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Four main theories of development pdf

Piaget's theory of cognitive development states that our cognitive abilities develop through four specific stages. Summarize the stages of Piaget's theory of cognitive development Key Takeaways Key Points Jean Piaget developed his cognitive -developmental theory based on the idea that children actively construct knowledge as they explore and manipulate the world around them. The four stages of Piaget's theory of cognitive development correspond with the age of the child; they include the sensorimotor , preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages. The sensorimotor stage occurs from birth to age 2 and is characterized by the idea that infants " think " by manipulating the world around them. The preoperational stage occurs from age 2 to age 7 and is characterized by the idea that children use symbols to represent their discoveries. The concrete operational stage occurs from age 7 to age 11 and is characterized by the idea that children's reasoning becomes focused and logical. The formal operational stage occurs from age 11 to adulthood and is characterized by the idea that children develop the ability to think in abstract ways. Key Terms deferred imitation: Inference in which the conclusion cannot be false given that the premises are true. object permanence: The understanding (typically developed during early infancy) that an object still exists even when it disappears from sight or other senses. Transitivity: The idea that if A is related to B, and B is related to C, then A must be related to C. assimilation: The absorption of new ideas into an existing cognitive structure. The Swiss cognitive theorist Jean Piaget is one of the most influential figures in the study of child development. He developed his cognitive-developmental theory based on the idea that children actively construct knowledge as they explore and manipulate the world around them. Piaget was interested in the development of "thinking" and how it relates to development throughout childhood. His theory of four stages of cognitive development, first presented in the mid-20th century, is one of the most famous and widely-accepted theories in child cognitive development to this day. Jean Piaget: Piaget's theory of child development is still one of the most widely accepted in modern psychology. Stages of Cognitive Development Piaget believed that as children grow and their brains develop, they move through four distinct stages that are characterized by differences in thought processing. In his research, he carefully observed children and presented them with problems to solve that were related to object permanence, reversibility, deductive reasoning, transitivity, and assimilation (described below). Each stage builds upon knowledge learned in the previous stage. Piaget's four stages correspond with the age of the children and are the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages. Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development: Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development includes four stages: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Sensorimotor Stage The sensorimotor stage occurs from birth to age 2. It is characterized by the idea that infants "think" by manipulating the world around them. This is done by using all five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Children figure out ways to elicit responses by "doing", such as pulling a lever on a music box to hear a sound, placing a block in a bucket and pulling it back out, or throwing an object to see what happens. Between 5 and 8 months old, the child develops object permanence, which is the understanding that even if something is out of sight, it still exists (Bogartz, Shinskey, & Schilling, 2000). For example, a child learns that even though his mother leaves the room, she has not ceased to exist; similarly, a ball does not disappear because a bucket is placed over it. By the end of this stage, children are able to engage in what Piaget termed deferred imitation. This involves the ability to reproduce or repeat a previously-witnessed action later on; rather than copying it right away, the child is able to produce a mental representation of it and repeat the behavior later on. By 24 months, infants are able to imitate behaviors after a delay of up to three months. Preoperational Stage The preoperational stage occurs from age 2 to age 7. During this stage, children use symbols to represent words, images, and ideas, which is why children in this stage engage in pretend play. A child's arms might become airplane wings as she zooms around the room, or a child with a stick might become a brave knight with a sword. Language development and make-believe play begin during this stage. Logical thinking is still not present, so children cannot rationalize or understand more complex ideas. Children in this stage are very egocentric, meaning they focus on themselves and how actions will impact them, rather than others. They are not able to take on the perspective of others, and they think that everyone sees, thinks, and feels just like they do. Concrete Operational Stage The concrete operational stage occurs from age 7 to age 11. It is characterized by the idea that children's reasoning becomes focused and logical. Children demonstrate a logical understanding of conservation principles, the ability to recognize that key properties of a substance do not change even as its physical appearance may be altered. For example, a child who understands the principles of conservation will recognize that identical quantities of liquid will remain the same despite the size of the container in which they are poured. Children who do not yet grasp conservation and logical thinking will believe that the taller or larger glass must contain more liquid. Conservation task: This video features three children completing conservation tasks. The first two children are confronted with a classic conservation task concerning liquid volumes. The first child does not understand conservation the principle that even though the appearance of substances may change, their key properties remain the same) and is likely in the preoperational stage. The second child understands conservation, demonstrating the concrete operational stage. The third child fails to show an understanding of conservation, and thus is likely still in the preoperational stage of cognitive development. Children begin to organize objects by classes and subclasses, and they can perform mathematical operations and understand transformations, such as addition is the opposite of subtraction and multiplication is the opposite of division. They still think in very linear ways and can only conceptualize ideas that can be observed directly—they have not yet mastered abstract thinking (described below). By the end of this stage, children will develop true mental operations and master the concepts of reversibility, transitivity, and assimilation. Reversibility is the idea that something can be changed back to its original state after it has been altered (for example, pouring water back and forth between two differently shaped glasses and still having the same amount of water). Transitivity is the concept of relation—for example, if A is related to B and B is related to C, then A must also be related to C. Finally, assimilation is the absorption of new ideas, information, or experiences into a person's existing cognitive structure, or what they already know or understand of the world. Piaget determined that in this stage, children are able to incorporate inductive reasoning, which involves drawing inferences from observations in order to make a generalization. In contrast, children struggle with deductive reasoning, which involves using a generalized principle in order to try to predict the outcome of an event. Formal Operational The formal operational stage occurs from age 11 to adulthood. It is characterized by the idea that children develop the ability to think in abstract ways. This enables children to engage in the problem-solving method of developing a hypothesis and reasoning their way to plausible solutions. Children can think of abstract concepts and have the ability to combine various ideas to create new ones. By the end of this stage, children have developed logical and systematic thinking, are capable of deductive reasoning, and can create hypothetical ideas to explain various concepts. Beyond Formal Operational Thought As with other major contributors of theories of development, several of Piaget's ideas have been challenged by later research. For example, several contemporary studies support a model of development that is more continuous than Piaget's discrete stages (Courage & Howe, 2002; Siegler, 2005, 2006). Many others suggest that children reach cognitive milestones earlier than Piaget describes (Baillargeon, 2004; de Hevia & Spelke, 2010). Many developmental psychologists suggest a fifth stage of cognitive development, known as the postformal stage (Bassecches, 1984; Commons & Bresette, 2006; Sinnott, 1998). In postformal thinking, decisions are made based on situations and circumstances, and logic is integrated with emotion as adults develop principles that depend on contexts. One way that we can see the difference between an adult in postformal thought and an adolescent in formal operations is in terms of how they handle emotionally charged issues. It seems that once we reach adulthood, our problem-solving abilities change: as we attempt to solve problems, we tend to think more deeply about many areas of our lives, such as relationships, work, and politics (Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 1999). Because of this, postformal thinkers are able to draw on past experiences to help them solve new problems. Problem-solving strategies using postformal thought vary depending on the situation. Adults can recognize, for example, that what seems to be an ideal solution to a disagreement with a coworker may not be the best solution for a disagreement with a romantic partner. Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, describes the dynamics of long-term relationships between humans. Discuss the contributions of Bowlby, Ainsworth, and Harlow to attachment theory Key Takeaways Key Points Attachment in infants is primarily a process of proximity-seeking to an identified attachment figure in situations of perceived distress or alarm for the purpose of survival. John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth conceived of four stages of attachment that begin during infancy: preattachment, attachment-in-the-making, clear-cut attachment, and formation of reciprocal relationships. Ainsworth identified three types of attachment that a child could possibly demonstrate: secure, avoidant, and resistant/ambivalent. Her colleague Mary Main later identified a fourth type, called disorganized attachment. In his experiments related to attachment, Harry Harlow raised baby monkeys away from their mothers; he gave them surrogate mothers made of wire and wood, to which they developed attachment bonds. Key Terms Separation anxiety: A psychological condition in children characterized by apprehension when separated from a parent. attachment: A strong bonding toward or with. Attachment theory describes the dynamics of long-term social relationships between humans. Attachment in infants is primarily a process of proximity-seeking to an identified attachment figure in situations of perceived distress or alarm for the purpose of survival. In other words, infants develop attachment to their caregivers—upon whom they are dependent—as a means of survival. John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth were two prominent researchers who advanced the theory of attachment as related to human development. Bowlby's Attachment Theory John Bowlby's contributions to the theory of attachment formation are heavily influenced by ethology (the scientific study of human and animal behavior), including an emphasis on the evolutionary origins and biological purposes of behavior. According to Bowlby, children are biologically predisposed to develop attachments to caregivers as the result of genetics. In 1969 Bowlby studied mother-infant interactions and concluded that infant smiling, babbling, crying, and cooing are built-in mechanisms to encourage parents to attach to, and thereby care for, the infant. Keeping the parent in close proximity ensures that the infant will avoid danger. Bowlby introduced the idea of the caregiver as a "secure base" for the child, and that their maternal attachment is a necessity for proper emotional and social development. Harlow raised baby Rhesus monkeys in a nursery-type setting away from their mothers; he gave them surrogate mothers made out of wire and wood, to which the babies developed attachment bonds. His alternative rearing technique, also called maternal deprivation, is considered highly controversial today. Harlow chose to investigate if the baby monkeys had a preference for bare wire mothers or cloth-covered mothers. For this experiment, he presented the infants with a cloth mother or a wire mother under two conditions. In one situation, the wire mother held a bottle with food and the cloth mother held no food; in the other, the cloth mother held the bottle and the wire mother had nothing. In the end, even in the situations in which the wire mother had food and the cloth mother had none, the baby monkeys preferred to cling to the cloth mother for comfort. Harlow concluded that there was much more to the mother/infant relationship than milk, and that this "contact comfort" was essential to the psychological development and health of infant monkeys. Freud's psychosexual theory of development suggests that children develop through a series of stages related to erogenous zones. Summarize Freud's structural model of personality and the stages of his psychosexual theory of development Key Takeaways Key Points Sigmund Freud 's psychosexual theory of development is based on the idea that parents play a crucial role in managing their children's sexual and aggressive drives during the first few years of life to foster their proper development. Freud's structural model posits that personality consists of three interworking parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. The five stages of Freud's psychosexual theory of development include the oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages. According to this theory, each stage of psychosexual development must be met successfully for proper development; if we lack proper nurturing and parenting during a stage, we may become stuck in, or fixated on, that stage. Freud's psychosexual theory has been seriously criticized for the past few decades and is now considered largely outdated. Key Terms conscience: A personification of the moral sense of right and wrong, usually in the form of a person, a being, or merely a voice that gives moral lessons and advices. psychosexual: Of or relating to the psychological aspect and aspects of sexuality. Sigmund Freud was a Viennese physician who developed his psychosexual theory of development through his work with emotionally troubled adults. Now considered controversial and largely outdated, his theory is based on the idea that parents play a crucial role in managing their children's sexual and aggressive drives during the first few years of life in order to foster their proper development. Sigmund Freud: Sigmund Freud developed his theory of development based on five psychosexual stages. Freud's Structural Model Freud believed that the human personality consisted of three interworking parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. According to his theory, these parts become unified as a child moves through the five stages of psychosexual development. The id, the largest part of the mind, is related to desires and impulses and is the main source of basic biological needs. The ego is related to reasoning and is the conscious, rational part of the personality; it monitors behavior in order to satisfy basic desires without suffering negative consequences. The superego, or conscience, develops through interactions with others (mainly parents) who want the child to conform to the norms of society. The superego restricts the desires of the id by applying morals and values from society. Freud believed that a struggle existed between these levels of consciousness, influencing personality development and psychopathology. The id, ego, and superego: Freud believed that we are only aware of a small amount of our mind's activities and that most of it remains hidden from us in our unconscious. The information in our unconscious affects our behavior, although we are unaware of it. Psychosexual Stages of Development For Freud, childhood experiences shape our personalities and behavior as adults. Freud viewed development as discontinuous; he believed that each of us must pass through a series of stages during childhood, and that if we lack proper nurturing and parenting during a stage, we may become stuck in, or fixated on, that stage. According to Freud, children's pleasure-seeking urges (governed by the id) are focused on a different area of the body, called an erogenous zone, at each of the five stages of development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. Oral (0-1 years of age): During this stage, the mouth is the pleasure center for development. Freud believed this is why infants are born with a sucking reflex and desire their mother's breast. If a child's oral needs are not met during infancy, he or she may develop negative habits such as nail biting or thumb sucking to meet this basic need. Anal (1-3 years of age): During this stage, toddlers and preschool-aged children begin to experiment with urine and feces. The control they learn to exert over their bodily functions is manifested in toilet-training. Improper resolution of this stage, such as parents toilet training their children too early, can result in a child who is uptight and overly obsessed with order. Phallic (3-6 years of age): During this stage, preschoolers take pleasure in their genitals and, according to Freud, begin to struggle with sexual desires toward the opposite sex (boys to mothers and girls to fathers). For boys, this is called the Oedipus complex, involving a boy's desire for his mother and his urge to replace his father who is seen as a rival for the mother's attention. At the same time, the boy is afraid his father will punish him for his feelings, so he experiences castration anxiety. The Electra complex, later proposed by Freud's protégé Carl Jung, involves a girl's desire for her father's attention and wish to take her mother's place. Latency (6-12 years of age): During this stage, sexual instincts subside, and children begin to further develop the superego, or conscience. Children begin to behave in morally acceptable ways and adopt the values of their parents and other important adults. Genital (12+ years of age): During this stage, sexual impulses reemerge. If other stages have been successfully met, adolescents engage in appropriate sexual behavior, which may lead to marriage and childbirth. Criticism of Freud's Theories Freud's psychosexual theory is controversial and has been thoroughly criticized. First, even though Freud reported were not real memories but constructs that Freud created and forced upon his patients. Second, many believed his work was too focused on human sexuality, especially his focus on the Oedipus complex and children's sexual desire for parents. Some critics of Freud believe the memories and fantasies of childhood seduction Freud reported were not real memories but constructs that Freud created and forced upon his patients. Finally, supporters of feminist theory believe Freud's theory to be sexist and overly reliant upon a male perspective (for example, his belief that girls developed sexual libido due to "penis envy"). Erikson's psychosocial stages of development focus on the resolution of different crises to become a successful, complete person. Summarize Erikson's stages of psychosocial development Key Takeaways Key Points Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a stage theorist who took Freud's controversial psychosexual theory and modified it into an eight-stage psychosocial theory of development. During each of Erikson's eight development stages, two conflicting ideas must be resolved successfully in order for a person to become a confident, contributing member of society. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy. Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development include trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame/doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair. Erikson also expanded upon Freud's stages by discussing the cultural implications of development; certain cultures may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs. Key Terms psychosocial: Having both psychological and social aspects. autonomy: Self-government; freedom to act or function independently. Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a stage theorist who took Freud's controversial theory of psychosexual development and modified it as a psychosocial theory. Erikson emphasized that the ego makes positive contributions to development by mastering attitudes, ideas, and skills at each stage of development. This mastery helps children grow into successful, contributing members of society. During each of Erikson's eight stages, there is a psychological conflict that must be successfully overcome in order for a child to develop into a healthy, well-adjusted adult. Erik Erikson: Erikson developed his eight stages of psychosocial development based on Freud's psychosexual theory. Stages of Psychosocial Development Erikson's stages of psychosocial development are based upon (and expand upon) Freud's psychosexual theory. Erikson proposed that we are motivated by the need to achieve competence in certain areas of our lives. According to psychosocial theory, we experience eight stages of development over our lifespan, from infancy through late adulthood. At each stage there is a crisis or task that we need to resolve. Successful completion of each developmental task results in a sense of competence and a healthy personality. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy. Erikson also added to Freud's stages by discussing the cultural implications of development; certain cultures may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs. Trust vs. Mistrust From birth to 12 months of age, infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child's basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are responsive and sensitive to their infant's needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive caregivers who do not meet their baby's needs can engender feelings of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world. Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt As toddlers (ages 1–3 years) begin to explore their world, they learn that they can control their actions and act on their environment to get results. They begin to show clear preferences for certain elements of the environment, such as food, toys, and clothing. A toddler's main task is to resolve the issue of autonomy vs. shame and doubt by working to establish independence. This is the "me do it" stage. For example, we might observe a budding sense of autonomy in a 2-year-old child who wants to choose her clothes and dress herself. Although her outfits might not be appropriate for the situation, her input in such basic decisions has an effect on her sense of independence. If denied the opportunity to act on her environment, she may begin to doubt her abilities, which could lead to low self-esteem and feelings of shame. Initiative vs. Guilt Once children reach the preschool stage (ages 3–6 years), they are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. According to Erikson, preschool children must resolve the task of initiative vs. guilt. By learning to plan and achieve goals while interacting with others, preschool children can master this task. Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, occurs when parents allow a child to explore within limits and then support the child's choice. These children will develop self-confidence and feel a sense of purpose. Those who are unsuccessful at this stage—with their initiative misfiring or stifled by over-controlling parents—may develop feelings of guilt. Industry vs. Inferiority During the elementary school stage (ages 6–12), children face the task of industry vs. inferiority. Children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. They either develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don't measure up. If children do not learn to get along with others or have negative experiences at home or with peers, an inferiority complex might develop into adolescence and adulthood. Identity vs. Role Confusion In adolescence (ages 12–18), children face the task of identity vs. role confusion. According to Erikson, an adolescent's main task is developing a sense of self. Adolescents struggle with questions such as "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?" Along the way, most adolescents try on many different selves to see which ones fit; they explore various roles and ideas, set goals, and attempt to discover their "adult" selves. Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of problems and other people's perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents' ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future. Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to "find" themselves as adults. Intimacy vs. Isolation People in early adulthood (20s through early 40s) are concerned with intimacy vs. isolation. After we have developed a sense of self in adolescence, we are ready to share our life with others. However, if other stages have not been successfully resolved, young adults may have trouble developing and maintaining successful relationships with others. Erikson said that we must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful intimate relationships. Adults who do not develop a positive self-concept in adolescence may experience feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation. Generativity vs. Stagnation When people reach their 40s, they enter the time known as middle adulthood, which extends to the mid-60s. The social task of middle adulthood is generativity vs. stagnation. Generativity involves finding your life's work and contributing to the development of others through activities such as volunteering, mentoring, and raising children. During this stage, middle-aged adults begin contributing to the next generation, often through childbirth and caring for others; they also engage in meaningful and productive work which contributes positively to society. Those who do not master this task may experience stagnation and feel as though they are not leaving a mark on the world in a meaningful way; they may have little connection with others and little interest in productivity and self-improvement. Integrity vs. Despair From the mid-60s to the end of life, we are in the period of development known as late adulthood. Erikson's task at this stage is called integrity vs. despair. He said that people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure. People who feel proud of their accomplishments feel a sense of integrity, and they can look back on their lives with few regrets. However, people who are not successful at this stage may feel as if their life has been wasted. They focus on what "would have," "should have," and "could have" been. They face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair. Kohlberg's theory of moral development states that we progress through three levels of moral thinking that build on our cognitive development. Summarize Kohlberg's stages of psychosocial development Key Takeaways Key Points Lawrence Kohlberg expanded on the earlier work of cognitive theorist Jean Piaget to explain the moral development of children, which he believed follows a series of stages. Kohlberg defined three levels of moral development: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Each level has two distinct stages. During the preconventional level, a child's sense of morality is externally controlled. Children accept and believe the rules of authority figures, such as parents and teachers, and they judge an action based on its consequences. During the conventional level, an individual's sense of morality is tied to personal and societal relationships. Children continue to accept the rules of authority figures, but this is now because they believe that this is necessary to ensure positive relationships and societal order. During the postconventional level, a person's sense of morality is defined in terms of more abstract principles and values. People now believe that some laws are unjust and should be changed or eliminated. Key Terms morality: Recognition of the distinction between good and evil or between right and wrong; respect for and obedience to the rules of right conduct; the mental disposition or characteristic of behaving in a manner intended to produce good results. Lawrence Kohlberg expanded on the earlier work of cognitive theorist Jean Piaget to explain the moral development of children. Kohlberg believed that moral development, like cognitive development, follows a series of stages. He used the idea of moral dilemmas—stories that present conflicting ideas about two moral values—to teach 10 to 16 year-old boys about morality and values. The best known moral dilemma created by Kohlberg is the "Heinz" dilemma, which discusses the idea of obeying the law versus saving a life. Kohlberg emphasized that it is the way an individual reasons about a dilemma that determines positive moral development. After presenting people with various moral dilemmas, Kohlberg reviewed people's responses and placed them in different stages of moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, an individual progresses from the capacity for pre-conventional morality (before age 9) to the capacity for conventional morality (early adolescence), and toward attaining post-conventional morality (once Piaget's idea of formal operational thought is attained), which only a few fully achieve. Each level of morality contains two stages, which provide the basis for moral development in various contexts. Kohlberg's stages of moral development: Kohlberg identified three levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Each level is associated with increasingly complex stages of moral development. Level 1: Preconventional Throughout the preconventional level, a child's sense of morality is externally controlled. Children accept and believe the rules of authority figures, such as parents and teachers. A child with pre-conventional morality has not yet adopted or internalized society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong, but instead focuses largely on external consequences that certain actions may bring. Stage 1: Obedience and -Punishment Orientation Stage 1 focuses on the child's desire to obey rules and avoid being punished. For example, an action is perceived as morally wrong because the perpetrator is punished; the worse the punishment for the act is, the more "bad" the act is perceived to be. Stage 2: Instrumental Orientation Stage 2 expresses the "what's in it for me?" position, in which right behavior is defined by whatever the individual believes to be in their best interest. Stage two reasoning shows a limited interest in the needs of others, only to the point where it might further the individual's own interests. As a result, concern for others is not based on loyalty or intrinsic respect, but rather a "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" mentality. An example would be when a child is asked by his parents to do a chore. The child asks "what's in it for me?" and the parents offer the child an incentive by giving him an allowance. Level 2: Conventional Throughout the conventional level, a child's sense of morality is tied to personal and societal relationships. Children continue to accept the rules of authority figures, but this is now due to their belief that this is necessary to ensure positive relationships and societal order. Adherence to rules and conventions is somewhat rigid during these stages, and a rule's appropriateness or fairness is seldom questioned. Stage 3: Good Boy, Nice Girl Orientation In stage 3, children want the approval of others and act in ways to avoid disapproval. Emphasis is placed on good behavior and people being "nice" to others. Stage 4: Law-and-Order Orientation In stage 4, the child blindly accepts rules and convention because of their importance in maintaining a functioning society. Rules are seen as being the same for everyone, and obeying rules by doing what one is "supposed" to do is seen as valuable and important. Moral reasoning in stage four is beyond the need for individual approval exhibited in stage three. If one person violates a law, perhaps everyone would—thus there is an obligation and a duty to uphold laws and rules. Most active members of society remain at stage four, where morality is still predominantly dictated by an outside force. Level 3: Postconventional Throughout the postconventional level, a person's sense of morality is defined in terms of more abstract principles and values. People now believe that some laws are unjust and should be changed or eliminated. This level is marked by a growing realization that individuals are separate entities from society and that individuals may disobey rules inconsistent with their own principles. Post-conventional moralists live by their own ethical principles—principles that typically include such basic human rights as life, liberty, and justice—and view rules as useful but changeable mechanisms, rather than absolute dictates that must be obeyed without question. Because post-conventional individuals elevate their own moral evaluation of a situation over social conventions, their behavior, especially at stage six, can sometimes be confused with that of those at the pre-conventional level. Some theorists have speculated that many people may never reach this level of abstract moral reasoning. Stage 5: Social-Contract Orientation In stage 5, the world is viewed as holding different opinions, rights, and values. Such perspectives should be mutually respected as unique to each person or community. Laws are regarded as social contracts rather than rigid edicts. Those that do not promote the general welfare should be changed when necessary to meet the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This is achieved through majority decision and inevitable compromise. Democratic government is theoretically based on stage five reasoning. Stage 6: Universal-Ethical-Principal Orientation In stage 6, moral reasoning is based on abstract reasoning using universal ethical principles. Generally, the chosen principles are abstract rather than concrete and focus on ideas such as equality, dignity, or respect. Laws are valid only insofar as they are grounded in justice, and a commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust laws. People choose the ethical principles they want to follow, and if they violate those principles, they feel guilty. In this way, the individual acts because it is morally right to do so (and not because he or she wants to avoid punishment), it is in their best interest, it is expected, it is legal, or it is previously agreed upon. Although Kohlberg insisted that stage six exists, he found it difficult to identify individuals who consistently operated at that level. Critiques of Kohlberg's Theory Kohlberg has been criticized for his assertion that women seem to be deficient in their moral reasoning abilities when compared to men. Carol Gilligan (1982), a research assistant of Kohlberg, criticized her former mentor's theory because it was based so narrowly on research using white, upper-class men and boys. She argued that women are not deficient in their moral reasoning and instead proposed that males and females reason differently: girls and women focus more on staying connected and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for emphasizing justice to the exclusion of other values, with the result that it may not adequately address the arguments of those who value other moral aspects of actions. Similarly, critics argue that Kohlberg's stages are culturally biased—that the highest stages in particular reflect a westernized ideal of justice based on individualistic thought. This is biased against those that live in non-Western societies that place less emphasis on individualism. Another criticism of Kohlberg's theory is that people frequently demonstrate significant inconsistency in their moral judgments. This often occurs in moral dilemmas involving drinking and driving or business situations where participants have been shown to reason at a lower developmental stage, typically using more self-interest driven reasoning (i.e., stage two) than authority and social order obedience driven reasoning (i.e., stage four). Critics argue that Kohlberg's theory cannot account for such inconsistencies.

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