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## **INTRODUCTION**

The research discussed in this thesis is based on a theory of moral reasoning developed by the late Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard University. Kohlberg's theory belongs to the cognitive developmental school of psychology, that is, an approach which attempts to trace the "natural development"<sup>1</sup> in thinking about the physical world. The basis of Kohlberg's approach rests on psychological research on moral reasoning and on the Kantian tradition in moral philosophy. In terms of this research "moral" refers basically to thought processes, that is, to judgement, reasoning or decision making in situations wherein the person has conflicting responsibilities or conflicting alternatives for action.

Kohlberg's theory owes much to Piaget's theory of logical and moral reasoning, but it goes further than Piaget's in three important respects. Firstly, Piaget proposed two phases in moral development, that is, a heterogamous and an autonomous phase, whereas Kohlberg proposes six stages of moral development going from pre-conventional reasoning to conventional reasoning, and finally developing into post-conventional or autonomous reasoning in adulthood. Because Kohlberg's stages go beyond conventional reasoning and encourage the person to question "conventions" he has come in for some criticism from several groups in educational circles in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Piaget was reluctant to attribute the formal properties of developmental stages to reasoning in the moral domain, whereas Kohlberg contends that the four characteristics of stages of cognitive development, that is, qualitative difference, invariant sequence, structured wholes, and increasingly differentiated hierarchical integration, apply equally well in the study of reasoning about moral questions.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Piaget and Kohlberg differ on the age at which autonomous moral reasoning occurs. Piaget held that it occurs around 10-12 years, whereas Kohlberg contends that it occurs in adolescence or even adulthood.<sup>1</sup> The findings of the present study appear to support Kohlberg.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years Kohlberg has revised his theory in the light of criticisms and research. These revisions have created difficulties for researchers and critics alike. Some writers have accused Kohlberg of inconsistency because of these revisions. However, Loevinger (1986)

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1. Wilson, J., "First Steps in Moral Education: Understanding and Using Reasons", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds.), Lawrence Kohlberg:Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, pp. 223-231.

2. Piaget, J., The Moral Judgement of the Child, New York, Norton, 1932.

1. Sullivan, E., "Can Values be Taught?", in M. Windmiller, N. Lambert and E. Turiel (eds.), Moral Development and Socialization, Boston, Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1980.

2. Leming, J.S., "Kohlbergian Programmes in Moral Education: A Practical Review and Assessment", in Modgil and Modgil (eds.), Consensus and Controversy Falmer Press, 1986.

1. Petrovich, O., in Lawrence Kohlberg:Consensus and Controversy, S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds.), Falmer Press, 1986, p. 103 (footnote).

2. see pp. 153-190 below

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writes that as “knowledge increase, one has a right, even a duty, to change one’s mind”. An example of one such change was the introduction into Kohlberg’s theory of a transitional stage (4 and a half) between stages 4 and 5, to account for what seemed to be regression among college students.<sup>3</sup> A second example is the introduction of “democratic schools” or “Just Community”<sup>4</sup> schools to promote upward movement through the moral stages in preference to the moral dilemma discussion approach, which is the approach adopted in the present study.

Early researchers focused on examining the theory “itself”, whereas later researchers, beginning with a study by Moshe Blatt and Kohlberg in 1975, have emphasised the educational application of the theory. It was an interest in this applied aspect of the theory which prompted the author of this thesis to undertake an intervention study to promote upward movement in moral reasoning in students at a Regional Technical College in Ireland.

In addition the research was prompted by three other particular reasons:

- (1) There had been no previous intervention studies of this nature carried out in Ireland prior to 1984. There had been some descriptive studies of the moral reasoning of adolescents in Ireland, particularly a study carried out by Ann Breslin Tolerance and Moral Reasoning among Adolescents in Ireland, 1982, but, to the author’s knowledge, no study where an attempt was made through curricular modification, to achieve change in moral reasoning.
- (2) Previous research evidence (Kuhn, Langer, Kohlberg and Haan, 1977) found that only 60% of adults attain formal operational thinking and that only 10% of this 60% showed clear principled moral reasoning. The majority of adults appear to use conventional moral reasoning when involved in solving moral dilemmas. This suggests that the proportion of adults in the United States (where the research was conducted) who are using principled reasoning in the solution of moral problems is very small. There is no reason to consider that the situation in Ireland differs in any great respect to that of the United States. At which point we consider the third reason why the present study was carried out.
- (3) The moral decisions people in contemporary society must make are very complicated, for example, decisions in relation to jobs or pollution; decisions about medical research, genetic research, abortion and euthanasia; decisions about the use of nuclear energy, to mention but a few. Because of the kind of world we live in,<sup>1</sup> it is in everyone’s interest that the student’s capacity to make well-reasoned moral
- (4) judgements is included as an “aim” of education. The evidence exists to show that noteworthy upward change in moral reasoning can be achieved where methods of role-playing and moral dilemma discussions are introduced into the curriculum (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975).

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3. see p. 35 below.

4. see pp. 94-105 below.

1. Hogan, P., “The Central Question in Technological Education”, an address delivered to the Association for Technological Education Conference, R.D.S., Dublin, December 1981.

## **The Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One presents the basic issues involved in Kohlberg's theory. Part Two deals with an intervention study designed to promote upward movement in moral reasoning and Part Three looks at the adequacy of Kohlberg's theory in the light of the experience of the intervention study. The first three chapters (Part One) are devoted to a study of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Chapter One presents the basic theory, that is, the moral reasoning develops through stages (on a parallel with logical stages) and that each stage is in better equilibrium than its predecessor. Kohlberg numbers these stages from one to six and further classifies the stages into three levels, that is, pre-conventional (stages 1 and 2), conventional level (stages 3 and 4), and post-conventional level (stages 5 and 6). At each stage the same basic moral concept is defined but at each stage this definition is more differentiated, more integrated and more universal. For example, stage 3 takes into account everything present in stages 1 and 2, but is a better organization of the same moral concept, resulting in a more equilibrated moral structure.

The relationship between Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Piaget's theory of cognitive development is discussed. Kohlberg has found a point-to-point correspondence between Piaget's logical stages and his (Kohlberg's) moral judgement stages. Kohlberg's research has also indicated that for a person to be able to reason at the principled stages of moral reasoning he or she must also be able to reason at the level of Piagetian formal operations.

In Chapter Two, Social Class and Justice as issues in Kohlberg's theory of moral development are discussed. With regard to social class, there is evidence which suggests a relationship between social class and moral judgement level of parent's and their sons. Chapter Two also examines the place of the concept of justice in Kohlberg's theory. Kohlberg holds that the concept of justice is present in all stages of moral development but it is only at the highest level (stage 6) that justice becomes a universal principle.

In Chapter Three the practical implications of Kohlberg's theory are investigated. Intervention studies to promote upward movement in moral judgement are examined. The general conclusion of this examination is that specially designed curricula, incorporating role-playing and discussion of hypothetical moral dilemmas, demonstrate "modest" rather than dramatic change in upward movement in moral judgement. The "Just Community" approach to promoting upward movement in moral judgement is next examined. This approach differs from the class - centred approach in that here the emphasis is on the whole school (as a "Just Community") rather than being focused on the individual classroom. The initial reports coming from these experiments are favourable. Also in Chapter Three mention is made of the place longitudinal studies play in providing support for the universality of the stage sequence as defined by Kohlberg.

Part II of the thesis deals with the intervention study. In Chapter Four, Research Design, the methodology of the study is explained. Briefly, the sample consisted of first year engineering students in a Regional Technical College. The total number was 72, that is, 37 experimental subjects and 35 controls. The measuring of moral judgement level was done through the

Defining Issues Test, developed by J. Rest, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter Five is devoted to an analysis and discussion of the findings of the intervention study. Both groups, that is, the experimental and the control group, show upward movement in moral reasoning over the period of the study. However, this development is more accelerated in the experimental group when compared with the controls.

A number of questions about the adequacy of the Kohlbergian enterprise emerge in the analysis and discussion of the intervention study and these are pursued in Part III of the thesis. Chapter Six accordingly, examines the Kohlbergian approach by considering the more important criticisms of it which originate in philosophical and psychological scholarship. The ability of Kohlberg's project to withstand these criticisms is reviewed.

Finally, in Chapter Seven the problems associated with the two methods recommended by Kohlberg to promote upward movement in moral judgement level are discussed, and recommendations are made on how these problems might be minimised.

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1. Rest, J., The Manual for The Defining Issues Test, University of Minnesota Press, 1979.

**PART ONE**

***KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF  
MORAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND ITS BACKGROUND***



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND IT'S BACKGROUND**

**Section 1.1:** Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

**Section 1.2:** Kohlberg's Theory and Piaget

## CHAPTER ONE

### Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development and its Background

#### 1.1 Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Over a period of thirty years of empirical research, Kohlberg has developed a theory of moral development which postulates a culturally universal, invariant sequence of stages of moral judgement<sup>1</sup>. This theory is derived largely from Piaget<sup>2</sup> who claims that both logic and morality develop through stages and that each stage is a structure which is in better equilibrium than its predecessor. Each new logical or moral stage is a new structure which includes elements of earlier structures but transforms them in such a way as to represent a more stable and extensive equilibrium on this point.

Kohlberg's theory assumes that new moral structures presuppose new logical structures, that is, that a new logical structure is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a new moral stage. However, Kohlberg contends that moral equilibrium involves two procedures or conditions absent in the logical domain, that is, role-taking and the principle of justice or fairness. Role-taking involves taking the point of view of others conceived as subjects and co-ordinating those points of view, whereas logic involves co-ordinating points of view upon concepts and their properties.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of cross-cultural studies Kohlberg has identified six definite and universal stages of development in moral thought.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of the reasoning used by subjects in putting forward solutions to hypothetical moral dilemmas it was noted by Kohlberg and his associates that each subject's stage or moral thought could be classified into one of six definite and universal stages of development.

These stages are as follows:

#### **Level A:      Preconventional**

**Stage 1:**      The stage of punishment and obedience.

**Content:** Right is literal obedience to rules and authority, avoiding punishment and not doing physical harm.

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1. Kohlberg, L., "From is to Ought, How to commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with it in the study of Moral Development", in T.Mischel (ed), Cognitive Development and Epistemology, New York, Academic Press, 1971a (Hereafter cited as "From is to Ought").

2. Piaget, J., The Moral Judgement of the Child, New York, Norton, 1932.

1. Kohlberg, L., "The Adolescent as a Philosopher", in T.Cottle (ed), Readings Adolescent Psychology: Contemporary Perspectives, Harper and Row, 1977.

2. Kohlberg, L., Essays in Moral Development, Vol. 1, Philosophy of Moral Development, Harper and Row, 1981, pp. 409-412.

**Social Perspective:** A person at this stage of moral reasoning does not consider the interests of others or recognise that they differ from the actor's point of view, does not relate two points of view. (No student in the intervention study discussed below<sup>1</sup> was stage typed at this level)

Kohlberg found that at stage 1 the subject assumes that moral judgements are self-evident requiring little or no justification beyond assigning labels or citing rules. For example, "telling on your brother is wrong because it is 'tattling'" and "breaking into the druggist's store is wrong because 'you are not suppose to steal'".<sup>2</sup>

**Stage 2:** The stage of individual instrumental purpose and exchange.

**Content:** Right is serving one's own or other's needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange.

**Social Perspective:** A person at this stage separates own interests and points of view from those in authority and others.

At stage 2 Kohlberg says that the person has developed

a moral relativity.... out of the understanding that different persons can have different yet equally valid justifications for their claims to justice.<sup>1</sup>

At this stage, as each person's primary aim is to pursue his or her own interests, the perspective is pragmatic, that is, "to maximise satisfaction of one's needs and desires while minimising negative consequences to the self".<sup>2</sup> On the assumption that the "other" is also operating from a similar perspective there is an emphasis on instrumental exchange so that individuals can co-ordinate their actions for mutual benefit. It becomes a situation of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours".

**Level B:      Conventional Level**

**Stage 3:** The stage of mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity.

**Content:** The right is playing a good (nice) role, being concerned about other people and their feelings (because it is expected), keeping loyalty and trust with partners and being motivated to follow rules and expectations.

**Social Perspective:** A person at stage 3 is aware of shared feelings, agreements and

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1. Chapters Four and Five below, pp. 122-290.

2. Kohlberg, L., "A Current Statement on some Theoretical Issues", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds), Lawrence Kohlberg: Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, pp. 485-546 (Hereafter cited as Consensus and Controversy)

1. *ibid*, p. 492

2. *ibid*.



expectations which take primacy over individual interests.

At stage 3 the person asserts that relationships and obligations are not reducible to a Stage 2 notion of concrete equal exchange. Kohlberg contends that at stage 3

... reciprocity involves the notions of obligation, debt and gratitude which allow one to understand reciprocity as going beyond concrete notions of equal exchange to maintaining relationship, mutuality of expectations, and sentiments of gratitude and obligation.<sup>1</sup>

This is the stage where the notion of awareness of The Golden Rule is first expressed. It is expressed as the idea that something is right or fair from one's point of view if one could accept it as right or fair from the other's point of view. The "other" from the point of view of Stage 3 is always the individual other. There is no reasoning as yet which takes the view of the "generalized other".

**Stage 4:** The stage of social system and conscience maintenance.

**Content:** The right is doing one's duty in society, upholding the welfare of society or the group.

**Social Perspective:** A person at this stage takes the viewpoint of the system which defines roles and rules. He or she considers individual relations in terms of place in the system.

At Stage 4 the person sees the social system as a consistent set of codes and procedures that apply impartially to all members. The social structure includes institutionalized social roles which serve to mediate conflicting claims and promote the common good.<sup>1</sup> There is a sense of duty, obligation or debt to society incurred by the benefits received from living in or having membership in the institution of society.

**Stage 4.5:** This stage is considered by Kohlberg to represent a transitional level between Conventional Moral Reasoning and Post-Conventional Reasoning, and is a later addition to the basic theory. The reason for its addition is discussed below.<sup>2</sup>

**Content:** Choice is personal and subjective. It is based on emotions; conscience is seen as arbitrary and relative, as are ideas such as "duty" and "morally right".

**Social Perspective:** The perspective is that of an individual standing outside of his own society and considering himself as an individual making decisions without a generalised commitment or contract with society.

Stage 4.5 differs from the true Stage 4 in that here the individual has a 'system' perspective but does not have a feeling of identification with the "system" or society.

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1. *ibid*, p. 493

1. *ibid*, pp. 494-5

1. see p. 27 below

### **Level C: Postconventional and Principled Level:**

At this level Kohlberg contends that moral decisions are generated from rights, values or principles that are agreeable to all individuals composing or creating a society designed to have fair and beneficial practices.

Critics of Kohlberg have taken exception to the notion that there are moral principles on which everyone can, and perhaps will agree. For example, Locke (1986)<sup>1</sup> says that when Kohlberg holds that at stage 6 there will be a single principle, that is, justice, equality and respect for persons, on which all will agree, he is being imprecise in the use of the term “universal”. Locke makes two points, firstly, that it is quite possible for people to have different incompatible sets of “universal” principles. He says, “... we each accept our own, (principles) but apply them universally to each other”.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Locke holds that moral principles have to be universal in the sense of applying indifferently to everyone who falls under them but this is not to say that there are universal moral principles on which everyone can, and perhaps will agree. As it is not appropriate at this point to continue a discussion of Kohlberg’s use of the term “universality” the reader is referred to Chapter Six<sup>2</sup> below where the philosophical basis of Kohlberg’s theory is investigated.

**Stage 5:** The stage of prior rights and social contract or utility.

**Content:** The social system is seen ideally as a contract freely entered into by each individual in order to preserve the rights and promote the welfare of all members.

**Social Perspective:** This stage takes the perspective of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts.

Within the Stage 5 perspective the person is aware that there are certain rights that must be considered inviolable by the society, and these rights cannot be abridged even through freely chosen contracts. At Stage 4 a person is seen as being responsible for upholding fundamental human rights even to the extent of disobeying the law to uphold these rights if necessary.

**Stage 6:** The stage of universal ethical principles.

**Content:** Regarding what is right the person is guided by universal ethical principles.

**Social Perspective:** The perspective is based on the moral premise of respect for other persons as ends; respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals.

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1. Locke, D., “A Psychologist Among the Philosophers” in S. Modgil and C. Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986.

1. *ibid*, p. 24.

2. pp. 193-224 below.

Kohlberg contends that at Stage 6<sup>1</sup> the perspective is not so much a new social perspective beyond Stage 5's notion of a prior-to-society perspective as it is a deliberate use of the justice operations as principles to ensure that perspective when reasoning about moral dilemmas. At Stage 5 law and moral norms are grounded on the operations of equality and equity, whereas at Stage 6 these operations become self-chosen principles.

The description of the stages has been modified and refined several times (Kohlberg 1958, 1968, 1973 and 1976, 1986).<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of a transitional stage (4.5) between Conventional stage 4 and Postconventional Stage 5 is a direct result of modifications due to the evidence produced by longitudinal interviews on subjects, and due also to a thorough revision of the stage-scoring system to reflect more directly the structure rather than the content of moral thought.<sup>2</sup>

The "stage" concept as used by Kohlberg in moral judgement research is largely an import from Piaget. In describing "stage" Kohlberg writes,

We call our types 'stages' because they seem to represent an invariant developmental sequence. True stages come one at a time and always in the same order.<sup>3</sup>

and again,

... it is possible for an individual to move at varying speeds and to stop at any level of development; but if he/she continues to move upward it must be in accord with the steps outlined... Stages define structured wholes; total ways of thinking, not attitudes towards particular situations. A 'stage' represents a distribution between moral form and moral content... Stage concept implies universality of sequence under varying cultural conditions.<sup>1</sup>

That is, all movement is forward in sequence and does not skip steps. This particular aspect of Kohlberg's theory has been confirmed by many studies, including the present study. Rest says of the findings of a twenty year longitudinal study in which fifty-six of fifty-eight subjects showed upward change, with no subject skipping stages, that,

If one is not favourably impressed with these findings, it is difficult

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1. Kohlberg, L., "A Current Statement on Some Theoretical Issues", in S. Modgil and C. Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 497.
  1. Siegal, M., "Kohlberg versus Piaget", in Merril-Palmer Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1980, p. 286.
  2. Kohlberg, L., "Continuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited", in P. Baltes and K. Warner-Schaie (eds), Life-Span Developmental Psychology, Academic Press, 1973, pp. 180-200.
  3. Kohlberg, L., "The Adolescent as a Philosopher", in T. Cottle (ed), Readings in Adolescent Psychology, Harper and Row, 1977.
  1. Kohlberg, L., "From is to Ought", in T. Mischel (ed), Cognitive Development Epistemology, New York, Academic Press, 1971a.  
to know what would be impressive in all of social development literature.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the evidence suggests that subjects move forward in development is not to say that subjects at a given stage do not use the reasoning of stages “lower” than their own. Kohlberg has found that during the transitional level between one stage and the next, the subject will exhibit thinking which is not stabilized at the new stage.<sup>1</sup>

Kohlberg contends that at any particular stage in his development the individual will have a certain way of handling his moral experience; of dealing with the claims and conflicts which society and other people impose upon him. This will be his current stage of moral reasoning. New experiences, or more complex social interactions, may generate claims and conflicts which he cannot resolve with his current reasoning, this will set up cognitive conflict. The resolution of this conflict will lead to a more sophisticated and more effective way of handling his moral environment, and so move to a higher stage of moral reasoning.<sup>2</sup> As stated above, the sequentiality of the stages appears to ‘be pretty firm up to stage 4 at least’.<sup>3</sup>

However, some other aspects of Kohlberg’s stage theory have been the subject of criticism, especially his emphasis on “hard stages” in the Piagetian sense, and also the fact that Kohlberg appears to have developed his theory first and then gone out to find support for it. Tomlinson puts the situation very well when he writes,

... one might naively have expected the enterprise to be one in which Kohlberg studied the changing types of moral judgement encountered with increasing age of subject and happened to find that these changes seemed best characterised in terms of an invariant sequence of organised social perspectives, the emphasis has definitely been otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

To justify his approach, Kohlberg appeals to Piagetian definitions of cognitive stages and finds that his research fits into Piagetian or ‘hard’ cognitive stage concept, that is, that each stage differs from its adjacent stage in four respects, which are, qualitative difference, invariant developmental order, unitary organization of thought processes and successive hierarchical integration and displacement by later stages. A Piagetian stage is not simply another response, but an organization of a variety of subcompetences that are definitive of a stage. Kohlberg writes,

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2. Rest, J.R., “Moral Research Methodology”, in S.Modgil nad C.Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 466.

1. Kohlberg, L., “Continuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited”, in P. Baltes and K. Warner-Schaie (eds), Life-Span Developmental Psychology, Academic Press, 1973.

2. Locke, D., “A Psychologist among the Philosophers”, in S.Modgil and C. Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 28.

3. Tomolinson, P., *ibid*, p. 111.

1. Tomlinson, P., “Any advance on the Present Stage?”, in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 108.

Following Piaget’s lead... justice reasoning would be the cognitive factor most amenable to structural developmental stage analysis insofar as it would clearly provide reasoning material where

structuring and equilibrating operations (e.g. reversibility) could be seen.<sup>2</sup>

Tomlinson finds that the

... applicability of the Piagetian hard-stage conception to cognitive development raises a whole host of issues.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important of these issues being “stage consistency”. And stage consistency appears to be in doubt. For example, Tomlinson (1986)<sup>2</sup> refers to a descriptive study of the moral stage of subjects, where three different measurements were used, and in which an attempt was made to grade the scorability of basic evaluative thought-units in terms of the clarity with which one could attribute a particular Kohlbergian stage to them. The methods used were, (i) written responses to hypothetical dilemmas, (ii) the use of a Kohlberg Moral Interview (verbal responses) and (iii) an interview based on a method developed by Kitwood (1980), in which respondents talk about value related activities from their own lives, prompted by such descriptions as “when someone I knew did something I thought was wrong”. The results of this study indicate that on the written test the highest percentage of subjects graded as being in a pure stage of moral reasoning was 44 per cent. On the Kohlberg Interview (verbal) the percentage increased to 52 per cent on one hypothetical dilemma and was 33 per cent on a second dilemma, and on the Kitwood Interview the percentages graded as being on a pure stage was 9 per cent.<sup>1</sup> One of the problems here may be due to the use of different measurement methods. It is like being compared with like? However, even if one looks only at the Kohlberg Interview where the highest percentage of subjects found to be at a pure stage of moral reasoning was 55 per cent, one does wonder about the universal existence of pure stages of moral reasoning in the Piagetian sense. Tomlinson concludes that,

At the very least, these data ought to give pause to a theory which contends the virtually exclusive power of its distributive justice structures as functional units in all peoples’ moral psychological processing.<sup>2</sup>

Rest finds a similar problem with the concept of “stage consistency”. He contends that Kohlberg’s Scoring Scheme is “biased to weed out stage mixture” and as such is biased

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2. Kohlberg, L., Levine, C., and Hewer, A., Moral Stages: A Current Formulation and a Response to Critics, Basel, Karger, 1983, p. 92.

1. Tomlinson, P., “Any Advance on the Present Stage?” in S.Modgil and C.Modgil, (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 111.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 113-4.

1. *ibid.*, p. 113.

3. *ibid.*, p. 114.

towards stage consistency.<sup>3</sup>

Rest concludes that at this present stage of research one must be wary of how strong a claim can be made for the “hard-stage” model of development. The reader is referred to Chapter Five below where it is noted that in the present study a large percentage of stage mixture was found. This finding appears to support the arguments made by Tomlinson above.

Two other problems with Kohlberg’s theory as it is formulated at present are the charges that the measuring instrument is biased in favour of males<sup>1</sup> and that, as the latest scoring scheme does not identify responses beyond stage 5, the status of stages 5 and 6 in Kohlberg’s system is in some doubt.

With regard to the first problem, that is sex bias, Rest<sup>2</sup> points out that a review of the literature does not support the claim that the theory is sex-biased. Walker (1983), in a review of more than seventy studies found no such bias. The second problem above, namely the status of stage 6 in Kohlberg’s theory, is discussed in chapter Six below The Adequacy of the Kohlbergian Enterprise.

As noted earlier, Kohlberg has revised his theory of moral development on several occasions. One such revision took place as a result of research by Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) where it appeared that college sophomores (second year students) exhibited a resurgence of Stage 2 thinking, that is, some sophomore students appeared not to be using the highest moral stages of which they were capable, but instead made use of pre-conventional thought which had previously been abandoned.<sup>1</sup> This regression was interpreted not as a structural retrogression but as a functional advance. It was considered to be a functional advance in that it was a result of a questioning of previous commitments and standards, which is a necessary step before a subject’s reasoning becomes stabilized at a principled level. These conclusions of Kohlberg and Kramer were arrived at as a result of data supplied by Turiel (1973a) on a “more careful analysis of the sense in which moral stage theory can tolerate regression”. Turiel concluded that the apparent retrogression is not in fact a retrogression but is a disequilibrium of transition in which the break-up of conventional morality is easy to confuse with the resurgence of pre-conventional morality (stage 2). This issue led directly to the development of a new stage-scoring system which more adequately represents the distinction between content and structure in moral thought.

In Kohlberg’s original scheme there was no intermediate stage between stages 4 and 5, however, as a result of Turiel’s data and a revised scoring scheme he found, in a longitudinal study of 53 subjects from Kohlberg’s original study (1958), that when a clear distinction was made between the transitional stage 4.5 thought and stage 5 thought, none of the longitudinal subjects under the age of 23 years displayed true stage 5 thought. Kohlberg also came to the conclusion, as a result of the new evidence provided by Turiel and the new scoring scheme,

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3. Rest, J., “Moral Research Methodology”, in Consensus and Controversy, 1986, p. 467.

1. Gilligan, C., In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982.

1. Kohlberg, L., “Continuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited”, in P. Baltes and K. Warner-Schaie (eds), Life-Span Developmental Psychology, Academic Press, 1973.

that (a) longitudinal subjects previously scored as stage 6 were misclassified, that is, material which had been scored as stage 6 was in fact another form of sophisticated stage 4 thought, and (b) that none of the longitudinal subjects had been classified at stage 6 by the age of 30 years.<sup>1</sup>

As the latest scoring system<sup>2</sup> does not describe stage 6 it seems that stage 6 is no longer a scoring possibility. Rest, whilst on the whole being very impressed with the present Kohlbergian Scoring Scheme (1984), nevertheless considers that the rare occurrence of the higher stages in Kohlberg's system may be due in part to the task characteristics of the Kohlbergian Moral Interview, and to the stringency of the scoring rules. Rest comments that

... a subject has to intrude a philosophical treatise in discussing Heinz-and-the-drug in order to be credited with the higher stages.<sup>1</sup>

The removal of the criteria for assessing reasoning at stage 6 is seen by some critics as a rejection by Kohlberg of aspects of his theory, in particular, stage 6 as the ultimate goal toward which the other stages are developing.<sup>2</sup> Certainly it raises difficulties for the theory. Kohlberg's justification for the removal of the measurement of stage 6 from his latest scoring scheme is that stage 6 is mainly a theoretical construct.

The Instrument used to measure moral reasoning in the present study was the Defining Issues Test developed by Rest.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for this are explained in Chapter Four Research Design. The Defining Issues Test, unlike the latest version of Kohlberg's Moral Interview, is designed to measure all the stages including stage 6; however, none of the subjects in the present study were typed at stage 6. This could be due to the fact that the subjects were all in their late teens or early twenties or it could also indicate that the Defining Issues Test is not designed to adequately distinguish stage 6 statements as opposed to stage 5 statements. To be able to design an instrument which measures stage 6 requires having an understanding of the thinking which would characterise a stage 6 thinker. Kohlberg has found that the individual is able to understand the thinking at their present stage, all stages below their present stage and one stage above the present stage. This may not apply to the understanding of stage 6 reasoning given that critics appear to have difficulty understanding Kohlberg's definition of stage 6, particularly with the notion of the individual at stage 6 being "autonomous" in his/her moral judgement. This point is taken up in Chapter Six below, suffice it to say here that when Kohlberg describes the stage 6 reasoner as being autonomous he means that the person at stage 6 creates his/her own moral standard or moral point of view and that this moral point of view is essentially a principle of justice. Philosophers have difficulty with this on two grounds, one, What does it mean to say that a person is "autonomous" in his/her judgement?

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1. *ibid.*

2. Colby, A., and Kohlberg, L., The Measurement of Moral Judgement, Vols. 1 and 2, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

1. Rest, J., "Moral Research Methodology", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 467.

2. Evans, C., "Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil, 1986, p. 472.

4. Rest, J., Manual for the Defining Issues Test University of Minnesota Press, 1974 (1979).

and, two, Why is the principle of justice considered to be the supreme principle of morality?<sup>1</sup>

As none of Kohlberg's longitudinal subjects were scored at a stage 6 some doubt has been expressed as to the actual existence of stage 6 reasoning at all. Evans (1986)<sup>2</sup> makes the point that, as Kohlberg's longitudinal sample was not a random sample and therefore not representative of the population as a whole, the absence of subjects stage typed at stage 6 in Kohlberg's sample does not mean that such subjects do not exist.

In this section Kohlberg's basic theory has been outlined and some of the problems with the theory have been introduced. The next section (1.2) deals with the relationship between Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

## **1.2 Kohlberg's Theory and Piaget**

Kohlberg and Piaget have a number of points in common. Indeed Kohlberg is very explicit about his debt to Piaget. For example, he writes "My own work on morality started from Piaget's notion of stages".<sup>1</sup> Both Piaget and Kohlberg postulate stages of development; they are both concerned with moral reasoning and Kohlberg's research has indicated that the attainment of the logical stages (Piaget's) is necessary, but not sufficient for attainment of the moral stage. Moreover, there is a point to point correspondence between Piaget's logical and Kohlberg's moral judgement stages.<sup>2</sup>

Kohlberg's theory assumes that all principled subjects (those reasoning at stages 5 and 6) are formal operational in the Piagetian sense but many formal operational subjects are not principled moral reasoners.<sup>3</sup> Kuhn, Langer and Kohlberg (1973)<sup>4</sup> found that of 60 per cent of persons who were formal operational only ten per cent showed clear principled thinking. These formal operational non-principled subjects may display elements of formal reasoning in responding to moral dilemmas and still display no autonomous use of moral principles in the dilemmas. None of the subjects found to be not formal operational, that is 40 per cent, were principled reasoners.<sup>1</sup> The interesting question is why have not all of the 60 per cent capable of formal operational thought also developed principled thinking in relation to moral judgement? If it is the case that principled moral reasoning is more adequate psychologically,

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1. Petrovich, O., "Moral Autonomy and the theory of Kohlberg", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986.

2. Evans, C., "Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview" in Consensus and Controversy, 1986.

1. Kohlberg, L., Essays in Moral Development, Vol. 1, The Philosophy of Moral Development, Harper and Row, 1981, p. 16.

2. Kohlberg, L., and Gilligan, C.k, "The Adolescent as a Philosopher" in T. Cottle (ed), Readings in Adolescent Psychology, Harper and Row, 1977.

3. *ibid.* Note that the term "principled" will be used throughout this thesis in the narrower sense intended by Kohlberg rather than in the broader sense of everyday usage such as, for instance "a man of principled action".

4. *ibid.*



1. *ibid.*

and later in the thesis we argue this, then why is it the case that a large percentage of people capable of higher levels of moral reasoning do not avail of that reasoning, at least so far as reasoning about hypothetical moral dilemmas is concerned? Some of the answers to this question will unfold as we proceed through the thesis.

There is a close similarity in the definition of “stage” as used by both Kohlberg and Piaget. The latter maintains firstly that the individual has a characteristic internal cognitive organisation which is “invariant” and secondly, as a result of interaction with the environment the individual learns to adapt his/her cognitive structures.

This adaptation involves, to use Piaget’s terms, “assimilation” and “accommodation”. He writes,

Intelligence is assimilation to the extent that it incorporates all the given data of experience within its framework.<sup>1</sup>

An act of intelligence in which assimilation and accommodation are in balance or equilibrium constitutes an intellectual adaptation. However:

Assimilation can never be pure because by incorporating new elements into its earlier schemata the intelligence constantly modifies the latter in order to adjust them to new elements.(2)

Because of this modification and adjustment the individual experiences disequilibrium. It is in the process of regaining a state of cognitive equilibrium that development occurs. This is typically slow and gradual. There can never be a radical rupture between the new and the old.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental change in the assimilation-accommodation relationship is one from undifferentiation and antagonism to differentiation and equilibrium.<sup>3</sup>

A qualitative difference in cognitive structure is a general characteristic of “stages” used by both Piaget and Kohlberg. An example of this is the difference between the reasoning used by the child of 7-8 years and formal operational reasoning. Piaget writes, when describing the thinking of the child of 7-8, that

... deduction bears only upon the beliefs which the child has adopted himself, in other words, it deals only with his personal conception of reality... if we say to a child: let us admit, for example, that dogs have six heads. The child will refuse to give an answer, because he will not assume the hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast the adolescent who is using formal deduction is reasoning from a premise that is merely assumed and not supplied by immediate belief.

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1. Piaget, J., The Origin of Intelligence in the Child, New York Int., University Press, 1952, p. 6.

2. *ibid*, pp. 6-7.

3. Flavell, J.H., The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget, D. Van Nostrand Co., 1963, pp. 52-63.

1. Piaget, J., Judgement and Reasoning in the Child, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1928, p. 67.

... two factors are particularly necessary for the right functioning of any formal reasoning: 1) a sort of detachment from one's own point of view of the moment ... 2) owing to the mere fact of having placed oneself inside the beliefs of others, or more generally inside a hypothesis, one must ... be able to remain on the plane of mere assumption ... deduction must detach itself from reality and take up its stand upon the plane of the purely possible, which is by definition the domain of hypothesis.<sup>2</sup>

For Piaget the world is constructed rather than given. Faced with a perturbing event, that is, a problem posed by an environmental event in relation to present mental structures, the child may follow one of three paths. He may assimilate the event to an existing cognitive scheme thereby enlarging its domain, or he may accommodate to the event, so changing the cognitive scheme currently in effect, or, he may show no change in cognitive structure. This process is the process of equilibration; it is the mechanism of transition from one developmental stage or stage to the next.<sup>1</sup> It is continuously operating in all exchanges between the growing child and his environment, and is the propellant for change and transition. The concept of equilibration is linked in a very intimate way to the concepts of assimilation and accommodation. It is the process of bringing these concepts into balanced co-ordination.<sup>2</sup> Piaget classified development into periods, subperiods and stages in terms of the kinds of structures present. He divides the ontogenetic span into three major epochs. The sequence of these developmental steps is thought to be invariant, while the chronological age at which each occurs is definitely not.

Piaget named these periods as:

Firstly - The Period of Sensory-Motor Intelligence, beginning at birth and continuing through to approximately the age of two years. The special developments of the period entail important accomplishments concerning objects, space, time, causality, imitation and play.

Secondly - The Period of Preparation for and Organization of Concrete Operations, commencing during the second year and continuing to develop up to approximately eleven years. During this period the child learns conservation of certain object properties in the face of phenomenal change, that is, conservation of quantity, weight, volume length and area.

Thirdly - The Period of Formal Operations, commencing approximately around eleven and continuing to develop up to fifteen years (as there is some controversy on the relationship between age and formal operations we return to this point later in this chapter. See pages ). Piaget held that whereas in the second period the child operates on concrete reality itself in this third period the child is concerned with conditional reality in which representational thought has become hypothetico-deductive.<sup>1</sup> The child is able to isolate variables and to

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2. *ibid*, p. 71.

1. Kessen, W., and Kuhlman, C., (eds), Thought in the Young Child, Part 1 of Cognitive Development in Children, University of Chicago Press, 1970.

2. Flavell, J.H., The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget, D. Van Nostrand, Co., Inc., 1963.

1. *ibid*, pp. 263-265.

deduce potential relationships which can later be verified by experiment.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the meaning Kohlberg attaches to “cognitive stage” it is important to examine how Piaget characterizes a cognitive stage as Kohlberg’s work on moral development is based upon, but significantly extends the work of Piaget.<sup>2</sup>

Piaget presents cognitive stages as having the following characteristics:

- (1) Stages imply distinct or qualitative differences in children’s modes of thinking or of solving the same problem at different ages.
- (2) These different modes of thought form an invariant sequence, order or succession in individual development. While cultural factors may speed up, slow down or stop development, they do not change its sequence.
- (3) Each of these different and sequential modes of thought form a structured whole. A given stage-response to a task does not just represent a specific response determined by knowledge and familiarity with the task or tasks similar to it: rather it represents an underlying thought-organization.
- (4) Cognitive stages form an order of increasingly differentiated and integrated structures to fulfill a common function. Higher stages reintegrate the structures found at lower stages. Formal operational thought includes all the structural features of concrete operational thought but at a new level of organization.<sup>1</sup>

In Judgement and Reasoning in the Child (1928) Piaget described at length experimental tests which require the use of formal reasoning, and consequently children under eleven years were unable to succeed on these tests.

Up to a certain age it is almost impossible to make a child assume a suggested hypothesis unless one forces him to believe it and thus changes it into an affirmation.<sup>2</sup>

Piaget makes the point again and again that it is only when the child can detach himself from his personal beliefs and enter into any foreign point of view that he really will know what is meant by hypothesis and has developed the ability to use formal operational thinking. Piaget considers 11-12 years as being the optimal age when this commences. He says that

... if formal thought is really dependent upon social factors, then it is not

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1. Inhelder, B., and Piaget, J., The Growth of Logical Thinking, New York, Basic Books, 1958.
  2. Leming, J.S., “Programmes in Moral Education”, in S. Modgil and C. Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986.
  1. Piaget, J., “The General problem of the psychobiological development of the child”, in J.M. Tanner and B. Inhelder (eds), Discussion on Child Development, Vol. 4, New York, International University Press.
    2. Piaget, J., Judgement and Reasoning in the child, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1928, p. 68.
    - 3.

impossible that this age should be related to the second critical phase of social life in the child. Everyone knows that at the age of 11-12 children have a marked impulse to form themselves into groups, and that the respect paid to the rules and regulations of their play constitutes an important feature of this social life.<sup>1</sup>

Piaget continues discussing an example of the type of arguments which are typical of the social behaviour of this age group and concludes that such social habits develop reciprocal understanding and lead to new habits of thought.

Kohlberg for his part has found that formal reasoning is a necessary condition for post-conventional moral reasoning, that is, stages 5 and 6. This level of moral reasoning requires the subject to detach himself from a personal point of view and instead adopt a societal or collective perspective. This may account for the necessary relationship mentioned above. To reason at the post-conventional level the subject has to have the ability to take the role of the other, to be aware that there are other people like himself/herself who have different feelings, desires and ways of seeing the world. It is the ability to look at one's own behaviour from these other points of views and interests.<sup>1</sup> For example, in post-conventional moral reasoning the subject's thinking is described as being more differentiated and universal. This means that at moral stages 5 and 6 people draw a distinction between such different things as the value of life and the value of property, and also that at these stages there is an appeal to more universal principles such as the idea of a social contract, or fundamental principles of justice. In contrast, as we saw in Section 1.1, conventional and pre-conventional stages stress narrow principles such as avoiding punishment for oneself or gaining a reward.<sup>2</sup> Each higher moral stage (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) is a more equilibrated level of reasoning in that as one moves through the stages there is a consistent gradual integration - through role-taking - of the view of others conceived as subjects and an increasingly differentiated integration of the principles of justice or fairness.

The relationship between role-taking and development of moral judgement has encouraged numerous studies in this area.<sup>1</sup> The first researcher to propose the educational application of Kohlberg's theory was Moshe Blatt. He found that verbal discussion in the classroom of hypothetical moral dilemmas would lead to genuine stage change. The finding was that one-fourth to one half of the students in one semester of such discussion groups, moved significantly toward the next moral stage during the academic year. No upward moral change was found in the control classes.<sup>2</sup> Since the discovery of the "Blatt Effect" a number of

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1. *ibid*, pp. 72-73.

1. Mosher, R., and Sullivan, P., "A curricula in Moral Education for Adolescents", in P. Scharf (ed), Readings in Moral Education, Winston Press, 1978.

2. Fenton, E., "Moral Education: The Research Findings", in P. Scharf (ed), Readings in Moral Education, Winston Press, 1978.

1. Kohlberg, L., "Early Education. A Cognitive Developmental View", in Child Development, Vol. 39, Dec. 1968.

2. Blatt, M., and Kohlberg, L., "Studies on the Effects of Classroom Discussions upon Children's Moral Development", in Journal of Moral education, July 1975.

It is not to be assumed however, that for example, children who manifest concrete operations in the intellectual field at a particular age will also manifest parallel operations in the moral field.<sup>1</sup> The logical stage is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the moral stage.

There is controversy as to whether the stage of formal operations as described by Piaget is a universal mode of thought in the same way as the stage of concrete operations appears to be. Kohlberg found that for many people, the development of formal thought never occurs at all.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, all children display some clear capacity for concrete logical reasoning; however, in research using the pendulum task<sup>3</sup> as a measure of formal reasoning the following results were obtained. The percentage of 235 persons at various ages showing clear formal operational reasoning at the pendulum task is as follows:

Aged 10-15 / 45 per cent	Aged 16-20 / 53 per cent
Aged 21-30 / 65 per cent	Aged 45-50 / 57 per cent

In the study quoted by Kohlberg and Gilligan<sup>1</sup> above the figures indicate that it is not until age twenty-one to thirty that a clear majority (56 per cent) attain formal reasoning by this criterion. The researchers (Kuhn, Langer and Kohlberg) suggest that there is no further development of formal reasoning after age thirty.<sup>1</sup> Kohlberg cautions against taking these figures too seriously since various tasks requiring formal operations are of somewhat varying difficulty. Piaget make a similar point in an article on the intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood where he states:

... cognitive structures common to all individuals ... will, however, be applied or used differently by each person according to his particular activities.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of the universality of formal operational thinking is compounded by a number of factors. Firstly, not all adolescents and adults appear to use it, secondly, Siegler, Liebert and Liebert trained successfully pre-adolescents to solve the Piagetian pendulum problem<sup>3</sup> (these ten and eleven year old children were unable to solve the problem before the training

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1. Weinreich, H., "Kohlberg and Piaget: Aspects of their Relationship in the Field of Moral Development", in Journal of Moral Education, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 201-213.
  2. Kohlberg, L., and Gilligan, C., in T. Cottle (ed), Readings in Adolescent Psychology, Harper and Row, 1977.
  3. The subject is shown a pendulum whose length may vary as well as the number of weights attached. He/she is asked to discover or explain what determines the speed of movement (or 'period') of the pendulum. Only a formal operational subject will 'isolate variables', that is, vary length, holding weight constant, and so forth, and arrive at the correct solution (Kohlberg and Gilligan, "Adolescent as a Philosopher", in Cottle, 1977, p. 218).
1. Kohlberg, L., and Gilligan C., in T. Cottle, 1977, p. 79.
  2. Piaget, J., "Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood", in Thinking, Johnson-Laird and Wason (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 158-165.
  3. Siegler, R.S., Liebert, E.E., and Liebert, R.M., "Inhelder and Piaget's Pendulum Problem: Teaching Pre-adolescents to Act as Scientists", in Development Psychology, 9(No. 1), 1973, pp. 97-101.

session), thirdly, Luria<sup>1</sup> and later Cole<sup>2</sup> carried out studies on learning and thinking and found marked differences in performance on problems of logic between “traditional” and “modern” groups. Scribner<sup>3</sup> undertook a series of studies to test the hypothesis that failure to integrate and retain the information in the problem was the cause of apparent “non-logical” performance. Sharp and Cole replicated these studies among Mayan speaking and Spanish speaking villagers in the Yucatan, Mexico. Groups for comparison were rural and semi-rural, schooled and non-schooled adult and child populations. Later a set of syllogisms was administered to adults to investigate the consequences of literacy. The consistency of the basic findings is impressive. Not only are quantitative results uniform from study to study but certain qualitative aspects of performance between the various groups are similar.<sup>4</sup> Taken as a group these studies appear to support a number of generalisations:

- (a) In all cultures, populations designated as “traditional” or non-literate have just somewhat better than a chance solution rate across all types of problem material.
- (b) Within each culture there is a large discrepancy in performance between schooled and non-schooled.
- (c) With schooling, there is little cultural variation in performance between the cultures studied.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, there is some evidence that children do not use all the sub-operations involved in formal operations reasoning when solving problems which require formal reasoning.<sup>2</sup> Bynum, Thomas and Weitz<sup>3</sup> found evidence for only eight of the sixteen binary operations described by Inhelder and Piaget.

Neimark describes several studies showing that some children seem to solve the Piagetian problems without any hypothetico-deductive reasoning, and others use only conjunction and implication. The problem may be one of appropriate measurement tests. Piaget’s experimental tasks involved traditional science experiments. Therefore, children who have been educated in school science may, as a result of a stimulating environment and educational training, develop formal operations in early adolescence. Others not so fortunate may develop intellectually at a much slower rate, so that formal operations may not appear until adulthood. Piaget says of such less-well-educated adolescents:

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1. Luria, A.R., “Towards the problem of the historical nature of psychological processes”, in International Journal of Psychology, 1971.

2. Cole M. et al, The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking, New York: Basic Books, 1971.

3. Scribner, S., “Modes of thinking and ways of speaking: culture and Logic reconsidered”, in Thinking, Johnson-Laird and Wason (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 483-500.

4. *ibid.*

1. *ibid.*

2. Ginsburg H., and Opper S., Piaget’s theory of Intellectual development, Prentice Hall, 1979, pp. 178-206.

3. Bynum, T.W., Thomas, J.H., and Weitz, L.J., “Truth Functional Logic in Formal Operational Thinking: Inhelder’s and Piaget’s Evidence”, in Developmental Psychology, Vol. 7(No. 2), 1972, pp. 129-132.

They would be capable of thinking formally in their particular field, whereas faced with our experimental situations, their lack of knowledge .... would hinder them from reasoning in a formal way, and they would give the appearance of being at the concrete level.<sup>1</sup>

Tulkin and Konner<sup>2</sup> during research on Kalahari Bushmen used an “ecologically valid” task (discussion of hunting) instead of the pendulum problem and found that the Kalahari show a high level of formal operational thought:

.... the process of tracking, specifically involves patterns of inference, hypothesis - testing and discovery, that tax the best inferential and analytic capacities of the human mind.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, it seems as if the measurement system used will determine whether formal operational thought is a universal structure or not. It may be the case that adolescents and adults use formal operations only in situations which are compatible with their interests and some of the evidence quoted in the preceding pages seems to support this position. It is apparent that further research is essential before the controversy over Piagetian formal operations will be resolved.

What has the foregoing got to do with Kohlberg’s theory of moral development? The evidence indicates a necessary relationship between formal operational reasoning and post-conventional moral reasoning. If it is the case that only a certain percentage of adults attain formal operations, then principled moral reasoning is limited to this percentage. However, the evidence that only some adults are capable of formal operations appears to be inconclusive and further research may provide evidence of universality. We also know that only a small percentage of those capable of principled moral reasoning actually appear to use it when tested on hypothetical moral dilemmas.

The intriguing question is, why are some adolescents and adults accepting a less than adequate level of reasoning in relation to moral judgment than they are logically capable of attaining? It may be for a number of reasons; whilst the evidence seems to suggest a parallel between intellectual and moral growth, it is nevertheless the case that level of understanding does not automatically translate into a high level of moral decision. Kohlberg and others have found that moral reasoning development is supported by exposure to reasoning at one stage higher than one’s own, and also by the opportunity to discuss conflicting or alternative solutions to moral dilemmas. And further, Kohlberg has found that to move upward through the stages the subject has to have the ability to take the role of the other, to empathise. Later in Chapter Two, where the role of social class and its relationship to moral reasoning is examined it will be noted that evidence appears to indicate that the above conditions for moral development tend to be better catered for in some social classes than in others.

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1. Piaget, J., “Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood”, in Human Development, Vol. 15, 1972, pp. 1-12.

2. Ginsburg H., and S. Opper, 1979, p. 203.

1. *ibid.*

Before leaving this discussion of the relationship between Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Piaget's theory of cognitive development there is one further important point to be made. Piaget was reluctant to ascribe the formal properties of developmental stages to reasoning in the moral domain.<sup>1</sup> This may have been because Piaget's observations regarding moral development had been limited to children between the ages of 6 and 12. He identified two phases in moral development, that is, a heteronomous phase where the child is controlled by forces outside himself/herself as for example, parents, teachers and rules; and an autonomous phase where the child/adult learns increasingly to be controlled by "inner" forces as for example, their own reasoning about a situation based on an ability to take the role of the other person. We shall see later in Chapter Six The Adequacy of the Kohlbergian Enterprise that the use of the term "autonomy" to describe reasoning is very controversial in that philosophers and psychologists use the term in two different senses. For example, philosophers query whether it is possible for a person to be autonomous in that the individual is strongly influenced by his/her social group so that "it is questionable whether an individual ever acts as an 'autonomous' agent."<sup>2</sup>

The psychologists generally use the term "autonomy" to apply as a label for mature moral development, without any specification as to the aspect of morality to which the concept refers.<sup>1</sup> A recent example of the concept's application is that "an 'individual autonomous morality' is opposed to an imposed morality of the adult world"<sup>2</sup> and again, "autonomy is an essential precondition of the 'equal dignity' ... of all individuals."<sup>3</sup>

Moral Psychology is best with problems associated with terminology mainly because it is virtually impossible to separate moral psychology from moral philosophy. The two overlap continually and consequently moral psychologists come in for a lot of criticism from philosophers. Petrovich considers that the problem of attempting to define the concept "autonomy" caused Kohlberg to look eventually beyond the six stages of moral reasoning to hypothesise the existence of a seventh stage<sup>4</sup> where the individual will reason from an unconditional point of view in the Kantian sense. Kohlberg contends that an individual at the metaphoric "Stage 7", which presupposes the conflicts and questions that arise at moral stage 6, will give the "justice" reasoning of stage 6 a religious significance through appealing to either the natural law or agape.<sup>1</sup> Kohlberg considers "Stage 7" reasoning to be the reasoning characteristic of religious maturity as Stage 6 moral reasoning is the reasoning which Kohlberg concludes, must first be preceded by moral maturity. Needless to say, the foregoing has its

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1. Leming, J.S., "Programmes in Moral Education", in S.Modgil and C.Modgil (eds), Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 246.

2. Breakwell, G., "Moralities and Conflict", in H. Weinreich-Haste, and D. Locke (eds), Morality in the Making, J. Wiley and Sons, 1983, p. 232.

1. Petrovich, O., "Moral Autonomy and the Theory of Kohlberg", in S. Modgil and C. Modgil, 1986, p. 88.

2. Quoted in Petrovich 1986, p. 88.

3. Vine I., (1983) quoted in Petrovich, 1986, p. 88.

4. Petrovich, O., in S. Modgil and C. Modgil, 1986, p. 89.

1. Kohlberg, L., "The Question of a Seventh Stage", in Essays of Moral Development, Vol. 1, The Philosophy



of Moral Development, Harper and Row, 1981, pp. 322-351. characterizes moral maturity. The two “go” together in that religious maturity, according to critics. For example, Don Locke (1986) considers “Stage 7” a “delusion”,<sup>2</sup> and he admits to not understanding what “Stage 7” is about.<sup>3</sup> Fowler<sup>4</sup> claims that Religious stage precedes moral stage. However, as the whole concept of “Stage 7” needs further research and clarification it is not possible to arrive at any firm conclusions about it at this point. Suffice it to say that when Kohlberg postulates the seventh stage he is not adding on to his stage theory of moral reasoning whose ultimate goal is stage 6 reasoning, he is rather postulating that the moral reasoning of stage 6 may be given religious significance through, as mentioned above, appealing to the natural law or agape.

In this chapter Kohlberg’s basic theory has been examined in some detail in section 1.1, and in the following section the relationship between Kohlberg’s theory of moral development and Piaget’s theory of logical reasoning has been outlined.

In the next chapter the investigation is focused on the effects of social class on moral development, and the part that the principle of justice plays in Kohlberg’s theory.

2. Locke, D., “A Psychologist among the Philosophers: Philosophical Aspects of Kohlberg’s Theory”, in S. Modgil and C. Modgil (eds), Lawrence Kohlberg: Consensus and Controversy, Falmer Press, 1986, p. 30.

3. *ibid.*

4. Fowler, J.W., Stages in Faith, New York, Harper and Row, 1981.