Cognitive Development 24 (2009) 207–219

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Cognitive Development

Adolescent and adult reasoning about gender roles and fairness in Benin, West Africa

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Moral development
Gender
Culture

ABSTRACT

This study examined reasoning about gender roles in a traditional society in Benin, West Africa. Ninety-seven male and female adolescents and adults evaluated conflicts between a husband and a wife over gender norms to determine whether gender norms, are judged to be moral or conventional. Although most attributed decision-making power to the husband, justifications and evaluations that supported challenges to traditional gender roles indicate that social roles were seen as alterable conventions. In addition, concerns with punishment of one spouse were associated with endorsing the other spouse as decision-maker, indicating that endorsements of authority may be coerced. Very few age differences were found, indicating that adults are not more enculturated into an acceptance of hierarchy than adolescents. However, adults were more likely than adolescents to perceive coercion.

Concepts of rights, justice and welfare are held by children, adolescents, and adults across a wide range of cultures (Turiel, 2002). Yet most, if not all, cultures include some social traditions that can be characterized as at odds with these moral constructs, especially in the perpetuation of male dominance and female subordination, although there exists wide variation across cultures. How does growing up in a context in which males are in positions of greater authority than females affect reasoning about gender equity?

Some cultural psychologists suggest that growing up in a hierarchical culture leads to an acceptance or even a valuing of hierarchy through a process of enculturation, where hierarchy is judged to be the best system for the good of the group as a whole (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). For example, Shweder et al. (1987) state that "hierarchy protects the

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doi:10.1016/j.cogdev.2008.12.004

vulnerable from exploitation, while rewarding the powerful for caring for the weak" (p. 79). Some cultural psychologists have gone further to suggest that authority practices are not just valued; they are judged part of a moral code that also includes traditional gender roles more broadly conceived (Haidt & Joseph, 2008; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997).

In contrast, some developmental psychologists suggest that hierarchy may not be valued or considered part of a moral code, even when children grow up within a hierarchical tradition. Research from a social domain perspective demonstrates that the moral domain, consisting of rights, justice and welfare, is developed by people around the world, including in countries with a tradition of gender hierarchy—for example, in China (Yau & Smetana, 2003); in Nigeria (Hollos, Leis, & Turiel, 1986); and in Zambia (Zimba, 1994). In fact, concepts of justice are applied even to local traditions of male entitlement (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994).

The present study examines whether growing up in a culture with gender hierarchy leads to a valuing of traditional gender roles to the degree that they are judged to be part of a moral code. From a social domain perspective, issues of authority and gender roles are not part of the moral domain, but are conventions (Carter & Patterson, 1982; Laupa, Turiel, & Cowan, 1995). Conventions are defined as culturally variable components of social systems. For example, girls but not boys wear barrettes, but this is seen as alterable; it could be acceptable for a boy to wear a barrette in some cultures. Roles regarding authority are also variable. For example, in some cultures, mothers, not fathers, decide what is to be eaten for dinner, but this arrangement is also alterable. Moral issues are not seen as alterable. For example, it is not acceptable to harm an innocent person in any cultural context.

Thus, the moral and conventional domains are distinguished by their *alterability*—the idea that a different context cannot change a moral principle (Turiel, 1983). Conventional concerns, in contrast, are variable and can be altered in a new context. The present study examines whether gender norms are regarded as alterable and thus meet the criteria for being conventional. *Justifications* also differ for moral versus conventional concerns. Moral justifications make reference to non-culture specific consequences which involve rights, justice or welfare. Conventional justifications refer to culture-specific ways of doing things. In the present study, it was expected that judgments about authority would be based on conventional justifications, and judgments in support of the welfare of the family would be based on moral justifications.

Finally, the possibility of *enculturation* was examined by investigating whether adults are more entrenched in cultural traditions of hierarchy than adolescents. Cultural psychology models of morals as being culture-specific (Shweder et al., 1997) might predict that adherence to cultural norms would increase with more socialization. However, previous research has found minimal age differences between adolescents and adults in judgments about gender equity (Neff, 2001). In addition, the ability to distinguish between the moral and conventional domains is well established by adolescence, and social domain theorists would not expect age differences in the ability to distinguish the two domains.

The question of whether gender norms are judged to be moral or conventional in a traditional culture has important implications. Gender norms regarded as conventional and alterable imply a stronger possibility of movement toward equitable relations between the sexes. If people around the world can apply ideas regarding justice even to entrenched cultural traditions like gender hierarchy, then striving for equity could come from within even very traditional cultures. The present study examines these issues in Benin, West Africa, a region that is often characterized as collectivistic (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002) and hierarchical (United Nations Human Development report for Benin, 2007).

In addition to the main goal of determining whether gender norms are judged to be moral or conventional, there were three other goals of this research. The first was to examine how moral and conventional issues are weighed when they are in conflict. Issues of gender hierarchy involve both conventional issues of social roles and moral issues related to rights, justice and welfare. Some research has examined conflicts between conventional authority and morality. Studies in an Arab community in Israel (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994), in India (Neff, 2001; Shweder et al., 1987), and in Colombia (Mensing, 2003) show that adolescents and adults often endorse traditional male authority, even in cases where there are moral consequences including unfairness. In fact, Wainryb and Turiel (1994) found that women often endorsed male entitlement, even while they called it unfair. Thus, in the present study it was expected that participants would sometimes privilege male authority over concerns with fairness. However, even when conventional concerns take precedence over moral concerns, they are still

expected to be distinguished. Thus, judgments endorsing hierarchy were expected to be based on conventional justifications regarding traditional authority and not moral justifications regarding the welfare of the family.

A second goal was to investigate the role of *pragmatic concerns*, defined as concerns with avoiding punishment for disobedience (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994). It was expected that pragmatic concerns could influence judgments about who has authority. Wainryb and Turiel found that women in the traditional Druze culture in Israel frequently justified male entitlement by referencing the possibility of punishment for challenging authority. The present study extends Wainryb and Turiel's work by directly asking both males and females about punishment for disobedience. It was expected that participants would be more likely to note consequences for disobedience for wives than husbands, since husbands traditionally are the ones who punish and wives are traditionally the ones who are punished, based on gender hierarchy. In addition, this study extends Wainryb and Turiel's work by examining whether there is an association between these concerns and judgments about authority. If pragmatic concerns are connected to judgments about authority, it may be an indication that endorsements of hierarchy are based in part on fear of punishment and not a valuing of hierarchy, as some have suggested (Haidt & Joseph, 2008; Shweder et al., 1987).

Because males and females may have different perspectives on gender hierarchy, a final goal was to examine gender differences. Males, who are accorded higher status in most societies, may be more likely to support hierarchy than females, who are less likely to benefit from hierarchical practices. In fact, research on reasoning about gender indicates that adolescent boys are more likely to endorse traditional gender roles than adolescent girls (Brose, Conry-Murray, & Turiel, 2008; Neff, 2001). In multifaceted situations, variations in judgments are especially likely to occur. Thus, it was expected that gender differences in reasoning about gender hierarchy would reflect the self-interest of each gender, with males supporting hierarchy more than females to some degree. However, both sexes were still expected to judge social roles as conventional and not moral.

Judgments about the possibility of punishment for disobedience may also differ for males and females. No research has directly examined gender differences in perceptions of consequences for disobedience. Wainryb and Turiel (1994) found that women mentioned concerns with punishment in their justifications of male entitlement, but this justification did not appear in a parallel study of males. In the present study, the possibility of punishment for disobedience is directly assessed by asking both males and females about consequences for disobedience. Based on Wainryb and Turiel's (1994) study, females were expected to report harmful consequences more than males.

To investigate these issues, adolescents and adults in a traditional community in Benin, West Africa were asked to judge hypothetical stories about decisions in marital relationships about whether to follow traditional gender roles. Benin was chosen because its traditional customs reflect gender hierarchy in family and marital arrangements, making it a suitable culture in which to examine whether traditional gender roles are judged to be moral or conventional in such a culture and to investigate conflicts between gender roles and fairness, the role of pragmatic concerns, and sex and age differences in reasoning about these issues in a traditional culture.

Benin is a democratic country in West Africa of about six million people. As in many countries in West Africa, men in Benin hold more power than women. For example, according to the United Nation's Human Development report for Benin (2007), in 2005 females made up less than 1% of the government ministers in Benin. Also prevalent are prohibitions on women inheriting property and lack of educational opportunities for girls. Literacy is 24% for women compared to 55% for men. Practices that reinforce gender hierarchy are strongly connected to tradition for many Beninese. Some parents, for example, say that educating girls is a waste of time and that the education of females is a threat to their traditions (Boko, 1999).

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Participants were 97 Beninese adolescents and adults: 25 adolescent males (mean age 15-2, S.D. = .87, range 14–16), 24 adolescent females (M = 15-0, S.D. = .83, range 14–16), 24 adult males

(M = 34-11, S.D. = 10.13, range 25–60) and 24 adult females (M = 34-5, S.D. = 5.15, range 27–45). Most participants stated that they were Christian (86%), with 7% stating their religion as Muslim and 6% stating an indigenous religion. Participants averaged 4.7 years of education (S.D. = 2.03, range 0–10). Almost all adults were married (98%), with an average of 2.4 children (S.D. = 2.13, range 0–9). No adolescents were married or had children. All participants lived in Porto Novo (pop. 190,000), the capital of Benin.

1.2. Procedure

Participants were recruited at public markets, apprenticeship centers and schools by Beninese research assistants. Participants responded to questions in a semi-structured interview of about 30 min conducted in their native language of Goun by a research assistant of the same sex as the participant. The two research assistants were native Beninese, fluent in Goun. They both had the equivalent of master's degrees in the social sciences and were trained in the clinical interview method (Piaget, 1929; Turiel, 1983). A professional translator translated the interview protocol into Goun. Beninese high school English teachers translated and transcribed all the interviews from Goun into English.

1.3. Measures

The interview was designed with feedback from local scholars and was revised after pilot testing. The interview was designed to examine judgments about conflicts between husbands and wives over gender roles and entitlements. Spousal conflicts were chosen that are common sources of disagreement related to gender roles in Benin. There were five conflicts: whether to take a literacy class (Literacy), whether to take a job in an office (Office), whether to buy a refrigerator with wedding money (refrigerators are a source of income in Benin, because cold drinks can be sold, Money), who should contribute to the household by doing housework and allowing the other spouse to work (Housework), and who should care for the children (Childcare).

Each story included an opportunity to improve the situation of the family, either financially (either by earning more or by working more because duties at home were being taken care of by the other spouse) or otherwise (by taking literacy classes). The Office story serves as one example:

> Marie and Andre have been married for many years and they have four children who all go to school. Marie and Andre are tomato vendors. Andre has an opportunity to work in a government office and he wants to do the work. Marie doesn't want Andre to work in an office because she thinks that he should remain a vendor.

Note that tomato vendors make very little money and working in an office would be a financial improvement for the family.

The Housework story serves as an example of how one spouse doing more work at home would benefit the family financially:

> Basilia and Gilbert are farmers who have been married for many years and they have four children who all go to school. Gilbert has an opportunity to work as a barber and he wants to do the work. If he takes the job, there will be more money but not enough to hire a maid, and Basilia will have to do the majority of washing the clothes, cleaning and preparing of meals herself. Basilia doesn't want Gilbert to work as a barber because she doesn't want to do all the domestic work by herself.

In a between-subjects design, there were two story types. In one, a husband requests that his wife approve of a plan that would be beneficial to the family and which would be in accordance with traditional gender roles (as in the examples above, hereafter called *Traditional roles* type). In the other, a wife requests that her husband approve of a plan that would be beneficial to the family but which would *not* be in accordance with traditional gender roles (hereafter called *Challenging roles* type): for example, this is the Office story of the Challenging roles type:

> Andre and Marie have been married for many years and they have four children who all go to school. Andre and Marie are tomato vendors. Marie has an opportunity to work in a government office and

she wants to do the work. Andre doesn't want Marie to work in an office because he thinks that she should remain a vendor.

Thus the sex of the protagonist and whether Traditional roles were being challenged varied across story types, making it possible to determine the extent to which participants saw gender roles as alterable, and thus conventional, in cases in which it was best for the family.

Stories were constructed so that the spouses were in conflict over whether to go ahead with the plan. In order to include conflict in the stories, it was sometimes necessary for the stories to vary in some ways. Specifically, in the Housework story there was an emphasis on an increase in the housework compared to what was normally required; thus, this dimension varied. A husband in the Challenging roles story was asked to do a small amount of housework, versus a wife in the Traditional roles story, who was asked to do extra housework on top of her usual housework duties. In the Childcare story, the Traditional roles story described a working wife who is asked to care for her children in the evenings so the husband can work, while in the Challenging roles story, the husband did not work, making it more feasible that the wife needed to work and needed the husband to care for the children. The remaining stories were exactly parallel across story type.

Each story was followed by a series of questions designed to elicit judgments of the situation, as well as concerns about the consequences for disobedience. First, the participant was asked for a judgment of who should decide how to resolve the conflict. This question assessed whether participants endorsed male authority (for example, "Who should decide whether [the protagonist] can go to the literacy class or not, the wife or the husband?"). This question was followed by a request for justification.

Two further questions assessed whether traditional roles could be altered. First, participants evaluated the protagonist who suggested the plan that would benefit the family or him/herself ("What do you think of [the protagonist] who wants to go to the literacy class?"). Although this question was intended to be followed by justifications, the female interviewer did not ask for justifications. Justification data for this question were therefore not analyzed. Next, participants evaluated the spouse who rejected the protagonist's request ("Is it OK or not OK if [a spouse] does not allow [the protagonist] to go to the literacy class?") to examine how they judged a restriction on engaging in a beneficial activity. This question was followed by a request for a justification.

Concerns with the consequences for disobedience were assessed by the question: "What would happen if [the protagonist] disobeyed [his/her spouse]?"

One gender neutral question was included to assess whether participants applied moral concepts in a situation that is not gender-related. This story described a man who took care of his son and his nephew and who decides to send only his son to school, even though both are well-behaved and smart and even though the man has enough money to send both children to school. Participants were asked to evaluate the man's decision and give a justification ("Is it OK or not OK to send only his son? Why or why not?").

Story order was reversed for half of the participants to examine effects of story order.

1.4. Scoring

Coding was based on previous research (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994), adapted where necessary for this study based on 30% of the interviews. Coding for which spouse should make the decision was *husband decides, both decide together,* or *wife decides*. "Both decide together" was used infrequently and therefore responses were coded dichotomously as 1 = husband should decide or 0 = wife should decide or both should decide together.

Evaluations of the protagonist who makes a request for the benefit of the family were coded as *positive, mixed,* or *negative*. Evaluations of the spouse who rejects the protagonist's request were coded *OK, mixed,* or *not OK*. Consequences for disobedience were coded as *positive or no consequences, negative for both spouses and/or the family, negative for the protagonist,* or *severely negative for the protagonist* (which included divorce, separation or violence). Because the purpose of the question was to investigate only the negative consequences to the protagonist, a dichotomous variable was constructed to indicate whether consequences would be negative or severely negative to the protagonist (coded as 1) or negative to both or not negative (coded as 0).

Table 1
Justification categories.

Category		Description
Uncodable		Justification absent or uncodable
Personal choice		Reference to a person's right to engage in an activity. ("The husband needs to be able to go where he wants to go." "He should decide for himself.")
Pragmatics		References to issues of logistics and planning, including financial issues. ("The family needs the money." "He should take the job so that he has retirement money.")
Moral	Rights/fairness	Comparisons implying that both should be treated similarly. ("He can't take something for both of them just for himself." "Both should be able to take the class.")
	Welfare	References to others' physical or psychological welfare or harm. ("If she takes the literacy class, she will feel better about herself." "If he isn't home in the evenings, the children will not grow up knowing about the world from their father.")
Relationship harmony		References to the need to maintain harmony between people and avoid disagreements. ("There will be misunderstandings." "He has to do it for peace in the family.")
Conventional	Gender roles	Expectations related to gender. ("She is at home to take care of the children." "Men go out into the world more so they know more about how the world works.")
	Tradition	References to the ways things have been done in the past and culture specific norms. ("Our ancestors did it this way." "We've always done it that way")
	Religion	References to God, the afterlife, and religious stories. ("God made man first and woman was created to help man." "God said women should obey their husbands.")
	Authority	References to position of authority. ("The man is the head of the household." "He owns her.")
Concerns with punishment		References to threats of harm or punishment. ("He will chase her from the house (divorce)." "If she does what she wants, he will beat her.")

Note. These categories are based on responses to the questions: "Is it OK or not OK for the uncle to send only his son to school?" "Who should decide?" "Is it OK or not OK for the spouse to refuse the protagonist's request?".

The justification codes were based on previous research (Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983; Turiel, 1983) but adapted to the responses obtained here (see Table 1). For ease of analysis, rights/fairness and welfare justifications were combined into a moral category. Gender roles, tradition, and religious justifications were combined into a conventional category called *tradition*. The *authority* category, which often refers to the man being the head of the household, is also a conventional category because cultural norms help determine who is considered the head of the household. These categories, along with the remaining categories (personal, pragmatic and relationship harmony, concerns with punishment) are reported when they made up at least 10% of responses.

An additional trained judge recoded 15% of the interviews to assess reliability. Inter-judge agreement in the coding of evaluations was 92% and Cohen's Kappa was .88. Inter-judge agreement in the coding of justifications was 79%, and Cohen's Kappa was .71.

2. Results

Results were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). Follow-up tests used Bonferroni corrected levels of significance. Main effects and lower order interactions that were qualified by higher order interactions are not reported.

Order of the stories was included in initial analyses. Only one order effect was found. In the question, "Who should decide?" there was a story × order interaction, $F(4, 324) = 3.36$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$, which indicated that the order of the Childcare story, $F(1, 95) = 11.50$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$, led to different judgments. The husband was more likely to be endorsed as the decision-maker in this story when it was presented first ($M = .90$, S.D. = .06), than when it was presented last, ($M = .62$, S.D. = .06). Subsequent analyses combined the two orders.

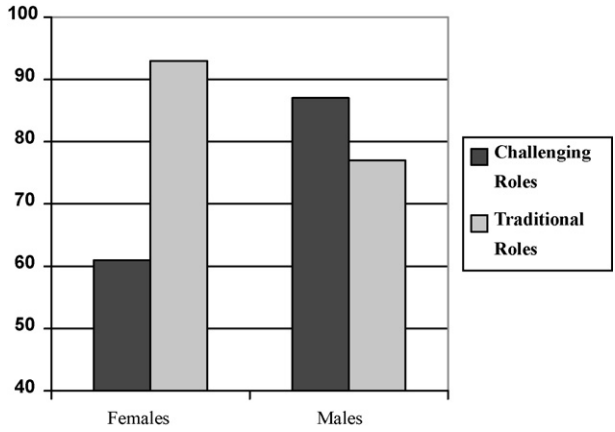

Fig. 1. Percentage of participants endorsing the husband as decision maker by story type and gender.

2.1. Judgments and justifications in the non-gender-related story

In response to the question of whether or not it was permissible for an uncle to send his son but not his live-in nephew to school 99% percent of participants judged it wrong to send only the son. Justifications for these judgments overwhelmingly (91%) pertained to rights, fairness or welfare. Three percent gave a justification related to tradition, 2% gave a justification related to capabilities, and 1% gave an authority justification. These results indicate that the participants used moral justifications to reason about a straightforward situation involving fairness.

2.2. Judgments and justifications about decision-making authority

Across all stories, participants most often endorsed male hierarchy, with 80% judging that the husband should decide. These judgments were analyzed using a 5(stories) × 2(gender) × 2(age) × 2(story type) repeated measures ANOVA, with story as the repeated measure. A story type × gender interaction, $F(1, 81) = 27.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .25$, revealed that males endorsed the husband as decision maker in both story types, but females, $F(1, 44) = 28.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .34$, were more likely to say that the protagonist should decide in both story types. (See Fig. 1 for overall percentages and Table 2 for means and

Table 2
Evaluations by story type and gender.

		Traditional roles	Challenging roles	Total
Husband should decide	Males	.77 (.04)	.87 (.04)	.82 (.03)
	Females	.93 (.04)	.61 (.04)	.77 (.03)
	Total	.85 (.04)	.74 (.04)	
Evaluations of protagonist	Males	1.26 (.06)	1.76 (.08)	1.51 (.04)
	Females	1.12 (.06)	1.26 (.06)	1.19 (.04)
	Total	1.19 (.06)	1.51 (.05)	
Rejecting the protagonist's request	Males	2.68 (.08)	2.30 (.08)	2.49 (.06)
	Females	2.92 (.07)	2.68 (.08)	2.80 (.06)
	Total	2.79 (.05)	2.50 (.08)	
Disobedience would be punished	Males	.28 (.05)	.40 (.08)	.34 (.06)
	Females	.30 (.07)	.60 (.07)	.45 (.05)
	Total	.29 (.06)	.50 (.05)	

Note. Evaluations of the protagonist are on a scale from 1 (positive) to 3 (negative). Restriction on the protagonist are on a scale from 1(OK) to 3 (not OK). All others are proportions. S.D.s are in parentheses.

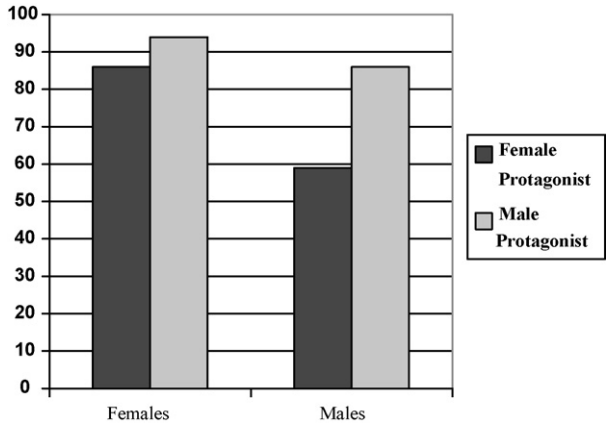

Fig. 2. Positive evaluations of the protagonist by sex and condition (percentages).

S.D.s for responses to individual questions.) No age differences were found to support an enculturation viewpoint.

As expected, justifications for male authority were primarily conventional, having to do with authority (49%) and tradition (19%), but some (9%) used moral justifications, although this was below the 10% cut-off point. The percentage use of different justification types by story appear in Table 2.

2.3. Judgments of the protagonist

Despite endorsements of male decision-making, most participants (an average of 83% over all stories) evaluated the protagonist positively, even in the Challenging roles story type—that is, where the protagonist challenged the traditional gender hierarchy (Fig. 2). A 2(gender) × 2(age) × 2(story type) repeated-measures ANOVA, with story as the repeated measure, revealed a gender × story type interaction, $F(1, 63) = 5.73$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$, which indicated that males were more mixed than females in their evaluations of the female protagonist in the Challenging roles story type, $F(1, 34) = 23.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .41$. Males and females did not judge the male protagonists in the Traditional roles story type differently. No age effect was found.

2.4. Evaluating a rejection of the protagonist's request

Most participants (an average of 80% over all stories) judged that it was not acceptable for a spouse to reject the protagonist's request. Even in the Challenging roles story type, a majority (71%) said that it was not acceptable to restrict a wife who was challenging traditional roles, providing further evidence that gender roles were judged to be alterable. A 5(stories) × 2(gender) × 2(age) × 2(story type) repeated-measures ANOVA, with story as the repeated measure, revealed main effects for story type, $F(1, 70) = 15.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$, and sex, $F(1, 70) = 16.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. The main effect of story type indicated that participants were more critical of a wife who rejects a request in line with traditional gender roles than they were of a husband who rejects a request challenging traditional roles, although means (Table 2) indicate that most were critical in both cases. Table 2 also shows the means for the gender main effect, which indicated that female participants were more critical of a spouse who rejects the protagonist's request than males. No age effect was found.

The reasons participants gave for judgments of a rejection of the protagonist's request were varied and were often uncodable or missing (34% of all responses). Of the codable responses, most were moral (38% of responses) or a matter of pragmatics (27%). Conventional justifications included Authority (15%) and Tradition (11%). The prudential category was used in 10% of codable responses. Table 3 shows these percentages by story.

Table 3
Percentage usage of justification type by story.

		Traditional roles condition				Challenging roles condition			
		Moral	Authority	Tradition	Pragmatics	Moral	Authority	Tradition	Pragmatics
Who decides	Childcare	.10 (.05)	.41 (.07)	.30 (.06)	.00 (.02)	.16 (.05)	.40 (.07)	.22 (.06)	.04 (.02)
	Literacy	.08 (.03)	.30 (.04)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.04 (.03)	.20 (.04)	.06 (.02)	.03 (.02)
	Money	.06 (.03)	.47 (.07)	.09 (.04)	.11 (.05)	.07 (.03)	.37 (.07)	.12 (.04)	.13 (.05)
	Office work	.06 (.04)	.67 (.06)	.06 (.04)	.08 (.04)	.09 (.04)	.23 (.06)	.13 (.04)	.11 (.04)
	Housework	.07 (.03)	.48 (.07)	.24 (.06)	.02 (.02)	.00 (.03)	.53 (.07)	.24 (.06)	.03 (.02)
	Total	.07 (.02)	.46 (.04)	.14 (.02)	.05 (.02)	.07 (.02)	.35 (.04)	.16 (.02)	.07 (.02)
Rejecting protagonist's request	Childcare	.27 (.07)	.07 (.03)	.10 (.04)	.07 (.05)	.24 (.07)	.01 (.03)	.10 (.04)	.16 (.05)
	Literacy	.20 (.06)	.16 (.05)	.00 (.00)	.17 (.05)	.24 (.06)	.13 (.05)	.00 (.00)	.11 (.05)
	Money	.17 (.06)	.02 (.04)	.00 (.02)	.27 (.06)	.21 (.06)	.13 (.04)	.02 (.02)	.21 (.06)
	Office work	.37 (.07)	.04 (.05)	.00 (.00)	.12 (.06)	.33 (.07)	.18 (.05)	.00 (.00)	.22 (.06)
	Housework	.21 (.06)	.03 (.03)	.24 (.06)	.20 (.06)	.23 (.06)	.17 (.04)	.22 (.06)	.22 (.06)
	Total	.24 (.03)	.06 (.02)	.07 (.02)	.16 (.03)	.25 (.03)	.12 (.03)	.07 (.02)	.18 (.03)

Note. Standard deviations appear in parenthesis.

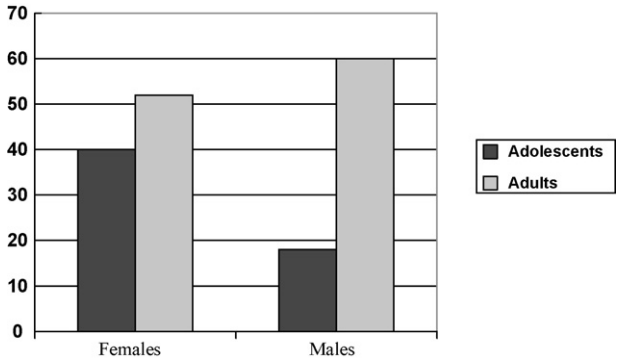

Fig. 3. Perceptions that the protagonist would experience negative or severely negative consequences for disobedience by age and sex (percentages).

2.5. Perceived consequences of disobedience

Across all stories, 41% of participants indicated that consequences for disobedience would be negative or severely negative for the protagonist. A 5(stories) × 2(gender) × 2(age) × 2 (story type) repeated-measures ANOVA, with story as the repeated measure, was conducted on a dichotomous variable of perceptions or not of negative/severely negative consequences. There was a main effect for story type, $F(1, 58) = 5.21$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$, which indicated that negative consequences were more likely to be expected for female protagonists than male protagonists (see Table 2 for means and S.D.s). A gender × age interaction, $F(1, 58) = 4.29$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$, indicated that among males, $F(1, 23) = 15.50$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .40$, adolescents were significantly less likely to mention negative or severely negative consequences than adults, as Fig. 3 shows. There was no significant age difference between adolescent and adult females.

Finally, the relationship between perceived consequences for disobedience and responses about who should decide was explored within each story type. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each story between responses that the man should decide and negative consequences for disobedience, as scored on the 4-point scale. Table 4 contains the significant correlation coefficients for each story. As hypothesized, in the Challenging roles story type, participants who perceived more negative consequences to the wife were significantly more likely to indicate that husband should make the decision about whether to follow gender roles or not. In an unexpected result, the reverse was also true. In the Traditional roles story type, perceptions that the *husband* would be the victim of more negative consequences for disobedience were significantly associated with judgments that the *wife* should decide.

Table 4
Correlations between consequences for disobedience and who should decide.

Story	Traditional roles	Challenging roles
Childcare	−.34*	.52**
Literacy class	−.30*	–
Money	–	.32*
Office job	–	.35*
Housework	−.36*	–

Note. Consequences for disobedience was coded 1 = positive or no consequences, 2 = negative consequences for both spouses, 3 = negative consequences for protagonist only, and 4 = severely negative consequences to protagonist only. Who should decide was coded 0 = both decide together or woman decides 1 = man decides.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$.

3. Discussion

The major goal of this study was to examine whether growing up in a traditionally hierarchical community results in a belief that traditional gender roles are part of a moral code. Participants indicated that gender roles are conventional and not moral, both in terms of the alterability of gender roles and their justifications for male authority. The alterability of gender roles was evident in the majority of participants who judged a wife positively when she was challenging gender roles and in the majority who condemned a husband who rejected the wife's proposal to challenge gender roles. That is, participants judged that when it is in the best interest of the family, a husband should do housework or childcare, and a wife should be able to go to a literacy class, take a job in an office or make a decision about how to spend the family's money. Thus, even in this traditional community, gender roles are judged to be alterable when it is in the best interest of the individual or the family.

Justifications also showed that gender norms are not judged in moral terms. When participants did endorse gender hierarchy, as they did in their judgments about who should make a decision in the family, participants were not making a moral judgment. Justifications endorsing male decision making overwhelmingly cited authority and tradition, with less than 10% offering moral justifications. Contrary to what some have suggested (Markus et al., 1997; Shweder et al., 1987), male authority was not justified as being in the best interest of the family. For example, an adolescent male suggested that the husband has the authority to decide for his wife because "he owns her" (which is not legally true in Benin), while another said the husband should decide "because he has more power than the woman." The justifications overall and these responses suggest that hierarchy is justified with references to the power of the man more than what is best for the group.

In contrast, the majority of justifications regarding whether it is acceptable or not to reject the protagonist's request cited moral and pragmatic issues. For example, one adult male said the husband would be wrong to reject his wife's request to work in an office because "she is seeking a way to happiness," a reference to her psychological welfare. Another participant advocated challenging gender roles because "the family needs the money." In these cases, participants showed that moral and pragmatic concerns sometimes override the need to adhere to gender roles.

In addition to justifications about authority judgments and judgments regarding alterability, evidence that adolescents and adults reasoned the same way about these issues does not support existence of socialization effect between adolescence and adulthood. Although some models (Shweder et al., 1987) suggest that people are socialized into an acceptance of a moral code, the present study shows that adults in this traditional community were not more entrenched in gender roles than adolescents.

Despite the fact that participants clearly distinguished the moral and conventional domains, it was also clear that they had to weigh considerations from both domains in their judgments about conflicts over gender roles. Judgments about gender hierarchy include both moral concerns with fairness and conventional concerns with who is the traditional authority. Given that participants must weigh each of these issues, the internal conflicts found in their judgments about male authority is not unexpected. In fact, participants seemed to hold two opposing viewpoints—that husbands should decide about these issues but should take the non-traditional position. Thus, participants tended to endorse conventional male decision-making, but they also showed that they were critical of an authority decision that did not benefit the welfare of the protagonist and the family, indicating that many participants may have struggled with the conflict between the two considerations. Previous research in traditional communities (Neff, 2001; Wainryb & Turiel, 1994) has also found variability in judgments about male authority. These results point to the importance of acknowledging within-culture variability in the acceptance of norms, especially in situations in which conventions may not be fair or in the interest of the welfare of those involved.

One explanation of endorsements of male authority hierarchy by women, who would be less likely to benefit from it, could be that male authority is enforced through punishments for disobedience. In fact, participants did judge that wives were more vulnerable to punishment than husbands, but both males and females were seen as victims to some degree. Examination of transcripts indicated that consequences differed for wives and husbands. Wives were vulnerable to being beaten, while for husbands, violence through voodoo was mentioned. Both were seen as vulnerable to divorce. Thus these

results indicate that both husbands and wives punish in some form and both suffer the consequences of punishment.

Based on previous research (Wainryb & Turiel, 1994), it was expected that concerns with punishment might be associated with endorsements of male decision-making authority. As expected, endorsements of the husband as decision-maker were related to more severe consequences to the female protagonist in three of the five stories. In an unexpected finding, more severe consequences to the *male* protagonist were related to endorsements of the *wife* as decision-maker in three stories. Thus, it does appear that coercion plays a part in how gender roles regarding authority are decided, but it is also clear that it is not only the males who use coercion to their benefit.

Another cause of variability in judgments is that participants with different experiences in subordinate or dominant positions might have had different perspectives on hierarchy. In general, female participants were less likely to support gender norms that subordinate women. In their judgments of decision-making authority, females were more likely to endorse the protagonist as the decision-maker, regardless of the sex of the protagonist, while males were more likely to endorse the husband in both story types. Female participants were also more likely than males to condemn the spouse when she or he rejected a beneficial proposal, regardless of the sex of this spouse. Thus, males tended to endorse male authority more than the female participants, which would seem to indicate that they were influenced by self-interest. After all, males who advocate for challenging gender roles are also advocating for a loss of power to their own sex. Yet, females showed a greater tendency to endorse judgments based on what was best for the individual or the family in both story types. Thus, it appears that females were focused on the benefits to the family or an individual, whether it challenged or reinforced traditional roles, indicating that their decisions were not based only on promoting their own sex, but also that they placed less priority on traditional gender roles.

There were also gender differences in perceptions of punishment for disobedience, but only for adolescents. Adolescent males were less likely to perceive negative consequences for disobedience than adolescent females or adults of either sex. More research is needed to determine whether these adolescents are less aware of consequences for disobedience because they do not have experience in marital relationships, or whether attitudes about retribution for disobedience are changing and adolescents do not expect it as much because they do not expect to participate in it themselves.

Although there was no evidence for enculturation between adolescence and adulthood, future research should also examine changes during childhood to determine how social norms affect children's reasoning about fairness. A study of children's reasoning about gender inequality in hierarchical cultures would provide a better understanding of how children's social and moral reasoning develops. In particular, it would be good to investigate which domains are affected by culture-specific socialization and what this socialization looks like, and which domains are not affected by this enculturation.

It is also important to note that is that Benin is extremely poor. Benin is ranked one of the poorest countries in the world according to the UN's Human Development report for Benin (2007). Poverty may affect these participants' willingness to challenge traditional gender roles. Many of the stories presented here pitted the welfare of the family against traditional gender roles, but for a very poor family, meeting the basic needs of the family may be deemed more important than adherence to gender roles.

Overall, this study shows that even in a traditionally hierarchical community, judgments about authority and gender roles are not judged to be part of a moral code, but are conventions that are judged to vary in different situations. Further, this study also suggests that people are not socialized into an acceptance of any moral code. People who grow up with gender hierarchy do not see hierarchy as a moral principle that cannot be altered. They are critical of traditional gender roles when those roles are not in the best interest of individuals and the family.

Models that suggest that authority or hierarchy is enculturated into a moral code (Shweder et al., 1997) or a moral foundation (Haidt & Joseph, 2008) ignore the variability that comes from weighing issues of fairness and tradition. This is critically important because characterizations of traditional cultures as monolithic in their support of hierarchy ignore the fact that females are especially critical of gender role restrictions that tend to limit their opportunities, while males sometimes demonstrate a bias for protecting the rights and privileges of their gender. Further, judgments in support of hierarchy

must also be viewed with awareness that coercion can be used to elicit support for hierarchy. Thus, people may be biased towards their own perspective, and they may be coerced into accepting some hierarchy, but they are not enculturated into a view that hierarchy is part of a moral code.

Acknowledgements

This study is based on a doctoral dissertation, submitted to the University of California, Berkeley, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree. The author gratefully acknowledges the support and guidance of Elliot Turiel, Susan Holloway, and Kaiping Peng on the dissertation. Thanks are also due to Sabine Toungakouagou and Eudes Facia for help with data collection and to Judi Smetana and Elliot Turiel for their thoughtful comments on earlier versions of this manuscript.

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