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The Development of Moral Emotion Expectancies and the Happy Victimizer Phenomenon: A Critical Review of Theory and Application

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The *happy victimizer* demarks a phenomenon in which there is a discrepancy between young children's understanding of moral rules and their attribution of positive emotions to wrongdoers. In this paper, we argue why developmental transitions in this aspect of emotion understanding have both theoretical and applied value. First, the research literature on moral emotion expectancies is critically reviewed and methodological constraints of the happy victimizer experimental paradigm are discussed. Second, we elaborate on the connections between moral emotion expectancies and children's understanding of human agency. It is argued that the coordination process involved in making moral emotion attributions and moral judgments is a key element in the evolving moral self. Third, the developmental significance of moral emotion expectancies for children's and adolescent's externalizing symptoms and adaptive behavior is discussed.

Keywords: Moral emotion expectancy, happy victimizer phenomenon, theory of agency, moral self, social adaptation

The purpose of this article is to offer a critical review of the research literature—both experimental and clinical—dealing with the “happy victimizer phenomenon,” a frequently overlooked, but potentially revealing, developmental transition in children's emotion understanding (Arsenio, Gold, & Adams, 2006). This phenomenon highlights a peculiar disjuncture in young people's socio-moral growth—one in which kindergarten and early school-aged children, who have otherwise been shown to understand that acts of victimization are wrong, nevertheless attribute positive, or “happy,” emotions to those who intentionally bring harm upon others. Until quite recently, research in this area has focused primarily on documenting the age-graded differences between younger and older children's reasoning about harmful actions and their emotional fall-out. Numerous studies (e.g., Arsenio & Kramer, 1992; Arsenio & Lover, 1995; Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988; Yuill, Perner, Pearson, Peerbhoy, & van den Ende, 1996) exploring this developmental transition provide robust evidence that it is not typically before the ages of 6 or 7 that children begin to associate moral emotions, such as sadness, guilt, or remorse,

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with immoral conduct. Although various theories concerning children's empathic abilities and attachments to others would fail to predict this finding, the happy victimizer phenomenon is particularly puzzling when set against the impressive findings of social domain researchers (e.g., Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983, 1998). According to this research, young children already at 3 to 4 years of age have developed an intrinsic understanding of moral rules. That is, they consider particular behaviors to be immoral, not because of extrinsic sanctions and authoritative commands but because of the harm suffered upon the victim. Assuming this is true, the central question that arises is, "Why does the young child's cognitive moral knowledge not lead to a corresponding emotional morality...?" (Lourenço, 1997, p. 426). Or, more generally, how ought we to account for the disjunction between children's rich knowledge about the defining characteristics of moral issues, on the one hand, and their relatively impoverished understanding of the affective consequences of these very same matters, on the other? As an answer to this question, we will begin by considering some of the methodological concerns that have been expressed by researchers who study the happy victimizer transition. We will then argue that the happy victimizer finding contributes greatly to contemporary theorizing about moral agency and our understanding of the processes that lead to the emergence of a "moral self" (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004). Further, we will elaborate on the important role moral emotion expectancies play in the emergence and maintenance of children's anti- and prosocial behavior.

The Happy Victimizer Experimental Paradigm: Procedures and Limitations

The experimental conditions for testing the happy victimizer phenomenon usually engage children in a one-on-one interview procedure in which they listen to a short story involving a prototypical moral violation (e.g., physical harm, such as pushing a peer to the ground) between two story protagonists—the victim and victimizer. Following these stories, the standard emotion attribution question is typically: "How does [the victimizer] feel at the end of the story?" According to the earliest studies of the happy victimizer phenomenon (Barden, Zelko, Duncan & Masters, 1980; Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988), when this form of question is employed, young children consistently indicate that the victimizer is happy. As evidenced by follow-up research, however, the results of this early work need to be approached with some caution. In particular, other areas of research have shown that young children are generally more likely to select positive emotions and deny negative ones in any kind of social cognitive task (e.g. Harter & Buddin, 1987). At the same time, young children rarely exhaust their memories if not urged to do so (see Flavell, Miller & Miller, 2002). Researchers have speculated that together these two tendencies have led to an exaggerated assessment of victimizers' happiness.

Arsenio and Kramer (1992) tested this hypothesis and included various levels of probing for alternative and opposite valence emotions. Following rigorous probing, 66% of the 6- and 88% of the 8-year olds provided opposite valence emotions (e.g.,

sadness or remorse) for the victimizer. However most of the 4-year-olds continued to expect that victimizers would feel happy even after being explicitly directed to the sadness of the victim. Follow-up research with a Portuguese sample (Lourenço, 1997) has provided supporting evidence of 4-year-olds' entrenched responses regarding the victimizer's happiness. For younger children, then, it would appear that the happy-victimizer finding cannot be explained by lack of probing for additional emotions.

Lack of probing, however, is not the only shortcoming of standard happy victimizer research. As Keller and colleagues (Keller, Lourenço, Malti, & Saalbach, 2003) have remarked, the typical study in this area usually asks children to indicate how *somebody else* might feel in the victimizer situation (i.e., researchers request "other" attributions), but not how they would feel for *themselves* in the same situation (i.e., "self" attributions). Consequently, children may be responding to the question from a detached, third-person—or, "informational"—viewpoint based on what they know of other people's behavior rather than their own, first-person experience. Because the story protagonist in the victimizer role is engaged in an intentional action (i.e., he or she has made a choice to act badly), it seems natural to expect him or her to feel good after the transgression. Supporting this hypothesis, Keller et al. (2003) found that even young children tended to attribute positive emotions more often to others than to themselves. Nonetheless, more than 50% of the 5- to 6-year-olds still responded "good" when attributing emotions to self. That is, the happy victimizer response pattern does not entirely disappear even in cases when only self-attributed emotions are requested. Such findings rule out the explanation that the happy victimizer phenomenon is simply an artifact of the experimental conditions under which children are asked to make emotion attributions. The question of what causes happy victimizer attributions, however, remains open.

Motivational Explanations and the "Moral Self"

Because there is ample empirical evidence from the social domain approach (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983, 1998) attesting to young children's rich *cognitive* understanding of moral rules, an alternative to making sense of the happy victimizer finding has been to take a *non-cognitive*, or motivational, approach. First proposed by Nunner-Winkler and Sodian (1988, see also Nunner-Winkler, 1999, 2007), this approach suggests that children first come to know moral rules in a purely informational sense, i.e., they know that moral norms exist and can provide reasons for them. Nevertheless, they do not experience these norms as personally binding obligations. As a result, transgressing them does not lead to negatively charged self-evaluative emotions, such as shame or remorse. Nunner-Winkler and Sodian's (1988) conclusions support research on the "moral self" (e.g., Colby & Damon, 1992; Damon, 1984). This research suggests that cognitive and motivational aspects of an individual's identity exist initially as two independent conceptual systems, and it is only gradually, and not until adolescence, that they grow into a unified and integrated moral identity.

There are various pitfalls to framing the happy-victimizer phenomenon exclusively in motivational terms, not the least of which bears on the methodological shortcomings described earlier. More significantly, however, is Blasi's (1999a) critique that Nunner-Winkler and Sodian (1988) did not rule out other possible cognitive explanations for their findings. They did not, for example, investigate whether stage differences in moral understanding or other aspects of children's developing moral judgments (such as Kohlberg's distinction between moral types, see Krettenauer & Edelstein, 1999) contribute to changes in their emotion attributions. More specifically, it is plausible that Stage 2 or Type A reasoners are less inclined to anticipate negative self-evaluative emotions when transgressing a moral rule.

While the foregoing considerations suggest that it is premature to accept an exclusively motivational explanation of the happy victimizer phenomenon, it is also not clear that such a strict division between motivational and cognitive functioning is necessary. That is, cognition and motivation need not be conceived as independent of each other; in the particular case of the happy victimizer phenomenon, it is difficult to imagine how they could be. Because children must necessarily engage their reflective abilities to predict the victimizer's feelings, the experimental procedure contains inherent cognitive demands. That is, making such a prediction requires children to make a cognitive appraisal of the story situation.

Understanding the happy victimizer procedure as a cognitive appraisal fits well with a functionalist account of emotions (Barrett, 1995; Barrett & Campos, 1987). On this view, emotions serve as signals, demarking those aspects of persons' environments that are especially important to them and worth acting upon. In the case of the happy victimizer phenomenon, the fundamental assumption is that moral rules are meaningful to an individual insofar as negative emotions (or self-sanctions) attend moral infractions. If the experience of a negative emotion is absent, then the conclusion is that the individual does not value moral behavior or upholding moral standards.

One critical issue arising from this functionalist perspective is the relation between the seemingly "automatic" appraisals that individuals experience and the more explicit, deliberative appraisals involved in happy victimizer research. That is, because children are asked to openly reason about another individual's emotional reactions in these procedures, the emotional judgment or appraisal process being explored is an *explicit* one. Automatic versus more explicit cognitive appraisals, however, appear to serve quite different motivational functions (see Blasi, 1999b). A spontaneous or automatic *experience* of a moral emotion, such as shame or guilt, drives a person into an action without further reflection being required. By contrast, the expectancy of a moral emotion needs to be reflected upon in a decision-making process in order to guide persons' actions. If a motivational explanation of the happy victimizer phenomenon is to have any merit, all this suggests that the moral emotion *expectancies* that children provide in this research need to be situated in a deliberative or agentive framework.

Agency and Action Coordination

Imbedded in the notions of cognitive appraisal and emotional expectancy is the basic assumption that human beings are agentive and that emotions are part of an arsenal of tools allowing individuals to better control their actions and engage in deliberate, or planned, behavior. Based on such reasoning, it is conceivable that the different procedures used to explore the happy victimizer transition may also prove to be a valuable window onto what young children understand about the relation between human emotions and the complexities of human action. A key feature of the happy victimizer procedures is that children must situate other individuals' actions in relation to their egoistic goals and the broader socio-moral context of what is or is not prohibited. In an important sense, then, happy victimizer research deals with individuals' "theories of agency." One purpose of this theoretical knowledge is to bring order and predictability to children's own and others' emotional lives. As this "theory" is integrated into children's self-reflective knowledge (i.e., as it becomes more accessible, rehearsed, and explicit) it becomes the developmental engine for an emerging "moral self." Although little empirical work has been conducted to investigate the plausibility of such an account, the work of Paul Harris (1989) and Jean Piaget (1954/1981) provide important insight as to how children's understanding of moral emotions works in relation to their conceptions of human agency.

Harris: Internalizing an "External Audience"

Harris (1989) has argued that the turning point in young children's reasoning about emotional matters, and particularly acts of victimization, comes with the addition of a new recursive layer in their views about others' agency, or, as he put it, a shift from "seeing people as simply agents" to "seeing them as observers of their own agency" (p. 92). Central to this account is the idea that children eventually come to internalize an "external audience." This process of internalizing an audience ultimately allows children to evaluate their own and others' actions from a more distant, third-person point of view.

Harris' claims have garnered some support in the research of Murgatroyd and Robinson (1997), who used an altered victimizer story line—one where respondents heard that an additional, third story character, the "onlooker," was observing the victimizer's actions, and then reacted with either approval or disapproval. Murgatroyd and Robinson (1997) provide evidence suggesting that emotional judgments are determined by how others (i.e., the "audience" in Harris' account) are imagined to think about a wrongdoing. Although these findings shed some light on the factors that may influence children's moral emotion attributions, questions remain as to how they fit within a broader developmental account of children's moral growth. What is the relationship between the development of moral autonomy and agency in Harris' account? When does a strategy of "emotional matching" evolve into a principled way of thinking about moral or immoral actions? Beyond these questions, however, Harris' work is instructive insofar as

it highlights how young children are sensitive to normative standards and recognize the formative role of others in determining them. Piaget's account goes further in showing how such sensitivity to norms relates to the development of children's emotional lives.

Piaget: Emotions and Agency

Although not a well-known piece of his broader legacy, Piaget elaborates on the relation between children's emotional lives and the development of agency in his collection of lectures (1953-54) published as *Intelligence and Affectivity* (1981). There, demonstrating the significance of emotions in children's development, Piaget describes agency—or what he called the “will”—as “the affective analogue of intellectual decentration” (Piaget, 1954/1981, p. 64). For Piaget, agency relates to matters of moral duty and obligation, or what he called “normative affects” (Piaget, 1954/1981, p. 59). The structure of the will or agency, perhaps counter to most intuitions, has more in common with logical necessity than with personal freedom. This is because the will is inherently rational, emerging only from a coordinated system of social and personal values. These values, in turn, are construed as a “veritable logic of feelings” that, as Piaget (1954/1981, p. 13; see also p. 60) remarks, ultimately come to share the same “conservations and invariants” (p. 60) that arise in children's intellectual growth.

Piaget does not assume that children come into the world automatically equipped with a ready-made “scale of values” (Piaget, 1981, p. 9). Rather, on his account, values arrive as a bundle of largely arbitrary desires, or spontaneous impulses (i.e., “non-normative” feelings), that work to effectively *drive* the will. Initially, then, a child's will is not properly said to be his or her own, but is instead determined by considerations that are external to it. Insofar as this is the case, the child's conduct is sometimes said to be “heteronomous” (Piaget, 1981, p. 65; see also Piaget, 1932/1965; compare Frankfurt, 1999, pp. 131-132).

An autonomous will, by contrast, begins to emerge under very different circumstances and requires that a subject act against the dominant impulse when in conflict with a weaker one, by “subordinating [it] to a permanent scale of values” (Piaget, 1954/1981, p. 65). To help make this subordination process clear, Piaget (1954/1981) draws on the notion of decentration, suggesting that acts of will are essentially the intellectual equivalent to a “change of perspective” (p. 64). Similar to the perceptual manipulations occurring in Piaget's classic conservation problems, the subject masters the immediate *affective* configuration of a situation by “connecting it with former situations and, if need be, by anticipating future ones” (p. 63). This is where Piaget's account begins to converge with more contemporary notions of how emotional expectancies, like those explored in the happy victimizer paradigm, influence human behavior.

Agency and Constraint in Happy Victimizer Research

In a program of research initiated by Sokol and his colleagues (Sokol, 2004; Sokol & Chandler, 2003), it has been argued that the standard happy victimizer vignette en-

gages participants in the same sort of affective decentration process that Piaget has described. Specifically, the victimizer in the standard story condition faces a conflict between two impulses—in the case of Sokol’s stimulus materials, either to wait his turn to play (the moral choice) or to behave badly by pushing the other story character aside (the stronger, egoistic impulse). Participants in Sokol et al.’s research who could successfully coordinate the victimizer’s actions and goals typically attributed to the victimizer a mixture of emotions: happy for achieving his goals, and sad for harming the other child in the story. Importantly, two key details entered into children’s mixed responses: 1) understanding how individuals’ agency is rooted in an autonomous locus of control; and, 2) recognizing that human agency, however open to personal considerations, is nevertheless subject to interpersonal or social constraints (i.e., normative values). In other words, children’s understanding of *agency* and *constraint* guided their emotion attributions. In support of this argument, Sokol et al. have also shown that children’s performance on the happy victimizer procedures is strongly associated with other parallel measures of social understanding, or an interpretive theory of mind (Chandler & Sokol, 1999; Sokol & Chandler, 2003), that similarly tap children’s conceptions of agency.

Although further research using Sokol et al.’s procedures is needed, the tentative implications of this work are threefold. The first is that, while the happy victimizer experimental procedures are often characterized as eliciting children’s best thoughts about moral emotions, it may be more accurate to describe them as a measurement strategy for exploring children’s notions of agency or the will. Second, and taking the form of a hypothesis needing further investigation, if the standard happy victimizer stimulus materials (i.e., the story conditions) are ostensibly about matters of the will, then it follows that children’s developing conceptions of agency should intersect in systematic ways with the emotion attributions they make. Sokol’s (2004) findings in support of this hypothesis suggest a promising lead toward making better sense of the happy victimizer transition. Third, and finally, given this research program’s emphasis on the development of agency, it suggests one avenue for exploring some of the developmental building blocks associated with the “moral self” in early to middle childhood. Specifically, it illustrates the merit of construing children’s socio-moral growth as a process of coordinating one’s actions in relations to others, or what might more generally be called a “theory of agency.” Focusing on the coordination processes involved in children’s reasoning about moral emotions and their own and others’ agency also makes it possible to explore the happy victimizer phenomenon at later time-points in development, such as adolescence and young adulthood.

Adolescents’ Moral Reasoning and the Happy Victimizer Paradigm

Previous research on moral emotion expectancies has mainly focused on early-to-middle childhood, and little attention has been devoted to developmental changes in adolescence. Where adolescence has been a focus, these few studies were prima-

rily interested in emotional expectancy differences between delinquent teenagers and their non-delinquent peers (for an overview see section below) and did not address broader developmental issues. One recent study, however, stands as an exception to this trend. Krettenauer and Eichler (2006) investigated changes in adolescents' self-attributed moral emotions following a moral transgression by analyzing how their meta-cognitive understanding of morality contributes to the coordination process of moral knowledge and emotion expectancies. As demonstrated by Krettenauer (2004), adolescents typically move through a series of stances of meta-ethical understanding as they struggle to understand the nature of moral beliefs. In early adolescence, teenagers evidence an intuitionist understanding of morality. Intuitionists simply "see" whether an action is right or wrong (i.e., the rightness or wrongness of an act is self-evident). This understanding begins to change in middle adolescence as young persons advance to a subjectivist level of meta-ethical understanding. Meta-ethical subjectivists consider moral judgments to be a matter of personal preference and subjective feeling. Consequently, emotion expectancies become an important source of moral knowledge, and serve an important coordinating role in adolescents' moral deliberations. In particular, Krettenauer and Eichler (2006) found that once adolescents had achieved a subjectivist meta-ethical stance, confidence in moral judgments increased as a function of adolescents' moral emotion expectancies. In this way, adolescents' understanding of moral emotions helped to consolidate their moral beliefs (Krettenauer, 2007). Thus, the coordination process between moral judgment and moral emotion expectancies that is evident in the happy victimizer transition during early childhood also continues to play a role in adolescent thought.

Altogether, these new directions in the study of the happy victimizer phenomenon suggest that there is value in exploring emotion attributions in an agentic framework in both childhood and adolescence. The attempt to coordinate individuals' personal goals against a backdrop of moral standards and the continuity of this coordination process is probably one of the keys to understanding the basic mechanisms involved in the emergence of a "moral self." In line with this theoretical assumption, researchers have begun to use moral emotion expectancies as a research tool for exploring children and adolescents' behavior regulation and adaptation.

Moral Emotion Expectancies and Behavior Regulation

Research on children's and adolescents' behavior regulation, although starting from a different theoretical framework than we propose here, has shown that aggressive behavior is often triggered by distortions in social-cognitive information processing and related emotions (see Crick and Dodge's, 1994, influential social-information processing model; also, Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Orobio de Castro, Merk, Koops, Veerman, & Bosch, 2005). One of the most important steps in social information processing is to develop outcome expectancies, including

expectancies of emotional responses, following an action. Happy victimizer research has revealed systematic changes in these outcome expectancies over the course of development. At the same time, it has demonstrated that moral emotion expectancies reflect important individual differences in behavior regulation and adaptation.

Moral Emotion Expectancies and Anti-Social Behavior

Research on the relationship between children's emotion attributions and externalizing, aggressive problem behaviors reveals an increasingly consistent picture (see Arsenio et al., 2006, for a recent review). Studies with kindergarteners and preschoolers provide evidence that positive (i.e. immoral) emotion expectancies, or related hedonistic justifications, are associated with behavioral problems, although these relationships depend partially on the measure and the exact interview questions used. For example, Asendorpf and Nunner-Winkler (1992) reported that moral emotion expectancies were negatively related to cheating behavior for five- to seven-year-old children. By contrast, Ramos-Marcuse and Arsenio (2001) studied four- to five-year-old preschool children's emotion attributions and externalizing behavior problems and found no direct relation. Dunn and Hughes (2001) found that hard-to-manage 4-year-olds, who frequently engaged in violent pretend play, two years later displayed more hedonistic emotion justifications than a control group. Similarly, Hughes and Dunn (2000) reported that 6-year-old children with behavior problems focused more frequently on the hedonistic aspects of their emotion expectancies than children without such problems. Likewise, in a study by Arsenio and Fleiss (1996), clinically diagnosed, behaviorally disruptive 6- to 12-year-old children were more likely to minimize the negative emotions experienced by victimizers than the children in the control group. These findings, however, stand in contrast to research by Malti (2003), who found no differences in a 6- to 11-year-old sample of aggressive and non-aggressive children's emotion attributions to victimizers.

As a way to shed further clarification on this inconsistency, researchers have begun to differentiate between emotions attributed to the hypothetical victimizer and those attributed to the self (see section on Procedures and Limitations above). In these studies, self-attributed moral emotions are more strongly associated with externalizing, aggressive behavior. For example, Malti (2007) found that self-attributed moral emotions—but not other-attributed ones—negatively predicted aggression in kindergarten children. Furthermore, Malti and Keller (in press) reported that 6- to 10-year-old boys with high self-attributed moral emotions displayed less externalizing behavior than boys with lower levels of self-attributed moral emotions.

Studies on bullying and juvenile delinquency provide additional support for the value of separating self- and other- attributions. In particular, Gasser and Keller (2007) reported that justifications for self-attributed emotions were especially relevant in regard to seven- to eight-year-old elementary school children involved in bullying behavior. Menesini and colleagues (2003) found that 9- to 13-year-old bullies displayed a higher

level of disengagement emotions (i.e., indifference and pride) when asked about the self in the role of the victimizer. Finally, Krettenauer and Eichler (2006) showed that the intensity of self-attributed negative (moral) emotions negatively predicted adolescents' delinquency. A similar finding was reported by Arsenio, Gold, and Adams (2004), showing that behaviorally disruptive adolescents rated themselves as feeling happier following acts of provoked aggression and unprovoked acts of victimization.

In sum, these studies provide substantial evidence that individual differences in moral emotion attributions to the self are closely related to behavioral problems across different age groups. As these studies are restricted to cross-sectional designs, however, further longitudinal research is needed to investigate the developmental relationships between these aspects of social growth.

Moral Emotion Expectancies and Pro-Social Behavior

When looking at relations between moral emotion expectancies and social behavior, it is important to consider not only anti- but also prosocial behavior. Although there is a well-established literature on the role of empathy in prosocial behavior (see Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Sadovsky, 2006), very little is known about moral emotion expectancies as predictors of prosocial behavior. One of the few studies in this area that has attempted a direct investigation was conducted by Gummerum and colleagues (Gummerum, Keller, Rust, & Hanoch, 2007). In this study, three- to five-year-old children's emotion attributions to hypothetical victimizers predicted their prosocial behavior in a sharing situation developed in economic game theory (see Gummerum and Keller, this issue). Another study by Malti, Gummerum, and Buchmann (2007) found that a combined measure of self-attributed moral emotions and justifications predicted mother-rated prosocial behavior in six-year-old children. Although these studies used different measures to assess prosocial action and the findings are only partially consistent, they nevertheless provide first empirical evidence of the role of moral emotion expectancies in children's prosocial behavior.

Conclusions

The purpose of our article was threefold: First, we elaborated on methodological limitations of previous happy victimizer research. Second, we detailed how research about moral emotion expectancies contributes to a more general account of moral agency and how the coordination processes involved in moral emotion expectancies and moral judgment underlie the emergence of moral selfhood. Third, we analyzed the role of moral emotion expectancies in the genesis of (mal)adaptive behaviors. Below, we summarize the rationale for these three discussion points and identify areas of future research.

From a methodological point of view, lack of probing is one of the main shortcomings of previous happy victimizer research. More recent research indicates that sys-

tematic probing for alternative emotions may lead to a higher incidence of negative emotion attributions, particularly in middle childhood. A second methodological concern is that children more frequently mention negative emotions when asked to attribute emotions to themselves in the role of the victimizer (self attributions) than when asked to attribute emotions to a hypothetical wrongdoer (other attributions). These findings indicate that methodological factors may influence emotion attributions in important ways. Further research is needed to investigate what factors in the happy victimizer research paradigm pull for negative or positive emotion attributions. Similarly, future research should use a more differentiated array of hypothetical situations that may influence emotion attributions (cf. Arsenio et al., 2004; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Yell, 2003), and compare emotion attributions in hypothetical and real-life transgressions (Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005).

Regarding the role of moral emotion expectancies in the development of a moral self, we criticized an exclusively motivational explanation of the happy victimizer attribution pattern. As moral emotion expectancies require cognitive skills, a rigid distinction between cognitive and motivational factors cannot be sustained. We argued that emotion attributions in the happy victimizer procedure indicate how children understand human agency and gradually learn to coordinate one's actions in relations to others. The decline of happy victimizer attributions indicates that moral knowledge and moral emotions are becoming increasingly coordinated in the course of development. We discussed empirical evidence demonstrating that this coordination process is not limited to childhood, but continues into adolescence.

The present paper suggests that moral emotion expectancies are intimately linked to the development of the moral self. Because no empirical research has yet analyzed this relationship directly, the ideas presented here remain largely theoretical. To be sure, establishing an empirical link will not be straightforward task given that there is currently no standard measure for exploring developmental changes in the moral self (Hardy & Carlo, 2005). So far most of the research on the moral self has been restricted to examining the relation between moral identity and community service (see Hart, 2005; Nucci, 2004). An investigation into the relationship between moral self and moral emotion expectancies would greatly improve our understanding of the psychological processes that are associated with the development of a moral self in day-to-day life.

Regarding the relations between moral emotion expectancies and behavioral adaptation, we discussed implications of emotion attributions for children's and adolescents' antisocial and prosocial behavior. Behavioral adaptation and symptoms of maladaptation are related to the developmental level of social and moral understanding as well as emotions (Noam, 1992). Because emotion attributions as assessed in the happy victimizer procedure reflect children's understanding of the relation between moral emotions and actions, they open a promising avenue for studying behavior regulation. In line with this argumentation, previous research documented that self-attributed moral emotions and aggression are negatively associated, both

in childhood and adolescence. Moreover, there is preliminary evidence that moral emotion expectancies significantly contribute to children's prosocial behavior.

Almost all previously mentioned studies on the happy victimizer attribution pattern and on moral emotion expectancies are cross-sectional. This makes it almost impossible to integrate general developmental and clinical developmental perspectives. Investigating how the normative developmental decline of happy victimizer emotions intersects with the development of individual differences in behavioral adaptation and how moral emotion expectancies shape later (mal)adaptive behavior should be the next step for researchers in this area. Such a longitudinal research design would yield unprecedented insights on the development of moral emotions and their role in individuals' moral functioning. In summary, then, it appears that research on the happy victimizer phenomenon opens a promising avenue for future research on socio-moral development. Still, we are a long way from reaching its full potential.

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