UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

# Towards Understanding Adolescents' Adaptation to School Moral Norms: Development and Validation of the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology

by

Aaron D. Haddock

University of California, Santa Barbara

Committee in Charge:

Professor Shane R. Jimerson, Chair

Professor Michael J. Furlong

Professor Erin Dowdy

September 2017

The dissertation of Aaron D. Haddock is approved.

Michael Furlong, Ph.D.

Erin Dowdy, Ph.D.

Shane R. Jimerson, Ph.D., Committee Chair

June 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation, *Towards Understanding Adolescents' Adaptation to School Moral Norms*, is the culmination of an intellectual project pursued in diverse ways over the past two decades. In this time, the values and ideas at its core have been shaped by friends, family, mentors, and colleagues – as have I. From beginning to end, the project has benefitted from the erudite guidance generously provided by mentors who gave freely of their counsel and learning. In particular, I want to thank my undergraduate professors, Dr. Diana Reynolds, Dr. Rick Kennedy, and Dr. Bill Wood, whose passion for the humanities and commitment to teaching ignited my curiosity and, in important ways, set me on this journey. My thanks are also due to my advisors at Columbia University, Dr. Stefan Andriopoulous and Dr. Samuel Moyn, who facilitated my understanding of the importance of context and guided my study of ethical and political theory. I am also indebted to my mentors, Dr. Marianne D'Emidio-Caston and Hugh Ranson, who taught me to how to translate ideas into practice as a teacher committed to fostering my students' ethical, social, and emotional development. I am equally indebted to my students, all of whom continue to amaze me with their kindness and achievements, and the exceptional teachers and staff at Crane Country Day School, who taught me so much about teaching, friendship, and community.

Very special thanks are due to my advisor, Dr. Shane Jimerson, who has been a tireless supporter and champion of this project. Dr. Jimerson exemplifies intellectual curiosity, scholarly rigor, and the scientist's pursuit of true knowledge and understanding. I am grateful for our many stimulating conversations and enjoyable adventures over the past six years. My thanks are due for the warm encouragement, constructive coaching, and timely feedback he consistently provided on the project from inchoate idea to final product. I also

give special thanks to Dr. Michael Furlong, whose incisive questions and wise suggestions in response to early iterations of this project refined my thinking and prompted me to learn more, ultimately resulting in a much stronger work than I had first envisioned. Likewise, I owe great thanks to Dr. Erin Dowdy, whose careful reading and perceptive comments significantly enhanced the final product. Dr. Dowdy illustrates how nicely equanimity and geniality complement intellect and industry. In addition, I have benefitted tremendously from the teaching and support of the faculty in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology at UCSB, especially Dr. Matthew Quirk and Dr. Jill Sharkey.

My most heartfelt thanks are given to my parents, Dean and Denise Haddock, whose unwavering love and abundant care reside at the core of my being. My father's odds-defying resilience both made it possible for me to pursue my dreams and showed me how to do it; his example inspires me and gives me hope for children and families facing adversity. My mother's encouragement and affection enabled me to aim high and believe that I could do it. Her unconditional positive regard and steady nurturing taught me how to love and trust. Heartfelt thanks are also owed to my brilliant brother, Joshua Haddock, my first and oldest friend and constant childhood companion, and my innovative sister, Cherith Haddock, who inspires me to be creative and bold.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the love and support of not just one family, but two. My sincerest thanks go to my parents-in-love, Walter and Darlene Hansen, who love and care for me as if I was their own, and to my brothers and friends, Jonathan and Nathaniel Hansen. I am deeply grateful for the profound influence the Hansen family has had on my life, values, and identity. Their belief in my abilities and support for our family contributed to making this possible in critical ways.

Lastly, and most importantly, I am grateful for the support of my loving wife and dearest friend, Linnea. She has been intimately involved in this project from its inception and has traveled great distances with me, literally and figuratively, to pursue it. We have celebrated the successes together, and she has provided steadfast support and comfort through the challenges. I am profoundly grateful for her listening ear and thoughtful contributions to the work. Linnea has been a critical source of strength and support through it all. Seeing it through would have been impossible without her – and a lot less fun. I am eternally grateful for our three wonderful children – Xander, Soren, and Bowen – each thriving in his own way. They fill our hearts and home with laughter, warmth, and delight. Playing and talking with my boys and going on Rattlesnake Rambler adventures will always be my favorite ways to take a break.

*My greatest hope is that the effort that went into this project will, in some small way, contribute to the creation of a more just and caring world. May <u>all</u> children be filled with joy and peace and receive the love, support, and resources they need to flourish!*

VITA OF AARON D. HADDOCK

# Aaron D. Haddock, M.A., M.Ed., M.A.

## EDUCATION

**Yale School of Medicine** 7/2016 – 6/2017
Doctoral Fellow, Department of Psychiatry
Division of Prevention and Community Research
*Primary placement*: The Consultation Center
*Secondary placement*: West Haven Mental Health Clinic
APA-accredited Internship in Clinical and Community Psychology

**University of California – Santa Barbara** 9/2011 – Present
Doctoral Candidate in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
*Emphasis*: School Psychology
*Committee*: Shane Jimerson, PhD; Michael Furlong, PhD; Erin Dowdy, PhD

**University of California – Santa Barbara**
M.Ed. in School Psychology 11/2015

**Antioch University**
Clear Multiple-Subject Teaching Credential 9/2004 – 6/2005
M.A. in Education – Concentration in Social Justice and Leadership 9/2010 – 6/2011
*Thesis*: Developing and Evaluating the Application of a Developmentalist Approach to Social, Emotional, and Moral Learning

**Columbia University** 9/2002 – 5/2004
M.A. in Liberal Studies
*Emphasis*: Modern European Studies
*Committee*: Samuel Moyn, PhD (History); Stefan Andriopoulos, PhD (German)
*Thesis:* Cinematic Trance: Robert Musil's "Toward a New Aesthetic"

**University of Vienna**, Austria 9/2000 – 6/2001
**Fulbright Scholarship**
*Emphasis*: German Languages & Literatures; Intellectual History
*Project*: The Science of Soul: Musil, Kundera, Bernhard

**Point Loma Nazarene University** 8/1995 – 5/1999
Bachelor of Arts, History
Cum Laude & Graduation with Honors and Distinction

## TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| Nationally Certified School Psychology Credential | 7/2017 |
| Pupil Personnel Services Credential | 7/2017 |
| Cognitive Behavioral Intervention in Schools (CBITS) | 2016 – 2017 |
| Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) | 2016 – 2017 |
| Clear Multiple-Subject Teaching Credential | 6/2005 |

## PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

APA, Division 16: School Psychology, Student Affiliates of School Psychology

- Past-President & Editor of *From Science to Practice and Policy* 2017 – 2018
- President 2016 – 2017
- President-Elect 2015 – 2016
- Editor and Co-Editor of *From Science to Practice and Policy* 2011 – 2013

International School Psychology Association

- Chair & Founder of School Psychology in International Schools Interest Group
- Student Membership Task Force

California Psychological Association, Division 8, Neuropsychology

- Student Representative 2011 – 2013

Crane Country Day School

- Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees 2008 – 2009
- Master Teacher Committee 2009 – 2010
- Teacher Evaluation Design Team 2010 – 2011

## AWARDS AND HONORS

| | |
|---|---|
| Center for School-Based Youth Development Research Award | May, 2015 |
| Outstanding Researcher Award (CCSP Department) | May, 2013 |
| Dean's Advancement Fellowship Award | Summer, 2014 |
| Dorman Commons Fund Award | 2011 – 2012 |
| Lejeune Teaching Fellowship/Teacher of the Year Award | May, 2010 |
| Fulbright Scholarship, Vienna, Austria | 1999 – 2000 |
| Dean's List | 1996 - 1999 |

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Psychology Fellow** 2016 – 2017
***The Consultation Center at Yale University Medical School***, New Haven, CT
Supervisor: Nadia Ward, PhD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry
**Projects:**

- School-based Trauma-Informed Care Initiative (Bridgeport Public Schools)
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Evaluation

U.S. Department of Education (DOE) & Bridgeport Public Schools

**Responsibilities:**

I contributed to two projects focused on improving behavioral health outcomes and academic achievement in children and adolescents. For the School-based Trauma-Informed Care Initiative, I created and delivered professional development presentations; consulted with teachers, counselors and school leadership; trained in CBITS and TF-CBT; and evaluated the program. On the GEAR UP project, I was responsible for developing and validating measures, collaborating with school and community partners to collect data, analyzing data, presenting results to community partners and at the annual GEAR UP/DOE conference in New York, and publishing research related to these projects.

**Graduate Research Assistant** 2011 – 2017

*University of California - Santa Barbara*

**Responsibilities:**

In this position, I collaborated with Shane Jimerson, PhD, on a variety of research and writing projects and presentations at national and international conferences.

**Assistant Program Coordinator and Evaluator** 8/11 – 6/16

*University of California - Santa Barbara*

*Isla Vista Elementary School, Goleta, CA*

Power of Play of Project

Supervisor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

**Responsibilities:**

I coordinated the implementation, progress monitoring, and evaluation of the Power of Play program; developed data collection procedures and research methodology; and trained and supervised 50-60 undergraduates in program implementation each quarter. I frequently presented on the program at national and international conferences.

**Assistant Program Coordinator and Evaluator** 8/11 – 6/16

*University of California - Santa Barbara*

*Isla Vista Elementary School, Goleta, CA*

*Goleta Valley Junior High, Goleta, CA*

Promoting Positive Peer Relations (P3R)

Supervisor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

**Responsibilities:**

I coordinated the implementation, progress monitoring, and evaluation of the Promoting Positive Peer Relations (P3R) program, an intervention aimed at improving school climate and positive peer relations and reducing bullying behavior in schools. I developed surveys, data collection procedures, and research methodology; consulted with school leadership and teachers on program implementation; implemented the program; conducted analyses; and completed an evaluation report, the results of which I presented at participating schools to district leadership, teachers, and parents. I frequently presented on the program at national and international conferences.

**Assistant Consultant and Program Evaluator** 9/14 – 6/15

*University of California - Santa Barbara*

*Goleta Union School District*

TIERS Program in Goleta Unified School District

**Responsibilities:**
Working on a team led by Shane Jimerson, PhD, I made significant contributions to this district-wide program evaluation of a comprehensive behavior support program (TIERS) implemented in all Centers for Therapeutic Education throughout the Goleta Union School District. I played an integral role in the development and dissemination of online surveys; data collection, cleaning, and analysis; communication and consultation with teachers and leadership on program implementation; implementation of the program in a school-based Center for Therapeutic Education; and the creation of an evaluation report.

**Assistant Consultant and Program Evaluator** 9/14 – 6/15
*University of California - Santa Barbara*
*Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)*
TIERS Program in Centers for Therapeutic Education
**Responsibilities:**
Working on a team led by Shane Jimerson, PhD, I made significant contributions to this county-wide program evaluation of a comprehensive behavior support program (TIERS) implemented in all Centers for Therapeutic Education throughout the Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). I played an integral role in the development and dissemination of online surveys; data collection, cleaning, and analysis; consultation with teachers and leadership on program implementation; implementation of the program in a school-based Center for Therapeutic Education; and the creation of an evaluation report.

**Assistant Researcher, Consultant, and Program Evaluator** 9/14 – 6/15
*University of California - Santa Barbara*
*Goleta Union School District*
GUSD MTSS Implementation Survey
**Responsibilities:**
Working on a team led by Shane Jimerson, PhD, I made significant contributions to this program evaluation of a district-wide implementation of a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. I played an integral role in the dissemination of online surveys; consultation and communication with the teachers and administrators implementing the program; data collection, cleaning, and analysis; and the creation of an evaluation report.

**Assistant Researcher, Consultant, and Program Evaluator** 9/13 – 6/14
*University of California - Santa Barbara*
*Goleta Union School District*
Corrective Reading
**Responsibilities:**
Working on a team led by Shane Jimerson, PhD, I made significant contributions to this program evaluation of a district-wide implementation of a reading remediation program (Corrective Reading) in nine special education classrooms. I conducted and created a literature review of direct instruction reading remediation programs and the Corrective Reading program, with particular attention to such programs effectiveness for English Language Learners. I trained and led a team of eleven undergraduate research assistants, as they conducted 157 fidelity observations over the course of eight months employing a web-based fidelity checklist I created. Pearson product-moment correlations estimated the inter-observer reliability coefficient for the overall fidelity of implementation score was .96. I conducted a separate study examining student outcomes, implementation integrity, and professional perspectives related to Corrective Reading for 78 Latino/a students in grades 2 to 6 with reading deficits of two or more grade levels; I have presented the results at NASP and CASP.

**Graduate Student Researcher** 9/02 – 5/04
Columbia University in the City of New York
Supervisors: Stefan Andriopoulos, PhD (German); Samuel Moyn, PhD (History)

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STATISTICAL TRAINING**

Advanced Training in Statistics and Research Methods

- Structural Equation Modeling – Dr. Karen Nylund-Gibson
- Factor Analysis – Dr. Karen Nylund-Gibson
- Advanced Multivariate Statistics – Dr. George Marcoulides
- Inferential Statistics - Dr. Brett Kia-Keating
- Linear Models for Data Analysis – Dr. Brett Kia-Keating
- M-*Plus* Software
- SPSS Software
- Excel Data Analysis
- Program Development and Evaluation – Dr. Shane Jimerson, Dr. Nadia Ward, Dr. Michael Strambler, Dr. Joy Kaufman, Dr. Jacob Kraemer Tebes, Dr. Derrick Gordon, Dr. Cindy Crusto, Dr. Christian Connell

Member, *Latent Variable Group* in Department of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

- Advisor: Karen Nylund-Gibson, PhD

## PUBLICATIONS

### *In Preparation*

**Books:**

Jimerson, S.R. & **Haddock, A.D.** (forthcoming). *Grade retention and social promotion: Toward the cognitive and social competence of children*. New York, NY: Routledge.

**Articles:**

Steeger, C.M., Strambler, M.J., Ward, N.L., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Heberle, A. (forthcoming, 2017). Factor structure of a perceived teacher support scale for urban high school adolescents.

Ward, N.L., Strambler, M.J., **Haddock, A.D.**, Heberle, A. (forthcoming, 2017). Increasing educational attainment among urban minority youth: Results of the U.S. Department of Education's educational initiative, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Haddock, A.D. & Jimerson, S.R. (in preparation). Assessing adolescents' adaptation to school moral norms: Development and validation of the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire.

Jimerson, S.R. & Haddock, A.D. (in preparation). Meta-analysis of grade retention research.

***Published***

**Articles:**

Haddock, A., & Jimerson, S. (2017). An examination of differences in moral disengagement and empathy among bullying participant groups. *Journal of Relationships Research, 8*. https://doi:10.1017/jrr.2017.15

Bowles, T., **Haddock, A.D.**, Jimerson, S.R., Coelho, V., Sławomir, J., Hatzichristou, C. …Carvalho, C. (forthcoming, Spring, 2017). An international perspective on factors influencing delivery of social and emotional learning programs. *Journal of Relationships Research, 7.*

Klingbeil, D. A., Renshaw, T. L., Willenbrink, J. B., Copek, R. A., Chan, K. T., **Haddock, A.**, ... & Clifton, J. (2017). Mindfulness-based interventions with youth: A comprehensive meta-analysis of group-design studies. *Journal of School Psychology, 63*, 77-103.

Yu, R. & **Haddock, A.D.** (2016). Working together to create opportunities for school psychology graduate students. *American Psychological Association, The School Psychologist, 70*(3), 43-5.

Haddock, A.D. (2016). Fostering the future of school psychology: An update on APA Division 16 Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP). *American Psychological Association, The School Psychologist, 70*(1), 30-32.

Haddock, A.D. & Jimerson, S.R. (2015). The power of play: Leveraging recess to support students at school. *American Psychological Association, The School Psychologist, 69*(3), 8-11.

Jimerson, S.R. & **Haddock, A.** (2015). Understanding the importance of teachers in facilitating school success: Contemporary science, practice, and policy. *School Psychology Quarterly, 30* (4).

Haddock, A. D. & Jimerson, S. R. (2015). Thinking globally: Contemporary initiatives and future frontiers. *American Psychological Association, The School Psychologist, 69* (2).

Haddock, A. D. & Jimerson, S. R. (2015). Research regarding international schools and education. *International School Psychology Association, World-Go-Round, 42* (1), 14-17.

Haddock, A.D., Dodds, R., and Wigginton, R. (2014). School-connectedness and well-being. *American Psychological Association, From Science to Practice and Policy, 7* (4), 3-9.

Jimerson, S. R. & **Haddock, A. D.** (2014). Toward understanding school psychology in international schools. *International School Psychology Association, World-Go-Round, 41* (4), 14-18.

Haddock, A. D. & Jimerson, S. R. (2014). School psychology in international schools. *International School Psychology Association, World-Go-Round, 41* (3), 19-24.

Haddock, A.D., Capous, D., and Gopaul-Knight, K. (2013). Post-traumatic stress disorder in children and adolescents. *American Psychological Association, From Science to Practice and Policy, 6* (2), 21-31.

**Book Chapters:**

Jimerson, S.R., **Haddock, A.**, Stein, R., & Shahroozi, R. (2016). Common core state standards and RTI: The importance of assessment, intervention, and progress

monitoring. S. R. Jimerson, M. K. Burns, & A. M. VanDerHeyden (Eds.) (2014) *Handbook of Response to Intervention: The Science and Practice of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.,** & Yu, R. (2015). Grade Retention. In K. Chrisman and D. L. Couchenour (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Contemporary Early Childhood Education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A**., & Brown, J. A. (2012). Beyond Grade Retention and Social Promotion: Towards Supporting Students With Learning and Behavioral Disabilities. In B. G., Cook, M. Tankersley, T. J. Landrum, A.C. Hattie, & E. M. Anderman (Eds.), *Advances in Learning and Behavioral Disabilities* (Volume 25). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.

**Technical Reports/Program Evaluations:**

Jimerson, S.R., Wu, R., **Haddock, A.** (2015*). GUSD TIERS implementation fidelity survey and classroom student behavior ratings*. Goleta, CA: Goleta Union School District.

Jimerson, S.R., Wu, R., **Haddock, A.** (2015). *Santa Barbara County SELPA TIERS implementation fidelity survey: Region and school level analyses*. Goleta, CA: Goleta Union School District.

Jimerson, S.R., Dowdy, E., Carnazzo, K., **Haddock, A.** (2015). *GUSD multi-tiered system of support implementation survey winter 2015: The science of practice of assessment, instruction, and intervention (promoting reading, math, behavior/social development)*. Goleta, CA: Goleta Union School District.

Jimerson, S.R., Dowdy, E., Carnazzo, K., **Haddock, A.** (2014). *GUSD multi-tiered system of support implementation survey fall 2014: The science of practice of assessment, instruction, and intervention (promoting reading, math, behavior/social development)*. Goleta, CA: Goleta Union School District.

Jimerson, S.R., **Haddock, A.**, Rime, W.J. (2014). *Corrective Reading in the local context: Implementation fidelity and student outcomes*. Santa Barbara, CA: Center for School-based Youth Development.

**PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

Haddock, A.D. (May, 2017) *Understanding and supporting trauma-exposed youth at school: Scholarly project.* Yale Medical School: Department of Psychiatry. New Haven, Connecticut.

Haddock, A.D., Heberle, A., Ward, N.L, & Strambler, M.J. (February, 2017). *Promoting equity and justice through structural analysis and systems intervention with schools.* Teachers College Columbia University Winter Roundtable on Cultural Psychology and Education; Roundtable Discussion. New York, New York.

Ward, N.L. & **Haddock, A.D.** (February, 2017). *Supporting Trauma-Exposed Youth: Strategies to Create a Trauma-Sensitive School.* National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships (NCCEP) GEAR UP Capacity-Building Workshop. New York, New York.

Haddock, A.D. & Ward, N.L. (2017). *Creating trauma-sensitive schools.* Professional development presentation for Bridgeport Public Schools, Roosevelt School.

Haddock, A.D. & Ward, N.L. (2017). *Creating trauma-sensitive schools.* Professional development presentation for Bridgeport Public Schools, Discovery School.

Haddock, A.D. & Ward, N.L. (2016). *Understanding the impact of toxic stress on student learning.* Professional development presentation for Bridgeport Public Schools.

Haddock, A.D. & Ward, N.L. (2016). *Creating trauma-sensitive schools.* Professional development presentation for Bridgeport Public Schools, Read School.

Jimerson, S. R. & **Haddock, A. D.** (2016, February). *Beyond retention and social promotion: Evidence-based alternatives.* Mini skills presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Jimerson, S. R., Dowdy, E., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Carnazzo, K. (2015, October). *RTI/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Implementation Fidelity.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists. Riverside, California.

Yu, R., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Jimerson, S. R., (2015, October). *RTI in restrictive settings: Examining fidelity.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists. Riverside, California.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Yu, R. (2015, October). *Beyond grade retention and social promotion: Toward the cognitive and social competence of students.* Workshop presented at the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists. Riverside, California.

Jimerson, S. R., Baas, S., Robinson-Zanartu, C., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Hatzichristou, C. (2015, February). *Crossing cultures and continents: A transnational and multi-cultural view of school psychology.* Chair of Symposium presented at the 2015 Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Orlando, FL.

Haddock, A.D., Babcock, S., Binmoeller, C., May, C., & Jimerson, S. R., (2015, February). *Bullying prevention through promoting positive peer relationships: Empirically-supported curriculum.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. Orlando, Florida.

Binmoeller, C., Stein, R., & Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.D.** (2015, February). *Measuring unseen behavior: The psychometric properties of the Bullying Attitude Measure.* Poster presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. Orlando, Florida.

Binmoeller, C., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Stein, R. & Jimerson, S. R. (2015, February). *Attitudes towards bullying, a comparison across ethnicity and gender.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. Orlando, Florida.

Haddock, A.D., Jimerson, S.R., Shahroozi, S.R., & Babcock, S. (2015, February). *Beyond grade retention and promotion: Evidence-based alternatives.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists, Orlando Florida.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Shahroozi, S. R. (2014, February). *Evidence-based alternatives to grade retention and social promotion.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, D.C.

Haddock, A.D., Jimerson, S. R., Gillespie, A., & Rime, J. (2014, February). *Playground strategies to promote problem solving and reduce discipline referrals.* Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Washington DC.

Ruderman, M.R., Jimerson, S.R., & **Haddock, A.D.** (2014, February). *From bystanders to upstanders: Defending behavior in bullying.* Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Washington DC.

Renshaw, T., **Haddock, A.D.**, Rime, J. (2014, February). *School-based mindfulness interventions.* Symposium presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Washington DC.

Haddock, A.D. & Jimerson, S.R. (2014, February). *Moral disengagement and empathy among bullying groups.* Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Washington DC.

Haddock, A.D., Binmoeller, C., Stein, R., Gopul, K., & Jimerson, S.R. (2014, February). *Promoting positive peer relationships: A collaborative approach to reducing bullying.* Mini Skills Workshop presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Washington DC.

Haddock, A. D., Jimerson, S. R., & Shahroozi, S. R. (2014, February). *Evidence-Based alternatives to grade retention and social promotion.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, D.C.

Haddock, A.D. (2014, February). *Children's mental health*. Professional development presentation for teachers at Crane Country Day School. Santa Barbara, CA.

Stein, R., **Haddock, A**., Binmoeller, C. Jimerson, S. (2013, February). *A positive approach to reducing bullying and improving school climate.* Presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA.

Shahroozi, S. R., Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.**, Rime, W. J., & Ruderman, M. A. (2013, February). *Show me the money: Promoting school mental health*. Presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA.

Haddock, A.D. (2013, January). *Helping children cope with crisis and talking with them about violence.* Presented at Crane Country Day School "Parents for Crane" Meeting, Santa Barbara, CA.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.**, Gillespie, A., & Rime, J. (2012, September). *Playground strategies to promote problem solving and reduce discipline Referrals.* Paper presented at the California Association of School Psychologists Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

Stein, R., **Haddock, A.D.**, Binmoeller, C. Jimerson, S.R. (2012 October) *Promoting positive peer relationships: A positive approach to reducing bullying and improving school climate*. Mini-skills session presented at California Association of School Psychologists Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

Haddock, A.D., Rime, W.J., Shahroozi, R., & Jimerson, S.R. (2012, October). *Triarchic conceptualization of advocacy: The confluence of science, practice, and policy.* Paper presented at California Association of School Psychologists Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.D.**, & Gillespie, A. (2012, February). *Power of play: Playground strategies to facilitate pro-social play activities and the development of conflict resolution and problem solving.* Paper presented at California Association of School Psychologists Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

Haddock, A. (2010, August). *The debate over moral education: Traditionalist, developmentalist, modernist*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Authentic Learning. Santa Barbara, California.

Haddock, A. (2006, October). *Writing trouble stories*. Workshop presented at the California Association of Teachers of English Conference. Fresno, California.

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Haddock, A., Stein, R., & Jimerson, S. R. (2016, August). *Nice is not enough: The interplay of morality and bullying.* Presented at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association. Denver, Colorado.

Haddock, A., & Jimerson, S. R. (2016, July). *Toward understanding school psychology in international schools.* Poster presented at the annual conference of the International School Psychology Association. Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Yu, R., Jimerson, S. R., & **Haddock, A. D.** (2016, February). *Examining implementation fidelity and student outcomes of the TIERS model.* Presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Haddock, A. D. & Jimerson, S. R. (2016, February). *Toward understanding school psychology in international schools.* Presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Haddock, A. D. & Jimerson, S. R. (2016, February). *Corrective Reading with Latino/a youth: Examining efficacy, fidelity, and outcomes.* Presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Haddock, A., & Jimerson, S. R. (2015, October). *Corrective reading with Latino/a youth: Examining efficacy, fidelity, and outcomes.* Presented at the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists. Riverside, California.

Haddock, A., & Jimerson, S. R. (2015, October). *Toward understanding school psychology in international schools.* Presented at the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists. Riverside, California.

Haddock, A., & Jimerson, S. R. (2015, July). *Toward understanding school psychology in international schools.* Poster presented at the annual conference of the International School Psychology Association. São Paulo, Brazil.

Jimerson, S.R., Gillespie, A., **Haddock, A.**, & Rime, W.J. (2013, March). *The power of play: Playground strategies to promote problem solving and reduce conflicts*. Presented at the 47th Annual Convention of the University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Jimerson, S.R., **Haddock, A**., & Binmoeller, C. (2013, July). *Promoting student social and emotional competence during recess: The power of play.* Presented at the Annual Convention of the International School Psychology Association, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A**., Gillespie, A., Rime, J., & Binmoeller, C. (2013, July). *The power of play: Strategies to promote problem solving and reduce discipline referrals.* Presented at the American Psychological Association Conference. Orlando, FL.

Rime, W.J., **Haddock, A.D**., Shahroozi, R., & Jimerson, S.R. (2013, February). *Triarchic conceptualization of advocacy: Confluence of science, practice and policy*. Presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA.

Jimerson, S.R., Gillespie, A., **Haddock, A**., Rime, W.J. (2013, February), *Playground strategies to promote problem solving and reduce discipline referrals.* Poster presentation at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA.

Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A**., Gillespie, A. (2012, February) *Power of play*. Poster presentation at National Association of School Psychologists in Philadelphia, PA.

## WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

Jimerson, S. R. & **Haddock, A.** (2014, July). *Bullying prevention and intervention: Policies and processes to promote positive peer relationships.* Workshop presented at the annual conference of the International School Psychology Association, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Shahroozi, S. R., Jimerson, S. R., **Haddock, A.**, Rime, W. J., & Ruderman, M. A. (2013, February). *Show Me the Money: Promoting School Mental Health.* Workshop presented at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA.

Shahroozi, S. R., **Haddock, A.**, Jimerson, S. R., Rime, W. J., & Ruderman, M. A. (2012, October). *Show Me the Money: Promoting Mental Health at School.* Workshop presented at the annual convention for the California Association of School Psychologists, Costa Mesa, CA.

## TEACHING & ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

8/14 – 6/16 **Assistant to Department Chair: Shane Jimerson, PhD**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California, Santa Barbara
**Responsibilities:**
I assisted the Department Chair in this role in a wide variety of administrative activities and special projects.

11/22/2015 **Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Self, Identity and Autonomy – Erikson, Roberts, and Schwartz***
**Course: Human Development: Developmental Bases of Behavior**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

10/29/2015 **Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory***
**Course: Topical Seminar in Applied Psychology**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

8/2015 – 9/2015 **Teaching Associate (Course Instructor)**
**Course: Research Methods in Applied Psychology**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
**Responsibilities:**
I was the sole instructor for this undergraduate course in research methods. I helped develop a syllabus for the course; helped develop and presented all lectures; created and graded all course assignments and exams; created a web-based course website for all course materials, submission of assignments, and grading; and held weekly office hours.
**Student Ratings:**
**1.1 and 1.5 Average ESCI score** (quality of teaching and course, respectively)
(ESCI = Evaluation System for Courses and Instruction; 1=Excellent, 2=Very Good, 3=Good, 4=Fair, 5=Poor)

10/05/2015 **Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Developing Research Ideas***
**Course: Research Methods in Applied Psychology**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Matt Quirk, PhD

Spring, 2015 **Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Developing Research Ideas***
**Course: Research Methods in Applied Psychology**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Matt Quirk, PhD

Winter, 2015 **Teaching Assistant (Course Lecturer)**
**Psychology 1: Introduction to Psychology**
Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Alan Fridlund, PhD
**Responsibilities:**
I provided weekly 90-minute lectures to undergraduate students on topics in psychology, graded research papers, advised students enrolled in the course, and assisted with the administration of testing.
**Student Ratings:**
**1.1 Average ESCI score** (quality of teaching)
(ESCI = Evaluation System for Courses and Instruction; 1=Excellent, 2=Very Good, 3=Good, 4=Fair, 5=Poor)

Winter, 2015 **Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Promoting Prosocial Behavior and Managing Difficult Behavior in Children***

**Course: Topical Seminar in Applied Psychology**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

Fall, 2014

**Guest Lecturer**
**Topic: *Early Relationships - Bowlby and Sroufe***
**Course: Human Development: Developmental Bases of Behavior**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD

Fall, 2014

**Teaching Assistant**
**Course: Human Development: Developmental Bases of Behavior**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD
**Responsibilities:**
I provided lectures and assisted with the administration of the course.

Winter, 2014

**Teaching Assistant (Course Lecturer)**
**Psychology 1: Introduction to Psychology**
Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Alan Fridlund, PhD
**Responsibilities:**
I provided weekly 90-minute lectures to undergraduate students on topics in psychology, graded research papers, advised students enrolled in the course, and assisted with the administration of testing.
**Student Ratings:**
**1.2 Average ESCI score** (quality of teaching)
(ESCI = Evaluation System for Courses and Instruction; 1=Excellent, 2=Very Good, 3=Good, 4=Fair, 5=Poor)

Fall, 2013

**Teaching Assistant**
**Course: Human Development: Developmental Bases of Behavior**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
Instructor: Shane Jimerson, PhD
**Responsibilities:**
I provided lectures and assisted with the administration of the course.

2005 – 2011

**Fourth Grade Teacher**
Crane Country Day School
Santa Barbara, California
**Responsibilities:**

I was the core teacher for fourth grade students. In this role, I provided instruction in mathematics, English, and social studies/history and monitored the progress of my students' academic achievement. As the students' core teacher, I was also responsible for developing and implementing a social and emotional learning program, coordinating all specialist teachers, communicating with parents, holding parent conferences, organizing and leading field trips, critically reviewing and developing curriculum, participating in ongoing professional development, mentoring and assessing other teachers, advising school leadership, representing the faculty to the school board, and serving on a wide variety of committees.

2004 – 2005 **First and Fifth Grade Student Teacher**
Brandon Elementary School, Goleta Union School District
Santa Barbara, California

2001 – 2002 **Substitute Teacher**
**Grades: Kindergarten – High School**
Santa Barbara Unified School District
Santa Barbara, California

1999 – 2000 **Substitute Teacher**
**Grades: Preschool – High School**
San Diego Unified School District; Lemon Grove School District; Grossmont Union High School District
San Diego, California

## CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

07/16 – Present **Psychology Fellow**
West Haven Mental Health Clinic
West Haven, Connecticut
**Responsibilities:**
In this position, I provide weekly individual psychotherapy and case management to children and adolescents and families, participate in the Child Treatment Team (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, fellows), and conduct comprehensive psychological assessments. I participate in weekly didactic training sessions on a variety of relevant topics, and I am also training in and implementing Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

08/14 – 06/16 **Registered Psychological Assistant**
Supervisor: Carrie Towbes, PhD, Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice
Santa Barbara, California
**Responsibilities:**
I obtained registration by the California Board of Psychology (PSB #94021133) to practice as a Psychological Assistant supervised by a clinical

psychologist in private practice. In this role, I primarily conducted comprehensive neuropsychological and psychoeducational evaluations of children and adolescents. I conducted numerous comprehensive psychological evaluations and wrote the accompanying fully integrated reports. I employed a very wide array of psychological and neuropsychological testing instruments and provided diagnoses based on the DSM-V (e.g., Autism, AD/HD, Generalized Anxiety Disorder) in conjunction with recommendations for special education services based on education code. Please see last page of CV for a list of the psychodiagnostic and neuropsychological assessments with which I have experience. I scheduled appointments, conducted intake assessments with parents, interviewed support personnel and teachers, conducted observations, shared testing results, consulted with other relevant professionals, and participated in IEP and student study team meetings.

09/11 – 06/16 **Supervisor**
Power of Play Program
Isla Vista Elementary School, Goleta Union School District
Santa Barbara, California
**Responsibilities:**
In this position, I contributed leadership and provided weekly supervision to 50-60 undergraduate students implementing a school-wide program to promote prosocial behavior on the playground during recess. I also regularly guest lectured on topics in education, human development, and applied psychology in an associated course at UCSB.

08/14 – 05/15 **Mental Health Clinician**
Center for Therapeutic Education (CTE)
Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
Santa Barbara County, CA
Supervisors: Erin Dowdy, PhD; Travis Jenkins, NCSP

**Responsibilities:**
In this position, I provided weekly individual and group psychotherapy to junior high students with Emotional Disturbance enrolled in the CTE program. I implemented and provided consultation and support to teachers and aides in the TIERS Program, a comprehensive behavioral points and levels system combined with daily social skills lessons, individual and group therapy, and parental involvement. I consulted with CTE teachers, classroom aides, mental health providers, and school psychologists regarding student behavior plans, interventions, and approaches to working with students.

08/13 – 06/14 **Therapist/Behavioral Collaboration Team**
Goleta Union School District: Mountain View Elementary School, Brandon Elementary School, Isla Vista Elementary School
Santa Barbara, California
Supervisors: Erin Dowdy, PhD; Peggy Grossman, NCSP; Shane Jimerson, PhD, NCSP
**Responsibilities:**

In this position, I provided weekly individual and group psychotherapy to children (ages 5 – 11 years), implemented behavioral interventions, and consulted with teachers, administration, and parents. I facilitated classroom-wide bullying prevention program for 6th graders (P3R). I engaged in behavioral consultation with elementary school teachers. I monitored intervention progress using observational and survey-based data. I also conducted psychoeducational assessments with preschool and elementary age children, wrote comprehensive psychoeducational reports, and presented results/provided feedback at Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

08/12 – 06/13 **Therapist/School Psychology Practicum Student**
Santa Barbara School District: Goleta Valley Junior High School
Santa Barbara, California
Supervisors: Iris Kaminsky, PhD, NCSP; Jill Sharkey, PhD, NCSP
**Responsibilities:**
In this position, I regularly provided individual and group psychotherapy to between eight and ten adolescent students from diverse backgrounds and eligible for special education services for a wide-range of disabilities. I planned, conducted, and monitored progress in individual and group therapy. In addition, I led a weekly social skills groups for students with autism; regularly conducted comprehensive psychological assessments and wrote complete psychoeducational reports; conducted classroom observations; consulted with teachers and staff; attended and presented at IEP meetings; and assisted in the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program (P3R). I created and presented a mindfulness and decision-making psychoeducational program to high school students.

10/11 – 12/13 **Clinician**, **Psychological Assessment Center**
Hosford Counseling and Psychological Services Clinic
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California – Santa Barbara
**Responsibilities:**
I served as a clinician in the Psychological Assessment Center, providing psychological assessment services. I conducted several comprehensive psychological evaluations, consisting of multimethod assessment of personality, contextual, neuropsychological, intellectual, and academic achievement factors. I selected, administered, and scored assessments; wrote integrated reports; provided DSM-IV diagnoses, and provided feedback to community-based clients seeking comprehensive neuropsychological assessments.

Spring, 2012 **Social Skills Groups Facilitator**
Franklin Elementary School
Santa Barbara, California
**Responsibilities:**
I led a social skills group for five Latino adolescents experiencing peer conflicts and exhibiting maladaptive behavior in the school context.

2011-2012 **School Psychology Practicum in Special Education Classroom**
Special Day Classroom, Canalino Elementary School
Carpinteria, California
**Responsibilities:**
In this position, I implemented one-on-one behavioral interventions with two students diagnosed with autism and severe emotional disturbance and led small groups focused on social skill acquisition and academic remediation.

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Psychological Association (APA):
Div. 16 School Psychology
Div. 24 Society for Theoretical & Philosophical Psychology
National Association of School Psychology (2011-present)
International School Psychology Association (ISPA)

## COMMITTEE POSITIONS

Fall, 2015 **Faculty Search Committee Student Representative**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California, Santa Barbara

9/14 – 6/15 **Student Representative to Faculty**
Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
University of California, Santa Barbara

# ABSTRACT

Towards Understanding Adolescents' Adaptation to School Moral Norms:
Development and Validation of the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire

by

Aaron D. Haddock

This study reports on the initial development and validation of the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire (SMAQ) with a sample of 609 (54% female) students in Grades 7 and 8 in California. The SMAQ is a 24-item self-report instrument for assessing youths' adaptability to the moral and social norms at school composed of two scales – the Moral Incongruence with School Scale (MISS) and the Moral Congruence with School Scale (MCSS). The MISS is operationalized via four subscales measuring cognitive restructuration at school, minimizing own agency at school, disregarding/distorting negative impact of actions at school, and blaming/dehumanizing the victim at school. The MCSS is also operationalized via 4 subscales measuring school caring, school justice, school rules, and school moral identity. Findings supported the theoretical model underlying the SMAQ. Results from confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the two scales that structure the SMAQ, the MCSS and the MISS, were each characterized by four conceptually sound latent factors that were strong indicators of single second-order factors (i.e., moral incongruence with school and moral congruence with school). All subscales exhibited adequate construct reliability and internal consistency. Moreover, invariance analysis demonstrated that the factors structuring both scales were invariant across gender. In addition, bivariate

correlations and a latent-variable path model provided evidence that (a) moral incongruence with school was a strong predictor of self-reported bullying behavior and moral disengagement and (b) moral congruence with school was a strong predictor of self-reported defending behavior. This study also provides an English translation and adaptation and preliminary psychometric evidence of validity for a 14-item scale for children embedded within a 24-item moral disengagement scale for adolescents. Implications for theory, practice, and research are discussed.

Keywords: adaptive behavior, ecological-developmental theory, moral development, moral disengagement, moral education, positive youth development, protective factors, risk factors, school climate, school psychology, situational action theory, social-cognitive domain theory, social-emotional learning.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Prolegomena to the School as a Context for Individual Moral Adaptation

The school social environment is a profoundly important factor influencing students' social and academic adaptation (Felner & Felner, 1989). Defined as the "quality and character of school life," school climate concerns individual members' perceptions and psychological experience of the school environment (Pickeral, Evans, Hughes, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 3; Van Houtte, 2006). Positive school climate is essential for students' psychological well-being and safety (Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990; Ruus et al., 2007; Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009; Welsh, 2000), academic engagement and achievement (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001) and social and emotional development (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997; Shocet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Importantly for this study, school climate is believed to reflect the "norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe," which highlights the school as an influential developmental setting that intersects with other developmental settings and serves as a context of socialization shaping students' socioemotional and behavioral adjustment (National School Climate Center, n.d.; Trickett, 1978). As such, students' dispositions toward and personal congruence with the norms, values, and rules at school constitute a key dimension of positive school climate. In response to research documenting the importance of contextual factors for student success, recommendations by the Institute of Education Sciences and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention supporting school climate reform, along with initiatives by the U.S. Department of Education aimed at enhancing school climate, schools increasingly engage in a variety of activities intended to facilitate

positive school climate and supportive learning environments, foster students' social, emotional, and ethical development, and encourage prosocial behavior and healthy peer relationships. Students' adherence to school norms governing interpersonal relationships is of particular interest in light of the myriad well-documented deleterious effects bullying and victimizing behaviors have on both victims and perpetrators and school climate more generally. In order to better understand the underlying factors contributing to bullying and antisocial behavior, research in applied psychology has increasingly focused on better understanding the role of moral reasoning and emotional development, which has in turn prompted interest in the conceptualization of these constructs and their assessment.

Contemporary school psychology is grounded in an ecological-developmental paradigm, which conceives of individual development as profoundly and reciprocally influenced by multiple interconnected environmental systems (Apter & Conoley, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). As Burns (2011) has argued, one of the key contributions school psychology makes to education, applied psychology, and the development of children and youth is the ecological-developmental approach to prevention it brings to schools and other mental health settings. Importantly, the field's embrace of the ecological-developmental conceptual framework represents a deliberate move away from the medical model paradigm's emphasis on detecting and intervening in pathology viewed as located within the person (Burns, 2011). To further clarify this theoretical distinction, Apter and Conoley (1984) articulated four key tenets of the ecological perspective (as summarized by Burns, 2011), "(a) individuals are an inseparable part of a system; (2) 'disturbance is not viewed as a disease located within the body of the child, but rather as a discordance in the system' (p. 89); (c) dysfunctions are the result of a mismatch between an individual's skills

and knowledge, and the environmental demands; and (d) any intervention should focus on the system to be most effective" (p. 134). When coupled with a preventive framework, school psychology's conceptual paradigm endeavors to address the factors that put students at risk while simultaneously promoting their wellness, adaptive behavior, and effective coping.

In light of these theoretical considerations, it is notable that researchers in the field of school psychology are increasingly employing Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement to assess and explain students' behavior at school, especially antisocial, aggressive, and bullying behavior. As Bandura has written, the theory of moral disengagement seeks to clarify how good people do bad things via a set of hypothesized psychological mechanisms clustered into broad socio-cognitive processes (Bandura, 1999, 2000). While there are problems with both the underlying theory and its assessment addressed in detail later in this study, it is worth noting that thinking through and attempting to address these issues provided some of the initial inspiration behind it. In a variety of ways, the theory of moral disengagement has provided a foil, in the literary sense, throughout, simultaneously highlighting important considerations and prompting critical reappraisals. From the perspective of ecological-developmental theory, the theory of moral disengagement offers only a partial explanation that, consistent with the medical model, tends to overemphasize individual level factors at the expense of careful consideration of individuals' sociocultural embeddedness and the school as a social context for individual adaptation. It may be the case that some students, who have been socialized to and internalized the norms and rules of the school setting, employ the mechanisms of moral disengagement to justify violating those previously accepted standards when treating others inhumanely or otherwise

breaking school rules, as the theory of moral disengagement would have it. However, for adaptive reasons, other students may simply subscribe to a different set of moral norms or personal rules for behavior that are less aligned with the school context — making the machinations of moral disengagement moot. An ecological-developmental understanding of norm-related behavior in the school context appreciates that, while the school environment exerts pressure on adolescents to adhere to its ways, it is not the only social context students are negotiating (Trickett & Schmid, 1993). Adolescents are always also being socialized to and influenced by other salient social and cultural contexts, such as their family, community, and peer groups, which may vary in terms of their adaptive requirements, worldview, and coping styles and, as result, be more or less congruent with the adaptive requirements of the school context. Thus, aspects of a student's personal morality (i.e., beliefs, values, attitudes, and rules for behavior) may be at odds with the morality and conventions of the school context and still be adaptive for the adolescent depending on the student's perception of the demands of other contexts (e.g., peer group, neighborhood, family) (Trickett & Schmid, 1993). In fact, previous research reveals that many students experience conflict from competing sets of norms and adaptive requirements within the school context (Trickett, 1984). For example, Matute-Bianchi (1986) studied variability in patterns of school performance among Japanese-American and Mexican-descent students in an agricultural region of Central California. Ethnographic analyses revealed that some students of Mexican descent identifying as Chicanos appeared to perceive the behavioral and normative patterns of school culture that fostered academic achievement and success as features of the culture of the dominant group, i.e., white culture. As a result, some Chicano students perceived adherence to school culture, policies, and practices as incompatible with their identity as a

Chicano and, thus, regarded being a successful student and being a Chicano as mutually exclusive identities. Though education is announced as a vehicle that opens up opportunities for all students to transcend their social positions, in practice, the education system all too often plays an active or at least complicit role in the reproduction of class and social inequalities (see, e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Though in reality, the behavioral and normative patterns of school culture that foster academic achievement and success do not belong to any particular cultural group, when students do not see and experience members from their own cultural group represented at the institutional level, it sends the message that school is not a place for them and that the norms, practices, and policies of school culture are there to serve and advance those already in power.

In addition to these theoretical issues, there is also the issue of the scale Bandura and colleagues developed to assess the construct of moral disengagement, which has since become the most widely used assessment instrument around the world (Gini, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2013). The original moral disengagement scale was created in Italian for use with adult Italian-speaking populations and does not appear to have undergone the rigorous translation and adaptation process consistent with best practice in measurement development, resulting in an instrument with serious unaddressed problems (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Despite its flaws, scores of researchers continue to use this measure of moral disengagement with English-speaking youth, thus, one component of this dissertation addresses this need by translating and adapting this scale and analyzing its psychometric properties.

The more important and central component of this study addresses the need for a conceptual model of moral engagement at school that is consistent with school psychology's

theoretical orientation (i.e., ecological developmental paradigm, prevention science, wellness promotion) and its operationalization in a domain-specific, bi-dimensional measure that assesses the factors underlying both students' incongruence and congruence with the moral norms of the school setting *as well as* the factors that lead to moral congruence with the school context and promote students' ethical development. In this study, it is proposed that students' moral engagement with school has dual aspects manifested in both rejecting justifications for violating school moral norms and conventions and accepting the practical and ethical reasons that bolster adherence to school norms and conventions. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to develop and establish the technical adequacy of a domain-specific measure of adolescents' school-specific moral adaptability: the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire (SMAQ). The instrument operationalizes this bi-dimensional conceptual model of student moral engagement with two scales that can be utilized separately or in tandem. One scale assesses the degree to which a student's personal morality is incongruent with the moral norms and social conventions of the school setting (i.e., Moral Incongruence with School Scale; MISS), while the other scale assesses the degree to which an individual's personal morality is congruent with the moral norms and social conventions of the school setting (i.e., Moral Congruence with School Scale; MCSS). The development and validation of the SMAQ was undertaken to advance our understanding and assessment of the social, emotional, and ethical adjustment of youth and further inform educational professionals' ability to promote student wellbeing and positive school climate. Consequently, the results of this study have implications for the theory and practice of school psychology and education.

# CHAPTER 2

## Conceptualizing Student Moral (Dis)engagement

### Theoretical Foundations

Transactional-ecological theory stresses that human behavior must be understood in its broader socio-cultural-historical context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Transactional-ecological theory conceives of the individual as developing within a nested arrangement of systems, ranging from the micro- and mesosystem interactions with and between family, school, and peers to the macrosystem interactions with broader cultural, economic, historical, and political forces (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Individual genetic differences are seen as interacting with a variety of environmental circumstances that significantly influence thought and behavior to generate a diversity of outcomes. Transactional-ecological theory views the relationship between individuals and their environment as continuous and reciprocal, with individuals and contexts shaping one another (Sameroff, 2009). Individuals act on their environment in both reasoned and habitual ways based on their learned behavior and schemas in an effort to practically meet the demands of their environment (Hewitt, 2000). The person-environment interaction generates new stimuli for both to adapt to, effectively driving the developmental process (Sameroff, 1975, 2009; Sameroff & Fiese, 2000). From the transactional-ecological perspective, children are regarded as "in a perpetual state of active reorganization" and, hence, "cannot properly be regarded as maintaining an inborn trait or habit as a static characteristic" (Sameroff, 2009, p.8). As a result, the transactional-ecological perspective conceives of problems as never being situated completely in the child, the family, or in an interaction between the two, but rather as always *in the relationship*

between the child and the context (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000). Behavioral outcomes involve the reciprocal effects of context on child and child on context.

Contemporary school psychology is grounded in an ecological developmental paradigm that understands individuals as inseparable from systems and individual development as profoundly and reciprocally influenced by multiple interconnected environmental systems (Apter & Conoley, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Importantly, contemporary school psychology's embrace of the ecological perspective represents the field's move away from the medical model paradigm's emphasis on detecting and intervening in pathology located within the person (Burns, 2011). Rather, problems with living and dysfunctional behavior are viewed as resulting from the incongruity that can exist between an individual's skills, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes and the demands of their environment (Apter & Conoley, 1984; Burns, 2011). Consequently, prevention and intervention from a transactional-ecological perspective focuses on optimizing the adaptation process through examination of the compatibility between an individual and the reciprocal nature of their association with their environment. When an individual and a particular environment are found to be misaligned as evidenced by difficulties in adaptation, it is understood as a discordance in the person-environment system stemming from the lack of fit (Conoley & Haynes, 1992; Hewett, 1987). Since lack of fit is often specific to the characteristics of particular settings, difficulties in adaptation in one setting does not necessarily represent a cross-situational behavioral deficit (Hendrickson, Gable, & Shores, 1987).

## Specificity Matching

Informed by findings in the attitude (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, 2005) and trait (e.g., Epstein, 1979; Fleeson, 2004) literatures, the specificity matching principle states that, "in naturally occurring settings, outcomes are typically caused by multiple factors, many of which may be rivals of the particular predictor variable the researcher is studying. To compensate for the influence of such rival predictors, the specificity matching principle holds that the specificity of predictors and criteria should be matched. […] In short, specific predictors should be used to predict specific behaviors and general predictors should be used to predict general behaviors" (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007, p. 87). Subsequent studies and meta-analyses have served to confirm this principle. For example, in a meta-analysis of the relation between self-measures and measures of performance and achievement, Hansford and Hattie (1982) found that academic ability was more accurately predicted by specific academic self-concepts ($r$ = .42) than by global self-esteem ($r$ = .22). Likewise, a meta-analysis of the relation between self-beliefs and academic achievement found that assessing self-views specific to the relevant academic domain (e.g., math self-efficacy) and self-beliefs regarding specific subject areas produced stronger predictor-outcome associations (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004). Supported by these and other research findings, Swann et al. (2007) argue that the strength of the relation observed between predictor and criterion variables is systematically determined by their specificity.

Recent research on subjective well-being and covitality (i.e., the co-occurrence of human strengths or positive psychology constructs) in the school context provides a particularly apropos example of the specificity matching principle applied to assessing psychological constructs related to the school domain (Renshaw et al., 2014). Informed by

the cumulative assets theory of childhood resiliency, which parses out the specific relations between family-, school-, and community-specific assets and outcomes for youth (e.g., Scales, 1999), researchers are increasingly developing domain-specific measures to target school-specific factors affecting youth. A good example of this can be found in the pioneering efforts to develop and validate school-specific measures of youths' subjective wellbeing. Furlong and colleagues developed the Positive Experiences at School Scale (PEASS) to measure positive psychology constructs specific to school and the Social and Emotional Health Survey (SEHS) to assess core cognitive dispositions associated with adolescents' positive psychosocial development (Furlong, You, Renshaw, O'Malley, & Rebelez, 2013; Furlong, You, Renshaw, Smith, & O'Malley, 2014). Building on this research, Renshaw and Bolognino (2014) found that, for a sample of college students, a questionnaire that specifically tapped the construct of covitality specific to the college setting had a stronger effect and thus incremental validity vis-à-vis academic achievement when compared with global covitality status. These findings led the authors to argue for the privileging of school-specific indicators over global indicators since school-specific measures tend to be both more informative and better predictors of school-related outcomes (Renshaw & Bolognino, 2014). Furthermore, in a study reporting on the development and validation of a school-specific measure of student subjective wellbeing, Renshaw, Long, and Cook (2014) argued that, unlike the domain-general approach, a school-specific approach to measurement is congruent with best practice in school psychological and educational service delivery and the Response-to-Intervention (RTI)/Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework for problem-solving and assessment-to-intervention practice (e.g., Hawkins, Barnett, Morrison, & Musti-Rao, 2010; Peacock, Ervin, & Merrell, 2010).

**Wrongful Attributions and Situation-Centered Determinants of Behavior**

There is evidence to suggest that the specificity matching principle is particularly important as related to research on social knowledge, reasoning, and behavior, particularly in light of experimental findings in social psychology. Despite contemporary virtue ethicists' redeployment of the notion of consistent character traits guided by certain values or virtues, social psychologists consistently find that humans do not exhibit "cross-situational stability" or "context-independent dispositions" and that situational factors can supersede factors related to the individual (Nisbett & Ross, 1991). Beginning with modern personality psychology nearly a century ago and extended and enhanced by research in the field of social psychology, the "globalist" conception of people as possessing stable character traits and consistent dispositions to respond across contexts under the guidance of a particular value has steadily eroded. What has emerged is a picture of human behavior emphasizing the importance of contextual influences and systematic human tendencies to respond to their environment in ways that call into question the cross-situational stability of character traits and moral commitments. In contrast with globalism, situationism asserts that the influence of situations is routinely underestimated and the role of individual dispositions overestimated (Nisbett & Ross, 1991).

In one of the earliest studies examining environmental press on individual moral action, the psychologists Hartshorne and May (1928) studied the question of character with over 10,000 youth in the U.S. in the late 1920s (Hartshorne, May, & Maller, 1929; Hartshorne, May, & Shuttleworth, 1930). Their findings were shocking to many. Presented with opportunities to steal, cheat, and lie in a number of different athletic and academic contexts, the children's behavior was found to be largely dependent upon the situations in

which they were placed. The researchers' found that it was challenging, even impossible, to generalize about an individual's behavior across situations based on a few samples of previous behavior, their personality traits, or assessments of moral reasoning. For instance, a person who cheated on a school test was no more or less likely to cheat in a sporting event when given the opportunity than a person who did not cheat on a school test. Youth who would not break the rules at home, even small rules when there was no risk of being caught, were no less likely to cheat on a school test. Students who cheated on a spelling test were not more likely to cheat on a math test or in a sports game. Based on these findings, the authors posited the doctrine of specificity of moral behavior, which holds that moral behavior is quite specific to each situation or setting and that individuals generally behave in each situation according to how they have learned to behave in particular conditions. Numerous subsequent studies have provided additional support for a situation-specific understanding of moral behavior.

Despite the body of research demonstrating the powerful effects of contexts on behavior, humans are characterized by a general tendency to attribute behavior to internal rather than external causes — despite the situation (Ross, 1977). Known as the fundamental attribution error or correspondence bias, this principle is often illustrated with a study by Jones and Harris (1967) in which participants concluded that the authors of pro- and anti-Castro essays really were pro- or anti-Castro even though they had been told that the authors were assigned to take one or the other position based on a coin toss. It is generally accepted that perceptual salience undergirds the occurrence of the fundamental attribution error since the individual behavior one is attempting to understand is more perceptually salient than the numerous variables comprising the situation and influencing the individual actor (Taylor &

Fiske, 1975). To take moral disengagement as an example, one could argue that when researchers conclude that respondents obtaining high scores on Bandura's Moral Disengagement Scale are morally disengaged and that this moral disengagement is driving their antisocial, aggressive, or bullying behavior, they run the very real risk of committing the fundamental attribution error. We should ask: Do participants' responses on the MDS reflect internal, person-centered dispositions, or might they be better understood as reflecting contextual factors, like social identity, group norms, social disadvantage, culture, and adaptive behavior in context?

As Crisp and Turner (2010) explain, the social identity approach to understanding the self posits that it can be partitioned into aspects reflecting a person's personal identity and aspects reflecting a person's social identity, with context determining which is most salient (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). An individual's social identity is grounded in group membership and generally expresses the "range of attributes that characterize the prototypical group member" and conforms to a set of group norms concerning how group members ought to think, feel, and behave (Crisp & Turner, 2010, p. 19). While it is generally true that most societies' social norms promote prosocial behavior and discourage antisocial and aggressive behavior, depending on the particular situation and underlying conditions group norms encouraging attitudes and beliefs that support the latter types of behavior and discourage the former may emerge in societies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For instance, research on emergent norm theory has shown that it is often the case that an individual may hold antisocial or aggressive beliefs or behave in an antisocial or aggressive manner because that is the attitude or behavior that reflects the group norm that is consistent with a person's most salient social identity in a particular situation (Turner & Killian, 1957). Accordingly, it

would be inaccurate to say that the person is disengaging from common social or moral norms, or deindividuating, since they are simply adhering to a different group norm. In such an instance, no moral justification is required for transgressing previously accepted norms, as in moral disengagement theory and traditional models of deindividuation, because the individual's attitudes and behavior are in fact consistent with their social identity and a different set of norms governing their collective identity (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995). Returning to the example presented earlier of the conflict some students reported experiencing between their Chicano cultural identity and their perception of the culture of the school as the culture of the dominant group, emergent norm theory appears to provide a more accurate explanation of these students' experience than moral disengagement theory.

Research has also found that environmental factors (i.e., temperature, noise, and crowding) and, of particular relevance for this study, social factors can increase the likelihood of aggressive and antisocial behavior (e.g., physical and verbal aggression, vandalism, rioting) and helping behavior. For instance, Matthews and Cannon (1975) found the environmental noise level to be a significant determinant of helping behavior. Social disadvantage coupled with an individual's or group's sense that the depravation they are experiencing is unjust (i.e., relative depravation) and that they are unable to remediate the inequality by legitimate means has been shown to increase the likelihood that aggressive norms will be adopted (Crisp & Turner, 2010). In addition, research has demonstrated cultural influences on aggressive and antisocial behavior. For instance, due to historical, economic, and social forces, some groups adhere to a culture of honor that mandates individuals employ violence to protect their property and integrity (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). An analog can be found in the subculture of violence adopted by some gangs, in which

antisocial and aggressive behavior is the norm by which gang members can achieve economic sustainability, status, and power in society. Evidence of such an emergent aggressive and antisocial group norm has been documented in urban gangs (Toch, 1969), the Sicilian Mafia in Italy (Nieburg, 1969), and prison groups (Calkin, 1985).

It is also important to consider how individuals' exposure to traumatic events and toxic levels of environmental stress may predispose them to antisocial attitudes and behaviors. Prevalence research estimates that two out of every three school-age children experience at least one traumatic event prior to adulthood (Perfect, Turley, Carlson, Yohanna, & Saint Gilles, 2016) and that, on average, youth growing up in adverse circumstances experience two traumatic exposures (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2007; Porche, Costello, & Rosen-Reynoso, 2016). Research further clarifies that trauma exposure has an extremely deleterious impact on students' social-emotional-behavioral functioning (the Adverse Childhood Experiences [ACEs] Study; Felitti et al., 1998; Perfect et al., 2016). For example, students living in adverse circumstances and impacted by trauma are more likely to receive a mental health diagnosis and qualify for special education services as a student with an emotional disturbance (Porche, Costello, & Rosen-Reynoso, 2016). Complex trauma exposure (i.e., multiple or chronic trauma experiences, typically involving the primary caregiving system/individuals) can disrupt a child's sense of trust and positive expectations toward others, which in turn impedes the development of collaborative and prosocial behavior, empathy, and emotional and behavioral regulation (Becker-Blease, Turner, & Finkelhor, 2010; DePrince, Weinzierl, & Combs, 2009).

Conversely, research also demonstrates that, as with aggressive and antisocial behavior, prosocial behavior is influenced by factors outside of the individual or individual

personality. There are powerful social norms, or prevalent and customary attitudes and beliefs, that shape our attitudes toward helping, altruistic, cooperative, and caring behavior. In particular, individuals' attitudes toward helping others is profoundly influenced by their internalization of the widely-held cultural norm that individuals should help others, which Crisp and Turner (2010) have argued is related to normative beliefs about reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), social responsibility, and social justice (Lerner & Miller, 1978). Moreover, research demonstrates that prosocial behavior is both learned through and prompted by the observation of others (i.e., modelling) (e.g., Bandura, 1972; Bryan & Test, 1967; Rushton & Campbell, 1977) as well as influenced by the characteristics of the individual(s) receiving the behavior, such as their perceived similarity to the actor (Krebs, 1975) and their attractiveness (Benson, Karabenick, & Lerner, 1976). Despite these powerful situational influences on prosocial behavior, it should be noted that there is also research to suggest some weaker though rather stable individual-level differences, such as sensitivity to social norms (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964), internal locus of control, and dispositional empathy (Bierhoff, Klein, & Kramp, 1991).

**Situational Action Theory**

Consistent with both the ecological developmental paradigm and a situationist appreciation for contextual influences, Situational Action Theory (SAT) provides insights into the attitudes and behavior of individuals vis-à-vis the specific rules governing particular contexts. According to SAT, settings possess rules about right and wrong conduct, or *moral rules* and, as a result, action directed or governed by moral rules can be defined as *moral action* (Wikström, 2004, 2010). Notably, however, SAT is not a moralistic theory — it does not make judgments about what rules or actions are right or wrong. Rather, it views all action

guided by moral rules as moral action, whether the act is in abidance with the rules or not (Wikström, Oberwittler, Trieber, & Hardy, 2012). Like settings, individuals also possess a personal set of rules about right and wrong, or a *personal morality*, that may be more or less aligned with the moral rules of the setting. SAT recognizes that both rational deliberation and habit cause individuals to follow or break rules (Wikström & Treiber, 2009). When individuals deliberate, it engenders agency and self-control and a heightened sensitivity to deterrence cues, but when individuals are familiar with a setting or set of circumstances, action in those settings and circumstances can become habituated. SAT posits that acts that violate the moral rules governing a particular setting stem from two sources: (a) the moral rules of a particular situation, setting, or context have not been internalized by the individual and, as a result, behavior that violates the situation's moral rules is viewed as legitimate; and (b) a temptation or provocation is stronger than an individual's self-control, making it difficult for the person to act in congruence with his or her personal moral commitments (Wikström & Treiber, 2009). As is clear, both sources offer an alternative explanation than that provided by the theory of moral disengagement. In the first instance, individuals do not view their behavior as illegitimate — their moral rules and the moral rules of the setting are simply divergent. Whereas in the second source, SAT offers an alternative explanation of moral disengagement; though it is possible that individuals may justify breaking their own moral commitments, individuals do not *necessarily* employ psychological processes to disengage self-imposed sanctions on behavior, rather they may simply get overwhelmed by temptation or a provocation, likely resulting in feelings of guilt or shame because the act is not appraised as justified.

From the perspective of SAT, rule breaking serves as a proxy for morality and moral development (rule-relevant morality). Applied to the school context, rules for conduct at school are *moral rules* since they specify what actions are right or wrong under particular circumstances and in particular settings. It is assumed that students with moralities that differ significantly from the morality of the school setting will be more likely to exhibit behavior that departs from common rules of conduct and moral norms. Moreover, according to the theory, students with low self-control are also more likely to violate the rules, even if they hold personal moral commitments that align with school rules. Conversely, students with personal moralities held in common with the school are significantly less likely to violate common rules of conduct and school moral norms (Wikstrom & Svensson, 2010). As such, SAT acknowledges that personal moralities differ and may be more or less in line with particular moral settings, such as a school. Moral development (strong vs. weak) is thus relative to the school setting (the rules of right and wrong in a school) – not moral universals. SAT offers a functional, empirical approach to morality, defined as rules governing what is right and wrong in a particular setting. SAT is helpful in that it clarifies the setting-specific nature of the rules governing individual actors' conduct and identifies the various causes for individuals' actions to be more or less consistent with the rules of the setting. As institutions with rules defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior and a fairly common shared set of prosocial values along with the power to enforce these rules and an interest in teaching these values, schools are settings governed by a rather clearly defined set of moral rules. Social-cognitive domain theory's distinction between two different domains of social knowledge further elucidates the school setting as a context for moral adaptation.

**Social-Cognitive Domain Theory**

Social-cognitive domain theory draws on research on moral development in the field of developmental psychology (Nucci, 2001, 2002; Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2006). It holds that children learn moral reasoning and judgment in caring, trusting, and fair environments that facilitate moral development via reflection on the intrinsic effects of actions on others' welfare and issues of justice. Based on research demonstrating that from a very young age children's social interactions and experiences lead them to differentiate conceptually between moral issues and nonmoral issues pertaining to social conventions, domain theory draws a conceptual distinction between the moral domain and the domain of social convention grounded in differences in human reasoning over actions that impinge on the well-being of others and actions concerning appropriate behavior in different social contexts (Nucci, 2009). As Nucci explains, humans "reason differently about moral actions that affect the welfare of others, and matters of convention in which the status of the actions is a function of agreed upon social norms or the dictates of authority" (Nucci, 2009, p. 9). Research with children and adolescents has demonstrated that whereas judgments about moral issues are typically justified in terms of fairness or the harm or benefit caused, judgments about social conventions are justified in terms of whether or not social rules exist addressing the matter (Nucci, 1989; Tisak, Crane-Ross, Tisak, & Maynard, 2000; Turiel, 2008). Though social conventions and moral norms are related, social conventions exist to foster order and predictability and are governed by shared social norms, agreed upon rules and standards, or the directives of authority — not the intrinsic effects of acts. This distinction is critically important because, as Turiel argues in *The Culture of Morality* (2002), history is filled with examples of unjust social conventions parading as moral universals. If morality is reducible

to social convention, there exist no grounds on which to oppose immoral social conventions that harm and exploit others. Conversely, when issues of morality are grounded in the intrinsic effects of acts, unjust social conventions can be opposed on moral grounds (i.e., as violations of justice, human welfare, rights) (Turiel, 2002). Taking the example of an unprovoked physical harm, such as one student hitting another student, a moral judgment about its wrongness can be made independent of social consensus about the rules because it could be grounded exclusively in the intrinsic effects of the act (e.g., hitting hurts) (Nucci, 2009).

**Moral Disengagement**

The theoretical foundation for the SMAQ builds on, but critiques and departs from Bandura's theory of moral disengagement in significant ways. Nevertheless, given the theory of moral disengagement's conceptual importance for the development of the MISS and the theory's ability to provide a foil that highlights how the SMAQ's grounding in transactional-ecological theory leads to a different interpretation of students' responses on the measure, a more extensive treatment of the theory of moral disengagement is in order. Therefore, this section first provides an overview of the theory, a summary of important research findings based on the theory, and a discussion of moral disengagement measures. It then turns to a broader contextualization of the theory of moral disengagement in relation to other similar theories, and concludes with a critique of the Moral Disengagement Scale and the theory on which it is based.

Research on the construct of moral disengagement has increased rapidly over the past two decades. In 1986, Albert Bandura published his highly influential theory of human motivation and action from a social cognitive perspective in the book *Social Foundations of*

*Thought and Action: A Social-Cognitive Theory*. In 1990, Bandura applied his social-cognitive theory to understanding human moral conduct in the article "Selective Activation and Disengagement of Moral Control" in the *Journal of Social Issues* and in a book chapter entitled "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement," which appeared in an edited book called *The Origins of Terrorism*. Based on a search of PsycINFO, from 1986 until 2017, 292 peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles have been published on the topic of "moral disengagement." The literature grew at under 10 articles per year until 2008, when 16 articles were published. From 2010 to 2013, between 20 and 30 articles appeared each year, but in 2014 the rate nearly doubled, with 54 articles published. 2015 saw 57 more. Between January and March of 2016, more articles were published on moral disengagement than were published in the period between 1990 and 2001.

Bandura's social-cognitive theory of moral agency asserts that a set of psychological mechanisms are at play when individuals, whether acting alone or in groups, commit violent, social injurious, and antisocial acts (Bandura, 1986, 1990, 1999, 2002; Bandura, et al., 1996). Research employing the theory has been applied to a wide variety of subjects, including the perpetration of inhumanities (Bandura, 1999), ethical decision making (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008), antisocial behavior (Hyde, Shaw, & Moilanen, 2010), civic duties and obligations (Caprara, Fida, Vecchione, Tramontano, & Barbaranelli, 2009), sports (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2007), organizational behavior (Moore, Detert, Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012), support for military action (McAlister, 2001), and more. Moral disengagement has been studied in many different countries (e.g., Japan, China, Samoa, India, Australia, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and appears to be an especially popular construct among European researchers. Stemming from

Bandura's early collaborations with Italian scholars, much research on moral disengagement has been conducted with Italian samples (e.g., Bandura et al., 1996).

As Bandura has explained, his research on psychological theories of moral agency is an attempt to answer the question: why do good people do bad things? While not denying the role moral reasoning plays in guiding action, the Social Cognitive Theory of the Moral Self emphasizes how affective self-regulatory mechanisms mediate the link between moral reasoning and behavior (Bandura, 2002). According to Bandura, moral reasoning alone does not regulate conduct (Bandura et al., 1996). Rather than focusing on the reasons undergirding moral judgment and action, Bandura endeavors to understand how moral thought is translated into behavior by identifying the psychological mechanisms undergirding compliance with common moral standards as a way of clarifying how these mechanisms can be engaged or disengaged (Bandura et al., 1996). According to Bandura, as individuals are socialized they construct and internalize an understanding of the moral standards of their context, which subsequently guides their behavior (Bandura et al., 1996). Once these moral norms are established, most people regulate their actions in accordance with the adopted standards because doing so is satisfying, fosters self-worth, and enables one to behave in accordance with one's values and, thus, avoid self-censure (Bandura et al., 1996). These self-regulatory mechanisms or self-sanctions motivate and enable the cognitive regulation of moral behavior. Hence, affective self-regulatory processes (e.g., empathy) are theorized to form the critical link between emotional thought (i.e., cognition and emotion) and action, between what people think and feel they should do and their actual behavior.

According to the theory, these self-regulatory functions, which are governed by self-reactive influences and self-sanctions, only impact actual behavior when they are activated.

When an individual engages in psychosocial processes that disengage self-sanctions from their conduct it, in effect, frees them from the self-censure and guilt that would normally prevent them from engaging in inhumane conduct (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 364). This process thus enables people to selectively activate and disengage internal control to allow "different types of conduct with the same moral standards" (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 364). In other words, one need not relinquish one's moral standards in order to transgress against them since, through the process of moral disengagement, it is possible to maintain those moral standards while at the same time justifying actions that violate them by convincing oneself that the standard does not apply to a particular situation or person. Bandura posits that this can occur via eight distinct mechanisms clustered within four broad strategies. Gini and colleagues (2013) have neatly summarized the theory as follows. Moral disengagement consists of four major domains: (a) cognitive restructuring of immoral behavior, (b) obscuration of personal responsibility, (c) misrepresentation of injurious consequences, and (d) blaming the victim. *Cognitive restructuring* operates by framing the behavior itself in a positive light through moral justification, advantageous comparison, or euphemistic labeling. *Obscuration of personal responsibility* involves displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility. The third broad set of strategies, *misrepresentation of injurious consequences*, operates by minimizing, disregarding, or distorting the consequences of one's action, allowing individuals to distance themselves from the harm caused or to emphasize positive rather than negative outcomes. The fourth disengagement domain, *blaming the victim*, involves dehumanization of the victim and attribution of blame, or framing aggression as provoked by the victim. These mechanisms can facilitate aggressive or victimizing

behavior via a process of moral disengagement that insulates individuals from negative feelings (e.g., guilt or shame) typically associated with immoral acts.

Research across countries and cultures consistently finds that proneness to moral disengagement is positively related to aggressive and antisocial behavior (Bandura et al., 1996, 2001; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinetti, & Caprara, 2008; Pelton, Gound, Forehand, & Brody, 2004; Pornari & Wood, 2010) and negatively related to empathy and prosocial behavior (Bandura et al., 1996, 2001). In addition, males report higher levels of moral disengagement than females, even when demographic variables (e.g., ethnicity, socio-economic status) are controlled for (Bandura et al., 1996; Obermann, 2011; Yadav, Sharma, & Gandhi, 2001). Results of a meta-analysis summarizing the existing literature on the relation between moral disengagement and different types of aggressive behavior among school-age children and adolescents found a small to medium positive overall effect ($r$ = .28) (Gini, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2013). Effect sizes were larger for adolescents as compared to children. Building on this, researchers are increasingly employing the construct of moral disengagement in studies of bullying and victimization, with results also indicating a positive relation (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009; Gini, 2006; Gini, Pozzoli, & Hauser, 2011; Menesini et al., 2003; Obermann, 2011; Perren, Gutzwiller, Malti, & Hymel, 2012; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012; Thornberg & Jungert, 2014). For example, Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno (2005) proposed moral disengagement as a framework for understanding bullying and peer harassment behavior among adolescents, arguing that the construct captures the positive attitude toward violence and aggression among adolescents who bully, harass, and victimize others at school. Other studies have implicated moral disengagement as contributing to bystander behavior (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009; Gini, 2006;

Menesini et al., 2003; Obermann, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). The construct of moral disengagement may be a helpful framework for understanding school violence and victimization, particularly as it relates to bullying. For instance, Obermann (2011) examined the relation between moral disengagement and different self-reported and peer-nominated positions in school bullying and found that both self-reported and peer-nominated bullying were related to moral disengagement, and that bullies and bully-victims displayed higher moral disengagement than outsiders. Similarly, in an investigation of a group of 8- to 11-year olds' understanding of cognitions and emotions vis-à-vis their participant role in bullying and their understanding of moral emotions and proneness to disengage morally, Gini (2006) found that bullies, reinforcers, and assistants all exhibited a significantly higher tendency to activate moral disengagement mechanisms, whereas defenders displayed higher levels of moral engagement. Further evidence of the role played by both moral emotions, such as empathy, and moral reasoning in bullying situations was demonstrated in a study by Menesini and colleagues (2003) in a study demonstrating that bullies showed a higher level of disengaged emotions and motives when asked to put themselves in the role of bully and that bullies reasoned more egocentrically. This is consistent with Hymel and colleagues (2005) findings that bullies were significantly more likely to report positive attitudes and beliefs about bullying and endorse items associated with the mechanisms of moral disengagement.

**Moral Disengagement as Moral Neutralization**

The theory of moral disengagement draws on basic principles in social psychology concerning the self, attribution, social cognition, attitudes, group processes, social influence, prejudice, intergroup relations, aggression, and antisocial and prosocial behavior to explicate

the cognitive processes at play when individuals that are generally rule-abiding and compliant with prosocial moral norms transgress against those previously accepted moral standards. Given the comprehensiveness of the theory, it is not surprising that Bandura and colleagues were not the first to attempt such a synthesis. Recognizing this, in 2010, Ribeaud and Eisner published an important article that theoretically and empirically examined whether the theory of moral disengagement captures the same cognitive processes and exhibits conceptual overlap with similar concepts developed independently in the fields of criminological theory and young offender rehabilitation: moral neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957) and secondary self-serving cognitive distortions (Barriga & Gibbs, 1996), respectively.

The American sociologists Sykes and Matza developed the theory of moral neutralization to explain the cognitive processes employed by middle-class youth socialized to prosocial moral norms who nevertheless engaged in delinquent behavior. Put forth as an alternative to Cohen's subcultural theory (1955), which argued that delinquent behavior is grounded in its own value system and cultural norms different from the mainstream dominant culture, Sykes and Matza argued that cognitive processes preceded delinquent acts. The authors articulated five such neutralization techniques: denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Interestingly, it is worth noting that the ecological developmental perspective that informs this study's conceptualization of student moral adaptability is also quite congruent with subcultural theory, with its functional emphasis on how economic factors and cultural differences can engender values, beliefs, and attitudes that may be different from mainstream values, beliefs, and attitudes. From the perspective of student moral adaptability,

neutralization techniques and functionalist theories, like subcultural theory, can co-exist conceptually since both hold explanatory insights.

Barriga and Gibbs (1996) developed the theory of self-serving cognitive distortions (or thinking errors) to understand and treat the cognitive processes employed by young offenders to justify harmful acts and neutralize guilt. Barriga and Gibbs (1996) specify two types of cognitive distortions. Primary cognitive distortions are "self-centered attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs" that accord "status to one's views, expectations, needs, rights, immediate feelings and desires to such a degree that the legitimate views of others (or even one's own long-term best interest) are scarcely considered or are disregarded altogether" (Barriga & Gibbs, 1996, p. 334). Primary distortions are buttressed by secondary distortions that involve "pre- and post-transgression rationalizations that serve to 'neutralize' conscience or guilt" (Barriga & Gibbs, 1996, p. 334). Barriga and Gibbs identify three types of secondary distortions: blaming others, minimizing/mislabeling, and assuming the worst. As Ribeaud and Eisner point out, the neutralization technique of *assuming the worst*, "or gratuitously attributing hostile intentions to others, considering a worst-case scenario for a social situation as if it were inevitable; or assuming that improvement is impossible in one's own or others' behavior" (p. 334), appears to conflate Bandura's notion of *attribution of blame* with Crick and Dodge's (1994) research on biased information processing and their concept of hostile attribution of intent.

Given the ostensible conceptual overlap between moral disengagement, moral neutralization, and self-serving cognitive distortions, Ribeaud and Eisner (2010) examined the empirical overlap of the three neutralization concepts based on a combined exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the self-report measures commonly used to measure them.

Techniques of neutralization were measured with a brief scale utilized with all age groups (i.e., from age 7 to 20) in the Denver Youth Study (Huizinga, Weiher, Espiritu, & Esbensen, 2003). Moral disengagement was measured with two scales, Bandura and colleagues' original 32-item scale (1996) and Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno's (2005) post-hoc measure of moral disengagement and bullying. Self-serving cognitive distortions were measured with an adapted version of the "How I Think" questionnaire (HIT) (Barriga, Gibbs, Potter, & Liau, 2001) for Dutch youth (van der Velden, 2008). Subsequent analyses demonstrated a strong correlation among the four scales ($r$ = .51 - .77). Factor analysis of the four scales indicated a one-factor solution with the first factor accounting for 70% of the variance. In addition, factor analysis of all items from the four scales indicated a one-dimensional factor structure, with all items loading on the first factor, which accounted for 23% of the total variance. Based on these results, Ribeaud and Eisner (2010) concluded that "neutralization techniques, moral disengagement, and secondary self-serving cognitive distortions converge not only theoretically but also empirically" (p. 307) and "essentially capture the same cognitive processes" (p. 311). In the spirit of parsimony, the authors proposed four key mechanisms or processes subsumed under the term moral neutralization: cognitive restructuration, minimizing own agency, disregarding/distorting negative impact, and blaming/dehumanizing the victim.

It should be noted that the factor structure of the Moral Incongruence with School Scale (MISS) described in this study is derived from Ribeaud and Eisner's aforementioned four key mechanisms of moral neutralization. Moreover, this study also builds on Ribeaud and Eisner's argument that it is misguided to explain deviant or aggressive behavior solely in terms of neutralization techniques since antisocial behavior stems from an interaction

between situation-centered and person-centered determinants of behavior. As an alternative, the authors proposed that moral neutralization be integrated into a broader theoretical frame represented by Situational Action Theory, which this study does in conjunction with ecological developmental theory (Wikström 2004; Wikström & Treiber, 2009).

## Measuring Moral Disengagement

The findings reported by research on moral disengagement prompt important questions about their methodological basis. How are researchers' determining if youth are morally disengaged? What measurement tools and research methodologies are being used? If moral disengagement involves employing psychological mechanisms to justify transgressing against one's previously held moral convictions, are the research methodologies employed able to adequately measure such a complex process?

**Bandura's Original Moral Disengagement Scale.** Nearly all research on the construct of moral disengagement and its correlates rely on self-report questionnaires, with multiple different versions available for use with adolescents. However, as Gini and colleagues confirm in their meta-analysis of the literature on moral disengagement, the 32-item version of the Moral Disengagement Scale (MDS) Bandura and Italian colleagues published in 1996 has been translated into many languages and is by far the most widely used measure internationally (Bandura et al., 1996). The MDS aims to assess the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement: moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement and diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame for different forms of transgressive conduct (physically injurious and destructive conduct, verbal abuse, deceptions, and theft) (Bandura

et al., 1996). Respondents are presented with a list of statements, which they rate on a three-point scale according to their level of agreement (0 = *disagree*, 1 = *not sure*, and 2 = *agree*).

The most extensive examination of the psychometric properties of the original 32-item scale was conducted with a version in Italian administered to a sample of 799 Italian children in Grades 6-8 ranging in age from 10 to 15 years old, with a mean age of 11.8 years (Bandura et al., 1996). Bandura and colleagues reported that a principal-components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation suggested a one-factor structure accounting for 16% of the variance, with all items loading on the principal factor. A one-factor structure with all items loading on the principal factor was again found in a second study by Bandura and colleagues in 2001 based on a sample of 564 Italian adolescents, though the amount of variance the single factor accounted for was not reported (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001). The Italian version of the scale has shown good reliability ($\alpha$ = .82 and .86; Bandura et al., 1996, 2001). Both of these studies reported gender differences in moral disengagement, with males reporting higher levels of moral disengagement than females. Moreover, moral disengagement was found to be unrelated to family socioeconomic status or participant age. In the 1996 study, the authors report that scores on the MDS correlated with child, teacher, and parent ratings of social competence, aggression and, in some instances, delinquency.

Though this measure of moral disengagement scale was originally created in Italian for use with Italian students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, an English translation of this version of the MDS was published in the Appendix of Bandura and colleagues' 1996 article. No information is provided on the translation of the scale items from Italian into English or the process utilized to adapt the scale for English-speaking samples. This fact seems to

suggest that the authors did not employ state-of-the-art methodology for test translation and adaptation (i.e., the International Test Commission [ITC] Guidelines for Test Adaptation) to prepare this English-version of the Italian scale. The authors may not have intended for subsequent researchers to utilize the scale as presented in the article or for it to become the standard instrument used to measure moral disengagement and the root scale for translations into other languages.

***Examination of the acceptability and validity of the original MDS.*** In fact, given the quality and comprehensibility of the scale's English translation, it is quite surprising how consistently this version of the MDS is used with samples of U.S. students. To illustrate this point, when this author administered this version of the scale to a diverse sample of nearly 800 students in sixth to eighth grades in southern Californian schools, the students consistently complained that many of the items were confusing. When queried further, their remarks suggested that they found the syntax of the items unnatural (e.g., "Kids are not at fault for misbehaving if their parents force them too much."), the word choice odd (e.g., "It is okay to treat badly somebody who behaved like a 'worm.'"), and the meaning of some of the prompts unclear (e.g., "If kids are living under bad conditions they cannot be blamed for behaving aggressively."). Use of the scale even prompted complaints from teachers and parents about language used in the scale, the incomprehensibility of some of the items, and the researchers' intent. Pelton and colleagues (2004) encountered similar problems when using the original translation of the MDS with a sample of 245 African American youth (mean age = 11.4) in the U.S. In order to address students' "lack of comprehension of the meaning [of some items]," the authors were forced to remove the four items tapping euphemistic language due to their complexity, make modifications to some items to make

them more culturally sensitive and to increase comprehensibility, and use an interview format to administer a scale designed to be taken independently (Pelton et al., 2004). For example, the authors modified "It is okay to treat someone badly if they act like a 'worm' (original)" to "If someone acts like a jerk, it is okay to treat them badly (revised)" because the word "worm" "was not culturally meaningful" to the students.

In addition, when this author conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with geomin rotation of Bandura's original scale based on responses from the aforementioned sample of adolescents, it did not result in the factor structure proposed by Bandura and colleagues; neither the eight mechanisms by which moral disengagement is proposed to occur, nor the four broad processes of moral disengagement (i.e., reconstructing immoral conduct, diffusing responsibility, dehumanizing the victim, and misrepresenting injurious consequences) emerged as factors. Furthermore, a clear factor structure without numerous cross loadings did not emerge when two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight factors were explored. Confirmatory factor analyses of the scale conforming to the theory of moral disengagement's possible eight-factor, four-factor, one-factor, and second-order structure were also explored, with results suggesting the scale is best represented by a single factor, as previously found in other studies.

Though the MDS is increasingly employed for research conducted in school settings, Bandura's original MDS is designed to measure global moral disengagement, not moral disengagement specific to the school context. The specificity matching principle suggests that such a misalignment is problematic since global measures should not be utilized to predict specific outcomes. Rather, when outcomes specific to the school domain are the focus (e.g., antisocial and aggressive attitudes and behavior), best practice suggests a school-

specific measure of moral disengagement be utilized, rather than a global measure such as Bandura's original moral disengagement scale.

**Alternative measures of moral disengagement.** In 1995, prior to publishing the 1996 article with the English translation of the MDS in the Appendix, Caprara, Pastorelli, and Bandura published an article in Italian entitled, "La misura del disimpegno morale in età evolutiva" ("Measuring moral disengagement in childhood and adolescence") that examined a 14-item version of the MDS for 9- and 10-year olds and a 24-item version of the MDS for 11- to 14-year olds. Items for these short-forms of the MDS for elementary-aged students and middle school-aged students were derived — and slightly adapted to be more appropriate for these age groups — from the items in the 32-item version published by Bandura and colleagues in 1996. According to Gini, the short-forms of the MDS in Italian are typically used with children and adolescents, while the longer 32-item version is typically used with adults (Gini et al., 2014). This author commissioned a professional Italian translator to translate Caprara et al.'s 1995 article and these short-form versions of the MDS into English in order to incorporate the article's findings into this review and examine its modifications of the original 32-item version of the MDS (see Table 7). Based on Bandura and colleagues' (1996) version of the MDS, Caprara and colleagues' (1995) Short Form version of the MDS (Bandura et al., 1996) for adolescents measures the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement. It is comprised of 24 items with a three-response format (1 = *disagree*, 2 = *not sure*, and 3 = *agree*). Caprara and colleagues (1995) examined the scale with 446 students (246 males and 200 females) between the ages of 11 and 14, attending the first, second, and third years of the De Sanctis State Middle School in Rome. The authors report that the item-total correlation coefficients were satisfactory in most cases, with the sole

exception of item 20 ("If a group of kids decides to do something harmful, it is not right to put the blame for the damage caused on one individual kid."), which exhibited a low value. The Cronbach's alpha value of .81 confirmed the overall reliability of the definitive scale. Analysis of the factorial structure revealed a first component that accounted for 19% of the variance, while the remaining components accounted for much smaller percentages. In most cases, the first-factor saturations were greater than .30, with the exception of two items belonging respectively to diffusion (DF20 = .139) and displacement of responsibility (DR5 = .264). The one-factor structure of the scale was further supported by an examination of the scree test of the eigenvalues and by the first-factor saturations. A one-way analysis of variance of the total scores revealed a significant difference between males and females, with males more inclined to moral disengagement than females. Caprara et al. (1995) further examined associations between moral disengagement and propensity for aggression and prosocial behavior using both self-reports and peer evaluations. In both instances, the correlation between moral disengagement and propensity for aggression (i.e., tolerance toward violence, irritability, physical and verbal aggression, rumination) was significant and positive; whereas, the correlation between moral disengagement and prosocial behavior was significant and negative. Moral disengagement was significantly more correlated with aggression in males than in females.

As previously discussed, Pelton et al. (2004) created a slightly altered version of the MDS for use with 245 African American children. Consistent with Bandura and colleagues' previous analyses, Pelton and colleagues examined the psychometric properties of the scale using principal-components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation. One factor emerged accounting for 5% of the variance. The scale demonstrated good reliability, with an alpha

reliability coefficient of .82. All but two items loaded at .30 or higher (Pelton et al., 2004). The Pelton study also reproduced Bandura et al.'s findings in the 1996 study of significant relations between moral disengagement and child aggressive and delinquent behaviors.

Some adaptations of the moral disengagement scale have also been constructed. For instance, in order to focus on the relation between moral disengagement and bullying, Hymel and colleagues (2005) created a "post hoc" scale by identifying 18 items from a lengthier self-report survey of bullying behavior they conjectured reflected Bandura's four categories of moral disengagement. Similar to other investigations of the original moral disengagement scale using principal components analysis, the four types of moral disengagement did not emerge as factors. Rather, the scale exhibited a unidimensional structure, with 13 of the 18 items loading on a single factor ($\alpha = .81$). Consequently, the researchers computed an overall composite score for participants by taking the average of the 13 items with significant loadings on the single factor. As with the original moral disengagement scale, subsequent researchers have begun to use this scale in studies of the association between moral disengagement and bullying (e.g., Almeida, Correia, Marinho, & Garcia, 2012). Moreover, Ribeaud and Eisner's (2010) previously discussed study, the authors found a moderate association between the scales and significant degree of conceptual redundancy ($r = .51$) between a subset of items from Bandura's original moral disengagement scale and the Hymel and colleagues scale. Thornberg and Jungert (2013) employed a similar process as Hymel and colleagues (2005) to construct a measure of moral disengagement in bullying from a larger survey of students' attitudes and beliefs about bullying. Based on the results of previous analyses of the aforementioned moral disengagement scales, these researchers assumed a one-factor structure for this scale, precluding further analysis.

**Translation, Adaptation, and Validation of the MDS Short Form for Children and Adolescents**

As previously discussed, Caprara and colleagues (1995) published a study that examined a 14-item version of the MDS for 9- and 10-year olds embedded in a 24-item version of the MDS for 11- to 14-year olds. These short-forms of the MDS for elementary-aged students and middle school-aged students use similar items in the 32-item version published by Bandura and colleagues in 1996, and are the scales researchers usually employ when conducting research with Italian students. Though most studies of moral disengagement are based on administration of the 32-item version of the scale with children and adolescents, this version was intended for use with adults (Gini et al., 2013). Caprara et al.'s (1995) article has never been translated into English, and these short-form versions of the MDS have never been translated/adapted for use in English. To address the original MDS's aforementioned issues with comprehensibility and length, this author collaborated with a professional Italian translator to develop and pilot a translation and adaptation of Caprara and colleagues' (1995) 24-item version of the MDS for adolescents (Moral Disengagement Scale–Short Form for Adolescents [MDS – SFA]) and embedded 14-item version of the MDS for Children (Moral Disengagement Scale–Short Form for Children [MDS – SFC]) that could be utilized as an alternative to the widely-used 32-item Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura et al., 1996). The adapted MDS – SFA and embedded MDS – SFC were piloted with 95 males (51%) and females (49%) in sixth (30%), seventh (39%), and eighth (31%) grades in California.

The adequacy of the linguistic equivalence between the source version of the scale in Italian (i.e., Caprara et al., 1995) and the adapted scale into English was examined using the

Item Translation and Adaptation Review Form (Hambleton & Zenisky, 2011), an empirically validated review form that standardizes the checking of translated and adapted items on educational and psychological tests (see, e.g., van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). Further modifications were made to the translation of the scale based on this review. Additional modifications were made to the translation based on a critical review of all available versions of the items translated into English (Bandura et al., 1996; Caprara et al., 2014; Gini, 2006; Pelton et al., 2003) and a committee approach to test adaptation. Balance was sought between closeness to the source version of the item in Italian and comprehensibility and equivalent meaning in English. Multiple versions of some items were included in the piloted version of the adapted scale. Cognitive interviews with groups of students focused on the comprehensibility of the translated items and respondents' interpretation of the items were conducted with a sample ($N$ = 45) of the 95 students in the pilot study, and the results informed further alterations of the translation. Table 1 below includes the 24 items for the adolescent scale and notes the 14 items that compose the elementary student scale.

Table 1

*Translation and Adaptation of Caprara and colleagues (1995) Moral Disengagement Scale – Short Form for Adolescents (MDS – SFA) and Children (MDS – SFC)*

| *Items, Response Format, and Scales* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Response: 1 = *never true* 2 =sometimes true 3 = always true | | | |
| **Giustificazione Morale** | | **Moral Justification** | |
| 1. GM1 | È giusto venire alle mani per proteggere i propri amici. | It's okay to fight to protect your friends. | (M) |
| 2. GM9 | E' bene usare la forza contro chi offende la tua famiglia. | It's okay to use violence against someone who offends your family. | (M & E) |
| 3. GM17 | E' giusto battersi quando è in gioco l'onore del proprio gruppo. | It's right to fight when the honor of your group of friends is at stake. | (M & E) |
| 4. GM25 | È bene mentire per evitare guai ai propri amici. | | X |
| **Etichettamento Eufemistico** | | **Euphemistic Language** | |
| 1. EE2 | Dare pacche e spinte non è altro che fare "giochi di mano." | | X |
| 2. EE10 | Picchiare dei compagni fastidiosi è soltanto dare loro una "lezione." | When you hit annoying kids you're just teaching them a "lesson." | (M & E) |
| 3. EE18 | Prendere la bicicletta di qualcuno senza permesso è soltanto un "prestito." | Taking someone's bicycle without permission is just "borrowing." | (M & E) |
| 4. EE26 | Non è una cosa grave "alzre il gomito" di tanto in tanto. | It's not a big deal to 'hit the bottle' now and then. | (M) |
| **Confronto Vantaggioso** | | **Advantageous Comparison** | |
| 1. CV3 | Fumate sigarette non è assolutamente grave rispetto all'uso di droga. | | X |
| 2. CV11 | Rubare un po' di denaro non è affatto grave rispetto a quanti rubano grandi quantità di denaro. | Stealing a little money is nothing serious compared with stealing a lot of money. | (M & E) |
| 3. CV19 | Non è grave insultare un compagno dal momento che picchiarlo è peggio. | It's not a big deal to insult other kids because hitting them is worse. | (M & E) |
| 4. CV27 | Di fronte alle cose illegali che certa gente è capace di fare, prendere cose di poco conto da un negozio senza pagare non è affatto grave. | Compared to the illegal things that some people are capable of doing, taking some inexpensive things from a store without paying is not a big deal. | (M) |
| **Diffusione della Responsabilità** | | **Diffusion of Responsibility** | |
| 1. DF4 | Non si può incolpare il singolo ragazzino che appartiene ad una banda per i guai che la sua banda commette. | | X |
| 2. DF12 | Un ragazzo che si limita a suggerire di violare delle regole non può essere incolpato se gli altri ragazzi gli danno retta e poi lo fanno. | A kid who merely suggests that others break the rules cannot be blamed if other kids listen and do so. | (M) |
| 3. DF20 | Se un gruppo di ragazzi decide di fare qualcosa di dannoso non è giusto dare la colpa del danno arrecato ad alcun ragazzo preso individualmente. | If a group of kids decides to do something harmful, it is not right to put the blame for the damage caused on one individual kid. | (M) |
| 4. DF28 | Non è giusto rimproverare un bambino che ha contribuito solo in piccola parte al danno prodotto dall'intero gruppo. | It's not right to blame a child who contributed only a little to the damage caused by the entire group. | (M) |
| **Dislocamento della Responsabilità** | | **Displacement of Responsibility** | |
| 1. DR5 | Si ii ragazzi vivono in cattive condizioni nei quartieri dove abitano non possono essere rimproverati se sono aggressivi. | Kids living in bad neighborhoods, can't be blamed for being aggressive. | (M) |
| 2. DR13 | Se i ragazzi non vengono ben educati a casa loro, non possono essere rimproverati se poi si comportano male. | Kids who are not taught good behavior at home can't be held responsible for bad behavior. | (E) |
| 3. DR21 | I ragazzi non possono essere rimproverati se usano delle parolacce dal momento che la maggior parte dei loro amici fa lo stesso. | You can't get kids in trouble for swearing since most of their friends swear too. | (M & E) |
| 4. DR29 | I ragazzi non possono essere rimproverati per essersi comportati male se i loro compagni li hanno indotti a comportarsi cosi. | Kids can't be blamed for behaving badly if their friends led them to behave that way. | (M) |
| **Distorisione della Consequenza** | | **Distorting Consequences** | |
| 1. DC6 | Non è grave dire piccole bugie dal momento che non fanno male a nessuno. | It's not a big deal to tell little lies because they don't hurt anyone. | (M) |
| 2. DC14 | I bambini non se la prendono a male quando li si prende in giro perché anche questo è un modo per interessarsi a loro. | It doesn't really hurt kids' feelings when you make fun of them, because it's just another way of showing them attention. | (E) |
| 3. DC22 | Il prendere in giro non fa veramente male a nessuno. | Teasing doesn't really hurt anyone. | (M & E) |
| 4. DC30 | Gli insulti tra bambini non recano danno ad alcuno. | When kids insult each other, nobody gets hurt. | (M) |
| **Deumanizzazione della Vittima** | | **Duhaminzation of the Victim** | |
| 1. DV7 | Certe persone meritano di essere trattate come animali. | Some people deserve to be treated like animals. | (M) |
| 2. DV15 | E' bene maltrattare chi si comporta come un essere schifoso. | It's okay to treat someone badly if they act like a bad person. | (M & E) |
| 3. DV23 | Vi sono persone odiose che non meritano il rispetto dovuto agli esseri umani. | There are hideous people who don't deserve the respect that human beings are due. | (M) |
| 4. DV31 | Alcune persone meritano di essere trattate duramente perché non hanno sentimenti che possono possono essere feriti. | Some people deserve to be treated harshly because they don't have feelings that can be hurt. | (E) |
| **Attribuzione di colpa** | | **Attribution of Blame** | |
| 1. AC8 | Se i ragazzi litigano fra loro e sono maleducati è colpa degli insegnanti. | If kids fight among themselves and act rudely, it is their teachers' fault. | (M) |
| 2. AC16 | Se le persone lasciano in giro le proprie cose è colpa loro se poi qualcuno le ruba. | | X |
| 3. AC24 | I bambini che vengono maltrattati di solito se lo meritano. | Kids who get mistreated usually deserve it. | (M & E) |
| 4. AC32 | Non si possono incolpare quei ragazzi che si ribellano ai loro genitori quando questi sono troppo oppressive. | You can't blame kids who rebel against their parents if their parents are too overbearing. | (M & E) |

*Note.* M = items for middle school; E = items for elementary school; M + E = items for middle and elementary school; X = item eliminated.

Adhering to the International Test Commission [ITC] Guidelines for Test Adaptation (Hambleton, 2005; van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996), this author examined whether judgmental reviews, cognitive interviews, and empirical analyses provided evidence of the structural and functional equivalence between the translated and adapted version of Caprara and colleagues MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC and Bandura and colleagues (1996) 32-item version of the MDS.

**Reliability, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity.** The internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC and the 32-item MDS were .85 and .79, respectively. In order to examine the scale's stability over time, a test-retest reliability coefficient (Pearson's correlation) with a time interval of approximately three weeks between administrations was calculated. For 75 respondents, the MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC exhibited a test-retest reliability of $r = .70$, $p < 0.001$ and the 32-item MDS exhibited a test-retest reliability of $r = .79$, $p < 0.001$. Under the assumption that, when summed, the scores from the first and second administration of the scales produce a total score, essentially a two-item test, that can be employed to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the measures, Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability was computed for both scales. The coefficient alpha reliability for the MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC and the 32-item MDS was .82 and .88, respectively. Thus, results indicated that both scales exhibited strong internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and internal consistency reliability. Finally, the MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC and the 32-item MDS exhibited high concurrent/convergent validity ($r = 0.80$, $p < 0.001$).

**Empirical Examination of Structural Equivalence (Convergent Validity).** According to van de Vijver and Leung (1997), structural equivalence of an instrument

administered in different cultural groups is established by demonstrating that it measures the same construct in both groups. Operationally, this involves the identification of underlying dimensions (factors) in both groups and an examination of whether the instrument demonstrates the same factor structure in both groups (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003; van de Vijver & Poortinga, 1991). Similar to Bandura and colleagues' (1996) analysis of the 32-item version of the MDS and Pelton and colleagues' (2004) analysis of their modification to the 32-item MDS, Caprara and colleagues (1995) conducted a principal-components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation on the source Italian version of the MDS-SFA with results indicating one component accounting for 19% of the variance. The reader will recall that principal-components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation indicated a one-factor structure for both the 32-item version of the MDS (accounting for 16% of the variance) and Pelton and colleagues' (2004) adaptation of the MDS for an American sample (accounting for 5% of the variance). Similar results were found for the translated and adapted MDS – SFA (and embedded MDS – SFC). Findings from a principal components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation on the English translation and adaptation of the MDS-SFA clearly indicated one component accounting for 24% of the variance. Examination of factor loadings also indicated consistency across groups. In sum, pilot study results provide promising evidence of the equivalence and consistency of test structure across the Italian and English versions of the MDS – SFA/MDS – SFC measure.

**Critique of the Moral Disengagement Scale**

According to Bandura's theory, moral disengagement involves employing psychological maneuvers to disengage moral self-sanctions against inhumane conduct (Bandura, 2002). Hence, when one "morally disengages" from an act, one is engaging in a

psychological process of self-regulatory moral control that enables one to perform detrimental or harmful behavior that is contrary to the moral standards one has previously committed oneself. As a result, one is able to perform an act that should cause aversive feelings of guilt or severe cognitive dissonance without feeling guilty or experiencing severe cognitive dissonance. However, a close look at Bandura's original moral disengagement scale reveals that the scale may not offer a satisfactory measure of moral disengagement. According to Bandura's theory, moral disengagement is predicated on prior commitment or socialization to a set of moral standards that the moral disengagement process enables one to justify violating. Consequently, an adequate measure of moral disengagement would need to, first, assess a person's personal morality, then, assess whether certain reasons enable them to justify breaking their moral rules or commitments. For instance, to know if a respondent on the MDS was truly disengaging from their previously accepted moral commitments, it would be important to know if they think it is wrong to lie in general before inquiring if it would be "alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble." Perhaps the person believes it is fine to lie in all sorts of circumstances and for no reason at all. Or to know if the respondent finds stealing permissible in general before inquiring, more specifically, if a person is "careless where they leave their things it is their own fault if they get stolen." Does the respondent need to make the relative comparison of the wrongness of "beating people up" to justify that "damaging property is no big deal," or do they just think that damaging property really is no big deal? Do they only hit "obnoxious classmates" to "give them a lesson," or do they hit classmates for all sorts of reasons or for no reason at all? Does endorsing the statement, "It is alright to fight to protect your friends" on a self-report questionnaire actually *always* reflect the process of moral disengagement? Or could it be that the student agreeing to this item

subscribes to the more general belief that it is alright to fight for whatever purpose, whether one is protecting friends or not? The correlations between moral disengagement and aggressive behavior consistently reported in the research literature lends support to the possibility that students viewed as morally disengaged may, in reality, simply accept fighting and engage in more of it. Moreover, there may be important adaptive reasons supporting an individual's belief that it is permissible, perhaps even necessary, to fight to protect their friends. Responses to the MDS do not clarify these alternative interpretations.

The MDS does not assess respondents' prior moral standards, rules, or commitments, it merely assesses whether they agree with certain behaviors under certain conditions. As a result, for each individual response, it is unclear if the mechanisms of moral disengagement are at play. They may be for some, but others may simply have a different personal morality, prompting different rules for behavior, in response to the perceived demands of different social contexts, and therefore no need to employ the mechanisms of moral disengagement. Based on how the MDS is constructed, we do not know. From the pool of respondents with high scores on the MDS, the measure is unable to sort out those respondents employing the theorized mechanisms of moral disengagement from those who may simply hold a different personal morality independent of the moral norms represented by the MDS. Yet, despite this ambiguity, studies consistently report high scores on the MDS as reflecting the construct of moral disengagement, which seems to be an over interpretation of the measure. Simply calling a scale a measure of moral disengagement does not make it so and, by obscuring the fact that some respondents with high scores on the MDS may hold personal moralities that are adaptive and functional in particular contexts, use of the MDS and its corresponding

theory likely occludes a more nuanced and accurate interpretation of the information being conveyed about some respondents' values, attitudes and beliefs.

Even if Bandura's original measure of moral disengagement or the various alternative versions were well aligned with the theory, that is if the measures first assessed respondents' moral commitments before assessing whether or not certain justifications effectively enabled them to transgress against those commitments, the question remains: Are students really morally disengaged? Is this the optimal way for researchers to conceptualize students' moral agency and moral behavior in the school context? The importance of context and situational influences on actors' moral beliefs and moral actions is not lost on Bandura. In his social cognitive theory of the moral self, he explicitly acknowledges this, writing, "People do not operate as autonomous moral agents, impervious to the social realities in which they are enmeshed. Social cognitive theory adopts an interactionist perspective to morality. Moral actions are the product of the reciprocal interplay of cognitive, affective, and social influences" (Bandura, 2002, p. 102). However, despite Bandura's clear recommendation to attend to contextual influences, all too frequently researchers' application of the theory of moral disengagement neglect to adequately consider situation-centered determinants of behavior. When it comes to the conclusions normally drawn by researchers employing Bandura's theory and scale, they tend to make internal, person-centered rather than external, situation-centered attributions when interpreting the responses of the participants in their sample. In other words, the students' internal levels of moral disengagement, perhaps influenced by contextual factors, are driving other antisocial behaviors (e.g., bullying, victimization, dishonesty, etc.).

Thus, ascribing the processes associated with moral disengagement to *all* individuals reporting a high level of aggressive or anti-social responses on the MDS seems a simplistic misapplication of the theory since the scale does not enable researchers to disentangle respondents employing the mechanisms of moral disengagement from respondents adhering to a divergent social norm or personal morality. It is not that individuals do not employ the mechanisms of moral disengagement, at times, some almost certainly do; however, a more accurate interpretation of responses on the MDS stops short of assuming that all respondents require such justifications to get around, as it were, the moral norms they have been socialized to and have accepted. It is more likely that the vast majority of responses merely reflect the logic underlying anti-social and aggressive group norms, attitudes, and behavior — not the contortions of thought needed to assuage the cognitive dissonance and feelings of guilt or shame that arise when one violates one's own moral commitments. As Bandura has argued, behavior is learned both directly and indirectly through the observation of the behavior of others. When individuals perceive that positive outcomes are associated with an observed behavior, be it prosocial and caring or antisocial and aggressive, they are more likely to emulate that behavior (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961).

Since the process of moral disengagement does not provide a comprehensive explanation of antisocial and aggressive attitudes and behavior and the concomitant self-reporting of such attitudes and behavior, researchers are encouraged to make less heavy-handed interpretations of the information being conveyed by respondents on the MDS. The insights to be had from information gathered via the MDS and similar measures likely have less to do with the moral dispositions of individual students and more to do with the general moral climate among the group providing responses to the items. When emphasis is,

misguidedly, placed on the former, the solution appears to be some form of character development or moral education program to remediate the moral sentiments of persons gone astray; whereas, when emphasis is placed on the latter — on the situation, on the context — the solutions that emerge focus more on organizing the underlying social institutions and circumstances such that they are conducive to human welfare and avoiding placing people in contexts that elicit "bad" behavior . In the context of schools, this means addressing inequality of opportunity and school climate.

This seems especially important when conducting research in the school setting, where students are utilizing their available repertoire of cognitive and behavioral skills to actively interpret and cope with multiple, reciprocal, interdependent social contexts (e.g., family, school, and peer groups) with varied norms, attitudes, and adaptive requirements (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 2005; Sameroff, 1975, 2009; Sameroff & Fiese, 2000; Trickett & Schmid, 1993). Since the behavioral demands vary across these contexts, a behavior considered adaptive in one may be considered maladaptive in another. In the school setting, students may also experience conflict from competing sets of adaptive requirements. For example, students may be pulled in different directions by peer-group norms and behavioral norms appropriate to school (Trickett, 1984). In such a scenario, a student may behave in ways that significantly diverge from the normative expectations of the school setting yet are still adaptive in relation to the perceived demands of the other social contexts the student is negotiating. For instance, in a cognitive interview with an adolescent student following administration of the MDS, the adolescent told this author that he understood how he was supposed to respond to the items on the questionnaire, but said that if he really acted like that he would likely "get pushed around and beat up all the time."

Moral disengagement theory may provide insights into the cognitive processes influencing the behavior of a small minority of students, but the broad application of the theory to understanding anti-social, aggressive, and bullying behavior that appears to be gaining popularity in the field of school psychology seems misguided. Based on these considerations, I have argued that the field of school psychology is better served by the ecological-developmental perspective on adolescent moral attitudes and behavior in schools. This theoretical discussion is important because it at once urges researchers to interpret the results of studies using the MDS differently and provides the theoretical framework for the scales developed and validated in this study.

## Purposes of the Dissertation

This dissertation addresses several issues related to the conceptualization and assessment of students' moral adaptability to school. To accomplish these aims, this study offered a critique of the theory of moral disengagement and articulated an alternative theoretical orientation more consistent with the fields of school and community psychology. In doing so, this study aimed to offer a model for understanding students' moral commitments and behavior that takes into consideration both dimensions of human moral agency and appreciates that students are navigating and adapting their behavior to multiple contexts that may be governed by different moral and social norms. Relatedly, a second purpose of the dissertation was to develop and establish the psychometric soundness of a brief, multidimensional, domain-specific measure of adolescents' school-specific *adaptability to* and *incongruence with* common school moral norms — the Moral Congruence with School Scale (MCSS) and the Moral Incongruence with School Scale (MISS) — organized into a single measure of school-related moral adaptability, the Student

Moral Adaptability Questionnaire (SMAQ). Consistent with these purposes, the aims of this dissertation were intended to support the construct validation of the SMAQ. Thus, an initial aim was to conceptualize the construct of student moral adaptability to school and its sub-constructs (moral congruence and incongruence with school). Next, these subconstructs were operationalized through the construction of test scales and items, and then the measure's factor structure was confirmed and validated. The final aim was to investigate the utility of the SMAQ subscales' higher order factors (i.e., moral congruence with school and moral incongruence with school) as predictors of students' responses to Bandura's original moral disengagement scale as well as their self-reported bullying and defending behavior.

The morality of the school context is embodied in its norms, rules, and behavioral expectations. These norms are both functional and cultural. While the theoretical orientation undergirding these measures appreciates that morality differs across contexts (e.g., cultures, social environments, economic realities and disparities, minority versus majority cultures, historical time and place), both measures included in the SMAQ (MCSS and MISS) seek to assess students' compatibility with the school context. For a variety of reasons, some students' environments outside of the school context foster personal moralities and behaviors that are at odds with the school context. Behaviors, habits, and values that may be viewed as adaptive, normal, functional, or protective in one environment, may be viewed as maladaptive, abnormal, dysfunctional, or risk inducing in the school context.

The SMAQ fills a critical lacuna in the assessment of school climate and socioemotional learning (SEL) and holds important implications for science, practice, and policy. The SMAQ will enhance researchers', schools', and teachers' understanding of students' personal moralities (i.e., their personal rules for right and wrong), refine our ability

to identify and target key areas of socio-emotional and moral development, and improve our ability to measure the effectiveness of related programming and interventions. In addition, this will improve understanding and appreciation for the plurality of moralities held by students in our schools, while enhancing our ability to design interventions addressing personal moralities and behaviors that are incompatible with the school context. Using the SMAQ holds potential for informing data-based decision making regarding social skills education, deterrence, schoolwide positive behavior supports, school climate improvement efforts, and monitoring a school's progress toward creating a safe and supportive school in compliance with education code and school safety plans.

This dissertation advances the science and practice of applied psychology in the school setting. While domain-general measures of moral disengagement and a measure of moral disengagement related to bullying attitudes are available for adolescents, prior to this study there were no measures available to assess adolescents' adaptability to common school-specific moral norms. Unlike the theory of moral disengagement, the constructs measured by the two scales (i.e., MCSS and MISS) that compose the SMAQ are theoretically consistent with the field of school psychology's transactional-ecological-developmental approach to conceptualizing human attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. As previously argued, the domain specificity of the SMAQ scales are also congruent with best practice in school psychological and educational service delivery. In addition, the SMAQ's assessment of the duality of students' moral agency, that is both their support for common school moral norms and their rejection of moral norms incongruent with the school context, is consistent with schoolwide prevention and promotion programming's efforts to not only reduce student problems but also promote student adaptability and success. Evaluations of educational

practices and interventions aimed at facilitating students' social-emotional-moral development and promoting students' prosocial behavior at school that only measure students' endorsement of moral norms incongruent with the school context (e.g., their moral disengagement) are one-sided and incomplete; a more well-rounded assessment of the effects of such programming must also measure students' support for common school moral norms and the reasons that justify them (cf. Domitrovich et al. 2010). Hence, the SMAQ was developed to advance school psychology practice and educational assessment through advancing an alternative approach to conceptualizing and measuring students' adaptability to the moral and social norms of the school context.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Consistent with these aims, it was hypothesized that (a) the SMAQ would be characterized by a conceptually sound and psychometrically robust multidimensional latent-trait structure, (b) that the SMAQ would demonstrate measurement invariance across gender, (c) that the higher order factor measured by the MISS would be negatively related to the higher order factor measured by the MCSS and strongly predictive of self-reported bullying behavior and Bandura and colleagues' (1996) MDS, and (d) that the higher-order factor measured by the MCSS would be negatively related to the higher order factor measured by the MISS and would be strongly predictive of self-reported defending behavior.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHOD

## Participants

The target sample consisted of adolescents in Grades 7 and 8 attending a public junior high school located in a midsize suburban city in southern California. At the time of this study, the combined enrollment of the school was approximately 740 students. The data used in subsequent analyses were collected as part of, but prior to, the implementation of a schoolwide intervention aimed at promoting positive peer relationships and reducing bullying and victimization, *P3R Promoting Positive Peer Relationships* (Faull, Swearer, Jimerson, Espelage, & Ng, 2008). Self-reported demographic data indicated that the sample was 46% male (*n* = 281) and 54% female (*n* = 328). The ethnicity breakdown was as follows: 42% Hispanic/Latinx (*n* = 255), 41% White (*n* = 247), 7% Asian (*n* = 44), 1% African American (*n* = 7), 1% Native American or Alaskan Native (*n* = 4), 1% Middle Eastern (*n* = 4), 7% Multiracial (*n* = 45), and 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (*n* = 1). In addition, 42% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

Aware of societal expectations for behavior, youth tend to exaggerate positive attitudes and behaviors and downplay negative attitudes and behaviors on self-report surveys (Carifio, 1994; Cornell, Klein, Konold, & Huang, 2012; Furlong, Sharkey, Felix, Tanigawa, & Green, 2009). Thus, it is important to screen out invalid responders to achieve more accurate prevalence rates of student risk behaviors (Cornell et al., 2012). Since surveys used focused on bullying, rules, and moral norms at school, respondents may feel compelled to downplay or exaggerate their bullying, defending, rule-breaking, and norm-violating behavior. To attend to this issue, the survey included questions intended to identify

mischievous responders. Students responded to the statement "I am telling the truth on this survey" on a four-point scale ranging from totally false to totally true twice and in reverse order. Although all students were considered eligible to participate in this study, usable self-report surveys characterized by few missing responses and indication of honest responses to the two general response honesty items were received from $n$ = 609 participants (Cornell et al., 2012; Furlong, Fullchange, & Dowdy, 2016).

**SMAQ Development**

Development of the SMAQ and its underlying scales adhered to Clark and Watson's (1995) basic principles for quality scale development. It was also informed by references on measurement construction and validation (e.g., DeVellis, 2016; Wilson, 2004). The establishment of construct validity represents the primary objective in measure development (Clark & Watson, 1995). Construct validity is composed of three components: *substantive*, *structural*, and *external* (Clark & Watson, 1995; Loevinger, 1957). Establishing the substantive validity of a measure is the first stage in the measure development process. Evidence of substantive validity is based on a specific conceptualization and theorization of the construct. This involves a review of the relevant literature to determine the scope and range of the construct of interest, identify problems with existing measures, explore if the proposed measure is needed, and inform the creation of a broadly conceived and over-inclusive initial item pool. Once substantive validity has been established, structural validity is evaluated through testing the measure on a target sample and evaluating the item distributions, latent structure, internal consistency, and construct boundaries utilizing descriptive, factor analytic, reliability, measurement invariance, and concurrent correlational analyses. Subsequently, evidence of external validity is examined in a variety of ways,

including administration to diverse samples, tests of its associations with theoretically similar (convergent) and different (divergent) measures, and its usefulness in applied settings.

**Substantive validity.** To begin the measure construction process, the following outlines the nature and scope of the types of the measures to develop: brief (16 items or fewer), multidimensional measures of adolescents' (a) incongruence with the moral norms of the school context and (b) congruence with the moral norms of the school context. These scales were intended to work in tandem in a single questionnaire to tap different dimensions of students' moral reasoning and adaptability to the moral norms of the school setting. Initial scale development was prompted by the need for a school-specific measure of students' moral engagement or adaptability to the school context as well as an alternative to Bandura and colleagues' original Moral Disengagement Scale due to previously discussed conceptual and measurement shortcomings with the scale. Informed by the dual aspects of moral agency, that is both refraining from behaving inhumanely and proactively behaving humanely (Bandura, 2002), I aimed to also develop a school-specific scale tapping the norms and reasons supporting prosocial human behavior. Effort was made to develop feasible scales that could be utilized as a representation of students' school-specific moral agency. These scales are intended for use by researchers studying school climate, bullying and victimization, and social, emotional, and ethical development as well as by practitioners for progress monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of programming targeting these constructs. Next, I conceptualized the nature of the meta-construct to be assessed by the measures, which was defined as *youths' personal moralities in relation to the morality of the school context.* The next step was to review the germane literature on this meta-construct and the pertinent sub-constructs delimited by or closely related to the meta-construct.

Ethical theory and biomedical ethics (e.g., Beauchamp & Childress, 2013; Rachels & Rachels, 2003), Situational Action Theory (e.g., Wikström 2004), transactional-ecological-developmental theory (e.g., Sameroff, 2009), the synthesized theory of moral neutralization (Ribeud & Eisner, 2010), research on children's moral development — especially, the social-cognitive domain theory approach (Nucci, 2001; Turiel, 2002), common school norms, and a review of several school districts' codes of conduct (e.g., Virginia Board of Education Student Code of Conduct – Policy Guidelines) provide the broad framework for the SMAQ. Items in both the MISS and the MCSS are intended to address both domains of social reasoning and knowledge postulated by social-cognitive domain theory: the moral domain and the social convention domain; hence, items addressed behaviors and attitudes deemed unacceptable in the school context based on the harm or injustice caused as well as those in place to foster order, predictability, and an environment conducive to learning. The construction of scales and subscales according to the higher order factors and subfactors hypothesized to underlie students' moral adaptability to school was informed Beauchamp and Childress's (2013) discussion of ethics and moral norms in their highly regarded *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (7th Edition). In addition, Gibbs' (2014) synthesis of Kohlberg's and Hoffman's theories into a moral domain defined by the principles of *justice* and *caring* informed the conceptualization of the MCSS. For example, the SMAQ's bifurcation of scales into the MISS and the MCSS aligns with Beauchamp and Childress's distinction of the moral principles of *nonmaleficence*, *beneficence*, and *justice.* Nonmaleficence is defined as the obligation "to abstain from causing harm to others," which aligns with attitudes characterized by moral neutralization (p. 150). Nonmaleficence is related to but distinct from beneficence, which is defined as "all forms of action intended to

benefit other persons," including preventing harm, removing harm, and doing or promoting good (p. 203). As Gibbs (2014) discusses at length, moral appeals to promote the good of individuals and groups are normally compelled by empathy. Beneficence is also related to the principle of justice, defined as "fair, equitable, and appropriate treatment in light of what is due owed to persons" (p. 250). Though distinct, the moral principles of beneficence and justice are closely connected since an adequate definition of the good includes that which is just (Gibbs, 2014). As Piaget (1932/1965) explained, "between the more refined forms of justice […] and love properly so called, there is no longer any real conflict" (p. 324). Translated into the language of statistical modeling, Piaget's conclusion implies that caring and justice are distinct, yet highly correlated, factors, and the other aforementioned moral theories lend further credence this claim.

***Moral incongruence with school scale.*** The MISS is consistent with the moral principle of *nonmaleficence* and is informed by Ribeaud and Eisner's (2010) empirical synthesis of the constructs of moral disengagement, neutralization techniques, and secondary self-serving cognitive distortions into the construct *moral neutralization*, though applied to the school context. Ribeaud and Eisner refer to this construct as *moral neutralization*, though in its application to the specific setting of school I have argued *moral incongruence* is a more apropos name. Endorsement of items on the MISS generally represent acceptance of or justification for some form of harm to others at school (e.g., theft, destructive conduct, physical injury, verbal abuse, bullying). Thus, the relevant literature was reviewed related to this metaconstruct, including subconstructs and measures devised to assess these subconstructs that were within the scope of the metaconstruct. Prominent scales used to measure moral disengagement, moral neutralization, and secondary self-serving cognitive

distortions were reviewed and, in some cases, school-specific adaptations of items were created for the MISS (e.g., Bandura et al., 1996; Barriga & Gibbs, 1996; Barriga, Gibbs, Potter, & Liau, 2001; Gibbs, Barriga, & Potter, 1992; Hymel et al., 2005; Pelton et al., 2004; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Ribeaud and Eisner's (2010) synthesis suggests the construct of moral neutralization is composed of four subconstructs or factors that tap into moral values, beliefs, and attitudes: cognitive restructuration, minimizing own agency, disregarding/distorting negative impact, and blaming/dehumanizing the victim. These constructs were adapted for the school context and items were created that aimed to tap them. *Cognitive restructuring* reframes school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct as socially acceptable behavior. *Minimizing own agency* displaces or diffuses responsibility for school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct on to social pressures from others. *Disregarding/distorting negative impact* denies or minimizes injury, harm, or the deleterious impact of school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct. *Blaming/dehumanizing the victim* involves a biased perception of the victim that constructs them as deserving of harm because they lack human qualities (e.g., feelings, hopes, concerns) or their provocations of the aggressor make the injurious conduct inevitable. From the perspective of student moral adaptability to school, it does not matter if students are employing techniques of moral neutralization or hold personal moralities that concord with these sub-constructs. Respondents' responses are simply assumed to describe their personal morality in relation to the school context.

As Beauchamp and Childress (2013) explain, "obligations not to harm others are sometimes more stringent than obligations to help them" (p. 151); "rules of nonmaleficence therefore take the form 'Do not do X'" (p. 152). This idea certainly holds true in the school

context and is embodied in its code of conduct, which sets criteria for disciplinary measures (e.g., removal, suspension, expulsion), legal action, search and seizure, and mandatory intervention and treatment. Based on a review of several school districts' codes of conduct, a classification system was created to categorize behaviors representing school rule violations or offenses. Categories of school rule violations or offenses included: lying, stealing, physical aggression, relational aggression, bullying, disrespect for authority, property violations, alcohol and drugs, threats and intimidation, violence with a weapon, profane or obscene language or conduct, rule breaking, gang-related activity, and disruptive behavior. As these categories make clear, school norms defined by the code of conduct prohibit harm to others and self and promote a school environment that is physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe, trustworthy, respectful, drug-free, and conducive to learning and teaching. MISS scale items were classified and evaluated by both moral neutralization technique and school rule violation to ensure scale items adequately reflected the moral norms related to nonmaleficence characterizing the school context.

***Moral congruence with school scale.*** The items in the over-inclusive initial item pool for the MCSS were organized according to four broad constructs composed of multiple subconstructs. The MCSS was theoretically informed by social-cognitive domain theory's definition of morality as "conceptions of human welfare, justice, and rights, which are functions of the inherent features of interpersonal relations," and are learned via reflection on the intrinsic effects of one's actions on others' well-being and issues of justice (Nucci, 2001, p. 7; Nucci, 2009). Consistent with social-cognitive domain theory, the initial broad constructs structuring the pilot scale and the creation of an over-inclusive item set were informed by the four-component model of moral functioning (Bebeau, Rest, and Narvaez,

1999; Johnson, 2011; Jordan, 2007; Narvaez & Vaydich, 2008; Rest, 1986), which conceptualizes morality as grounded in four psychological processes that generate a moral behavior: *moral sensitivity*, *moral judgment*, *moral motivation*, and *moral character*. The constructs of moral sensitivity and moral judgment align with Beauchamp and Childress's (2013) theorization of the moral domain into the two primary principles of beneficence and justice and Gibbs's theorization of the moral domain into the two primary principles of the good and the right as reflective of Hoffman's emphasis on the development of attitudes toward caring and Kohlberg's emphasis on the development of attitudes toward justice.

It is worth noting that this decision to structure the MCSS around the four-component model of moral functioning was informed by consultations with two luminaries in the field of moral development and education, John C. Gibbs and Martin W. Berkowitz. Berkowitz provided the author with a document listing all of the scales employed in the Measuring Morality Survey. The scales included in the Measuring Morality Survey were selected in consultation with an international group of scholars from sociology, psychology, and linguistics from a broad range of theoretical traditions who study morality or theoretically-related constructs; all scales included in the Measuring Morality Survey were reviewed to help determine the nature and scope of the construct of interest and to glean insights into the types of items that might be appropriate to include in the scales. More information on the Measuring Morality Survey can be found at http://kenan.ethics.duke.edu/attitudes/resources/measuring-morality/

*Moral sensitivity* is defined as awareness of how our actions affect other people and "the ability to recognize moral issues in complex situations" (Jordan, 2007, p. 325). Moral sensitivity involves possessing empathy, perspective-taking ability, making inferences about

others' behavior, interpreting others' reactions and feelings and responding appropriately, comprehending how behaviors can impact the welfare of self and others, forethought and reflective action. Consistent with the psychological process of moral sensitivity, items were created specific to the school context grouped into several subconstructs, some of which were modeled after preexisting items and scales. Thus, included in the process of moral sensitivity were items intended to tap the *moral emotions* such as empathy, sympathy, and guilt (informed by Haidt [2003], Menesini & Camodeca [2008], and Wikström's [2006, 2012] Shame Scale), *caring by connecting with others* (informed by Narvaez [2009] Ethical Sensitivity Scale), *altruism* (informed by Child Trends Positive Indicators Project), *perspective-taking* (informed by Davis's [1980] Interpersonal Reactivity Index [IRI], Eisenberg & Mussen, [1989], and Narvaez [2009]), *problem solving* (informed by Bransford & Stein [1993], Narvaez [2009], and Tirri & Nokelainen [2007]), and *affective and cognitive empathy* (informed by Child Trends Positive Indicators Project, Davis's [1980] IRI, and Narvaez [2009]).

*Moral judgment* is defined as determining which action is right or wrong based on the moral justifications or reasons that support particular lines of action. Social-cognitive domain theory posits three different domains of moral judgment. The social domain concerns norms and social rules that are particular to a social system or group and are designed to promote the smooth functioning of social groups and institutions; the moral domain concerns issues of harm and welfare, justice, and rights; and, finally, the personal domain concerns issues of privacy and prerogative that primarily impact the individual (Nucci, 2008; Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983). Consistent with the psychological process of moral judgment, which concerns students' understanding of social and moral rules and their ability to recognize and reason

about moral issues, I created items specific to the school context grouped into several subconstructs, some of which were modeled after preexisting items and scales. Thus, included in the process of moral judgment were items intended to tap *moral judgment* (informed by Gibbs's [2014] Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form Objective (SRM-SFO), *working with others* (informed by Child Trends Positive Indicators Project), *positive peer relationships* (informed by Child Trends Positive Indicators Project), *trustworthiness and integrity* (informed by Child Trends Positive Indicators Project), and *respect for authority/student-teacher relationships*. Moreover, informed by the research literature on fostering youth moral development (e.g., Nucci, 2008, 2009; Turiel, 2002) and student behavioral engagement (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Hazel, Vazirabadi, & Gallagher, 2013), items aiming to tap students' appreciation of the utility of and acceptance of *school rules and norms* were also included.

*Moral motivation* is defined as the prioritization of "moral values over other personal values (e.g., careers, academic achievement, affectional relationships, aesthetic preferences, institutional loyalties, pleasure, excitement, etc.)" (Bebeau et al., 1999, p. 22). The concept of moral motivation is informed by research on moral identity exploring how individuals may organize a social identity around a set of moral commitments that they employ to construct self-definitions that, in turn, influence their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g., Blasi, 1984). As Aquino and Reed (2002) have argued, when an individual's moral identity is highly valued it can serve as a powerful self-regulatory mechanism motivating action in line with a person's moral commitments. As such, moral identity may be a better predictor of

actual behavior than reported beliefs and attitudes (e.g., see research on tests of individuals' "sacred values" in action by Atran, 2010).

*Moral character/self-control* is defined as the ability to overcome distractions and obstacles due to the strength of one's convictions, self-discipline, impulse control, courage, persistence, and implementation skills. This factor is conceptualized as building on an individual's ability to set goals and control impulses as well as possessing the requisite skills to act in alignment with goals. Items in this subconstruct were informed by the Social Emotional Health Survey's (SEHS) Emotional Competence Subscale and two of the scales that inform measurement of this trait: Child Self-Control Rating Scale (CSCRS) and the student version of the Behavioral Emotional Rating Scale (BERS-2) (Furlong, Sharkey, Boman, & Caldwell, 2007). Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik, and Arneklev's (1993) Low Self-Control Scale was also referenced in the development of items for this factor (Wikstrom and Svensson, 2010).

***Scale structure.*** Since the aim was to develop a brief, multidimensional instrument for use in schools, I determined that an optimal measure structure would consist of two scales each comprised of three to four first order factors indicated by three to five items and likely loading on to higher order factors. The goal was to create an inventory composed of two scales that, when combined, would reflect the bidimensional meta-construct of student moral adaptability (i.e., moral congruence and incongruence with school).

Following the selection and definition of the constructs of interest, an item structure and pool was created. Consistent with Clark and Watson's (1995) basic principles for quality scale development, I first developed broadly conceived and over-inclusive initial item pools for each of the scales. The initial item pools sought to tap the sub-factors I hypothesized

composed the broader factors that make up the two-dimensional meta-construct of student moral adaptability. Respondents were given the prompt, "For each of the following statements, select the one choice that best describes you." Items were phrased positively for both subscales. For example, on the MISS, one item reads "Sometimes it's okay to bully other people at school" and, on the MASS, an item reads "Students should follow school rules even if they probably won't get caught breaking them." A 4-point, Likert-like scale was selected as the most appropriate (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *somewhat disagree*, 3 = *somewhat agree*, 4 = *completely agree*). This response scale format was selected because the subconstructs assessed are conceptualized as moral positions, values, or attitudes with which students may or may not agree, subscribe to, or self-identify. Four response options indicating an individual's level of agreement or disagreement with a statement provides students with a sufficient range of options to meaningfully distinguish them and is consistent with similar scales. Moreover, this type of response scale was selected because the scales are intended to measure the degree to which students endorse common moral norms at school since it is assumed the scales composing the SMAQ will be used in efforts to better understand school climate, which is directly impacted by a student body's congruence with school moral norms, and school climate improvement efforts as well as to assess the effects of interventions aimed at facilitating students' social-emotional-moral development and effecting change in students' attitudes and moral commitments.

Next, over-inclusive pilot scales for both the MISS and the MCSS were developed by drafting numerous potential items corresponding to several potentially relevant subconstructs. In some instances, items were modeled after preexisting items in the aforementioned scales, but adapted for the school context. Subsequently, the pilot SMAQ

was submitted to members of the author's research team for content review. Based on feedback from the research team, revisions to item wording were made and some items were removed. This resulted in a 122-item pilot SMAQ, with 47 items for the MISS and 75 items for the MCSS. See Table 1 and 2 for MISS and MCSS components, subscales, and items.

Table 2

*Overinclusive Item Pool for the Moral Incongruence with School Scale*

| Subscales and Items |
|---|
| *Cognitive Restructuration at School Scale* |
| It is alright to get in a fight at school if your friends are in a fight. |
| It is alright to beat up somebody who doesn't respect your friends. |
| It is alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble. |
| Slapping and shoving another student is just a way of joking. |
| It's okay to join in when someone you don't like is being bullied. |
| Sometimes it's okay to bully other people at school. |
| Bullying is just a normal part of being a kid. |
| Some kids need to be picked on to teach them a lesson. |
| Sometimes other students need to be beat up at school. |
| Only a coward would ever walk away from a fight at school. |
| All students lie; it's no big deal. |
| Some students deserve to be called bad words. |
| Some teachers just don't deserve to be treated with respect. |
| It's okay to threaten and intimidate another student because hitting them is worse. |
| It's okay to disobey an unfair teacher. |
| It's okay to take something that does not belong to you if it is not clear whom it belongs to. |
| It's better for other students to fear you than to like you. |
| *Minimizing Own Agency at School Scale* |
| Kids who are not taught to obey the rules should not be blamed for misbehaving at school. |
| Kids living in rough neighborhoods can't be blamed for breaking school rules. |
| Kids cannot be blamed for using bad words at school when all their friends do it. |
| It's okay to get in a fight at school if another student makes you mad. |
| Sometimes you have to hurt another student if you have a problem with them. |
| You have to get even with students who don't show you respect. |
| It's important to intimidate other students so they will leave you alone. |
| It's okay to cheat on tests or schoolwork if it's the only way to get a good grade. |
| It's okay to sell drugs at school if you really need the money. |
| It's better to break school rules than betray your group of friends. |
| *Disregarding/Distorting Negative Impact of Actions at School Scale* |
| Spreading rumors about other students doesn't really hurt them. |
| Cheating a little bit on tests and schoolwork isn't really wrong. |
| Flipping someone off doesn't really hurt them. |
| It doesn't really hurt kids' feelings when you tease and make fun of them because it's just another way of showing them attention. |
| Tagging or vandalizing a school building isn't really a problem since the school will just paint over it. |
| Kids with a lot of stuff don't even notice if some of their stuff gets taken. |
| Kids don't mind being called bad words; they are used to it. |
| Being a little high or drunk at school doesn't get in the way of doing well in school. |
| Skipping school sometimes doesn't really get in the way of doing well in school. |
| Getting bullied helps make people tougher. |
| All students lie to their teachers; it's not a big deal. |

*Blaming/Dehumanizing the Victim at School Scale*

Some kids just don't deserve to be treated with respect.
If a student acts like a lowlife, it's okay to treat them badly.
Some kids get bullied because they deserve it.
It's okay to pick on losers.
Most kids who get bullied bring it on themselves.
If someone at school leaves their backpack open or unattended, they deserve to have stuff stolen out of it.
Sometimes you have to ruin someone else's reputation before they try to ruin yours.
If you think someone might try to hurt you, it's smart to hurt them first.
If a classmate tells on you, it's okay to take revenge on them.

Table 3

*Overinclusive Item Pool for the Moral Congruence with School Scale*

| Components, Subscales, and Items |
|---|
| **Moral Sensitivity at School** |
| *Moral Emotions at School Scale* |
| I would feel ashamed if I got caught stealing from another student. |
| I would feel ashamed if I got caught bullying another student. |
| I would feel ashamed if my teacher caught me cheating on a test. |
| I would feel ashamed if my parents found out I was disobeying and being disrespectful to teachers at school. |
| *Caring for Others at School Scale* |
| I am concerned about the wellbeing of my classmates. |
| I am concerned about the wellbeing of the students at my school. |
| I feel a sense of connection to the students at my school. |
| I try to consider my classmates' needs. |
| Nurturing positive relationships with other students is important to me. |
| *Altruism at School Scale* |
| I feel obligated to help other students at my school. |
| I try to help other students feel better. |
| It's important for students to help other students, even if it's hard. |
| It's right for students to help other students even if they are from different ethnic backgrounds. |
| It's right for a student to help another student, even if they don't know them. |
| *Perspective-taking at School Scale* |
| It's important for students to respect other students' perspectives, even if they disagree. |
| I am able to cooperate with other students who do not share my opinions on what is right and wrong. |
| I get along with kids who hold different perspectives or do not agree with me. |
| I consider other students' perspectives, not just my own. |
| I try to see both sides in a conflict. |
| *Problem Solving at School Scale* |
| When I have a problem with another student, I try to think of several different good solutions. |
| When I have a problem with another student, I try to find the best way to solve it. |
| When I have a problem with another student, I believe it is always possible to find a positive solution. |
| It's better to for students to talk out their problems or get help than get in a fight at school. |
| It's important for students to help each other solve problems. |
| *Empathy at School Scale* |
| I feel bad when someone at school gets their feelings hurt. |
| I am happy when my classmates are successful. |
| I understand how my friends at school feel. |
| It is important to me to understand how other kids at school feel. |
| I notice if I offend another student. |

**Moral Judgment at School**

*Moral Judgment at School Scale*

It's important to think about the consequences of your actions before you do something.
There's really no excuse for hurting other students on purpose; all students have a right to feel safe at school.
It is important to keep promises if you can because relationships are based on trust.
School goes best when students are honest.
It's wrong for students to take things that belong to other people because stealing is unfair.
All students have a right to be treated fairly.

*Working with Others at School Scale*

It's important for students to cooperate at school.
It's important for students to make positive comments when working in groups.
Students can work well together in groups, even if they don't know each other well.
When working in groups, it's important to do your fair share.
When working in groups, it's important for students to respect other points of view.
Students with different backgrounds, beliefs and identities can get along.

*Positive Peer Relationships at School Scale*

Friends build each other up and encourage each other to be the best they can be.
Friends support each other through hard times.
Friends tell each other the truth.
Friends encourage each other to be kind to other students.
Friends encourage each other to follow the school rules.
Friends treat each other fairly.

*Trustworthiness and Integrity at School Scale*

It's important to keep the promises you make, even to people you don't know well.
It's important for students to tell their friends and teachers the truth.
There's really no excuse for cheating on tests and schoolwork.
Students should accept responsibility for their actions, even if they will get in trouble.
It's right to keep the promises you make to friends, even when it's hard.

*Following School Rules Scale*

It is important for students to follow the rules at school because rules provide order to school life.
It's important for students to follow the school rules, even when they don't want to.
My rules for myself and the school rules are basically the same.
My school and I think the same things are right and wrong.
The school rules make sense to me.
School and classroom rules are there to help students learn and keep students safe.
Students should follow school rules even if they probably won't get caught breaking them.
There are good reasons for following the school rules.

*Respect for and Relationships with Adults at School Scale*

Teachers at school deserve to be treated with respect.
It's important for students to follow their teachers' directions, even if they don't want to.
Adults at school are working hard to keep students safe.
My teachers want to help me reach my full potential.
I believe my teachers want the best for me.

**Moral Motivation at School**

*Moral Motivation and Identity at School Scale*

It would make me feel good to be known as a caring, fair, and honest student.
Being caring, fair, and honest is an important part of who I am.
I strongly desire to be caring, fair, and honest.
My behavior at school shows others that I am caring, fair, and honest.
My comments at school communicate to others that I am caring, fair, and honest.

**Moral Self-Control at School**

*Self-Control at School Scale*

I can calm down when I get angry at school.
I can stop myself from breaking school rules.
I think about the consequences of my actions, plan what I'm going to do, and do it.
I can do the right thing, even under pressure from others to do something I think is wrong.
I follow teachers' instructions.

Following this content review and with the permission of school administrators, the pilot SMAQ was administered to a target sample of adolescents attending a local middle school. Following administration, a focus group was held with the students to receive feedback on item comprehensibility and to assess the degree to which respondents were interpreting the items in the manner intended. Based on students' feedback in the focus group, minor changes were made to the wording of some items, while retaining all 122 test items.

Next, the pilot SMAQ was administered to the seventh- and eighth-grade students (described in the Participants subsection above) at a local junior high school as a component in the evaluation of the Promoting Positive Peer Relationships program (Faull, Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2008) during the 2014-2015 academic year. The questionnaire was administered to students before the program began; however, students in the eighth grade had exposure to the program during the previous school year as seventh graders. Students completed the questionnaire anonymously using online survey software in a single administration. Classroom teachers oversaw survey administration at school during regular

school hours. Teachers instructed students to keep their answers private and complete the survey in silence.

**Structural validity.** Once the substantive validity of the SMAQ was established, its structural validity was assessed utilizing participant responses from the total sample. Initial structural validity evidence was established by evaluating item distributions. Since measure construction was guided by established theory and an a priori hypothesized pattern of relationships among factors, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was not employed to identify the pilot measure's latent structure and reduce the number of items (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2012). Instead, bivariate correlations among the set of items in each theorized sub-construct were examined and the most highly correlated items were selected as best representing the theorized factors. This approach had the further advantage of preserving the total sample for subsequent analyses aimed at confirming the SMAQ's latent factor structure and coherence, examining concurrent validity, and assessing measurement invariance across gender. Through this process, the number of items in each scale was reduced to 16 items in the MISS and 16 items in the MCSS (see Table 4). In addition, the bivariate correlations for the MCSS indicated a slightly different four-factor structure from the hypothesized structure. The moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral identity and motivation factors were retained, but the moral character/self-control factor was dropped in favor of an emergent factor based on items related to school rules. Since items related to empathy and caring in the moral sensitivity factor exhibited the strongest correlations, this factor was renamed *School Caring*. The other three factors on the MCSS were renamed *School Justice*, *School Rules*, and *School Moral Identity* to capture the school-specific nature of the items comprising the sub-scales. On the MISS, groups of correlations emerged consistent with the hypothesized four-factor structure,

which was retained and named *Cognitive Restructuration at School*, *Minimizing Own Agency at School*, *Disregarding/Distorting Negative Impact of Actions at School*, and *Blaming/Dehumanizing the Victim at School*. Internal consistency analyses were conducted on the resulting subscales and the latent structure was confirmed with confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). Subsequently, measurement invariance was tested across gender, and the CFA model was employed in a structural equation model that predicted bullying and defending behavior as well as moral disengagement.

**Concurrent Validity Measures**

**Bullying Participant Role Survey (BPRS): Bullying and Defending Behavior Subscales** (BPRS; Summers & Demaray, 2009). The BPRS was developed for use with children in fifth to eighth grades, based on the Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ) developed by Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen (1996). The BPRS measures students' perceptions of bullying in their school and, based on students' responses on 48 items, assesses four different participant roles: Bully, Victim, Defender of the Victim, and Outsider. Students indicated how frequently they engaged in relevant activities in the past 30 days, with responses provided on a five-point scale (*never*, *1-2 times*, *3-4 times*, *5-6 times*, and *7 or more times*).

There is evidence to support the psychometrics of the BPRS to accurately assess various participant roles in the bullying situation (Summers & Demaray, 2009). Three studies conducted with large samples have provided evidence that the measure is reliable in terms of internal consistency (alpha = .93) and validity (Summers & Demaray, 2009). Summers and Demaray have reported that an exploratory factor analysis resulted in a four-factor solution that accounted for 55% of the variance with factor loadings ranging from .428 to .863.

Evidence of reliability on the subscales is as follows: Bully Subscale (alpha = .90); Victim Subscale (alpha = .93); Defender Subscale (alpha = .93); and Outsider Subscale (alpha = .93).

**Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura et al., 1996).** Bandura's Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale (MDS) was employed to measure the individual's tendency to use cognitive mechanisms that can disengage self-sanctions that typically serve to regulate behavior and justify the use of violent and aggressive behaviors (Bandura, 1991, 1999). This scale is the most commonly used measure of moral disengagement internationally (Gini, Pozzoli & Hymel, 2013). The MDS is a 32-item questionnaire designed to assess an individual's proneness to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1995). Items are rated on a three-point scale (1 = *disagree*, 2 = *not sure*, and 3 = *agree*). The MDS assesses the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement described above (Bandura et al., 1996). The scale has shown good consistency (alpha = .82 and .86; Bandura et al., 1996, 2001), and results of factor analysis (Bandura et al., 1996, 2001) has suggested that an one-factor structure accounts for approximately 16% of the variance.

## Data Collection and Processing

**Data Analyses.** Data analyses were conducted according to the SMAQ development process previously articulated. The structural validity of the SMAQ was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Initial interest was in the fit of an eight-factor model composed of four factors for the MISS and four factors for the MCSS. Since the four factors that comprise each of the scales were hypothesized to assess four highly related domains, the next step was to empirically test whether a higher-order CFA supports conceptualizing the four first-order factors composing the MISS and the four first-order factors composing the

MCSS as second-order scales. Higher-order models examine if the first-order factors measure a general higher-order (or second-order) factor that accounts for the pattern of relations among the subfactors. The literature on scale development recommends that higher-order factors be extracted when first-order factors are correlated since factor overlap suggests further generalizability is possible (Gorsuch, 1983). Moreover, when higher-order CFA supports a unidimensionality of data out of the first-order factors it indicates that the first-order subscales can be combined to develop a second-order scale. Since the MISS and MCSS are intended to be used together as a measure of students' moral adaptability to school, a second-order CFA was then conducted in which the two scales figured as two second-order factors, comprised of their four first-order factors, in the model. Once the structure of the final scale was confirmed, the CFA model was extended to conduct a latent variable path analysis (LVPA) that predicted reported bullying and defending behavior as well as Bandura and colleagues (1996) MDS.

Finally, the scales were assessed for invariance across genders. Measurement invariance establishes that the parameters of a measurement model are statistically equivalent across two or more groups. The basic steps of invariance testing were followed: CFA model with overall sample; individual groups; configural invariance (CI) model; metric invariance (MI) model; scalar invariance (SI) model (Sass, 2011; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). At each step, equality constraints were imposed on successive models. Change in chi-square tests were utilized to examine whether successive steps led to a significant decrease in model fit; advancement through the steps of invariance testing is dependent upon the maintenance of model fit (i.e., no significant decrement between steps). *Configural invariance* (CI) tested the equality of factor structure across the two groups by allowing all parameters to be freely

estimated, and then assessing whether the model maintains adequate fit. CI tests whether there are the same number of factors in each group as well as whether the same indicators load on each of the same factors for each group. A CI model with adequate fit provides grounds to pursue evaluation of more restrictive invariance models and establishes a baseline model for comparison in subsequent steps. As such, the analysis of CI would provide evidence to evaluate if the SMAQ subscales fit equally well for both males and females. Once CI was established, *metric invariance* (MI) was tested. Tests of MI were performed to examine the degree to which the indicators on the SMAQ exhibit comparable relationships to the latent construct across groups. MI tests whether the values of the factor loadings are different for each group, and is a more restricted model compared to CI. Factor loadings were constrained across samples, and then tested to see if that constraint produced a significant decrease in model fit. This was accomplished by comparing the chi-square value of the baseline model with the chi-square value of the metric invariance model. If no significant increase in model misfit is found, this is evidence of invariance of factor loadings. Thus, the MI analysis provided information on the equivalence of the factor loadings between gender groups on each of the MISS's and MCSS's subscales. When latent factor loadings are equal across both gender groups, this indicates that the two groups responded to the items in the same way. Next, tests of *scalar invariance* (SI) were conducted. SI tests whether the factor means and indicator intercepts are invariant across both groups in addition to what has already been established as invariant. Testing SI proceeds by constraining the indicator intercepts to equality across groups and fixing one group's latent mean to zero to create a reference group used to assess equality of indicator intercepts across groups. Thus, SI is a more restricted model compared to MI. Establishing measurement invariance is an important

step in validating a measure because when loadings and intercepts or thresholds are invariant across groups, scores on latent variables can be validly compared across the groups and the latent variables can be used in structural models hypothesizing relationships among latent variables.

All CFAs and tests of measurement invariance were performed utilizing M*plus* software version 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). Since all items were measured on an ordinal four-point scale (i.e., categorical) and were not normally distributed, the robust weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator was used to fit the models, which is recommended (Brown, 2006). Consequently, model fit statistics describe the fit of the item factor model to the polychoric correlation matrix among the items for each group. Optimal model fit was assessed based on fit statistics and factor loadings. The model's goodness-of-fit was evaluated employing the chi-square test of model fit, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger & Lind, 1980) and its 90% confidence interval, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). Acceptable model fit was determined according to the criteria set forth by Hu and Bentler (1999): RMSEA ($\leq .06$, 90% CI $\leq .06$), SRMR ($\leq .08$), CFI ($\geq .95$), and TLI ($\geq .95$) (also see Brown, 2006 and Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Factor loadings as close to 1.0 were sought, since high item loadings on a factor signify measurement accuracy. The scale of the factors was determined with unit-loading identification (ULI). In the higher-order model, all four factors composing the respective scales were specified to load onto a second-order factor. Tests of measurement invariance were conducted using the convenience syntax in M*plus*. Sass's (2011) approach to assessing evidence of invariance when using the WLSMV estimator was employed. Thus,

evaluations of model fit in invariance testing were based on (a) statistical significance of the $\Delta\chi^2$ (keeping in mind this test statistic's limitations due to sensitivity to sample size and model complexity), (b) change in approximate fit statistics (i.e., ΔCFI, ΔRMSEA, and ΔSRMR), and (c) magnitude of difference between the parameter estimates. Differences in CFI values between models that are smaller than or equal to -.01 denote that it is inappropriate to reject the null hypothesis of invariance (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

# CHAPTER 4

## Results

### Structural Validity

**Preliminary Data Screening.** Before performing structural equation modeling analyses, all data were screened for missing data, multicollinearity, skewness, and outliers. Missing data were estimated utilizing M*plus* software version 7.3 using the weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). The distributional aspects of the items included in the MISS and the MCSS were examined for normality utilizing histograms, normal probability plots, and detrended normal probability plots. Item correlations were examined for possible multicollinearity. On the MCSS, items' correlation coefficients ranged from .40 to .70, with the highest coefficients clustering on the hypothesized factors, suggesting that these items likely measure the same construct. On the MISS, items' correlation coefficients ranged from .30 to .60, with the highest coefficients clustering on the hypothesized factors, suggesting that these items likely measure the same construct. On the MCSS, the item mean was 3.6 (*SD* = .54) and the scale mean was 43.7 (*SD* = 6.4), indicating that on average students mostly agreed or completely agreed with the items, with responses ranging from 1 to 4. On the 12-item MISS, the item mean was 1.2 (*SD* = .39) and the scale mean was 14.1 (*SD* = 4.7) indicating that on average students mostly disagreed or completely disagreed with the items, with responses ranging from 1 to 4. Both scales exhibited unimodal distributions, with items on the MCSS exhibiting negative skew (i.e., items clustering on larger values) and items on the MISS exhibiting positive skew (i.e., items clustering on smaller values), suggesting that ceiling effects may be present for both scales. It is likely that these are examples of naturally skewed distributions of variables that

are representative of the larger population given that individuals tend to self-report prosocial behavior and attitudes. Since the robust weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator is robust to non-normality and floor or ceiling effects the items were retained (Brown, 2006; Flora & Curran, 2004). The MCSS demonstrated strong overall internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .95) and the subscales of the MCSS did as well; the same was true for the MISS (Cronbach's alpha = .92). Bivariate correlations conducted among the SMAQ scales (MISS and MCSS) and the concurrent validity scales – the BPRS Defender and Bully subscales and the Moral Disengagement Scale – indicated weak to moderate statistically significant associations in the expected directions, with the exception of the positive correlation between the Bullying Scale and the Defender Scale (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Intercorrelations Among the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire Scales and the Concurrent Validity Scales*

| | Correlation (*r*) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scale | MISS | MCSS | BS | DS | MDS |
| 1. MISS | 1 | | | | |
| 2. MCSS | −.37** | 1 | | | |
| 3. BS | .52** | −.29** | 1 | | |
| 4. DS | .06 | .13** | .22** | 1 | |
| 5. MDS | .61** | −.40** | .35** | .05 | 1 |

Note. ** = Correlation is significant at the $p < .01$ level. MISS = Moral Incongruence with School Scale; MCSS = Moral Congruence with School Scale; BS = Bullying Scale of the Bully Participant Role Survey; DS = Defender Scale of the Bully Participant Role Survey; Moral Disengagement Scale.

**Bivariate Correlations.** Bivariate correlations between items included in the over-inclusive versions of each of the scales indicated that the items included in both the MISS and the MCSS possessed strong to very strong positive relationships with one another within each respective scale; that is items in the MISS were positively correlated with one another

and items in the MCSS were positively correlated with one another. These results suggested that the items included in each of the scales were related and potentially factorable. Examination of the results of the correlational analyses revealed clusters of highly correlated items in each of the scales that were consistent with each of the scales' underlying theory. These highly correlated clusters of items were interpreted as potential factors. Consequently, the items demonstrating the strongest within-cluster relationship were selected as indicators of their respective factors for use in the subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis.** For CFA Model 1, a fully correlated eight-factor latent structure for the SMAQ was tested utilizing data from the entire sample using M*plus* software version 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). The model test the fit of the theoretically-based factor structure of constructs assessed by the initial 32-item SMAQ, with 16 items per scale and four items per subscale (MISS: cognitive restructuration at school, minimizing own agency at school, disregarding/distorting negative impact of actions at school, blaming/dehumanizing the victim at school; MCSS: school justice, school caring, school rules, school moral identity). Results from this model indicated an adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 548.34$, $df = 436$, $p < .001$; CFI = .995, TLI = .995, RMSEA [90% CI] = .023 [.016, .028]. Consistent with expectations, all items demonstrated robust factor loadings for each hypothesized latent construct ($\lambda$ range = .82 – .98, $p < .001$) and strong interfactor associations in the expected direction. MCSS factors exhibited strong positive relations ($\varphi$ range = .83 – .90, $p < .001$), MISS factors exhibited strong positive relations ($\varphi$ range = .92 – .95, $p < .001$), and MCSS factors exhibited moderate-to-strong negative relations with MISS factors ($\varphi$ range = -.46 to -.66, $p < .001$).

Given that the SMAQ was designed to be a brief measure utilized in schools and because all items exhibited high loadings on their respective factors, following the CFA the number of items in the SMAQ was further trimmed to increase its utility for its designed purpose as a measure to be used for research and practice in schools. Taking into consideration item loadings, face validity, and construct representativeness, the SMAQ was reduced to 12 items per scale (i.e., MISS and MASS), with three items representing each of the four subscales constitutive of the scales, for a total of 24 items (see Table 5). Thus, this revised and reduced 24-item SMAQ was tested in CFA Model 2.

Table 5

*Standardized Factor Loadings for the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire*

| *Items, Response Format, and Scales* | Loadings |
|---|---|
| Prompt: For each of the following statements, select the one choice that best describes you. | |
| Response: 1 = *completely disagree* 2 = *mostly disagree* 3 = *mostly agree* 4 = *completely agree* | |
| **Moral Incongruence with School** | |
| ***Cognitive Restructuration at School Scale*** | |
| 1. Sometimes it's okay to bully other people at school. | .94 |
| 2. Sometimes other students need to be beat up at school. | .93 |
| 3. Some students deserve to be called bad words. | .85 |
| ***Minimizing Own Agency at School Scale*** | |
| 4. It's okay to get in a fight at school if another student provokes you/makes you mad. | .91 |
| 5. Sometimes you have to hurt another student if you have a problem with them. | .89 |
| 6. It's okay to cheat on tests or schoolwork if it's the only way to get a good grade. | .91 |
| ***Disregarding/Distorting Negative Impact of Actions at School Scale*** | |
| 7. Cheating a little bit on tests and schoolwork isn't really wrong. | .85 |
| 8. Tagging or vandalizing a school building isn't really a problem since the school will just paint over it. | .87 |
| 9. Being a little high or drunk at school doesn't get in the way of doing well in school. | .86 |
| ***Blaming/Dehumanizing the Victim at School Scale*** | |
| 10. Some kids get bullied because they deserve it. | .95 |
| 11. It's okay to pick on losers. | .90 |
| 12. If a classmate tells on you, it's okay to take revenge on them. | .90 |
| **Moral Congruence with School** | |
| ***School Justice Scale*** | |
| 13. School goes best when students are honest. | .89 |
| 14. It's wrong for students to take things that belong to other people because stealing is unfair. | .90 |
| 15. When working in groups, it's important for students to respect other points of view. | .95 |
| ***School Caring Scale*** | |
| 16. It's important for students to help other students, even if it's hard. | .89 |
| 17. I feel bad when someone at school gets their feelings hurt. | .86 |
| 18. I am happy when my classmates are successful. | .87 |
| ***School Rules Scale*** | |
| 19. It is important for students to follow the rules at school because rules provide order to school life. | .95 |
| 20. Students should follow school rules even if they probably won't get caught breaking them. | .94 |
| 21. There are good reasons for following the school rules. | .93 |
| ***School Moral Identity*** | |
| 22. It would make me feel good to be known as a caring, fair, and honest student. | .97 |
| 23. Being caring, fair, and honest is an important part of who I am. | .96 |
| 24. My behavior at school shows others that I am caring, fair, and honest. | .89 |

*Note.* All values were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

As previously noted, the literature on scale development recommends that higher-order factors be extracted when first-order factors are highly correlated, as was found in Model 1, because factor overlap suggests further generalizability is possible. Hence, CFA Model 2 extended Model 1 to test a second-order latent factor model in which the four first-order latent factors structuring the MISS and the four first-order latent factors structuring the MCSS were loaded onto two general second-order latent constructs (i.e., moral incongruence with school; moral congruence with school). Findings from Model 2 also yielded adequate data-model fit, $\chi^2 = 340.70$, $df = 243$, $p < .001$; CFI = .996, TLI = .995, RMSEA [90% CI] = .026 [.019, .033]. All items exhibited robust factor loadings for each latent construct ($\lambda$ range = .85 – .97, $p < .001$) and, consistent with expectations, the two general second-order latent constructs (i.e., MISS and MCSS) exhibited a strong negative relation (-.60, $p < .001$). In sum, the results denoted that both Model 1 and Model 2 fit the data well. Model 2 was selected as the measurement structure for the SMAQ due to its superior parsimony and because the four moral incongruence with school and the four moral congruence with school domains loaded significantly onto their respective second-order factors (see Figure 1). Consequently, the second-order factor model was selected for use in subsequent analyses; however, in the multigroup invariance analyses, the scales were analyzed separately to independently demonstrate measurement invariance for both the MISS and the MCSS in the event the scales are used separately.

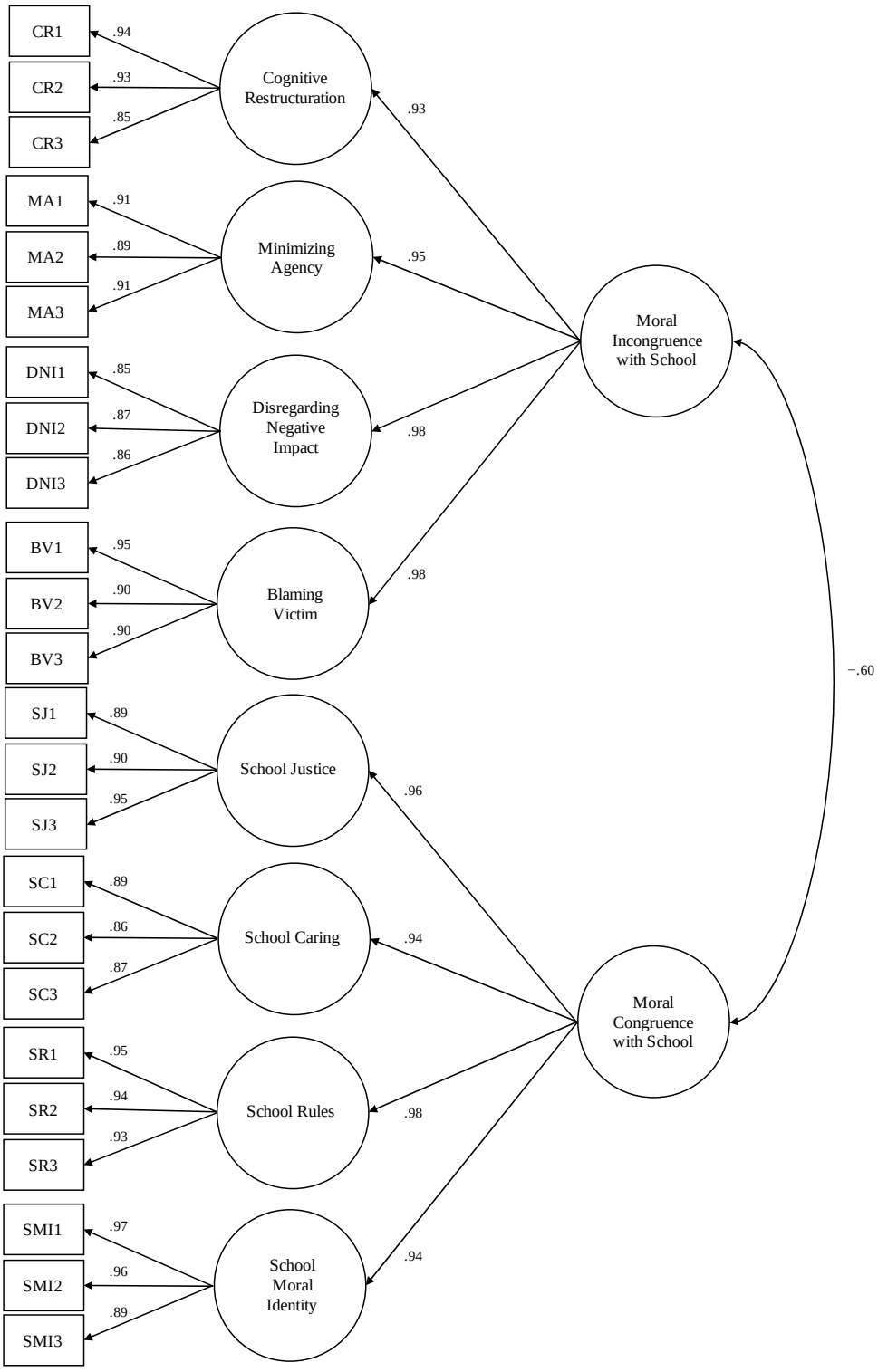


*Figure 1*. Preferred second-order CFA measurement model for the SMAQ. All standardized factor loadings were significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Given that there may be interest in using one of the scales (i.e., MISS or MCSS) without the other, it should be noted that the second-order latent factor models also independently yielded adequate data-model fit (MISS: $\chi^2$ = 155.80, *df* = 50, *p* < .001; CFI = .979, TLI = .973, RMSEA [90% CI] = .060 [.050, .071]; MCSS: $\chi^2$ = 145.30, *df* = 50, *p* < .001; CFI = .994, TLI = .993, RMSEA [90% CI] = .059 [.048, .070]). See Figure 2 and Figure 3.

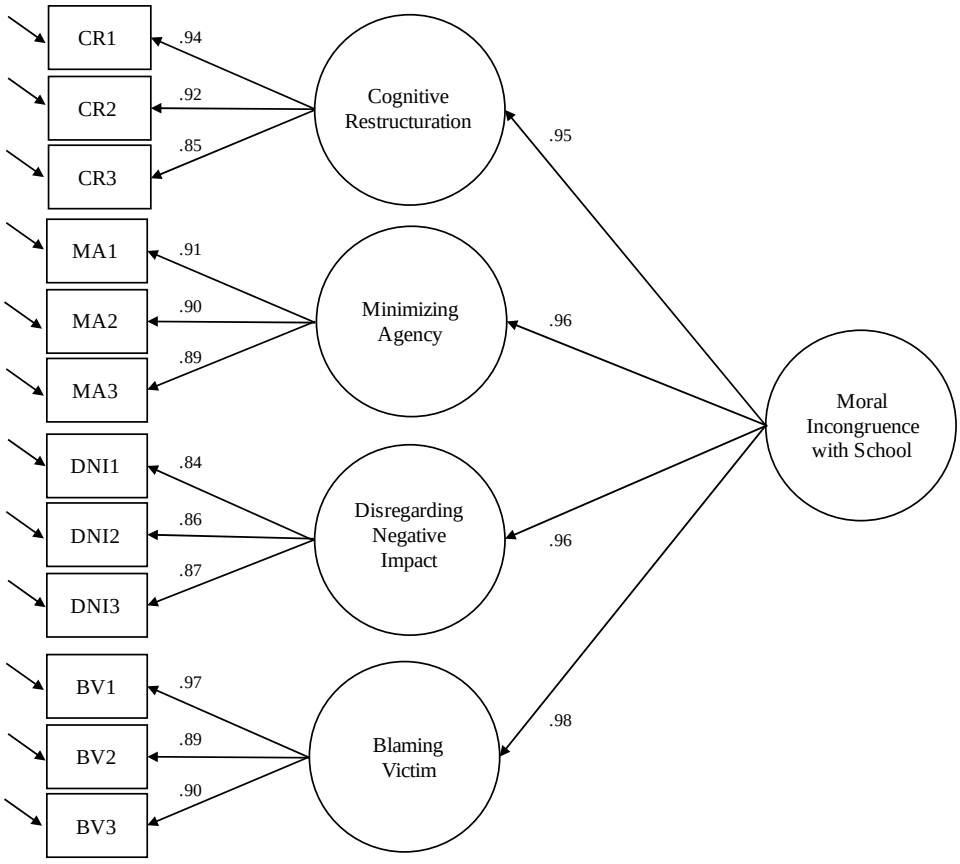


*Figure 2*. Second-order CFA measurement model for the MISS. All standardized factor loadings were significant at the *p* < .001 level.

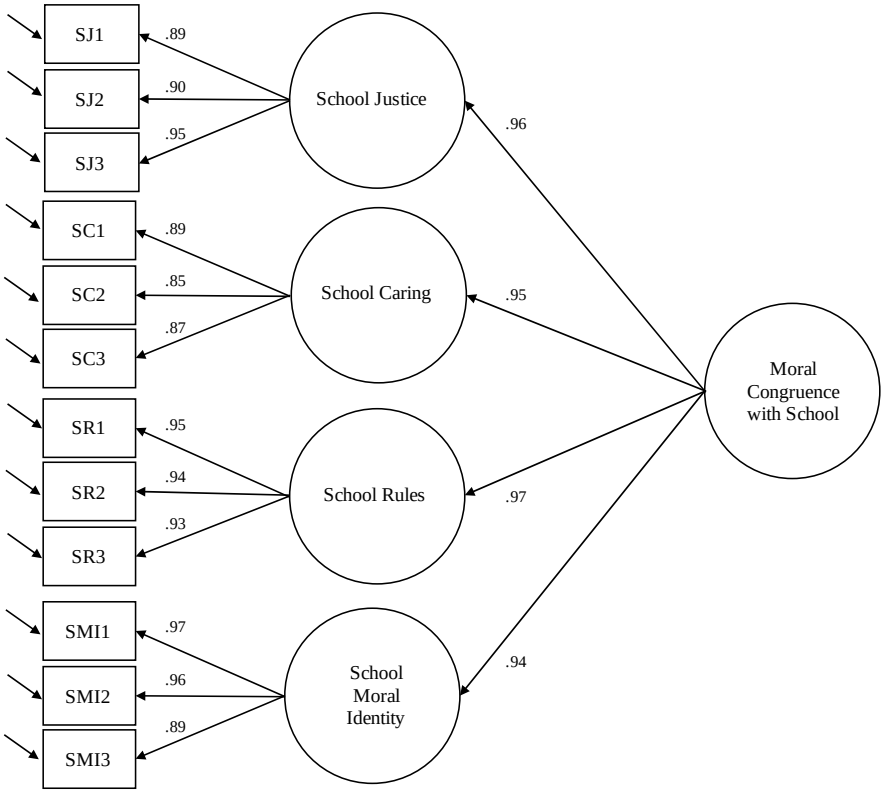


*Figure 3*. Second-order CFA measurement model for the MCSS. All standardized factor loadings were significant at the $p < .001$ level.

**Multi-group Invariance Testing.** Measurement invariance testing of the SMAQ's factor model, was performed in three stages employing a series of multigroup CFA testing configural, metric, and scalar invariance. The MISS and the MCSS were examined for both gender groups separately. For both the MISS and the MCSS, results suggested adequate data-model fit for all levels of invariance for both gender groups (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Multiple Group Measurement Invariance Testing of the MISS Across Gender

| | $x^2$ | *df* | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ | CFI | ΔCFI | RMSEA (90% CI) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single Group Solutions | | | | | | | |
| Baseline Model/Overall Sample | 164.546 | 48 | | | .977 | | .065 [.054, .076] |
| Females ($n$ = 318) | 102.524 | 48 | | | .981 | | .060 [.044, .076] |
| Males ($n$ = 264 ) | 91.919 | 48 | | | .984 | | .059 [.040, .077] |
| Measurement Invariance | | | | | | | |
| Configural | 194.979 | 96 | 30.433 | 48 | .982 | .005 | .060 [.047, .071] |
| Metric | 197.201 | 104 | 2.222 | 8 | .983 | .001 | .055 [.044, .067] |
| Scalar | 210.139 | 124 | 12.938 | 20 | .985 | .002 | .049 [.037, .060] |

Note: CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval.

a. ΔCFI < -.01 signals lack of invariance.

b. Significant chi-square signals lack of invariance.

*$p$ < .05 **$p$ < .01 ***$p$ < .001

Table 7

Multiple Group Measurement Invariance Testing of the MCSS Across Gender

| | $x^2$ | *df* | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ | CFI | ΔCFI | RMSEA (90% CI) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single Group Solutions | | | | | | | |
| Baseline Model/Overall Sample | 93.617 | 48 | | | .997 | | .042 [.029, .054] |
| Females ($n$ = 303) | 64.474 | 48 | | | .998 | | .034 [.000, .053] |
| Males ($n$ = 248) | 104.654 | 48 | | | .994 | | .069 [.051, .087] |
| Measurement Invariance | | | | | | | |
| Configural | 170.392 | 96 | 76.775 | 48 | .996 | -.001 | .053 [.040, .066] |
| Metric | 170.213 | 104 | −0.179 | 8 | .997 | .001 | .048 [.035, .061] |
| Scalar | 197.747 | 124 | 27.534 | 20 | .996 | -.001 | .046 [.034, .058] |

Note: CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval.

a. ΔCFI < -.01 signals lack of invariance.

b. Significant chi-square signals lack of invariance.

*$p$ < .05 **$p$ < .01 ***$p$ < .001

**Path Model Testing.** Results from a latent variable path analysis (LVPA) utilizing the SMAQ's second-order factors of moral incongruence with school and moral congruence with school to predict bullying behavior, defending behavior, and the original Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura et al., 1996) yielded an adequate data-model fit, $\chi^2$ = 3051.911, *df* = 2396, $p$ < .001, CFI = .980, TLI = .980, RMSEA = [90% CI] = .021 [.019,

.023]). As expected, the analysis revealed a significant moderate-to-strong positive relation between moral incongruence with school and both bullying behavior and moral disengagement. Moreover, moral congruence with school exhibited a significant moderate positive relation with defending behavior. Consistent with the results of the bivariate correlations between the concurrent validity scales reported above, the bullying factor and the defending factor demonstrated a weak but significant positive relation in the structural equation model (SEM). A baseline model demonstrated that moral disengagement possessed a significant positive relation to bullying behavior; however, when included in the LVPA model with moral incongruence with school, moral disengagement's relation with bullying behavior was non-significant. The robust negative standardized path coefficient (-.602) between the second-order factors (i.e., MISS and MCSS) and the moderate-to-strong positive standardized path coefficients with outcome variables (i.e., bullying and defending behavior and moral disengagement) in the hypothesized directions suggest that the MISS and the MCSS possess good discriminant validity. Figure 4 provides a complete presentation of the latent variable path model.

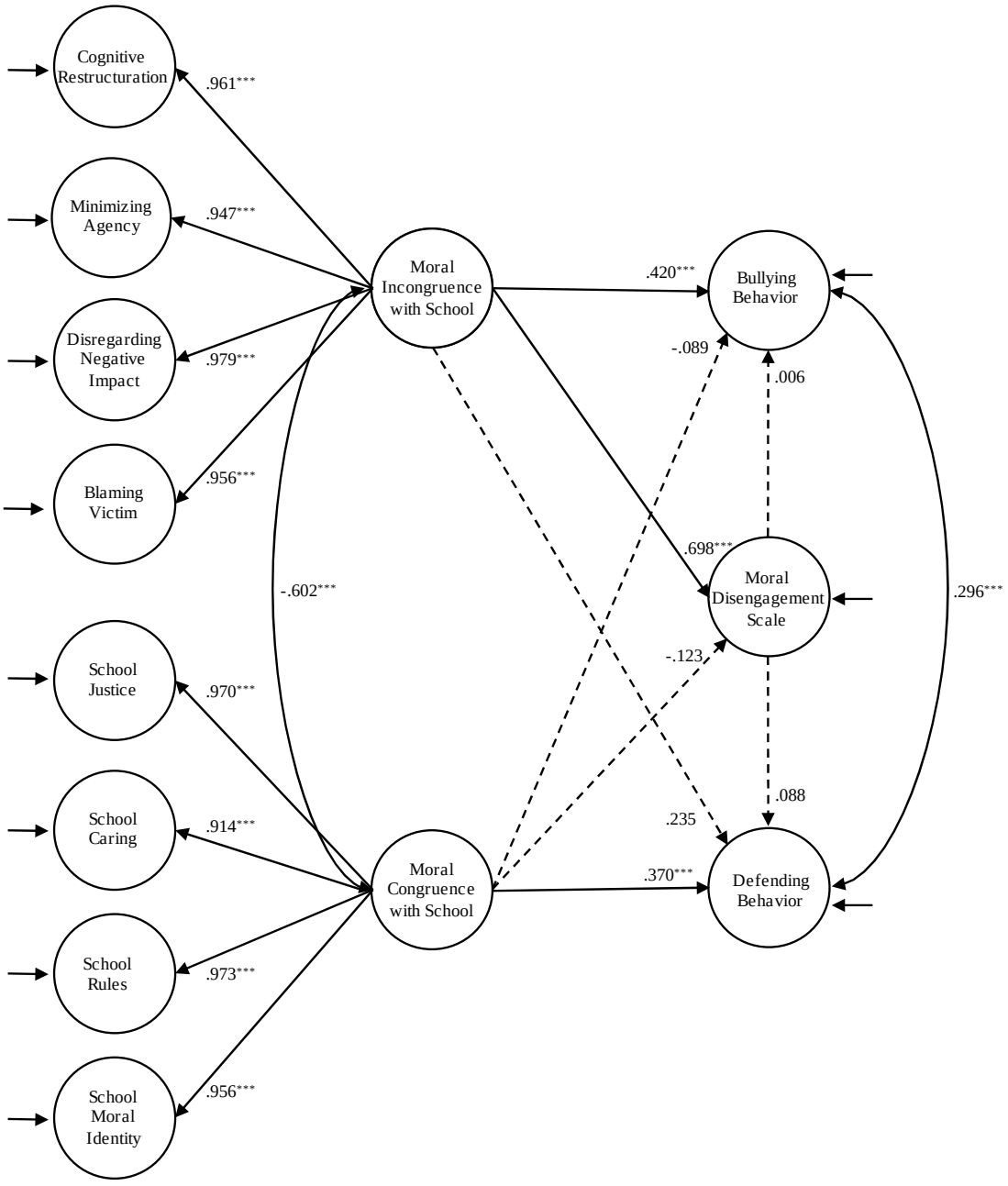


*Figure 4.* Latent variable path model (LVPA) of Moral Incongruence with School and Moral Congruence with School as predictors of Bullying Behavior, Defending Behavior, and Moral Disengagement. *** = Factor loading ($\lambda$) or standardized path coefficient ($\beta$) significant at the $p < .001$ level. Dashed lines denote nonsignificant paths.

# CHAPTER 5

## Discussion

### Overview of the Study and Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of the present study was to develop and establish preliminary evidence of validity of a brief self-report instrument for assessing adolescents' adaptability to school moral norms – the Student Moral Adaptation Questionnaire. The SMAQ was primarily developed to serve as a measure of students' personal morality and the degree to which that personal morality is congruent or incongruent with the norms and rules of the school setting. A secondary purpose was to provide researchers interested in better understanding students' justifications for violating – as well as adhering to – common moral norms and rules at school with a school-specific alternative to both the moral disengagement scale (in a variety of forms) and its underlying conceptual framework. Consequently, one of this study's initial tasks was to critically assess the theory of moral disengagement and its measurement. This investigation uncovered heretofore undocumented problems related to the adaptation of the most widely used version of the moral disengagement scale from Italian to English coupled with issues in both the scale's underlying theory and its operationalization in the measure. As a result, an additional sub-purpose of this study was to re-translate and adapt the moral disengagement scale for use with English-speaking adolescents in the United States.

The central purpose of this study was to construct an empirically- and socially-valid assessment of students' moral adaptability to school. With this aim in mind, the study proceeded according to Clark and Watson's (1995) principles for scale development. To establish the measure's substantive validity, the first step was to conceptualize and develop a bi-dimensional model of students' adaptation to the moral norms and rules at school; the

model aimed to tap students' beliefs, attitudes, and justifications for behavior that is both *incongruent* and *congruent* with the school context. This involved consulting the research literature to inform the theoretical development of the meta-construct moral adaptability to school, its sub-constructs moral incongruence with school and moral congruence with school, and several latent factors theoretically structuring these sub-constructs. Building on this research-based theorization of the meta-construct and its sub-constructs, the next step was to create scales and items to operationalize the constructs, with the aim of substantiating the SMAQ's substantive validity. The product of this preliminary stage in the measurement construction process was an inchoate measure, over-inclusive in both scales and items. The process resulted in a pilot version of the SMAQ composed of two scales, the Moral Incongruence with School Scale and the Moral Congruence with School Scale. The pilot version of the MISS was composed of four hypothesized subscales—cognitive restructuration at school, minimizing own agency at school, disregarding/distorting negative impact of actions at school, and blaming/dehumanizing the victim at school—and a total of 47 items. The pilot version of the MCSS was composed of 14 subscales—moral emotions at school, caring for others at school, altruism at school, perspective-taking at school, problem solving at school, empathy at school, moral judgment at school, working with others at school, positive peer relationships at school, trustworthiness and integrity at school, following school rules, respect for and relationships with adults at school, moral motivation and identity at school, and self-control at school—organized around four broad constructs—moral sensitivity at school, moral judgment at school, moral motivation at school, and moral self-control at school—and a total of 75 items. The pilot measure was administered to a target sample of adolescents in seventh and eighth grade, and then empirically examined.

Bivariate correlations revealed clusters of items corresponding to the hypothesized subscales for the MISS and clusters of items corresponding to three of the broad constructs structuring the MCSS along with a cluster of highly correlated items suggesting an emergent construct related to students' understanding of school rules. Based on these findings, a 32-item pilot version of the SMAQ was constructed with two scales, the MISS and the MCSS; each scale was composed of four subscales with four items per subscale (MISS: cognitive restructuration at school, minimizing own agency at school, disregarding/distorting negative impact of actions at school, blaming/dehumanizing the victim at school; MCSS: school justice, school caring, school rules, school moral identity).

In order to establish the measure's structural validity, the second step of this study focused on investigating the preliminary psychometric properties of the pilot version of the SMAQ. Findings from the first-stage CFA, conducted with the 32-item pilot version of the SMAQ, confirmed that the items included in the four subscales structuring the MISS and the four subscales structuring the MCSS exhibited robust loadings on their factors and that the model demonstrated excellent model fit. Moreover, consistent with expectations, results indicated moderate-to-strong inter-factor correlations in the expected direction; MCSS factors were positively correlated, MISS factors were positively correlated, and MCSS factors were negatively correlated with MISS factors. Since all items exhibited high loadings on their respective factors, at this stage additional items were omitted from each of the eight subscales to make the measure more feasible for use in schools, resulting in a shortened 24-item version of the SMAQ.

Employing the pared down version of the SMAQ, findings from the second-stage CFA confirmed the hypothesized latent structure of the SMAQ as consisting of two

negatively correlated latent constructs—moral incongruence with school and moral congruence with school—each structured by four subscales demonstrating high loadings on their respective domains with very good model fit. Based on these results, this model of student moral adaptability was employed in a subsequent latent variable path analysis. In regard to the second-order factor moral incongruence with school, this analysis found a moderate positive association between moral incongruence with school and bullying behavior, a strong positive association between moral incongruence with school and moral disengagement, and a strong negative association between moral incongruence with school and moral congruence with school, which demonstrated a moderate positive relation with defending behavior. Moreover, findings indicated that, although a baseline model demonstrated that moral disengagement possessed a significant positive relation to bullying behavior, when moral disengagement was included in the path modeling analysis with moral incongruence with school, moral disengagement's relation with bullying behavior became non-significant. The path analysis also confirmed that the second-order factors (i.e., MISS and MCSS) possess moderate-to-strong associations in the hypothesized directions with the concurrent validity measures, suggesting that the MISS and the MCSS possess good convergent and divergent external validity and, importantly, are likely predictive of self-reported bullying and defending behavior. Indeed, the evidence of a relationship found between students' moral adaptability to school and their self-reported engagement in bullying or defending behavior is worthy of further investigation and is consistent with research documenting that the way that students reason about bullying and defending—including their propensity to morally disengage (Caravita, Gini, & Pozzoli, 2012; Gini, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2014), their reliance on personal rather than universal moral schemes to rationalize otherwise

unacceptable behaviors (Robson & Witenberg, 2013), and their basic moral sensitivity (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013)—appears to be linked to their likelihood to engage in bullying behavior. In addition, results of multigroup measurement invariance analyses of both the MISS and the MCSS indicated that both scales demonstrated full factorial invariance for both genders. These findings give credence to the SMAQ's usefulness as a valid measure of both male and female students' moral adaptability to school.

Collectively, the results of these analyses provide preliminary support for the SMAQ as a structurally valid measure of students' moral adaptability to school and demonstrate that the SMAQ's scales and the latent constructs they denote are psychometrically sound for both genders and converge or diverge in meaningful and consistent ways with measures of related constructs (i.e., self-reported bullying and defending behavior). Thus, the confluence of findings provide support for the study's central hypothesis that the SMAQ possesses substantive, structural, and external validity as evidenced by a statistically strong multi-dimensional latent structure. Taken together, this initial validity evidence suggests that the SMAQ warrants further research and is a potentially promising measure of adolescent students' personal moralities in relation to common school norms and rules for use in schools as an outcome measure or progress monitoring tool.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The results reported above are promising and contribute valuable preliminary psychometric information on the SMAQ; however, these findings should be considered in view of the present study's methodological limitations. First, since the sample was one of convenience and composed entirely of students from Grades 7 and 8 attending a single school, the degree to which the findings are generalizable to students in other areas of the

United States or countries is currently undetermined. Consequently, prudence dictates that these findings are likely only generalizable to schools with demographically similar populations. It is worth mentioning, however, that the sample is fairly similar to the broader student population in California in 2015-2016 (i.e., 54% Latinx or Hispanic, 24% White, 9% Asian, 6% African American, 3% Multiracial, and 1% Native American or Alaskan Native; 59% eligible to receive free or reduced price school meals). Thus, more research is needed to examine the SMAQ and its underlying theoretical constructs with diverse samples nationally and internationally. This effort is currently underway; the SMAQ is being utilized in a study in Japan and researchers in countries are interested in exploring its use with students. Research is encouraged that further explores the SMAQ's cross-cultural utility as well as additional investigations of measurement invariance across gender, ethnicity, and location. In addition, although there is research that suggests self-report surveys are reliable and fairly valid means of measuring prevalence and incidents of human behavior (Aebi, 2009; Junger-Tas & Haen Marshall, 1999; Kivivuori, 2007, 2011; Krohn, Thornberry, Gibson, Baldwin, 2010), the skewed nature of the data raises the possibility that it may have been impacted by the demand characteristics of the school environment and the nature of the SMAQ, social desirability effects (e.g., participants reporting more prosocial or school-congruent beliefs and attitudes than they actually hold), and other forms of response bias. Thus, to attend to these issues it is recommended that future studies employ other approaches to data collection – such as having teachers and peers complete informant report measures, conducting observations of school behavior, individual interviews, and focus groups, and comparing self-report data to performance-based measures (e.g., disciplinary records, report card comments) – to triangulate the findings and enhance understanding of the theoretical

constructs. This would also garner additional helpful information on the degree to which students reporting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are congruent or incongruent with the school context are in reality exhibiting behavior that is consistent with their reports; research has identified several factors contributing to the inconsistency that can exist between expressed attitudes and observed behavior, such as individuals' attitude strength, self-awareness, attitude specificity, and mischievous responding (e.g., Echabe & Garate, 1994; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Furlong et al., 2016; Liberman & Chaiken, 1996; Teger, 1970). Furthermore, although the SMAQ's interrelations with the concurrent validity measures conformed to the a priori theory structuring the SMAQ (i.e., the direction and significance of the relation between the MISS and MCSS and bullying and defending behavior and moral disengagement), given the present study's cross-sectional research design, causality should not be inferred. Future studies should look at the SMAQ's relationship with other important constructs that are likely related to students' moral congruence with the school setting, such as exposure to potentially traumatic events and toxic stress, the student-teacher relationship, school climate and culture, and subjective well-being and coping ability.

Finally, while the results of the present study provide evidence of the SMAQ's construct validity, this should not be taken as proof that this theoretical model is the best model. As a theoretically driven analytic procedure, confirmatory factor analysis possesses the ability to falsify proposed theoretical models according to how adequately the model fits the observed data, however there remains the possibility that an equally good or better, yet untested model exists; though, given how well the current data fit the proposed model, it would be challenging to specify a model with much better fit. In addition, further investigations into the construct of student moral adaptability utilizing other, yet to be

developed, measurement methods, especially those that would provide a more in vivo experience of the school context, are certainly warranted. For instance, one can imagine the development of assessment instruments utilizing film (e.g., the Movie for the Assessment of Social Cognition; Dziobek et al., 2006) and video game (e.g., Zoo U; Craig, DeRosier, & Watanabe, 2015; www.ZooUgame.com) technology that provide students with a more contextualized, interactive, and realistic experience of decision making and behavior within the moral and social convention domains at school.

**Implications for Theory and Practice**

In light of its findings, this study holds several implications for the theory and practice of school psychology. In terms of theory, one of the present study's key purposes was to offer researchers in the field of school psychology and education an alternative to the theory of moral disengagement to make sense of the underlying processes driving students' inappropriate and harmful behavior at school. Grounded in Ribeaud and Eisner's (2010) synthesis of moral disengagement, neutralization techniques, and cognitive distortions, the MISS assesses the four key mechanisms of moral neutralization at school. *Cognitive restructuring* reframes school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct as socially acceptable behavior. *Minimizing own agency* displaces or diffuses responsibility for school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct on to social pressures from others. *Disregarding/distorting negative impact* denies or minimizes injury, harm, or the deleterious impact of school rule violations, antisocial behavior, and harmful conduct. *Blaming/dehumanizing the victim* involves a biased perception of the victim that constructs them as deserving of harm because they lack human qualities (e.g., feelings, hopes, concerns) or their provocations of the aggressor make the injurious conduct inevitable. Ascribing moral

disengagement to *all* individuals reporting high aggressive or anti-social responses on self-report moral disengagement scales is overly simplistic. Mechanisms of moral disengagement versus divergent social norms or personal morality must be disentangled. Responses may reflect underlying aggressive or antisocial group norms, attitudes, and behavior that may be adaptive for students in other contexts – not necessarily the cognitive dissonance associated with moral disengagement. Behavior is learned both directly and indirectly through the observation of others. When individuals associate positive outcomes with an observed behavior, be it prosocial and caring or antisocial and aggressive, they are more likely to emulate that behavior (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). Therefore, students' moral engagement needs to be considered within context, including the school, family, peer group, and community in which the student is embedded.

The present study also sought to conceptualize student adaptability to school as bi-dimensional, that is as composed of both attitudes and beliefs that are incongruent with school norms and rules as well as, importantly, attitudes and beliefs that are congruent with school norms. Thus, the model of student moral adaptability explored and operationalized in this study proposes that we study not only those personal moralities and moral justifications undergirding harmful and inappropriate behavior but also those beliefs and attitudes that promote caring, a sense of justice, and an appreciation for the pragmatic reasons underlying most rules at school.

The SMAQ fills a critical lacuna in the assessment of school climate and social and emotional learning (SEL) and holds important implications for theory and practice. The specificity matching principle (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007) holds that global measures should not be utilized to assess specific outcomes; rather the specificity of

predictors and criteria should be matched. These school-specific scales measuring students' (1) Moral Incongruence with School (MISS) and (2) Moral Congruence with School (MCSS) in the Student Moral Attitude Questionnaire (SMAQ) can be used as an alternative to global moral disengagement scales. The SMAQ will enhance researchers', schools', and teachers' understanding of students' personal moralities (i.e., their personal rules for right and wrong), refine our ability to identify and target key areas of socio-emotional and moral development, and improve our ability to measure the effectiveness of related interventions. In addition, the SMAQ's operationalization and application of Situational Action Theory (SAT) to the school context makes a novel and important contribution to our theoretical understanding of how students' personal moral rules about what is right and wrong to do guide actions that may be more or less compatible with the rules and norms of the school setting. It is hoped that this will improve our understanding and appreciation for the plurality of moralities held by students in our schools and enhance our ability to design interventions addressing personal moralities and behaviors that are incompatible with the school context. Using the SMAQ holds potential for informing data-based decision making regarding social skills education, deterrence, school-wide positive behavior supports, school climate improvement efforts, and monitoring a school's progress toward creating a safe and supportive school in compliance with education code and school safety plans.

The theoretical perspective undergirding the SMAQ provides guidance on how schools can facilitate students' congruence with the moral and social norms of the school context. Empathy and moral engagement can be fostered gradually and systematically by weaving social-emotional learning programming into school curriculums (e.g., Bowles, et al., 2017; Domitrovich, Durlak, Goren, & Weissberg, 2013; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014) and

through universal, classroom-based interventions (e.g., *Second Step;* Elias & Arnold, 2006; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Importantly, programming grounded in a developmentalist approach to social, emotional, and ethical development, such as social-cognitive domain theory (Nucci, 2009; Turiel, 2002, 2006) is recommended (on the differences between the developmentalist and traditionalist approaches see Haddock, 2010). A developmentalist approach to moral education emphasizes moral reasoning and the development of empathy and teaches emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills (Arsenio, 2002; Nucci, 2001, 2008, 2009; Turiel, 1983, 1989, 2002). From the developmentalist perspective, authentic moral education means fostering the development of the moral conceptions of fairness, human welfare, and rights coupled with an ability to critically reflect on the norms and mores of society (Turiel, 2002). It aims to employ practices that will cultivate students' empathy for others, capacity to resist unjust conventions, and motivation to contribute to the ethicality of our social institutions.

A developmentalist approach encourages classroom teachers to utilize community-based norm setting activities for classroom management and the creation of positive classroom climate (Nucci, 2009; Watson, 2003). For example, teachers and students could work together in class meetings to construct moral norms based on "how we want our class to be" (Child Development Project, 1996; Watson, 2003). In class meetings, children would be given opportunities to present their preferences based on feelings and past experiences (e.g., "We shouldn't hit one another because it hurts.") in an effort to set community-based norms and create a social contract that all can abide by. In the case of behaviors related to the moral domain, Nucci advises teachers to refer to the moral basis of the norm, rather than the social basis in order to avoid reducing moral issues to social consensus or convention. In this

way, students' moral reasoning skills are strengthened and empathy is increased by enabling them to grasp the intrinsic effects of harmful or unjust acts and form moral commitments based on moral judgment, perspective-taking, and care for others rather than mere social pressure or social convention (Noddings, 2002; Nucci, 2009; Turiel, 2002). Children raised and educated in warm, caring, predictable, and fair environments are much more likely to perceive the social world as grounded in goodwill and caring, predisposing them to beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that foster caring and just schools and societies (Arsenio & Gold, 2006; Arsenio & Lover, 1995; Watson, 2003).

In regard to preventing and responding to bullying and victimizing behaviors, schools are encouraged to focus on bullying prevention efforts that help increase skills related to moral reasoning and engagement within a contextual framework. Teaching students how to consider multiple perspectives in a situation and evaluate the implications of their actions, creates a framework for moral considerations in problem solving. Teachers are encouraged to foster classroom community, collaborate with students on the construction of classroom rules and norms, and provide students with opportunities to reflect on the sources of those school values and rules (Nucci, 2009; Watson, 2003). Teachers and school staff are encouraged to adopt a multifaceted framework that considers individual, peer, school, and community contributions to the bullying process since moral deliberation and disengagement occur at the individual level and are profoundly influenced by situational factors, such as interactions with peers and the overall school climate (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, 2010; Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2009; Kasen, Berenson, Cohen, & Johnson, 2004).

While facilitating students' authentic ethical development is of undoubted importance, the situationist, ecological-developmental theoretical argument that undergirds

the concept of student moral adaptability urges the field of school psychology to be cautious about placing a disproportionate emphasis on individual-level factors, which inevitably generates individual-level solutions, in light of the fact that individual behavior tends to conform to the behavioral norm for particular situations (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). When the source of the problem is conceptualized as stemming from individual students' underdevelopment, the logical response is to provide more or better programming and interventions to teach social skills and foster students' character or social, emotional, and ethical development. However, from the perspective of situationism, which holds that environments and contexts hold more explanatory power than individual factors like character or personality, enhancing students' commitment to care for other students and treat them justly requires at least an equal emphasis on promulgating conditions conducive to the cultivation of such values. As Harman writes, if we seek to enhance human welfare, "it is better to put less emphasis on moral education and building character and more emphasis on trying to arrange social institutions so that human beings are not placed in situations in which they will act badly" (Harman, 2008, p. 11). Returning to the opening of this study, school contexts that promote the just and caring treatment of all members of the school community are essential, and the onus is on the school to appreciate, on the one hand, that its context is but one important context that students are navigating and adapting to and, on the other hand, that the school must actively take steps to create positive school contexts that both create situations that bring out students' best and foster personal moralities congruent with its prosocial norms and conventions. As such, schools are encouraged to focus on facilitating just and caring communities that hold students to authentic moral norms, that is those norms that can be generated from the intrinsic effects of acts (e.g., acts that cause physical or

emotional harm), and take a teaching approach to students' struggling to adapt. Importantly, schools are also encouraged to cultivate greater flexibility around the conventional aspects of school culture, which, in addition to their practical utility, often also reflect dominant culture norms, in an effort to foster closer alignment between the institutional culture of the school and the diverse cultures represented in their student body.

A recent issue at a charter school in Boston with a strict dress code policy that included forbidding students to wear makeup, nail polish, dyed hair, and braided hair extensions provides an illustrative example (Lazar, 2017). When two 15-year-old African American female students, who are twins being raised by White adoptive parents, decided to wear their hair in braids to learn more about black culture, as they explained, they were kicked off sports teams, blocked from attending the prom, and given 18 hours of detention. From the social-cognitive domain perspective, the students' actions appear to have violated this particular school's definition of the social convention domain, but not the broader moral domain; students wearing makeup or their hair in braids surely does not cause other members of the school community physical or emotional anguish, and likely does not interfere with student learning and fostering school community and relationships either. If anything, the harsh dress code the school adopted serves to make the 43 percent of the student body that are students of color feel unwelcomed and discriminated against, as students protesting the dress code made clear. According to social-cognitive domain theory, wearing hair braids would be viewed as outside both societal convention and interpersonal moral considerations, and therefore within the personal domain, or matters of preference and choice (Nucci, 2001). Nevertheless, school administrators defended the policy along both moral and conventional lines of argument, stating the dress code provides, "commonality, structure, and equity to an

ethnically and economically diverse student body while eliminating distractions caused by vast socioeconomic differences and competition over fashion, style, or materialism" (Lazar, 2017). This justification for the policy failed to persuade the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed a discrimination complaint against the school with the state Department of Education, and the state Attorney General, who wrote a letter instructing school officials to immediately discontinue the policy. In a letter to the school, the Civil Rights Division of the state Attorney General's office countered that aspects of the dress code, "are not reasonably tailored to those goals, if they bear any relation at all" (Mettler, 2017). In the end, the school agreed to lift the prohibition against hair braids for the remainder of the school year. It is hoped that this small concession will prompt the school to embark on a more comprehensive reformation of its policies and create a truly ethical school climate that is welcoming and responsive to its diverse student body as it provides them with a high-quality education. The theoretical framework of student moral adaptability could assist the school in conceptualizing such an effort, and the SMAQ could be utilized to better understand the degree to which its students are adapting to and engaged with the moral and social norms of the school context.

**Conclusion**

This study provides preliminary psychometric evidence of the validity of a new school-specific, instrument designed to assess students' moral adaptability to the school context – the SMAQ. Its grounding in the ecological developmental paradigm offers researchers and practitioners in school psychology and education a tool for assessing students' moral engagement in school that is better aligned with these fields' theoretical orientations than is currently available. Importantly, the SMAQ's theoretical base integrates the situationist perspective, as represented by school psychology's ecological-developmental

orientation and Situational Action Theory, with social-cognitive domain theory and its bifurcation of social knowledge into the domains of morality and social convention, in a conceptualization of school moral engagement that appreciates the school as a context for adaptation.

The SMAQ's bidimensional assessment of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are both incongruent and congruent with the moral norms and social conventions of the school context is aligned with school psychology's dual emphasis on reducing risk *and* promoting wellness, adaptive behavior, and effective coping. Thus, the measure does not only seek to assess beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors at odds the moral norms and conventions of the school context, but also, with the MCSS, personal moralities that align with the norms and conventions of the school and foster positive school climate, such as students' orientations toward treating others justly and with care, their understanding of the functional utility of school rules, and the integration of such a personal morality into one's sense of identity. Consistent with this theoretical approach, the SMAQ's MISS returns Bandura's theory of moral disengagement to its source in moral neutralization theory, now with items specific to the school context and a re-conceptualized interpretation focused on understanding students' personal moralities in relation to the school context, rather than the degree to which they are employing the psychological mechanisms of moral disengagement.

While this study has provided initial support for the conceptual and psychometric validity of the SMAQ's measurement model and generated preliminary substantive and structural evidence of validity, significantly more research is needed to more firmly establish the construct validity of student moral adaptability, which the SMAQ aims to measure. In particular, it will be important to further examine the measure's cross-cultural utility and

investigate whether it demonstrates invariance across gender, ethnicity, and location with additional samples of students in middle and high school. Thus, though these results are provisional, they are promising and provide preliminary support for the validity of the SMAQ as a brief, bi-dimensional measure of students' moral adaptability to the school context. In closing, it is hoped that the theoretical construct of student moral adaptability articulated in the present study will contribute to the developing body of research on the role schools and educators play in the social, emotional, and ethical development of youth and the creation of positive school climate. This study may prompt scholars in the field of school psychology interested in this line of research to critically consider the degree to which their theoretical orientation and the specific context of assessment are aligned with the theory of moral disengagement and the instruments available to assess it; for researchers that, upon reflection, find the theory and/or measures they are currently employing wanting, it is hoped that the SMAQ will provide them with an alternative more well aligned with their theoretical perspective and, thus, better able to assess and address their research questions. Finally, it is hoped that scholars who take up this invitation will contribute to the further testing and refinement of the SMAQ and its underlying conceptualization of students' moral adaptability to the school context.

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| Scale Translation and Adaptation of the Moral Disengagement Scale – Short Form for Children and Adolescents and Analysis of Psychometric Adequacy | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Research Question** | **Hypothesis** | **Analysis** | **Result** |
| ***Q1:*** *Does the adapted version of the MDS-Short Form demonstrate judgmental evidence of adequate linguistic equivalence with the source versions?* | Yes, the translated version of the MDS-Short Form (English) will demonstrate judgmental evidence of adequate linguistic equivalence. | Item Translation and Adaptation Review Form (Hambleton & Zenisky, 2011; Vijver & Leung, 1997, p. 41) | Supported |
| ***Q2:*** *Does the adapted version of the MDS-Short Form demonstrate empirical evidence of adequate equivalence with the source versions?* | Yes, the translated version of the MDS-Short Form (English) will demonstrate empirical evidence of adequate construct equivalence. The adapted scale will replicate the source scale's original factor structure or reveal a similar factor structure. | Principal-components analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation | Supported |
| ***Q3:*** *Does the adapted version of the MDS-Short Form demonstrate acceptable (a) internal consistency (homogeneity) and (b) stability (reliability)?* | Yes, the adapted version of the MDS-Short Form will demonstrate acceptable consistency (coefficient alpha of .70 or higher) and stability (reliability).<br><br>Note: Caprara et al. (1995) reported α = .81; Bandura et al. (1996, 2001) reported α = .82 and .86, respectively. | Coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha): Homogeneity or internal consistency among the set of items<br><br>Pearson Correlation: Test-retest reliability | Supported |

| Development and Validation of the Student Moral Adaptability Questionnaire (SMAQ) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Research Question** | **Hypothesis** | **Analyses** | **Result** |
| ***Q1:*** *Does the measure demonstrate substantive validity?* | Yes, the measure will demonstrate evidence of substantive validity. | Determine nature and scope of constructs<br><br>Create an item structure and pool | Supported |
| ***Q2:*** *Does the measure demonstrate structural validity?* | Yes, the measure will demonstrate evidence of structural validity.<br><br>The measure will be characterized by a conceptually sound and psychometrically robust multidimensional latent-trait structure.<br><br>The measure will demonstrate measurement invariance across gender. | Descriptive Analyses<br><br>Bivariate Correlations<br><br>Confirmatory Factor Analysis<br><br>Reliability Analysis<br><br>Measurement Invariance across Gender | Supported |
| ***Q3:*** *Does the measure demonstrate external validity?* | Yes, the measure will demonstrate evidence of external validity.<br><br>The higher order factor measured by the Moral Incongruence with School Scale (MISS) will be negatively related to the higher order factor measured by the Moral Congruence with School Scale (MCSS) and strongly predictive of self-reported bullying behavior and Bandura and colleagues' (1996) Moral Disengagement Scale.<br><br>The higher order factor measured by the MCSS will be negatively related to the higher order factor measured by the MISS and will be strongly predictive of self-reported defending behavior. | Latent Variable Path Analysis/Structural Equation Model | Supported |