



How will this child's moral thinking about stealing a cookie differ according to whether he is in Piaget's heteronomous or autonomous stage?
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The heteronomous thinker also believes that rules are unchangeable and are handed down by all-powerful authorities. When Piaget suggested to young children that they use new rules in a game of marbles, they resisted. By contrast, older children—moral autonomists—accept change and recognize that rules are merely conventions that are subject to change.

The heteronomous thinker also believes in **immanent justice**, the concept that if a rule is broken, punishment will be meted out immediately. The young child believes that a violation is followed automatically by its punishment. Thus, young children often look around worriedly after

doing something wrong, expecting the inevitable punishment. Immanent justice also implies that if something unfortunate happens to someone, that person must have transgressed earlier. Older children, who are moral autonomists, recognize that punishment occurs only if someone witnesses the wrongdoing and that, even then, punishment is not inevitable.

How do these changes in moral reasoning occur? Piaget argued that as children develop, they become more sophisticated in their thinking about social matters, especially about the possibilities and conditions of cooperation. Piaget stressed that this social understanding comes about through the mutual give-and-take of peer relations. In the peer group, where others have power and status similar to the child's, plans are negotiated and coordinated, and disagreements are reasoned about and eventually settled. Parent-child relations, in which parents have power and children do not, are less likely to advance moral reasoning, because rules are often handed down in an authoritarian manner.

Moral Behavior

The behavioral and social cognitive approach to development focuses on moral behavior rather than moral reasoning. It holds that the processes of reinforcement, punishment, and imitation explain the development of moral behavior. When children are rewarded for behavior that is consistent with laws and social conventions, they are likely to repeat that behavior. When models who behave morally are provided, children are likely to adopt their actions (Ma & others, 2018). And when children are punished for immoral behavior, those behaviors are likely to be reduced or eliminated. However, because punishment may have adverse side effects, it needs to be used judiciously and cautiously.

If a mother has rewarded a 4-year-old boy for telling the truth when he broke a glass at home, does this mean he is likely to tell the truth to his preschool teacher when he knocks over a vase and breaks it? Not necessarily, because the situation influences behavior. More than half a century ago, a comprehensive study of thousands of children in many situations—at home, at school, and at church, for example—found that a totally honest child is virtually nonexistent, as is a child who cheats in all situations (Hartshorne & May, 1928–1930). Behavioral and social cognitive researchers emphasize that what children do in one situation is often only weakly related to what they do in other situations. For example, a child might cheat in class but not in a game, or a child might steal a piece of candy when alone but not when others are present.

Social cognitive theorists also emphasize that the ability to resist temptation is closely tied to the development of self-control (Mischel, 2004), which involves learning to delay gratification. According to social cognitive theorists, cognitive factors are important in the child's development of self-control (Bandura, 2012).

immanent justice The expectation that, if a rule is broken, punishment will be meted out immediately.

gender identity The sense of being male or female, which most children acquire by the time they are 3 years old.

gender roles Sets of expectations that prescribe how females or males should think, act, and feel.

Gender

Gender refers to the characteristics of people as females and males. **Gender identity** is the sense of being male or female, which most children acquire by the time they are 3 years old. **Gender roles** are sets of expectations that prescribe how females or males should think, act, and feel.



First imagine that this is a photograph of a baby girl. *What expectations would you have of her?* Then imagine that this is a photograph of a baby boy. *What expectations would you have of him?*
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During the preschool years, most children increasingly act in ways that match their culture's gender roles.

How do these and other gender differences come about? Biology clearly plays a role. Among the possible biological influences are chromosomes, hormones, and evolution (Antfolk, 2018; Hawley & Bauer, 2018; Li, Kung, & Hines, 2017). However, our focus in this chapter is on the social aspects of gender.

Social Influences

Many social scientists do not locate the cause of psychological gender differences in biological dispositions. Rather, they argue that these differences are due to social experiences (Leaper & Bigler, 2018; Rose & Smith, 2018; Weisgram & Dinella, 2018). Their explanations include both social and cognitive theories.

Social Theories of Gender Three main social theories of gender have been proposed: social role theory, psychoanalytic theory, and social cognitive theory. Alice Eagly (2001, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017) proposed **social role theory**, which states that gender differences result from the contrasting roles of women and men. In most cultures around the world, women have less power and status than men do, and they control fewer resources (Helgeson, 2017). Compared with men, women perform more domestic work, spend fewer hours in paid employment, receive lower pay, and are more thinly represented in the highest levels of organizations. In Eagly's (2016, 2017) view, as women adapted to roles with less power and less status in society, they showed more cooperative, less dominant profiles than men did. Thus, the social hierarchy and division of labor are important causes of gender differences in power, assertiveness, and nurture (Eagly, 2017; Eagly & Wood, 2017).

The **psychoanalytic theory of gender** stems from Freud's view that the preschool child develops a sexual attraction to the opposite-sex parent. This is the process known as the Oedipus (for boys) or Electra (for girls) complex. At age 5 or 6, the child renounces this attraction because of anxious feelings. Subsequently, the child identifies with the same-sex parent, unconsciously adopting that parent's characteristics. However, developmental psychologists have observed that gender development does not proceed in the manner that Freud proposed (Callan, 2001). Children become gender-typed much earlier than age 5 or 6, and they become masculine or feminine even when the same-sex parent is not present in the family.

The social cognitive approach provides an alternative explanation. According to the **social cognitive theory of gender**, children's gender development occurs through observation and imitation of what other people say and do, and through being rewarded and punished for gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). From birth onward, males and females are treated differently. When infants and toddlers show gender differences, adults tend to reward them. Parents often use rewards and punishments to teach their daughters to be feminine ("Karen, you are being a good girl when you play gently with your doll") and their sons to be masculine ("Keith, a boy as big as you are is not supposed to cry"). Parents, however, are only one of many sources from which children learn gender roles (Brown & Stone, 2018). Culture, schools, peers, the media, and other family members also provide gender role models (Chen, Lee, & Chen, 2018). For example, children learn about gender by observing other adults in the neighborhood and on television. As children grow older, peers become increasingly important. Let's look more closely at the influence of parents and peers.

Parental Influences

Parents influence their children's gender development by action and by example. (Helgeson, 2017; Leaper & Bigler, 2018). Both mothers and

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psychoanalytic theory of gender A theory deriving from Freud's view that the preschool child develops a sexual attraction to the opposite-sex parent, by approximately 5 or 6 years of age renounces this attraction because of anxious feelings, and subsequently identifies with the same-sex parent, unconsciously adopting the same-sex parent's characteristics.

social cognitive theory of gender A theory emphasizing that children's gender development occurs through the observation and imitation of gender behavior and through the rewards and punishments children experience for gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior.