**Kohlberg’s and Gilligan’s theories of moral development**

Lawrence Kohlberg was an American psychologist. He has introduced a theory moral development in 1958. His theory of moral development is a theory that focuses on how children develop morality and moral reasoning. Kohlberg's theory suggests that moral development occurs in a series of six stages and that moral logic is primarily focused on seeking and maintaining justice.

**Level 1. Preconventional Morality**

Pre-conventional morality is the earliest period of moral development. It lasts until around the age of 9. At this age, children's decisions are primarily shaped by the expectations of adults and the consequences of breaking the rules. There are two stages within this level:

* **Stage 1 (Obedience and Punishment)**: The earliest stages of moral development, obedience and punishment are especially common in young children, but adults are also capable of expressing this type of reasoning. According to Kohlberg, people at this stage see rules as fixed and absolute.Obeying the rules is important because it is a way to avoid punishment.
* **Stage 2 (Individualism and Exchange)**: At the individualism and exchange stage of moral development, children account for individual points of view and judge actions based on how they serve individual needs. [Reciprocity](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-rule-of-reciprocity-2795891) is possible at this point in moral development, but only if it serves one's own interests.

**Level 2. Conventional Morality**

This level is the acceptance of social rules regarding what is good and moral. During this time, the agent internalizes the moral standards they have learned from their role models and from society. This period also focuses on the acceptance of authority and conforming to the norms of the group. There are two stages at this level of morality:

* **Stage 3 (Developing Good Interpersonal Relationships)**: Often referred to as the "good boy-good girl" orientation, this stage of the interpersonal relationship of moral development is focused on living up to [social expectations and roles](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-social-exchange-theory-2795882). There is an emphasis on [conformity](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-conformity-2795889), being "nice," and consideration of how choices influence relationships.
* **Stage 4 (Maintaining Social Order)**: This stage is focused on ensuring that social order is maintained. At this stage of moral development, people begin to consider society as a whole when making judgments. The focus is on maintaining law and order by following the rules, doing one’s duty, and respecting authority.

**Level 3. Postconventional Morality**

At this level of moral development, people develop an understanding of abstract principles of morality. The two stages at this level are:

* **Stage 5 (Social Contract and Individual Rights**): The ideas of a social contract and individual rights cause people in the next stage to begin to account for the differing values, opinions, and beliefs of other people. Rules of law are important for maintaining a society, but members of the society should agree upon these standards.
* **Stage 6 (Universal Principles)**: Kohlberg’s final level of moral reasoning is based on universal ethical principles and abstract reasoning. At this stage, people follow these internalized principles of justice, even if they conflict with laws and rules.

**Gilligan’s criticism on** **Kohlberg’s theorie of moral development**

Carol Gilligan found that Kohlberg’s theory had a strong male bias. According to Gilligan’s studies,  
men had a tendency to solve problems by applying abstract moral principles. Men were found to  
resolve moral dilemma by choosing the most important moral rule, overriding other rules. In contrast, women gave importance to preserve personal relationships with all the people involved. The context oriented emphasis on maintaining personal relationships was called the ethics of care, in contrast with the ethics of rules and rights adopted by men.

Gilligan revised the three levels of moral development of Kohlberg, as stages of growth towards  
ethics of caring.

The pre-conventional level, which is same as that of Kohlberg’s first one, right  
conduct, is viewed in a selfish manner solely as what is good for oneself.

The second level called conventional level, the importance is on not hurting others, and willing to sacrifice one’s own interest and help others. This is the characteristic feature of women.

At the post-conventional level, a reasoned balance is found between caring about others and pursuing the self-interest. The balance one’s own need and the needs of others, is aimed while maintaining relationship based on mutual caring. This is achieved by context-oriented reasoning, rather than by hierarchy of rules.

**Erik Erikson’s 8 stages of psychosocial development**

Erikson asserts in his psychosocial theory that ego identity is reached by facing goals and challenges throughout eight stages of development over the entire life cycle. Each of the psychosocial stages is distinguished by two opposing emotional forces, known as contrary dispositions, that result in a crisis that needs to be resolved. Each crisis must be mastered as swiftly as possible, otherwise, a person’s psychology is in risk. However, a successful resolution of the conflict results in a healthy personality and the attainment of a basic virtue. The ego uses these character strengths to resolve subsequent crises.

**1. Trust vs. Mistrust**

The first stage of Erikson’s psychosocial development starts at birth and continues to approximately 18 months of age. The principal task is trust versus mistrust. Infants rely solely upon their caregivers; thus, if caregivers are responsive and sensitive to their infant’s needs, it helps the infant develop a sense of trust. Apathetic caregivers who do not meet their baby’s needs may cause the baby to develop feelings of anxiety, fear and mistrust and see the world as unpredictable. Basic virtue developed: hope.

**2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt**

The second stage occurs between the ages of 1½ and 3 years. If a child is allowed to develop at their own pace during this stage, they can acquire self-reliance and self-confidence. However, if parents are inconsistent, overcritical, or overprotective, the child may doubt their ability to control themselves and their world. Basic virtue developed: will.

**3. Initiative vs. Guilt**

The third of Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development arises during the preschool stage, 3-5 years of age. A child can develop initiative through social interactions, and by planning and commencing in play and other activities. If the child’s pursuits fail or are criticized, feelings of self-doubt and guilt may arise. Basic virtue developed: purpose.

**4. Industry vs. Inferiority**

The fourth stage occurs from ages 5 to 12 years. During this period, a child begins to compare themselves with peers. The child learns to be productive and to accept the evaluation of his or her efforts, and in turn, can develop a sense of accomplishment and pride in their academic work, sports, social activities and home life. If a child feels they do not measure up, feelings of inferiority or incompetence may be established. Basic virtue developed: competency.

**5. Identity vs. Role Confusion**

The fifth stage of psychosocial development is marked by an adolescent identity crisis. Between the ages of 12-18, an individual develops a sense of self by experimenting with a variety of social roles. An adolescent who is successful at forming a cohesive, positive identity will have a strong sense of identity, whereas adolescents who do not search for an identity or are pressured into an identity may experience role confusion and develop a weak sense of self. Basic virtue developed: fidelity.

**6. Intimacy vs. Isolation**

The sixth stage extends from late adolescence to early middle age, 18 to 40. A strong sense of self must be developed in adolescence in order to create intimate relationships with others during this stage. Adults who lack a positive self-concept may experience emotional isolation or loneliness.

To avoid feeling isolated or alone, individuals must learn to not lose themselves when sharing or caring for others. Gaining a strong self-identity allows an individual to achieve true intimacy, whereas identity diffusion can be a challenge. Basic virtue developed: love.

**7. Generativity vs. Stagnation**

Also called generativity versus self-absorption, the seventh stage in Erikson’s psychosocial development theory occurs during the ages of 40-65. During middle adulthood, individuals have a positive goal of generativity. In most cases, this results in procreation, along with the fulfillment of parental and social responsibilities. This is in strict contrast to interest in the self or self-absorption. Basic virtue developed: care.

**8. Integrity vs. Despair**

The final stage of psychosocial development theory during old age (65+) is a period when a person reflects on life. One can either develop a sense of satisfaction with their life and approach death with peace or develop a sense of despair over missed opportunities and wasted time, leaving the individual to approach death with dread. Basic virtue developed: wisdom.