

# Example of moral development research paper

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



## Introduction

Moral development for male and female has been argued from different perspectives by different theorists in psychology. This includes Kohlberg's theories (Kohlberg to whom Gilligan was a student) and Erikson's theory who was also a lecturer with Gilligan at Harvard. Kohlberg had at several times called Gilligan where they shared in lecturing together). Gilligan's ideas however go contrary to the two bringing about several arguments on the topic.

In her book 'in a different voice', carol Gilligan writes in disagreement with Kohlberg's theory on the issue of female gender having a lower level of moral development compared to the male gender. She criticizes his version on the stages of moral development of the young children arguing that the majority of those included in his research were boys and therefore the girls' voice is not heard. Their representation according to her was minimal and the research did not favor the girls as it did the male gender

She also points out that his scoring methods favored a primary way of reason that boys were familiar with over the moral argument focusing on relationships better understood by girls. Gilligan goes further to show that Kohlberg's', Freud's' and Erikson's' methods were from a male centered view basis (Shaffer, 2004).

In her book, Gilligan includes her own version of the moral development stages which differ in perspective with those of Kohlberg's theory in page eight of her book, Gilligan points out that since the male gender is defined by separation and the female by attachment, then the male gender is threatened by intimacy and the female gender by separation.

Both men and women have their different approaches towards morality. Men however having dominated the discussion and the opposite gender's perspective therefore is not taken seriously. This leads to the assumption that they (female gender) are less developed.

## **Moral development ideas**

### Views on moral development

I tend to agree with Gilligan's phrase that separation describe masculinity and attachments femininity. In this case, the male gender is afraid of intimacy while the female is afraid of separation as was put across by Gilligan.

Men approach morality in terms of rights to others. The female however approach morality from the perspective of having responsibilities towards others introducing the idea of care and responsibility in the relationship. This does not prove that the female gender as being less developed in terms or moral development but rather approaching the issue from a different point of view (Shaffer, 2004).

During the period of growing, children learn or pick up habits or behaviors from their parents. At some point, the boys are attached to their mother but as they grow, they tend to separate their distance from their mothers and imitate their fathers. Girls on the other hand will pick up the traits from their mothers whom they mimic and end up picking the responsibility of being caring . as they play, they are observed to mimic their gender and will grow up in this manner. Girls too are attached to their fathers on some point in their lives

The two are complementary rather than one gender being superior to the

<https://assignbuster.com/example-of-moral-development-research-paper/>

other in terms of moral development. I believe that the female gender tend to be more caring and hence more attached and intimate than their male counterpart. For this reason, they are more caring towards others as in a relationship and therefore the morality of responsibility

The male individualism and separation from the female gender attains them the ethics of care. As much as Gilligan agrees with the general moral development progression in children, she would also like that the sensitive perspective of the female not be ignored.

In her own theory, Gilligan outlines 3 levels in moral development. This includes the selfish stage, conventional morality and post- conventional. From this three, there is a progression from being selfish to a principled morality level.

In these three stages, they start by being selfish and only focusing on themselves. They then progress to being social with others. They learn to share and be fair with others this being the conventional. In the conventional stage, they also learn that selfishness is wrong and that it is wrong to act on their own interest only and not the others.

For women, care comes as a critical of self and not primarily self -protective. For both genders, developments entail the integration of responsibilities for others and respect of others rights by discovering complementarities of the two views. For women however, the integration of these two views is through the knowledge of the logic psychology of a relationship

In the book (pg8), Chodolow (feminist sociologist and psychoanalyst) writes that sex difference in the early experience of relationships and individualism does not suggest that the women are weaker in the ego boundaries as

compared to men. She replaces the negative description as put by Freud about the female psychology with a positive description of her own.

She puts it that, the female gender emerge with stronger basis for empathy of others needs or/and feelings. Relationships are viewed in deference by the two genders. Separation of the boys from the mother is important for them to develop which is not so for the female. A mother will be saddened by the separation even from her own children as in the cases where they leave for further education (Shaffer, 2004).

Women have come to be devalued as a result of their place in man's life.

They have taken the role of nurturing and taking care of the male, she tends to mend the networks of the relationship which she relies upon and this has been mistaken to mean that the female gender is less developed in terms of moral development. This is not so since they only have a different approach of the issue.

According to Gilligan, the irony lies in the fact that history has defined the goodness of the women, their care and sensitivity to others needs and this has now been used to describe them as lesser in the matter of moral development

Although both their theories have come to be accepted in psychology, there remains to be differences on both. Kohlberg's justice operations is bound to rights as stated by Gilligan while her theory includes the caring nature of women and the idea of responsibility. Gilligan thinks that Kohlberg's theory is based on or reflects the western education and cultures.

## **Lawrence Kohlberg.**

Following his education and graduating work in psychology, Kohlberg became interested in Piaget and went on to interview children and the adolescents on the issues of morals which was his dissertation and a rendition of his new theory.

In his method, the core sample was composed of 72 boys aged 10, 13 and 16 from middle and lower class families in Chicago. As his research progressed, he added younger children to his sample number from America and other countries. The interview he held with the children composed of a series of dilemmas which included the Heinz Steals the Drugs Dilemma. He was interested in the reasoning of the children on the questions asked. He would go further to give more dilemma situation in order to get the best sample from the subjects' moral thinking. At the end of this, Kohlberg came up with the six stages of moral growth for the female and male gender (Kohlberg, 1974, Oct)

This comprised of preconvention morality which included stage one and two. Stage one involves obedience and punishment orientation. Where the children assume that the authorities have set a fixed set of rules that must be obeyed. Although some might argue that he Heinz could steal for the sake of the wife.

The second stage is individualism and exchange. In this point, they recognize different individuals have different views such as that of Heinz and of the druggist. In the preconvention stage, since the children are not speaking as members of the society yet, they will look at morality as something external to them (Shaffer, 2004).

Level two of history is conventional morality which includes good interpersonal relationship. At this stage, they are at their teen years and will look at morality as simple deals and that everyone should live up to the societies expectations . In this, they believe in good motives and interpersonal feelings such as love and empathy. Hence they believe Heinz was in the right.

Step 4 involves maintaining the social order. Here, the emphasis is to maintain the law. In this case, the subjects will agree that Heinz motives may have been good but he still broke the law. The last level in Kohlberg's theory is post conventional morality and this composes steps 5 and 6, astep5 involves social contract and individual rights.

In this step, the subjects believed that in the making of a good society, every individual has their role and therefore the social contract. In this step, they might argue that since Heinz wife has a duty in the society, then Heinz might have been justified to steal the drugs for the wife.

The last stage is the universal principle and the subjects believe that certain rights of individuals should be protected and disputes settled through democratic processes.

Though the three stages are the same for Gilligan's theory, they differ in that; her theory includes the female perspective of responsibility and care to others and not just the rights to others (Shaffer, 2004).

In comparison, Gilligan's six stages of moral development involved the pre-convention level which included stages one and two, the first step involved the caring for oneself while the second involved the concern of being selfish. The second level is the conventional level. In this level, stage

three is where goodness is the care for others and is looked as self-sacrifice. The third level is the post conventional level and the fifth stage is towards the dynamics of relationships and trying to eliminate any tension between oneself and others.

The sixth stage is spread to the general recognition of the individual and the others. On Gilligan's model, development morally is developing of the individual in relation to others. This therefore involves care and relationships as excluded by the former stages,

The justice perspective includes the traits such as reason and logic, impartiality, fairness conflicting interests and self reliance while those of care include emotions, partiality, sympathy and empathy, trust and responsibilities (Shaffer, 2004).

## **Erikson's theory**

In the school age years, industry verses inferiority is the basic conflict while in adolescence there is identity and role confusion. This is followed by young adulthood where intimacy and isolation fall and middle adulthood involving generatively and stagnation. This stage welcomes both ideas of Gilligan and Kohlberg's though it still favors the male perception

## **Conclusion**

Although all of these models have tried their best to describe the moral development stages, I tend to agree with Gilligan more on her theory of moral development since she has based her idea on a fair ground. This is to say that, her definition on both the male and female genders is more acceptable because it falls well with the reality of things.



In the society, not everything is based on the idea of rights toward others and justice. It is different for the male gender as it is for the female gender. The female will dwell more on care and responsibility whether it is a mother caring for her children and husband or just in a given relationship while the male gender will always try to separate as it is seen in young males who do not want to be seen a lot with their mothers in public. The little boys will imitate their fathers to try and do as the fathers do hence they grow in the same way (Shaffer, 2004).

This does not signify the male or female to be less developed but rather each is developed in their own unique way. Some studies have even shown that the female are more developed than the male gender which I do not agree with.

Erikson's theory also tries to explain the development process for both male and female. In his theory, he looks at both genders while they are growing and states the different situation they are most likely to face and fall into. This makes more sense except for the fact that his theory tends to favor the male gender more hence in the process

## **References**

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*.

Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

Kohlberg, L. (1974, Oct). Education, Moral Development and Faith. *Journal of Moral*

*Education* 4 (1): 5-16.

Shaffer, R. (2004). *Social and Personality Development* (5th ed.). Wadsworth Publishing.