

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER IN THE PRODUCTION IN PSYCHOLOGY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT (1982-2019)¹

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ABSTRACT. This study addresses the results of a study that examined the international research output in the Psychology of Moral Development with a focus on gender in English-language journals from 1982 to 2019. This review identified 52 articles that relate gender and moral development as research topics. These articles were analyzed to identify the presence and type of feminist epistemic perspective on gender. The study employed meta-research to analyze the content of the previously mapped materials using a state-of-the-art approach. Based on Sandra Harding's classification of different feminist epistemic positions, the analysis revealed that research in this field has not progressed with regard to postmodern epistemic positions. These positions appear to be nonexistent in the field, which is still dominated by empiricist feminist episteme and the standpoint feminist episteme. However, research based on these positions has not been continuous since the 1990s. The discontinuity was inferred to be due to the inconclusive Kohlberg-Gilligan debate on gender differences in moral development, which alludes to the insufficiency and the perception thereof of feminist perspectives, such as Gilligan's standpoint. The Psychology of Moral Development appears to resist epistemic revisions, as some authors emphasize, and the article presents data attesting to this.

Keywords: psychology of moral development; gender; feminist epistemologies.

PERSPECTIVA DO GÊNERO NA PRODUÇÃO EM PSICOLOGIA DO DESENVOLVIMENTO MORAL (1982-2019)

RESUMO. Abordam-se resultados de uma pesquisa concluída que mapeou, em periódicos de língua inglesa, a produção internacional de pesquisa em Psicologia do Desenvolvimento Moral, no período de 1982 a 2019, que tem gênero como tema. Esse mapeamento levantou 52 artigos que relacionam gênero e desenvolvimento moral como tema de pesquisa, os quais foram analisados buscando-se identificar a presença e o tipo de perspectiva epistêmica feminista sobre o gênero. Como percurso metodológico, utilizou-se da técnica de meta-pesquisa para analisar o conteúdo dos materiais anteriormente mapeados pela técnica de estado da arte. A análise, baseada na classificação de Sandra Harding sobre os diferentes posicionamentos epistêmicos feministas, desvelou que a produção investigada não progrediu em relação às epistêmicos pós-modernas, que aparentam inexistência entre as pesquisas do campo, o qual ainda é dominado pelas epistêmicos feministas empiricista e de standpoint, embora a investigação partindo delas não tenha sido tão continuada desde

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a década de 1990. Inferiu-se, também, que sua descontinuidade se deve ao debate Kohlberg-Gilligan, sobre as diferenças de gênero no desenvolvimento moral, permanece inconcluso, o que alude à insuficiência, e a percepção dela, de perspectivas feministas como a de standpoint de Gilligan. A Psicologia do Desenvolvimento Moral parece resistir a revisões epistêmicas que rompam com suas origens epistemológicas, como ressaltam algumas autoras e como o artigo traz em dados que atestam essa inferência.

Palavras-chave: psicologia do desenvolvimento moral; gênero; epistêmicos feministas.

PERSPECTIVA FEMINISTA DE GÊNERO EN LA PRODUCCIÓN EN PSICOLOGÍA DEL DESARROLLO MORAL (1982-2019)

RESUMEN. Se discuten los resultados de una investigación completa que mapeó, en revistas en idioma inglés, la producción de investigación internacional en Psicología del Desarrollo Moral, de 1982 a 2019, que tiene el género como tema. Este mapeo planteó 52 artículos que relacionan género y desarrollo moral como tema de investigación, los cuales fueron analizados en un intento por identificar la presencia y tipo de perspectiva epistémica feminista sobre género. Como abordaje metodológico, se utilizó la técnica de metainvestigación para analizar el contenido de materiales previamente mapeados por la técnica de última generación. El análisis, basado en la clasificación de Sandra Harding de las diferentes posiciones epistémicas feministas, reveló que la producción investigada no ha progresado en relación a las epistémicos posmodernas, que parecen no existir entre las investigaciones en el campo, que aún está dominado por epistémicos empiristas y feministas. Desde el punto de vista, aunque la investigación basada en ellos no ha sido tan continuada desde la década de 1990. alude a la insuficiencia, y percepción de la misma, de perspectivas feministas como la de Gilligan. La Psicología del Desarrollo Moral parece resistir las revisiones epistémicas que rompen con sus orígenes epistemológicos, como destacan algunos autores y como el artículo aporta datos que dan fe de esta inferencia.

Palabras clave: psicología del desarrollo moral; género; epistémicos feministas.

Introduction

This article is the result of research conducted from 2019 to 2020 and funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP)⁶. The article is part of a larger research program that aims to map how feminist epistemes, as critics of knowledge, have interrogated research in Psychology of Development. Thus, this article builds on the ongoing program to recognize, organize, and make intelligible the production of Psychology of Development regarding emerging feminist issues, particularly gender.

Psychology of Development is traditionally understood as the branch of psychology that studies the acquisition, changes, and transformations of psychological capacities throughout life. However, due to its broad scope, it is “[...] an extremely arbitrary division of psychology, since all psychology concerns the understanding of processes of behavioral

⁶ The research was entitled *Gender in the Production of Research in Psychology of Moral Development: Mapping and Analysis in International English-Language Journals (1982-2018)*, and was valid from August 1, 2019, to February 29, 2020, and linked to FAPESP under process number 2019/08942-1. Available at: <https://bv.fapesp.br/pt/bolsas/187806/o-genero-na-producao-de-pesquisa-em-psicologia-do-desenvolvimento-moral-mapeamento-e-analise-em-per/>. Accessed on: February 1, 2022.

change” (Biaggio, 2007, p. 22). This makes it difficult to distinguish from other branches of the study of psychological phenomena and processes. Thus, the psychology of development encompasses other branches of psychology and relates to other fields of study, one of which is ‘Moral Psychology’.

According to La Taille (2007, pp. 11-12), Moral Psychology is a field “[...] in which the psychic processes through which moral rules, principles, and values are legitimized are studied, understanding morality as that which is in the order of duty.” Due to the ambiguity in defining the scope of psychology, some theories studied in Moral Psychology are also studied in Developmental Psychology. Thus, this article adopts the nomenclature “Psychology of Moral Development” to refer to this twofold field framed by the relevant theories herein, namely the moral theories of the Swiss epistemologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and the American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987).

Piaget (1994, p. 23) introduced the cognitive-evolutionary approach to the psychological study of morality with his 1932 publication, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. In this book, he investigated the genesis and development of moral judgment in children: “[...] all morality consists of a system of rules, and the essence of all morality must be sought in the respect that the individual acquires for these rules.” Piaget (1994) identified two distinct moral tendencies experienced by people: ‘heteronomy,’ in which judgments are mediated by external factors, and ‘autonomy,’ in which respect for rules is based on reciprocity and mutual respect as cognition and interpersonal relationships develop.

With Piagetian moral theory considered a seminal but unfinished project (Freitas, 2003), decades later, Kohlberg (2017) continued Piaget's studies in the field of morality, “[...] and, it is worth noting that Kohlberg's work consolidated the field of Moral Psychology” (Franzi & Araújo, 2013, p. 55), and made the cognitive-evolutionary approach the most influential in the psychological study of morality. According to Kohlberg (2017), the development of morality is longer and more complex than Piaget (1994) outlined. Like Piagetian cognitive stages, it presents itself in hierarchical and progressive stages, covering ‘three levels’ and ‘six stages,’ with two stages at each level. As with Piaget's stages, these stages shift from an individualistic perspective to one of reciprocity and mutual respect, characterized by a rational sense of justice.

However, these theories were the target of several criticisms, including gender bias, which led to feminist critiques (Gilligan, 1982; Miller & Scholnick, 2000; Montenegro, 2003; Nogueira, 2017; Burman, 2019).

Since the late 19th century, psychology has been based on positivist and experimentalist frameworks and methodologies imported from the biological sciences to meet the criteria of the time that would legitimize it as a modern science (Nogueira, 2001, 2012, 2017; Saavedra & Nogueira, 2006; Prehn & Hüning, 2005; Souza, 2017). However, research on differences between men and women based on these findings has led to discourses attempting to naturalize women's inferiority, reinforce normative sexual roles, pathologize certain identities and desires, and justify cultural and historical inequalities. From the 1970s onward, however, feminist critics continually interrogated this androcentric, sexist, and heteronormative configuration of psychology.

Several authors, such as Nogueira (2001, 2012, 2017), Saavedra and Nogueira (2006), and Prehn and Hüning (2005, p. 65), discuss “[...] the impact of the feminist movement on psychological theory, prompting a reevaluation of methodologies and concepts and resulting in a new scientific approach [...] to analyzing relationships between women and men.” While there is no consensus in the literature, the feminist movement can

be divided into temporal 'waves' for historical context⁷, identifying at least three waves: the first from the late 19th century to the 1960s, the second until the mid-1980s, and the third starting in the 1990s. This third wave is ongoing and is sometimes referred to as 'post-feminism.'

Feminist critiques gradually "invaded" various areas of scientific knowledge, generating an alternative epistemological perspective that met their assumptions. That is, it was not androcentric, sexist, or heteronormative. This perspective is known as 'feminist epistemology' (Harding, 1986; Nogueira, 2001, 2012, 2017; Narvaz & Koller, 2006, p. 139). However, it would be more "[...] appropriate to speak of epistemologies and methodologies, in the plural, since [from the feminist perspective] there is not just one form of knowledge production but rather several based on different theories."

However, in this article, the term feminist 'epistemes' is used instead of feminist 'epistemology', as the latter refers to the process of constructing criteria and bases of scientific knowledge (Harding, 1986; Souza, 2017). Epistemes, on the other hand, focuses more on how feminism can problematize sciences, including psychological science. This involves questioning the science and prompting it to review itself and search for methodological and conceptual alternatives.

Critiques of science from a feminist perspective only emerged in the mid-1970s amid the second wave of the feminist movement. In science in general, "[...] as well as in the social sciences and later in psychology, feminist demands and critiques of the family, female oppression, and the subordinate status of women had important repercussions at the level of both research and different theories" (Nogueira, 2012, p. 48). North American philosopher Sandra Harding (1986) classifies feminist critiques of modern science based on three epistemic positions: 'feminist empiricism,' 'feminist standpoint' theories, and 'postmodern feminism' (Nogueira, 2001, 2012, 2017). This classification remains current and is continually cited in feminist literature⁸.

Along with the rise of feminist critiques of science during the second wave, the social category of gender was established, initially to differentiate between biological sex and social gender. Feminists adopted this concept in their studies of women's oppression. Later, it was expanded to encompass sexual and gender diversity. As feminist theories and authors with diverse theoretical affiliations incorporated gender, it began to be manipulated from a plurality of perspectives. Various guises of gender were proposed, resulting in diverse gender concepts. Depending on the theory that uses it as its 'background,' gender has different theoretical orientations. Given the aforementioned classification of feminist critiques of science (Harding, 1986; Nogueira, 2012, 2017) and the various feminist theories from which they originate, it is evident that gender can be approached from empiricist, standpoint, or postmodern feminist epistemes.

Returning to Harding's (1986) classification, the first category refers to empiricist feminism, which identifies and denounces the sexism, androcentrism, and heteronormativity present in modern science, but does not question its assumptions or methodologies. Standpoint feminism questions these inequities and their consequences through modern

⁷ The presentation of the Feminist Movement in waves is a narrative choice, since there is no consensus in the literature about the organization of the movement in this way and which is questioned by other narratives (Prenn & Hüning, 2005; Nogueira, 2017).

⁸ Harding's (1986) classification of feminist epistemes, which underpins and is revisited throughout this article, is our own epistemological and theoretical choice. However, it is important to highlight that there are other ways of interpreting this theory within feminist epistemology, which also foster dialogue within Harding's interpretation, including Marxist, decolonial, Black, queer, and other feminisms. Such alternatives can be found, for example, in Schiebinger (2001) and Sardenberg (2007).

scientific methods and principles. It adopts a “[...] differentiated, gender-specific perspective, viewing women as the primary basis of all research. They believe that truly feminist knowledge, centered on women's unique experiences, can produce a better understanding of reality” (Nogueira, 2012, p. 49). However, Harding (1986) argues that, despite its critical potential, standpoint feminism adopts an ‘essentializing’ stance by assuming a universal knowledge that can be generalized to the group ‘women.’ According to the empiricist and standpoint perspectives, gender is seen as permanent and stable, and is therefore essentialist. Postmodern theories, on the other hand, offer more radical critiques of science than the previous two perspectives because they reject universalizing discourses based on modern assumptions. From this perspective, gender is not an innate phenomenon but is instead culturally, historically, and socially constructed.

Piaget and Kohlberg's theories, originating from the Psychology of Moral Development, a field demarcated by the modern scientific project, also generated androcentric and sexist interpretations of human development. Feminist critics challenged these theories and the scientific project they represent in three epistemic positions (Gilligan, 1982; Miller & Scholnick, 2000; Montenegro, 2003; Nogueira, 2017; Burman, 2019). This helped the theorists rethink their foundations and methodologies. The most widespread and cutting-edge critique came from North American psychologist Carol Gilligan (born 1936), who collaborated with Kohlberg on studies in the 1970s.

Gilligan (1982) was the first to identify the androcentrism and sexism in Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories, as well as in several other psychological theories of development. In her aforementioned book, the universal ‘child development’ reported is based on male experience. However, Piaget (1994, p. 69) dedicated two entries to the girls who participated in his study, in which he emphasizes that the girls “[...] have a much less developed legal spirit than boys [...]” and are “more tolerant and easily satisfied with innovations.” For this reason, Piaget considers them “less concerned with legal elaboration” (Piaget, 1994, p. 73).

Kohlberg (2017) based his theory on a sample restricted to white, middle-class, male public school students in Chicago, Illinois, to validate its universality. The sample consisted of 84 boys between the ages of 10 and 16. In the studies he developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Kohlberg concluded that women perform worse than men, making moral judgments from lower levels and stages.

In her book *In A Different Voice*, published in 1982, Gilligan criticizes Piaget and Kohlberg for basing their theories on male experience. She also reports on a study conducted exclusively with women, whose results contradict the idea that women do not reach higher levels or stages of moral development. Based on her findings, Gilligan (1982) argues that women have a different moral reasoning structure than men. This structure prioritizes the care and well-being of others, which Gilligan calls the ‘Ethics of Care.’ Therefore, the problem lies in Kohlberg's theory, which focused solely on rationality and justice and ignored women.

Gilligan's critique led to the development of a program that built on her ideas while opening the field to new critiques and approaches, as Harding (1986) explained in her work on the evolution of epistemic positions in feminist critiques of science. Furthermore, Kohlberg's response to Gilligan's critiques and their respective replies and rejoinders generated one of the most significant scientific debates of the latter half of the 20th century. This debate is known as the ‘Kohlberg-Gilligan debate,’ which we discussed in a previous work (Silva, 2021).

Contemporary criticisms of Kohlberg's theory, such as those by Gilligan (1982), led the author to acknowledge the limitations of the theory and reevaluate its scope and

methodology. However, he continued to reject the notion of moral development as outlined in Gilligan's *Ethics of Care* (Silva, 2021). Gilligan's (1982) criticism and proposal of an ethics of care were an undeniable contribution. However, they also enabled the dissemination of essentialist ideas about morality. For example, one might interpret these ideas as suggesting that care is natural to women (Montenegro, 2003; Nogueira, 2012, 2017; Silva & Souza, 2022).

For Nogueira (2017, p. 81, author's emphasis), "[...] Gilligan's stance is essentially one of feminist standpoint epistemology, centered on women and therefore also essentialist." Nogueira also points to more contemporary criticisms coming from other research programs and epistemic perspectives. For example, the postmodern epistemic approach of English psychologist Erica Burman (2019, p. 275, our translation), although she herself admits that, within the scope of the *Psychology of Moral Development*, "[...] Gilligan's debate remains widely influential." According to Nogueira (2012, 2017), regardless of their epistemic positions, the conflicts that feminist criticisms have caused can be considered beneficial and liberating for science, enabling shifts and revisions in various fields of study, including psychology.

Therefore, we are interested here in the shifts and revisions provoked by feminist epistemologies, if and when they occur, in the field of *Psychology of Moral Development*, when research in this field addresses the concept of gender. It is also unclear whether this research interrogates the moral theories used by feminist epistemes when addressing gender or if these theories are interrogated beyond Gilligan's epistemics. Thus, the research from which this article arises was attentive to the recognition, organization, and intelligibility of this production, especially with regard to approaching the gender and epistemic review.

The objective was to gather, map, and analyze international research on the psychology of moral development published in English-language journals from 1982 to 2019 that focused on gender. The methodology was carefully defined and planned to achieve this objective. The state-of-the-art methodological techniques (Ferreira, 2002) were used to gather and map the relevant literature, and 'meta-research' (Tello & Mainardes, 2015) was used to analyze the content of the materials gathered and mapped by the state-of-the-art.

Given the impossibility of producing a discussion that encompasses all the results obtained, this article presents the results of the content analysis of the mapped articles regarding the feminist perspective on gender and their respective epistemic positioning. The remaining results found through the research were reserved for other published (Silva, 2020, 2021) and forthcoming works. Having thus delimited its scope, this article aimed to identify the presence and type of feminist epistemic perspective on gender in this mapped production. The following describes the process of gathering and mapping the research, which generated a research instrument containing 52 references to materials (articles) that address gender and moral development as a research topic. It also describes the process of analyzing the articles' content.

Methodology

The desired mapping was achieved using a state-of-the-art technique because the goal was to study the production process itself, collect the materials that comprise it (in this case, articles), and organize them to understand their progression over the defined time period and other considered variables.

According to Ferreira (2002, p. 258), state-of-the-art research shares the common "[...] challenge of mapping and discussing academic production across different fields of knowledge. This research attempts to answer which aspects and dimensions have been

highlighted and privileged at different times and places, as well as how and under what conditions.” In this methodology, one engages with the content of the collected works and seeks to understand the state of the field during a specific time period. The main concern of the state-of-the-art is the relationship between the materials, particularly regarding the variable “time.” Therefore, it is more appropriate to use the state-of-the-art methodology to map production and use another methodological technique to analyze its content.

To implement the state-of-the-art approach, this investigation was conducted from 1982 to 2019. This period corresponds to the year of publication of Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice* (1982) and the year before the research concluded. Starting with this book, gender began to be treated as a topic in this research; previously, it had only been addressed as a variable. Therefore, Gilligan is recognized as a pioneer for bringing the debate on gender to the Psychology of Moral Development and for inaugurating a research program that treats gender as a central topic. Addressing gender as a topic means making it the central focus of the research, whereas considering it as a variable is not the central object of the investigation, but rather a consideration made generally when comparing empirical results with the profile of the participating sample.

Four databases were consulted to collect the articles: the Virtual Health Library (VHL), Journal Storage (JSTOR), CAPES Journal Portal, and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO). Eleven search strategies were defined by combining descriptors related to moral development and gender using the Boolean operator ‘AND.’ These strategies were applied to the four databases. The search was conducted after exhausting all searches in each database. Box 1 below presents a record of all results, the search strategies used, and the descriptors used in each search strategy.

Box 1 Search results in the Virtual Health Library (VHL), Journal Storage (JSTOR), CAPES Journal Portal, and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) databases according to the defined search strategies.

Search strategy (descriptors and Boolean operator AND)	Number of results				
	BVS	CAPE S	JSTO R	SciEL O	Total
1 Moral development and gender	02	20	05	0	27
2 Developmental psychology and gender	0	07	0	0	07
3 Psychology of moral development and gender	0	0	0	0	0
4 Moral psychology and gender	0	01	01	0	02
4 Piaget and gender	01	01	0	0	02
5 Kohlberg and gender	0	01	01	0	02
7 Carol Gilligan and gender	0	03	03	0	06
8 Carol Gilligan and care ethics	01	0	0	0	01
9 Care ethics and gender	07	02	0	0	09
10 Moral theory and gender	0	0	03	0	03
11 Moral judgments and gender	03	11	04	0	18
Total	14	46	17	0	77

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A total of 77 results were found across all searches. However, many of these results were duplicates, and those that did not address the intersection of gender and morality were discarded after reading the article abstracts. After this selection process, 52 articles remained (N = 52). The 52 articles were then organized into a research tool (Silva, 2019, Appendix I) and mapped according to authorship, year of publication, journal, and other relevant variables. In summary, as reporting on this mapping is not the focus of this article, it is sufficient to note the scarcity of this literature and the predominance of North American authors and journals.

The list of works found is presented in the table below.

Table 1: International English-language articles from the production in Psychology of Moral Development, from 1982 to 2019, which have gender as a theme

0	Year	Author	Title
1	1982	Flanagan, Owen J.	Virtue, sex, and gender: some philosophical reflections on the moral psychology debate
2	1983	Broughton, John M.	Women's rationality and men's virtues: a critique of gender dualism in Gilligan's theory of moral development
3	1983	Reimer, Michele Smith	Gender differences in moral judgment: the state of the art
4	1984	Myer, Kathleen A.; Hensley, J. Higgins	Cognitive style, gender, and self-report of principle as predictors of adult performance on Piaget's water level task
5	1984	Pratt, Michael W.; Golding, Gail; Hunter, William J.	Does morality have a gender? sex, sex role, and moral judgment relationships across the adult lifespan
6	1984	Reimer, Michele Smith	Gender differences in moral judgment: implications for clinical practice
7	1985	Lifton, Peter D.	Individual differences in moral development: The relation of sex, gender, and personality to morality
8	1987	Flanagan, Owen J.; Jackson, Kathryn.	Justice, care, and gender: the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate revisited
9	1987	Sayers, Janet	Freud revisited: on gender, moral development, and androgyny
10	1988	Donenberg, Geri; Hoffman, Lois	Gender differences in moral development
11	1989	Boldizar, Janet P.; Wilson, Kenneth L.; Deemer, Deborah Kay	Gender, life experiences, and moral judgment development: a process-oriented approach
12	1992	Condon, E. H.	Nursing and the caring metaphor: gender and political influences on an ethics of care
13	1992	Sharpe, Virginia A.	Justice and care: the implications of the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate for medical ethics
14	1993	Lobel, Thalma E.; Menashri, Judith	Relations of conceptions of gender-role transgressions and gender constancy to gender-typed toy preferences
15	1993	Nadelson, Carol C.	Ethics, empathy, and gender in health care

16	1993	Silberman, Margaret A.; Snarey, John.	Gender differences in moral development during early adolescence: the contribution of sex-related variations in maturation
17	1994	Krebs, Dennis L.; Vermeulen, Sandra C.; Denton, Kathy L.; Carpendale, Jeremy I.	Gender and perspective differences in moral judgment and moral orientation
18	1994	Miles, Ann	Helping out at Home: Gender Socialization, Moral Development, and Devil Stories in Cuenca, Ecuador
19	1994	Wertz, Dorothy C.	Provider gender and moral reasoning: the politics of an "Ethics of Care"
20	1995	Daniels, Judy; D'andrea, Michael; Heck, Richard	Moral development and Hawaiian youths: does gender make a difference?
21	1995	Hammer, Ruth Ellen; Hoffer, Nancy; King, William L.	Relationships among gender, cognitive style, academic major, and performance on the Piaget water-level task
22	1995	Keefer, Matthew Wilks; Olson, David R.	Moral reasoning and moral concerns: an alternative to Gilligan's gender based hypothesis
23	1995	Levy, Gary D.; Taylor, Marianne G.; Gelman, Susan A.	Traditional and evaluative aspects of flexibility in gender roles, social conventions, moral rules, and physical laws
24	1996	Carlo, Gustavo; Koller, Silvia H.; Eisenberg, Nancy; Da Silva, Marcia S.; Frohlich, Claudia B.	A cross-national study on the relations among prosocial moral reasoning, gender role orientations, and prosocial behaviors
25	1996	Garmon, Lance C.; Basinger, Karen S.; Gregg, Virginia R.; Gibbs, John C.	Gender differences in stage and expression of moral judgment
26	1996	Wark, Gillian R.; Krebs, Dennis L.	Gender and dilemma differences in real-life moral judgment
27	1997	Bernardi, Richard A.; Donald, Donald F.	An examination of moral development within public accounting by gender, staff level, and firm
28	1997	Morrison, N. K.; Severino, S. K.	Moral values: development and gender influences
29	1999	White, Richard D. Jr.	Are women more ethical? Recent findings on the effects of gender upon moral development.
30	2000	Gump, Linda S.; Baker, Richard C.; Roll, Samuel	Cultural and gender differences in moral judgment: a study of Mexican Americans and Anglo-Americans
31	2001	Eisenberg, Nancy; Zhou, Qing; Koller, Silvia	Brazilian adolescents' prosocial moral judgment and behavior: relations to sympathy, perspective taking, gender-role orientation, and demographic characteristics
32	2001	Glover, Rebecca J.	Discriminators of moral orientation: gender role or personality?
33	2001	Theimer, Christine E.; Killen, Melanie; Stangor, Charles.	Young children's evaluations of exclusion in gender-stereotypic peer contexts
34	2002	Kracher, Beverly; Chatterjee, Abha; Lundquist, Arlene R.	Factors Related to the cognitive moral development of business students and business professionals in India and the United States: nationality, education, sex and gender

35	2003	Mcgillicuddy-De Lisi, Ann V.; Sullivan, Brigid; Hughes, Mary Beth	The effects of interpersonal relationship and character gender on adolescents' resolutions of moral dilemmas
36	2005	Klofft, Christopher P.	Gender and the process of moral development in the thought of Paul Evdokimov
37	2005	Meadows, Sarah O.; Land, Kenneth C.; Lamb, Vicki L.	Assessing Gilligan vs. Sommers: gender-specific trends in child and youth well-being in the United States, 1985-2001
38	2007	Nunner-Winkler, Gertrud; Meyer-Nikele, Marion; Wohlrab, Doris	Gender Differences in Moral Motivation
39	2008	Kracher, Beverly; Marble, Robert P.	The significance of gender in predicting the cognitive moral development of business practitioners using the sociomoral reflection objective measure
40	2009	Levenson, Michael R	Gender and wisdom: the roles of compassion and moral Development
41	2010	Cesur, Sevim; Topçu, Mustafa Sami	A reliability and validity study of the Defining Issues Test: the relationship of age, education, gender and parental education with moral development
42	2011	Mathieson, Kay; Banerjee, Robin	Peer play, emotion understanding, and socio-moral explanation: the role of gender
43	2011	Steele, Natan; Branson, Leonard.; Martin, Rachel. C.	The moral minority: impact of gender, education, work experience and age on moral development in business students
44	2013	Burgos-Saelzer, Cecilia Beatriz	Nursing care from the perspective of ethics of care and of gender
45	2014	Bouhnik, Dan; Mor, Deshen.	Gender differences in the moral judgment and behavior of Israeli adolescents in the internet environment
46	2014	Reitingner, Elisabeth; Heimerl, Katharina	Ethics and gender issues in palliative care in nursing homes: an Austrian participatory research project
47	2015	Wang, Liz C.; Calvano, Lisa	Is business ethics education effective? an analysis of gender, personal ethical perspectives, and moral judgment
48	2017	Capraro, Valerio; Sippel, Jonathan	Gender differences in moral judgment and the evaluation of gender-specified moral agents
49	2018	Hodson, Nathan	A care ethics approach to the Gender Kidney Donation Gap Hodson
50	2019	González-Álvarez, Julio; Cervera-Crespo, Teresa	Gender differences in sexual attraction and moral judgment: research with artificial face models
51	2019	Hartman, Laura; Widdershoven, Guy; Vries, Annelou De; Wensing-Kruger, Annelijn; Heijer, Martin Den; Steensma, Thomas; Molewijk, Bert	Integrative clinical ethics support in gender affirmative care: lessons learned
52	2019	Raghuram, Parvati	Race and feminist care ethics: intersectionality as method

Source: Prepared by the authors

Finally, to analyze the content of the articles, a different methodological technique was used to guide the analysis. This time, the technique adopted was meta-research, which consists of “[...] analytically observing the research process present in articles, books, theses, dissertations, etc., in terms of content analysis” (Tello & Mainardes, 2015, p. 166). Designed for ‘research that evaluates research,’ meta-research has the potential to reveal ‘[...] characteristics, trends, weaknesses, and obstacles to the development of a research field or theme. It encompasses the analysis of theoretical-epistemological aspects, methodologies, argumentation styles, level of internal coherence, ethical reflexivity, etc.” (Mainardes, 2018, p. 306).

Mainardes (2018) also considers that meta-research can encompass three aspects of a study, depending on the outlined focus: theory, method, and data/results. This would configure meta-research as a ‘meta-theory,’ ‘meta-method,’ or ‘meta-analysis.’ Since this article proposes analyzing the incorporation of gender in mapped production and determining whether it has a feminist perspective and, if so, its epistemic positioning, it mainly proposes and outlines the scope of meta-theory analysis.

Thus, the meta-research involved individual analyses of the materials based on a ‘systematic reading’ (Tello & Mainardes, 2015) of their entire content, according to the consulted literature. Afterwards, a textual report describing the content of each article and the findings made possible by the analysis was produced. First, the analysis sought to identify whether gender was approached from a critical feminist perspective. If so, it identified the epistemic positioning of this approach. If not, the analysis identified its theoretical perspective, whether normative or otherwise.

Furthermore, as presented in the introduction to the article, we examine any feminist epistemic positioning that the articles present when addressing gender from a feminist perspective. We also examine the postmodern feminist episteme as a ‘critical’ feminist perspective because it is more radical than other epistemes, and to which we theoretically adhere (Souza, 2017; Silva & Souza, 2022).

The results obtained from the individual analyses were then grouped into categories corresponding to their feminist perspectives and epistemes. These categories are presented below.

Results and discussion

Although the results obtained from the state of the art are not the focus of this article, the scarcity revealed by the mapping in terms of production volume is worth highlighting. When the 52 articles were distributed by year of publication, the average production was nearly two articles per year, peaking in the mid-1990s at four articles per year. However, there was no long-term upward or downward trend. Ellemers et al. (2019) reviewed only empirical studies on psychology and morality and found 1,278 English articles from 1940 to 2017. Thus, they inferred that research on morality addressing gender is peripheral to the field of Psychology of Moral Development in terms of production volume.

Delving into the results obtained from the meta-research, we first examined how gender is incorporated into research in this field, in order to understand its relationship to moral development. Nearly all of the research presented in the articles addressed gender from the perspective of differences in moral development between genders. These differences primarily concerned the performance of men and women, thus reviving the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate for empirical verification through instruments that assess moral development or theoretical discussions of the issue. Of the articles that addressed gender

differently, three of the total 52 articles did not directly relate gender to the moral theories of Piaget and Kohlberg.

From this, we sought to determine whether the articles addressed gender from a critical feminist perspective. We divided the articles into two main groups: those based on feminist perspectives and those based on non-feminist perspectives. When gender was addressed from a feminist perspective, we analyzed the discussion produced in the articles and the feminist theories and authors they referenced, which are associated with some of the feminist epistemes, to determine their epistemic positioning according to Harding's (1986) classification.

The 52 articles analyzed were classified into two groups: the first group of articles that do not present a feminist perspective, and the second group of articles that do. The first group was called "There is no explicit or declared perspective." The second group was divided into three subgroups according to Harding's (1986) classification: 'empiricist feminist perspective, standpoint feminist perspective, and postmodern feminist perspective.'

Contrary to expectations, the investigations in the first group, even those addressing gender, do not present a more consistent theoretical foundation for their manipulation of the concept. Of the 52 articles, 27 corresponded to 52% of the total production. It was expected that if the articles did not attribute a feminist foundation to gender, they would at least base it on a normative or pathologizing perspective through non-feminist gender theories. Such perspectives have historically been established in psychology and other fields, such as biology, neuroscience, and psychiatry (Scott, 1995).

Of the second group, 11 articles (21% of the total, $N = 52$) corresponded to the empiricist epistemic perspective, which is one of the three epistemics described by Harding (1986). Six of these articles were based on the Gender Schema Theory of North American psychologist Sandra Bem (1974): Pratt, Golding, and Hunter (1984); Sayers (1987); Glover (2001); Kracher, Chatterjee, and Lundquist (2002); Nunner-Winkler, Meyer-Nikele, and Wohlrab (2007); and Kracher and Marble (2008). The article by Nunner-Winkler, Meyer-Nikele, and Wohlrab (2007) was also based on the Social Role Theory of North American psychologist Alice Eagly (1997). Kracher, Chatterjee, and Lundquist (2002) referenced the North American psychologist Rhoda Kesler Unger. In contrast, Keefer and Olson (1995), Wark and Krebs (1996), McGillicuddy-De Lisi, Sullivan, and Hughes (2003), Bouhnik and Mor (2014), and Wang and Calvano (2015) do not cite any authors or theories that support their empiricist epistemic perspective on gender. Thus, it was discerned that their use of the concept of gender fits the feminist perspective due to the characteristics of their investigations and how they refer to gender. While these articles cite Gilligan's discussions of gender differences, they only serve as a 'backdrop' for their feminist empirical investigations.

Regarding Bem's theory (1974, p. 155, our translation, our emphasis), the author developed it in the late 1960s and popularized the epistemic perspective. The author also proposed "androgyny" as a new identity. "[...] masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions, thus making it possible to characterize a person as masculine, feminine, or 'androgynous' based on the difference between their endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics." Despite its apparent critical potential to integrate psychological and cultural duality, the theory has been criticized for its recognition of culturally and historically constructed stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. This recognition retains the classic gender binary and reaffirms gender differences in personality traits.

Eagly's theory (1997) emerged in the 1970s with the same epistemic approach and proposed that gender differences result from the assumption of social roles that regulate behavior and are learned throughout socialization. Though also the target of much criticism, this theory and its propositions "brought new insights but also implied other problems and the same ones, in addition to not resolving existing ones [...]." In practical terms, gender continues to be seen as internal and immutable" (Nogueira, 2001, p. 141).

According to Harding (1986, p. 26, our translation, our emphasis)⁹, these criticisms of Bem (1974) and Eagly (1997) reveal the characteristic inconsistencies of the episteme they represent: "[...] feminist attempts to rethink what is perceived as 'bad science' highlight profound logical inconsistencies and, paradoxically, empirical inadequacies in empiricist epistemologies." Being the epistemic most referenced in the articles together with the standpoint episteme, this is a coherent result, since, as Nogueira (2012, p. 50) highlights, empiricist feminism is, even today, the most predominant in Psychology. It emerged when women entered this science with their feminist agendas and, "[...] to be accepted, the majority chose to imitate the psychological approaches that were defended by their male peers." Thus, this episteme is the only one of the three that does not question the traditional paradigm of scientific knowledge production.

The next subgroup was characterized by a standpoint feminist epistemic perspective. As in the previous epistemic subgroup, 11 articles were assigned to this one, corresponding to 21% of the total articles (N = 52). Gilligan's theory (1982) was referenced in all of the articles in this subgroup: Flanagan (1982); Broughton (1983); Reimer (1983); Reimer (1984); Flanagan and Jackson (1987); Donenberg and Hoffman (1988); Daniels, D'andrea and Heck (1995); Levenson (2009); Burgos-Saelzer (2013); Capraro and Sippel (2017); and Hodson (2018). Authors who built upon Gilligan's theory were also referenced, including the North American psychologist Nona Lyons (1983) and the North American philosopher Nel Noddings (2013), both from a standpoint perspective. Lyons was cited in three articles: Flanagan and Jackson (1987), Daniels, D'Andrea, and Heck (1995), and Donenberg and Hoffman (1988). Noddings was only cited in Flanagan and Jackson (1987). Nancy Chodorow (1991), a North American sociologist and psychoanalyst who was a reference for Gilligan in the development of her theory, is also cited from a standpoint perspective in three articles: Broughton (1983), Reimer (1983), and Flanagan and Jackson (1987). Some articles explicitly reference the gender foundation, while others only reference Gilligan's theory. Often, these references are decontextualized, making it difficult to discern the epistemic perspective attributed to the concept of gender. Additionally, the articles cite a theory that represents this perspective based on the characteristics of the investigations portrayed and the manner in which gender is referenced.

Lyons (1983) collaborated with Gilligan in the 1980s but has since left the field of morality. Noddings (2013) continued Gilligan's Ethics of Care but offered adaptations to her original proposal: "Noddings defends the proposal of an ethics of care over an ethics of principles, contrary to Gilligan's notion of complementarity" (Kuhnen, 2010, p. 155), and further emphasizes gender essentialism by assuming typically feminine and masculine moral perspectives.

Gilligan (1982) supports Chodorow's (1991) psychoanalytic readings of parental relationships in childhood and their effects on gender identity. According to both Freud and Chodorow, parental relationships in childhood influence how men and women develop. For

⁹ "[...] feminist attempts to reform what is perceived as bad science bring to our attention deep logical incoherences and what, paradoxically, we can call empirical inadequacies in empiricist epistemologies".

Chodorow, however, the child's relationship with their primary caregiver—which he argues is, “naturally,” the mother or another female figure—triggers different consequences for the psyche of boys and girls, at least until the first three years of life. Gilligan believes this leads women to develop a moral perspective that values the well-being of others, and men to develop a morality based on rationality and justice, as advocated by Kohlberg (2017). Criticism of Chodorow's theory stems from criticism of the epistemic perspective it represents.

As Nogueira (2001, p. 114) points out, the feminist standpoint is an important alternative to the empiricist epistemic perspective because it questions the fundamental principles of the modern scientific model, “[...] this approach distances itself from the emphasis on the search for objectivity and neutrality characteristic of the empiricist approach. Studies focus on women themselves, producing knowledge [...] centered on particular experiences [...]” Gilligan's theory is the “[...] maximum exponent of this [epistemic] position. However, many authors associated with this feminist epistemic perspective “[...] indirectly intended to challenge the traditional validity of scientific methods [...]”, but often ended up “[...] celebrating the special nature of women and emphasizing important differences between the sexes” (p. 144). Thus, even though Gilligan criticizes the absence of women in Kohlberg's initial research samples and their poor performance in moral development, she and other feminist standpoint authors simply invert the essentialist logic for the benefit of women (Montenegro, 2003).

The last subgroup referred to the postmodern feminist epistemic perspective. Three articles were attributed to this subgroup, accounting for 6% of the total (N = 52). Perhaps due to the diversity of feminist theories that share this epistemic position, these articles cited several theories. As expected, Gilligan's theory was referenced in all three articles, while her successors Joan Tronto (1999) and the aforementioned Noddings (2013) were cited in Raghuram's (2019) article, and Virginia Held, also a successor of Gilligan, was cited in both Raghuram (2019) and Sharpe (1992). Sandra Harding (1986) and Catharine MacKinnon were cited in Sharpe (1992) and Wertz (1994). Other feminist authors mentioned in Raghuram (2019) include Judith Butler, Patricia Hill Collins, Linda McDowell, and Carol Thomas. Sharpe (1992) cites a larger number of authors, including Annette Baier, Cass R. Sunstein, Julia A. Sherman, Evelyn Torton Beck, Joyce McCarl, Nielsen Deborah Tannen, and Seyla Benhabib. Finally, Wertz (1994) cites Susan Sherwin, Rachel T. Hare-Mustin, Jeanne Marecek, Zella Luria, and Martha T. Mednick. It is noteworthy that most of these authors, except for Gilligan and her successors, are theorists or have theoretical affiliations with postmodern epistemic theory. The three articles draw on this theory when addressing gender.

Postmodern feminism emerged from the second-wave crisis of the feminist movement in the 1980s, giving rise to the third wave. This crisis was triggered by various factors, and feminist theories based on the postmodern paradigm soon dominated feminist and gender studies, as Souza (2017) points out.

The main premise of the postmodern paradigm is uncertainty about scientific knowledge and distrust of how to produce it: “[...] perhaps the most important idea of postmodern perspectives is the denial of the search for universal and absolute truth” (Nogueira, 2001, p. 144). This premise underlies the terminological differentiation adopted in this article, shifting from epistemology to episteme. Unlike empiricist and standpoint feminisms, postmodern feminism does not seek to be considered the best form of feminist thought, nor does it seek an epistemology that is more appropriate for women. This is

because seeking hegemony means controlling thought and occupying the position of the dominator (Harding, 1986; Souza, 2017).

Conceived from the third wave of the feminist movement and postmodern epistemic theories, the concept of gender has been deconstructed in relation to how it was conceptualized by previous waves of feminism. Previously, gender “[...] was defined based on sex as a natural, binary, and hierarchical category, as if there were a naturally masculine or feminine essence inscribed in subjectivity [...]”, thus, “[...] the binary idea of two sexes and two genders was revised, and gender came to be understood as a primarily political relationship that occurs in a discursive and historical field of power relations” (Narvaz & Koller, 2006, p. 650).

The postmodern feminist epistemic perspective, according to Nogueira (2012, p. 49), “[...] goes further in challenging the assumptions of feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theories [...]”, as it rejects any universalizing and generalizable discourses about women, and further argues that: “[...] instead of considering knowledge as a final result or universal law[...]”, without it being possible “[...] to uncover the process or its location in the world, situated knowledge is an epistemological proposal for localization and consideration of the contextuality of knowledge, within the framework of its own production.”

It is important to note that when organizing the articles into categories, attention was given to their theoretical aspects, particularly how gender was incorporated, which gender theories were used to support it, and the feminist epistemic approaches these theories represent. The analysis reveals that when addressing moral development and gender simultaneously, few articles grounded gender in perspectives other than empiricist or standpoint. No articles were found that employed postmodern critical feminist epistemic perspectives or questioned the epistemological foundations on which moral theories were constructed.

For the most part, we saw an interrogation of the implications of Kohlberg's moral development construct on gender differences—men's and women's performance—through Gilligan's (1982) ideas. Sometimes, Kohlberg's theory was examined from an standpoint feminist episteme, as represented by Gilligan. At other times, her ideas were used merely as a backdrop, based on epistemic empiricism. Although Gilligan's work is from an epistemic feminist standpoint, contemporary to hers, the empiricist perspective also “invaded” research seeking to clarify the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate.

Final considerations

This article is based on research that gathered, mapped, and analyzed international English-language articles addressing gender and morality. The mapping, based on a state-of-the-art method, revealed that this subject matter is peripheral and lacks further investigation addressing this intersection. Since the publication of the book *In a Different Voice* by Gilligan in 1982, production has increased, peaking in the 1990s but declining in subsequent years.

Through meta-research, it was observed that the articles' content analysis revealed that almost all of the presented investigations address gender from the perspective of gender differences in moral development. This revives the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate for both empirical verification and theoretical discussion. A few articles addressed gender from a different perspective. The foundation of gender was divided into two main groups: feminist and non-feminist perspectives.

The first group consisted of 27 articles and accounted for 52% of the total production (N = 52). The second group was divided into two subgroups according to the epistemic perspectives of the theories on which the articles were based. Eleven articles corresponded to the empiricist epistemic perspective, and 11 articles corresponded to the standpoint epistemic perspective. Each subgroup represented 21% of the total. Only three articles embraced the postmodern epistemic perspective, representing 6% of the total.

Except for Gilligan's, no articles were found in which the postmodern feminist epistemic perspective deconstructed or questioned the epistemological foundations on which Piaget's and Kohlberg's moral theories were constructed. This indicates the consolidation, nearly 40 years after the publication of her book, of the epistemic rupture caused by Gilligan (1982), who was a pioneer and vanguard in the field.

Studies approaching gender from empiricist and standpoint feminist epistemic perspectives continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s, even amid the emergence and consolidation of the third wave of the feminist movement. During this time, postmodern theories dominated feminist production and renewed literature on gender. Even since the 2000s, there have been few references to postmodern feminist theories or other ways of interrogating moral theories besides the debate on gender differences. Nevertheless, as this type of research has declined since 2000, one might infer that this discontinuity is related to the overcoming of feminist perspectives, such as Gilligan's standpoint, as well as to the inconclusive nature of the Kohlberg-Gilligan debate, as Silva (2021) points out, alluding to its insufficiency.

Therefore, over the 37-year delimited time period, there was no progress in this debate regarding the critical potential of postmodern feminist theories and the epistemic ruptures they could bring to the field.

This is perhaps the most important finding of all the research. While authors in the field of Social Psychology indicate that this type of advancement has occurred, the Psychology of Moral Development seems to resist epistemic revisions that break with its epistemological origins. This idea is highlighted by Oliveira and Madureira (2014), Souza (2017), and Burman (2019), and our research provides data that attests to this inference.

In a movement of critical feminist perspectives aligned with broad revisions of scientific practices that emphasize situated perspectives and overcome dichotomies and reductionisms regarding the processes of investigating research objects, it appears that the collected, mapped, and analyzed literature indicates that the inconclusive Kohlberg-Gilligan debate about contemporary androgyny is no longer relevant, despite the recognition of the crucial importance of their work as a critique of the masculinist domination of Psychology of Moral Development. Differences in morality based on gender perspectives rooted in binarity (male-female) and essentialism (corporeal-cisgender) are insufficient to explain the intricacies of the relationships and psychological processes involved in moral development.

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Data Availability Statement: The dataset supporting the results of this study is available within the article.

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