

# Psychology and Human development (lecture7)

## Lecture 7. **Moral Development**

1. Development of reasoning and problem solving.
2. Kohlberg theory of Moral Development
  - a. Preconventional morality
  - b. Conventional morality
  - c. Postconventional morality



# Reasoning and Problem-solving

Reasoning – capacity for cognitively combining or reorganizing information to produce additional information: a conclusion or solution.

Problem-solving – when reasoning is used to reach a particular desired output.

# Can children reason?

## Yes

- Babies' exploration of their environment
- Using past knowledge in analogical ways to solve problems
- Can solve a problem:
  - a. There is a link to past knowledge
  - b. The problem is clearly understood
  - c. Does not overload working memory

## No

- It's often weaker than that of adults: the younger the child, the poorer the knowledge about the problem.
- It's clear that knowledge has benefits for reasoning  
Increased knowledge is a key factor in the development of problem solving
- Can be improved by making children think more strategically and methodically



# Moral Reasoning

*The way a child reasons about right and wrong, his awareness of ethical behavior.*

*Cognitive processes by which individuals make decisions about moral issues and justify these decisions*



# Kohlberg's theory of Moral Development

## Level I Preconventional

### Morality

(children under 10)

Stage 1. Children are afraid of punishment and obey the rules.

Stage 2. Children want rewards and conform to rules.





# *Level II Conventional Morality*

(from 10 to app 16)

Stage 3. Children want approval from other people.

Stage 4. Adolescence conform to authorities to avoid the feeling of guilt.



# *Level III Postconventional Morality*

(the highest level of moral thinking based on personal standards and beliefs)

Stage 5 – concerned with individual rights and democratic laws

Stage 6 – entirely guided by his own conscience

*According to Kohlberg, many people never reach Level III in their moral development.*





# Moral judgment development research study .

(Nancy Eisenberg, 1987)

**What?** – one person's wants conflicted with another's wants

**Who?** – groups of children

**How long?** – 7 years

## Conclusion:

- 1) agreed that moral reasoning became more sophisticated with age.
- 2) Adolescent girls were more sympathetic and other –oriented than boys in their moral reasoning.
- 3) Empathy tended to lead to sharing behavior in older children.

The research extends Kohlberg's emphasis on cognition by demonstrating the importance of emotion in moral reasoning and social behavior.



# The connection of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

- 1. Only those who've achieved formal operational thought (4 stage) are capable of the kind of abstract thinking necessary for Level III, Postconventional morality.*
- 2. Stage 6 requires formulating abstract ethical principles and needs higher cognitive processes: hypothetical relationships, problem solving and making decisions.*

# Kohlberg's reports:

- Fewer than 10% of his adult subjects show.  
'clear – principled' stage 6 thinking.  
(example: druggist, husband, duty to save from  
dying. The law of society? Or the law of nature  
or God?)

Criticism: male centered – because it places a  
masculine style of abstract reasoning based on  
justice and rights.

While feminine style – based on care and concern  
for others.

## LEVEL I: Preconventional Morality

Stage 1 Punishment orientation  
(Obeys rules to avoid  
punishment)

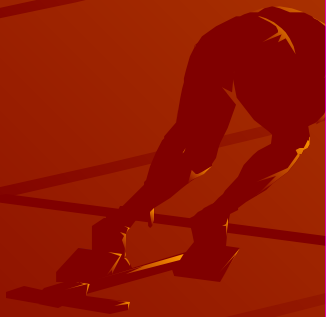
Stage 2 Reward orientation  
(Conforms to obtain re-  
wards, to have favors re-  
turned)



## LEVEL II: Conventional Morality

Stage 3 Good-boy/good-girl  
orientation (Conforms to  
avoid disapproval of others)

Stage 4 Authority orienta-  
tion (Upholds laws and so-  
cial rules to avoid censure  
of authorities and feelings  
of guilt about not “doing  
one’s duty”)



## LEVEL III: Postconventional Morality

Stage 5 Social-contract orientation (Actions guided by principles commonly agreed on as essential to the public welfare; principles upheld to retain respect of peers and, thus, self-respect)

Stage 6 Ethical principle orientation (Actions guided by self-chosen ethical principles, which usually value justice, dignity, and equality; principles upheld to avoid self-condemnation)





# SEMINAR QUESTIONS

1. What is reasoning? Moral reasoning?
2. Can children reason? Why?
3. How do children learn to behave according to social norms of a society during the first 10 years of life?
4. When do children conform to authorities in order to avoid the feeling of guilt?
5. When do people become concerned about their rights and want to defend them according to democratic laws?
6. Is it possible to enter postconventional morality without achieving formal operational thought? Why?
7. What's the cognitive basis for formulating ethical principles (stage 6)?
8. What's the main criticism of Kohlberg's theory of moral development?
9. What makes it impossible for all people in the world to reach postconventional morality?
10. How important are emotions in moral reasoning and social behavior? Give example.