions of the beautiful. Misconceptions about the subject matter of paintings and sculpture are not limited to only children—they are prevalent in adults as well. Adulthood levels of conceptions of the beautiful are plural—there is not just one singular adulthood level.

The adulthood conceptions of the beautiful seem to be homomorphic parallel to adulthood developmental conceptions of the good, and conceptions of the just and the right. The developmental conceptions of the beautiful are distinct and separate from the moral structures, but hierarchically rise in parallel fashion to the

moral structures. In 49% of instances, the level of conceptions of the beautiful was the same as the level of conceptions of justice. In 91% of instances, there were plus or minus a half level correspondence between the level of conceptions of the beautiful and the level of conceptions of justice. In 33% of instances, the levels of

conceptions of the beautiful are identical to levels of conception of the good. In 83% of instances, the levels of conceptions of the good are within a half level, plus or minus, to levels of conceptions of the beautiful. And, in 98% of the cases, the levels of conceptions of the good and the levels of conceptions of the beautiful are within one level, plus or minus, to one another. There seem to be five levels of conceptions of the good, and five levels of conceptions of the just, along with five levels of conceptions of the beautiful, and uniformity of general development across the domains, though not completely at just one level. Data on level 6 justice structures and level 6 conceptions of the beautiful are too sparse to make generalizations about their relationships.

levels of conceptions exhibited

Asking if a painting like Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* is beautiful is different from asking 'is it right?' or 'is it real?' or 'is it good?' Each of those four questions represents a different fundamental question in a distinct domain of its own. What is right is not reducible into fewer than two questions, which are 1) what is good and 2) what is just and right within social contract theory but can be reducible to what is good within utilitarian theory (Marshall, 1922; Rawls, 1971). Utilitarian moral theories permit a three-domain model of the real, the right, and the beautiful, since conceptions of the right are ones that are secondary to conceptions of the good and are defined as those that maximize the good (Rawls, 1971). Utilitarianism is teleological philosophical

moral theory Within utilitarianism the good is primary, and the right consists of maximizing the good. Utilitarianism also does not have the supererogatory virtues, such as compassion, benevolence, magnanimity or forgiveness, within moral conceptions of the right. Utilitarian theories incorporate the good and the right together rather than making distinctions between them (Marshall, 1922; Rawls, 1971). The four distinct questions cannot be conflated with one another within social contract theories, which separate the good from the right and constrain or forbid the good if it violates the right (Rawls, 1993).

In a Kantian framework, the beautiful is a domain and category of judgment of its own, *sui generis*, one that is irreducible to other types of judgments for analyzing artistic beauty (Kant & Meredith, 1911). Kant's principle of subjective universality incorporates criteria for a normative end point of objective judgments of the beautiful. The domain of the beautiful is what Fry (1966) refers to as Kantian autonomy in aesthetics.

The types of developmental levels of "hard" structural stages central to the focus of Piaget's (Inhelder & Piaget, 1966) and Kohlberg's studies (1969) are ones whose qualities are structural and progress through invariant sequences of construction that transform previous structures rather than qualitatively add to them. Progression

cannot occur, for example, from level 1 to level 4 directly. There is no skipping of sequential levels. Each stage provides a platform from which the next levels are constructed. Individuals can, however, revert from higher level capacities to lower levels of functioning. The four criteria for hard structural stages (Kohlberg & Armon, 1984) are all applicable to the four domains. Developmental stages or levels incorporate qualitative changes in thought and affect that are constructed by the individual. Each stage forms a generalized structured whole that is applied in solving all similar issues. These qualitative changes in thought and affect occur in an invariant sequence and transform the previous highest developmental structure into a new hierarchically higher structural whole. While the research study was a cross-sectional one, the connection between the findings in the domain of the beautiful to ones in the subdomain of justice-reasoning suggests that longitudinal studies would confirm ontogenetic progression through the six structural developmental conceptions of the beautiful.

NOTAS

[1] Author note: correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Dr. Albert Erdynast and Wendy Chen Antioch University, 400 Corporate Pointe Culver City, CA 90230 E-mail: aerdynast@antioch.edu