The Development of Conceptions of the Right to Literacy in Traditional Rural Africa

by

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Abstract

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This study examined conceptions of the right to literacy in children, adolescents, and young adults living in rural Zulu villages in the mountains of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, as one instantiation of the development of conceptions of human rights in a developing world setting. Of human rights, literacy was chosen because of its familiarity to children and adolescents and because of its recognized importance to the promotion of well-being and equality in the developing world; the setting was chosen as representative of a traditional non-Western group living in relative geographical isolation. The participants (N = 72), in three groups, 10-11, 15-16, and 18-21 years old, equally divided by sex, were posed questions about the right to literacy, its properties in the abstract, and about hypothetical scenarios presenting conflicts between the right to literacy and cultural preservation, parental authority, and gender roles. Participants were asked to justify their responses to each question. Findings showed that participants endorsed the right to literacy in the abstract assessments (93% – 100%) and conflict assessments (61% – 100%), using, in the majority of instances, rationales of agency – capacities and resources promoting self-determination and well-being – and morality. This understanding of human rights, as it was isomorphic with ‘Western’ conceptions of human rights as determined by previous North American studies and by philosophical treatments of human rights, provided evidence for commonalities in moral development processes between Western and traditional ‘non-Western’ settings. The conflict assessments provided evidence for how children coordinate this right in the context of their families and communities and their evaluations of the relative importance of rights in comparison to other social values.
Dedication

To Joe and to Barbara;
To the late Nadine Lambert.

As I complete this manuscript the children of South Africa have taken to the streets again, in the year of 2009, to continue their struggle for an education and a future. I can only wish with all my heart that they succeed to fulfill their potential and that of their beautiful country.
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‘Non fatuum huc persecutus ignem’ – It is no will o’ the wisp I have followed here.

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The aim of this study is to investigate the development of conceptions of human rights in a developing world setting: conceptions of the right to literacy held by children and adolescents living in rural KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The construal of literacy as a human right may seem to be an unusual claim. However, literacy enables cognitive development (Stanovitch, 2000) and the acquisition of knowledge. The literate may gain, with their increased communicative and contractual functioning, social and economic independence (Okin, 2003). These abilities are central to agency, defined, for the purposes of this study, as those capacities for self-determination essential to human freedom and well-being. It is the purpose of human rights to protect the core requirements for agency for every person (Gewirth, 1982). In the developing world, agency increasingly depends on literacy, which aids access to employment, medical care, and freedom of movement, amongst a host of other abilities.

Examining conceptions of the right to literacy entails the investigation of a topic of deep personal importance to the many peoples of the developing world. Many of them, including the young participants in this study, belong to the first literate generation in their families. To construe literacy as a right is to assert their entitlement to learn to read against any form of opposition or discrimination. But whether they understand and endorse this right, and to what extent they might invoke it if challenged, is a matter of enquiry.

From a broader theoretical perspective, conceptions of human rights are often thought to be contingent on social exposure to individualistic Western values; some social scientists assert that human rights conceptions are not native to the developing, or non-Western, world. Those who employ this dichotomy commonly include in the group of ‘Western’ cultures the United States, Europe, and other countries, in which an ‘individualistic’ ethos is said to determine social and psychological characteristics in the population; while ‘non-Western countries’ include Africa, Asia, and South America, where a ‘collectivistic’ ethos is said to be deterministic. An opposing view is that moral conceptions, including human rights conceptions, are constructed as part of normative human development; therefore, the expectation would be to find evidence for the development of these conceptions in both ‘Western’ or ‘non-Western’ communities. Research on conceptions of rights in isolated rural settings, in populations with strong traditional characteristics, informs a theoretical discussion involving the nature of the self, the interactions of the individual with society, and the source of moral judgments, and whether all of these are culturally determined, or self-determined.

I proceed to further justify literacy as a right by identifying those characteristics that link it to agency and reviewing relevant literature from economic development theory about the consequences of class and gender inequities in literacy provision in areas of the developing world. I present the theoretical basis of this study, a model of the development of social reasoning through the active structuring of experience by the child (Turiel, 1983). I do so partly through contrasts with social learning and cultural models of moral development. I summarize philosophical and social scientific discussions about rights and culture to elucidate the implications of conceptions of rights, standing, as they do, at the interface between society and the individual, and discuss psychological research on conceptions of rights. These arguments will support a rationale for the study design that integrates a general theory of the psychology of human rights with the setting of the traditional communities chosen for the study.
The research questions under investigation are as follows: do children and adolescents in developing world settings hold conceptions of the right to literacy? How do they justify their positive or negative evaluations? In hypothetical conflicts involving the right to literacy with traditional social values, do they uphold this right; how do they conceptualize and resolve dilemmas stemming from these conflicts? In the cases in which the right to literacy is subordinated, which conflicting values prevail? What age-related differences present here, and how do these differ from the results of North American studies?

**Literacy as a human right**

Literacy is proposed, here, to be a human right because of its great value in promoting cognitive and communicative abilities and communication. It can contribute to social exchanges with increased verbal capabilities and the ability to enter into written contracts. In the developing world, it can enable women to find work outside the home, promoting their economic independence, and contributing to gender equity. However, it happens all too often that girls are unable to learn to read because of discrimination within their families.

Rational autonomy is the first requirement for agency; it provides the basis for every choice that precedes self-determined action. Cognitive development, the construction of experience, enables the processing of knowledge in the pursuit of autonomous aims which are, in themselves, deeply enriched by knowledge and social exchange.

Literacy enables access to the rich content of written knowledge, a breadth of knowledge not available through individual experience, and enhanced capacities for cognitive development and expression through increases in vocabulary. Controversies about whether the cognitive consequences of literacy and of education in general are confounded have been addressed by research isolating the effects of reading, using hierarchical regression techniques, and obtaining significant relationships between exposure to print and vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and verbal fluency (Stanovich, 2000).

The role of broad knowledge and verbal fluency in the ability to make self-determined choices, and to be effective as an agent, ‘the ability to be a self-controlling, self-developing agent who can relate to others on a basis of mutual respect and cooperation’ (Gewirth, 1982, p. 5), is self-evident. Evidence comparing literate and illiterate mothers in Nigeria, China, Sri Lanka, and India links the psychosocial benefits of literacy, increased self-esteem and communicative abilities, with improved access to medical care and information and to significant decreases in rates of infant mortality (Adamson, 1986).

With the industrialization of agriculture, farm workers need to read packaging labels. Oral contracts lack power; migrant work calls for abilities to read public transport timetables and job advertisements. These historic changes severely penalize the illiterate and strengthen claims for the status of literacy as a human right.

Illiteracy is linked with reduced opportunities for economic success; reduced family, social and political voice and status; reduced longevity for both illiterate parents and their children; and the transmission of poverty from generation to generation (Nussbaum, 2000; Okin, 2003; Sen, 1990). Amartya Sen makes an argument for the benefits of literacy in the developing
world by providing correlations between gender, illiteracy and life expectancy. He proposes that, in regions throughout the developing world, the welfare of a person relative to other family members depends upon whether that person can gain independent employment. Non-wage earners are given less access to food and health care in times of family hardship, and are less likely to survive. As literacy enables movement outside the home and employment, literate members of the family have better chances of survival. In those areas where boys are more likely to be educated than girls, more males survive, creating gendered disparities in life expectancy. Sen calculates that the global disparity between male and female longevity, notably, in sub-Saharan Africa, southeast and eastern Asia, western Asia, southern Asia and northern Africa, amounts to a total population loss of one hundred million women, indirectly attributable to differences in schooling opportunities. While Sen acknowledges that this model may be oversimplified, he also notes that longevity differences in a region have been known to disappear in response to literacy campaigns.

Although adult literacy can provide functional reading skills, learning how to read in early childhood is critical, for the majority of learners; many adult learners give up reading, because it is too difficult (Abadzi, 1996). In order to become fluent, people must learn to read in childhood. Stanovitch (2000) found a powerful correlation between early literacy experiences and a range of positive cognitive and psychosocial outcomes. The benefits of early literacy were clearly cumulative, reflecting reciprocal reinforcements between elements of learning such as vocabulary, information, and motivation, while a lack of early reading experience created a deficit that, in light of the accelerating progress of early learners, was difficult to compensate. Stanovitch dubbed the phenomena ‘the Matthew effect’ after the Gospel According to Matthew: “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” (XXV: 29).

Therefore the importance of learning to read in early childhood cannot be underestimated; yet, childhood is a vulnerable time in which children’s rights must be protected by their families. Literacy is what is known as a positive right (Gewirth, 1992). In contrast to civil liberties, which entail duties of non-interference, positive rights entail duties to fulfil a need, when people cannot reasonably provide for themselves; these are called duties of provision. The government must assume the duty of provision in the case of literacy.

But also, there are duties of non-interference, provision, and non-discrimination arising from the right of literacy that belong to the family and community. It is their duty to allow and enable the child to attend school. Many would say that it is their responsibility to encourage their children: Rawls notes, “the internal life and culture of the family influence, perhaps as much as anything else, a child’s motivation and his capacity to learn from education, and so in turn his life prospects.” (Rawls, 1971/1999, p. 265). Duties of non-interference pertaining to the right to literacy can be violated if children are needed to work at home, or where literacy would disturb discriminatory practices, relating usually to gender, ethnicity or caste, that support hierarchical distributions of power or religious traditions.

Parents can fail to fulfill their duties in instances of poverty; often, again, it is girls who go without in competitions for scarce resources. Power differentials within the family are often more acute during hard times. However, gender discrimination against girls within the family is a traditional value throughout much of Africa, and has been labelled ‘son preference’ in African
human rights discourse (Kaime, 2005). Discrimination of this kind is often difficult to detect from without the family, partly because the family can be falsely idealized as a just and benevolent institution, and partly because the affairs of the family are perceived as private and exempt from public judgment or interference (Okin, 2003). There are numerous instances in which the sphere of action of the right to literacy is the family, where discrimination is taking place, and not society at large.

However, it would be unjust not to mention here evidence of the high priority often placed on literacy by very poor people. In a survey mounted by the World Bank, parents living in deep poverty named literacy for their children as one of the most basic goods, along with the ability to earn, to live without exploitation, to enjoy good health, and to participate in community life. They associated literacy primarily with economic independence in their children’s futures; and in some cases, placed such great value on this freedom that they themselves would go hungry in order to pay for their children’s school uniforms and fees (Narajan, 2000).

The right to literacy is instrumental in protecting the development of agency because literacy enables access to knowledge and cognitive abilities that inform choice, social abilities, such as entering into contractual agreements, and communicating as an informed and independent agent. For the poor, the benefits of the right to literacy are often construed in economic terms, even if, in more affluent eyes, literacy supports self-fulfillment in a broader sense. Evidence about the need for learning to read in childhood, and about unequal opportunities for males and females in the family unit, indicate that gender roles and children’s rights within the family are areas in which the recognition of the right to literacy are of great practical importance.

**Rights as psychological phenomena: implications for culture**

I have presented an argument that literacy is a human right, and now turn to a rationale for the study of human rights as psychological phenomena, and the study of human rights in a non-Western society. Human rights are defined as “the rights that are had by every human being simply insofar as he is human. The objects of these rights, what they are rights to, is freedom and well-being” (Gewirth, 1996, p. 6). They entail universal entitlements and obligations to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or national origin. Claims for the broad applicability of human rights are based on ‘natural rights’ criteria – the assumption that human rights have their source in universal aspects of human nature.

But from a political or historic perspective, human rights are perceived to have distinctly local origins. They are a modern phenomenon (Declaration of Universal Human Rights, 1948) and they are often seen as a product of Western liberal philosophy (Bielefeldt, 2000; Helwig, 2006). Because of this apparent paradox, the existence of psychological conceptions of human rights in non-Western cultures is a matter of enquiry with broad implications; for the presence of these conceptions outside their ‘native’ culture provides evidence for commonalities in human rights conceptions, moral development, and conceptions of the self, countering theories of cultural variations of these phenomena.

Some social scientists maintain that moral conceptions, including rights, are transmitted
through the exposure of children to their particular culture, or through the acquisition of pre-
formed social concepts. But it is necessary to question whether moral conceptions such as rights
are culturally determined, or whether certain general categories of human requirements can be
termed universal, so that universal entitlements for protection are justified; whether we can be
taught values such as rights; whether rights are ‘natural’, somehow inherent to humans, and
waiting to be discovered, like other laws of natural science; or whether there is yet another
answer to the question of the origin of rights. Responses to these questions tend to polarize
around deterministic and self-determining theories of human nature; in the first, we are the
recipients of learning; in the second, we evaluate our lives, and develop towards freely chosen
ends.

The majority of theories about the development of social knowledge follow this polarity
between deterministic and self-determining approaches, and are divided, respectively, into
transmission and constructivist approaches. Transmission perspectives include, amongst others,
social learning and cultural perspectives, which two are most relevant to the study of the
development of rights conceptions. The underlying assumption of transmission models is that
children’s thinking can be largely determined by what they are taught; while in constructivist
thought, including social domain theory, the development of knowledge is an active process
undertaken by the child, who structures conceptions of the world in response to experience. In
this view, both direct experience and instruction are mediated through the child’s conceptions of
reality. It follows that transmission models attribute the greatest formative power to the child’s
environment; while constructivism, while taking environmental factors into consideration,
focuses on children’s active processes of development and the potential for self-regulated
thought.

The central premise in this study is that moral conceptions, including conceptions of
justice, welfare, and rights, are individual constructs of evaluations and perceptions of social
experience. This process of development, although dependent on environmental experience, is
not attributable to direct transmission of values; it is the product of active interpretation (Piaget,
1932/65; Kohlberg, 1981; Turiel, 1983). Within social knowledge, conceptions of rights belong
to the domain of moral reasoning, which will be defined, provisionally, as conceptions that
prescribe rules of conduct between persons and between individuals and society; although a
more stringent definition, specific to social domain theory, will be developed through the course
of this discussion. Theories about moral development and about rights conceptions are each
represented in transmission and constructivist schemes.

I consider the content, aims, and sources of morality in different perspectives, and how
these relate to the central definition of morality in each; in social domain research, empirical and
epistemological arguments converge to indicate that morality has sources in development that are
independent of social transmission. This perspective provides evidence to show that morality
forms an autonomous domain of thinking about social values originating in the evaluations of
acts with intrinsic consequences involving welfare or fairness; whereas, in social learning
perspectives, the source and end of morality is within society, so that morality is determined by
society.

In several earlier accounts of moral development, such as those of Durkheim (1925/1961)
and Piaget (1932/1965), rights were not a prominent subject. Psychological autonomy, the ability
to make choices based on independently held values and rationales, is essential to agency, the capacity to act towards self-determined ends, which rights defend. A discussion on autonomy bears powerfully on agency and conceptions of rights. I discuss variations on conceptions of autonomy and their implications in the treatises on moral development by Durkheim and Piaget, in lieu of more explicit discussions on rights. Concepts of autonomy are interdependent with concepts of the self and its relation to society; these are considered.

Contrasting hypotheses about the influence of culture on moral development capture differences between transmission and constructivist models; while the second hypothesis of this study, about the coordination in judgments about conflicts, is included in social domain theory, within the constructivist perspective.

Theoretical origins: In society

A classic sociocentric perspective on morality, autonomy, and the individual was proposed in Moral Education (1925/1961) by the sociologist Durkheim, who saw society as the source and endpoint of morality. He reasoned that, as egoistic acts directed towards personal ends were never evaluated as moral, it followed that acts for the sake of any individual were also not moral; the ends of morality could not be any one person or group of persons. He located morality in what he termed the collective interest (p. 58-59). Morality entails obligations between persons and society; and, as the objects of moral duty must have consciousness, society must have an independent, supranatural life of its own:

We have seen -- and it is altogether evident -- that beyond the individual there is only a single psychic entity, one empirically observable moral being to which our wills can be linked: this is society... Just as the living cell is something other than a sum of its cells, so is society a psychic being that has its own particular way of thought, feeling, and action, differing from that peculiar to the individuals who compose it (p. 65).

Autonomy was defined by the implications of this separation between morality and the individual. Morality, including the origins of its rules and authority, its goals, and its processes of construction and change, was the product of society -- a living, conscious entity -- and linked to the larger goals of scientific and artistic progress. Durkheim drew a parallel between the triadic relationship of society, a rationally based morality, and the moral awareness of individuals, to the relationship of religion, divine authority, and ‘a bit of divinity’ in each person (p. 104); by this, he emphasized the external origins of morality and the passivity of the individual who learnt its pre-formed rules.

Durkheim’s interpretation of the nature of morality was that it was objective; it was directly comparable to scientific laws such as those of mathematics and the physical sciences. The implication for moral development was that morality, like these subjects, was best acquired through enlightened secular education: “morality can be completely derived from empirical realities; consequently, education is in the nature of things as applicable to the moral as to the intellectual elements of culture” (p. 105). As morality was the product of a scholarly discipline, as with any other science, “individual reason can no more be the lawmaker for the moral world
than that of the physical world” (p. 116).

Autonomy represented an informed consent to social norms of morality that was so complete as to subsume the individual will to the larger moral imperative, so that the socially defined good was freely chosen. Because morality was a science, whose goal was the maintenance and progress of an abstracted Society, it was removed from everyday life and individual relationships. It was delineated sharply from emotion and egoistic desires, sensibilities “that have their own nature and that are refractory to the dictates of reason” (p. 109). Instead of expressing rational perspectives of freedom, inseparable, some would assert, from emotion and desire (Piaget, 1981; Nussbaum, 2001), the ideal of autonomy was free conformity to an external and largely fixed system of laws, in which any change was so gradual that “our personal contribution is never more than a minute factor in the complex result in which it disappears anonymously” (p. 107).

*Theoretical origins: The individual in interaction*

Piaget in *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1932) conducted a series of empirical studies on moral judgment in children, examining French Swiss children between four and fourteen years of age on topics such as lying, sharing or distributive justice, objective damage and intentionality, and responsibility, punishment and retributive justice. He did so using a clinical interview methodology that consisted in eliciting children’s responses to stories on these topics and using careful questioning to ascertain their reasoning processes. From the results of these studies he developed a theory of stage development of morality including two stages: heteronomous morality based on the respect of rules laid down by adults and seen as objective; and autonomous morality based on mutual respect, an understanding of morality as based on cooperation and fairness, contingent on reason and consensus, and alterable. Piaget drew these premises about moral development from his more general theory on the growth of children’s cognitive perspectives from egocentrism, a tendency to conflate objective and subjective aspects of phenomena, towards a more differentiated perspective in which internal and external realities were correctly distinguished and bounded. In the social world, this differentiation meant the formation of capacities for independence and interdependence that enabled genuine cooperation and an autonomous morality distinct from social imperatives.

On this empirical and theoretical basis, Piaget responded to Durkheim’s theory of moral development:

... Durkheim affirms the unity of all moral and social facts ... [he] regards all morality as imposed by the group upon the individual and by the adult upon the child. (p. 341)

... it remains to be seen whether the unity of all social facts postulated by Durkheim is not such as to rob morality of its most fundamental, and most specific characteristic – its normative autonomy. The danger of the sociological explanation – and Durkheim was the first to notice it – is that it may compromise morality, by identifying it with reasons of state, with accepted opinions, or with collective conservatism; in a word, with everything that the greatest reformers
have attacked in the name of conscience. (p. 344)

...The essence of social constraint and of external authority is to identify what is with what ought to be, the ideal state of things being thus conceived as already realized. (p. 346)

In opposition to Durkheim’s morality based upon constraint, which Piaget termed unilateral or heteronomous, Piaget argued that morality must be based on egalitarian relations between peers; these mutual relations alone would stimulate a growing appreciation of morality, defined as conceptions of justice.

Whereas Durkheim conceived moral education as the imposition of order from without, Piaget held that the child must construct the understanding of any experience, including formal education:

In fact, both social or educational influences ... can have some effect on the subject only if he is capable of assimilating them, and he can do this only if he already possesses the adequate instruments or structures (or their primitive forms). In fact, what is taught, for instance, is effectively assimilated only when it gives rise to an active reconstruction or even reinvention by the child. (Piaget, 1970, p. 721)

Like Durkheim, Piaget held that morality could only arise through social interactions; and while he also proposed a heteronomous morality, regulating relationships between adults and children, and consisting of duty and the unilateral respect of young towards old, true morality was conceived as autonomous, based on early social feelings, but trending towards more rational ideas of the good. From the first stage, heteronomy, comprising early conceptions of morality as obedience to authority, children passed through intermediate forms of thought to the second stage, autonomous morality, based on mutual cooperation, at around the beginning of adolescence. This was characterized, above all, by the differentiation of morality from social authority; by the understanding that social rules were made through consensus, and were alterable; and by values of equality, reciprocity, and mutual respect.

As children learn how to create rules amongst themselves, in adulthood they are able to apply autonomous reasoning to social rules. On both empirical and epistemological grounds, Piaget refuted Durkheim’s characterization of the rules of social life as unalterable, isomorphic to the laws of physical science. While social life is a subject of empirical enquiry, social rules are interpretative and progressive, and can be legitimately reformed by the application of rational judgment to sound social knowledge.

When Durkheim reminds us that the individual is unable of himself to create morality, this by no means implies that the person is not free to judge of everything by his reason alone. Nothing could be truer than to say that autonomy presupposes a scientific knowledge of social life as of natural laws and the ability to recognize these laws at work. But social laws are unfinished and their progressive formation presupposes the unfettered cooperation of personal reason.
The autonomy of reason has therefore nothing to do with individual fancy, but it stands in direct contradiction to the idea of external authority recognized as such. (p. 370)

In this passage, Piaget corrected two fallacies. First, while an isolated individual could not create morality, the contribution of the individual was essential to a system in which morality was the product of shared social perspectives. With this rationale, Piaget recognized and legitimized diverse viewpoints:

a system of laws of perspective enabling one to pass from one point of view to the other... In this case each individual perspective could be different from the others and yet at the same time adequate and in no danger of jeopardizing the coherence of the whole. (p. 351)

He suggested that social heterogeneity is normative, and not, as Durkheim believed, subversive. On the contrary, autonomy, which involves recognizing the uniqueness of the self and others, is necessary to negotiate and reconcile different perspectives in the pursuit of cooperation.

Second, Piaget validated the subjective life of the individual. It need not be ‘individual fancy’, egoistic, irrational, or arbitrary; it could consist, rather, of evaluations of legitimate variations in perspective, including reasonable claims for necessary resources. To conflate the objective with the rational was an error that denied individual reason and reduced emotion and the self to undesirable remnants of childhood.

Both these points undermined the case for an absolute moral authority. Piaget reasoned that the constraint of heteronomous morality could only delay the development of autonomous thought. With growing identification with self-determined values, beliefs in the legitimacy of adult authority and punishment faded, to be replaced by the gradual engagement in a shared moral understanding, and an increasing reliance upon democratic methods and consensus. Morality, as well as other disciplines, progressed by the contribution of autonomous thinking to society through the application of agreed epistemologies. “This cooperation ... is the only thing that allows for the distinction between what is and what ought to be” (1932/65, p. 346).

Many of Durkheim’s core points are implicit in theories in which society, social learning, or culture are central; while most of Piaget’s assumptions represented here remain foundations of social interaction or constructivist theories, including those of Kohlberg (1981) and social domain theory (Turiel, 1983). Despite the lack of specific treatment of rights by Durkheim or Piaget, these two accounts provide sufficient information on views of the self, the individual in society, and autonomy, to project with some accuracy those rights which would be required to maintain their respective visions of society, bearing in mind that even those societies characterized as authoritarian or collectivist must secure certain protections for well-being.

Durkheim did not discuss rights in Moral Education; when he referred to the national obligation to promote justice and welfare, rights were not mentioned (p. 77). His conception of the individual was such that claims for rights did not come under consideration, rather, “the need for containing one’s self within determinate limits is demanded by the person’s nature” (p. 68), so that the relationship between the self and society was conceived unilaterally, as constraints
and obligations for the individual, instead of a system of mutual entitlements and obligations. Nevertheless, children were motivated by feelings of solidarity; considerations of fairness and welfare would pertain in this environment in order to support the collective goodwill, regardless of its prevailing authoritarianism.

Reason would suggest that those entitlements that optimized the social order would be supported: rights to life, to property, and to education; and that human rights linked to expression, conscience, and dissent, such as the civil liberties of speech and religion, might find limited scope; they could be confined to an elite. If autonomy were limited to free consent to a predetermined moral order, the protection of autonomy would not encompass the needs of self-determination and choice, but, rather, the capacity to accommodate existing facts, and societal values. Rights are an essential part of community, as social contracts must impart some degree of impartiality (Rawls, 1971); but this communitarian conception of rights does not impart the guarantees of intellectual freedom and universality of human rights (Gewirth, 1996).

For Piaget, freedom embraced multiple perspectives, method, and progress, autonomy and mutuality. The needs for freedom, freedom of thought, dissent, expression and due processes for negotiation and change for each and every individual would justify the protection of civil liberties. As individuals must have communities to optimize the exchange of ideas, the protection of minority interests, including academic and religious freedom, would also follow.

The relevance of the constructivist perspective of Piaget to rights claims has been made with the specific requirements of autonomy in mind; but a discussion of the broader implications of constructivism for rights is also pertinent. To the extent that development is demonstrated to have specific environmental needs with lasting effects upon agency, in childhood and in maturity, those needs are legitimized as rights claims. To the extent that a person is considered the product of their society, without a clear account of a set of inalienable developmental needs, rights will be conceived as relativistic, and reducible.

In some societies, the privilege of playing outdoors is gender-specific, in keeping with, and in anticipation of, the cultural norm that men carry out active pursuits, and women manage their households (Filkin, 2009). From a Piagetian perspective, play supports adult cognition as well as the physical health and emotional well-being of the child; the importance of social interactions with peers for moral development must also support the right for freedom of association, even in childhood (Piaget, 1951, 1954). These developmental necessities form the basis of a human rights claim for all children, regardless of the society in which they are growing up (Hart, 1991; Cohen & Naimark, 1991); they are defended in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1990). The debate on the degree to which different developmental needs are malleable, and to what degree they must be supported by a conducive environment and can be disrupted by certain cultural practices, directly pertains to rights claims; therefore, the differences between Durkheim and Piaget address one area of the controversy about whether rights are, or are not, culturally relative.

Durkheim did not explore stages of moral development; the process of the psychological development of rights conceptions does not enter into his theory. For Piaget, as he did not carry out any specific research on rights, it can be surmised only that, in accord with his theory, a full understanding of rights would arise in early adolescence as a consequence of due reflection on the needs of the individual.
Lawrence Kohlberg elaborated many of the arguments first put by Piaget in *The Moral Judgment of the Child* and involved himself deeply in problems of social scientific epistemology and cultural relativism pertaining to the study of morality. Kohlberg developed a revised stage theory of morality, adding a pre-conventional level to Piaget’s conventional and post-conventional (autonomous) levels, and dividing each level into two for a total of six stages. Each stage represented “‘structured wholes’, total ways of thinking, not attitudes towards particular situations” (p. 120). Each successive stage subsumed those previous to it, distinguished moral from non-moral concerns more clearly, and was characterized by thinking which was more consistent, universalizable, and impartial.

Kohlberg conducted a fifteen-year long study involving seventy-five boys, aged, at the onset, between ten and sixteen years. He used clinical interviews based on Piaget’s methodology, but used stories adapted from classical ethical problems, known as casuistry. These entailed complex moral dilemmas whose solutions by Kohlberg’s participants yielded data for his research on stage theory. Perhaps the best known example, known as the Heinz dilemma, involved a scenario in which a man’s wife was suffering from a fatal disease; he was unable to afford a highly priced drug that would cure her. The participant had to decide whether Heinz should steal the drug or let his wife die. The content of the justification, rather than the choice itself, determined the stage attributed to the response. A Stage 1 response to this dilemma would entail considerations of whether Heinz would be punished for his choice. A positive Stage 6 response would involve a justification invoking the ultimate value of life and the lesser relative value of property.

Like Piaget, morality, for Kohlberg, was based on reason; it was not an artefact of conditioned behavior. Kohlberg opposed the use of non-cognitivist methodologies for the study of morality and established a strong case for the need for explicit psychological epistemologies by arguing that psychological approaches such as behaviorism implicated assumptions about human nature that were either erroneous or unproven. He surmised that, for the field of psychology to progress, these assumptions had to be made explicit and open to enquiry:

Many of us feel that the study of cognition by American child psychology failed to progress for two generations because of an inadequate epistemology, sometimes called logical positivism or behaviorism.


In this instance, the assumption underlying behaviorism was that the process of learning was independent of that which was learnt, whereas Piaget had demonstrated convincingly that learning processes were indissoluble from content (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). According to Piaget, each area of cognition – mathematics, physical science, morality – comprised a separate domain, each with unique criteria for its content, validity judgments, and direction of progress. Learning was dependent on the structure and content of each domain and could not be treated as an automatic response to stimuli. For this reason, after laboring under false premises for decades, behavioral psychologists working on cognitive problems failed to produce substantial results.
Morality was also cognitive, rather than behavioral, in its origins. Nor was it acceptable to assume that morality consisted of cultural mores without underlying intrinsic values. The moral domain of thought had its epistemological roots in ethics and philosophy; the treatment of morality by the social sciences required a metaethical perspective. There could be no objective, or neutral, point from which to interpret morality; behaviorist, social learning and constructivist theories all entailed psychological assumptions and philosophical perspectives about human nature. This inevitable partiality meant that the epistemological position of the researcher and the object of study both needed to be part of the process of enquiry and progress. Kohlberg speculated that the relationship between epistemology and empiricism could become mutually informative, that “the ought statements of philosophers of knowledge and morality, and the is statements of psychologists of knowledge and morality, should be based on mutual awareness”. (Kohlberg 1971/1981, p. 105)

Kohlberg produced an epistemology for the study of moral development in response to his own mandate; although he wrote that any philosophical stance would produce similar results when compared to that of behaviorism, in fact, his own initial hypothetical position reflected considerations of the particular needs of moral psychology. Kohlberg’s central position rested on Kantian philosophy with its formalistic principles of justice; nevertheless, he recognized the importance of the principle of respect for persons, and that to fulfill that respect required attention to the facts of psychology.

Although Kantian universality is identical to formal justice or impartiality, substantive principles (justice, equality, respect for persons) add additional requirements and make the “ends in themselves” formulation workable. (Kohlberg 1971/1981, p. 166)

Kohlberg went on to explore an epistemology of rights. Most moral philosophies belong to one of two categories; the first is termed deontic, formalistic, or categorical, and is associated most strongly with Kant. It contains abstract rules of organization, such as prescriptivity, universality, and impartiality; its primary principle and aim is justice. The second type, most commonly associated with Aristotle (1911/1998), and termed teleological or eudaemonistic, is concerned with evaluations of human needs, capacities, and intentions in terms of a defined end, such as the good life, or flourishing. Generally, teleological evaluations are ordered by hierarchies of the subjective importance of different goods.

Rights integrate universal principles of justice with what are, essentially, eudaemonistic taxonomies, such as can be found in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). For example, the right to education recognizes the universal entitlement to develop psychological capacities for knowledge and reasoning. Rights, like eudaemonistic evaluations, are ranked in order of subjective importance, as well as having justice components. The Heinz dilemma is a classic example of a hierarchical judgment in which the right to live (should) outweigh the right to property.

Kant was largely concerned with developing formalistic principles for moral philosophy; but developmental psychology is concerned with situated conceptions. It was of great benefit to
incorporate eudaemonistic concerns into an epistemology to ground structural moral principles which would otherwise be sterile, lacking in context, and incomplete in their capacities to reflect psychological phenomena. To this end, Kohlberg, while strongly influenced by Kant, also referred to Rawls (1971) and Raphael (1955) whose work combined both deontic and eudaemonistic aspects.

The principle of justice adds the specification that treatment of humans as “ends in themselves” is to be defined in terms of rights or claims. This implies that duties are correlative to rights (Raphael, 1955, p. 49), a notion that in turn implies that obligations are always to specific individuals or people. (Kohlberg 1971/1981, p. 166)

Rights play a necessary role in the grounding of philosophical moral principles into individual perspectives, which contribute towards making it possible to translate abstract principles into psychological empirical concepts in the moral domain. Towards this end, Kohlberg saw the significance of rights as stable, integrative concepts that combined formal elements of justice – reciprocity, universality, and prescriptivity – with elements of eudaemonism, grounding these in contractual obligations between individuals. Although Kohlberg saw the role of justice as the primary overarching principle of morality, he recognized the importance of rights and also that of welfare, “The contents of moral concerns is always welfare,” (p. 175), delineating the content of the moral domain to include these three concepts, and establishing for psychological constructivism the definition of morality as including conceptions of justice, welfare, and rights.

Kohlberg proposed his moral stage sequence to be isomorphic with Piaget’s developmental stages of cognitive development. The highest stage of this sequence, formal operational reasoning, entailed capacities for abstract logical reasoning that mapped onto capacities for moral judgment: for example, logical operations of reversibility parallel moral judgments involving justice. Also, higher stages involved higher levels of differentiation of the moral from the non-moral, such as distinguishing morality from convention. Kohlberg held that cognitive abilities were necessary but not sufficient for moral reasoning at the same stage, as values such as justice and benevolence were also implicated. Although conceptions such as justice, rights, and the value of life were present at lower levels of development, they exhibited characteristics such as inadequacies of differentiation typical of that stage, such as, in the following example, his predictions of characteristics of conventional and postconventional thinking about rights:

[Conventional]

Stage 4. Having rights means having (1) categorical general freedoms and expectations that all members of society have, and (2) rights awarded to particular roles by society. General rights usually take primacy over role rights. (Having a right is differentiated from a particular legitimate expectation.)

Obligations are responsibilities; that is, welfare states of others or of society for
which one is accountable. These responsibilities arise through (1) being a member of society and (2) voluntarily entering into roles that entail these responsibilities.

[Post-conventional]

Stage 5. Having rights entails an awareness of human or natural rights or liberties that are prior to society and that society is to protect. It is usually thought by Stage 5 that freedoms should be limited by society and law only when they are incompatible with the like freedoms of others. (Natural rights are differentiated from societally awarded rights.)

Obligations are what one has contracted to fulfill in order to have one’s own rights respected and protected. These obligations are defined in terms of a rational concern for the welfare of others...

Stage 6. Having rights means that there are universal rights of just treatment that go beyond liberties and that represent universalizable claims of one individual on another.

Obligations are correlative to any right or just claim by an individual that gives rise to a corresponding duty for another individual (p. 216).

In Stage 4, in which morality and convention remain undifferentiated, rights are determined by society. They may be distributed equally or on a hierarchical basis, if, in the latter case, society will benefit. It is not until the postconventional stage that criteria of justice and respect for the individual must apply. Typically, Stage 4 reasoning was attained in adolescence, but Stages 5 and 6 were used only by only some adolescents and adults. Therefore, according to Kohlberg, a full ability to conceive or even to understand human rights was contingent on levels of cognitive abilities unavailable in late adolescence, and then utilized only by a minority. The constraints on autonomous moral thinking according to Kohlberg’s stage theory appeared far more stringent than those of Piaget, who held that moral autonomy was normative from adolescence onwards. This finding had implications not only for age-related development but also for cross-cultural comparisons of moral development.

Kohlberg reviewed philosophical assumptions of cross-cultural views on morality held by social scientists at the time and contended that cultural relativism was based on confusion between a genuine need for tolerance of cultural variations in morality and the conclusion that these variations were all equally valid and that there was no basis for a universal morality, contradicting his own thesis. In defense, he studied populations in Asia and Mexico and produced evidence of commonalities with American and European populations in the content and developmental sequences of moral reasoning. “Our studies suggest that the same basic ways of moral valuing are found in every culture and develop in the same order” (p. 123). However, he did find differences in rates of developmental progress and an absence of postconventional thinking in non-Western rural populations.

While Kohlberg held that extraordinary individuals in any culture or historical era could
attain postconventional thinking, his findings would predict the unlikelihood of finding a priori or principled universal conceptions of rights in uneducated or poorly educated adults in non-Western populations. He would predict that the probability of finding human rights conceptions in children and adolescents in these populations would be smaller still, because their development, due to a comparative lack of cognitive stimulation in village life, tended to be slower than that of Western children in urban environments.

**Epistemological and methodological revisions following Kohlberg**

Fundamental to the position taken in this paper are Kohlberg’s positions on epistemology for the social sciences; his linking of moral psychology with moral philosophy; his concomitant use of qualitative and quantitative analysis; and his positioning of the study of morality on the basis of individual reason and affective evaluations such as sympathy, rather than behavior, culture, or biology (Turiel, 2008b). However, evidence suggested certain difficulties with aspects of moral stage theory. In addition to the above-mentioned tensions arising from the cultural implications of Kohlberg’s theory, his methodology, involving the analysis of responses to complex moral scenarios, was highly sensitive to cognitive abilities that were, in turn, dependent on educational exposure. The small proportion of Stage 5 and Stage 6 respondents emerging from empirical research implied that only an elite could be truly morally autonomous.

Stage theory was based on the Kantian assumption that universal morality was derived from abstract processes. Despite eudaemonistic influences from Rawls and Dewey, the broad structure of Kohlberg’s stages was determined by its endpoint in principled thinking and the implication that growth logically proceeds from the egocentricity of infancy through enlarging social perspectives towards a mature position of impartiality.

As neat as this structural model was, empirical data raised questions about stage theory, and about the strict application of assessing moral development on the basis of capacities for abstract reasoning about morality. The alternative was to explore capacities for evaluations of everyday social interactions involving the use of moral principles in making judgments. In examples of research on conceptions of rights, Melton (1980) found that an understanding of rights was held by a majority of children by the third grade, while Torney-Purta (1982) and Ruck, Keating, Abramovitch and Koegl (1998) confirmed and qualified these results, finding evidence for conceptions in a majority of ten-year-olds of rights as universal entitlements. These researchers found evidence for conceptions of rights at an earlier age than predicted by stage and global development theories as well as other age-related changes in interpretations of social knowledge. Ruck et al. (1998) stated, “the focusing only on a global trend towards more abstract representation of rights may obscure important features of young people’s thinking”.

Given these tensions, the assumptions that 1) the developmental progression of morality was global and proceeded from non-moral origins; that 2) the endpoint of moral development was the construct of abstract moral principles reflecting Kantian methodology; and that 3) social and moral development presupposed increases in capacities for abstract thought, all fell into question.

Also, in fulfilling his goal of defining and clarifying his epistemological perspective, Kohlberg aligned his work with the tradition of Western liberal philosophy, at the same time
laying claims to the universal applicability of his psychological theory. His claims for the universality of a theory based on a single political tradition inevitably aroused controversy and resistance, particularly following his results with non-Western populations which, however he qualified them, implied the existence of a hierarchy in which European and American cultures excelled.

The following sections address these problems. First, a scholar of rights, Gewirth, provides an epistemological basis for the study of rights. His dialectical argument for the justification of human rights achieves several purposes: it is based on the perspective of the individual, rather than arguments for an abstract principle, shifting to a phenomenal or subject-based perspective that is in line with that of constructivist psychology. It provides a substantial definition of the construction of rights, their function and purpose. I propose also that it provides an epistemological model that is relatively free from culturally bound assumptions.

Next, social domain theory provides further epistemological, theoretical and empirical bases for the study of social and moral development. This theory is based on the premise of existence of multiple interrelated domains of social thought, providing an alternative to the stage theories proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg. Social domain researchers have been active in the study of cultural variations in social development, providing empirical evidence for the sources of commonalities and differences in development and constructing an alternative approach to hierarchical models of cultural differences.

Agency as the source of human rights conceptions

A group of philosophers within the liberal tradition finds moral justifications, such as those for justice and rights, through considerations of individual perspectives; this is in contrast with arguing for principles or teleological ends, as with Kant and Aristotle. One of these is Gewirth (1982) in his philosophical analysis of human rights and their justification; his method is grounded in a perspective on the importance of agency, or capacities for freely determined action. His starting point in individual phenomenology, grounded in a theoretical model of human interaction, avoids problems of abstraction, while exhibiting many structural parallels with constructivist psychology. Gewirth states, in his arguments for rights: “I shall be considering actions as they are viewed and referred to by the agent himself” (p. 116). For this reason, Gewirth’s perspective presents as a particularly good candidate for a psychological epistemology. His dialectical argument leads from the prudential good of agency for an individual to the moral justification of human rights as a system of universal entitlements and duties that serve to protect the means for agency to each and every individual.

Although human rights are often termed ‘natural rights’, referring to the sense in which they originate – somehow – in human nature, Gewirth saw the need for proof: “it does not seem true to say that persons are born having rights in the sense in which they are born having legs. At least their having legs is empirically confirmable, but this is not the case with their having rights.” (p. 43). Constructing this proof captures a variation of the ‘is-to-ought’ problem. The intuitive sense that human rights are irrevocable, if not inviolable, implies that they are an ‘ought’ that ‘is’; that this is a form of morality that is indissociable from an aspect of humanity that is universal, basic, and essential.
Gewirth defined rights as “an individual’s interest that ought to be respected and protected,” (Gewirth, 1996, p. 9); as obligatory, prescriptive, and egalitarian. He qualifies those objects they need to protect:

The importance of human rights stems from ... the great value of the objects or interests that need to be protected: interests ranging from life, physical integrity, and economic security to self-esteem and education. (p. 9)

Gewirth based his argument on the central importance of agency to the individual. Agency consists of those capacities and resources, viewed from the center of self-awareness, or the Jamesian ‘I’, that are necessary to attain well-being and freedom, where the latter is defined as the ability to control and determine one’s actions, in the light of relevant knowledge, towards a desired purpose.

Because actions are conative and value-pursuing, they commit the agent to advocate or endorse for himself the rights of freedom and basic well-being which are the proximate necessary prerequisites of all his acting; hence, he makes judgments which fulfill the condition of prescriptiveness. Because the agent must advocate these rights for general reasons stemming from his simply being a prospective purposive agent, his advocacy must logically be extended to all other persons; hence, his judgments fulfill the conditions of being moral and egalitarian (p. 127).

The awareness of agency is an intrinsically evaluative phenomenon. It implies rational choice: that, by choosing how to act, people reason about and assign value to what they pursue:

This conception of worth constitutes a valuing on the part of the agent; he regards the object of his action as having at least sufficient value to merit his acting to attain it...These criteria of value need not be moral or even hedonic; they run the full range of the purposes for which the agent acts (p. 117).

As action is essential to being human, then agency becomes prescriptive – we think that we must have those necessary goods for action. If we advocate agency for ourselves, we must admit that others will also logically do so. Gewirth argues that when this prescriptiveness is seen to logically pertain to all other agents, the agency that is a prudential ‘must’ in the case of a single person becomes a moral ‘must’ extended to all others in a just system of reciprocal entitlements and duties. Gewirth claims that, with this argument, he has been successful in bridging the gap between is and ought.

Gewirth notes that the benefits of agency can be recognized through direct experience: “the entailments in question are so direct that awareness of them can safely be attributed to any person who is sufficiently rational to be able to control his behavior by his unforced choice with a view to achieving his purposes.” (1981, p. 116). From the psychological literature, it can be seen that agency assumes a positive value from infancy, in the early experiments and play of very young children (Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1951, 1954, 1981). If a model of moral development
were based on the integration of the recognition of agency with basic conceptions of distributive justice, it might predict that these moral conceptions would arise at an earlier age than the norms proposed by Kohlberg (1981), which were based on principled abstractions developed in late adolescence.

Lastly, Gewirth’s theory, in the context of the controversy about cultural universalism or relativism, stands alone. It is not attached to a larger Western theory such as eudaemonism. In its use of dialectics, it must acknowledge the technical philosophical developments of Hegel and Marx; but also it is rooted in the liberal tradition. The concept of agency has strong claims for universality; it is self-evident that people desire to act. It is not in itself expressing any fixed principle. Therefore a theory based on agency has some grounds for a claim of cultural impartiality.

Domain theory: Introduction

Social domain theory, developed by Turiel and his colleagues, addressed and resolved many fundamental tensions of stage theory. It originated in the results of a study showing that, rather than a progression from the conventional to the moral in adolescence, there existed, in this age group, separate elements of conventional and moral thinking.

The [initial] research was aimed at discerning the differences and similarities in moral judgments and conceptions of the conventions of social systems. It quickly became apparent that moral reasoning and concepts of social organization constituted two fundamental and separable aspects of children’s understanding of the social world (Turiel, 1983, vii).

Subsequent research demonstrated the existence of these independent domains of thought in young children (Smetana, 1981), extended the recognition of domains to include others, notably, the personal (Nucci, 1981) and the prudential (Tisak & Turiel, 1984); established the bases by which domain distinctions are made (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 1980; Weston & Turiel, 1980; Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983), found processes of judgment involving the coordinations between domains (Killen, 1985), and established the utility of social domain theory for research in different cultures (Hollos, Leis, & Turiel, 1986; Neff, 2001; Conry-Murray, 2006).

Social domains are distinguished by their unique content and by related sets of evaluative rules. The content of the moral domain is limited to conceptions of welfare, justice and rights, which are seen to have intrinsic consequences; while the conventional domain contains norms that are context-specific and enable social coordinations, and are judged to be arbitrary. The personal domain includes conceptions that define individuality, including preferences such as dress, leisure activities, companions, choice of occupation and religion; and the prudential domain includes conceptions about protecting individual well-being and safety.

The content of each domain is involved in the formation of evaluative criteria. All of the above social domains are prescriptive, that is, they entail evaluative obligations, ‘shoulds’, ‘oughts’, or ‘musts’. Moral conceptions are judged to also have the following characteristics: impersonality (not a personal decision), universality (everywhere, in all contexts), and rule non-
contingency, that is, that moral conceptions are grounded by the requirements of intrinsic needs and are not dependent on social regulations.

The criteria specific to rights are similar: they are prescriptive; they are applicable to every agent or person, discounting characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, or gender, this property is termed generalizability. Rule non-contingency has a particular application in respect of the right to literacy and the government. The moral authority of a human right subordinates the law (Gewirth, 1982, p. 238). It obliges the government to comply with its requirements by providing opportunities for those who cannot learn without aid; and a law violating a right is invalid because of the a priori authority of the latter. In other words, the relationship of morality and the law make it permissible, without a contradicting argument, for the citizens of that country to disregard a law violating a human right. This will be referred to as law subordination.

Conventions, following rule criteria based on arbitrary regulations, are seen as alterable according to social context (e.g. appropriate dress for a wedding or the beach), relative to social group (applies to Guatemalan society, but not the Inuit), and subject to regulation and social consensus (Turiel, 1983, p. 52). Personal conceptions are seen as contingent on personal desire and lack of consequence to others, and therefore outside rule jurisdictions (p. 58); prudential judgments refer to the significance of a personal harm or benefit. There is a tendency for moral criteria to be judged as more important than conventional rules, and moral transgressions, more serious than conventional ones.

Whereas Piaget and Kohlberg both viewed the young child as unable to differentiate the moral from non-moral (either authority or fear of punishment), Turiel and his colleagues found that young children from the age of four or five expressed moral judgments, distinguished them from conventions, made judgments of independent choice belonging to the personal domain, and expressed prudential concerns (Smetana, 1981; Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983; Nucci, 1981; Tisak & Turiel, 1984). Evidence showed that social development was not a process of differentiation, but rather, independent development within each distinct domain and the ability to make integrated judgments involving multiple domains.

A further distinction between the global theories of Piaget and Kohlberg and social domain theory is that, in global progression, autonomy is constrained, not only by the capacities of a certain stage, but the characteristics of that stage: for example, an individual at Stage 4 will generally give conventional justifications for their reasoning. Social domain research has produced evidence that judgments about a given social situation are made through the use of coordinations of concepts, where this term refers to “processes by which individuals focus on and process different considerations” (Killen, 1986). For example, a conflict about helping a hurt individual met by chance in the street may involve the moral judgment that it is necessary to give aid to someone who is helpless and in distress, and the conventional judgment that it is also necessary to arrive on time at the formal dinner beginning in eight minutes’ time. It can be seen from this example that either moral or conventional concerns may prevail, depending on, for example, how badly the person is hurt. These coordinating processes have been characterized as flexible (Turiel & Perkins, 2004); concepts from any social domain may be considered; and there is no fixed hierarchical order. Although moral concepts are often assigned a high importance in coordinations, personal, prudential, or conventional considerations may predominate in the final judgment.
The implications of the coordination of independent domains pertain directly to questions of autonomy, both in developmental terms, in making judgments, and in the autonomy of the individual in society (Turiel, 2008c). First, an individual may use personal, conventional, or moral considerations from early childhood: this contrasts with the premise that thinking tends to be constrained by developmental stage. Second, in any given situation, an outcome is not predetermined by domain; as seen in the example above, small variations can alter judgments and the value given to a conventional or moral element. Third, establishing the moral domain as autonomous, and having its origins in individual evaluations of the intrinsic consequences of social interactions, implies that it is normative, and not exceptional, for individuals to have a source of judgments distinct from societal conventions; in this matter, social domain theory holds a position opposed to that of Durkheim (1925/1961, p. 8) and also from Kohlberg’s theory of “mild cultural evolutionism” (1971/1981, p. 26).

**Domain theory: Commonalities and differences between cultures**

There are further implications for the study of cultures using social domain theory stemming from evidence for the autonomy of the moral domain as distinct from the conventional, and the variations in judgment stemming from coordinations of culturally established conventions with concepts from other domains.

In a variety of social science perspectives, and from a variety of angles, the autonomy of the individual in non-Western societies has been seen as relative to cultural mores about the self, using arguments often reminiscent of Durkheim. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1934) characterized social development in her view of the child as “the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities” (p. 3). Markus and Kitayama (1991) broadly characterized construals of the self as dependent on cultural variations; in Western cultures, the typical ‘self’ was autonomous, and self-contained, and highly individuated; the Asian ‘self’ was motivated by interdependence and saw itself as closely resembling others and lacking in individuality. The Western ‘self’ was described as ‘bounded’, while the Asian was described as ‘unbounded’: “An interdependent self cannot be properly characterized as a bounded whole, for it changes structure with the nature of the particular social context. Within each particular social situation, the self can be differently instantiated” (p. 227). The self that was held to be universal to all cultures was a physical sense of self, and the awareness of internal phenomena such as feelings and dreams; otherwise, considerable cultural variation was possible.

Spiro (1993) responded with arguments from psychologists such as Erikson and James for the essential function of the “I” as the center of psychological cohesion and free will (p. 111). He also presented a range of evidence from Burman Buddhists who, contrary to Theravadan doctrine, “experience a subjective sense of the self...and, perhaps more important, they find the doctrine of a selfless person not congenial to their soteriological aspirations.” (p. 119) and Japanese villagers who report, “despite a surface harmony, much tension, especially rivalry and envy.”(p. 135) Further, fieldwork with Ojibwa Amerindians suggested that, in a society where persons purportedly did not experience anger, psychic compensation occurred through the expression of anger in dreams (p. 130). Spiro’s analysis suggested that there was evidence in all
these cultures for the existence of an intrapsychic self that maintained autonomy; but that there was considerable cultural variation in the presentation of a social self and degrees of social interdependence.

While Markus and Kitayama hold that the self is malleable and assumes a lesser role in an interdependent society, Spiro presents evidence that the self is not infinitely adaptable to cultural mores, and must find compensatory mechanisms if its expression is overly suppressed. Further, Markus and Kitayama’s proposed dichotomy between independent and interdependent seems to imply an antagonistic relationship in which one pole dominates at the expense of the other; Spiro finds this view spurious. Taking support from identity psychologists such as Erikson, James, and G.H. Mead, he argues that human independence can only thrive in the context of positive interdependent relationships.

These arguments for cultural variations in the self find parallels in perceptions of cultural variations in the nature of rights; a variety of possibilities have been proposed. One possibility is that an entire society could be construed as being rights-based or community-based. For example, it could be expected that in a communal society, civil liberties such as freedom of speech would not hold much meaning for a people who valued social harmony above personal freedoms. Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1987), developing a theory of moral variation in cultures through a radical reform of Kohlberg’s moral psychology, agreed with Kohlberg’s views on universal moral principles of natural law, harm, and the abstract principle of justice, but demurred on the universality of rights and concepts of the individual. Shweder et al. defined Kohlberg’s individual as “an autonomous entity prior to or outside of the social arrangements in which he or she is found, hypothetically stripped of any distinguishing social identity” (p. 148). On the basis of excluding rights as a mandatory feature of different cultural moral systems, they developed a system of three types of morality at the societal level: rights-based, duty-based, and goal-based. Their research in Oriya, India, provided evidence for a duty-based morality based primarily on social convention in a stratified system; people’s entitlements were dependent on whether they were male or female, Brahman or Untouchable. In other words, Shweder proposed that some aspects of human rights, such as gender equality, were not applicable in this alternative system of morality, although others, such as concern for welfare, were.

Alternatively, entitlements could attach to communal interests as well as to the individual. In particular, it has been proposed that the family in the African context has a stature and entitlements that is particular to this region. For example, the African (Banjul) Charter of Human and People’s Rights (Organization of African Unity, 1981), Article 18, which South Africa has signed and ratified, states that the family is “the natural unit and basis of society . . . The State shall have the duty to assist the family, which is the custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community”. The African family is here accorded a status of a unit with rights-like claims (p. 123).

It could also be reasonably argued that, for example, in developing countries it is critical to promote literacy in the population for the sake of the national economy; this justification, although it is based on the benefits to society, does hold an indirect association with human rights. Advocates for human rights in an African context have been known to call for a shift of emphasis of the right to economic development over those rights involving civil liberties, asserting that the latter, in conditions of poverty, are of limited benefit (Appiagyei-Atua, 2005),
and maintaining that the communal good is a precondition to the welfare of its weakest members, the children of a family and the poor of a nation.

In a variation paralleling the ideal of the interdependency of healthy individuals with their society (Spiro, 1993), The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes an integrated view of the welfare of the child and its family; a family is entitled to protection that is essential to a child’s normative development, and a healthy family is the right of the child:

Convinced that the family... should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,
Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 1990, Preamble)

In a society in which the rights of the individual are upheld, independent and interdependent interests are not necessarily antagonistic, but should complement one another, and there is no real dichotomy between individual and family or community interests. However, it cannot be assumed that this ideal situation applies. The ‘common good’, benefits to the family, village, or nation, may not necessarily return to the individual. It is possible that the benefits to a family may be at the expense of the child’s ends; and the literate citizen is not necessarily the beneficiary from his gain in skills. Gewirth writes of ‘common good’ policies, including South African apartheid,

If... the intended meaning of ‘common good’ is collective, then this may involve a conception of the ‘good’ that many of the community do not share; and institutional enforcement of that common good may involve oppressive coercion of at least those members. (Gewirth, 1996).

Here the elements of power, hierarchy, and inequitable distribution of rights to different groups in a community become apparent. It is often assumed by external observers that most individuals in the society subscribe to culturally transmitted values of duty; that hierarchies such as the caste system in India and gender-based roles, in which women are subordinate with overwhelming frequency, are acceptable; and that conceptions of personal entitlements such as rights are weak or absent. Social scientists from several disciplines have suggested that, in reality, in societies viewed as ‘interdependent’, there is often an asymmetrical distribution of rights and duties in which entitlements pertain to the dominant members of the society, and the duty-based moralities thought to be intrinsic to these societies are, in truth, mainly imposed upon its subordinates (Abu Lughod, 1993; Nussbaum, 1999; Turiel, 2002, 2005). Evidence considered in the following section suggests that conceptions of autonomy are ubiquitous but are, in some cases, subordinated to other concerns, and often, because of fear of punitive consequences, are left unexpressed (Ackerley, 2000): for example, a girl may believe it unfair that her brother is allowed to go to school and not she, but may fear punishment if she defies her parents’ decision.
Prior research on rights in a traditional, hierarchical society, a Druze Arab community in Israel, revealed that adolescents and adults in that group understood and endorsed rights in the abstract (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). However, in hypothetical conflict situations involving the objections of male authority figures (husbands, fathers) to rights affirmations by other family members (wives, children), these rights were not always upheld. The gender and family position of hypothetical agents were significant in the outcome of conflicts concerning rights to reproduction, free speech, and religion. The implications of this research are that, although certain characteristics, such as hierarchical organization, typified this particular historic setting, conceptions of rights were found to co-exist with them. However, rights were often subordinated in decision-making processes.

In a study of family decision-making processes in India, it was found that, despite cultural emphases of the obligations of wives towards husbands, males and females endorsed the freedom of women to participate in activities outside the home – but not as often as they did the freedom of men. For both sexes, personal autonomy was used as a justification (Neff, 2001). Another study involving traditional families in Benin, West Africa (Conry-Murray, 2006) found that rights conceptions in this population were often subordinated to prudential concerns about substantial punishment of subordinate family members if a rule were to be disobeyed.

The findings on processes of coordinations in social judgments are of particular significance in hierarchically based societies. Evidence for the existence of an autonomous moral domain contradicts concepts about societies with homogeneous social thinking and harmonious social life. It has been found that moral conceptions such as rights are found in these traditional societies, and that the apparent differences between societies are explained to a significant degree by differences in the way that moral and conventional are coordinated in conflict situations.

**Domain theory: Research on rights**

Much of the new evidence presented by domain theory research emerged through methodological advances. In the constructivist tradition, the clinical interview was designed to explore the reasoning of the child. While Piaget’s research in *Moral Judgment of the Child* generally used stories using familiar stimuli, Kohlberg’s interviews were based on medieval morality tales and involved complex moral dilemmas whose interpretation was sometimes problematic. In social domain theory, the standard methodology used questions involving prototypical moral problems – evaluating a single concept or domain criteria – or simple conflicts involving two concepts. This methodology minimized the need for complex logical analyses and production difficulties, allowing researchers to directly appraise social concepts even in very young children.

In his research on rights, Helwig (1995, 1997, 1998) adapted the clinical interview method pioneered by Piaget (1932/65), who used a system of questions and probes about moral dilemmas in social situations familiar to children. His interview designs retain these features and the use of age-appropriate situations and language. For example, suppose that an abstract
question on an aspect of the right to free speech covers the criteria of generalizability: a right must apply to everyone, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, etc. (Dworkin, 1977). An age-appropriate version of this question was, “Should people be allowed to say what they think, in all countries?” (Helwig, 1998). Another study investigating conceptions in different contexts used evaluations of discussions of rock music (Helwig, 1997). The methodological emphasis was on simplicity and familiarity of situations that would minimize comprehension problems.

Helwig addressed previous assumptions used in studies on rights based on Kohlberg’s principles (Gallatin, 1985) and in surveys on attitudes about rights, that conceptions of rights, in order to be valid, must be produced as abstract principles. He extended domain theory principles to the study of rights to hypothesize that ‘failures’ to maintain rights in all situations could be better construed as instances of social conflicts in which the right was judged less salient than another social concern. His study design incorporated this interpretation by including two sections, one on abstract or prototypical assessments, and the other, on assessments of the right in conflict situations. This twofold approach also mapped onto other domain theory studies.

Using these principles, Helwig carried out several studies on rights and civil liberties in North American children, adolescents and young adults (1995, 1997, 1998). The first study investigated conceptions of free speech and religion using forty-eight participants in three age groups, 12–13, 16–17, and 19–20 years of age. Prototypical assessments examined their conceptions of these civil liberties in the general, whether they generalized to other cultures, and whether they were held against legal authorities in the U.S. and other countries. Conflict assessments examined moral dilemmas involving the right in conflict with physical or psychological harm or a fairness issue. One example of a judgment involving the conflict between freedom of religion and physical harm entailed an initiation ceremony in which newcomers to a religious group underwent a ritual beating with wooden sticks.

The results of this study showed that over ninety-four percent of all participants endorsed freedoms of speech and religion in the general, as generalizable, and as rule non-contingent. Between fifty and one hundred percent of participants, contingent on age group, endorsed violating a law restricting these freedoms. Conflict situation assessments showed a range of endorsements of 18% to 100%. Age-related patterns of endorsement were contingent on the type of freedom and the type of harm or injustice involved. The justifications used to support endorsements included autonomy, psychological and communicative functions, social utility, and democratic processes.

Subsequently Helwig (1997) examined differences in endorsement of freedom of speech and religion by context (family, school, or society) and whether the agent is a child or an adult. Two hundred and forty participants in four groups from six to twenty-three years old assessed prohibitions of freedom of speech – the discussion of rock music by an authority who dislikes it – and freedom of religion – engaging in a particular religious ritual. Again, these prohibitions were assessed in the general, as generalizable, and as rule non-contingent; and assessments of violation of the prohibitive rule were also posed. Results showed that, in every condition, a majority of participants endorsed both freedoms as held against authorities. The youngest participants, 1st and 3rd graders, endorsed rights less frequently, although still more than half the time. Prohibitions of children’s freedom of speech and religion were judged more favorably than the prohibition of adults. Justifications referring to authority tended to decrease with age, and
those referring to agent properties, that is, the capacity for informed choice, tended to increase with age. One particular significance of this study is evidence for basic conceptions of rights held by children as young as six years of age.

Another study (Helwig, 1998) examined conceptions of the freedom of speech as part of a study on children's judgments of different systems of government. Forty-eight children between six and eleven years of age assessed the freedom of speech, its properties of generalizability, rule non-correlativity, and violations of rules prohibiting the freedom. Results for this study showed that a majority of children endorsed the freedom of speech and its properties at all ages, but that minorities of the two youngest age groups endorsed rule violations. Again, basic conceptions of rights were held by a majority of six-year-olds, including properties of generalizability and rule non-correlativity. The results of these three domain theory research studies provided strong evidence for conceptions of rights held at an earlier age than reported in any prior study of moral development.

Helwig noted that conceptions of the personal domain also emerge at around six or seven years of age, and proposed, with Turiel and Nucci, that these personal conceptions may support the development of conceptions of rights in the moral domain by providing psychological data on the necessity of a bounded sphere of particular personal freedoms (Helwig, Turiel, & Nucci, 1996). Nucci (2005) defended this premise with further research: he provided evidence from United States, Brazil, Asia, and India for cross-cultural evidence of conceptions of autonomy, sometimes invoked to justify resistance in conflicts within the family involving the use of authority by a parent or spouse. It was also acknowledged by parent participants in all of these studies that increasing autonomy with age was a necessary part of development, although there was a tendency for middle- and upper-class parents to allow their children autonomy at an earlier age, and for working-class parents to cite prudential concerns as a reason for resisting their children’s desires for freedom. However the conclusion was that there was evidence for similar conceptions of the personal domain and the need for autonomy for healthy psychological development across settings and classes.

Nucci also extended this line of thought into the political and historical dimension:

It is the historically situated generation of individual claims to freedom reflecting ahistorical basic psychological needs that both stimulates moral discourse and provides the potential critique of the status quo. (Nucci, 2005, p. 377).

This situated aspect of rights is particularly relevant to this study in light of the recent political changes of the post-apartheid era and its likely impact on the psychological conceptions of rights of young people in the first generation of literacy. Nucci suggests that conceptions of personal autonomy within the social context provide precedents for rights conceptions; autonomy and agency are not, however, synonymous; some forms of autonomy do not meet the criteria of essentialness for human rights, and agency includes physical, economic, intellectual and social capabilities on which autonomy depends. The relationship between autonomy and agency can be described in terms of intersection and interaction; and different rights will tap various aspects of agency, with varying implications.
Summary and Predictions

In grounding my study of human rights in a non-Western society I have chosen the right to literacy, in light of empirical evidence showing the significance of literacy to the poor in the developing world and a theoretical argument demonstrating the association of literacy with core elements of agency, abilities for self-determination that are the object of human rights. I have presented a number of perspectives on moral development to develop the rationales for predictions: that morality develops autonomously from social rules such as conventions; that the process of making social judgments can involve the coordination of moral concepts with social concepts from other domains, including conventions and prudential considerations; and that various aspects of agency, that are phenomenally direct, form fundamental justifications for rights.

Following this introduction, my first prediction was that children and adolescents in this particular non-Western setting, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, will maintain conceptions of the right to literacy in accordance with human rights conceptions. In order to investigate this prediction, I will assess understandings of the right to literacy in the abstract, examining the several key properties which define it.

Next, I will pose a number of assessments in which the right to literacy conflicts with other social values. Prior research has shown that, in Western populations, judgments of rights are not absolute. For example, research in the U.S. has shown that, while the right to free speech is endorsed by most in the abstract, people may not endorse the right to free speech if it is likely to incite violence against minorities (Helwig, 1991). In this example of a conflict situation, the right to free speech is coordinated with moral concerns about physical harm to others and is subordinated to the latter. Following this evidence of coordinations found in North American populations, predictions are made for coordinations in a society characterized as hierarchical: The second prediction for this study is that, in conflict assessments, the right to literacy may sometimes be subordinated to traditional values, such as gendered role differences, or to economic priorities, so that the outcomes of these coordinations will be less positive and more heterogeneous than those of abstract evaluations. These outcomes will contribute to an understanding of the place of the right to literacy in this population: how strongly it is valued, and why. Differences in coordinations, contingent upon a number of different environmental and social factors, may help to explain one way in which cultural variations in social judgments manifest.

The third prediction for this study, based on prior studies by Helwig (1995, 1997) and Ruck, Abramovitch and Keating (1998) is that age-related differences will be tied to childrens’ understandings of the attributes of the agent and the right to literacy itself, not to stage-related progressions, and to increasing abilities to coordinate judgments.
Setting

Defining the traditional and the non-Western

Before describing the Zulu children and adolescents participating in this study, including their political and social history, social life, and economics, I discuss the use of the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-Western’ and set some bounds for these terms; their use in a study that questions the validity of the dichotomy between Western and non-Western confers an obligation to qualify and defend the application of these terms to a particular group. These terms and others such as ‘collectivistic’ and ‘native’ have meanings and implications that overlap by association as descriptions of ‘other’, despite their distinct differences. While contesting many of these underlying assumptions, I suggest that the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-Western’ can have valid meaning in a constructivist perspective, as well as in the terms of the hypothetical dichotomy posed by Shweder et al. and Markus and Kitayama. Without hoping to make more than a preliminary exploration of a highly complex issue, I address psychological, social, political and historic aspects of the problem.

A non-Western population is said to maintain a collectivistic perspective, in which the common good is the primary goal of the society and its members, while Western populations have an individualistic outlook (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987). Markus and Kitayama propose distinct psychological conceptions of the self: bounded, or perceived as separate and distinct from others, in Western societies; and unbounded, with no clear individuation, and inclusive of others, in non-Western ones.

In contrast, Turiel (1998, 2002, 2005), in his analyses of the self in relation to culture, finds agreement with Spiro, Erikson and James in proposing a psychological model of clear distinctions between self and other in non-Western as well as Western cultures. In opposition to theories of shaping by communalistic values in non-Western cultures, he posits that non-Western peoples, like Western ones, assume an evaluative, interactive stance to cultural events. Differences within cultures stimulate psychological disequilibrium, multifaceted evaluations of relationships, and judgments with which people justify willing or unwilling compliance, subversion, and rebellion. This analysis, if applied to inter- as well as intra-cultural interactions, suggests that, when exposed to novel Western artefacts and values, that ‘natives’ make evaluations in the light of their own knowledge and values and engage in active adaptation, rather than passively accommodating to Western culture.

The contention between these two views is the basis of the main hypothesis of this study. It is assumed that the independence or interdependence of the self in non-Western societies remains to be determined, so that psychological characteristics cannot be used to distinguish a non-Western from a Western group without circularity. Rather, non-psychological criteria, e.g., ethnicity, family and community characteristics and practices, and political history, must be used to define a group’s purported identity. What needs to be established is whether the society, rather than its individuals, can arguably be characterized as collectivistic or group-oriented; and which particular social practices would provide evidence for a communal ethos.

In terms of ethnicity, Markus and Kitayama name ‘White, middle-class men with a Western European ethnic background’ as prototypical Westerners (p.22), while non-Western
societies include Asian and African reference groups. I will assume that these groupings are made in reference to the exposure that children receive to family and community customs and references to common political and ideological heritages, each epitomizing, respectively, independent and interdependent outlooks. Western children would be exposed to a rights-based, constitutional, secular government system and individual-centered child-rearing practices, while the prototypical non-Western child would be socialized in a communal, authority-based political system with duty-oriented family values.

Shweder et al. differentiated Western from non-Western societies using political and philosophical criteria: social relationships in Western societies have contractual bases, while in non-Western societies,

... A differentiated social morphology is part of the natural order of things, and the moral value of a person is dependent on the position occupied with a system of particular interpersonal relationships (Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987, p. 22).

so that non-Western societies often form hierarchical systems in which the moral worth of individuals depends upon their pre-determined role therein.

Historical criteria for defining a society as Western or non-Western are often assumed to be synonymous with ‘tradition’: that is, an Asian or African society is said to retain its ‘non-Westernness’ in the face of progress to the degree that its members adhere to historically based practices. The Oxford English Dictionary includes two relevant definitions: “That which is thus handed down; a statement, belief, or practice transmitted (esp. orally) from generation to generation” and “more vaguely: a long established and generally accepted custom or method of procedure, having almost the force of a law; an immemorial usage”. Most non-Western groups today are said to be ‘Westernized’ as a result of exposure to Western education, technology, and values; presumably, before this exposure, these groups were exemplars of their own culture; and after this exposure, any changes that the group makes are assumed to be ‘Western’. If this is the case, then it must be that very few groups today can still be termed ‘traditional’.

A critique of assumptions about non-Western or ‘native’ cultures and their putative collective response to cultural exposure has been written by the anthropologist Appadurai (1988), who contends that whereas the term ‘native’ once meant only that a person lives where they were born, through anthropological usage, the word has come to convey a sense of limited knowledge and perspective, and has been used largely for distant peoples, and not for ourselves. “Proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue” (p. 37), whereas our own society, we assume, is heterogeneous and diverse. Further, the supposed lack of physical mobility of the native has been associated with a corresponding lack of intellectual and moral freedom. In this state of immobility, the argument goes, exposure to outside values inevitably destroys a cultural authenticity that is based on wholeness.

Appadurai exposes this anthropological perspective of the native as a myth with evidence from contemporary anthropological research showing extensive, complex, and evolving economic, political, and linguistic interactions amongst the most remote nomadic hunting groups, such as the San Bushmen and Inuit, as well as amongst more politically dominant African tribes. In other words, he declares that the ‘native’ of anthropological imaginations
never did exist, even before significant Western contact. While the irrecoverable cultural losses in modern times caused by the destruction of tribal peoples and their displacement from their homelands are beyond dispute, it is erroneous to believe that the status of the ‘native’ prior to Western intrusion was that of isolation and homogeneity; that cultural values thus preserved could be destroyed by mere exposure; or that any adaptations following exposure to Western values must be ‘Westernization’ and not cultural expressions that are agentic adaptations, and often extensions of an existing body of practices. Disruption of cultural practices as a result of, for example, severe economic hardship, the physical separation of families through forced migrant labor practices, and the prohibition of particular practices or traditional means of obtaining livelihoods are of course destructive and must be taken into account in an assessment of cultural continuity and vitality.

Turiel and Appadurai do not argue that the terms traditional or non-Western are meaningless. They assert that societies and individuals so identified do not live in stasis. The implication of this is that peoples are traditional to the extent that they maintain a continuity of distinctive practices, beliefs, livelihoods, and ways of thought; and ‘non-Western’ as holders of practices and beliefs that arose in Africa, Asia, or Amerindian histories: distinct, but not necessary alien to American or European understanding. These are actively held attributes, and not a reflection of their degree of exposure to other cultures.

The Zulus: Their social life and economy; their history of rights and literacy.

The participants of the study were Zulu children and adolescents from rural communities in KwaZulu Natal, a state in the northwest of South Africa. There were two study sites: Stepmore (alt. 4,382 ft) and Lotheni (alt. 5,336 ft.), set in the Drakensberg mountains, approximately nine miles apart by road. Stepmore was a village of about six thousand people, and Lotheni was a community of kraals, or small family hill farms, scattered over twenty square miles of a river valley and its surrounding hills. At this altitude, KwaZulu Natal has a mountain climate similar to the high foothills of California, suitable for cattle grazing.

The inhabitants of these villages were Zulu; their primary language, isiZulu, was their tribal language, and although most people spoke some English, this was their lingua franca, their second language, used for communication with outsiders. KwaZulu Natal was established as the home of the Zulus, the largest clan in the area, in the nineteenth century; prior to that, it was part of the larger Nguni nation from which the Zulus emerged; and after that, as part of South Africa, KwaZulu Natal was the Zulu ‘homeland’ or tribal territory.

For much of the lives of the adults of these villages, black South Africans were subject to both hierarchical tribal rules and apartheid regulations. Zulu traditions drew distinctions between the roles and privileges of males and females, and apartheid maintained strict divisions between Africans, whites and other races.

The traditional Zulu economy was based on subsistence farming of the kraal and cattle herding. A typical kraal consisted of a small plot of land with several rondavels, traditional thatched roundhouses, with a garden and small livestock. While produce from the kraal helped to feed the family, the family’s cattle herd determined their wealth and status. Labor roles were gendered, and male responsibilities were generally lighter: typically, men and boys tended the
cattle, while women and girls cared for the *kraal*, including gathering wood and water, household, cooking and gardening responsibilities, and care of children and farm animals. Wealth, including land and cattle, was inherited along patrilineal lines, and girls, once married, were taken into their husband’s extended household, where they could be one of several wives. Females were therefore subordinate in the household economy, and girls were fungible in the sense that they were items of exchange upon marriage, whereas boys were a permanent part of their native households. So the education of daughters was economically redundant to the family, while the education of sons was an investment.

Over many years of white South African colonization, the traditional economy deteriorated. The cattle-herding way of life no longer provided basic subsistence. Forced migrations and the appropriation of black-owned agricultural lands by white Africans, authorized by the Black Lands Act in 1913, deprived many African tribes of their ancestral grazing lands and forced them onto less fertile areas. As apartheid politics simultaneously restricted black South Africans to inferior places in the national economy, their productive freedoms suffered further. During the years of apartheid, black South Africans were members of ‘independent black homelands’, from which they could not leave to look for work without carrying a passbook. They were not South African citizens and could not vote in national elections. The minority white South Africans controlled the government and passed numerous acts deleterious to black South African economic progress and welfare.

‘Bantu education’, schooling for black South Africans, was intended to meet, and not to exceed, the limited educational needs of manual laborers. The Bantu Education Act prohibited educational equality for black South Africans. Prior to its enactment, those black South Africans who received a formal education did so through Christian mission schools. The Act gave exclusive control of African education to the Department of Native Affairs, banned independent church-run schools, and provided resources far inferior to those available to white students, including buildings, supplies, teacher training and salaries. The ‘Bantu’ curriculum was designed to perpetrate a white South African conception of black culture, and to constrain, as far as possible, black South African exposure to European information, values, and progress. Although the Act promoted literacy on paper, its consequences were to suppress literacy provision to black South African children as well as to deny the equality of Africans to whites (Bantu Education Act, 1953; Hartshorne, 1992).

However, historical evidence suggests that attempts by European South Africans to exclude black South Africans from exposure to Western education and values – to maintain their ‘non-Western’ status – served to stimulate the active expression of conceptions of equality, justice, and rights, including, and especially, rights to literacy and education. Resistance from African men, women and children, from the writing of anti-apartheid literature to the organization of large protest marches, was prevalent in South Africa from the official instigation of apartheid in 1948 until its dismantling with the inauguration of the first African president, Nelson Mandela.

Hendrik Verwoerd, then the Minister of Education, but destined to become the Prime Minister of South Africa known as the ‘architect of apartheid’, declared in 1953, the year the Bantu Education Act was passed, that the ‘Bantu’ must not be subjected to an education that showed him “the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze”; that
“If the native in South Africa today ... is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake” (Kallaway, 1984).

Young Nelson Mandela, raised as a chief’s son in a small South African village, retorted shortly thereafter:

Teach the children that Africans are not one iota inferior to Europeans. Establish your own community schools where the right kind of education will be given to our children. If it becomes dangerous or impossible to have alternative schools, then you must make every home, every shack, every rickety structure a centre of learning for our children. Never surrender to the inhuman and barbaric theories of Verwoerd. (Speech at annual conference of Transvaal Teachers' Association, 1953. Williams, 2001)

With the new Constitutional Bill of Rights, in 1996, apartheid was repealed after a protracted period of struggle, conflict, and negotiation. People of all races were acknowledged as citizens of South Africa, and human rights were ratified for the first time in the country, including education, universal suffrage, free speech and political expression, and freedom of movement within and beyond national borders for all citizens (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

At the time of writing, while the government has made large investments in education for rural black South Africans since the end of apartheid, the educational system remains in great need of improvement. With poorly educated teachers trained in Bantu schools, supply shortages, and a range of educational difficulties including poverty, English second language issues, and communities with rates of AIDS infections averaging 25%, the aim of universal literacy for black South African children has yet to be fulfilled.

Local history: Stepmore and Lotheni villages

Stepmore and Lotheni in KwaZulu Natal, the setting of this study, have both been homogeneous Zulu communities for many generations. This spatial continuity has allowed these communities a large degree of social integrity, with many well-established extended families in the area. However, of the two, Lotheni, further from town, was more rural, with most Lotheni families maintaining traditional hill-farms, while Stepmore was a newer village, with two-room government-built houses as well as thatched huts. Stepmore, an unincorporated village, was likely the result of local forced land appropriation and Zulu relocation: fertile local pasture between the nearest town, Underberg, and Stepmore, belongs to white South African-owned dairies, while the land around Stepmore and Lotheni, while sustaining some cattle grazing, is comparatively poor, mountainous, and dry.

Stepmore and Lotheni were accessible by dirt roads, had no electricity, and were supplied with water by rivers and springs. Both villages had a primary school, serving students from kindergarten through 6th grade, and a high school, serving grades 7 to 12. The schools each had one outside ‘standing-tap’ for water and no heating or electricity, although temperatures in winter sometimes went below freezing. Facilities such as markets, a pharmacy, clothing and hardware stores, and doctors were available in the town of Underberg, twelve miles from Stepmore and
twenty miles from Lotheni.

At the time of the study, the summer of 2008, informal interviews suggested that the disadvantages of the local subsistence economy had become ever more apparent to the Zulus by contrast with the comparatively wealthy white South Africans in the area. Adequate schools, good medical care, and modern transportation all require money, and most Zulus were drawn to these advantages. However, most families remained poor, scraping by with a mix of traditional and paid labor. In the extended family system and in the community, resources were pooled to some extent, and employed adults are expected to help support their parents as well as their children. The families of the area formed networks extending care to vulnerable members, so that, for example, the great majority of children orphaned by AIDS were adopted by grandmothers or aunts.

Economists’ studies of the locale supported these anecdotal impressions. A recent study of KwaZulu household economies revealed that, with unemployment figures in the area at approximately 45%, most families continued to engage in subsistence farming (Mtshali, 2002). They also sought employment in dairies or with timber companies, on game reserves, or as household domestics, typically earning less than 2$US/hour. A study reporting substantial increases in informal sector employment in the last decade, including temporary, domestic, and non-professional work, showed that many Zulus were finding local employment accommodating poor educational levels, but that their incomes were unstable; many shifted from job to job with periods of unemployment (Cichello, Fields, and Leibbrandt, 2003). Many women worked as street vendors selling vegetables or clothing, also maintaining their households; for example, they were still responsible for gathering wood, expending, on average, one to two hours daily on this chore alone. Government aid was provided through old age and disability pensions and child grants.

As in many parts of Africa, the importance of the family was spoken of as a central value. A kraal, a rural household, typically included thatched roundhouses belonging to several generations of family members, who congregated in the kitchen roundhouse to socialize and keep warm in winter. Respect towards older family members was maintained by adherence of conventions ranging from formal greetings to filial obedience and financial support of elders. A study of intergenerational relations (Moller & Sotshongaye, 1998) showed that a majority of interview participants, grandmothers and grandchildren from urban and rural areas, maintained these traditions of respect. Extended families often look after children from other families for a variety of economic reasons; a survey of KwaZulu Natal showed that 22% of children under eighteen were fostered by close relatives, and that, further, these children were mostly treated as full family members and not ‘Cinderellas’ (Cichello, 2003).

Zulus in this area continued ‘ancestor practices’ involving rituals and celebrations, believing that the living must respect their ancestors in order to maintain a reciprocity of care: the ancestors, remaining at home in exchange for rituals expressing care and remembrance of their spirits, would bring good luck to the living and watch over them. Parties celebrating the anniversary of the death of a patriarch involved the slaughter and roasting of a cow and invitations to hundreds of people to eat, socialize, and dance.

Travel between villages and to Underberg was typically on foot or by public mini-bus. Many participants of the study had rarely been to town, because the families typically could not
afford to take a child without a good reason, such as an essential doctor’s visit. Because there were no stores in Stepmore or Lotheni, tourists rarely used the dirt roads, and all of the school staff were Zulu, non-Zulu visitors and personal contact with a non-Zulu person by the village children was very rare.

Prior to 1994, there was one Bantu primary school in Stepmore and no school in Lotheni. A literacy survey of KwaZulu Natal in 1994 found that the ratio of illiterate to literate people in Underberg and its surrounding areas was 1:7; but the literacy rate in ‘deep rural’ areas such as Stepmore and Lotheni was as low as 1:18 (Moulder & Krige, 1994). Further, a literate person was defined as one with seven or more years of education; but many Bantu school leavers were functionally illiterate because of the sub-standard education provided by rural schools. New schools were built to provide universal education to the children of Stepmore and Lotheni in the mid- to late-1990s. Therefore, most of the adult citizens of Stepmore and Lotheni are illiterate. Current students, including the study participants, belong to the first generation to attend school. Teachers reported in informal interviews that they believed 85% or more of the village children and adolescents attend school, and that the main reason some do not is because they belong to households with parents working away from home. As many children are born at home, and often do not receive their birth certificates until they are registered at school, there was no way of determining the exact percentages of school attenders.

These two Zulu villages were racially and linguistically ‘100% African’ and maintained social and family networks that upheld African traditions. These included communal aspects, such as a social milieu of extended families with responsibilities to vulnerable elders and to the family lineage through ‘ancestor practices’, customs such as extended-family child fostering arrangements and proximal family life, and hierarchical aspects such as respect conventions and gendered work roles. In all these ways Stepmore and Lotheni would be characterized as ‘non-Western’ in the terms proposed by Shweder, Markus and Kitayama and accepted for the purposes of this study. The history of the inhabitants of these villages as a ‘Westernized’ culture in political and historical terms, that is, as equals in a democracy with a rights-based constitution, is brief compared to a long and relatively stable history under authoritarian rule, first as Zulus, and then under apartheid. The aim of apartheid to confine Africans to their own culture continues to have repercussions, inasmuch as the poor educational outcomes and English language skills subsequent to the Bantu Education Act continues to limit many Zulus to informal or lower-end jobs and to prohibit their full entry into the national economy. Current economic trends show growth in the informal sector of KwaZulu Natal (Cichello & Fields, 2003); it can be surmised that this growth has allowed locally born workers to stay in close proximity to their households and extended families, contributing to the integrity of their familial networks and enabling them to maintain the fabric of traditional social life.
Methods

Study design

In this study, an interview protocol was adapted from prior studies on rights and civil liberties by Helwig (1991, 1995). As in these North American studies, the interview included an abstract section and a conflict section including conflicts between the right and other moral or social concepts. In this study, assessments involved conflicts relating to traditional values and economic issues typical of the developing world. The use of hypothetical scenarios, like those in the conflict assessments, have been used in a number of studies to assess stable conceptions such as conceptions of rights. Further, studies have shown that judgments made about hypothetical situations correspond to judgments about real life or experienced situations (Turiel, 2008a).

The abstract set included four assessments, including one on the right to literacy in general, and one on each of the following criteria: **generalizability**, that human rights apply regardless of nationality, gender, or ethnicity; **law subordination**, that human rights have moral primacy over national laws, so that, if a law violates a human right, there are moral grounds to disobey it; and **government duty**, that the government is responsible for ensuring that this right is carried out.

Nine assessments, in three categories, posed situations in which the right to literacy is evaluated in conflict with cultural preservation, parental authority, and gender roles. These conflicts sometimes involve poverty: either the child is needed to work to help support the family, or the family cannot afford to send all of its children to school. These scenarios were based on research from Africa, India, and southeast Asia (Adamson, 1986; Sen, 1990, Narajan, 2000).

Participants and setting

Participants were students from rural elementary and secondary schools near the town of Underberg in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. They included 72 children, adolescents, and young adults divided equally into three age groups, 10–11 (M = 11:1, range = 9:10 – 11:1), 15–16 (M = 15:9, range = 14:9 – 16:9), and 18–21 (M = 18:9, range = 18:0 – 21:1), divided evenly by sex. The youngest group were in the fourth and fifth years of elementary school; the two older groups attended the fifth and sixth forms (the last two classes) of secondary school.

All the participants were Zulus ethnically and culturally. Their first language was isiZulu, the dominant African language in KwaZulu Natal. Most participants had some proficiency in English, which was taught in the schools as a second language. Half of the population came from Stepmore, a village of approximately 6,000 people; the other half came from a hill farming community, Lotheni; these two schools provided enough students for the study. All participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through talks given at their schools, and virtually all children of the appropriate age groups chose to take part in the study. For many of the participants this was their first opportunity to speak to a non-Zulu person and to be in an interview situation.

The majority of the students’ families were very poor. Mtshali (2002), in a study of household economics of the region, reported that reliable statistics on income have not been
obtained for rural KwaZulu Natal, and, at any rate, have limited applicability in a mixed rural economy based on subsistence farming, informal trade, limited formal employment opportunities, and government grants. Broadly, high rates of illiteracy, high unemployment, poor infrastructure, and mountainous farmland indicate a very low per capita income, while many households reported a lack of food security.

Assessments and procedures

Appendix A includes two versions of the interview: a list of the questions by category, and the Zulu/English field version.

Data were obtained through single one-to-one interviews at the participants’ primary and high schools. They were held in isiZulu with the researcher and a translator present. Three different translators were engaged for the study, adult literacy teachers who were native speakers of isiZulu from Stepmore and Lotheni. The interviews ranged in duration from twenty to forty minutes.

Informed consent was obtained using oral scripts or written forms in isiZulu, as required. Consent forms for minor participants to their parents were obtained prior to the interviews. Child assent forms for participants aged 10–11 or 15–16 and adult consent forms for participants aged 18–21 were provided at the interview.

The original protocol for the study of the right to literacy was developed for an American population. It was adapted for the African setting, translated into isiZulu, and revised using back translations and multiple translators. The first back translation revealed a linguistic ambiguity; many isiZulu words are compound words incorporating one or several root-words, and the isiZulu root-word for reading, –fund–, is synonymous for both ‘reading’ and ‘education’. This created a number of ambiguities in the protocol, so that an introductory paragraph was added to specify that –fund– meant ‘reading’, and the phrase ‘reading what is written’ was used to reinforce the intended meaning.

In the interviews, (a) the translator read the introduction and questions from the interview protocol verbatim, in isiZulu; (b) the student responded in isiZulu; (c) this response was translated into English so that the researcher was able to assess the participants’ comprehension of the question and the quality of the response. If necessary, (d) the researcher then clarified the question or posed probes which were then translated into isiZulu for the participant, returning to point (b) in the process. In this way the researcher was able to monitor and support the quality of the interview on an ongoing basis.

The structured interview included thirteen questions in two sections, abstract and conflict assessments. Four abstract assessments posed prototypical evaluations of the right to literacy, while conflict assessments posed evaluations of the right to literacy in nine assessments, divided into three sets with three questions each, about cultural preservation, parental authority, and gender roles.

Each assessment included the main question eliciting an evaluation (yes or no; all right or not all right), and the question, ‘Why do you think so?’ asking for justifications for each evaluation.

In the abstract assessment set, the first question asked whether each and every child should be able to learn to read. The second question asked whether literacy should be provided
regardless of nationality, gender, or ethnicity. The third question asked whether, if a law exists forbidding children to learn to read, this law should be obeyed, or broken. The fourth question asks whether the government has a duty to provide children with the opportunity to learn to read.

Nine questions, divided into three categories of three questions each, investigated how participants evaluated the right to literacy in conflict.

In the culture assessment set, the first question was abstract, asking whether culture or learning to read was more important. The second question was whether, if there were a group of people with an exclusively oral culture, their children should learn to read, or whether they should learn the stories and poems of their oral culture, if they must choose. The third question was whether it is better for a child to learn to read or the traditional skill of furniture building, if they must choose.

In the parental authority assessment set, the first question was whether it was all right for parents to forbid a child to learn to read; the second question was whether, if parents did forbid a child to learn to read, the child should obey or disobey them; and the third question was whether it is all right for parents to keep a child at home, if they are needed to work.

In the gender assessment set, the first question was whether males and females should have the same opportunities to learn to read; the second question was whether it is all right if the government does not protect girls from gender discrimination in learning to read; and the third question asks whether it is all right if a family, unable to afford to send all of their four children, chooses to send only the boys.

The interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Coding

The coding system (see Appendix B) was based on two coding manuals from previous studies using social domain methodologies. One was a coding system developed by Davidson, Turiel and Black (1983), and subsequently widely used and adapted as a basis for studies on social and moral development. The second was a coding system developed for research on adolescents’ and young adults’ conceptions of civil liberties (Helwig, 1991, 1995).

Thirty percent of the interview protocols were selected at random, representing age groups and sexes equally, to develop this coding manual. The coding system was then used to code the remaining seventy percent of the data. Both portions were combined for analysis.

A short section of the coding system contained cultural and linguistic information about the interview protocols, including vocabulary and syntactic ambiguities.

Evaluations and justifications

Evaluations were the endorsements or non-endorsements of the right to literacy for each assessment. These responses were coded using a three-point system: positive, negative, or ambivalent (including, also, vacillating and conditional responses).

Each response included an evaluation and one or more justifications. Evaluations were coded as positive, negative, ambivalent, or uncodeable. The positive or negative valence of the response was relative to the right to literacy; in six out of thirteen questions this meant reversing the valence of the original response, which was posed in terms of evaluating an opposing rule,
law, or convention. A response was coded as mixed if, after being asked to make a choice, a participant maintained a preference for a conditional or ambivalent response.

Justifications were associated with negative or positive evaluations. If an evaluation was ambivalent, the appropriate positive and negative justifications were both coded. Each justification was coded according to the categories in Appendix B. Justification categories for positive evaluations categories are summarized in Table 1. These included: non-specific; agency; moral; inter- and intra-psychological benefits; authority restrictions; historical or governmental progress; and societal progress or utility.

The category of agency included references to the development of capacities; to the functions of literacy that constituted capabilities; and the essential resources acquired by being literate. Morality included concepts of justice, welfare, and rights, including the duties conferred by rights on the government or family. Inter and intra-psychological concepts referred to individual well-being and healthy social relationships. Responses negating rule and law assessments included opposition to restrictions of choice, judgments of violations of children’s rights, and judgments of legitimate restrictions on authority. Last, historical, governmental, and societal responses referred to the recent social changes and how the need to be literate has been heightened.
### Table 1

**Categories of justifications for positive endorsement**

**Non-specific**: a positive endorsement or acceptance of literacy with no mention of any external rationale or justification. *But* if the response includes ’must, supposed to, should’ this defines an endorsement of the right, and not a non-specific endorsement.

**Agency**: Literacy provides capacities for agency, where agency is defined as the ability to choose and act with sufficient knowledge and with conscious purpose.

References to:

*Development of agency*: e.g., growth, potential, future, opportunities, independence.

*Cognitive/communicative functions*. Knowledge, information. Intelligence, skills, self expression. Advantages of literacy: permanence of the written word, vocabulary, comprehension; communicating outside the community, cross-cultural information.

*Prudential*: Actor’s own well-being is secured through these goods/abilities.


**Family/community aid**: references to benefits for the family, obtaining information, writing letters for the illiterate; legal competencies, financial benefits.
| **Morality** | rules of social conduct involving fairness, freedom, and well-being. |
| **Equality** | Concepts refer to fairness, equality, justice, or otherwise contain a notion of equilibrium between individuals’ competing claims. |
| **Rights** | conceptions of rights refer to entitlements that help to protect or promote individual agency. ‘Government duty’ is included here as the obligation for the state to make provisions to fulfill this right as necessary. |
| **Welfare** | conceptions of welfare refer to notions of the wrongness of acts leading to physical or psychological harm or the need to abstain from such acts. |
| **Inter/intrapsychological benefits** | references to confidence, self-respect, enjoyment; esteem in the family or community, being ‘somebody’, learning to respect others. |
| **Negative Judgments of Prohibitions by Authority** | A parental rule or law restricting the right is seen as not OK, illegitimate, requiring revision; etc. |
| **Societal progress/utility** | References to the benefits to society of a literate population. |
| **Historic/governmental progress** | democratic powers, constitutional rights. Reference to history (e.g. ‘nowadays,’ ‘in these times’), national policy or sentiments, democratic process, better economic opportunities. |
| **Reference to a legal right** | e.g. the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. |
Justification categories for negative evaluations, described in Table 2, included: affirmations of the benefits of cultural preservation such as the protection conferred by adhering to cultural practices; affirmations of laws and their normative status; references to the value of normative family regulations, and the benefits of respect and obedience; and gender attributes and roles, making a clear distinction between judgments stemming from convention or tradition (roles) as opposed to those based on experience (attributes). For example, statements that members of one gender are more deserving of the benefits of literacy because they are loyal to their families, or less so because they are irresponsible, were coded as attributes; those referring to the levels of literacy desirable in a wife were coded as roles.

More detailed explanations of justifications can be found in the coding system in Appendix B.
Table 2

Definitions of justifications for negative endorsements

**Cultural preservation:**

*Maintaining* traditional beliefs/practices is seen as an end in itself.

*The protective value* of cultural practices for the individual.

*Particular traditional values*, e.g. respect for elders.

**Positive evaluation of prohibitive law:**

*Normative law.* Law should be followed ‘because it’s the law’. No further justification or rationale for positive evaluation of law is given.

*Law and order.* Laws must be followed so that social order is preserved and societal breakdown is avoided, respect for the law is maintained.

*Social contract.* Laws must be followed because they express a social contract comprising a reciprocal exchange of benefits and obligations between individuals and government.

*Coercion.* Obeying the law for fear of reprisals: violence, withdrawal of support, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of justifications for negative endorsements (cont.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive evaluation of prohibition/parental authority:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Normative rule.</em> Rule should be followed ‘because the parent is a parent’. No further justification or rationale for positive evaluation of law is given. Parental authority is seen as inviolable, not to be questioned. Unelaborated references to parental authority, respect, and obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Maintaining familial relationships/obedience/respect.</em> Parental authority must be obeyed so that order in the family is maintained. The importance of maintaining a respectful relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reciprocity.</em> Parental authority must be obeyed because children’s obedience is part of a system of benefits and obligations between family members. Code here children’s justifications of obedience ‘because they gave you life’, ‘because they provide for you’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Coercion.</em> Obeying parental authority for fear of reprisals, beatings, abandonment, withdrawal of support, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender-based informational assumptions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Behavioral and trait attributions:</em> ‘boys get drunk’, ‘girls get pregnant’, either sex is perceived as more responsible or more capable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Roles:</em> men as heads of family, women as wives belonging to their husbands’ families.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reliability

An independent scorer trained in the use of the coding system and blind to age and sex of subjects and purposes of the study scored 12 randomly chosen interviews (two males and two females from each age group) for comparison with the original coding. An adjusted interrater agreement (Cohen’s kappa) could not be obtained for those evaluations that were 100% positive: the general, government duty, and parental prohibition assessments. For the abstract assessments, Cohen’s κ was 1.0 for evaluations, where permitted, and .69 for justifications; for the conflict assessments, Cohen’s κ was .96 for evaluations, where permitted, and .74 for justifications.
Results

The purposes of the abstract assessments, presented in the first section, were to ascertain whether the right to literacy was evaluated positively or negatively, and whether participants’ conceptions corresponded with the properties of generalizability, law subordination, and the duty of the government as provider. These questions were addressed using analyses of both evaluations and justifications for these prototypical assessments of properties of rights. The second section presents analyses of the conflict assessments, including the proportions of positive, negative and ambivalent evaluations and variations in the justification categories according to type of assessment. Both sections include analyses of age-related differences in responses to assessments.

Preliminary comparisons of the effects of sex were performed using Fisher’s exact test, a variant on the chi-square test indicated by a number of small cell sizes \(n < 10\) and an overall sample size of less than 100 \(N = 72\). No significant effects were found, and male and female participants were combined for all subsequent analyses.

An alpha level of .05 was used for analyses, unless otherwise indicated. For multiple tests the alpha level was reduced using the Bonferroni adjustment.

Abstract assessments

The results of the abstract assessments are presented in Table 3. One hundred percent of the participants endorsed the right to literacy in the general, while 99% endorsed the generalizability assessment, 92% endorsed the law subordination assessment, and 100% endorsed the government duty assessment. Chi-square goodness of fit tests, performed on evaluations where permitted, showed that these results were statistically significant compared to chance. For the law subordination assessment, \(\chi^2 (1) = 67.06, p < .001\); for the government duty assessment, \(\chi^2 (1) = 116.76, p < .001\). The mean of the evaluations for the abstract set was 98%.

The results of the abstract assessments were summed by participant to determine the percentages of endorsements of the full abstract set. Sixty-six participants (92%) endorsed all four of the abstract assessments; this proportion was significant in comparison to chance, \(\hat{\chi}^2 (1) = 50, p < .001, \alpha = .012\). Five participants (6.9%) endorsed three assessments, but not rule non-contingency; one (1.4%) endorsed the general and government duty assessments, but not generalizability or rule non-contingency.

Table 4 shows pairwise comparisons on the main effects of each abstract assessment conducted using the Stuart Maxwell marginal homogeneity test. This symmetry test determines the homogeneity of qualitative variables for \(k x k\) matrices (Abbasi, 2009). Out of five possible tests, two pairwise comparisons, between the general assessment and law subordination evaluations, and the law subordination assessment and government duty evaluations, were marginally significant, Stuart Maxwell \(\hat{\chi}^2 (6) = 2, p = .05\).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ambivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that each and every child should have the chance to learn</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to read? <em>(general)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that <em>everyone</em> should have the chance to learn to read,</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no matter who they are?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example, irrespective of nationality, where they live, or how rich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they may be? <em>1</em> <em>(generalizability)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a law in a country forbids certain children from learning to read,</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for example, girls, or a certain race, is it better to obey that law,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or is it better to break it? <em>(law subordination)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must every government, all over the world, give every child the chance</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to learn to read? <em>(government duty)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding. *1*

*There was one uncodeable response for this assessment.*
Table 4
Abstract assessments: Between-assessment comparisons using symmetry tests (Stuart-Maxwell marginal homogeneity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General – generalizability</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General – law subordination</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General – government duty</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizability – law subordination</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizability – government duty</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law subordination – government duty</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$.**
Table 5 presents the justifications for the positive evaluations. Agency (for definitions, see Table 1) was the most frequently used category, ranging between 48% and 77%. Within this category, references to prudential benefits, ranging between 15% and 34%, were the most frequently used, followed by references to cognitive and communicative functions, ranging between 11% and 31%. The second most commonly used category was morality, ranging from 5% to 30%. The sum of justifications of agency and morality for the abstract assessment was 82% for the general assessment; 88% for the generalizability assessment; 82% for the law subordination assessment; and 78% for the government duty assessment. Therefore, the main categories of the abstract set are agency and moral justifications, with their sums ranging between 78% and 88%, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The categories of help to family or community were considered ambiguous in terms of agency, because giving this help could involve a range of motives. If family justifications are considered separately, 71% to 88% of justifications for the abstract assessments referred to agency or moral reasoning, while family and community benefits accounted for 4% to 11%, and societal progress, from 0% to 4%.

A final analysis identified the proportion of individuals who endorsed every abstract assessment, using rights-based, that is, agency or moral, justifications for every response. The number who did so was thirty-one, or 43%. The probability of this proportion of endorsements and agency or moral justifications occurring by chance in this sample size, assuming five main justification categories, (\(N=72\)), is \(p < .001, \alpha = .01\).

The abstract justification results were examined for age-group, sex, and interaction effects, using 3 (age group) x 2 (sex) ANOVAs on the main justification categories, agency and moral justifications. For the general assessment, a significant effect of age group on agency justifications was found, \(F(2, 71) = 5.5, p = .0019, \eta^2 = .19\). The use of agency justifications increased for each age group; fourteen 10-11 year olds, twenty-two 15-16 year olds, and twenty-two 18-21 year olds used agency as a justification; also, the older age groups used more justifications, so that the 10-11 age group used 18 agency justifications, the 15-16 age group used 31 agency justifications, and the 18-21 age group used 42 agency justifications. Six males used moral justifications, whereas only one female did.

For the law subordination assessment, a significant effect of age group on agency justifications was found, \(F(2,71) = 4.36, p = .017, \eta^2 = .14\), and a significant effect of age group on moral justifications, \(F(2,71) = 3.70, p = .030, \eta^2 = .09\). In this assessment the use of agency justifications decreased with age, with 19 participants in the 10-11 age group using 27 justifications, eight participants in the 15-16 age group using 12 justifications, and eight participants in the 18-21 age group using 12 justifications. However, there was an increase of the use of moral justifications with age, with three 10–11 year olds, six 15–16 year olds, and twelve 18–21 year olds using moral justifications.

For the government duty assessment, the effects of interactions between age group and sex, age group, and sex, upon agency justifications were all significant: for the interaction between age group and sex, \(F(3, 71) = 8.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27\); for age group, \(F(2, 71) = 2.34, p = .0019, \eta^2 = .27\); and for sex, \(F(1, 71) = 11.7, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27\), with the use of agency justifications decreasing with age. Fifteen 10–11 year olds used 19 agency justifications; ten 15–16 year olds used 12; and three 18–21 year olds used four; also, seven males used nine
justifications, while 21 females used 26 justifications.

In the abstract set, there were only six negative evaluations, all in response to the law subordination assessment; the justifications for these negative law subordination evaluations are presented in Table 6. Three out of six of these justifications referred to normative law (for example, ‘because it’s the law of the country’), while one referred to the social benefits of obeying the law, and one, to gender attributes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General n = 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, including (total in parentheses):</td>
<td>(77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Growth, future, ability</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cognitive/communicative</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prudential</em></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Family/community aid</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal progress/utility</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic/governmental progress</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral, including:</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Equality</em></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rights</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Government Duty</em></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Multiple justifications were coded, so that the total number of justifications is greater than the number of subjects (n = 72 unless otherwise specified). Therefore the total sum of justifications, including both positive and negative, may be ≥72. Justification categories are included in table where their sum is greater than or equal to four percent (≥4%) of the total sum of justifications for the question. Percentages for totals of categories (Moral, Agency) and for evaluation totals, are the percentage of all justifications, including those whose sum is less than 4 percent, rounded; for this reason, the percentage of justifications in the table ≤100%. 
Table 6

Abstract assessments: Law subordination assessment, justifications for negative evaluations by percentage (n = 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncodeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative law</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpsychological benefits</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender attributes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total (may not total to 100 due to rounding)*
Figure 1

*Abstract assessments: Sums of percentages of agency and moral justifications*
Conflict assessments

The conflict sets received high proportions of endorsements, but the means of these proportions were lower than that of the abstract set. As with the abstract assessments, a large proportion of justifications for the conflict assessments referred to agency and morality; but for each set, the proportions of these two justifications differed. For each set or type of conflict, justifications emerged for negative evaluations that were characteristic of each; for example, negative gender evaluations were justified by concepts of gender attributes and roles.

Analyses of evaluations and justifications for each type of conflict, and the proportions of the main justification categories for each set are presented.

Culture assessments

As shown in Table 7, the endorsements of literacy in the culture assessment set ranged from 82% to 93%, with a mean of 87%. The importance of reading was maintained over that of culture, according to the participants’ own interpretations and the oral and practical aspects of culture presented in the assessment questions, in eighty-two to ninety-three percent of the assessments; in six to twelve percent of the assessments, a higher value was placed on different aspects of culture. While the positive evaluations represent a large majority, it was smaller than the mean of endorsements for the abstract assessments (97%). A comparison of the means of the abstract and culture sets, using a repeated-measure ANOVA with set as the repeated measure, demonstrated that the mean of the abstract assessment set was significantly greater than that of the culture assessment set, $F(4, 67) = 11.52, p = .0012, \eta^2 = .60$. Chi-square goodness of fit tests on each assessment showed that the culture assessment results were significantly different from chance: for the general assessment, $\chi^2(2) = 77.87, p < .001$; for the oral culture assessment, $\chi^2(2) = 41.39, p < .001$, and for the traditional skill assessment, $\chi^2(2) = 103, p < .001$.

Pairwise comparisons examining main effects of assessments within the set by means of Stuart-Maxwell marginal homogeneity tests revealed no statistically significant differences, as shown in Table 8, so that distinctions between the different aspects of culture presented for comparison with literacy were not significant at the level of analysis of the evaluation results.
Table 7

*Culture assessments: Evaluations by percentage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Literacy endorsed</th>
<th>Literacy not endorsed</th>
<th>Ambivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is culture more important or is learning to read more important, if you have to choose?</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(general)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think a tribe with an oral tradition should choose to let their children learn to read, or should the children learn their oral culture, if they have to choose? <em>(summary, oral culture)</em></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If parents have to make a choice, do you think they should choose for their children to learn to read, or learn a traditional skill (building furniture)? <em>(summary, traditional skills)</em></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*Culture assessments: Between-assessment comparisons using symmetry tests (Stuart-Maxwell marginal homogeneity)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairs of assessments</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General – oral culture</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General – traditional skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral culture – traditional skills</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01.
Table 9 shows the positive justification results. For the culture assessments, a large proportion of justifications referred to agency, ranging from 75% to 86%. Moral justifications for all the culture assessments were <2%. Chi-square tests comparing the proportions of justifications for positive evaluations for each culture assessment were not significant.

A number of responses to the oral culture assessment referred to the practical value of literacy to revise information, or to make permanent records:

He said he is going to choose just to go to school, not to memorize things like storytelling and that. Those who didn’t write it down, they are going to forget those things. He mentioned that he wants to know to learn and write it. After he forgot that thing, he is going to take that book and remember, oh! that is what I learned, that is on that page.

In contrast, the evaluations of traditional skills included a higher proportion of prudential justifications, for example: “They will get survival if they stay at home. If they continue at school, they will get a different job.”
Table 9

_Culture assessments: Justifications for positive evaluations_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General n = 59</td>
<td>Oral culture n = 67</td>
<td>Traditional skills n = 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, including (total in parentheses):</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Growth, future, ability</em></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cognitive/communicative</em></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prudential</em></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/community aid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal progress/utility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic/governmental progress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 shows the justification results for negative evaluations. For the general assessment, 10 out of 15 (67%) of justifications for negative evaluations cited the protective powers of culture; for the oral culture assessment, two out of five justifications (40%) referred to the maintenance of tradition; and for the traditional skills assessment, three out of seven (43%) justifications referred, also, to maintaining traditions.

Explorations of effects of age group and sex on the gender assessment justifications, positive and negative using ANOVAs had no significant results.

The general culture assessment was worded to allow participants to interpret ‘culture’ as they wished. Those who endorsed culture in preference to literacy referred to culture as Zulu ancestral beliefs, which entail rituals to ensure that deceased family members are honored, and, in turn, care for the living. Table 11 presents examples of these and other justifications endorsing culture.
Table 10

Culture assessments: Justifications for negative evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General ( n = 15 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General affirmation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining traditions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective powers of culture</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific cultural values/skill</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

*Culture assessments: Examples of justifications for negative evaluations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General affirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think children, they had better learn about their culture. Because culture is too important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintaining traditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you come from the family that recognizes culture you have to do it and you have to make sure that you understand your culture very clearly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Culture is the way for you as a traditional person. While you stick to your culture it is like you are living in the old days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protective powers of culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You can’t be well survived without your cultures. The ancestors will look after you and they hold you everywhere you are going.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In everything that happens you must know your culture, like if we are slaughtering the cows for the ancestors. It will make all your things, your future, bright.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific cultural value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maybe the parent who didn’t respect the elders because they say that we are all the same, we are a human being and the older man is the human being so I will not greet them. What if they greet me as if we are all the same? That is not respect.
Parental authority assessments

The parental authority assessment evaluations, as shown in Table 12, were endorsed by 61% to 100% of participants. Although 100% of the participants thought that it was not all right to forbid a child to learn to read, only 61% thought children should disobey their parents if they were forbidden. Eighty-two percent of the participants thought that it was not all right for a child to stay home to work to meet the needs of the family. Negative evaluations ranged between 0% and 32%, while the proportion of ambivalent evaluations was between 0% and 11%. A repeated-measure ANOVA, with set as the repeated measure, showed that the mean of the abstract assessment set (97%) was significantly greater than that of the parental authority set (81%), $F(4, 60) = 9.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$, so that these conflict assessments on parental authority received a lower proportion of endorsement, on average, than did the abstract assessments. Chi-square goodness of fit tests, where permitted, revealed significant differences from chance for both the child’s obedience assessment, $\chi^2(3) = 33.7, p < .001$, and for the child’s labor assessment, $\chi^2(3) = 41.39, p < .001$.

Pairwise comparisons of the main effects between individual evaluations found each difference to be significant, as shown in Table 13. Of particular interest was the comparison between judgments of parental prohibitions and children’s obedience (Stuart Maxwell $\chi^2(3) = 28.00, p < .001$), in which, although every participant said that it was wrong for parents to forbid a child to read, thirty-two percent of participants held that a child should obey their parents if they insist that the child is forbidden to learn to read; six percent held ambivalent or conditional views on the conflict; and sixty-one percent said that children should disobey their parents. Eighty-two percent of participants held that it was not all right for parents to keep their children at home if they are needed to do work, while 7% thought that this was all right, and 11% held ambivalent views.

The number of ambivalent responses for this assessment set was larger than for the culture assessment set; however, this difference was not significant. Using Fisher’s exact tests and comparing non-ambivalent to ambivalent responses for each assessment set, Fisher’s $\chi^2(1) = .57, p = .45$. 
Table 12

*Parental authority assessments: Evaluations by percentage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Literacy endorsed</th>
<th>Literacy not endorsed</th>
<th>Ambivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If parents forbid a child to learn to read, is that all right? (Parental prohibition)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the parents forbid the child to learn to read no matter what is said or done, should the child obey the parents, or should they disobey? (Child’s obedience)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If parents think that children are needed to work at home, so they choose to keep the children at home instead of sending them to school to learn to read, is this all right? (Child’s labor)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
### Table 13

*Parental authority assessments: Between-assessment comparisons using symmetry tests (Stuart-Maxwell marginal homogeneity)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ authority – child’s obedience</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.0000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ authority – child’s labor</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.0015**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s obedience – child’s labor</td>
<td>20.03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.0002**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$.**
Table 14 presents the justifications for positive evaluations of parental authority assessments. As well as the main categories of agency and morality, a category of justifications termed *authority restrictions*, which was unique to this set, emerged. Table 15 provides examples. It included judgments that integrated limits on parental authority with references to rights, agency, or criteria such as parents’ competencies or the magnitude of the conflict; it was the dominant response in the child’s obedience assessment (36%). Agency justifications ranged between 27% and 58%; moral justifications comprised 6% to 11% of responses; and authority restrictions ranged between 5% and 36%. The sums of the major justifications for this set, agency, morality, and authority restrictions, ranged between 68% and 73%; a comparison of these totals using a one-sample test of proportion was not significant, \( p = .34 \), although the percentages of the agency and authority restriction categories within these totals showed some significant variations. Figure 2 illustrates the proportions of these three main categories.

ANOVAAs on the effects of age group and sex on the main categories of parental authority justifications revealed one significant result for this set; for the effects of age group on the authority restriction justifications for the obedience assessment, \( F(2,71) = 3.38, p = .039, \eta^2 = .10 \). Three 10–11 year olds used three authority restriction justifications; five 15–16 year olds used eight; and twelve 18–21 year olds used fourteen.

The justifications for negative evaluations, presented in Table 16, comprised references to the importance of maintaining obedience or respect (22%); to normative concepts of parental authority, as if it were absolute (25%); to concepts of reciprocity referring to a debt owed to parents for their care (28%); and finally, to references of coercion by parents including withdrawal of support or the threat of physical violence (22%). Examples are presented in Table 17.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
<th>Parental prohibition</th>
<th>Child’s obedience</th>
<th>Child’s labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 72$</td>
<td>$n = 48$</td>
<td>$n = 67$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, including:</td>
<td></td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth, future, ability</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive/communicative</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudential</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/community aid</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter/intrapsychological benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality, including:</td>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority restrictions:</td>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria limiting parental authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibition restricts future, choices, or rights</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15

*Parental authority assessments: Examples of authority restrictions*

**Criteria limiting parental authority**

No, you cannot respect somebody who forbids you to go and learn.

You must obey an adult in small things, but if she forbids you, you must disobey.

Disobey, because their parent is not well-educated to not let him to go to school so he must disobey them.

*Prohibition restricts future, choice, or rights*

The children must disobey. Because they [the parents] kill the future of their children.

The parents has got no right to forbid the child and the children has got a right to learn.
Table 16

*Parental authority assessments: Justifications for negative evaluations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
<th>Parental prohibition n = 0</th>
<th>Child’s obedience n = 36</th>
<th>Child’s labor n = 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining obedience/respect</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative parental rule</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity with parents</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercion by parents</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

*Parental authority: examples of negative justifications*

**Maintaining respect**

Because respect is important. When you are not respecting your parents you are not respecting anybody. I think you won’t even respect your learning at school.

I have to respect her until she agrees with me. I will speak to my relatives and explain my problem.

**Normative parental rule**

Children has to respect their parents because they are the parents.

**Reciprocity with parents**

He must respect parents, because they are the only people who choose for me to come on this earth.

**Coercion by parents**

She says she is going to obey because there is nothing that she can do, she has no money and she is a child.
Figure 2

*Parental authority assessments: Sums of percentages of agency, moral, and authority restrictions*

![Bar chart showing parental authority assessments](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parental authority</th>
<th>Obedience</th>
<th>Child labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority restrictions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender assessments

The gender assessments received the largest proportions of positive evaluations of the conflict assessment sets; also, they received a higher proportion of moral justifications than all other assessment sets. As presented in Table 18, the positive evaluations of the assessments ranged between 90% and 94%; however, the mean of the evaluations of the gender sets was significantly lower than that of the abstract set, as shown by a repeated-measure ANOVA with set as the repeated measure, $F(4, 66) = 4.73, p = .002, \eta^2 = .23$.

Comparisons between each pair in the set, using Stuart Maxwell marginal homogeneity tests, showed that the differences in their evaluations were not significant; for all pairwise comparisons, Stuart Maxwell $\chi^2(1) > .16$ (Table 19). There was little evidence in the evaluations to suggest that the assessments entailing the government protection of girls against their families and communities, or family poverty, were judged significantly differently than the assessment of equal opportunity in the general.

Also, these evaluations were characterized by a lack of ambivalence compared to the culture and parental authority conflict evaluations. There was only one ambivalent response for the gender assessment set, against seven ambivalent culture assessment set responses, and seventeen parental authority set responses. Fisher’s exact tests on the differences in percentages of ambivalent and non-ambivalent responses were significant for both the parental authority and gender assessment sets, Fisher’s exact $\chi^2(1) < .001$, and the culture and gender assessment sets, Fisher’s exact $\chi^2(1) = .002$. 
Table 18

*Gender assessments: Evaluations by percentage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Literacy endorsed</th>
<th>Literacy not endorsed</th>
<th>Ambivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should boys and girls, or women and men, have the same opportunities to learn to read? (equal opportunity)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a different country, some families and villages do not allow their girls to learn to read. But the government does not protect the girls from this. Is this all right? (government protection)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a country where it costs money to send children to learn to read, a family has two boys and two girls, but they can only afford to send two children to school. Therefore they choose to send the boys and not the girls. Is that all right? (family poverty)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19

Comparisons between gender assessments using symmetry tests (Stuart-Maxwell marginal homogeneity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunity/government protection</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunity/family poverty</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government protection/family poverty</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 gives the percentages of positive justifications for the gender evaluations. The largest category of justifications for the positive gender assessment set was moral, ranging between 45% for the government protection assessment to 59% for the equal opportunity assessment. These evaluations elicited a higher proportion of moral justifications than any other set; the mean ratio of moral to agency justifications was approximately 1.8:1 for the gender set, as opposed to 1:4 for the abstract set, 0:1 for the culture set, and 3:4 for the parental authority set.

Clear distinctions were made between assessments in the use of categories of unelaborated, equality, rights, government duty, and welfare within the category of morality. Responses to the assessment about equal opportunity emphasized equality (47%) over rights (12%), while responses to the government protection assessment were distributed broadly over equality (19%), democratic mandate (10%), rights (9%) and welfare (7%). The participants’ practical solutions to solving the problem of the children’s school attendance were included in the high percentage of non-specific justifications (31%) for the parental poverty assessment. Stuart-Maxwell symmetry tests on these proportions showed their differences to be statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 48.03, p < .001$.

The percentages of agency justifications for the gender assessment set ranged between 23% and 31%; symmetry tests of these proportions showed that their differences were not significant. However, the percentages of prudential assessments used in the equal opportunity and government protection assessments were 14% for each of these assessments and 0% in the family poverty assessment, while the percentages of family and community benefits were 0% in the equal opportunity and government protection assessments, and 15% in the family poverty assessment. These differences in the use of two categories of agency were statistically significant, Stuart-Maxwell $\chi^2(2) = 29, p < .001$, so that participants tended to justify children’s literacy in the family poverty assessment by its potential benefits for the family, while in the equal opportunity and government protection assessments, the use of prudential gains for the children were used more frequently.

The sums of the main categories of justifications, moral and agency, were 90% for the equal opportunity assessment; 73% for the government protection assessment; and 71% for the family poverty assessment.

ANOВAs exploring effects of age group and sex on gender assessment justifications found one significant result for the moral justifications of the family poverty assessment, $\chi^2(2,71) = .019, p = .13$. The use of moral justifications decreased with age; 15 10–11 year olds, eight 15–16 year olds, and six 18–21 year olds used moral justifications for this assessment.
Table 20
Gender assessments: justifications for positive evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>Equal opportunity</th>
<th>Government protection</th>
<th>Family poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, including (total in parentheses):</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Growth, future, ability</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Cognitive/communicative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Prudential</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Family/community aid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter/intrapsychological</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral, including:</td>
<td>(59)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Unelaborated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Equality</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Rights</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Government Duty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Welfare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21

Gender assessments: Justifications for negative evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification category</th>
<th>% of justifications</th>
<th>Equal opportunity ($n = 5$)</th>
<th>Government protection ($n = 3$)</th>
<th>Family poverty ($n = 7$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender attributes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3

*Gender assessments: Sums of percentages of agency and moral justifications*
Comparisons between abstract and conflict assessment sets

This result confirmed that all of the conflict assessment sets received significantly lower positive endorsements than the abstract set.

It was expected that judgments of conflict assessments would involve processes of coordination between the right to literacy and other social concerns. In those cases where the right to literacy was subordinated, smaller proportions of endorsement would ensue from assessments of the right to literacy in conflicts than in the abstract.

Repeated-measure ANOVAs for percentages of evaluations between the abstract assessment set and each conflict set were all significant: $F(4, 67) = 11.52, p = .0012, \eta^2 = .60$; $F(4, 60) = 9.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$; and $F(4, 66) = 4.73, p = .002, \eta^2 = .23$, for the culture, parental authority, and gender assessment sets, respectively, showing that levels of endorsement for the abstract assessment set were significantly higher than those in each conflict assessment set. All post hoc, pairwise comparisons between the abstract and conflict assessment sets were significant. The mean of the endorsements for the abstract set was 97%; for the culture assessment set, it was 87%; for the parental authority set, it was 81%; and for the gender set, it was 92%.

For the abstract assessments, the use of agency ranged from 43% to 77%; for the culture assessments, from 75% to 86%; for the parent authority assessments, from 23% to 54%; and for the gender assessments, from 8% to 31%, yielding a mean percentage of agency justifications of 51%.

An overview of the categories by justification revealed patterns of salience of the two main categories, agency and morality. In the justifications for abstract assessments, the ratio of agency to morality was 4:1; for culture assessments, agency was the only major rationale; for parental authority assessments, the ratio was 4:3; for the gender assessments, the ratio was 1.8:1.

Agency and moral justifications were consistently high proportions of the whole for the abstract assessments, ranging between 71% and 88%; these, as well as the smaller category of authority restrictions, were posited to make primary reference to individual benefits and to comprise a broader category of rights-based justifications. Justifications citing family benefits, ranging from 0% to 11%, and those referring to societal progress, ranging from 0% to 4%, made primary reference to social group benefits and were posited to comprise a category of communal justifications. Table 22 presents the percentages of these two aggregate categories by assessment, showing that rights-based justifications were used more frequently in all assessments than were communal justifications; while the percentages of rights-based assessments by assessment ranged between 56% and 90%, those of communal assessments ranged between 5% and 15%. A paired t-test comparison between the two categories found that the difference between their means was significant, $t(1870) = 688, p < .001$. 
Table 22
Rights-based\(^1\) vs. communal\(^2\) justifications, percentages, by assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Moral</th>
<th>Authority Restriction</th>
<th>Rights-based</th>
<th>Family Benefits</th>
<th>Societal Progress</th>
<th>Communal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizability</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Subordination</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government duty</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral culture</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional skill</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental authority assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental prohibition</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s obedience</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s labor</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunity</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government protection</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family poverty</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Rights-based justifications are sum of agency, moral and authority restriction justifications.

\(^2\)Communal justifications are sum of family/community and societal progress justifications.
Discussion

This study examined conceptions of the right to literacy in Zulu children and adolescents in rural villages in South Africa. Developmental research about conceptions of rights was first conducted with North American populations, providing a foundation for comparisons of conceptions of rights in other political and social settings. Notably, Melton (1980) provided initial evidence that conceptions of rights emerge in middle childhood, rather than mid- to late adolescence as predicted by Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development. A series of studies (Helwig, 1991, 1995, 1998) went on to establish that American and Canadian children and adolescents understand rights using moral criteria such as generalizability, affirm freedoms of speech and religion in the general and against prohibition by law, and evaluate these freedoms using psychological criteria such as age-related capacities to make responsible judgments and increasing needs to exercise autonomy (Helwig, 1997). Other researchers have explored differences between rights of self-determination, such as freedoms of speech and religion; protection, such as rights to physical safety and psychological well-being; and provision, such as rights to adequate clothing and nutrition (Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998).

The investigation of cultural differences in the development of conceptions of rights in non-Western populations has implications beyond superficial variations caused by context. This is because, as the political and philosophical emergence of full human rights conceptions originated in Europe and North America, theories have arisen dividing the world into ‘duty-based’ and ‘rights-based’ cultures (Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987) which parallel older and more fundamental arguments in the moral literature about whether morality develops as a result of socialization processes or through individual evaluations of social experience. Shweder et al., assuming that children learn morality, in the main, through the influences of society, argue that the ‘free-market’ societies of the West produce individuals using a rights-based, contractual morality and a strong individualistic outlook, while African and Asian social groups, based on communal and hierarchical values, produce persons using a morality based on duties to others and perceiving others’ needs as their own.

In contrast, the view that morality is constructed through individual evaluations of experience supports the idea that persons in all cultures develop complex views of social knowledge, including personal, conventional, and moral concerns, and make multi-faceted decisions which take into account all of these concerns, and related information, in context (Turiel, 1983, 2008c). Evidence for conceptions of rights in non-Western cultures supports the premise that morality develops through individual reasoning processes rather than by social transmission. By implication, Turiel’s perspective, and evidence for rights in a ‘duty-based’ society, also challenge the notion that the psychologies of individuals in different cultures, including their conceptions of morality, can be reduced to single orientations.

Researchers do, of course, address issues of cultural variation: for example, whether and how age-related changes vary between cultures, and how conflicts between conceptions of rights and traditional communal or hierarchical values are resolved. Developmental studies of conceptions of rights in non-Western cultures have been conducted in China and Israel (Lahat et
al., 2009; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008), but more studies in a range of settings are necessary to establish commonalities in the development of conceptions of rights as well as links between variations in conceptions of rights and their political, economic, or social settings.

Conceptions of the right to literacy have not previously been studied from a psychological perspective, with the exception of pilot research undertaken by this author in the United States and an assessment made by Lahat et al. (2009) on the right to education. The right to literacy is recognized as fundamental to individual and societal progress in the developing world and to the social and economic equality of women (Sen, 1990; Okin, 2003). It can be viewed as a survival and economic right in the context of human rights, and as a nurturance or provision right in the context of the developmental literature on conceptions of rights. From these perspectives, the right to literacy can be seen to pertain to children, particularly girls, in the developing world, and the study of their conceptions of the right to literacy has implications for developmental psychology and for applications in the advocacy of human rights.

The central research questions of this study addressed those questions outlined above about conceptions of rights in non-Western cultures: do children and adolescents in developing world settings hold conceptions of the right to literacy; and, if so, do they use moral criteria and justifications similar to those found in North American developmental studies? In hypothetical conflicts involving the right to literacy with traditional social values, how do they coordinate those values? What developmental differences emerge between this and other studies of conceptions of rights?

**Evidence for conceptions of the right to literacy**

The first prediction made for this study, based on the primary research question, was that rural Zulu children and adolescents would maintain and endorse conceptions of the right to literacy that were in agreement with human rights conceptions. Four assessments were posed to examine, first of all, whether participants understood and endorsed the right to literacy in general; whether they thought that this right should be upheld regardless of attributes such as gender, wealth, or nationality (generalizability); whether they thought that it would be acceptable to violate a law that prohibited some children from learning to read (law subordination); and whether they thought the government had a duty to provide opportunities for every child to learn to read (government duty). As expected, rights were endorsed for each of these questions in the abstract, with full endorsement for the general, generalizability, and government duty assessments, and 92% endorsement for the law subordination assessment. These data provided strong evidence for the existence and endorsement of conceptions of rights.

These findings were in line with the studies by Turiel and Wainryb (1998), which also employed assessments of conceptions of rights in the general, as generalizable to other countries, and the evaluation of exercising a freedom if it were illegal. Their results for these abstract assessments, indicating high levels of endorsement of freedoms of speech and religion in a non-Western culture, with slightly lower levels of endorsement of the exercise of an illegal freedom, closely paralleled the results of this study.

The Lahat et al. (2009) study examined nurturance and self-determination rights in China,
including an assessment of the right to education in a conflict in which the parents wanted their child to work; the right to education was endorsed by 85% of the Chinese study participants, using justifications of independence, nurturance, and self-determination An almost identical assessment in this study produced an 82% endorsement of the right to literacy in the South African population.

The evaluations of each assessment are supported by the justifications, which referred to the contributions of different functions of literacy to economic opportunities, positive cognitive and social outcomes, and, in the words of many of the participants, ‘a bright future’. The main categories of justifications were organized into two types: those that were unambiguous references to agency or morality, or rights-based, and those referring to family, community, or societal benefits, called communal. Examples of the latter include: “Yes, even if the mother is not able to read, the mother will ask the child just to read for her, the child will be able to read that letter for the parent”. “Everyone, you know that they need to be literate because if you are thinking of the economy the economy wants the people who are more in reading in writing; so it is better for everyone to be in the way of reading and writing”. Responses referring to communal benefits were judged to be ambiguous in regard to agency or morality, because if a child chooses to help their community, this would be considered agentic; but children, as subordinates in their families and communities, can be used instrumentally as well, as would be in keeping with a collectivistic or hierarchical outlook.

The results show that a significant proportion, 73%, of justifications were rights-based, that is, were unambiguous references to agency, morality, or rights-based restrictions on authority, compared to less than 6% for communal ones. A count of those who held a consistent rights perspective, endorsing every abstract assessment and using, each time, rights-based justifications, show that over forty percent of the participants met these stringent conditions for a rights-based perspective. In contrast, not one participant represented a perspective which consistently used communal justifications.

The justifications confirm that the participants’ conceptions of the right to literacy were grounded in notions of the resources needed to attain self-determination and well-being, such as knowledge with which to make choices, skills to gain employment or further education, and normative social status in a changing society, and also, moral values such as fairness, the welfare of vulnerable children, and the right to protect ones’ own interests against undue interference; by doing so, they further identify these conceptions with human rights conceptions.

**Coordinations**

I briefly re-iterate the theory on coordinations in cultural context before discussing significant results from each conflict assessment set.

As stated in the section on domain theory (p. 20), coordinations are the process by which conflicts are resolved into decisions. Coordinations may be simple or multi-faceted; and the result may be that one value predominates, excluding considerations of the other; a hierarchy may be created, retaining both concepts, but giving one higher value; a conditional judgment may be made, taking other factors into account; and so on (Killen, 1985). Coordinations may involve concepts from any combination of domains; often, moral concepts are assigned a high
value in these evaluations and subordinate the opposing concept; but this is not a fixed rule. Each assessment is an instantiation of individual values and informational assumptions, contextualized and flexible.

Scant research on rights has been conducted in non-Western settings. The primary goal of assessing coordinations in this study, and that on the Druze Arabs (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998), was to explore the hypothesis that conceptions of rights are prevalent in non-Western cultures, but that, in hierarchical settings, they may be subordinated more often to other social roles than in societies characterized as egalitarian. The prediction for this particular setting was that, in conflict assessments, the right to literacy would sometimes be subordinated to traditional values, such as gender roles, or economic priorities, so that the outcomes of these coordinations would include lower rates of endorsement and a larger range of justifications than those of abstract evaluations.

As predicted, analyses of the conflict assessment sets revealed significantly lower means of percentages of endorsement compared to the mean of the abstract set for each set. While the mean of the endorsements for the abstract set was 97%; for the culture assessment set, it was 87%; for the parental authority set, it was 81%; and for the gender set, it was 92%. The culture and parental authority sets, although not the gender set for reasons discussed below, had significantly higher levels of negative and ambivalent evaluations which provided further evidence for coordination processes.

These results were in keeping with those of an American study on freedoms of speech and religion, in which contextualized assessments, posing conflicts of these freedoms with issues of physical and psychological harm and fairness/justice, produced lower percentages of endorsements than the abstract evaluations of these freedoms (Helwig, 1995) and with conflict assessments involving freedoms of speech, religion, and reproduction in the Druze culture (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998), insofar as, in each instance, the right in the abstract was endorsed more strongly than in contextualized situations in which other values sometimes took precedence. However, the high frequency which the right to literacy was upheld was unexpected (no formal predictions had been made on this matter); it was maintained more strongly in conflict assessments than were freedoms of speech and religion in the Helwig and Turiel and Wainryb studies. It may simply be that the great value of literacy, especially in reference to the contemporary globalized economy, is obvious; or its value in the eyes of this people may be further enhanced by the particular circumstances of the post-apartheid era.

Turiel (1983) summarized his views on the role of culture in making coordinations, with the individualist/collectivist dichotomy in mind:

... judgments in the American samples do not fall into categories reflecting holistically integrated cultural schemes. It has been found that the social cognition of individuals reflects different orientations... The same individuals are relativists and universalists. They are concerned with group solidarity and individual rights. They can be absolutist and flexible... Some judgments are based on authority and social hierarchies, whereas other judgments are based on equality (p. 214).

This description applies to judgments made by Zulus as well as Americans. Even in a society
with many traditional and communal values, the right to literacy took precedent in a majority of cases. Yet, there were a number of instances when values associated with a traditional orientation did prevail. In conflict assessments, judgment making processes which had been construed as automatic applications of rigid concepts are revealed as richly differentiated, individualized voices. It is on this more nuanced basis that we can explore the results for commonalities. An examination may reveal which concerns were most frequently considered to subordinate the right to literacy; analyses by domain and the content of informational assumptions may help to establish or confirm patterns of coordinations about which little is known; and highlighting those resolutions that involve the production of new concepts as well as coordinations may help to elucidate how cultural adaptation occurs.

**Coordinations of conceptions of culture**

In the general assessment on culture, the most frequently used rationale to justify subordination of the right was the metaphysical belief in the importance of ancestor practices, a body of rituals honoring the dead. It is said that the spirits of the dead leave home and travel for a time; then a feast is held to call the spirits home, nourish them, and persuade them to stay at home to protect family members and bring them good luck. Two components to this belief were important to the participants who endorsed it: the assumption that the ancestors live on as spirits and require care carried a moral obligation; but more often, references were made to the prudential value attached to the ancestors’ protection of the living. In all but one coordination with ancestor practices, the right to literacy was subordinated; the remaining coordination was ambivalent.

References to learning and maintaining traditions because they were passed down in the family, i.e. that they were social conventions, often were part of coordinations in which the participant wanted to retain both culture and literacy. Coordinations involving comparisons of the efficacy of literacy and culture for developing agency, e.g., careers and opportunities, subordinated culture without exception: these coordinations were direct estimations of utility and potential.

So, in the culture assessments, beliefs about ancestor practices predominated in those assessments where they were used; they were usually used unequivocally; while other aspects of culture that were not part of this belief system were evaluated more flexibly and subordinated more often; and a utilitarian comparison of traditions to literacy resulted in the subordination of culture. The way in which each participant chose to define ‘culture’ was strongly linked to the way in which their coordinations were resolved.

**Coordinations of concepts of parental authority**

The parental authority assessments also involved traditional beliefs that were highly valued; but the ways in which they were coordinated differed. Obedience and respect for parents are often presented as uniquely African values. These purported values were confirmed in that, while all the participants thought it wrong for parents to forbid a child to learn to read, many considered that the child should nonetheless obey parental prohibitions against learning. Many more participants subordinated the right to literacy to obedience than to ancestor practices.
However, three characteristics distinguished the obedience conflict. One was the integration into the problem of the endorsement of culturally acceptable methods of negotiation, that is, using older relatives as advocates; another was the emergence of concepts of authority restrictions that legitimized disobedience using particular criteria; and the last was an age-related increase in the use of authority restrictions. Despite the eminence of the tradition of obedience compared to the metaphysical belief in ancestor practices, the results of conflict coordinations suggested that greater flexibility was exercised in its evaluation, and that this capacity for flexible reasoning, including adopting the aim of integrating respect for cultural norms and respect for parents as individuals with the fulfillment of the participants’ rights, increased with age. An example was this quote from a young woman of sixteen (interviewers’ words in italics):

The parent must choose just to read. Why do you think so? What if the parents say no? He or she must tell them that she wants to go and read. What if they still say no? She can report to the other sisters or to her gran. If her parents say no, you can’t go to school, she can feel not OK, and she can report this to other persons. And then what do the other persons do? They must sit with their mother and talk to her. After that, if the parents still say no, can they choose? Is it still their choice? No, after that, it is the child’s choice. Why do you think so? She wanted to get the knowledge at school.

In this elaborated procedure, the participant proposed a solution in which traditional extended–family practices of negotiation, an expression of respect to her parents and to cultural norms, were adhered to, and yet, in the end, she upheld the right to literacy and subordinated obedience to the child’s entitlement to learn to read; in other responses, the final choice was to subordinate the right to literacy to obedience. The potential for variation in the processes of coordinations between different types of traditional values are illustrated by this comparison between social conventions of obedience and those involving metaphysical ancestor practices, in which the former is flexible and allows for a conditional response such as this one, while the ancestor practice belief appeared to be rigid and generated ‘black-or-white’ coordinations.

**Coordinations of conceptions of gender**

The gender assessments were characterized by a higher proportion of moral justifications than any other conflict assessments; these responses were tied to situations focusing on the properties of equality and the moral obligation of the government to ensure equal educational opportunities for girls, so that the moral aspect of each assessment was emphasized; this was also true in the family poverty assessment, in which the large proportions of moral justifications included a large number of unspecified moral justifications attributable to the belief that poverty was not a valid reason to keep children at home and away from school; and in no instance was poverty accepted as a permissible justification for gender discrimination. In the child labor assessment and the family poverty assessment the rights of the child were consistently upheld, and, in the latter, a number of responses provided detailed advice for parents in order for all of their children to go to school: “They are supposed to mix and take a boy and girl, and, another year, take the other boy and girl.” “They were going to make a loan in the bank and go in order
to send all the four of them to school.”

The fact that each of these hypothetical situations entailed two moral values which most of the participants endorsed contributed to another significant result, which was the absence of ambivalent responses: there was only one in this set as compared to seven in the culture set and seventeen in the parental authority set. However, it appears that there was a further reason for this ‘clean split’.

While the large majority of participants did not accept gender discrimination in education, those who did endorsed informational assumptions about boys tending towards alcoholism or girls becoming pregnant, and the likelihood that they would fulfill their obligations towards their parents when they were adult. But tacit in these evaluations were underlying principles concerning communal obligations. These negative judgments were not based on the informational assumption alone; rather, differences in rights-based and communal principles were implicated. In each case, the hypothetical children were evaluated in terms of their usefulness to their parents, and not in terms of the opportunities due to them, so that the gender roles and assumptions used were linked, in each case, with instrumental values. While rights are not determined on the basis of whether an opportunity that is offered is more or less likely to result in success, instrumental evaluations may legitimately involve such considerations. Therefore, each gender-based assumption was linked to instrumental thinking. The dichotomy in rights-based and instrumental principles revealed in these assessments may have been implicated in the lack of ambivalence in the coordinations.

The result that participants did not accept poverty as a justification for gender discrimination or for allowing children to grow up illiterate contrasts with stereotypes about literacy in the developing world. Although many poor girls do not go to school, many more do go than do not; and it is important, in all fairness, to distinguish between issues of poverty and gender discrimination that is linked to beliefs and attitudes that may perhaps prevail more frequently amongst the poor.

**Age-related differences**

The third prediction for this study is that age-related differences would be tied to childrens’ understandings of the attributes of the agent and the right to literacy itself, not to stage-related progressions, and to increasing abilities to coordinate judgments.

The results of both abstract and conflict evaluations showed that there were no significant age- or sex-related differences in the percentages of endorsements, so that the salience of conceptions of the right to literacy remained stable through development. Previous studies of rights have found that age-related differences in children’s endorsements often relate to their evaluations of age-related needs and competencies (Helwig, 1997; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998). In the case of the right to literacy, participants from this setting would recognize a universal need that, in their experience, is often provided to very young children, but sometimes, to older ones whose entry into the educational system has been delayed for some reason. It is entirely consistent that there would be no age-related differences in their endorsement of the right to literacy, as the needs and competencies of non-reading children do not vary according to age, and all the more so because Zulu students focus on the great
importance of finishing secondary school and passing the South African qualifying exam, known as matriculation.

It might be predicted, from theorists using the rights-based/duty-based perspective, that age-related differences would reflect exposure to Western values from school, so that results would show a predominance of duty-based values in the youngest age group and an increase in endorsements of rights and equal opportunity with age, or that younger children, holding a lower status in the family, would reference their sense of rights to status, and subordinate their sense of entitlement to that of their father, mother, and perhaps older siblings. However this kind of effect was not found.

A number of age-related findings in this study related to differences in the use of agency (personal or prudential) or moral justifications; and variations in these findings suggested that several reasoning processes guided participants' choice between the two. Social domain theory, unlike stage theories, does not posit a developmental progression towards the consistent use of abstract moral principles. The use of each domain continues through life, although, in each domain, there are characteristic developmental changes (Turiel, 1983, p. 102). However, there is some evidence that the emergence of conceptions of rights, in early elementary school years, occurs later than personal and other moral concepts, which emerge in pre-schoolers (Helwig, 1997; Nucci & Weber, 1995; Smetana, 1981), and that there is a developmental pathway in which personal concepts precede conceptions of rights (Helwig, 1997; Nucci, 2005). Other research focusing on coordinations has suggested that, with age, there are gains in competencies such as integrating prior knowledge into a problem and the ability to focus on more than one consideration at a time (Killen, 1985). It would appear that age-related changes in the development of conceptions of rights could express any or all of these trends.

There were six significant age-related findings in thirteen assessments. These included, for the abstract general assessment, an increase in agency justifications with age, $p = .0019$; for the law subordination assessment, a decrease in agency justifications, $p = .017$, and an increase in moral justifications, $p = .03$; for the government duty assessment, a decrease in agency justifications, $p < .001$; for the obedience assessment, an increase of authority restriction justifications, $p = .039$; and for the family poverty assessment, a decrease in moral justifications, $p = .019$. These variations imply that there could be several processes involved.

It could be speculated that while the increase in the use of agency justifications in the general question reflects a general increase in ability and knowledge with age, the law subordination and government duty results, where there is a decrease in the use of agency justifications and an increase in the use of moral justifications, are consistent with a movement from simple to more complex along a developmental pathway of conceptions of rights; older children would be more capable of coordinating arguments about law subordination and the role of government as well as having more substantial information about the role of government. For the obedience assessment, the increase of authority restriction justifications appears to relate to an increase in the ability to coordinate and integrate a number of considerations; while the decrease in the use of moral justifications for the family poverty assessment relates to the ability of older adolescents to bring more knowledge to a coordination problem and to opine that the problem posed by the assessment was a non-starter, that the parents must not choose between sending their boys and girls to school, but could and should find a way for all of their children to
attend.

The correctness or claims to validity of these different interpretations are not as important as the evidence that, again, a number of processes are implicated, reflecting cognitive growth in a number of areas underlying the ability to make moral judgments.

Limitations

A background study focusing on contemporary social norms on the economic and social roles of men and women, expectations of respect and obedience within the family, and evaluations of the importance and prevalence of ancestor practice beliefs would have supported stronger interpretations of the data. For example, was the advocacy of gender-equal education related to a shift in marriage and property customs, or did it co-exist with these customs? Data from rural China suggest that parental endorsement of children’s equal rights to education co-exist with expectations that boys will support their parents in old age and a higher number of years spent at school by boys (Hannum, Kong, & Zhang, 2009); information like this about the study area in KwaZulu Natal would have supported the understanding of consistencies and inconsistencies in the application of moral concepts such as rights and equal opportunity in traditional societies.

Another limitation of this study was the age range, from ten to twenty-one years of age. Because this study captured a particular historical transition, it would have been of great value to have obtained assessments of the right to literacy from the parents and grandparents of the participants and to have made generational evaluations. It would also have been of interest to investigate whether or not the children’s assessments of family life, and their understandings of the traditional values of respect, obedience, and family obligations, agreed with those of their parents.

It would have been interesting, as well, to explore developmental pathways of conceptions of rights in younger children, as, in the age range studied, the developmental ‘milestones’ of rights, universality and rule non-contingency, had been achieved by most ten-year-olds, in parallel with participants from the North American pilot study and in a study of children’s judgments of freedom of speech and religion (Helwig, 1997). Findings for younger age groups could support comparative developmental studies in a relatively intact non-Western social setting.

One limitation of this study is that, as a single topic in a single setting, it does not provide comparisons that would further confirm or disconfirm hypotheses about, for example, the kinds of variations of self-determination and nurturance rights in relation to culture which were explored in Lahat et al. (2009).

Further, the finding of high levels of endorsement of the right to literacy can only be interpreted to mean that this particular right is highly valued in the Zulu population. It cannot be generalized to imply, for example, that this ‘nurturance’ or ‘provision’ right is more highly valued in a traditional society because nurturance rights are more valued in communal societies, or that the Zulu population is becoming Westernized and more ‘rights-based’ in the post-apartheid era. Historical evidence has shown that education is highly valued by black South Africans, and that educational repression has provoked strong political resistance in the recent
past; further studies of the right to literacy in other non-Western cultures, such as, for example, rural India, may show that religious and family values upheld in this setting work to subordinate the right to literacy more strongly than any value found in the Zulu population.

However, what this study does reveal is the degree to which judgments involving rights are nuanced and sensitive to small changes in context, particular local values – for example, the value of obedience – instead of adhering to global characteristics such as culture. Most participants advocated gender equality in education despite the continuing existence of strong gendered divisions in household labor. Some traditions were interpreted rigidly while others, although important, were negotiable. This kind of evidence tends to confirm the value of the constructivist viewpoint rather than the pursuit of broad connections between, for example, culture and variations in rights and morality.

What effect did the presence of the interviewer have on the participants’ responses? Many of them had never spoken to a non-Zulu person before, and it would be expected that some of them would try to please or to impress the interviewer with their responses. While some of the students saw the interview as an opportunity to practise their English skills and exercise their confidence, the justifications used by even the youngest students expressed complex ideas that could not have been produced spontaneously with the aim of impressing the interviewer. They were consistent with one another and appropriate to the problems presented.

**Theoretical discussions of agency**

The use of agency in organizing the justifications was adopted from the work of the philosopher, Alan Gewirth, on human rights. The philosophical concept of agency, the recognition of those goods that support capacities for self-determination, was instantiated in a categories for the use of a psychological study. These included references to the development of agency, concepts such as hope, a positive future, and opportunities; to cognitive and communicative abilities that are agentic because they aid reasoning, self-determination, and core social capacities; and to the prudential goods resulting from literacy skills, such as educational qualifications, and jobs, that were the participants’ desired ends. In total, over half of the justifications referred to agency. Agency and moral concepts together accounted for almost three-quarters of the total number of justifications.

Kohlberg asserted that moral philosophy and psychological studies of moral development should mutually inform one another; the question arises as to whether the results of this study provided any confirmations or disagreements with the basis of Gewirth’s arguments.

Alternate propositions for the origins of human rights, drawn from philosophical sources, include the belief that human rights are intuitive or self-evident, as exemplified by the United States Constitution; that they are derived from pre-existing institutional rules; or that they are based on intrinsic worth or dignity (Gewirth, 1982, p. 43). Psychological data to support these premises could only be found for the concept of dignity, in a small number of references to self-respect and mutual respect. The participants’ main focus was on the evaluation of action in their social world: on the development of agency for children; capacities such as knowledge, vocabulary, and the power to make records; the acquisition of basic and essential goods, such as shelter, work, and social communication; and the support of autonomy, such as the capacity to
read one’s own private letters. This focus corresponded neatly with Gewirth’s claim that “to tie human rights to the necessary conditions of action is to connect the rights directly with morality, since action is the common subject matter of all moralities” (p. 5).

Gewirth’s philosophical theory is part of a contemporary movement in liberal philosophy towards the construction of a moral theory which represents the perspective of a rational individual in the society of others, a movement that could be said to have progressed from the abstractions of Kant through Rawl’s perspective-taking device of the ‘veil of ignorance’ and hence to Gewirth’s philosophical position. His intuition that agency would be an easily accessible phenomenon, central to human awareness, also seems to have been confirmed in the clarity of response in even the youngest members of this people. I would propose that the results of this study warrant the further exploration of agency as an organizing premise for studies on conceptions of rights and for the developmental relationship between concepts of agency and conceptions of rights.

Agency, domain theory, and the development of conceptions of rights

Another question that arises with the use of the philosophical construct of agency in social domain research considers the relationship of agency to the domains. As ‘every rational agent regards his freedom and well-being as necessary goods’ (Gewirth, 1982), it seems that Gewirth’s argument about agency may have some relationship with the personal and prudential domains, as well as pertaining to rights in the moral domain.

Developmental relationships between the personal domain and human rights have been posited by Nucci (2005):

Personal concepts provide the basic datum (i.e. the psychological necessity of the personal sphere) requisite to extend the moral conceptions of justice and beneficience (source of rights whose object is well-being) to include a conception of rights ... The thesis here is that personal concepts inform the construction of morality by extending conceptions of harm and welfare to include the psychological requirements of personal freedom. (p. 377).

One function of the personal domain is to achieve freedom by legitimizing certain forms of self-expression and defending them, if necessary, against restrictions by authority; there is evidence that this legitimacy is established using subjective criteria of psychological autonomy and health (Nucci, 2005; Nucci, Hasebe, and Lins-Dyer, 2005). Human rights, like personal concepts, define the legitimacy of certain freedoms and defend them against unjust restrictions, but employ moral criteria. The organizing premise of the prudential domain is the promotion of personal well-being and safety; again, rights delimit the use of prudential concepts using moral criteria.

One moral criteria that distinguishes rights from personal and prudential concepts is that rights protect essential and universal human needs; their purview excludes the trivial and the particular, so that, while personal criteria may legitimately defend the reading of comic books, moral criteria do not. While reindeer herding may be absolutely fundamental to the way of life of Siberian nomadic peoples, reindeer herding is not a human right because it is not universal;
instead the need to herd reindeer is a particularistic expression of human rights to a livelihood and to cultural continuity.

While the individual must develop personal and prudential concepts in order to establish psychological (ego) integrity, the need to construct social norms that integrate, bound, and stabilize individual interests into a social system is also an essential part of development. Personal and prudential concepts can serve as the basis to construct moral concepts.

Piaget proposed a theoretical model in which moral development is achieved by the transformation of non-moral social values into stable moral systems based on norms of reciprocity and mutual respect (Piaget, 1981). Non-moral concepts are subjective, lacking reciprocity and feelings of obligation. But the simple evaluation of liking another person (which is non-moral) becomes moral when it is transformed into a stable relationship of mutual respect, with reciprocal expectations and duties that maintain the integrity of the relationship and create standards for each individual. Piaget described the process of moral development, the development of feelings of justice, for example, as “regulations of regulations”, the superimposition of moral structures and affect on precursive subjective feelings such as sympathy.

I pose that personal and prudential concepts are utilized as precursive elements of rights which are actively transformed and integrated into full conceptions of rights. Personal and prudential concepts are less complex and less stable than moral conceptions; as in the example of liking another person, the personal and prudential are subjective. Personal concepts involve preference and choice; while prudential concepts are prescriptive (“I must ride my bicycle carefully to avoid harm”) but they are not prescriptive at the level of morality, because they do not involve reciprocal relationships or universal rules. As agentic concepts, personal and prudential concepts are conative and subjective, rather than moral, as they lack reciprocity and normativity. They are about what one wishes to do or perceives as prudent rather than what must be done for others.

The transformation of elements from the personal or prudential domains involves defining and organizational processes in the construction of moral norms. These elements are regulated by criteria 1) limiting entitlements to core functions; 2) specifying that these protections must be applied equally to every individual (universality); and 3) the systemization of reciprocal entitlements and duties. These moral regulations transform personal and prudential concepts by applying norms which, amongst other qualities, are more lasting and stable. Their intended function in society is to create durable norms about meeting basic human needs. However, as Piaget terms this kind of transformation “changing perspective’ in such a way that relationships appear that were not there at the start”, it must not be forgotten that their most fundamental intention is to be more moral: to be more just and more compassionate. A rights-based conception of society is aimed at the increase in well-being and fulfillment of each individual in society, although, ultimately, it may promote greater productivity in society at large. Conceptions of human rights are intended to compensate for various challenges to the individual, and, by preventing suffering and untimely loss, to further individuals and society alike. In this way human rights can claim to represent a more stable but also more idealized level of conceptual organization in which personal and prudential conceptions are maintained and subsumed.
Not every personal concept represents a precursor to conceptions of rights: although a child’s wish to choose his own friends could be said to precede the right to association, an insistence upon eating only certain foods does not construe a human rights claim; the fact that this is so does not negate the legitimacy of the personal domain. In fact, the trivial and particularistic nature of certain personal domain concepts would appear to contribute to the protection of individual expression and overall well-being.

Social domain theory differs from the stage theories of Piaget and Kohlberg in that development is not seen as global; each domain has a developmental pathway that is separate from the rest. Therefore this transformative process involves the active borrowing or incorporation of certain personal and prudential concepts and structures into the moral domain to meet a particular need, not a global transformation of the personal and prudential domains. Nor does this process involve the negation of any singular concepts in their original non-moral form. As is evident in the results, conceptions of agency involving personal and prudential domain concepts are retained and used according to context; age-related changes were evident in the developmental period studied.

This proposed structural analysis, in which personal and prudential concepts are transformed and used as precursive elements in more complex and stable moral conceptions, is consistent with the philosophical and empirical information presented in this study, and could conceivably serve as a hypothesis for further study.

The historical development of rights concepts

The developmental process posited for psychological development may have parallels in the historical evolution of human rights; this may speak to the paradox that, while the psychological evidence for commonalities in the content and bounding of the moral domain is consistent, the historical evidence shows that the modern definition of rights did not achieve full political recognition until 1948 (Bielefeldt, 2000, p. 102). Prior to that time, ‘motifs’, similar to properties of rights, were evident in different traditions: the idea of impersonality, or the rule of law, was found in the 1215 Magna Charta; the idea of the inalienable dignity of ‘each and every individual’ appeared in the Bible; the idea of natural or ‘a priori’ law appeared in the writings of the Greek, Sophocles; and so on.

These motifs were not equivalent to modern human rights; especially, widely accepted concepts of hierarchy prevailed over concepts of equality and generalizability that would have made these motifs fully moral according to modern understandings. Cycles of resistance and integration involving conflicts of the precursors of conceptions of rights with established hierarchical conventions were characteristic of European history; and these precursive conceptions were often ascribed to ‘natural law’ or secular thought. It appears that while the full development of rights on the political plane was made possible by the inroads of secularism on fixed hierarchical traditions, the modern political concept of human rights was consolidated by an international response to the atrocities of the Second World War.

The development of human rights on the political plane may have followed a similar logic to psychological conceptions in their development, so that political concepts of rule of law, natural law and entitlements that were ‘pre-moral’, and followed some, but not all, moral criteria, were eventually incorporated and transformed into morally into a conception of human rights.
Agency and the poor

Participatory research and case studies of the poor suggest that conceptions of agency are central especially to those human rights focusing on economic survival, and that an acute awareness of agency emerges in the psychological framing of poverty. An international participatory survey revealed that, of the psychological consequences of poverty, powerlessness and lack of voice were frequently mentioned. A Ghanaian characterization of poverty was “You know good, but you cannot do good” (Narayan, 2000, p. 39). Hence poverty is psychologically characterized as an acute sense of lack of agency. Predictions that non-Western societies foster a ‘merging’ of egos may be applicable to comparative religious studies; but in the daily struggle for life it may be that the poor focus more on individual agency, with material security as a primary end, than do the wealthy.

Historical references to the resistance against the efforts of the apartheid regime to suppress literacy amongst black South Africans have been presented in the chapter on Setting (p. 27). Helwig suggests, based on the finding that Chinese adolescents in a hierarchical society endorse democratic decision-making procedures more frequently than their Canadian counterparts (Helwig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2003), that the constraints of authoritarianism may produce an accentuated awareness of injustice rather than acquiescence (Helwig, 2008). It is therefore possible that the prevalence of rights and agency conceptions in this population was reinforced by their knowledge of the history of apartheid and the part played by their tribe. However, these considerations that the Zulus had reasons for a strong sense of agency would only account for an heightened awareness of rights and agency found in the population, not for its presence at all; they are based on a constructivist model. A socialization model would have generated predictions that the Zulus would not have responded with resistance in the years of apartheid, but that the participants in the study would have been adhered more or less to a duty-based model, decreasing, perhaps, with exposure to Western values with age; but the evidence clearly demonstrated this was not the case.

It may be that other philosophical treatments of human rights, such as a central emphasis on dignity, find their empirical validation in the area of civil liberties; that the concept of flourishing, for example, would better capture the endpoint of children’s developmental rights in a middle-class setting; and that agency is but one of several key constructs in the psychological investigation of conceptions of rights.
Conclusion

These findings, together with those from studies of the Druze Arabs (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998) and mainland Chinese adolescents (Lahat et al., 2009), contribute to the understanding of conceptions of rights in non-Western cultures. Each of these cultures has a history of political rights very different from the United States, and what could be called a different ‘take’ on collectivism. Their respective ethnicities, political and philosophical backgrounds, the primacy of traditional religion in the Druze, the socialist state in China, and the family in Zulu Africa, are all distinctly non-Western; yet, in all these contexts, as well as the United States, conceptions of human rights emerge and are salient.
References


Appendix A

Interview Questions by Type

Abstract Assessments
1) Do you think that each and every child should have the chance to learn to read?
2) Do you think that everyone should have the chance to learn to read, no matter who they are? For example, irrespective of nationality, where they live, or how rich they may be?
3) If a law in a country forbids certain children from learning to read, for example, girls or a certain race, is it better to obey that law, or is it better to break it?
4) Must every government, all over the world, give every child the chance to learn to read?

Conflict Assessments

Culture
1) Is culture more important or is learning to read more important, if you have to choose?
2) There is a child who has to leave early in the morning to go to school to learn to read, and he gets home late in the evening. He is so busy with school that he does not have time to learn his family’s skill, building furniture, which takes years to learn. If his parents have to make a choice, do you think they should choose for the child to learn to read, or learn traditional skills?
3) Suppose there is a group of people who do not use books, newspapers, or use reading or writing in any way. In their tradition, they used storytelling, memorizing things, songs and poems and teaching from person to person. They know that these ways will probably be forgotten if their children learn to read. They value these ways. Do you think the group should choose to let their children learn to read, or should the children learn their oral culture, if they...
have to choose?

_Parental Authority_
1) If parents forbid a child to learn to read, is that all right?

2) If the parents forbid the child to learn to read no matter what is said or done, should the child obey the parents, or should they disobey?

3) If parents think that children are needed to work at home, so they choose to keep the children at home instead of sending them to school to learn to read, is this all right?

_Gender_
1) Should boys and girls, or women and men, have the same opportunities to learn to read?

2) In a different country, some families and villages do not allow their girls to learn to read. But the government does not protect the girls from this. Is this all right?

3) In a country where it costs money to send children to learn to read, a family has two boys and two girls, but they can only afford to send two children to school. Therefore they choose to send the boys and not the girls. Is that all right?
Interview Questions: Translated Version

Introduction. **Ngicela ukhumbule ukuthi sikhuluma ngolwazi lokutunda hmayi infundo njenjo kujwayelekile.**

In IsiZulu the word for ‘education’ and ‘reading’ is the same. However in this study we are talking about the skill of reading. That is, being able to read books, newspapers, signs, and other forms of writing. Please remember that we are talking about the skill of reading and not education generally.

**Abstract Assessments**

Question 1.
**Ngabe ucbanga ukuthi ingane nengane kumele ibe nethuba lokukwazi ukufunda okubhaliwe?**
Do you think that each and every child should have the chance to learn to read?
**Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?**
Why do you think so?

Question 2.
**Ngabe ucbanga ukuthi wonke umuntu kumele abe nethuba lokufunda okubhaliwe, ngisho noma bengobani? Isibonelo, ngisho noma engowasiphi isizwe noma inhlobo, noma ngabe ehlala kuphi noma ngabe ube be kangakanani?**
Do you think that everyone should have the chance to learn to read, no matter who they are? For example, irrespective of nationality, where they live, or how rich they may be?
**Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?**
Why do you think so?

Question 3.
**Uma umthetho ezweni ungumveli abantu abathile ukuthi bafunde ukufunda, isibonelo, amantombazane noma isizwe esithile, kungcono yini ukukhlonipha lowo mthetho noma kungcono ukumaliza?**
If a law in a country forbids certain children from learning to read, for example, girls or a certain race, is it better to obey that law, or is it better to break it?
**Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?**
Why do you think so?

Question 4.
**Ngabe bonke ohulumeni, kuwo wonke umhlaba, kumele banikeze ingane nengane ithuba lokufunda okubhaliwe?**
Must every government, all over the world, give every child the chance to learn to read?
**Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?**
Why do you think so?
Culture

Question 1.
Ucabanga isiko elibaluleke kakhulu nomu ukufunda ukubhaliwe yiko okubaluleke kakhulu uma kufanele ukhethe ungakhethani?

Is culture more important or is learning to read more important, if you have to choose?

Kungani ucabanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Question 2.
Uma abazali bengazikhethela, ucabanga ukuthi bangakhethela abantwana babo ukuthi bafunde ukufunda, nomu ukuthi bafunde amakhono endabuko? Isibonelo, kukhona umntwana okumele ahambe ekuseni kakhulu ukuya esikoleni ukuyofunda, bese efika ekhaya ntambama kakhulu nomu kusihlwa. Wenzu kakhulu umsebenzi wesikole kangangoba akasanako sikhathi sokufunda amakhona asemndenini, ukwakha ifenisha okuthatha iminyaka ukufunda. Umndeni kumele ukhetheni?

There is a child who has to leave early in the morning to go to school to learn to read, and he gets home late in the evening. He is so busy with school that he does not have time to learn his family’s skill, building furniture, which takes years to learn. If his parents have to make a choice, do you think they should choose for the child to learn to read, or learn traditional skills?

Kungani ucabanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Question 3.

Suppose there is a tribe of people who do not use books, newspapers, or use reading or writing in any way. In their tradition, they used storytelling, memorizing things, songs and poems and teaching from person to person. They know that these ways will probably be forgotten if their children learn to read. They value these ways. Do you think the tribe should choose to let their children learn to read, or should the children learn their oral culture, if they have to choose?

Kungani ucabanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?
Parental Authority

Question 1.
Uma abazali bengavumeli umntwana ukuthi afunde ukufunda, kulingile lokho?
If parents forbid a child to learn to read, is that all right?
Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Question 2.
Uma abazali bengavumeli ukuthi umntwana afunde noma ngabe sekuthiweni noma kwenziweni, kumele umntwana ahloniphe abazal, noma kumele angabahloniphi?
If the parents forbid the child to learn to read no matter what is said or done, should the child obey the parents, or should they disobey?
Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Question 3.
Uma abazali becabanga ukuthi izingane kumele zisebenze ekhaya, ngakhoke bakhethe ukuthi izingane zihlale ekhaya kunokuthi bazithumele esikoleni ukuyofunda, ngabe lokhu kulingile?
If parents think that children are needed to work at home, so they choose to keep the children at home instead of sending them to school to learn to read, is this all right?
Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Gender

Question 1.
Ngabe abafana namantombazane, abesimame nabesilisa, kufanele babe namathuba alinganayo okufunda ukufunda okubhaliwe?
Should boys and girls, or women and men, have the same opportunities to learn to read?
Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?

Question 2.
Kwelinye izwe elehlukile eminye imindeni nezindawo zasemakayaya abavumeli amantombazane afunde ukufunda. Kodwa uhulumeni akawavikeli amantombazane kulekhu. Kulingile lokho?
In a different country, some families and villages do not allow their girls to learn to read. But the government does not protect the girls from this. Is this all right?
Kungani ucbanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?
Question 3.
Ezweni lapho kubiza imali ukuthumela abantwana ukuthi bafunde ukufunda, umndeni unabafana ababili namantombazane amabili, kodwa bangakwazi kuphela ukuthumela abantwana ababili esikoleni. Ngakhoke bakhetha ukuthumela abafana ayi amantombazane. Kulungile lokho?
In a country where it costs money to send children to learn to read, a family has two boys and two girls, but they can only afford to send two children to school. Therefore they choose to send the boys and not the girls. Is that all right?
Kungani ucabanga kanjalo?
Why do you think so?
Appendix B
CODING SYSTEM

Section One: Instructions for use

A. General description

All standard questions should be coded. Information provided by additional probe questions should also be taken into account, when relevant to the standard question. Each coded response to an interview question has, potentially, two parts: the evaluation and the justification(s).

1. Evaluations embrace simple yes/no, OK/not OK responses to interview questions that are interpreted in terms of endorsements/affirmations and negative endorsements/subordinations of the right to literacy. Section Two guides the coding of evaluations.
2. Justifications consist of participants’ rationales to support their evaluations. Responses to the standard question, ‘Why do you think so?’, and any subsequent probes, constitute the justification(s). Instructions for the coding of justifications will be found in Section Three.

B. Standard situation

The standard situation refers to the particular circumstances or definition of the situation to be used for coding purposes, whether for concept or conflict questions. The standard situation of ‘the right to literacy’ is defined as the entitlement of every individual to the provision of educational opportunities intended to teach reading and writing skills to a basic level of competency. There are no implications regarding the language taught, or content. Literacy is distinguished here from education in the general, under which it must be subsumed, and from other communicative skills such as oral competencies.

‘Right’ is used here in the moral sense rather than the political; that is to say, its cogency, or validity, is derived from reasoned evaluations rather than from legal or constitutional authority such as a national Bill of Rights. In order that the participants do not confuse the two meanings, the word ‘right’ is not used in the interview protocol. Instead, ‘the right to literacy’ is rephrased using variations of its literal meaning, that ‘each and every child should have the chance to learn to read’.

C. Validity of responses

Some responses contain assumptions, or rationales, that appear erroneous. However, code participants’ own understanding of the way things are, without regard to the factual accuracy of the response. For instance, if participants were to assume that English is spoken the world over and that this is a justification for universal literacy, this would be coded under ‘Prudential benefits, communicative abilities’. Likewise, rationales such as ‘there is no need for girls to learn to read because they just become pregnant’ would be coded under ‘Gender, behavioral and trait attributions’.
D.  

Transcription conventions

All of the interviews were conducted in Zulu, unless otherwise noted, and were attended by the researcher, a translator, and a participant. In the interviews, the translator read the standard interview questions verbatim; the participant’s response was translated; a translated dialogue between the researcher and participant, including further probes and responses, then took place. The transcriptions include the English translations of the original Zulu responses with the participant’s responses in plain type, the researcher’s probes in italics, and interjections from the translator in italics preceded by an initial and set between dashes (N.—comment—).

E.  

Notes on translation

Interpretation

The interpreters used in this study were native Zulu speakers for whom English was a second language. In a few instances their translations were difficult to understand and the transcript includes a clarification by the researcher that is the best data available for a particular question. In these instances, code these comments, which were based upon contextual cues from the interview and local knowledge.

Gender pronouns

The translators frequently used ‘he’ and ‘she’ interchangeably, even when referring to one child, so that these pronouns must not be relied upon or allowed to cause confusion.

-Fund-: ‘education’ or ‘reading’

In the Zulu language, the mother tongue of the participants spoken in all the interviews, the words ‘reading’ and ‘education’ are closely related. The root ‘-fund-’ is a homonym for either. To compound the possibilities for ambiguity, the vast majority of literacy-related activities occur at school and nowhere else: there are, for example, no street signs in the villages and most households have no books. While ‘reading’ is distinguished from ‘education’ by using the phrase, ‘reading that which is written’ in the interview questions, many participants use ‘reading’ and ‘education’ interchangeably. Where possible, the interviewer uses probes to elicit a distinction, but there is not always a clear distinction to be made; it is not always possible to separate reading from the educational process. Therefore, ‘education’ is coded as ‘reading’ in most instances. However, responses are considered uncodeable if the participant refers to the socialization process at school, unrelated subjects such as math, etc.

‘Disturb’

The Zulu translators use the English word ‘disturb’ to describe, not a psychological disturbance, but rather, the disruption of one’s aims, caused by bad luck, illness, or interference. A ‘disturbance’ is best translated as a loss of agency or capability.


Abstract assessments

The questions comprising the abstract assessment refer to the right to literacy in the general, where there are no competing moral or social claims. There are four questions in the general assessment, each based upon the standard situation of the right to literacy:

1. The first question elicits an assessment of the right to literacy.
2. The second question focuses upon generalizability, whether the right to literacy is applicable to all, regardless of attributes such as ethnicity, wealth, nationality, or gender.
3. The third, on law validity, examines reasoning about the independent validity of a right to the existing legal system: whether, if a law exists prohibiting the exercise of this right, this law ought to be obeyed or disobeyed, and why.
4. The fourth asks whether the right to literacy is a positive right, that is, whether the provision of literacy, particularly to those in need, is an obligation that must be assumed by the government.

Conflict assessments

In Questions 5-13, situations are posed in which the right to literacy comes into conflict with values common in traditional societies. These questions explore issues in the areas of cultural preservation, parental authority, and gender roles. Each area includes an abstract evaluation and two act assessments that pose concrete variations on the theme.

Descriptions of the standard situation for each of the contextualized examples follow, numbered as per the interview protocol:

Cultural preservation

1. Whether maintaining one’s culture is more important, or learning to read is more important. ‘Culture’, here, is defined by the participant.
2. Practical skills: Whether a child should go to school to learn to read or learn a traditional trade (furniture building). The choice here is between the value of a practical trade and the right to literacy.
3. Oral culture: Whether a group with a strong oral tradition ought to pass on their body of oral knowledge and beliefs to their children, or choose that the children learn to read. The choice here is between a group’s maintenance of their oral cultural tradition or the children’s right to literacy.

Parental authority

1. Whether it is acceptable if parents forbid a child to read.
2. Obedience: Whether a child ought to obey or disobey his/her parents when they forbid their child to learn, and every effort has been made to change their minds. The choice here is between obedience to the parents and the right to literacy.
3. Child labor: Whether parents ought to be able to stop a child from learning to read in order that they may work. The choice here is between the value of the child’s labor to the family and the child’s right to literacy.
**Gender**

1. Whether males and females should have equal opportunities to learn to read.
2. Government protection: The question is whether the government should protect girls so that they are able to learn to read in situations where their parents or community would prevent them from doing so. The choice here is between the duty of the government to enforce equal opportunities for literacy, and their authority to enact this duty, and the authority of the parents or community over their children.
3. Family poverty: The question asked here is whether it is acceptable for parents, if they can only afford to send two children out of a family of two boys and two girls, to choose to send the boys and not the girls. The choice here is between a parental decision based on gender and on the benefits to the family of having literate boys or girls, or one based on equal opportunity.

H. *Defining the response*

In general, responses to each question should be coded as a discrete unit of analysis. These are usually bounded by self-contained paragraphs comprising the response to each question in the interview and subsequent probes.

Except where noted, the general rule is to code only those judgments pertaining to the central focus of each example. If the participant includes tangential issues in his/her response, the standard procedure was for the interviewer to attempt to redirect attention to the central question. Some act assessments include practical difficulties that are peripheral to the central problem defined in the question descriptions. The participants sometimes responded by offering solutions to these peripheral difficulties. In some instances it will be necessary to look carefully for the justification in a response that mainly contains proposed practical solutions. Justifications containing issues or concerns that do not pertain to the standard situation should be coded in the main evaluation only if: (a) The participant rejects the interviewer’s counter-suggestion and still sees the issue as applicable to the example at hand, or (b) the interviewer fails to compensate for the additional concern.

I. *Hierarchical categories*

Some categories are hierarchical, as shown in Section Three. If a response cannot be unambiguously placed in a category, place it in the ‘least upper bound’: e.g., if it cannot be distinguished as 1.5 rather than 1.6, code it 1.0; if it cannot be coded 1.0 rather than 2.0, code it 0.0, 0.1 or 0.2.

Justification categories 0.1-2.0 are minimal categories, which means they should be used only in cases where the participant’s responses cannot be coded in one of the more specified categories. (3.0-14.0). These categories thus can only appear in isolation. Note: categories 0.1-2.0 constitute a hierarchy of preference. In cases where they appear in combination, the highest numerical category only is to be coded.

In those instances where a broad response is probed and followed by a second, more specific response, then code only the second response.

J. *Circular responses*
If a response is essentially an affirmation that repeats the question, for example: ‘should each and every child have the chance to learn to read?’ -- ‘Yes, they all must have that chance to learn to read’, then the justification should be coded as 1.0, a non-specific positive affirmation. However this same answer, if it were an independent response to a different question, would be coded as 9.3, right.

K. Justification/evaluation correspondence

All justifications and evaluations should correspond. Code only justifications that support the evaluation. If an ambivalent evaluation is given, code both positive and negative supporting justifications.

L. Multiple justifications

Multiple justifications should be coded when given. All justifications that match a category should be coded, unless otherwise specified in the category descriptions, or unless a probe elicits a more specific response, in which case that response only is coded. A phrase may contain a justification. For example, for the sentence, ‘in the new South Africa, all students have the right to read’, the phrase ‘in the new South Africa’ would be coded under 8.0, ‘historical progress’, and ‘all students have the right to read’ would be coded under 9.3.1, Justice/Welfare/Rights Concepts and Principles, Equality.

M. Negative/positive values for Abstract 3; Parental Authority 1,2, and 3; Gender 2 and 3

Note that for the three questions about laws or rules prohibiting the right to literacy (Abstract 3; Parental Authority 1 and 2), a negative response/non-endorsement of the prohibitive law is coded as a positive endorsement/affirmation of the right to literacy, and a positive response/endorsement of the law is coded as a negative endorsement/ subordination of the right. Similarly, Parental Authority 3 and Gender 2 and 3 present situations that contravene the right to literacy and ask, ‘Is this all right?’ For these questions a positive response is a negative response or subordination of the right to literacy. A negative response is a positive endorsement of the right.

N. Question not asked

If a question was not asked, code a dash (–).

O. Uncodeable

This category should be used when: (a) Forcing the response into an existing category would substantially distort its meaning, (b) the response is too unintelligible or incomplete to code, (c) the justification to be coded follows an unspecified evaluation, or (d) the participant answers a
question different from the one asked. Of course if such a response can be coded under the appropriate question elsewhere in the interview, do so.
Section Two: Evaluations

A. Introduction

The interview includes two types of questions: concept assessments and conflict assessments. The following four categories were devised to classify responses expressing, in concept assessments, endorsement or non-endorsement of the right to literacy, or, in conflict evaluations, affirmation or subordination of the right to literacy with regard to other social concerns. Positive or negative evaluations are elaborated according to the type of question asked: whether the right to literacy is being evaluated as it pertains to the individual (Abstract 1 and 2; Gender 1), against prohibitive laws or regulations (Abstract 3, Parental Authority 1 and 2), as a governmental obligation (Abstract 4, Gender 2), or in conflict with group interests (Culture 1, 2, and 3; Parental Authority 3; Gender 3).

B. Evaluation categories, by type of question

Abstract 1, Abstract 2, and Gender 1: Individuals and the right to literacy

0.0 Non-specified evaluations
   0.1 Uncodeable.
   0.2 No response.
   0.3 Don’t know. If a participant then gives a definite response, then ignore the ‘don’t know’ and code the other part of the response. If a clear response is given at some other point in the interview, then go back and use this response.

1.0 Positive evaluation: Endorsement/affirmation of the right to literacy.

2.0 Negative evaluation: Non-endorsement of the right to literacy: the right is judged as negative or irrelevant, or with conditions that would alter its moral status. A right must take the form, ‘everyone should (must, ought to) have, or is entitled to, a freedom or resource’.

3.0 Equivalent/vacillating/conditional evaluations. Contradictory elements appear equally important (equivalence) or no one element out of a number is prevalent (vacillation), so that a participant asserts that no choice can be made. In these instances, this response is recorded by a ‘=’. Supporting negative and positive justifications should also be coded. Conditional (depends) evaluations are contingent upon some unknown information, such as consequences, and is stated as ‘depends’ or in ‘if, then’ conditional form.
Abstract 3, Parental Authority 1, and Parental Authority 2: Prohibitive rules or regulations and the right to literacy

0.0 Non-specified evaluations
   0.1 Uncodeable.
   0.2 No response.
   0.3 Don’t know. If a participant then gives a definite response, then ignore the don’t know and code the other part of the response. If a clear response is given at some other point in the interview, then go back and use this response.

1.0 Positive evaluation: Negative evaluation of law or rule. A prohibitive government law or parental judgment is judged unacceptable/not all right/ought to be disobeyed. The implication is that the right to literacy is judged positively.

2.0 Negative evaluation: Positive evaluation of law or rule. Prohibitions by the government or parental are judged acceptable/all right/as an obligation to obey; the implication is that the right to literacy is judged negatively.

3.0 Equivalent/vacillating/conditional evaluations. Contradictory elements appear equally important (equivalence) or no priority is found amongst multiple elements (vacillation), so that a participant asserts that no choice can be made. In these instances, this response is recorded by a ‘=’. Supporting negative and positive justifications should also be coded. Conditional (depends) evaluations are contingent upon some unknown information, such as consequences, and is stated as ‘depends’ or in ‘if, then’ conditional form.

Questions 4, 12: Governmental obligations and the right to literacy

0.0 Non-specified evaluations
   0.1 Uncodeable.
   0.2 No response.
   0.3 Don’t know. If a participant first says, ‘I don’t know,’ then goes on to produce a definite response, either immediately, or later in the interview, then replace ‘I don’t know’ with this definite response. If the participant says, ‘I don’t know’ after considering several vacillating concepts, then use 3.0, below.

1.0 Positive evaluation of a duty. The government is judged to have an obligation to provide or to enforce the equitable distribution of this right.

2.0 Negative evaluation of a duty. The government is judged to have no obligation to provide this right or to enforce its provision, or, the conditions that attach to rights, i.e. prescriptivity and generalizability, are contravened, e.g., ‘the government need only provide literacy to boys.’
3.0 Equivalent/vacillating/conditional evaluations. Contradictory elements appear equally important (equivalence) or no priority is found amongst multiple elements (vacillation), so that a participant asserts that no choice can be made. In these instances, this response is recorded by a ‘=’. Supporting negative and positive justifications should also be coded. Conditional (depends) evaluations are contingent upon some unknown information, such as consequences, and is stated as ‘depends’ or in ‘if, then’ conditional form.

Questions 5, 6, 7, 10, 13: Social norms and the right to literacy or equal opportunity

0.0 Non-specified evaluations
   0.1 Uncodeable.
   0.2 No response.
   0.3 Don’t know. If a participant then gives a definite response, then ignore the some other point in the interview, then go back and use this response.

1.0 Positive evaluation: Affirmation. The judgment affirms the right to literacy (5,6,7,10) or equal gender opportunity (13) over the competing social value.

2.0 Negative evaluation: Subordination. The right to literacy or equal opportunity is subordinated to the competing social value.

3.0 Equivalent/vacillating/conditional evaluations. Contradictory elements appear equally important (equivalence) or no priority is found amongst multiple elements (vacillation), so that a participant asserts that no choice can be made. In these instances, this response is recorded by a ‘=’. Supporting negative and positive justifications should also be coded.

   Conditional (depends) evaluations are contingent upon some unknown information, such as consequences, and is stated as ‘depends’ or in ‘if, then’ conditional form.
Section Three: Justifications

A. Justifications supporting positive evaluations of the right to literacy or negative evaluations of non-provision of the right to literacy.

0.0 Non-specified
  0.1 Uncodeable
  0.2 No response
  0.3 Don’t know.

1.0 Simple acceptance of literacy is a positive endorsement with no mention of any external rationale or justification. Circular responses without a value judgment. Negative evaluations of non-provision: ‘if you can’t read, you can’t do anything.’ Include here ‘circular’ answers that merely re-phrase the question, see Section One, I. Also include answers that provide pragmatic solutions to obstacles such as finding money to pay school fees, circumventing a law forbidding literacy, etc. But if the response includes ‘must, supposed to, should’ this defines an endorsement of the right and not just a simple acceptance.

Examples: ‘Reading is the way things are’; ‘we read in order to be able to read’; ‘children need to read’; ‘we choose to read’; ‘everyone needs that chance to learn to read.’ but not ‘they must all get that chance to read.’ which includes the moral imperative.

2.0 Literacy provides capacities for agency, where agency is defined as the ability to choose and act with sufficient knowledge and with conscious purpose. In this category include references to:

   2.1 Growth, potential, future, opportunities, or ability. Independence, self-sufficiency; more or broader choices in life.
   2.2 Cognitive/communicative functions. Ways in which reading helps to acquire, process, and share knowledge. Literacy or education as an aid to cognitive development, as opposed to a qualification (cf. 2.3). Unspecified cognitive abilities or development as in, ‘reading is the key to opening minds’. A negative evaluation of non-provision of literacy here might be, ‘You will never know/learn anything if you do not learn to read.’
   Knowledge, information, intelligence, skills, self expression/autonomy, independent thinking. Advantages of literacy: permanence of the written word (records, references), advantages for revision and retention of information, scope of information from other cultures, vocabulary, comprehension. A negative evaluation of non-provision of literacy might be, ‘You will forget those things you learnt if you cannot read and write them down.’
   Communicative abilities: including learning a second language, communicating outside the Zulu community.
   2.3 Prudential: Actor’s own health, comfort, security, well-being is secured through these goods/abilities. Use this category for unspecified prudential justification, ‘for their own good’.
   Educational progress: general references to education, ‘moving up’,...
qualifications. The standard educational qualification is referred to as the ‘matriculation certificate’ or ‘matric’.

Jobs: finding, applying, qualifying for jobs

Money, purchased goods (cars, houses)

Legal: understanding and signing contracts/ protection from fraud

Privacy (the ability to read one’s own letters)

2.4 Family/community benefits: unspecified help for the family or local community

Cognitive/communicative benefits to the family or community: obtaining or recording information, writing letters for the illiterate

Legal (contractual) powers on behalf of family: understanding and signing contracts, avoiding fraud

Financial benefits for family.

3.0 Individual/interpersonal psychological benefits

3.1 Individual psychological benefits: confidence, self-respect, enjoyment

3.2 Interpersonal psychological benefits: Esteem in the family or community, being ‘somebody’, learning to respect others. A negative evaluation of the non-provision of literacy might be, ‘You are nothing if you cannot read.’

4.0 Societal progress/utility. References to the benefits to society of a literate population. Literacy facilitates national economic progress, communication between different ethnic and linguistic groups and nations, etc. Differs from 1.0 in that the value is placed upon the benefits of literacy to society and not to individuals. Differs from 6.0 in that positive consequences are not explicitly of a moral nature, e.g., involving justice or welfare outcomes. If social consequences of restriction of right are further specified in terms of community welfare, such as criminality, health outcomes, etc., then code in appropriate categories in 6.0.

5.0 Historic progress, democratic powers, constitutional rights.

5.1 Historic progress. Reference to history (e.g. ‘nowadays,’ ‘in these times’), national policy or sentiments, democratic process, better economic opportunities, in the context of positive change. ‘These days, everyone must learn to read to get those better jobs.’ Or, in the case of non-provision of the right to literacy, references to lack of progress.

5.2 Reference to a legal right, e.g. the Constitution or the Bill of Rights, as legitimating the right. Code only if there is no indication that people have the right independent of constitutional ratification.
6.0 Justice/Welfare/Rights. Concepts of justice refer to fairness, equality, justice, or otherwise contain a notion of equilibrium between individuals’ competing claims; conceptions of welfare refer to notions of the wrongness of acts leading to physical or psychological harm or the need to abstain from such acts; conceptions of rights refer to entitlements that help to protect or promote individual agency. Simple references to right and wrong.

6.1 Unelaborated reference to issues of justice or welfare. If fairness is further defined in terms of any of the categories below (9.2—9.6) code in appropriate specific categories. Sentences using both ‘everyone/all’ and ‘must/supposed to/should/has to…’

6.2 Equality. Reference to the principle of equality, equal opportunities, or the moral equivalence of individuals (‘We are the same’, ‘everyone should be able to…’, ‘boys and girls are the same, equal.’)

6.3 References to rights, Unelaborated; the right to learn to read, or education; or other rights: voting, privacy, etc.

6.4 References to the duty of the government to provide a right, based upon: Government’s ability (power, money) to provide; specific duties to the vulnerable: to children, to the poor; duties as the government’s mandate by democratic processes or principles.

6.5 Welfare: prohibition of right results in harm, including:

Physical harm. The association of illiteracy with poor health outcomes for individuals, including unwanted pregnancies, alcoholism, and HIV+/AIDS infections.

Psychological harm. Reference either to short-term negative psychological and emotional consequences for others, such as offense, hurt feelings, or distress, or to long-term emotional effects: psychological damage, psychopathology, and negative effects on an individual’s self-esteem.

Children’s ability to be self-sufficient in case they are orphaned.

Societal harm. General references to societal harm believed to result from illiteracy. These negative effects include the association of illiteracy with criminal behavior. For poor health outcomes code under individual welfare unless a clear reference is made to the well-being of the community as a whole.

7.0 Justifications for Negative Evaluation of Rule or Law. A parental rule or law restricting the right is seen as not OK, illegitimate, requiring revision; etc. No further specification of reasons for negative evaluation of law is given.

7.1 Rule or law is judged to restrict children’s future choices.

7.2 Rule or law is seen as violating children’s rights; parents have no right to interfere.

7.3 Parental duty, responsibilities. Parents have a duty to allow their children to read; preventing, or not enabling a child to take up their right, constitutes neglect or abuse.

7.4 Parental lack of information or understanding. Evaluation is referenced to
parent’s lack of competence to choose, usually used in the context of illiterate adults.

7.5 Legitimate challenges to parental authority. Children must obey but in certain instances, older children may open discussions or other adult authorities (extended family members, social workers) can legitimately intervene. Authority and obedience are seen as social protocols with rules of negotiation.

8.0 Gender
8.1 Behavioral and trait attributions: ‘boys get drunk’, ‘girls get pregnant’, either sex is perceived as more responsible or more capable.
8.2 Roles: men as heads of family, women as wives belonging to their husbands’ families.

B. Justifications supporting negative evaluations of rights: Subordination of right (or positive evaluations of laws or parental authority)

0.0 Non-specified
0.1 Uncodeable.
0.2 No response.
0.3 Don’t know.

8.0 Gender
8.1 Behavioral and trait attributions: ‘boys get drunk’, ‘girls get pregnant’, either sex is perceived as more responsible or more capable.
8.2 Roles: men as heads of family, women as wives belonging to their husbands’ families.

9.0 Cultural preservation:
9.1 Maintaining traditional beliefs/practices is seen as an end in itself.
9.2 The protective value of cultural practices for the individual.
9.3 Particular values, e.g. respect for elders.

10.0 Positive evaluation of prohibitive law
10.1 Normative law. Law should be followed ‘because it’s the law’. No further justification or rationale for positive evaluation of law is given. Practice is judged wrong simply because it violates an existing law. (‘I don’t think he should break the law because it’s the law.’ Also code here unelaborated positive references to the law (‘It’s a good law,’ ‘the law is right,’ etc.)
10.2 Law and order. Laws must be followed so that social order is preserved and societal breakdown is avoided. May also include references to the importance of maintaining respect for the law.
10.3 Social contract. Laws must be followed because they express a social contract comprising a reciprocity of benefits and obligations between individuals
and government. (‘You should follow the law because the government provides certain things for the individual: services like police protection, social stability, etc., and in return the government requires that citizens follow the law.’) 

10.4 Coercion. Obeying the law for fear of reprisals: violence, withdrawal of support, etc.

11.0 Positive evaluation of prohibition/parental authority

11.1 Normative rule. Rule should be followed ‘because the parent is a parent’. No further justification or rationale for positive evaluation of law is given. Parental authority is seen as inviolable, not to be questioned. Also code here unelaborated positive references to parental authority, respect, and obedience.

11.2 Maintaining familial relationships/obedience/respect. Parental authority must be obeyed so that order in the family is maintained. The importance of maintaining a respectful relationship with adults/parents (code references to self-respect under psychological benefits, 5.2).

11.3 Reciprocity. Parental authority must be obeyed because children’s obedience is part of a system of benefits and obligations between family members. Code here children’s justifications of obedience ‘because they gave you life’, ‘because they provide for you’.

11.4 Coercion. Obeying parental authority for fear of reprisals, beatings, abandonment, withdrawal of support, etc.