
Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftspädagogik

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Klaus Beck · Univ.-Prof. Dr. Klaus Breuer
Fachbereich Rechts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften

○ Reihe: Arbeitspapiere WP ○

1

Sigrid Lüdecke-Plümer/ Andrea Zirkel/ Klaus Beck

Vocational Training and Moral Judgment - Are There Gender-Specific Traits Among Apprentices in Commercial Business?

Herausgeber:

Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftspädagogik
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Klaus Beck
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Klaus Breuer
Fachbereich 03: Rechts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
Welderweg 9
D-55099 Mainz
Telefon: +49 6131 392-2009; Telefax: +49 6131 392-2095
email: beck@pop.uni-mainz.de

Lüdecke-Plümer, S., Zirkel, A. & Beck, K. (1997). *Vocational Training and Moral Judgment – Are There Gender-Specific Traits Among Apprentices in Commercial Business?*

Erscheint in: The Journal of Moral Education.

© Copyright

Alle Arbeitspapiere der Reihe „Arbeitspapiere WP“ sind einschließlich Graphiken und Tabellen urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwendung außerhalb der Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Herausgebers unzulässig. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Microverfilmungen und Einspeicherung auf elektronische Datenträger.

ABSTRACT

Since Carol Gilligan (1982) presented her conception of “two morals“, several empirical studies have been carried out to verify her assumption that the moral reasoning of men and women generally follows different principles. Some of the research findings occasioned us to look for gender-specific traits in a sample of insurance apprentices as well. Once again, the data confirm that Gilligan’s assumption cannot be uphold although some results of our detailed analysis of moral reasoning and the conditions of its development seem to be gender-biased. In our paper we argue that gender differences in moral judgments should not be dealt with as a matter of the quality of moral reasoning („different voice-hypothesis“) but rather as a matter of perceiving social role concepts in a deciding situation („different role-hypothesis“). Thus, the intra- and interpersonal differences in moral judgment found in our study might not be explained by the internal structure „moral competence“ alone. To a certain extent they are also caused by the interaction between the social situation, the individual’s personal and moral self and moral competence.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND MORAL JUDGMENT - ARE THERE GENDER-SPECIFIC TRAITS AMONG APPRENTICES IN COMMERCIAL BUSINESS?

State of discussion

Origin of the gender debate

Lawrence Kohlberg assumed universal validity for his theory of moral development. Consequently, from his point of view, no structural differences in the development of moral thinking could possibly exist between cultures or sexes. In opposition to this assumption, Carol Gilligan set off a heated controversy at the beginning of the eighties with her book "In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development" (1982). She criticized the exclusive examination of male testees by Freud (1925), Piaget (1954) and Kohlberg (1969) and tried to show that women solve social problems in a manner which is different - not inferior (!) - to that of men. Analyzing the answers obtained in *Moral Judgment Interviews* (MJI) sensu Kohlberg, Gilligan gained the impression that there were gender differences in moral reasoning: The most stage 4-substantiations were uttered by male subjects whereas the female respondents predominantly used the moral standard of stage 3.

Gilligan concluded that the moral judgment of the two sexes could not be tarred with the same brush of Kohlberg's idea of a morality of justice because the female approach is not adequately represented in Kohlberg's definition of moral stages. According to her "thesis of two morals", the male moral is rather abstract and rigid, following principles of justice and performance of one's duty (Kohlberg's stage 4). By way of contrast, the - more flexible and sensitive - female moral is characterized by care. Women typically feel responsibility for other people, they look after others and take care of others' well-being. This relation-orientated argumentation is scored on stage 3 of the Kohlberg scale. Thus, if the answers of both sexes are classified according to Kohlberg's Standard Issue Scoring, the women - so Gilligan's reproach - systematically come out on a lower stage than the men. This would mean a developmental inferiority of the women. Kohlberg himself got down to Gilligan's criticism (e.g. Kohlberg/Levine/Hewer 1983; Colby/Kohlberg 1987a). For having a complete idea of moral development, he admitted the necessity of "more than one voice" so that he finally considered the morality of justice and the morality of care as complementary. Nevertheless, Kohlberg still denied structural differences between the sexes (Colby/Kohlberg 1987a, 24).

In empirical studies focusing on the analysis of gender differences, the "two voices" were hardly traceable. In his review of relevant research findings Walker (1984, 1986) ascertained only a few gender-specific differences which were - moreover - not uniform: In some inquiries with children and teenagers (between 5 and 17 years), significant differences were found in favor of the girls whose moral reasoning was higher than the mean scores of the boys. Looking at the results of older adolescents, however, a slight tendency for a more elaborated male moral thinking was found. Finally, only in a few samples of adults (aged from 21 to 65 plus) a significant higher moral score of the male subjects was

revealed. But all these studies showed some methodological deficiencies, so that Walker could not supply empirical evidence for the hypothesis of two morals.

End of the gender debate?

The strongest criticism of Gilligan's ideas has been formulated by Debra Nails (1983). She reproaches Gilligan with her selective and biased analysis of data, trying only to support her own hypothesis. Gilligan's works were more or less of literary character and from a scientific point of view one should be careful with her conclusions. Oser and Althof also point out weaknesses of Gilligan's empirical approach which seems to lack theoretical foundation as well as philosophical stringency (1994, 329). They criticize that the idea of a "morality of care" is not described and explained in detail. Furthermore, they point to the fact that it remains unclear to which moral-philosophical orientation Gilligan's empirical perceptions are meant to correspond. Last but not least - if the morality of care and the morality of justice were not gender-specific but complementary - Oser and Althof emphasize that it would be necessary to indicate the factors which might cause the development of different moral orientations (1992, 328).

Nunner-Winkler reports on more than 130 inquiries about gender morality with approximately 20.000 test persons: In most of them, no gender differences were found at all; and if so, it was due to confoundations with other main effect variables (1994, 241), e. g. the level of education or occupation. Also age and social status turned out to be important for the stage of moral reasoning. Looking out for other influential factors, Döbert and Nunner-Winkler (1986) interviewed male and female adolescents (14 - 23 years old) about the topics "abortion" and "conscientious objection". Concerning the legitimacy of abortion, the male subjects argued in an abstract and principle-orientated way, the female interviewees rather in Gilligan's sense of caring. With reference to the legitimacy of conscientious objection, the sexes answered reversely. Thus, another important criterion for the type of individual moral judgment seems to be the degree of personal involvement which may be decisive for the tendency towards a context-sensitive or an abstract argumentation (Nunner-Winkler 1994, 241-242).

Besides individual factors like personal involvement, gender differences were also found depending on the context in which the moral conflict was located. Lugt-Tappeser and Jünger (1994) e. g. searched for gender differences taking the dilemma story as a situative factor. They designed six dilemma stories, i.e. "abstract" and "concrete-interpersonal" ones, in three different settings each: family, workplace and a neutral area (where the conflicts showed neither familiar nor professional traits). Whereas the abstract dilemmas raise value conflicts sensu Kohlberg (e. g. life vs. law), the concrete-interpersonal dilemmas deal with incompatible wishes of two people (e. g. one marriage partner wants to go on a skiing holiday over Christmas but the other can't get leave). Lugt-Tappeser and Jünger assumed that there were gender-specific moral judgments in the private domain because there are still - especially in the family - traditional role expectations so that the women would rather argue with principles of care. Conversely, in the occupational context they expected no differences between male and female subjects, both using predominantly reasons of justice. Owing to processes of emancipation at the workplace women and men nowadays should perform their professional role in a very similar way.

On the whole, hardly any differences between the abstract and the concrete dilemmas for each context were found. As expected, the judgments of men and women in the professional field were on the same moral level. Both preferred principles of justice so that effects of employment on women's judgments became evident. In the family context the female subjects tended to argue more often in terms of care than men, though one of two t-tests looking for gender differences in the abstract and concrete dilemma was not significant. In the neutral context however, the gender differences in both dilemmas became highly significant. Lugt-Tappeser and Jünger suppose that values which were internalized according to the traditional gender role are transferred into other fields where no specific role expectations must be met.

Taking this result as a "true" description of the reality of moral reasoning there is no reason to assume that there are no structural gender differences. In contrary, - as long and as far as socialisation includes gender-specific role orientations - these differences should be found in every study on this topic. But in the light of the results reported here opposite to Gilligan's idea the gender difference has to be described not as a matter of a "different voice" but as a matter of a "different role".

This shift in explanation is induced by an attempt to understand moral reasoning within a broader theoretical framework which focuses not mainly on internal facts and processes but widens the view by considering the impact of situational characteristics and particularly the interaction between the internal and external conditions. As Colby and Damon have stated, knowledge, personal goals and morality alike are developed and shaped within social interactions (1993, 218). However, these interactions might be heterogeneous with respect to the social field (e.g. family, workplace) or the social role (e.g. husband, friend, clerk, colleague) the individual is involved in. If the personal self and the moral self are not highly integrated, that is if morality has not (yet) become a personal goal, differences in moral judgment may - to a varying extent - be (also) due to the influences of different social fields and the different role expectations connected with them.

Thus, among others, in our project titled "The development of moral judgment in business apprenticeship" we have raised the following questions: (1) Are there structural gender differences in moral reasoning within different roles? (2) Do male and female apprentices differ in their moral decisions? (3) Do male and female subjects give different reasons for their decisions? The hypothesis were that differences in moral decision making and moral reasoning would occur in those fields where man and women might have developed gender-specific role interpretations (e. g. in the family). (4) Do male and female testees perceive the social environments in which they live as substantially different? Or, in other words: Are the socialisation experiences decisive for gender differences in moral decision making and moral reasoning? In the following chapters we will report our findings with regard to these leading questions.

Sample, instruments and methods

In our study the level of moral reflexion is determined according to the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg. Based on the manual of Colby/Kohlberg (1987b) and the description of the Kohlbergian moral stages by Kohlberg (Colby/Kohlberg 1987a, 15-22)

and Spielthener (1996) we have analyzed the answers of the apprentices to four conflict situations located in private and professional contexts (two of each). Assuming that moral judgment does not follow a universal structure but depends on the social setting as a role context in which the value conflicts are embedded, we use a family and a peer dilemma for the private realm of life and dilemma stories about external (competitive) versus internal (cooperative) relations in the company context.¹

On the other hand, we look for characteristics in the socialisation environment of our testees which may stimulate different moral levels in different contexts. According to Lempert (e.g. 1993, 1994) we distinguish six socio-biographical conditions: (1) *love and social recognition*, (2) *type of communication*, (3) *cooperative decision making*, (4) *involvement in social conflicts*, (5) *ascription of individual responsibility* and (6) *scope of action*. The condition (1) *love and social recognition* is subdivided into (a) *recognition as a person* with all one's individual peculiarities and (b) *recognition as role occupant* (or specialist) which depends on the fulfillment of role-related expectations. If an individual steadily feels recognized by others, if he or she is able to communicate in a free and symmetric way and may participate in decision processes, if he or she is explicitly involved in conflicts where several interests, norms or values clash, if the assigned responsibility for other people, for operations and so on is neither over- nor undercharging, and if the individual finds enough opportunities to realize its own ideas, the moral development should be fostered. Otherwise, if the seven sociobiographical conditions feature less stimulating, a stabilization or even a regression of the moral judgment competence is expected. According to these assumptions we computed individual scores for each developmental condition ranging from -1.0 ("dragging down") through 0.0 ("neutral/stabilizing") to +1.0 ("stimulating/fostering").

In the following paragraphs we focus on a subsample of our longitudinal study consisting of 50 male and 47 female apprentices in the insurance business, most of them aged between 17 and 25 years (see table I), who are in their first year of vocational training. The vast majority of our testees has acquired a senior high school diploma. Thus, the educational background does not show any interrelation with gender at all, but there are differences in age distribution between the sexes (Kullback's $2\hat{I} = 23,356$, $df = 9$; $p < 0.01$). However, we do not suppose age effects in our material. Theoretically the considered age group can be regarded as quite homogeneous, altogether having passed the „sensitive“ developmental phases of moral judgment in childhood and adolescence. Moreover, we assume that the moral development depends to a large extent on the stimulating potentials of the social environments in the family, in the peer group, at (the vocational) school and at the workplace which are not necessarily related to age.²

Table I: Sex and age distribution

Age	17-20	21-24	25 plus	miss.	total
male	15	31	3	1	50
female	16	26	4	1	47

In order to assess their moral judgment ability in occupational and private contexts we asked our subjects to reflect on our four dilemma stories - partly by way of questionnaires analogous to the Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM) by Gibbs/Widaman (1982) and partly via semi-structured interviews sensu Kohlberg (MJJ).

In the first of the two occupational conflicts dealing with external relations (“*ex-company dilemma*”) an insurance clerk has got to know by chance that a deceased insuree had not mentioned his illness when signing the contract. Now the clerk must decide whether he should retain this information and pay the benefits to the suppliant widow or not. In the second occupational conflict (“*within-company dilemma*”) an employee is asked by his superior to manipulate the sales figures in order to raise the amount of commission paid by the headquarters because the superior is in urgent need of money to repay a bank loan. As “*family conflict*” we have chosen Kohlberg’s Heinz dilemma, where a husband could save his wife’s life by breaking into a chemist’s shop and stealing a drug which he cannot afford. Finally, in the “*peer dilemma*”, the apprentices have to argue for or against stealing money in order to help a 17 year old room-mate to escape from the strict control and the depressing atmosphere in the orphanage.

For each dilemma there are several issues which modify the initial story focusing on a particular value conflict (e.g. *life/law*, *justice/law*, *affiliation/law*, *affiliation/property* and *affiliation/contract*). In the peer dilemma e.g. the probe question representing the conflict “*life/law*” reads: „What if the room-mate has got a suicidal tendency?“ and the conflict “*affiliation/law*” is emphasized when the room-mates are supposed to be best friends. In the Heinz dilemma - and analogously in both company dilemmas - the protagonist must weigh up the commitment for a person in need versus contractual fidelity (“*affiliation/contract*”) when the chemist offers to hand out the drug if Heinz signs a payments agreement. His wife urges him to accept but Heinz knows that he will definitely not be able to fulfill this contract. What should Heinz do?

The apprentices’ arguments for the chosen alternative of action are assigned to one of the Kohlberg stages of moral judgment. Then, the predominant (“modal”) stage is determined separately for each dilemma. Besides, every single argument is affixed with additional codes for the content elements of moral reasoning (e.g. obedience to the law; reciprocity; altruism; aspects of human relations like love, friendship, trust; hierarchy of values; responsibility within the society; human rights).

Data analysis and results

Moral stages

Comparing the modal stages of female and male apprentices for each dilemma³, there are no significant differences between the sexes⁴ - a finding which confirms again the criticism of Gilligan’s hypothesis. Fig. 1a to 1d represent the boxplots for the modal stages with the bold line indicating the midscore and the boxes covering the values between the 25th and 75th percentile. The horizontal lines below and above the boxes mark the range of non-extreme values (see fig. 1a and 1d). The boxplot for the Heinz dilemma (fig. 1c) shows some extreme scores - printed as small stars - due to the strong concentration of the other values on stage 3.

Fig. 1a: Ex-company dilemma

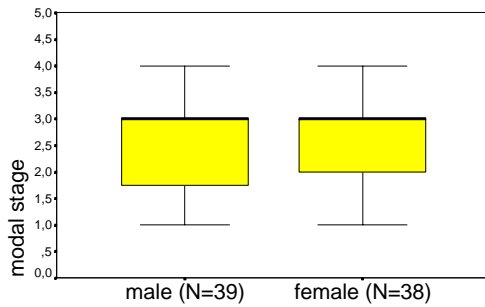


Fig. 1b: Within-company dilemma

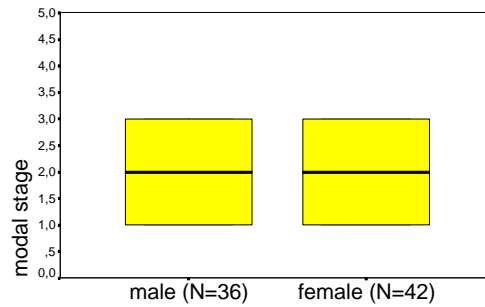


Fig. 1c: Heinz dilemma

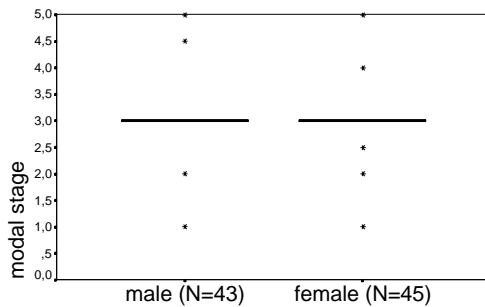
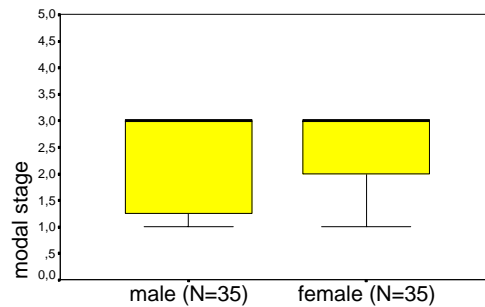


Fig. 1d: Peer dilemma



Looking at the dilemma scores beyond the modal stage score, with regard to three single issues (i.e. value conflicts) the Mann-Whitney U-test revealed a gender-specific stage preference (cf. table II). In the *within-company conflict* ($n = 65$, $U = 379$, $p = .039$) and in the *Heinz dilemma* ($n = 56$, $U = 297,5$, $p = .070$) the issue “*affiliation/contract*” shows on the whole higher stage arguments with female than with male apprentices. And when it comes to the question of punishing the offender (“*justice/law*”), in the *ex-company dilemma*, this tendency is strengthened ($n = 70$, $U = 367,5$, $p = .0009$). Only 4 women versus 19 men argue with preconventional arguments (stages 1 and 2) but 29 women versus 17 men produce judgments of the conventional level (stages 3 and 4).

Although of exceptional character - on the whole 31 value conflicts were analyzed - these findings must be borne in mind when the content analysis is put to the fore in the following paragraph.

Table II: Gender differences with regard to the stage scores *

Issue	Dilemma	Sex	Moral stages					Tot.
			1	2	3	4	5	
affiliation/contract	Within-company	male	10	11	9	0	0	30
		female	3	16	16	0	0	35
affiliation/contract	Family	male	5	6	14	1	0	26
		female	1	5	23	0	1	30
justice/law	Ex-company	male	10	9	17	0	1	37
		female	2	2	27	2	0	33

* cases without missings

As to the segmentation of moral judgment both sexes mainly showed a heterogeneous pattern of moral reasoning. Only 6 women and 8 men preferred the same moral stage across all four dilemmas.

Decisions and reasons

Although moral judgment competence is not measured by the decision for the one or the other alternative of action itself but by the *structure* of the moral arguments for the decision, we asked whether male and female apprentices solved the dilemma conflicts in a generally different manner. In our sample the moral decisions differed significantly only with regard to two value conflicts. While most female apprentices were irresolute or argued for mercy when it came to the conflict “*justice/law*“, their male colleagues preferred punishing the offender (*ex-company*: Cramer’s $V = 0.44$, $p = .001$; *within-company*: Cramer’s $V = .28$, $p = .044$; *Heinz*: Cramer’s $V = .383$, $p = .003$). The value conflict “*life/law*“ does not show such a uniform pattern across the dilemma stories. Whereas in both company dilemmas when a person’s life is at risk, most women turned out to be undecided or to regard the offence as appropriate, in this case the majority of our male testees recommended obedience to the law (*ex-company*: Cramer’s $V = .24$, $p = .106$; *within-company*: Cramer’s $V = .29$, $p = .028$). As this trend was reversed with regard to the *Heinz dilemma* where more men than women pleaded for stealing the drug (n.s.) - the difference becomes significant when a friend is the person in need (Cramer’s $V = .25$, $p = .076$) - there seems to be no general gender-related preference for the one or the other alternative of action.

The content analysis of moral reasoning supports each of the gender differences reported so far, both with regard to the stage scores as well as with regard to the decisions per issue. As the MANOVA showed no gender effect across all four dilemma stories, we report the significant t-test results ($p \leq .05$) when comparing the frequency of each single content score per issue between the sexes. For the issue “*justice/law*“ in the *ex-company dilemma* e.g. the t-test reveals that in this context more male apprentices use

the argument of reciprocal relations („If one commits a crime, one must bear the calculated consequences“). In the “*life/law*“ conflict of the Heinz-dilemma, where more men pleaded for punishment, predominantly women advance against the husband’s conviction, that a human life is more important than the obedience to the law. Interesting enough, however, 19 out of the 29 significant gender-related content preferences do not correspond to any of the previous findings (cf. table III). For example, in three issues of the Heinz story the quality of the relation between husband and wife turns out to be an argument which is more typical for women than for men. And in two stories, the Heinz and the ex-company dilemma, always in one issue, helpfulness is written mainly on female banners, whereas in the peer dilemma more male apprentices feel an obligation for support because it belongs to a friend’s role to stick to the other. Finally, in the *within-company dilemma* the fulfillment of role expectations (“An insurance clerk has to act in favor of his company“) belongs to the female territory. So, we have to conclude that the content preferences do not prove stable across (at least the parallel issues of) all four dilemmas.

Table III: Gender differences with regard to the moral reasons per issue

Dilemma	Ex-company	Within-company	Family	Peers
Number of issues	7	8	9	7
Number of reasons analyzed for gender differences	156	175	256	140
Number of reasons showing gender differences	5	9	11	4

After all, the inclination towards the one or the other argument seems to be more a question of *interaction* between the characteristics of the situation and the sex. Notwithstanding the gender issue, a comparison of the spread of the modal stage between the four dilemma stories (see figures 1a to 1d) also suggests the relevance of the story for the level of moral reasoning (cf. Lind 1993, 89). Whereas in the *Heinz dilemma* almost all apprentices prefer arguments of stage 3, the value conflicts in the other stories are settled in a much less uniform manner, partly by conventional, partly by preconventional reasoning.

Of course, one could argue that women and men differ in identifying themselves with particular dilemma settings. In order to control this interference factor we asked our subjects at the end of each story to rate their emphatic involvement into the given situation on a five-point Likert scale. Although all the protagonists in the dilemma stories are male, we found no less understanding for their position among the female apprentices than among the male.

Sociobiographical conditions of moral development

If female apprentices perceived their social environments generally more (less) stimulating than their male colleagues - and this for some time -, we would predict, with reference to Lempert (1993), a higher (lower) stage of moral judgment. Having found no structural gender differences in moral judgment, conversely, we assume that there have been no general differences in the sociobiographical conditions of the male and female testees in our sample.

We compared the descriptions of the seven developmental conditions in the five social fields (1) workplace, (2) vocational school (3) family life during childhood/-adolescence, (4) actual family life or partnership, and (5) peer group. As expected, only a few significant differences have been found, and that in two social fields: in family life during childhood/adolescence and in the vocational school which the apprentices attend for 1 ½ days a week.

Whereas the male subjects perceived their *participation in family decision making* as less adequate (mean = +.14), the female apprentices remember it as rather satisfactory (mean = +.42; $t = -1.91$; $df = 92$; $p = .059$). The women report that they were highly recognized as role occupants by other family members (mean = +.68). With regard to the men, this condition features somewhat less stimulating, though still positive (mean = +.48; $t = -1.70$; $df = 87$; $p = .092$).

In vocational school the male apprentices deplore the small *scope of action* granted by the teachers (mean = +.12), while the female find at least some opportunities to realize their own ideas or do not miss their lack that much (mean = +.40; $t = -1.99$; $df = 75$; $p = .051$). In the subject German Language, the *cooperation* between teacher and pupils was experienced much more negatively by men (mean = +.02) than by women (mean = +.33; $t = -1.72$; $df = 57$; $p = .091$) as was the *recognition as role occupant* in this subject, which is mainly perceived by marks (mean male = +.02; mean female = +.34; $t = -2.30$; $df = 53$; $p = .025$). In Social Studies, on the other hand, the recognition as role occupant is rated reversely with the male apprentices seeing themselves as performing rather well (mean = +.38) and the female students experiencing some weaknesses (mean = +.15; $t = 2.20$; $df = 64$; $p = .032$). However, there are no differences with regard to the profession-orientated school subjects Business Studies and Insurance Business. The social experiences in the three other fields i.e. workplace, actual family and peer group showed no gender-related particularities at all.

To summarise, the differences between the sexes with regard to the socio-biographical conditions of moral development are rare and moderate in our sample. Over and above that, half of the reported differences disappear when subdimensions like the school subject-specific inquiry of cooperation with the teacher are aggregated to an overall score for the vocational school as such (see figures 2a to 2e; conditions with significant differences on the aggregated level are labeled (*)).

Fig. 2a: Socio-biographical conditions of moral development at the workplace

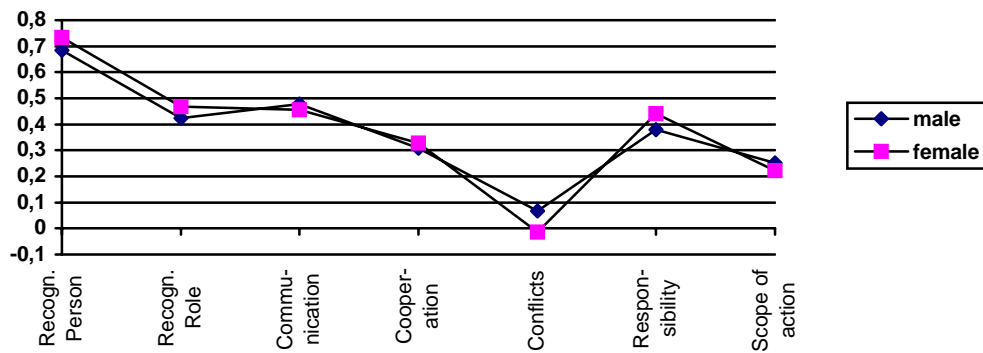


Fig. 2b Socio-biographical conditions of moral development at the vocational school

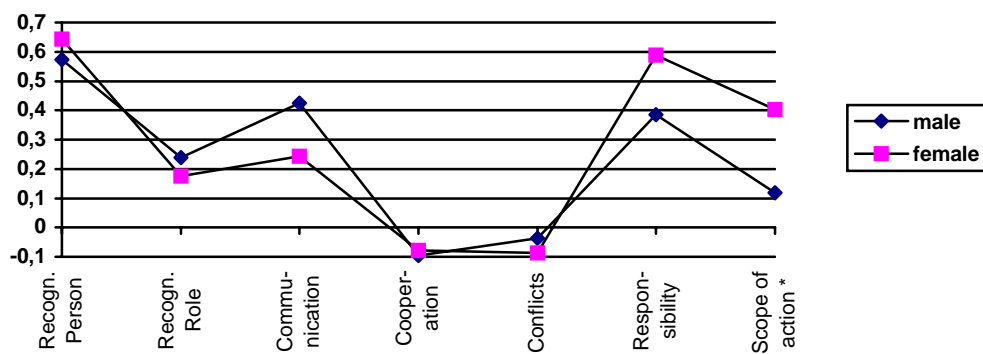


Fig. 2c: Socio-biographical conditions of moral development during childhood/adolescence

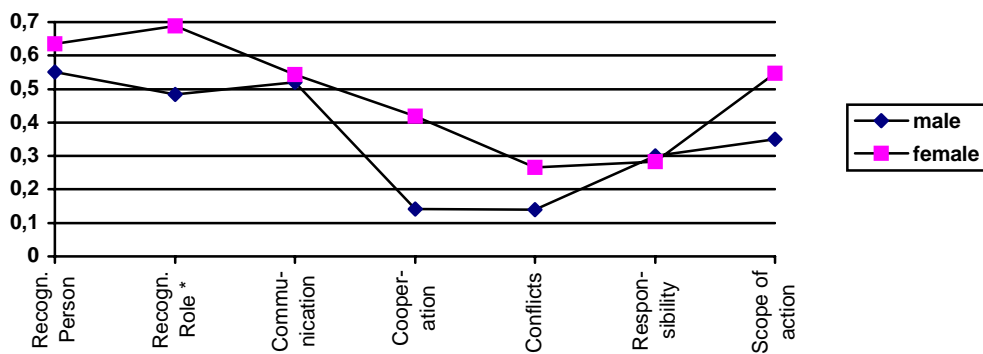


Fig. 2d: Socio-biographical conditions of moral development within the family or partnership

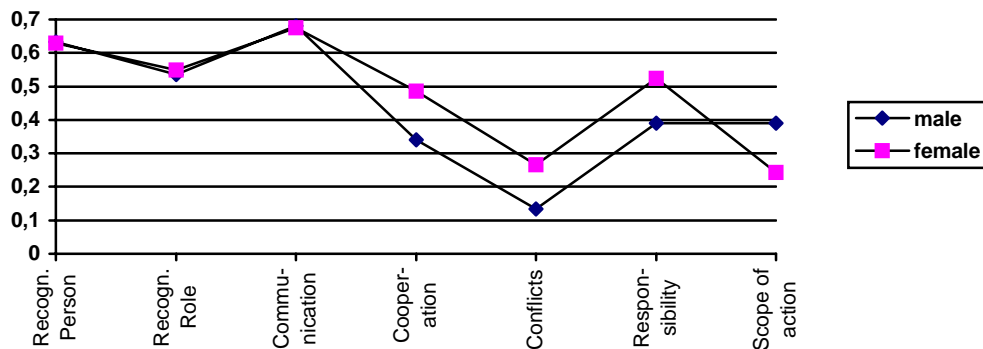
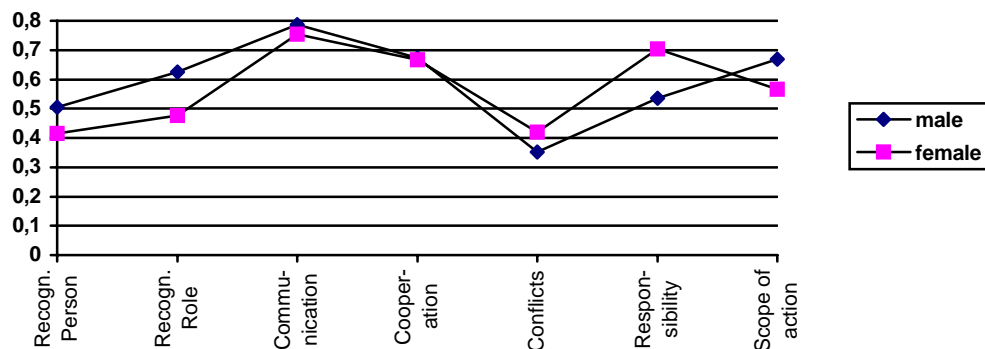


Fig. 2e: Socio-biographical conditions of moral development within the peer group



Discussion

All in all, our data support the criticism of Gilligan's idea of a different voice. We have found no significant differences in the structure of moral reasoning of male and female apprentices (measured by the „modal“ stage as Kohlberg and Gilligan did) and only minor differences with regard to the moral decisions and reasons. When looking for an explanation of this finding, we noticed that the sociobiographical conditions of moral development showed hardly any gender effects either.

On the other hand there is no reason to give up the conclusions of the multitude of studies on gender-specific socialization implying particular role sets of men and women (Hagemann-White 1984). Looking at our data under this perspective we realize that most of the gender differences we have found could be indicators of different role concepts which in turn may be partly a result of a gender-specific socialization.

In the value conflict „*affiliation/ contract*“ most women felt challenged with regard to their role as a social partner, while only a few interpreted the dilemma situation from the viewpoint of a contract partner. In the „*justice/law*“ issue again the female apprentices tended to use justice arguments in the sense of a social partnership and not in the sense of an equality before the law. This tendency is also reflected in the stated differences between male and female decisions in this issue.

However, neither across all dilemma stories nor across the value conflicts (most of which are parallel in the four contexts) a particular reason is consistently used more often by men than by women or vice versa. This finding is considered to be a strong argument against Gilligan's assumption of "two voices". Gender differences were only detected when inspecting our data issue per issue beyond the story level. Every issue, i.e. every modification of the dilemma situation, represents a new moral problem and stimulates a new process of moral reflection ending up with a new decision and a new moral argumentation (though some problems may be dealt with in the same way).

Our category system for the coding of moral reasons consists of 70 types of arguments. 5 of them turned out to be used depending on gender in the ex-company story, 9 in the within-company story, 11 in the Heinz story and 4 in the peer story (cf. Tab. III). E.g. when we questioned our subjects in the within-company story what to do and why if a superior asked his staff for forgery, significantly more female than male apprentices argued that the subordinate should forge because obedience were a value in itself. In none of the other 30 issues across the four stories this argument was again used in a gender-specific way. Whereas the argument that it is one's duty to keep authorities and rules working was also used by more women than men in the ex-company dilemma where the testees must decide whether the insurance clerk should pay the benefits to the suppliant widow even if she treated him very arrogantly the same argument was used significantly more often by male apprentices in the within-company dilemma. This time the question was whether the employee should manipulate the sales figures for the benefit of his superior even if he did not like him. This last example again supports our hypothesis that the story context stimulates a particular role taking which may be different between the sexes and which in turn implies a moral reasoning on a certain role-specific moral stage. In the first case female testees seem to take the role of a „business person“ whereas the male apprentices may feel addressed as „gentlemen“ when being contacted by the widow. In the second case, the men seem to interpret the situation preferably from the point of view of a „good clerk“ whereas the female apprentices may wish to live up to the role of a „good girl“.

Thus, we suggest that the gender differences in moral judgment which were found in studies like this are not caused by gender differences in the structure of moral reasoning but by differences in the interpretation of dilemma situations. According to this interpretation a role concept is activated which seems to be appropriate and it is this role concept which shifts the points for the choice of a stage principle for moral reasoning.

Additionally, the imagination of the consequences implied with the different possibilities of action in a problem situation might also influence the choice of a particular role: To be a „good clerk“ or a „business person“ means to make the decision for the best of the company, to be a „good girl“ or a „gentleman“ includes a decision which meets the expectations of the interaction partner. Thus, the individual's preference or fear of the possible consequences may support or hinder the activation of a special role concept. If, for example, an apprentice has not developed a strong feeling of self-value, he or she will be inclined to avoid the consequences of a social conflict with the interaction partners choosing the role of a „good boy/girl“ whereas another rather self-confident apprentice may face the dispute on behalf of his or her company.

At this point, the question arises to which extent the role taking of male and female apprentices is influenced (1) by habitualised experiences during primary and secondary socialization, (2) by personality characteristics, especially the „social self“ and the „psychological self“ (Damon 1989, 442), and (3) by the features of the situation resp. the social field. Putting the question in this way is led by the assumption that the process of moral reasoning and decision making is embedded in a complex net of interactions between internal functions. Of course, the question of interaction during a given situation in order to select and generate a certain behavior must be kept distinct from the question of the *development* of these functions. The data presented in this contribution do not allow to speculate on, much less to give answers to the question of development. However, it is quite obvious that situations which an individual experiences as morally relevant may contribute to the further development of his or her personality (in a wide sense) as well as the perception of and the reflection upon situations are the results of earlier development processes.

As our apprentices are still „newcomers“ in their insurance companies they may not have acquired job-oriented habits to cope with problems of the type of moral dilemmas so far. Thus, we assume that in this early phase of vocational training habits are not decisive for the choice of a role regarded as suitable for judging a moral problem in the business context. In accordance with many researchers we suppose that the role choice results from the interaction between personality traits on the one hand and a set of situational characteristics on the other hand. The relevance of the situational features depends on the individual's perceptions which, in turn, are based on its dispositions activated at the moment of perception (e.g. motivation, interests, cognitive styles, personal goals).

As counterpart in this interaction works the structure of the self, particularly the moral self as part of it. As there are different ideas of the concept of the „self“ under discussion (cf. Oser/Althof 1992, 243-244), it is not easy to pinpoint the components of the self which interact with the perception of the situation. According to Damon (cf. Damon 1989; Colby/Damon 1993; Damon/Hart 1988) the extent to which the moral self (as the „carrier“ of moral goals) is integrated with the personal self (as the „carrier“ of the personal goals) is the most important presupposition for the outcome of the interaction between the perception of a situation and the self.

In the view of Colby and Damon, moral goals are „central“ for the self, only if they are part of the personal self (1993, 204). Given this case, there will be a strong motivation to act in accordance with the outcome of moral judgment (which must not be confused with the moral self! Cf. Colby/Damon 1993, 205; see also Damon/Hart 1988, 173-174). Thus, if moral and personal goals are highly integrated, the likelihood should rise (i) that a given situation will be perceived as morally relevant, (ii) that a role will be chosen which is connected with a high level of moral reasoning and (iii) that all consequences of action, be they troublesome or even worse, will be accepted.

As Colby and Damon suppose, most people's moral self is relatively independent from their personal self (1993, 203), i.e. moral goals do not play an important role in their reflection and decision making. In this case, role choice cannot easily be predicted, especially not for situations which the person concerned is not acquainted to. Thus, even

if a situation is treated as morally relevant, other components of the individual's personality and his/her perception of the situation may gain influence on the role choice and the level of moral reflection as well. Research on this facet of the problem complex discussed here is still to be done. In our ongoing project we will carefully trace the process of vocational socialization of our apprentices under this aspect. Of special interest will be whether there are gender-related changes in role choice of female and male apprentices when we re-administer the dilemmas one year and two years later. For example, we wonder whether the female apprentices will have adapted their moral reasoning in the occupational context, especially in the ex-company situation, towards a more formal, law-orientated role concept at the end of the two or three years' training due to a socialization process in this particular field.

REFERENCES

- COLBY, A./DAMON, W. (1993) Die Integration des Selbst und der Moral in der Entwicklung moralischen Engagements, in: W. EDELSTEIN/G. NUNNER-WINKLER/ G. NOAM (Ed.) *Moral und Person*, pp. 203-231 (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp).
- COLBY, A./KOHLBERG, L. (1987a) *The Measurement of Moral Judgment. Volume I: Theoretical Foundations and Research Validation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- COLBY, A./KOHLBERG, L. (1987b) *The Measurement of Moral Judgment. Volume II: Standard Issue Scoring Manual* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- DAMON, W. (1989) *Die soziale Entwicklung des Kindes: ein entwicklungspsychologisches Lehrbuch* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta).
- DAMON, W./HART, D. (1988) *Self-understanding in childhood and adolescence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- DÖBERT, R./NUNNER-WINKLER, G. (1986) Wertwandel und Moral, in: H. BERTRAM (Ed.) *Gesellschaftlicher Zwang und moralische Autonomie*, pp. 289-319 (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp).
- FREUD, S. (1925) Einige psychische Folgen des anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschiedes. In: *Gesammelte Werke*, 14, pp. 19-30 (London, Imago Publishing).
- GIBBS, J. C./WIDAMAN, K. F. (1982) *Social Intelligence. Measuring the Development of Sociomoral Reflection* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall).
- GILLIGAN, C. (1982) *In a different voice. Psychological Theory and women's development* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).
- HAGEMANN-WHITE, C. (1984) *Sozialisation: Weiblich - männlich?* (Opladen, Leske + Budrich).
- KOHLBERG, L. (1969) Stage and Sequence. The Cognitive-Developmental Approach To Socialization, in: D. A. GOSLIN (Ed.) *Handbook of Socialization, Theory and Research*, pp. 347-480 (Chicago, Rand McNally).
- KOHLBERG, L./LEVINE, C./HEWER, A. (1983) *Moral stages: A current formulation and a response to critics* (Basel, Karger).
- LEMPERT, W. (1993) Moralische Sozialisation im Beruf. Bedingungsvarianten und -konfigurationen, Prozeßstrukturen, Untersuchungsstrategien, *Zeitschrift für Sozialisationsforschung und Erziehungssoziologie*, 13, pp. 2-35.
- LEMPERT, W. (1994) Moral Development in the Biographies of Skilled Industrial Workers, *Journal of Moral Education*, 23, pp. 451-468.
- LIND, G. (1993) *Moral und Bildung. Zur Kritik von Kohlbergs Theorie der moralisch-kognitiven Entwicklung* (Heidelberg, Asanger).
- LUGT-TAPPESER, H./JÜNGER, I. (1994) Moralisches Urteil und Geschlecht oder: Gibt es eine weibliche Moral? *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 46, pp. 259-277.
- NAILS, D. (1983) Social-scientific sexism: Gilligan's mismeasure of man, *Social research*, 50, pp. 643-663.
- NUNNER-WINKLER, G. (1994) Der Mythos von den Zwei Moralien, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 42, pp. 237-254.

- OSER, F./ALTHOF, W. (1992) *Moralische Selbstbestimmung. Modelle der Entwicklung und Erziehung im Wertebereich* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta).
- PIAGET, J. (1954) *Das moralische Urteil beim Kinde* (Zürich, Rascher).
- SPIELTHENNER, G. (1996) *L. Kohlbergs Theorie des moralischen Begründens - Eine philosophische Untersuchung* (Frankfurt, Lang).
- WALKER, L. J. (1984) Sex differences in the development of moral reasoning: A critical review, *Child Development*, 55, pp. 677-691.
- WALKER, L. J. (1986) Cognitive processes in moral development, in: G. L. SAPP (Ed.): *Handbook of moral development*, pp. 109-145 (Birmingham/Al., Religious Education Press).

- ¹ Besides, in a longitudinal perspective we want to examine whether moral segmentations, i.e. the variation of the modal stage from one dilemma story to another, will turn out to be stable instead of being a phenomenon of stage transition as Kohlberg supposed.
- ² As expected the Kruskal-Wallis test did not show any significant ($p \leq .05$) or systematic age effect.
- ³ The modal stage is identified for cases with at least three scorable answers and at least two answers on the modal stage. Non-discrete values of the modal stage (e.g. 2.5) mean that there was an equal number of scores on two adjacent stages (e.g. stages 2 and 3).
- ⁴ The tentatively computed two-factor ANOVA suggests no interaction between gender and age.