

Running of interpersonal cooperation and stage four, the

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Running head: KOHLBERG'S MORAL STAGE THEORY

2 Kohlberg's Moral Stage Theory Lawrence Kohlberg was a developmental theorist of the mid-twentieth century who carried on the work of Jean Piaget and is best known for his detailed and specific theory of children's moral development. According to Lawrence Kohlberg there are three levels of moral reasoning that include two stages within each level.

The Pre-Conventional Level, the Conventional Level, and the Post-Conventional or Principled Level are the main stages according to Kohlberg. Each of these levels is then further sub-divided into two stages to make a total of six stages (Crain, 1985). Stage One of The Pre-Conventional Level includes the punishment and obedience orientation.

Stage Two is the instrumental purpose orientation. The Conventional Level includes Stage Three, the morality of interpersonal cooperation and Stage Four, the social-order-maintaining orientation. The Post-Conventional Level includes Stage Five, the social-contract orientation and Stage Six, the universal ethical principle orientation. According to Kohlberg's theory, moral development proceeds gradually from one stage to the next, in an ordered and predictable sequence. Although Kohlberg recognizes each child progresses through these stages at different rates, and acknowledges that some youth may never reach the highest stages, his theory does not account for regression back to former, previously mastered stages as do some other developmental theorists. Kohlberg believed that most youth reach the mid-level of moral reasoning at the Conventional Level. At this stage, an

individual performs conventionally determined good behavior to be considered a good person.

They are concerned not just with interpersonal relationships but also with the rules set down by society. The law becomes all-important (Pollock, 2017).

This stage includes respect for fixed rules, laws and properly constituted authority. In this stage, there is a complete understanding of that a wrongdoer be punished and should pay his debt to society while law abiding citizens should be rewarded.

Authority figures are seldom questioned and highly respected. This is the highest stage that most adults will attain. Youth, at this stage, believe their moral decisions will be based on whether or not their decisions would win the approval of those people whose opinions matter to them. An example of this might be when a teen is hanging out with friends and they offer him an illegal drug to experiment.

If the teen had reached this stage, he/she would be thinking about the many discussions he/she has had with his parents about the use of illegal drugs and how addicting and destructive they can be. This thought process will likely dissuade the teen from accepting the drugs from his friend. According to Elizabeth Vozzola, "moral education derived in part from Kohlberg's work and his development of a school program called the "just community," where students increased their moral reasoning through democratic

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participation in the running of the school” (Vozzola E., 2015). For the most part, I agree with Kohlberg’s moral stages.

If lacking anything, I would like to see more of the morality and reasoning aspects included in his studies. I also believe that everyone matures at different levels and have personally known people that may have skipped through some of these stages. Additionally, as with any analysis, your experimental pool will vary from group to group, including different genders and cultural backgrounds. For me, I like to think that I am Stage 4 of Level 2, wherein most, fully mature adults land. It would be interesting to me to see research conducted on criminal behavior and how various groups of Running head: KOHLBERG’S MORAL STAGE THEORY
4 criminalst transitioned through the stages.