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## Cognitive, Moral, and Social Development in Childhood—Part II

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## Section A

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Moral Development

# Piaget's Two-Stage Theory

- Kids below 10 or 11 years:
  - Rules are fixed and absolute
  - Rules are handed down by adults and no one can change them
  - Base judgment on consequences
- The older child's view is more relativistic
  - Rules are not sacred and absolute but are devices which humans use to get along cooperatively
  - Base judgment on intentions
- Teacup dilemma (Piaget, 1932)

# Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

- Based on interviews with children and teens
- First three stages based on Piaget and last three stages go beyond Piaget
- 1958 research: 72 males in Chicago, ages 10, 13, and 16 years old
  - SES: lower- and middle-class
- 1963 and 1970: added to sample with girls, delinquents, and kids from other countries

# Heinz Dilemma

- In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

# Moral Reasoning Research

- Moral reasoning research aimed to understand decision making
- Three levels, six stages of moral reasoning
  - Pre-conventional
  - Conventional
  - Post-conventional

# Pre-Conventional Morality

- Young children beginning around age 3 or 4 will make decisions without thinking
  - Decisions are based on rules dictated by adults
- As they mature into childhood, they learn perspective-taking that allows them to realize how to negotiate and persuade others to bend the rules for mutual benefit



## Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment

- Authorities hand down a fixed set of rules which he or she must unquestioningly obey
- To the Heinz dilemma, the child typically says that Heinz was wrong to steal the drug because “He’ll go to jail” or “It’s bad to steal”

## Stage 2: Individualism

- Used car salesman stage: “What’s in it for me?”
  - At this stage children recognize that there is not just one right view that is handed down by the authorities
  - Different individuals have different viewpoints
    - ▶ “Since Heinz needs it, he should take it and the druggist will understand” or ...
    - ▶ “It wouldn’t do any good to take the drug because his wife will die while he is in jail”

## Level II, Conventional Morality

- Kohlberg found that most teens and adults remain at the level of conventional morality
- These stages focus on living out of respect for the boundaries set by the peer group and the laws of the community
- There is a shift from unquestioning obedience to a relativistic outlook and to a concern for motives

## Stage 3: Good Interpersonal Relationships

- The teen who conforms to the conventions of his peer group and the adult who conforms as the “nice” guy
  - They believe that people should live up to the expectations of the family and community and behave in “good” ways
  - Good behavior means having good motives and interpersonal feelings such as love, empathy, trust, and concern for others

## Stage 4: Law and Order Stage

- At stage 4, the respondent becomes more broadly concerned with society as a whole. Now the emphasis is on obeying laws, respecting authority, and performing one's duties so that the social order is maintained.
- In response to the Heinz story, many subjects say they understand that Heinz's motives were good, but they cannot condone the theft. What would happen if we all started breaking the laws whenever we felt we had a good reason? The result would be chaos; society couldn't function.

## Level III, Post-Conventional Morality

- Reasoning is based on principles
- The early principled reasoning is still conventional
- Later principled reasoning will forsake the rules and conventions of society in order to follow principles

## Stage 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights

- At stage 5, people begin to ask “What makes for a good society?” They step back from their own society and consider the rights and values that a society ought to uphold.
- Society should have two basic rights:
  - Society should protect them
  - Laws should accommodate people’s rights

## Stage 6: Universal Principles

- At stage 6, the principles of justice guide individuals toward decisions based on an equal respect for all. Stage 6 thinkers are “post law” and no longer accept their own society as given but think reflectively and autonomously about what a good society should be. Gandhi and Martin Luther King exemplify these principals.
- If the druggist were a stage 6 thinker, he would not have locked his door. If Heinz used stage 6 reasoning, he would take the drug, then turn himself in and take the consequences of his actions.



# The Overlap of Moral and Social/Emotional Stages

- Pre-conventional reasoning: from egocentrism to mutually beneficial deals
- Conventional reasoning values the community's needs first and individual's perspectives within that
- Post-conventional reasoning: principles are more important than either individuals or community
- Stage 5 emphasizes democratic processes, and stage 6 considers how all parties take one another's perspectives according to the principles of justice

# Gilligan's Stages of Moral Development

- Carol Gilligan (1982)
  - Kohlberg's stages were derived exclusively from interviews with males
  - The stages reflect a decidedly male orientation
- Gilligan's stages of female moral development
  - Egocentric
  - Sociocentric
  - Reciprocal

## Criticism: Cultural Bias

- Kohlberg believed stage sequence is universal
  - Don't different cultures socialize their children differently, teaching them very different moral beliefs?
- Kohlberg's response is that different cultures do teach different beliefs, but that his stages refer not to specific beliefs but to underlying modes of reasoning (Kohlberg and Gilligan, 1971)