

# **THE ASSESSMENT OF MORALITY**

## **PART I : THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

**BY**

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that morality is an area of intense human concern. All through history, men have attempted to justify their actions with moral reasons and philosophers have immersed themselves in the problems of defining good and evil. The drama of many great historical events has been coloured by moral considerations; examples are the French Revolution and the American Civil War. Morality is the raison d'être of many social institutions. Moral considerations are the stock-in-trade of religious bodies, and the manifestos of political parties are suffused with moral adjectives.

The psychological study of morality grew out of philosophy. New directions were needed because, whereas philosophy was mainly concerned with defining the ultimate good, psychology was concerned with studying the morality of ordinary human beings. As would be expected in an area of human functioning which is so complex and little understood, the study of morality is one of the most problematical fields of psychology. Thorny problems of definition and measurement, and the ever-present danger of introducing personal moral values into conceptualizations which should try to be objective, plague the student of morality. Peck and Havighurst (1964) neatly sum up the situation in the following words: "There is perhaps no study of human behavior more fraught with risk of subjective bias and culture-bound prejudice than is the study of moral character" (p. v).

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to outline the nature of some of the problems associated with morality.

Probably the most difficult problem which has faced all psychologists interested in morality has been that of objectivity. Perhaps more than in any other field of psychology, the moral theorist and experimentalist has to guard against the danger of projecting his own moral biases into his work. Early work in the field of morality was particularly prone to this failing. Theorists tended to be arbitrary and prescriptive, in that they defined, on the strength of their own insights, set of traits and behaviours

which were claimed to cover the realm of human moral functioning. The failure of this "content" approach produced a disillusionment which almost brought the study of morality to a halt. The subsequent history of research into this domain chronicles a trend away from arbitrary delineations of the field, towards conceptualizations which use more objective criteria.

Problems of objectivity are not limited to the definition of the domain of morality. Even once the domain has been specified, the evaluation of particular types of morality which fall within this domain is subject to experimenter bias. A number of theorists have partitioned the realm of morality into various moral "syndromes" or types of morality which they have ranked in terms of certain criteria. It is a moot point, however, whether any criteria exist which are sufficiently objective to permit the ranking of different types of morality in a manner which is free of personal prejudices.

Both of the problems mentioned above have a bearing on a third problem which relates to the question of universality. Is it possible to identify features of morality which will be found in all cultures, or are the moral concerns of each society so different that no unifying factors may be found? Many socialization theorists and social anthropologists would lead us to believe that morality is as relative as culture. On the other hand, certain theorists of morality claim that they have identified mechanisms which are so fundamental that they will be found in the moral functioning of individuals from all cultures. These mechanisms relate to the structure of moral reasoning rather than to its content and define the "syndromes" of morality which were mentioned above.

One of the greatest dilemmas which has confronted both theorists and experimentalists has been the problem of identifying the mode of human functioning which is most directly relevant to the study of morality. Three different modes have been proposed: behaviour, emotion and cognition. The behavioural approach is the oldest of the three: society has traditionally judged the moral worth of its members through their behaviour and psychologists have tried to do the same: this approach, however, tends to be

superficial and subject to experimenter bias. A second way of looking at morality is through emotion. Theorists of this persuasion have laid particular emphasis on guilt; their psychoanalytic orientation has led them to postulate that the transgression of internalized (superego) principles invariably results in a guilt response. The third school of thought stresses the cognitive, judgmental nature of morality which it sees as a reasoning process. This most recent approach has drawn upon the insights of ethical philosophy for its rationale, and it is ironical that the psychology of morality, which grew out of ethics, should return to it for its latter-day inspiration.

Another problem is the practical one of measurement. It might appear that morality is a far too complex and multi-faceted phenomenon to be amenable to any kind of measurement or assessment, particularly if the assessment is based on a nomothetic approach. However, the fact that society finds it necessary to identify a concept like morality suggests that there must be some core features which are common to the morality of all people, or at least all people within a single culture. The three approaches to the study of morality (behavioural, emotional and cognitive) have each attempted to identify features which are common and which therefore permit meaningful inter-individual comparisons to be made.

Although a number of efforts have been made to measure morality, not all of these attempts have been equally successful in tapping what might be called the "essence" or the most "fundamental" features of morality. The theorists who have approached morality from the cognitive point have probably enjoyed the greatest amount of success for they have identified basic formal features of moral reasoning, structures which describe the essence of an individual's morality to a much greater degree than any assessment of the content of his behaviour or of his emotional responses to transgression. The emphasis of the cognitive-structuralists upon formal, universal features of moral reasoning has enabled them to escape from the position of extreme relativism into which the study of morality had been pushed by socialization theorists and social anthropologists who

stressed the importance of cultural factors in the moulding of moral beliefs. Because it has the desirable features of being fundamentally orientated and relatively content free, the cognitive-structural approach to the study of morality is currently in the ascendancy. An additional advantage of this approach is that it offers scope for assessment using objective methods. Although it can be argued that the cognitive approach is not the final word in the study of morality, it is the best of the three approaches and suffers from fewer difficulties than the other approaches. For this reason, the present study will be based on a cognitive interpretation of morality.

Despite the fact that the study of morality is beset with problems, it remains a rich and interesting area of investigation. Hogan (1973) has summed up this sentiment in the following words: "The subject of moral conduct contains some of the most intriguing problems and paradoxes in the social sciences" (p. 217).

This is an appropriate point to give the reader an idea of the scope of this study, for the chapters which follow will make greater sense if the overall objectives of the study are kept in mind. There are two main aims: test construction and theory testing.

As was mentioned previously, the cognitive-structural approach offers the greatest scope for the employment of objective methods. This approach therefore is desirable from the point of view of test construction. A few techniques are available for the assessment of morality from the cognitive point of view, but none is totally satisfactory. The problem seems to be that the theorists who have constructed assessment instruments have not been psychometrically orientated.

The particular model on which the work in this study will be based has been derived from Kohlberg (1958). The tool which he has used to assess morality is the moral dilemma. Subjects are presented with a series of stories, each of which ends with the "hero" facing a moral dilemma which he resolves by taking a particular course of action. The subjects are then required to comment on the justifiability of this action from the moral

point of view .

Although this semi-projective method is promising in many respects , the particular way in which Kohlberg uses the technique leaves room for improvements . This study will address itself to the task of incorporating these improvements in a moral assessment instrument based on moral dilemmas .

The second aim of this study is to test one of the fundamental claims made by Kohlberg (1971) in his theory . According to Kohlberg , there are six "syndromes" or stages of moral reasoning . Although there is good evidence in favour of regarding these six stages as an effective and comprehensive means of classification , Kohlberg's claim that these six stages are ordered into a hierarchy based on their adequacy is open to objection . The second aim of this study is to test for the existence of this hierarchy .

This study will therefore be primarily concerned with two of the five main problem areas which have been mentioned in the introduction . Although the other three will not be dealt with directly , considerable discussion of them will take place in the theoretical sections .

## 2.0. THE DOMAIN OF MORALITY

In this chapter, attention will be given to the problem of distinguishing moral phenomena from non-moral phenomena; in other words, an attempt will be made to define the domain of morality. Both the philosophical and the psychological approaches to the problem will be reviewed in this chapter. As the two approaches are distinctly different, they will be dealt with in separate sections.

### 2.1. The Philosophical Approach to the Definition of Morality

Concern about morality dates back to the ancients; both Plato and Aristotle commented upon moral issues. They clearly identified morality with the cognitive sphere of man's functioning, thus initiating a long philosophical tradition (Gouldner, 1967). Plato, Aristotle and others conceived of morality in terms of a set of values, virtues and prescriptions. This approach had the disadvantage that the elements in each philosopher's set did not coincide perfectly with those of other philosophers, so that no definite advance was made towards a fundamental definition of the moral domain. Later philosophers have come closer to this, for they have concentrated on identifying universal principles rather than values and prescriptions.

In his work on ethics, Frankena (1963) views morality as a social undertaking which is not for the most part the invention of the individual for his own guidance. Like language and the Church, it exists before the individual, who is inducted into it and who becomes more or less a participant in it. Although parts of an individual's code may be of his own construction, morality is largely social in its origins. It makes demands on the members of a society and, to varying degrees, becomes internalized in these members.

In an attempt to define morality more closely, Frankena (1963) compares and contrasts it with two other systems of social regulation, viz. law and etiquette or convention. Convention does not deal with matters of such crucial social importance as those dealt with by morality and law.

Thus morality is distinguished from convention by certain features which it shares with law. Similarly, morality is distinguished from law (with which it overlaps to some extent) by certain features which it shares with convention, for instance the feature of not being created or changeable by anything like a deliberate legislative or judicial act, and the feature of having as its sanctions, not physical force or the threat of it, but at most praise and blame.

Despite his averral that morality is a largely social undertaking, Frankena (1963) points out that morality, as it has evolved in the Western world, has developed a more individualistic or protestant aspect. He therefore distinguishes two main stages of morality which he claims to be traced clearly both in individual development and the evolution of a culture. The two stages are "customary" or "group" morality and "personal", "principled" or "reflective" morality. This view, in an elaborated form is shared by several psychologists who will be mentioned later.

Lawrence Kohlberg is both an ethical philosopher and a moral psychologist of standing; hence he may be regarded as being singularly well qualified to comment on the field of morality. According to Kohlberg (1971):

" . . . . the epistemological blinders psychologists have worn have hidden from them the fact that the concept of morality is itself a philosophical (ethical) rather than a behavioral concept . . . . one needs to orient developmental research to philosophic concepts of morality . . . . While philosophic concepts of morality differ from one another, their differences are minor compared with the differences between almost any philosophic concept of morality and . . . . psychological concepts of morality" (p. 152).

Kohlberg (1964) approaches the definition of morality cognitively in the following way: "Moral judgments are judgments about the good and the right of action. Not all judgments of 'good' or 'right' are moral judgments, however; many are judgments of esthetic, technological or prudential goodness or rightness. Unlike judgments of prudence or esthetics, moral judgments tend to be universal, inclusive, consistent, and to be grounded on objective, impersonal, or ideal grounds" (p. 405).

It should be noted that Kohlberg does not regard truly moral judgments to be culture-bound, although he does agree that there is a stage in human moral development when judgments are heavily influenced by social pressures. This "conventional" type of morality is recognised by psychologists and philosophers of almost all shades of opinion, but most psychologists do not accept the existence of "principled" forms of morality, probably because they have not approached the problem from a rational, ethical point of view. Most philosophers, on the other hand conceive of morality in terms of universalizable principles, and their definitions reflect this view. Kant (1938), the great ethical philosopher, called his universalizable principle the categorical imperative, and described it operationally as follows " . . . . I am never to act otherwise than so that I could at the same time will that my maxim should become universal law" (p. 17). The philosopher J.S. Mill (1949) made his universalizable principle utilitarianism (the maximization of good over evil). Butler (1950), reflecting the Christian ethic, identified love as the universalizable principle.

The main aim of this section has been to demonstrate that, while philosophers of recent times differ significantly in their conceptions of the ultimate principles of morality, their approach to morality is essentially similar. All view morality as a primarily cognitive, rational phenomenon and all cite similar formal criteria which are necessary conditions before a statement may be regarded as "moral". The main criteria are (i) universalizability, (ii) prescriptiveness, (iii) ideality, (iv) consistency, and (v) impersonality. Hence, a statement like "The Cadillac is a good car" is not a moral statement because it does not imply that everyone should think that the Cadillac is a good car or that everybody should own one (criteria (i) and (ii)). On the other hand a statement like "It is bad to tell lies" implies that everyone should think it bad to tell lies and everyone should tell the truth.

At this point it should be clear that while philosophers agree substantially in their definition of moral statements, their conceptions of human morality



differ, because each philosopher assesses morality against the yardstick of his own universalizable principle or principles. This is true, but it does not mean that the philosophical approach has failed to help us in our search for an objective method of assessing human morality, for the formal characteristics, rather than the content of moral statements may be used as a criterion. In other words the moral philosophy of an individual may be judged in terms of the degree to which his arguments incorporate the formal features of universalizability, impersonality, ideality and the other criteria of truly moral statements. In this way, the philosophical approach to morality can avoid the pitfall of being prescriptive, for it does not demand that an individual value a particular principle in order to be moral; instead it looks at the formal characteristics of principled moral philosophy rather than the content of the philosophy. The philosophical approach does, however, require the acceptance of the notion that the morality of an individual may be equated with the degree to which his statements reflect the formal characteristics of morality. Not everyone would accept this.

## 2.2. Psychological Approaches to the Definition of Morality

Unlike the philosophers, the psychologists have espoused widely divergent views of morality. At least four main schools of thought may be distinguished: the sociological school, the learning or modelling school, the psychoanalytic or affective school and the stage-developmental school.

### 2.2.1. Sociological definitions of morality

The sociological definition of morality was formulated initially by Durkheim (1961). His approach is strictly relativistic. Moral behaviour is defined simply as that behaviour which is concordant with the norms of the ambient society. According to Cronbach (1949): "Character traits are those in which society judges one type of response as more ethical than another" (p. 417). One cannot therefore speak of morality as an invariant or independent phenomenon.

The sociological approach identifies morality with socialization and

writers like Berkowitz (1964) use the two terms interchangeably. Kohlberg (1964) has mounted a vigorous attack on the sociological interpretation of morality. He cites the instances of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia where the vast majority of the populace was "moral" in the sociological understanding of the word, because conformity to the existing social norms was widespread. Nevertheless, Kohlberg claims, it would be extremely difficult to justify these societies as being moral using any other criterion. Even within the context of present-day Western society, Kohlberg stresses the inadequacy of the sociological definition: "...the hollow lives apparent in our own affluent society have made it painfully evident that adjustment to the group is no substitute for moral maturity (Kohlberg (1964), p. 383). The same point is made by McCord and Clemes (1964).

#### 2.2.2. Definitions deriving from learning theory

The learning theory approach to the definition of morality is also relativistic. The relativism, however, is seen to operate at the individual rather than the societal level. Eysenck (1961) defines conscience (which he equates with morality) as a conditioned avoidance reaction to certain classes of acts or situations. Bandura and Walters (1963) view morality more positively by stressing the importance of modelling in the acquisition of moral attitudes and behaviour. Parents or parent-substitutes define moral behaviour and generally act accordingly; the child models his own behaviour on this example.

#### 2.2.3. Definitions deriving from Psychoanalytic theory

Like the previous two approaches, the psychoanalytic approach views morality as a static phenomenon, devoid of a growth potential. The morality which each person acquires in the course of his childhood is an externally given entity which is out of the individual's power to change.

The psychoanalysts have associated the moral sphere of the personality with the super-ego which emerges after the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex (Blum 1953; Nelsen et al, 1969). The formation of the super-ego involves the internalization of standards from the parents, particularly the father or father substitute. Failure to live

up to these standards results in a feeling of guilt (Kaul, 1965).

It should be noticed that, like the sociologists and the learning theorists, the psychoanalysts offer no fundamental definition of morality based on formal characteristics or any other objective criterion. All three approaches see the delimitation of the domain of morality to be largely socially determined. Each individual acquires his own definition of morality either through direct experience of the sanctions and mores of his society, or via some agent, like the parent, who interprets and may add to or modify the social morality before transmitting it to the child.

#### 2.2.4. Definitions deriving from the cognitive-developmental approach to morality

The cognitive-developmentalists have broken away from the traditional Hobbesian view of man to which Freud and others subscribed. In the Hobbesian tradition, Freud believed that society existed primarily to protect men from one another and that culture was established to assist in preventing the breakthrough of man's selfish and destructive needs. Man's super-ego performed the function of preventing the expression of these undesirable needs (Freud, 1939). Unlike the Freudians, the developmentalists do not view socialization as a continual struggle between the interests of the individual and society; rather, socialization is seen as a more positive process, the individual demonstrating progressively greater adaptive abilities and fulfilling this greater potential at successive stages in this development. As a result of this view, cognitive developmentalists tend to regard morality as a growing and changing function within the personality, a function which plays an integrative and interpretative role.

The most prominent developmentalists in the field are Piaget (1932), Peck and Havighurst (1964), Loevinger (1966) and Kohlberg (1958). All of them regard morality as a primarily cognitive phenomenon. Only Kohlberg, however, has offered a precise definition of morality. Because his interpretation of morality is largely philosophical, his views have already been mentioned in Section 2.1. As for the other developmentalists, no explicit definitions are given, and Loevinger (1966) even

makes a case for not offering definitions. Loevinger claims that the present level of sophistication of research into morality is approximately the same as was the level of sophistication of intelligence testing at the time of Binet. She observes that although Binet supplied several pointing definitions, he depended for the most part on a tacit comprehension of what intelligence is.

All the developmental theorists have constructed operational definitions of morality which they have used to direct their research. These should not be regarded as definitions in the true sense of the word. They take the form of moral stage descriptions. Each theorist has identified a set of moral stages which all people are supposed to pass through in the course of their childhood and early adulthood development.

### 2.3. The Definition of Morality for the Purposes of the Present Study

It is possible to adopt the stance of Loevinger (1966) and deny the need for a formal definition of morality. On the other hand, there is no denying that a definition, or at least some explicit statement of orientation is useful in guiding research.

If one looks at the psychoanalytic, the sociological and the learning theory approaches to the definition of morality, one can see that there is a single factor which all share in common. All three have what might be called a "content" approach to morality. The content refers to specific behaviours which are either sanctioned or censured. The patterning of sanctioned and censured behaviours is determined largely by the society or by the subculture. Hence, it is impossible to make any general statements about the domain of morality, because its content changes from culture to culture.

In a sense, this behavioural, content approach is an interpretation of morality at the "molecular" level, whereas the philosophers and Kohlberg attempt an interpretation at a "molar" level which deals with structures rather than content. This permits a non-relativistic definition of morality, for it is held that structures are universal whereas content is

not. The philosophical approach to morality differs from the above-mentioned three approaches in that it interprets morality as a cognitive judgmental rather than a behavioural phenomenon. A statement such as: "It is wrong to cheat the Taxman" is representative of the type of material with which the content approach deals, whereas the cognitive-judgmental approach of Kohlberg and the philosophers would make their interpretation on the rest of the sentence, which could be "...because you might get caught", or "...because each man must pay his fair share towards the national economy".

The alternative endings to the sentence which are given above illustrate a point made by Kohlberg (1971). He claims that any attempt to define and evaluate morality on the basis of content and behaviour is futile, because any one action may be performed for a variety of reasons. The fact that a man does not falsify his income-tax return says nothing about his underlying morality. It is only by studying the reasons for his action that it is possible to make inferences about the nature (i.e. structure) of his morality.

It seems reasonable to believe that the ultimate definition of human morality should incorporate both behavioural and cognitive factors. The student of morality should be interested both in the reasons for an action and in the action itself. A certain amount of insight into an individual's morality is gained if he says: "I do not cheat on my income-tax because I believe I should pay my share", but the final assessment of his morality depends on whether he does in actual fact, always send in a truthful tax return.

As behavioural assessments of morality are out of the question in this study, it has been decided to limit the definition of morality to the cognitive-judgmental realm. The morality of an individual will therefore be assessed on the basis of the reasons he gives for choosing a particular course of action. The morality of these reasons will be determined on the basis of certain structural and formal criteria. These criteria have been derived from the work of philosophers of ethics, and adapted by Kohlberg (1971) for use in the psychological study of morality.

### 3.0. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF ETHICS

As this study draws heavily on the work of philosophers for its basic orientation and its interpretation of morality, a brief outline of the discipline of ethics will be in order.

There are two main schools of thought in ethics. Adherents of these two schools are known as teleologists and deontologists respectively.

#### 3.1. Teleology

The ultimate question in ethics is "What is the good?" (It should be appreciated that when one is speaking of good in the moral rather than the nonmoral sense, it is customary to place the definite article before the word "good".) According to the teleologists, the basic criterion of the moral rightness of an act is the amount of goodness which is brought about by it. The word "goodness" which was used in the previous sentence should be taken in the nonmoral sense. Therefore, in teleology, the final appeal must be to the relative amount of good, or the balance of good over evil which is produced.

Unfortunately, no objective method is available for determining what good is. Many theorists have identified good with pleasure, and are called hedonists. Others have associated good with power, knowledge, self-realization, love and many other concepts. (Frankena, 1963.)

There are two main types of teleologist. The Ethical Egoists claim that one should always pursue what is the good for oneself. The Ethical Universalists (or Utilitarians) on the other hand, hold that one should try to promote the greatest general good. Epicurus and Nietzsche belong to the former group and Bentham and Mill to the latter. (Frankena, 1963.)

#### 3.2. Deontology

Whereas teleology is more concerned with ends, deontology places its main stress on means. Another way of explaining the difference between the two schools of thought would be to say that deontology builds the

foundations of its ethics on actions, while the foundations of teleology is set in things (Waddington, 1960). The word "things" should be interpreted very broadly. Deontologists deny that the good is solely a function of what is good; certain qualities of the act itself which are independent of the goodness or badness of the consequences must be taken into consideration. For instance, the fact that an act keeps a promise, or is just, or is commanded by God can be enough to ensure its moral goodness, because of qualities inherent in such an act. For a deontologist, it is possible for an act to be morally right, despite the fact that it does not produce the greatest amount of good over evil. (Frankena, 1963).

### 3.3. Immanuel Kant

As Kant (1938) is the most influential ethical philosopher of recent times, a short subsection will be devoted to his theory.

According to Kant: "It is impossible to conceive of anything anywhere in the world or even anywhere out of it that can without qualification be called good except Good Will" (p. 8). (Good is being used in the moral sense.) Kant relates the concept of Good Will to duty. When an act is performed, not for personal advantage, nor for the avoidance of unpleasant consequences, it may be said to be performed out of duty. The moral nature of Good Will is related to duty because "an action from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be attained by it, but in the maxim according to which it has been performed" (p. 15).

Hence, duty, as Kant defines it, is motivated by Good Will; duty therefore becomes a moral concept. Duty, however cannot be performed other than out of respect for some rule or law. The ultimate task of Kant's ethics is to identify such a law. The law which Kant provides is the well known Categorical Imperative: "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could at the same time will that my maxim should become a universal law" (p. 17).

Kant is a rule-deontologist, the Categorical Imperative being his only rule. It should be noticed that universalism is both a structural and a content feature in this rule.

#### 3.4. Agapism

One of the most prominent ethics of the Western world is the Christian ethic. The morality of the Christian faith is most succinctly summed up in the two Great Commandments of Christ:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and all the prophets" (Matt. 22 : 37 - 40).

Ethics which is based on the principle of love is usually called agapism. Philosophers have difficulty in identifying agapism with either deontology or teleology and speculate that it may possibly be a third form of ethics.



#### 4.0. A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE PERTAINING TO MORALITY, I: THEORIES OF MORALITY

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a review and evaluation of the theories of morality. Chapter 4 will supply a theoretical background which will assist in giving a fuller comprehension of the empirical studies to be reviewed in Chapter 5.

It is possible to split the theories of morality into three main classes:

- (1) Those derived from psychoanalytic theory;
- (2) Those derived from learning theory and socialization theory;
- (3) Those based on cognitive-developmental theory.

These three main classes of theories will be dealt with in separate sections.

##### 4.1. The Psychoanalytic Orientation

Psychoanalysts generally identify morality with the superego. Freud (1930) distinguishes two stages in the development of conscience. In the first stage, there is no internalized authority and guilt feelings are in effect only a fear of loss of the love of an external authority (usually the parents). This situation is typically found in children, although in some morally immature adults authority remains externalised. Such individuals will engage in forbidden behaviour as long as they are sure that no authority will find out.

Most people, however, pass on to the second stage of conscience development which involves the internalization of the authority with the establishment of the superego. Once the authority has been internalized, it is possible to speak of true guilt feelings which result when the internalized standards of the superego are transgressed. The feelings of guilt result from a hostile attack on the ego by the superego (Kaul, 1965. Blum, 1953).

The superego emerges as the result of the successful resolution of the Oedipal conflict. The superego is claimed by psychoanalysts to be

a well-integrated function; hence the psychoanalytic model would predict that morality is a well-integrated, all-of-a-piece phenomenon. As the standards which are incorporated in the superego are taken over from the authority in a "once-and-forever" process, the psychoanalytic theory predicts that the superego will be stable, changing or developing very little over time. This view is not shared by the cognitive developmentalists who claim that moral development continues to take place well into adulthood.

#### 4.2. The Orientation of Learning Theory and Socialization Theory

Although some of the earlier learning theorists like Dollard et al (1939) have interpreted psychoanalytic concepts in learning terms, most behaviourists have departed from the psychoanalytic model. Two of the most articulate exponents of the behavioural interpretation of morality are Bandura and Walters (1963). They deny that there is any necessary relationship between resistance to temptation and guilt as defined as self-punitive responses. They claim that the acquisition of resistance of temptation responses involves the classical conditioning of emotional responses whereas self-punitive responses are built up by instrumental conditioning.

Bandura and Walters (1963) stress the role of modelling as a transmitter of moral behaviour from one generation to the next. They claim that their studies on modelling have demonstrated that children "may acquire inhibitions without committing a prohibited act and without themselves receiving any punishment" (p. 178).

Parents are usually the models upon which children base their moral behaviour. Parents, however, are not consistent models. A father may urge his son not to cheat, but nevertheless fail to inform shop assistants when he is undercharged. For this reason, Bandura and Walters see morality, as a fragmentary and situation-bound collection of do's and don't's.

Behaviourists like Bandura and Walters (1963) and Eysenck (1961) are particularly opposed to cognitive developmental theories which stress

the integrating function of morality in the personality. A further reason for the rejection of cognitive developmental theories by behaviourists comes from the fact that learning theorists are accustomed to viewing the acquisition and extinction of behaviour in terms of smooth growth and decay functions; therefore, they find it impossible to accept the jerky step-functions which cognitive-developmentalists claim underlies moral development.

Socialization theorists have taken a broader view of the acquisition of moral behaviours than pure learning theorists, in that they see the whole society as a force which has a hand in the shaping of the morality of its members. Zigler and Child (1969) define socialization as "a broad term for the whole process by which an individual develops through transactions with other people his specific patterns of socially relevant behaviour and experience" (p. 474). Most definitions stress conformity to a greater degree. Elkin (1960) for instance defines socialization as "the process by which someone learns the ways of a given society or social group so that he can function within it" (p. 4). Scott (1971) has a similar definition. According to him, norms are internalized through a process of reinforcement, the reinforcement being social approval. It appears from these definitions that socialization is a broader term than moral development which is included in it.

Socialization theorists, therefore, seem to associate moral behaviour with conforming behaviour. Like the psychoanalysts, they distinguish only two phases in moral development. Before the individual has acquired the norms of the society in which he lives he may be regarded as amoral and unsocialized, then after he has acquired these norms he becomes moral, socialized and conforming. These two phases are not distinctly separated; they shade into each other. The socialization theorists deny that there is any further phase of moral development beyond the stage of conformity. Kohlberg (1971) and other cognitive-developmental theorists, on the other hand, distinguished a further level of moral development which they call "postconventional".

Zigler and Child (1969) claim that that socialization theorists over-emphasize the role of conformity in socialization. They point to the variability of behaviour found amongst socialized adults in most societies, particularly the more "advanced" countries. It is significant that it is in the more "advanced" countries that Kohlberg (1971) found most evidence of postconventional morality. It is conceivable that the socialization theory of moral development applies best to more "primitive" societies where individualism is discouraged.

#### 4.3. Cognitive-Developmental Theories of Morality

Cognitive-developmental theorists have broken new ground in the study of morality in that they have developed a relatively culture-free approach to the evaluation of moral statements. Other theorists have anchored their evaluations to the norms of the relevant society, whereas cognitive developmentalists have anchored theirs to ethical concepts which are based on the formal or structural properties of moral reasoning.

Structure is a higher-order feature of moral reasoning than content and is claimed by the cognitive developmentalists to occur in similar form in all cultures. While the content of the moral reasoning of two individuals may be different, the formal characteristics of their reasoning might be the same. It is possible, for instance, for one individual to argue in favour of Socialism while another advocates Capitalism, and despite these, both may be using a similar structural moral argument (which could be the maximization of the welfare of the general population).

Each theorist has distinguished his own set of moral structures or stages which, he claims, covers the universe of moral reasoning.

Within each set, the stages have been ordered into a hierarchy.

According to the cognitive developmentalists, every child in the course of his moral development passes from moral stage to moral stage and it is the claim of each of these theorists that his set of stages and his hierarchy describe most adequately the moral progression of the child. Fortunately, the sets of stages which each theorist has developed share much in common, so cognitive developmentalists present a

reasonably uniform picture of moral development.

Not all individuals develop to the final stages of the moral hierarchy. According to the cognitive developmental theorists, environment plays a relatively minor role in determining the point at which development ceases. Kohlberg (1969) claims that the cognitive complexity of which each individual is capable is the major factor which controls his potential for moral development. As the child grows, the complexity of thought of which he is capable increases. The cognitive development of the child is responsible for a comparable moral development, for the moral stages are ordered into a hierarchy on the basis of the degree of cognitive complexity inherent in each one. A point is ultimately reached when the cognitive development of the child or young adult tapers off and ceases. The level of cognitive complexity which has been reached at this point determines the stage of moral reasoning of which the individual is capable.

Unlike the learning theorists, the cognitive developmentalists claim that moral development occurs not smoothly but in a series of bursts which correspond with the transition from stage to stage. The reason for this uneven progression is that moral reasoning is always based on a particular type of logic; each stage of moral reasoning has a unique logic or rationale which differs from in its formal characteristics from the rationales of all other moral stages. Transitions from stage to stage are therefore abrupt, for hybrid forms of moral logic are generally unstable, hence the change to a distinctly different form of logic usually takes place swiftly.

The internal logic of each moral stage is the central core which holds the stage together; it unifies and integrates the concepts which are used in the moral reasoning of each stage and gives it its distinct character.

The rest of this section will be devoted to detailed descriptions of the various cognitive developmental theories. Each theorist will be dealt with under a separate heading.

#### 4.3.1. Jean Piaget

Piaget (1932) originated the cognitive-developmental approach to morality. The new insights which his structural approach brought to the study of morality pulled research and theory out of the mire into which it had been dragged by the content approach to morality. The work of Piaget inspired Kohlberg who is currently the most influential theorist of morality.

According to Piaget (1932) moral development is closely associated with cognitive development; he claims that his two cognitive stages of concrete and formal operations correspond directly with his two moral stages.

Piaget's two moral stages are:

Heteronomy: Rules are regarded as sacred and untouchable, emanating from adults or God and lasting forever. Every suggestion or alteration strikes the child as a transgression. This form of morality is based on the unilateral respect of the younger child for the adult.

Autonomy: Rules are looked upon as laws agreed upon by mutual consent because of their utilitarian value. Rules are alterable if everyone agrees. At this stage, the child has developed a contractual approach to morality.

The above two descriptions should make it clear that Piaget has a somewhat legalistic approach to morality. Speaking specifically of justice, Piaget has claimed that each stage of morality incorporates distinctive concepts of justice. Retributive justice, for instance is interpreted by heteronomous children in terms of expiatory punishment whereas autonomous children see the purpose of retributive justice as reform. Similar differences are found between heteronomous and autonomous subjects in their conceptions of immanent justice and distributive justice.

Several other features of moral reasoning were found by Piaget to correlate with his moral stages. The most important of these concerns the role assigned to intentionality. Children at the heteronomous stage judge an act in terms of its physical consequences, whereas autonomous children consider the intention to be more important than the consequences.

#### 4.3.2. Jane Loevinger

Loevinger (1966) has distinguished four main areas of human development: physical, psychosexual, ego and intellectual. There is a considerable amount of overlap between the four areas; intellectual development, for instance plays a role in ego development. Loevinger (1966) identifies moral development with ego development.

Loevinger et al (1970) comment on a long-standing issue in the study of ego development, namely the controversy over whether the ego is derived from and subservient to the instinctual drives, or whether the ego may be regarded as an impulse controller and an integrating function within the personality. Freud and the psychoanalysts took the first view, while Adler, Sullivan and others chose the second. Loevinger et al (1970) chooses the second view as her own point of departure. She claims that the cognitive developmentalists are united into a school by the fact that they have all adopted this approach. Pointing out their common ground she says: "All represent holistic views of personality and all see behavior in terms of meanings or purposes" (Loevinger et al, 1970, p. 3).

Seven stages of moral development have been distinguished by Loevinger. They are tabulated and described below:

Stage	Impulse Control and Character Development	Interpersonal Style	Conscious Preoccupation
1. Presocial Symbiotic		Autistic Symbiotic	Self vs. nonself
2. Impulse ridden	Impulse ridden, fear of retaliation	Exploitive, dependent	Bodily feelings, especially sexual and aggressive
3. Opportunistic	Expedient, fear of being caught	Exploitive, manipulative. Life is a zero sum game	Advantage, Control

Stage	Impulse Control and Character Development	Interpersonal Style	Conscious Preoccupation
4. Conformist	Conformity to external rules; feelings of shame if conventional rules are transgressed	Reciprocal, but superficial	Things, appearance, reputation
5. Conscientious	Internalized rules. Feelings of guilt if these rules are broken.	Responsible	Differentiated inner feelings, achievements, traits
6. Autonomous	Coping with inner conflict, tolerance of differences	Concern for autonomy	Role conceptualization, development, self-fulfillment
7. Integrated	Reconciling inner conflicts, renunciation of the unattainable	Cherishing of individuality	Identity

It should be noticed that, although she approaches morality primarily from the point of view of cognitive development, Loevinger has an integrated theory which relates emotional factors to cognitive concepts of ego development. She has succeeded to a greater degree than Kohlberg in relating the emotional components of morality to the cognitive components.

#### 4.3.3. Robert Peck and Robert Havighurst

Like Loevinger, Peck and Havighurst (1964) have adopted an approach which is not totally cognitive; they also take both emotional and behavioural factors into consideration. In their own words: "In short, if character be defined in terms of powerful, emotion-laden attitudes, as well as action patterns that tend to become habituated, the evidence indicates that there is indeed such a thing as individual character, and that it tends to persist through the years." (p. 165).



Although the authors stress the importance of all three commonly investigated areas of morality (cognition, emotion and behaviour), they make no serious effort to combine these three areas into a single coherent theory. Their attempt to incorporate emotional and behavioural factors into their moral stage conceptualizations seems to succeed only partially for some of the stages which they distinguish are impure mixtures of structure and content.

The five stages are:

(1) The Amoral Stage

Individuals at this stage have many features of the psychopathic personality. They are egocentric and treat others as instruments. They are slaves to their own impulses and may commit criminal acts. No moral principles have been internalized.

(2) The Expedient Stage

Like the amoral individual, the person at the expedient stage is egocentric. The welfare of others is taken into consideration, but only if personal ends may be accomplished simultaneously. Expedient persons may act in socially approved ways as long as there is some advantage in it, but if more is to be gained by other methods they will act accordingly.

(3) The Conforming Stage

Persons at this stage value socially approved, conventional behaviour very highly. They have a strong need to be approved of by others and an overriding anxiety that they may lose this approval. Moral evaluations are guided largely by stereotypes; the conforming man has a stereotyped image of how he should act towards his family and behaves accordingly. Despite his apparently socialized and moral behaviour, the conforming individual has no internalized universal principles; he subscribes to a set of concrete rules, each relevant to a particular situation. If he transgresses these rules he feels shame, not guilt.

(4) The Irrational-Conscientious Stage

This is the first stage in which standards are fully internalized. The principles are abstract and universalized, and transgression of these principles result in the feeling of guilt. Persons at this stage are called irrational because of the rigid manner in which they apply their principles without any consideration of the special circumstances of each situation.

(5) The Rational-Altruistic Stage

According to Peck and Havighurst (1964), the Rational-Altruistic stage represents the highest possible level of moral development. Like the irrational-conscientious individual, the rational-Altruistic person has universalized principles, but in addition, these principles are open to critical examination, and may be modified through social experience. The ultimate aim of the rational altruistic person is to promote the welfare of others. Peck and Havighurst list a string of adjectives which are supposed to apply to him: "honest", "kind", "spontaneous", "responsible", "enthusiastic", "constructive" and many others.

It should be clear that Peck and Havighurst's stages are not purely structural. Too often they degenerate into what might be called "character sketches". Stage 5 is particularly prone to this defect.

4.3.4. Lawrence Kohlberg

Kohlberg (1958, 1964, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972a) is with little doubt the most important theorist of morality and should be regarded as the successor of Piaget. Kohlberg has carried on the Piagetian tradition of studying morality from the structural point of view. Like Piaget he has attached his structural concepts to a predominantly legalistic framework.

Kohlberg's theory is more ambitious and more comprehensive than Piaget's. Piaget's theory is restricted in that it is mainly applicable to the study of morality in children. Kohlberg, on the other hand, has

made a study of the moral reasoning of young children, adolescents and young adults up to the age of 25. The set of moral stages which he has compiled has been based on these studies and, Kohlberg claims, covers fully the entire range of moral reasoning structures.

Being a philosopher as well as a psychologist, Kohlberg has brought some of the insights of philosophy into the psychological study of morality. He has conceptualized more clearly than any other cognitive-developmental theorist the criteria of a truly structural approach to morality. Kohlberg has criticised Piaget's two-stage system because the stages do not form integrated structural unities, but are multidimensional. He has replaced Piaget's two stages with a set of six stages which have been identified and described with the help of empirical study and philosophical insights. Empiricism and the ethical approach have been used by Kohlberg as complementary sources in the construction of his theory of morality.

Much of the philosophical influence on Kohlberg's theory comes from Kant. The formal criteria which may be used to evaluate the morality of statements have been most explicitly conceptualized by Kant, and Kohlberg has taken over these conceptualizations for use in the psychological study of morality. According to Kohlberg (1971):

- (a) There are formal criteria which make judgments moral. (These are the Kantian criteria of ideality, universality, impersonality pre-emptiveness, etc.)
- (b) These criteria are fully met only at the highest possible stage of moral development.
- (c) Kohlberg's six stage moral hierarchy represents a scale along which the criteria of a truly formalistic moral philosophy are more closely met in the later stages and fully met at the final stage.

Kohlberg's ambitious claim to have defined the end-point of morality has been disputed by Alston (1971), Peters (1971) and others. More-

will be said about this later.

Because Kohlberg bases his theory on formalistic and philosophical criteria, his interpretation of morality is overwhelmingly cognitive. He makes a case in favour of regarding morality as a purely ethical concept which is unrelated to emotional and behavioural considerations. Although it is possible to criticize his highly cognitive judgmental interpretation of morality, Kohlberg's theory is, within its own domain of cognition, the most internally consistent, integrated and comprehensive body of reasoning about morality that exists to date.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg holds that the interaction between organism and environment has as its endpoint cognitive and moral development which is aimed at achieving greater equilibrium. He sees moral development as an integrated process which is co-ordinated by a sense of self, a term which he has borrowed from Erikson. Each stage of morality which an individual goes through is therefore a personally meaningful entity; it has a structural framework which allows individuals to interpret, interrelate and evaluate experiences and hypothetical situations which fall in the moral domain. The structural framework is determined by a characteristic internal logic which each moral stage possesses.

More than any other cognitive-developmental theorist, Kohlberg claims that the structures which he has identified are to be found universally. In other words, Kohlberg holds that the features of morality which he has chosen to study are culture-free. Most theorists of morality claim that the environment has the most important role in the shaping of the individual's moral orientation, but Kohlberg claims that the quality of the environment serves only to speed up or to slow down moral development through its effects on the cognitive development of the individual. Rich and stimulating environments tend to accelerate the acquisition of more cognitively complex methods of reasoning while unstimulating environments slow the process. Moral development occurs in concert with cognitive development, for the stages of moral reasoning are ordered into a hierarchy on the basis of the degree of cognitive complexity inherent in each. Role taking is regarded by

Kohlberg, as by Piaget, as an important factor in moral development, for the progression from moral stage to moral stage may be seen in terms of an increasing ability on the part of the individual to see issues from the point of view of other people. Rest (1972) has in fact attempted a complete interpretation of Kohlberg's theory from a "sociological" or role taking point of view. Kohlberg's own interpretation is more "philosophical" for it sees moral development in terms of a progression through increasingly differentiated stages of reasoning which come closer and closer to meeting fully the formal requirements of truly moral statements.

Kohlberg's six stages are divided into three levels, each comprising two stages. The three levels are: pre-conventional (stages 1 and 2), conventional stages (3 and 4) and postconventional or principled (stages 5 and 6).

#### Level I : The Preconventional Level

##### Stage 1 : Punishment and obedience orientation

This stage is typical of young children and is very uncommon in adults. The physical consequences of an act are seen to determine its moral worth, irrespective of any intrinsic qualities of the act. Punishment is the central concern of this stage. There is an unquestioning deference to superior physical power. The punishment meted out by superior powers determines which behaviour is to be termed good and which behaviour is to be termed bad, for punishment is equated with badness.

##### Stage 2 : Instrumental Relativism Orientation

Right or good action is that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs, and occasionally those of others. This stage is basically hedonistic and expedient. Although stage 2 is typical of children, many adults also exhibit stage 2 morality. The morality of instrumental relativism regards people as instruments which may be used for the attainment of personal ends, particularly pleasure.

Elements of fairness, equality and reciprocity are present at this stage, but are interpreted naively and strings are usually attached to any activity which benefits another. Stage 2 is the morality of "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours". There are no internalized principles, for expediency is the only criterion which is considered.

Stages 1 and 2 share some general features which characterise level I. The cultural labels of "good" and "bad" are interpreted in terms of physical consequences (punishment, reward, the exchange of favours, etc.). Individuals at level I are marked particularly by the prevalence of egocentrism in their moral orientation. The ethics of level I makes little provision for other people. This moral system considers others only insofar as they are sources of supply punishment. Level I is pre-moral in that there are no internalized principles. In sociological terms, individuals at level I would be called "unsocialized".

#### Level II : The Conventional Level

##### Stage 3 : The Interpersonal Concordance, or "good boy - nice girl" Orientation

Stage 3 should be regarded as the first truly "moral" stage. For the first time moral reasoning is extended to include others in a meaningful way, although the extension is limited to family, friends, acquaintances and members of reference groups. The norms and values which these people subscribe to are of importance to the stage 3 individual and he usually takes them over as his own. Behaviour which pleases and helps family and friends, and which is approved of by them is classed as "good", for the stage 3 person values the approval of important "others" very highly. He conforms to what he regards as majority or "natural" behaviour; although his reference groups will strongly influence his particular interpretation of this type of behaviour. Statements which express stereotyped opinions about how people should be expected to behave are frequently made by stage 3 individuals. Typical stereotyped stage 3 statements are: "A good father should care for his family" and "It's the job of a policeman to protect innocent people from criminals".

Behaviour is often judged by intention. Expressions like "He means well" become important for the first time.

#### Stage 4 : The "Law and Order" Orientation

Good behaviour consists of doing one's duty, obeying fixed rules, showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. As in stage 3, the opinions of others are important, but morality is no longer regarded as those acts approved by fairly small reference groups. Rather, the morality of behaviour is judged largely with reference to the established institutions of society, particularly authority institutions like the army, the police force, the legal system, etc. Stage 4 morality is often associated with political conservatism, but it applies equally well to the left wing "hard-line" communists, for instance, often subscribe to a stage 4 type of morality. The fact that both the left and the right wing may use the same stage of moral reasoning to justify their politics attests to the structural nature of Kohlberg's stages.

Level II is characterized by its active support of fixed rules. Maintaining the expectations and rules of family, reference group or nation is valued in its own right. It is this level which most socialization theorists regard as the endpoint of morality.

#### Level III : The Postconventional or Principled Level

##### Stage 5 : The Social-Contract, Legalistic Orientation

Unlike stages 3 and 4, the morality of stage 5 is not dependent on the approval of reference groups or society. Instead, stage 5 has as its criterion rationalism and utilitarianism. Whereas stage 4 lays emphasis on authority, stage 5 stresses the welfare of individuals within society. The constitutions of democratic countries are often couched in stage 5 morality.

Morally defensible action, according to stage 5 is defined in terms of individual rights and standards which have been agreed upon by the whole society. Stage 5 is aware of the relativity of personal values,

and unlike stage 4, is prepared to accept fully the rights of others to have divergent opinions. For this reason, stage 5 places emphasis on procedural rules for reaching consensus. Outside of the moral life which is in the realm of the constitution and democracy, the good is a matter for personal values and opinion.

Whereas stage 4 has a law maintenance orientation, stage 5 is orientated towards law creation. Rules and laws are not upheld for their own sake; their purpose is to maximise the welfare of all and they should be changed if they do not succeed in this aim. The legalistic and utilitarian orientation of stage 5 extends beyond legal and democratic matters, and pervades the whole life style: considerations of general welfare, pragmatism and tolerance are the guiding principles of stage 5.

#### Stage 6 : The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

In contrast to stage 5's "law creation" orientation, stage 6 has a "higher law" orientation. Stage 6 is the form of ethical philosophy where action is most clearly guided by internalized principles. These principles are self-chosen and abstract, and have the qualities of logical comprehensiveness, impersonality and consistency. The Golden Rule and Kant's categorical imperative are examples of stage 6 principles.

Whereas stage 5 takes a pragmatic, utilitarian approach to the law, stage 6 looks upon laws as derivatives, in the ideal case, of what may be called "higher" or universal laws like reciprocity, justice, respect for the dignity of man, etc. These principles guide the life of the stage 6 person to the extent that if the laws of the country run counter to his own principles, then he will be prepared to break the law in order to maintain his principles.

Level III is characterised by the fact that societal sanctions no longer dominate the choice of values and standards. Principles are chosen according to the criteria of utilitarianism and universalism. The moral orientation of level III is more tolerant than that of level II in that it



acknowledges the right of others to have moral views divergent from ones own.

Kohlberg (1971) has furnished a most exhaustive philosophical argument aimed at justifying his claim that the six moral stages form a hierarchy of moral adequacy. Ethical criteria of universality, ideality, impersonality, etc. are used to support the argument. The objection can be made that while his arguments may make logical and philosophical sense, there is no guarantee that they make psychological sense. Even within the content of philosophical argumentation, Kohlberg's case for claiming the superiority of stage 6 over stage 5 seems to be based on value judgments. Stage 6 incorporates an essentially deontological moral orientation whereas stage 5 reflects the teleological ethic of utilitarianism. Kohlberg has taken the arbitrary position that deontology is superior to teleology. Alston (1971) has also criticised Kohlberg's claim to have successfully defined the endpoint of morality.

#### 4.4. Harvey, Hunt and Schroder

The theory developed by Harvey, Hunt and Schroder (1961) has not been designed specifically to explain moral phenomena. Nevertheless, like Kohlberg's theory it is "cognitive" and "developmental". It also conceives of development in terms of the progression through a series of stages. Certain structural similarities may be found between Kohlberg's moral stages and Harvey et al's cognitive stages. This is not entirely unexpected, since Kohlberg's theory of morality is cognitively and structurally based.

Harvey et al have distinguished four stages of cognitive development:

##### Stage 1 : Unilateral Dependence

There is a complete submission to external control. Conceptual systems are not built up through experience, but accepted from external authorities. Thinking is highly concretistic. This stage bears quite a strong relationship to Kohlberg's stage 1.

### Stage 2 : Negative Independence

There is a complete differentiation between the self and outside constraints. The individual reacts negatively to any attempt at control. He has a very strong will which he asserts in order to maintain his independence. Independence is often used destructively rather than constructively. This stage bears some similarity to Kohlberg's stage 2.

### Stage 3 : Conditional Dependence and Mutuality

This stage is characterised by the emergence of greater objectivism. The exaggerated distinction between the self and external forces is softened by a more realistic appraisal of others. The wishes and needs of others are taken into account and truly mutual relationships become possible. Cognisance is taken of the standards of others. The problems previously encountered concerning the conflict between power and submission are solved by assigning roles and responsibilities within society. This stage corresponds to Kohlberg's conventional level II (stages 3 and 4).

### Stage 4 : Interdependence

The concerns of stages 2 and 3 (viz. autonomy and mutuality) become fused and integrated so that neither interferes with the other. The nature of subject-object relationships is highly abstract. There is a basic orientation towards rationalism and a greater tolerance of views divergent from one's own. This stage resembles Kohlberg's level III (stages 5 and 6).

Space restrictions prevent a discussion of the less prominent theories of morality (e.g. those of McCord and Clemes (1964), Hogan (1970, 1973) and Hogan and Dickstein (1972a, 1972b)).

### 4.5. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, theories based on three different rationales have been reviewed. Those theories based on psychoanalytic theory, as well

as those based on learning and socialization theory share several features in common. Both approaches view morality as a static phenomenon which, once acquired, remains virtually unchanged. Both theoretical orientations view morality as a set of values and norms which are imposed by the environment upon the individual; in other words, the individual is not actively involved in the development of his own morality. Partly as a result of this, both theoretical approaches deny that morality plays any prominent integrating role within the personality. Finally, both approaches see moral development as a two-phase process. Initially there is a period when the small child has not yet taken on the norms and values of family, peer group or society. This is the amoral stage. Later, when these norms and values have been internalized, the child has reached a stage of socialization or morality. The morality of the second stage is conventional or conforming in nature; it is the view of both the psychoanalytic and learning-based approaches that there is no further moral development beyond this stage; in other words they deny the existence of postconventional morality.

The cognitive-developmental approach differs from the other two approaches on all the features mentioned above. Morality is not seen as a static phenomenon but as a continually developing, cognitively dominated function which is personally meaningful to the individual, and which performs an integrating service within the personality. Cognitive developmentalists take the view that morality is not directly influenced by societal pressures. Instead, they believe that moral development is geared to cognitive development. It is possible to criticize the cognitive-developmental approach on the grounds that it tends to ignore environmental factors almost totally.

All cognitive-developmentalists except Piaget have identified more than two stages of moral development. Like the psychoanalysts and the learning theorists, the cognitive-developmentalists have distinguished

a phase of amorality and a phase of conventionality. They have assigned one or more developmental stages to each of these phases. Unlike the psychoanalysts and learning theorists, however, the cognitive-developmentalists have distinguished a phase of post-conventional morality. This phase involves the internalization of principles which are selected on the basis of rationality or idealism and are independent of group sanctions. It appears that the psychoanalysts as well as learning and socialization theorists have not identified a stage of postconventionality because they have been orientated mainly towards an evaluation of attitudes towards acts rather than an evaluation of the reasons behind these attitudes. As Kohlberg (1971) has said, for any given attitude there may be many underlying reasons. The evaluation of attitudes and values in the moral realm, therefore constitutes a cruder approach than the evaluation of underlying reasons.

The rest of this section is devoted to a comparison of the sets of stages identified by the cognitive-developmentalists.

Apart from Piaget whose theory does not adequately account for adult morality, all the other cognitive developmentalists have constructed models which posit between five and seven stages of moral development. The comparisons which will be made below will be between Konberg and Loevinger's system and between Kohlberg and Peck and Havighurst's systems.

Loevinger's stage 1 has no correlate in Kohlberg's system for the reason that it deals with ego functioning at a very early stage. Most theorists would deny that this type of functioning falls within the domain of morality. Loevinger has included this stage because it falls within her broader concept of ego development. The stage 2 in Loevinger's system corresponds fairly closely with Kohlberg's punishment orientated stage 1 and Loevinger's stage 3 corresponds closely with Kohlberg's expedient stage 2. Loevinger's next stage (the stage of conformity) corresponds with both the stages 3 (interpersonal concordance) and

4 (law and order) of Kohlberg. Loevinger has distinguished two phases in this stage of conformity which correspond to Kohlberg's stages 3 and 4. The last 3 stages in Loevinger's system are post-conventional and correspond with Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6. It seems that Loevinger has made distinctions at the postconventional level which are too fine. Kohlberg's syndromes are larger and appear to describe more meaningful units of cognitive-moral functioning. As the area of postconventional morality is as yet still poorly understood, it is dangerous to pose too large a number of stages at this level for many of the so-called "stages" may be a peculiarity of the particular sample which was studied.

Peck and Havighurst's system will now be compared with Kohlberg's system. Peck and Havighurst's stages 1 (Amoral) and 2 (Expedient) correspond to Kohlberg's stage 2. There is so little difference between Peck and Havighurst's first two stages that it is surprising that they did not collapse them into a single stage. The third stage of Peck and Havighurst (the conforming stage) corresponds to Kohlberg's stage 3, and to some extent to Kohlberg's stage 4. The remainder of Kohlberg's stage 4 is accounted for by Peck and Havighurst's Irrational-Conscientious stage 4. These authors' final stage (the Rational-Altruistic stage) relates to Kohlberg's postconventional level (stages 5 and 6) although comparison is difficult because the Rational-Altruistic stage has many features which are non-structural.

The comparison of Loevinger's, Peck and Havighurst's and Kohlberg's stage systems suggests that Kohlberg's system is the most satisfactory. It comprises a comprehensive set of stages, yet it does not make over-fine distinctions at any level. Kohlberg's system seems to handle the conventional level most adequately, for the distinction between the interpersonal concordance orientation and the law and order orientation is only hinted at or unclearly made in the other stage systems. Kohlberg's handling of the postconventional level also appears to be more satisfactory than the treatments of this level by the other authors.

Despite the differences between the three stage systems which have been mentioned above, there are many overriding similarities. In particular, all three systems have clearly distinguished three phases of moral development: a pre-conventional phase, a conventional phase and a post-conventional phase. Similar criteria which serve to differentiate these three phases have also been cited by all the theorists. The pre-conventional phase is marked by the presence of ego-centrism, hedonism and expediency, the conventional phase by a blind acceptance of societally-approved norms and a need to keep the established system going for its own sake, and the post-conventional phase by the manifestation of independent internalized principles and by the acceptance of the right of others to have moral views divergent from one's own.

## 5.0. A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE PERTAINING TO MORALITY, II ; EMPIRICAL STUDIES

It will be remembered that the theories of morality may be divided into three main groups : psychoanalytic, behavioural and cognitive-developmental. As almost all empirical research has been based either implicitly or explicitly on one or other theory, the empirical studies may be divided into three similar main groups. For the sake of clarity and convenience, the present chapter will deal with each group separately.

### 5.1. Studies based on a Psychoanalytic Theoretical Orientation

Studies based on psychoanalytic theory have concentrated on the assessment of emotional responses, particularly guilt responses, for the psychoanalytic orientation makes the claim that guilt should always follow the transgression of superego principles (Sears, Maccoby and Levin, 1957). Many studies have therefore equated "moral character", or "degree of conscience" with the amount of guilt displayed in transgression situations, although Bandura and Walters (1963), Allinsmith (1960) and Grinder (1962) claim that their empirical evidence demonstrates that there is no consistent relationship between resistance to temptation and guilt. According to Pittel and Mendelsohn (1966), the reason why some experimenters have accepted that there is a strong linear relationship between guilt, self-punishment, resistance to punishment and strength of moral values is that the Freudian model predicts that all of the above features are functions of a unitary and integrated superego.

Aronfreed (1961) administered moral stories to 122 sixth graders. In each story, the central figure committed, with minimal justification, a socially prohibited act of aggression. Subjects had to complete the story. Responses were classified into several categories: self-criticism, confession, apology, reparation, modification of future behaviour, etc. Self-criticism or guilt was found to play only a minor role in the responses to transgression. The most common kind of response was correction of deviance, this often occurring without any evidence of self-criticism.

Allinsmith and Greening (1955) suggest that the parental induction of remorse in the child after transgression causes a greater manifestation of guilt in the child than other moral training methods.

The evidence, therefore, suggests that it is invalid to equate conscience or morality with the degree of guilt shown after transgression. Intervening variables like parental moral training techniques affect the relationship, and it appears that there are several other responses to transgression which may be useful indicators of the quality or degree of moral socialization of the individual.

Porteus and Johnson (1965) have attempted to measure morality both cognitively (C) and affectively (A). The A measure consisted of story completions scored for guilt, restitution and confession. One point was given for the presence of each of these features in the story completion. In the C measure, subjects were required to make moral judgments in response to moral dilemmas. Subjects were classified according to Piaget's two-stage system. The  $\phi$  coefficient of correlation between the A and C measures was highly significant, yet low at 0,35 (n = 235 ninth grade males and females). For girls, however, the  $\phi$  correlation was negligible. Intelligence was found to be an important moderator variable accounting for much of the variance shared by the A and C measures. The Porteus and Johnson study shows that the affective and cognitive measures were tapping almost totally different and unrelated areas. A similar conclusion can be drawn from a factor analytic study by Nelsen (1969), although some criticisms can be raised concerning Nelsen's psychometric practices, particularly in relation to the subjects-to-variable ratio. Nelsen found correlations of 0,31 for boys and 0,40 for girls between intelligence and moral development assessed according to Kohlberg's system. The corresponding correlations between guilt and moral development were 0,12 and 0,24. The subjects were 42 male and 55 female 6th graders.

## 5.2. Studies which concentrate on the Behavioural Manifestations of Morality

The study of behavioural aspects of morality may be approached in two



main ways. Firstly, it is possible to study actual behaviour, although it is not possible in all cases to rate the behaviour along a scale of intensity: sometimes the best that can be done is to classify the behaviour as either present or absent. The second method of study is to measure behavioural traits by means of a paper-and-pencil test or a similar psychometric technique. Both methods suffer from problems relating to the definition of the domain of moral behaviours. In general, arbitrary methods are used to identify behaviours which are hypothesised to fall within the realm of morality.

The largest study ever undertaken in the field of behavioural morality was performed by Hartshorne and May (1928, 1929) and Hartshorne, May and Shuttleworth (1930). The authors selected a set of traits which they regarded to be moral in terms of prevailing cultural norms. Amongst the traits studied were truthfulness, honesty with money, honesty in a situation involving prestige, co-operativeness and generosity. Large samples of schoolchildren were used.

The results obtained from this study exploded the myth that morality was an integrated, all-of-a-piece phenomenon. Although the reliabilities of the tests were satisfactory, the intercorrelations among the tests were generally low, ranging from zero to 0.40. Even amongst the various measures of honesty correlations were low. The intercorrelations between honesty, persistence and co-operation averaged only 0.24.

Burton (1963) reanalysed the Hartshorne and May data, subjecting it to a factor analysis. He found that the first principal component accounted for at least 40% of the common variance. Burton's analysis suggests that behavioural morality may be a rather more internally consistent area than previously thought although it can in no wise be considered a well integrated area. Nelsen et al (1969), in a study using over a hundred schoolchildren, replicated Burton's (1963) findings.

The results of the Hartshorne and May studies discouraged for the most part any further comprehensive investigations of behavioural morality.

For the most part, experimenters have limited themselves to small scale studies which examine a few behavioural variables. An exception is the study performed by Peck and Havighurst (1964). These experimenters attempted to assess morality as both a behavioural and as a cognitive phenomenon. The subjects were all 10 year-old children who had been born in Prairie City, an American Midwestern town. The total number of subjects was 120, although for many of the detailed analyses only 34 subjects were used. The subjects were studied longitudinally from the age of 10 to the age of 17.

A large number of different assessment methods were used: character ratings by parents, teachers and peers, interviews with parents and children, TAI and Rorschach assessments, sentence completions, essays and others. Some of the assessments were used to categorise subjects on Peck and Havighurst's five stage system of moral maturity. The experimenters selected six personality traits which they considered to be relevant to the study of morality: Moral Stability, Ego Strength, Superego Strength, Spontaneity, Friendliness and a Hostility-Guilt complex. These traits were selected by the experimenters because they reflected the areas of behavioural morality which were considered important in Prairie City.

The authors found that Moral Stability, Ego Strength and Superego Strength all correlated positively with morality as measured on the Peck and Havighurst five-stage scale. Positive correlations were also found between the above three traits and moral ratings by teachers and peers. Curiously, the authors do not quote any exact figures to support their findings.

The Peck and Havighurst study purports to demonstrate that there is a relationship between morality which has been assessed cognitively and various behavioural traits. There are, however, several weaknesses inherent in the study. Some of the behavioural traits were poorly defined (e.g. Superego Strength); the "halo-effect" appeared to have an influence on many of the ratings and the small sample of only 34 was

used for many of the crucial data analyses.

Numerous smaller-scale studies of behaviour and morality have been undertaken. Some of them are reviewed below.

Several studies have used cheating as an index of morality. Games and tasks have been devised which make cheating possible, ostensibly with little or no chance of detection, although facilities have been built into such apparatus which allow the experimenter to check on the cheating behaviour of the subjects. Hill and Kochendorfer (1969), using sixth grade American children as subjects varied the risk of detection and found that high risk decreased cheating, whereas knowledge of peers' results increased cheating. These results indicate that, in sixth graders at least, there is little evidence of any internalized standards which control cheating behaviour.

Schwartz et al (1969) compared two behavioural variables, the tendency to cheat and helpfulness with Kohlberg's six stage moral maturity scale. Subjects were 35 freshmen. Subjects who tended not to cheat and who were more helpful were found significantly more often in the upper half of Kohlberg's scale (stages 4, 5 and 6) than in the lower half.

Konrad Brenner (1967) conducted a comparative study between American and Soviet schoolchildren. He used a set of dilemma situations which pitted adult-approved behaviour against peer-approved behaviour. There were two conditions in the experiments; subjects were told either that their answers would be shown to peers or that their answers would be shown to their parents. The results revealed that there were significant differences in the expected direction between conditions. In the Soviet sample, however, the effect was less marked; subjects tended, to a lesser degree, to give peer-approved responses when their answers were to be shown to peers. This effect is presumably due to the fact that Soviet society is more authoritarian and places a greater premium on obedience. This study and the study of Hill and Kochendorfer (1969) mentioned above suggest that morality may

be a more situation bound and socially controlled phenomenon than the cognitive developmentalists are prepared to admit.

Bryan and Test (1967) investigated helping behaviour in the presence and absence of altruistic models. The experimental situation was designed to be as natural and everyday as possible. In one of the experiments a woman stood helplessly at the side of the road next to her car which had a clearly visible flat tyre. There were two experimental conditions. In one condition, oncoming motorists drove past a man helping a woman to change a flat tyre before they encountered the lady-in-distress experimental situation. In the second condition, motorists encountered nothing unusual before approaching the lady-in-distress. The amount of aiding behaviour was significantly increased by the presence of the altruistic model.

The studies which have been described above should have left the reader with the impression that research into the behavioural aspects of morality has been fragmentary and piecemeal. Apart from one or two large studies which produced somewhat disappointing results, most studies have examined small areas of behaviour. As a result, experimentation has been unco-ordinated: this lack of overall direction has been intensified by the fact that no comprehensive theory of behavioural morality has been available to guide research. In fact, the research workers interested in the behavioural features of morality have implicitly taken the view that there are no structural features comparable to those found in moral reasoning which would give some unity to research into behavioural features of morality.

### 5.3. Studies based on a Cognitive-developmental Theoretical Orientation

Research based on a cognitive-developmental theoretical framework is directed towards the assessment of moral reasoning rather than emotion or behaviour. Almost all the work which has been undertaken in this area has been based either on Piaget's or on Kohlberg's stage models.

Lee (1971) set out to test Piaget's hypothesis that cognitive and moral development are closely interlinked. Subjects were 195 children aged

Between 5 and 17. Several of Piaget's tests of cognitive development were used. Moral development was assessed by means of moral dilemma stories similar to those employed by Kohlberg. The results revealed a strong concordance between cognitive and moral development, but the concordance was somewhat attenuated when effects due to age were removed.

A further test of Piaget's theory was undertaken by Stuart (1967). Piaget (1932) has claimed that the transition from heteronomous to autonomous morality involves the acquisition of the ability to decentrate. Decentration is defined by Piaget as the ability to shift the given cognitive perspective. This ability is required in autonomous moral reasoning because autonomous morality involves the capacity to perceive issues from the point of view of others. Stuart's hypothesis was supported.

Grant, Kohlberg and White (1968) have also investigated the relationship between morality and attentional factors. Tests of attention included G.S.R. measures and measures of reaction time after various intervals. Moderate correlations averaging about 0,40 were found between measures of morality and measures of attention.

The above-mentioned studies by Lee (1971) and Stuart (1967) have been directed at the investigation of cognitive variables which, according to the cognitive-developmentalists, underlie moral reasoning and give each stage its distinctive structure. Because cognitive developmentalists assess morality from the point of view of structures which are cognitively based and purportedly culture-free, it is possible for these theorists to make the claim that their models have universal applicability. Kohlberg (1968, 1969, 1971) has reported extensively on a cross-cultural investigation which he has undertaken. Five cultures were studied: North-American, Taiwanese, Mexican, Turkish and Yucatanian. The moral reasoning of children from these cultures was assessed at three ages: 10, 13 and 16. The results of this study are presented graphically below.

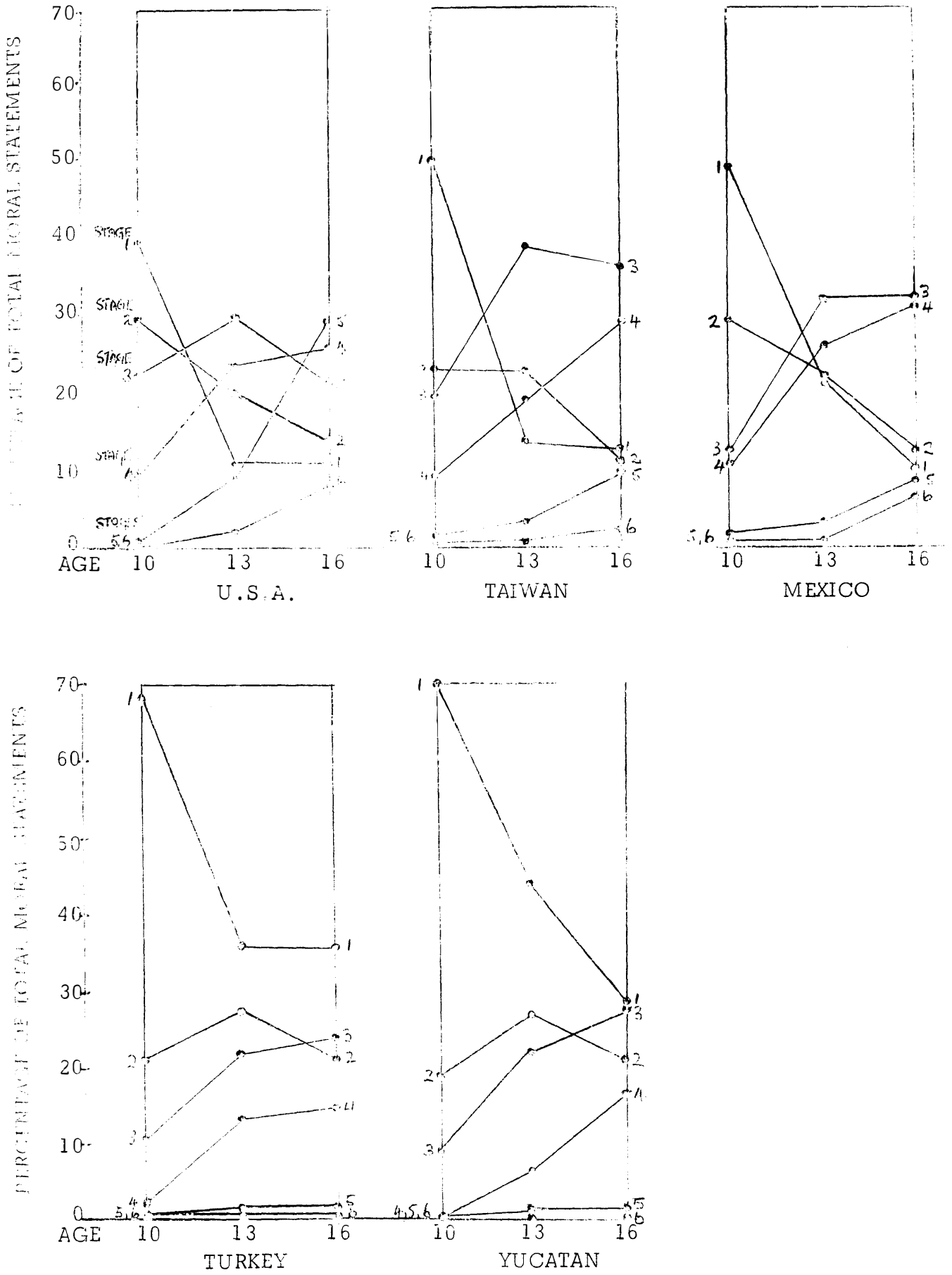


FIGURE 1 : THE MORAL REASONING OF FIVE CULTURES

Kohlberg (1971) claims that his structural stages have proved adequate in the assessment of the morality of all the cultures which he has studied. In addition, he claims that the tables presented above demonstrate the cultural universality of the stage sequence of moral development. At the age of 10, stage 1 is the most commonly used form of morality, followed by stages 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. By the age of 16, however, the U.S.A. sample has reversed this sequence, the higher stages of morality predominating. An exception is stage 6 which is still infrequently used. Stage 5 is the most commonly used moral orientation, closely followed by stage 4. (In most studies using North American subjects, stage 4 is the most commonly used stage.)

The developmental pattern demonstrated by the U.S.A. sample is not replicated in the other samples. In the Mexican and Taiwanese samples, stage 3 becomes the modal morality by the age of 16, stage 4 being the next most common. The Turkish and Yucatanian samples show relatively little development over the six years of study; stage 1 is still modal at the age of 16, followed by stages 3 and 2. Gorsuch and Barnes (1973), in a study using a sample of Carib boys found a similarly small degree of development between the ages of 10 and 16.

Kohlberg is of the opinion that moral development is not directly influenced by cultural variables. However, the degree to which the environment is stimulating influences cognitive development, which in turn influences moral development. If this is the case, then it appears that most non-American environments are highly impoverished sources of stimulation. It is possible that morality is conditioned culturally to a greater degree than Kohlberg is prepared to accept. Although a certain degree of cognitive complexity may be necessary for the attainment of the higher stages of moral reasoning, these stages seem to appear with any frequency only in cultures which such moral reasoning is culturally popular. The frequency of use of stage 5 moral reasoning in the cultures studied by Kohlberg seems to be directly correlated with the degree to which each culture subscribes to

a Western-democratic way of life. The conclusion which can be drawn from this line of reasoning is that Kohlberg's stages are not totally free of cultural influences and that it is unfair to assess the moral development of subjects who do not have a Western-democratic background, using a stage classification system which has been developed for those who do have such a background.

Kohlberg claims that his six stages are ordered hierarchically and that moral development universally follows this order. It is true that the data from the North American sample offers support for his notion of a hierarchical model of moral development. The other samples offer no further support for this thesis, however. In all cases, development has taken place over such a small range of moral stages, that nothing can be said about the order of appearance, or even the likelihood of appearance of the upper stages.

A further cross-cultural study has been undertaken by Tapp and Kohlberg (1971). In this study, the main focus was on the relationship of moral development to conceptions of law and legal justice. Samples were drawn from the following national groups: Denmark, Greece, India, Italy, Japan and the U.S.A. (both black and white cultures). The samples were stratified in various ways; there were 60 subjects per country, 30 per sex, 30 per social class (professional and working) and 20 per grade (4, 6 and 8).

The authors identified certain important areas in law and justice and asked subjects a series of questions which related to these areas. Responses were classified into a set of empirically derived categories. Because three age groups were studied in each sample, it was possible for Tapp and Kohlberg to order their legal categories into a hierarchy of legal development. A close concordance was found in all cultures between the hierarchy of legal development and the hierarchy of moral development. This is not entirely unexpected, since Kohlberg's moral stages are based largely on conceptions of justice. The above study serves to emphasize that Kohlberg's orientation towards



morality is legalistic. He believes that concepts of fairness and justice form the basis of morality.

A number of studies have investigated the factors underlying the development of moral reasoning. Weisbroth (1970) studied the relationship between moral judgment and both sex and parental identification. Thirty-seven male and 41 female college graduates served as subjects. The author found that there was no difference between the sexes in moral judgment as assessed by Kohlberg's test. Identification with both parents related significantly to higher stage moral reasoning in males, while in females, identification with the father was related significantly to higher stage moral reasoning. It is possible that moral development was influenced by some factor more specific than parental identification.

Boehm (1962) and Boehm and Nass (1962) investigated the relationship of social class and intelligence to moral judgment. The experimenters assessed morality using a Piagetian technique which required subjects to make moral judgments revolving around the intentionality of acts. The subjects were schoolchildren who were from upper-middle class and working class backgrounds. In both the upper-middle class and working class samples, intelligence was positively and significantly related to the level of moral reasoning. Upper-middle class children made significantly more mature moral judgments than working class children.

Selman (1971) has investigated the part which role-taking plays in moral development. Sixty 8, 9 and 10 year old children were studied. Selman found that reciprocal role taking skill was a necessary condition for the development of conventional moral reasoning (Kohlberg's stages 3 and 4). In this study, intelligence was controlled, a procedure which many studies have omitted to their detriment. Bell (1965) has also made the point that experimenters pay too little attention to effects due to intelligence. Correlations between moral development and intelligence in children and adolescents vary between about 0.30

and 0,50 (Nelsen, 1969; Rest, 1973).

Fodor (1969) has compared the moral judgment of Negro and White adolescents. Twenty-five Negro and 25 White subjects were administered Kohlberg's moral judgment test. The two samples were matched on age and intelligence. No significant differences were found in moral judgments between Whites and Blacks. It was found, however that subjects whose mothers had had a higher education used moral reasoning of a higher stage than subjects whose mothers had not completed the 12th grade. A number of mediating factors could be responsible for this effect.

Weiner and Peter (1973) have attempted to relate moral reasoning to achievement factors. The subjects were 300 children aged from 4 to 18. They were given various stories, some of which had moral themes and some of which had themes relating to achievement. In all stories, three variables were manipulated: intent (effort), ability and outcome. The experimenters found that in both moral and achievement stories all three variables play a significant role. The relative weightings given to intent and outcome varied with age. Younger children rated outcome more important than intent, while older children reversed the relative weightings of the younger children and rated intent more important than outcome. This finding accords with Piaget's theory.

Several studies have attempted to test the relative virtues of the cognitive-developmental and learning theories of morality. Experimenters who favour the learning point of view have tried to show that morality may be changed rapidly by modelling and reinforcement. They claim that this refutes the cognitive-developmentalists' notion that new modes of moral reasoning emerge only after cognitive development has taken place.

An experiment along these lines was conducted by Bandura and McDonald (1963). The subjects were 78 boys and 87 girls ranging in age from 5 to 11. The children were tested using Piaget's criterion of intentionality

and placed accordingly in either one of Piaget's two stages. The stimulus items were similar to those used by Piaget: subjects were presented with two stories; in one story, a well intentioned act causes a large amount of damage, and in the second story, an ill-intentioned act causes a smaller amount of damage. Subjects have to decide which of the two acts is more reprehensible. Autonomous children generally choose the act represented in the second story (bad intentions, small damage) whereas heteronomous children choose the act represented in the first story (good intentions, large damage).

There were three conditions in this experiment:

- (1) Model plus reinforcement: a model expressed views which were counter to those generally expressed by the child. The child was reinforced if he expressed views counter to his usual view.
- (2) Model alone: this condition was similar to (1) above, but no reinforcement was offered.
- (3) Reinforcement alone: this condition was similar to (1), but no model was present.

It was found that conditions (1) and (2) produced very significant ( $p < 0,001$ ) changes in moral reasoning both from objective responsibility (bad intentions, small damage) to subjective responsibility (good intentions, large damage) and vice versa.

A strange feature of this study is that although Bandura and McDonald, being learning theorists, reject stage conceptions of morality, they have in fact made use of Piaget's two stages of moral development as an integral part of their experiment. A criticism which can be made of this study is that the experimenters have changed, not moral reasoning, but only the behavioural manifestations which are usually associated with it.

Crowley (1968) was interested in the possibility that the results obtained by Bandura and McDonald might be temporary. Therefore, he

administered the posttest in his experiment 18 or 19 days after the main part of the study which consisted of modelling procedures similar to those used by Bandura and McDonald. Unlike the Bandura and McDonald study however, all modelling was done in the direction of subjective responsibility (autonomy). The post test revealed that there was a significant increase in the choice of the "large damage, good intention" alternatives by the subjects. The criticism, applied above to the Bandura and Walters study, also applies to Crowley's study. The findings of Crowley's study have been replicated by Schleifer and Douglas (1973) who used younger children in the 3 to 6 age group.

De Furgy and Woloshin (1969) undertook a study similar to that of Bandura and McDonald, but conducted their posttest a full 100 days after the conditioning phase of the experiment. For subjects who were originally heteronomous, the shift to autonomy was still marked after 100 days. The subjects who were originally autonomous and who had been subjected to modelling in the direction of heteronomy, had almost all returned to their original autonomous moral orientation after 100 days. Similar results were obtained in an experiment conducted by Cowan et al. (1969). These authors state that there is a strong possibility that the results of the above experiments reflect a social co-ercion or "Asch" effect rather than a genuine change in moral reasoning. However, the fact that conditioning in the direction of autonomy is more durable than conditioning in the direction of heteronomy suggests that exposure to higher-level moral reasoning may facilitate genuine moral development.

All the above studies have employed Piaget's classification paradigm. The only study using Kohlberg's classification system has been undertaken, this by Keasey (1973). The subjects in Keasey's study were 63 boys and 63 girls from the fifth and sixth grades of a public school in California. This sample was selected from a larger sample so that it was possible to classify equal numbers of subjects into

each of Kohlberg's first three stages. Keasey's experimental design was complicated, featuring seven conditions, one of which was a control condition. Only the most relevant findings will be reported here. Subjects who were exposed to moral reasoning one stage above their usual stage showed a marked upward shift in moral reasoning in a post-test conducted one day after the main experiment. After two weeks, a second posttest was conducted. The upward shift which manifested itself in the earlier post test had largely disappeared, many subjects having reverted to the form of moral reasoning which they had displayed in the pretest.

Keasey's experiment is the only one which has made a genuine attempt to modify moral reasoning rather than behavioural features which are supposedly correlated with it (i.e. the choice of particular alternatives in Piaget's moral dilemmas of intentionality). The fact that subjects who were exposed to moral reasoning one stage above their own showed an upward trend in their moral reasoning which was comparable, after two weeks, with the upward shift of the control group, suggests that the limited amount of change in moral reasoning which did take place was genuine and was probably caused by the stimulation of being confronted with a variety of moral dilemmas. On the other hand, the fact that it is possible to create dramatic short term changes in moral reasoning due to what Cowan et al (1968) call a social coercion or "Asch" effect suggests that if social pressures are more permanent than is the case in experimental situations, then more permanent changes in moral reasoning may also be brought about. This line of argument leads one to the conclusion that morality is conditioned socially to a much greater degree than the cognitive developmentalists are prepared to accept.

Taken as a group, the studies which have attempted to test the learning and cognitive developmental theories have been inconclusive.

One of the most important and wide-ranging studies in the field of morality has been undertaken by Haan, Smith and Block (1968).

This study investigated political-social behaviour, family background and personality correlates of moral reasoning in a sample of college students and Peace Corps volunteers. Five hundred and ten subjects participated in the experiment. This sample was selected from a larger sample, the criterion for selection being a pure, rather than mixed score on Kohlberg's scale. Hence, all individuals who participated in the study used a form of moral reasoning which was exclusively at a single stage. As there were so few stage 1 subjects in the sample, it was decided to limit the study to the upper five stages of Kohlberg's moral system. The following distribution of moral stage usage was obtained:

	<u>STAGE</u>				
Percentages	2	3	4	5	6
Males	6,3	22,5	43,0	21,3	6,7
Females	2,7	40,9	38,5	13,6	4,3
Total	4,5	31,8	40,8	17,5	5,5

The figures supplied in this table should not be regarded as representative of the student body at large, for the authors deliberately selected certain campus subgroups, including Free Speech Movement arrestees, Peace Corps volunteers and various activists. These subgroups comprised a large proportion of the sample. An examination of the sex differences in the distribution of moral stage usage reveals that stage 3 is the modal stage for females while stage 4 is modal for males. Research undertaken by Kohlberg has commonly produced similar results. It is possible that the social role of the woman as a home-maker promotes the formation of stage 3 morality in females, whereas the business world environment of men is better suited to stage 4.

In addition to completing Kohlberg's moral assessment scale, subjects filled in a comprehensive biographical questionnaire and performed

adjective Q-sorts which were relevant to their evaluations of themselves and of their parents' child-rearing practices.

Haan et al (1968) found that the principled groups (stages 5 and 6) were more radical and were more frequently agnostic or athiestic. They differed to a moderate degree from the political and social views of their parents. The principled subjects tended to become actively involved in political protest.

Principled men described themselves as idealistic, while principled women saw themselves as guilty doubting, restless, impulsive and not very feminine. The following adjectives were used by principled subjects to describe their ideal selves:

Men: perceptive, emphathetic, altruistic, creative, rebellious.

Women: rebellious, free, not ambitious, not practical, not responsible, not sociable.

The conventional groups (stages 3 and 4) were found to be politically conservative and to have small political differences with their parents. The religious affiliation of subjects in the conventional groups were usually Catholic or Protestant. Family harmony was a prominent feature of the conventional groups. Subjects reported that they were strongly influenced by their parents rather than their friends. Conventional subjects viewed themselves and their ideal selves as follows:

#### Selves

Males: Conventional, ambitious, sociable, practical, orderly, not curious, not individualistic, not rebellious.

Females: Ambitious, foresightful, not guilty, not restless, not rebellious.

#### Ideal Selves

Males: Ambitious, competitive, practical, foresightful, orderly, conventional, responsible, self confident, sociable, needing approval.

Females: Orderly, logical, responsible, competitive and self-denying.

The premoral group (stage 2) was composed predominantly of political radicals and liberals. Most premoral individuals were athiests. Men had highly conflictful relationships with their fathers, while their mothers were generally indulgent and easy-going. Premoral women described their mothers in unrelieved positive terms, but fathers were seen as uninvolved and permissive. The Q-sorts produced the following findings on the premoral subjects' conceptions of themselves and their ideal selves:

#### Selves

Men: Reserved, nonresponsive, creative, individualistic.

Women: Stubborn, aloof, feminine, not altruistic, not impulsive.

#### Ideal Selves

Men: Aloof, stubborn, uncompromising, responsive, free, artistic, not altruistic.

Women: Practical, idealistic, stubborn, sensitive.

The premoral sample was small, comprising only 23 subjects. Care should therefore be taken to treat the findings with caution. Nevertheless, Haan et al compare the premoral and principled groups and comment on some superficial similarities. Both groups espouse liberalism-radicalism and athiesm. Both groups also had less than harmonious family backgrounds. Haan et al claim however that there are fundamental differences between the groups, particularly as regards their relationships to society and authority. The principled individuals are independent and critical, but also involved and responsive to others. The premoral subjects are "angry, also critical, but disjointed and uncommitted to others and potentially narcissistic". (Haan et al, 1968, p. 197.) It seems possible that many of the similarities between the premoral and principled groups may have been caused by the peculiarities of this particular sample.



Of the three groups, the conventional group appears, superficially at least, to be the happiest and best adjusted. The reason for this seems to be that the conventional subjects experience harmonious relations with their parents and with society at large, for they tend to accept without critical questioning the norms and values of both parents and society.

Hampden-Turner and Whitten (1971) have also made a study of morality and political persuasion on the campus. According to their analysis, political conservatism is highly related to stage 3 and stage 4 moral reasoning. Most liberals and moderates are stage 5, but radicals fall into two moral groups: some are committed, principled stage 6 moral reasoners, but many are irresponsible hedonists whose morality is at stage 2. Most stage 4 conservatives are under the impression that all radicals and dissidents are unsocialized stage 2's who must be controlled, whereas the stage 6 radicals regard conservatism as a position which they have grown through when they progressed beyond stage 4 morality. The authors explain the antagonism between conservatives and radicals in the following way: "Each partisan feels that in attacking the other he is burning the effigy of his own moral infancy" (p. 76).

Fontana and Noel (1973), in a study on moral reasoning at Yale university, turned up data which substantially supports Hampden-Turner and Whitten's (1971) analysis. Fontana and Noel also included university administrators in their study. The administrators employed moral reasoning which was predominantly at stage 4. As the administrators' job roles require them to take a law-and-order position, it is a moot point whether an individual who subscribes to stage 4 morality is attracted to work which involves a law-and-order orientation or whether the requirements of the work mould the individual's morality.

In a recent study, Fishkin, Keniston and MacKinnon (1973) have examined the role which violence plays in political ideology and morality. Subjects were again university students (34 males and 31

females). They were administered Kohlberg's scale of moral reasoning and a political ideology scale which ranked individuals on three political dimensions: Conservatism, Peaceful Radicalism and Violent Radicalism.

Fishkin et al's findings confirmed, to a degree, those of Haan et al (1968) and Fontana and Noel (1973). Political conservatism and conventional morality (stages 3 and 4) were highly related, whereas violent radicalism drew support from preconventionals (stage 2's). Superficially, the data suggested that the stage 5 and 6 subjects also supported radicalism, but a detailed analysis by Fiskin et al revealed that post-conventional morality is associated, not with radicalism whether peaceful or violent, but with the rejection of conservatism.

#### 5.4. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has surveyed the literature on empirical studies of morality. The studies have been based on one or other of three main theoretical orientations: psychoanalytic, behavioural and cognitive. Unfortunately, there is virtually no overlap between these areas; research in one area is almost totally unrelated to and irrelevant to research in the other areas. Studies which have compared emotional, behavioural and cognitive measures of morality have generally found low and insignificant correlations between these measures.

Research into morality from the point of view of the emotional (guilt) manifestations has run aground, since the evidence indicates that guilt is not invariably associated with the transgression of internalized norms; other responses are possible, but these are not fully understood. In addition, Johnson and Kalafat (1969) have shown that different measures of guilt intercorrelate very poorly.

The research into behavioural aspects of morality has also experienced difficulties, principally in the definition of the domain of moral behaviour. This research is based on a very relativistic view of morality. Morality is seen as a highly culture-bound phenomenon. As Cronbach

(1949) has said: "Character traits are those in which society judges one type of response as more ethical than another" (p. 417). Nevertheless, Leedham et al (1967) appears to be the only experimenter who has made a serious attempt to determine the domain of behavioural morality through empirical means. This work has been ignored by other experimenters who prefer to make their own interpretations of moral behaviour.

The large scale behavioural studies of Hartshorne and May (1928, 1929) and Hartshorne, May and Shuttleworth (1930) seemed to prove that no general construct called morality exists. Intercorrelations between the behavioural and trait measures which were purposed to be within the domain of morality were, for the most part, low. Subsequent research has been fragmentary in the main; various small areas of behaviour which are hypothesized to relate to morality have been studied in isolation (e.g. altruism, honesty, persistence).

Kohlberg (1971) has criticized the behavioural approach to morality on the grounds that there is no one-to-one relationship between behaviour and the reasons underlying that behaviour. Any one piece of behaviour might have been motivated by a number of reasons. Therefore, Kohlberg has chosen to study morality as a cognitive phenomenon.

The study of morality from the cognitive point of view has certain advantages over the other approaches. Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories are comprehensive and supply experimenters with detailed models on which to base research. Of the cognitive-developmentalists, Kohlberg in particular, has developed a sophisticated assessment technique which enable experimenters to assign the moral reasoning of subjects to one of six categories or stages.

One of Piaget's and Kohlberg's main claims is that moral development is geared to cognitive development. Although studies have shown that cognitive factors are important in the progression from Piaget's heteronomous stage to his autonomous stage, the cross-cultural study undertaken by Kohlberg has produced data which indicate that environmental

effects may have an important influence on moral development. Learning theorists like Bandura and McDonald (1963) have attempted to demonstrate empirically that morality is socially conditioned rather than cognitively determined. The results of these experiments have been inconclusive, however.

Taken as a body, the research into the cognitive aspects of morality may be criticised for using a highly restricted range of samples. In almost every experiment, subjects have been either children or university students. Piaget's methods have usually been applied to children and Kohlberg's methods to university students. There is no guarantee that findings which are based on these samples have any generality. There is a pressing need for research into the morality of older subjects (i.e. subjects over the age of 30).

## 6.0. A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE PERTAINING TO MORALITY, III : ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

Chapter 7 will be divided, like Chapters 5 and 6, into three main sections. Each section will deal exclusively with one of the three major areas of study in morality and will describe the assessment techniques commonly used in that area.

### 6.1. Methods of assessing the emotional aspects of Morality

It will be remembered from the chapter on theory that the psychoanalytic school of thought regards guilt as an invariably occurring emotional response to the transgression of internalized (superego) norms.

The most common method of assessing guilt responses to transgression requires the subject to complete a story in which the "hero" has, with minimal justification, committed a socially reprehensible act. By completing the story, the subject indicates what he thinks the consequences of this act will be. This is a projective method of guilt assessment. The reader should refer to Miller and Swanson (1960) for an example of this technique.

A few other methods of guilt assessment are mentioned below:

Ruma and Mosher (1967) have developed a special type of interview technique designed to elicit guilt responses to real-life transgressions which have happened in the past;

Johnson and Kalafat (1969) have compiled a set of projective pictures which are similar to the T.A.T., but which have been selected on the basis of their ability to elicit moral responses from subjects;

Johnson and Kalafat (1969) have also used a sociometric rating method whereby each subject rates his peers on the amount of guilt manifested after transgression. This method is applicable only when all subjects are very well known to one another. Even then, it is doubtful whether subjects are likely to have a good insight into the amount of guilt felt by their peers.

## 6.2. Methods of assessing behavioural aspects of Morality

There are two main ways of studying morality from the behavioural point of view. The first method involves the direct observation of behaviour. The behaviour is usually studied in a particular context. The "lady-in-distress" study undertaken by Bryan and Test (1967) exemplifies the direct observation method. In some cases it is possible to rate the intensity of behaviour, but in other cases, such as the one cited above, behaviour can be rated only as present or absent.

The second main way of studying morality from the behavioural point of view is to determine the degree of approval or disapproval of subjects towards various behaviours which are hypothesized to fall within the domain of morality.

Cheating is a moral behaviour which is often studied directly. Hartshorne and May (1928, 1929) employed several cheating tasks; tests of a similar kind are still being used by experimenters. Hill and Kockendorfer (1969) have used a typical cheating task which they call the "ray-gun" game. Subjects are confronted with an apparatus which consists of a plastic gun and an opaque screen upon which images of rockets are projected. Each subject is allowed ten "shots" with the ray-gun. After each shot a score appears on the screen which supposedly reflects the accuracy of the shot. The apparatus is so programmed that the total score for ten shots is always the same. After ten shots, the screen indicates the total score which the subject has accumulated, and then goes blank. Each subject is then required to report his total score to the experimenter. The degree to which the subject inflates his score is taken as an index of his cheating. For a description of several other cheating tasks, the article by Nelsen (1969) should be consulted.

The sociometric method of peer ratings is often used to assess behaviour directly. This system works only when the subjects are well known to one another. Each subject is required to rate all the other subjects on some behavioural dimension which may be fairly specific (like honesty) or very broad (like moral character). This method has the disadvantage

that it requires a great deal from the subject, for he has to interpret the dimension to be rated and then assess the degree to which the behaviour relevant to this dimension is manifest in his peers. On the other hand, peer rating has the advantage that assessment is done in a less artificial situation than is the case when laboratory tasks (like the "ray-gun" game) are used. Johnson and Kalafat (1969) and Peck and Havighurst (1964) have used the method of peer ratings. Jones (1954) reviews some of the earlier studies which have employed the technique.

A simpler rating method is to obtain only one rating of each subject. In this case the rater is usually the subject's parent or his teacher. This method has been used by Hoffman and Saltztein (1967).

The second main way of studying behavioural aspects of morality is to require subjects to judge the rightness or wrongness of acts which are hypothesised to fall within the domain of morality for the culture in question. This method was used by Eisenman (1967) who compiled a set of items, each of which involved the transgression of conventional morality; the transgression was mitigated in each case by some extenuating circumstance (e.g. "John stole bread because he was hungry".) Subjects had to rate the behaviour in each item on a 7-point scale of moral rightness or wrongness. Similar methods were used by Birnbaum (1973) and McKinney et al (1973).

Leedham et al (1967) has attempted to determine the realm of behavioural morality using empirical means. He has compiled a 75-category classification which Signori and Schwartzentruber (1969) have contracted into 10 main areas of behavioural morality. The problem inherent in attempting to delineate the domain of morality is that the content area which is defined is relevant only to the population from which the sample was drawn. In many cases, this population will be of much less than national size.

### 6.3. Methods of assessing Cognitive aspects of Morality

The cognitive-developmentalists have set themselves the task of assessing morality from the cognitive point of view. The assessment methods of the

following theorists will be reviewed below: Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger and Peck and Havighurst. The methods of each of the theorists will be dealt with separately.

### 6.3.1. Piaget

Piaget (1932) is the originator of the method of assessment based on moral dilemmas. The dilemma is generally split into two parts, each part dealing with a slightly different situation. The following is an example:

"A. A little boy who is called John is in his own room. He is called to dinner. He goes into the dining room. But behind the door there was a chair, and on the chair there was a tray with fifteen cups on it. John couldn't have known that there was all this behind the door. He goes in, the door knocks against the tray, bang go the fifteen cups and all get broken.

"B. Once there was a little boy whose name was Henry. One day when his mother was out he tried to get some jam out of the cupboard. He climbed up on to a chair and stretched out his arm. But the jam was too high up and he couldn't reach it and have any. But while he was trying to get it he knocked over a cup. The cup fell down and broke."

(Piaget, 1932; p. 118.)

The subject is read the two parts of each dilemma and is then asked to state which of the two children is the naughtiest. He is required to motivate his answer with reasons. The main aim of Piaget's dilemmas is to determine the relative importance which the subject attributes to intentionality and outcome. Piaget (1932) claims that heteronomous children give more weight to outcome (i.e. the amount of damage caused) while autonomous children give more weight to intentionality.

A feature of Piaget's dilemmas which should be noticed is that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the two moral stages and the two alternative solutions to the dilemmas. Once a subject has made a choice, he has committed himself to a particular stage of moral reasoning. Therefore, the moral reasoning which a child supplies is used merely as supportive



evidence for classification. Kohlberg's (1968) methods are more sophisticated since the choice of alternative which the subject makes has no bearing on the type of moral reasoning which he can use to support it.

The content of Piaget's dilemmas is such that they are most suitable for administration to children. Piaget's methods are not applicable to adults.

### 6.3.2. Kohlberg

Kohlberg (1958, 1968, 1971) has taken Piaget's method of assessing moral reasoning through dilemmas and developed it to higher levels of sophistication. The content of the dilemmas is such that they can be administered to any subject over the age of about 6. A typical dilemma is given below:

"In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium for which a druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife."

(Kohlberg, 1971; p. 157.)

Porter and Taylor (1972), under the direction of Kohlberg, have written a handbook for assessing moral reasoning. The complete moral reasoning questionnaire consists of nine dilemmas, each followed by a series of relevant questions. Kohlberg himself often uses only four dilemmas to assess a subject's moral reasoning. The first question asked after each dilemma is always of such a form that it requires the subject to judge the rightness or wrongness of the "hero's" behaviour. In the case of the "Heinz" dilemma which is quoted above, the question is: "Should Heinz have done that and why?" The remaining questions are of a more specific nature and are relevant to the particular content of each dilemma. The

responses which the subject gives to these questions allows an assessment to be made which classifies him into a particular stage of moral reasoning. A much more detailed description of the assessment techniques will be given in the following chapter.

Porter and Taylor (1972) favour the method of reading each dilemma out to the subject and recording his responses "live". This approach makes group administration impossible, however; hence the more common method of administration is to supply each subject with a booklet containing the dilemmas and questions; subjects then write their answers down. Subjects are urged in the instructions to give answers which are as full as possible.

It should be noticed that Kohlberg's dilemma test is a projective technique. The rationale behind the method is that the subject will project himself into the dilemma situation and take the role of the "hero". Therefore, the solution which the subject sees for the dilemma should theoretically be the solution which he himself would follow if he were in the hero's predicament.

### 6.3.3. Loevinger

Loevinger et al (1970), like Kohlberg, also takes the position that the only way of assessing moral reasoning is through a projective technique. Nevertheless, she claims that there is no method which may be relied upon to reveal all that one wants to know about moral development. If the test is structured, the experimenter is projecting himself into the situation, whereas if the test is unstructured, the experimenter has little control over what the subject will reveal. The best that a test can achieve is to strike some form of compromise between these two extremes.

Unlike Kohlberg, Loevinger does not regard moral development as a completely discrete process. She claims that signs which first manifest themselves in an embryonic form will appear later at a higher level in a more advanced form. Loevinger sees her stages as a kind of artificial grid which is placed over the developmental process and which makes classification possible, for at present there is no way of assessing morality without somewhat artificially dividing it into blocks. A further point which Loevinger makes is that moral development may take place in different areas at different rates. This makes

a single classification of moral development (or ego development) impossible. Kohlberg (1972a) has come to terms with this problem and modified his assessment techniques accordingly.

The projective method which Loevinger (1966) has selected for use in the assessment of moral development is of the sentence completion type. Loevinger has chosen this method because she claims it offers a good balance between structuredness and unstructuredness, and also because, unlike Kohlberg, she is not solely interested in the cognitive aspect of morality. Her stage descriptions attest to this. (See Chapter 4.)

Loevinger has developed several versions of her assessment instrument. Each version consists of 36 items. The bulk of Loevinger's research has been based on female samples. The assessment instrument is therefore more suited for administration to girls and women, although a version for males is available. A few examples of her items are given below:

For girls and women

Raising a family

When they avoided me

Rules are

Women are lucky because

A pregnant woman

For men

The thing I like about myself is

A man's job

If I were king

When I am nervous, I

An inspection of Loevinger's items indicates that she has chosen many items which relate to the sex of the testee. Since it is Loevinger's aim to study ego development, an area which is not highly related to sex, it is surprising that Loevinger chooses so many of these items.

It appears that the assessment of uncompleted sentence protocols presents many more difficulties than the assessment of dilemma protocols. Loevinger et al

(1970) have supplied a bulky handbook to aid assessment, but nevertheless the unhappy situation exists that assessors have to make inferences on a minimal amount of material. The quality of a subject's moral reasoning is shown best when he is given a chance to develop and interrelate his concepts. This can only be done adequately within the space of more than one sentence. The format of Kohlberg's test makes allowance for this. Little can be gleaned about the cognitive structure of a subject's moral reasoning if there is only half a sentence to go on.

#### 6.3.4. Peck and Havighurst

Unlike other theorists, Peck and Havighurst (1964) do not rely on a single method of assessing morality. They have developed a five-stage classification of morality, and use information drawn from several sources in order to assign a subject to a particular stage. Their main sources are:

- (1) Essays. Subjects were asked to write essays with the following titles: "The person I would like to be when I grow up" and "A good person to have in our community".
- (2) Sentence Completions.
- (3) Interviews with trained psychologists.
- (4) T.A.T. and Rorschach protocols.

In addition to the classification of subjects according to a five stage scale of moral maturity, the authors were interested in six personality traits which they regarded as particularly relevant to morality. They are: Moral Stability, Ego Strength, Superego strength, Spontaneity, Friendliness and a hostility-guilt complex. The authors attempted to define these dimensions and measure them using the same four methods mentioned above, as well as several other methods which will not be mentioned here.

## 7.0. A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE SPECIFICALLY RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY

The present study has two main areas of concern: test construction and theory testing. The first aim is to develop an assessment instrument which will be an improvement upon Kohlberg's present methods. Once this aim has been achieved and a satisfactory classification instrument is available, this instrument will be used in the second phase of this study which will be to test one important aspect of Kohlberg's theory, namely the hierarchical ordering of his six stages.

Because this study may be divided into two distinct parts, the survey of the relevant literature will likewise be divided into two parts.

### 7.1. Moral Assessment

For reasons which have been stated in previous chapters and which will be made more explicit in the next chapter, it has been decided to approach morality from the structural-cognitive point of view. Of the methods which are available, Kohlberg's assessment technique is the most suitable for the present purpose. There are, however, certain deficiencies in this technique. These deficiencies will become apparent in the critical examination of Kohlberg's assessment instrument which will be presented below.

#### 7.1.1. Kohlberg's assessment instrument

Both Kohlberg (1972a) and Porter and Taylor (1972) have described systems for scoring dilemma protocols. The Porter and Taylor system is a simplified version of Kohlberg's scoring method. Both systems will be described here, but Kohlberg's method will not be described fully because it is highly involved.

The following is the scoring system used by Porter and Taylor (1972):

Read through the subjects response to each dilemma story and assign a stage score to it.

The stage score assigned to each dilemma response may be pure or mixed. Mixed scores are assigned when the subject's moral reasoning is a mixture of two stages, usually two adjacent stages. When this is the case, it is generally possible to determine which of the two stages is dominant. If a subject's moral reasoning is a mixture of stage 3 and stage 2 with stage 3 being dominant, then it is scored 3(2). The stage which is included within the brackets is called the minor stage while the one outside the brackets is called the major stage.

Once all the responses have been assigned a stage score, a final global score may be calculated as follows:

- (a) Assign a weight of 3 to a pure score (such as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6).
- (b) For a mixed score, assign a weight of 2 to the major stage and 1 to the minor stage.
- (c) After the stage scores have been weighted, add up the totals for each stage and convert to percentages.
- (d) If, as is generally the case, more than 50% of the responses are at a given stage, this becomes the major stage in the global score.
- (e) If 25% or more of the responses are at a given stage, this becomes the minor stage in the global score.

An example will illustrate this procedure. Suppose that a subject has supplied responses to four dilemmas, and suppose that the following stage scores had been assigned to them: 2(3), 3, 3(2), 3.

The assigned weights are:

	<u>Stage 2</u>	<u>Stage 3</u>
	2	1
		3
	1	2
	—	3
Totals	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>

The percentages are  $3/12 \times 100 = 25\%$  for stage 2  
and  $9/12 \times 100 = 75\%$  for stage 3.

The global score is therefore 3(2).

A slightly more sophisticated procedure is available which enables the assessor to assign a "moral maturity score" to each subject. This score varies between 100 (if all responses are at stage 1) and 600 (if all responses are at stage 6).

Kohlberg's scoring system is more elaborate in that he bases his assessment on the subject's response to various moral "issues". Issues are major moral values which are often seen to conflict with one another in moral dilemmas. In the "Heinz" dilemma, for instance, two important issues which are inherent in the dilemma and which may be used by the subject in his moral reasoning are the dying woman's right to live and the druggist's property rights. Kohlberg (1972a) has organised his set of issues into a smaller set of higher-order internally cohesive constructs which he calls systems. Each system consists of one or more issues. More will be said about issues and systems later, but at this point it suffices to say that various issues may be identified in a subject's moral reasoning. Kohlberg scores dilemma responses according to the stage of moral reasoning on each issue or system rather than the stage of moral reasoning on the response as a whole.

The issue or system scoring procedure is a recent development by Kohlberg. Systems are important from a theoretical point of view, for they may be regarded as broad areas of moral reasoning which may be subject to differences in terms of the degree of moral development which has occurred in each. A subject may use different stages of moral reasoning in different systems. For this reason, it would be desirable from the metric point of view to obtain a profile of scores for each subject, the profile reflecting the stage of moral reasoning used in each and every system.

Unfortunately, Kohlberg (1972a) has not found it possible to do this adequately. The reason why he has found difficulty in deriving separate stage scores for each system is that he has not updated the set of dilemmas which he has traditionally used to assess moral reasoning.

These dilemmas were adequate for Kohlberg's original scheme of assigning a single moral score to each subject but they are not up to the task of yielding a battery of scores on a set of systems.

The old dilemmas which Kohlberg (1972a) is still using were not carefully constructed according to their system content, because Kohlberg had not yet evolved his theory of systems. Consequently, Kohlberg has no set of dilemmas available which covers all systems exhaustively, giving each an equal degree of representation.

This inequality in the degree of representation of each system has created metric problems which have made it impossible for Kohlberg to assign separate stage scores to each system. Consequently he usually combines the issue or system scores which he has obtained into a single global score. He has evolved a complicated weighting system which he uses to manipulate the incomplete set of issue or system data into a single score. This system is highly arbitrary.

The above criticisms should make it clear that Kohlberg's scoring system and his repertoire of dilemmas leave much to be desired. There is a definite need for a set of dilemmas which have been constructed to more rigid specifications. The set of dilemmas should be constructed so that each dilemma incorporates a limited, preferably small number of issues. In other words, the dilemmas should be highly specialized. The total set should be designed so that all issues get equal representation. A desirable feature would be the inclusion of what might be called "parallel dilemmas" so that some estimation of reliability would be possible. At present the only index of reliability which is available is a measure of inter-rater reliability. Turiel (1966) and Rest (1973) have found the inter-rater reliability to be high (around 0,90).

At this point, something more should be said about the nature of Kohlberg's issues and systems. As the issues are the "building blocks" out of which the systems were created, the discussion which follows will deal with issues first, and then with derived systems.



Kohlberg (1972a) defines issues as "... a loose term for the general units in a moral situation which are seen as in potential conflict with one another" (p. 19). In the "Heinz" dilemma the conflicts revolve around the druggist's demands for money, the wife's claim to live, the question of stealing and possibly other less obvious matters. These conflicts are concrete examples of underlying issues: property, value of life, law, etc. The issues are in fact values. Kohlberg regards the set of issues which he has defined as a comprehensive collection of universal values. Although the values are universal, not everyone orders them in the same way. The ordering appears to vary from moral stage to moral stage. At stage 4 for instance, "law" becomes the most important issue. The stage 4 individual might argue that Heinz should not steal the drug because he would be breaking the law.

The following are the issues which Kohlberg has defined:

A. Law - orientations to laws and the legal system.

B. Conscience - morality and the choice process.

Kohlberg divides the conscience issue into several subissues.

The main ones are:

BI. the psychological sanctions for moral action, both external and internal (punishment, approval, guilt).

BIII. concepts of duty, responsibility and moral law (moral right and wrong), which may conflict or co-incide with the actor's wish.

BV. general moral theory; abstract or general definitions of "moral" and "duty".

C. Personal-affectational roles and relations - two subissues are distinguished:

CI. concerns revolving around role-stereotypes and good personal roles. Roles adopted towards family and friends are concerns of this subissue.

- CII. relations of affection : the part which personal affections and friendships play in the making of moral decisions.
- D. Authority and Civic Order Roles (where not defined by actual law) - two subissues are distinguished:
  - DI. stereotypes and concepts of citizen and military roles.
  - DII. orientations toward authority, respect for authority and power.
- E. Civil Rights - concerns for liberty or for all rights which are not the right to life and to property.
- F. Contract, Promise, Trust and Reciprocal Exchange
- G. The disposition to punish or not to punish and the reasons for it
- H. Life - interpretations of the worth of life, particularly in relation to other issues like law, property rights and conscience.
- I. Property rights
- J. Truth
- K. Sexual roles and values, and Sexual Love

Kohlberg has organized these eleven issues into a set of five systems. These systems were constructed on the basis of two criteria : logical-philosophical cohesiveness and internal stage-consistency. The systems are of particular interest to this study because they form a set of manageable size which could be used as a basis for dilemma construction.

A brief description of Kohlberg's systems will now be given. It should be noticed that each of the five major systems constitutes the major area of moral concern of one of five stages (stage 1 is excluded). This point will become clearer once the systems have been described.

The first system is the Conscience system. It is composed of only one issue (B, conscience). Conscience is the main area of concern in stage 6 moral reasoning.

The second system is the Legal/Judicial system. The following issues are

incorporated in it : A (law) , G (punishment) and E (Civil Rights) . Moral reasoning within this system is concerned with the rights and welfare of the individual vis-a-vis the rights and welfare of the organisation (usually the state) and is an attempt to do justice to the competing interests of both . The type of justice which is employed (and hence , the solution which is reached) depends on the stage of moral reasoning which is used . The Legal/Judicial system is of major concern to stage 5 moral reasoning .

The third system is the Polity system; it is composed of issues D (Authority and Civic Order Roles) and E (Civil Rights) . The Polity system is concerned with orientations towards legitimate authority . It should be noticed that the Legal(Judicial and the Polity systems overlap to a degree , for both incorporate issue E . The Polity system is the main area of concern for stage 4 moral reasoning .

The Affectional system is the fourth system . The following issues are included in it : C (Role Stereotypes and relations of Affection) and K (Sex and love) . The moral reasoning of the Affectional system revolves around the ethics of personal relationships , particularly those where affection is involved . Moral reasoning within the Affectional system is primarily concerned with interpreting the role which affection , friendship , loyalty and family ties should play in the moral decision making process . The Affectional system is central to stage 3 moral reasoning .

The fifth system is the economic system . The following issues are involved : F (Relations of Contract and reciprocity) , I (Property rights) and J (Truth and Trust) . This system concerns the moral aspects of the conditions of exchange . The exchangeable commodities which are the concern of the Economic system are of a non-affectional nature; system four deals with the exchange of affection . Much of the moral reasoning of stage 2 falls within the domain of this Economic system .

One issue (viz. Life) , is not included in any of the systems which have been described above . Kohlberg (1972a) seems unsure about how he should handle this issue , for at some points he regards it as a separate

system, while at other times he ignores it altogether. It does appear to be rather too restricted a construct to be awarded system status. In fact "Life" seems to be an issue which cuts across all other systems.

It should not be thought that each stage of moral reasoning limits itself to a single system. The ethics of each stage cover all systems, although one particular system appears to be central in each stage.

As it is intended in this study to use dilemmas to assess morality, a close examination should be made of the dilemmas used by Kohlberg. Certain metric and content features of these dilemmas have already been discussed. Nothing yet has been said about their format, however.

A particularly important feature of a dilemma is its ending. There are two possible endings. Either the story leaves off at the point where the "hero" is still undecided as to which course of action to take, or the story continues to the point where the "hero" has taken a decision and may have even carried it out. If the dilemma has the former type of ending, the subject is usually required to state, with reasons, which course of action he thinks the "hero" should follow. In the case where the dilemma has the latter type of ending, the subject is asked to judge the morality of the "hero's" solution of the dilemma.

Kohlberg generally uses the latter type of ending. In the "Heinz" dilemma, for instance the dilemma ends with Heinz breaking into the druggist's store. Nevertheless, there seems to be more to commend the format which requires the subject to make his own choice between the five possible courses of action. This type of ending is more likely to cause the subject to project himself into the situation and become personally involved when he responds to the dilemma.

A further point of criticism of Kohlberg's present format concerns the set of questions which is asked after the dilemma. No standardised practice is followed. The number and content of the questions vary from dilemma to dilemma. Part of this inconsistency is due to the fact that Kohlberg's dilemmas have not been carefully constructed with a specified issue or

system content. This practice is metrically unsatisfactory.

A word should be said about the realism of Kohlberg's dilemmas. Kohlberg (1972b) uses both realistic and unrealistic dilemmas. In terms of realism, the "Heinz" dilemma is fairly "middle of the road" : some dilemmas are appreciably more unrealistic while others are appreciably more realistic. Kohlberg has not investigated the relative efficacy of realistic and unrealistic dilemmas in terms of their ability to stimulate more reasoning. From the point of view of projective theory, it might be argued that unrealistic dilemmas are preferable because a subject is more likely to project freely into a situation which is not too close to his own life experience. On the other hand, it is possible that unrealistic dilemmas, being far removed from the everyday experience, are not taken seriously by the subject, with the result that responses become impoverished. Some research in this area is indicated.

## 7.2. Aspects of Kohlberg's Theory

The theory testing part of this study will investigate Kohlberg's claim that his six stages are ordered into a hierarchy according to a criterion of cognitive complexity. To date, several experiments have been performed by Kohlberg and his colleagues, which have attempted to demonstrate this hierarchy. In addition, Kohlberg has attempted to justify the hierarchy from the theoretical point of view. A review and criticism of both the empirical and the theoretical work follows.

### 7.2.1. A review and criticism of the attempts to justify the hierarchy empirically

Some mention has already been made of Kohlberg's cross-cultural study (Kohlberg, 1968, 1969, 1971). The point was made that the data could be interpreted to favour an explanation of moral development which assigns a much larger role than does Kohlberg's theory to environmental factors. If only the data obtained from the North American sample is examined, there is good evidence for concluding that development has taken place according to the ordered sequence of stages which Kohlberg proposes. As this sample was studied for 6 years (over the age range of 10 to 16), one would expect cognitive development to have taken place during this space of time. Therefore, one would also expect there to be a correlation

development, as they understand it, is always unidirectional. Once a particular stage has been reached, it is impossible to return to a previous developmental stage except in rare cases of pathological regression.

Kohlberg and Kramer have made these claims despite contradictory evidence. Citing evidence from their own sample, they state: "Between late high school and the second or third year of college, 20% of our middle class sample dropped or retrogressed in moral maturity scores ... This drop had a definite pattern. In school the 20% who dropped were amongst the most advanced in high school, all having a mixture of conventional (Stage 4) and principled (Stage 5) thought. In their college sophomore phase, they kicked both their conventional and their stage 5 morality and replaced it with good old Stage 2 hedonic relativism, jazzed up with some philosophic and sociopolitical jargon" (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969; p. 109). Sullivan and Quarter (1972) have also found evidence for this type of morality among university students.

Kohlberg and Kramer attempt to explain these findings in terms of their theoretical convictions by claiming that the retrogression to stage 2 by 20% of their subjects was "functional" rather than "structural". They point out that these subjects were still capable of using stage 4 and 5 moral reasoning if required to do so, and that retrogression was temporary, for, by the age of 25 all the subjects had returned to the higher stages of moral reasoning.

The authors give no adequate explanation for this phenomenon. It is possible that the retrogression which they found amongst some of their subjects was due to environmental factors. Having left the school and home environment which embodied conventional stage 4 norms, Kohlberg and Kramer's subjects found themselves in the less structured and less conventionally-orientated environment of the university. Some of the subjects, while searching for a replacement for their conventional and stage 5 morality attached themselves to the pre-moral subculture which Haan et al (1968) and other experimenters have identified amongst the university population. Later, on adjusting to their new environment and

coming into contact with principled students in their senior years, the retrogressed students returned to the higher forms of moral reasoning. The temporariness of the retrogression might therefore have been due to the peculiarities of the university environment. It is possible that permanent retrogressions might occur, given the right conditions.

Some evidence for this is supplied by data which Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) obtained from the fathers of their subjects. The fathers showed a substantially greater use of stage 4 morality than their 16 year old sons. Unless one accepts that some of the fathers had reverted to stage 4 morality one must conclude that the fathers were, on average, more cognitively simplex than the sons. The authors do not attempt to offer any explanation of the differences in moral reasoning between fathers and sons.

Apart from the previously mentioned cross-cultural study by Kohlberg (1968, 1969, 1971) which attempted to demonstrate the hierarchical ordering of the six stages, several other studies have been conducted with a similar aim (Turiel, 1966, Rest, Turiel and Kohlberg, 1969; Rest, 1973).

The earliest of these studies (Turiel, 1966) posed the hypothesis that if Kohlberg's stages form an invariant sequence, then subjects would be influenced more by reasoning directly above their particular stage (+1 moral reasoning) than by reasoning one stage below (-1) or two stages above (+2). The rationale behind this hypothesis is that if the 6 stages are ordered to form an invariant sequence, then the exposure of an individual to +1 moral reasoning will expedite his shift up to the next stage. -1 reasoning will have little effect on the subject because he has already surpassed that stage and +2 reasoning will also have little effect because it will be too far beyond the subject's comprehension. It is difficult to see how the author's hypothesis fits in with Kohlberg's claim that moral development is geared to cognitive development, unless one concludes that exposure to +1 moral reasoning makes the subject aware of new differentiations and consequently

enhances his ability to handle concepts in a more cognitively complex manner.

The subjects were 44 boys aged between 12 and 13½. The boys were at moral stages 2, 3 and 4. The experiment employed a control condition and three experimental conditions. The results confirmed the hypothesis. Two points should be born in mind, however. One is that the sample was very small, there being only 11 subjects per condition. With no control for intelligence or any other relevant variable, the results based on such a small sample could be misleading. Secondly, it is possible that any experimental effects which were obtained were not permanent, as Keasey (1973) has found (See section 5.3.).

The study of Rest, Turiel and Kohlberg (1969) was designed to retest Turiel's (1966) hypothesis and to investigate stage preferences.

Three hypotheses were set:

- (1) Stages of moral thinking above the subject's predominant stage would be preferred to those below his stage if subjects were asked to choose between them.
- (2) Stages of moral thinking above the subject's stage are increasingly more difficult to understand than are stages below his own stage. Hence, he will not be able to reproduce higher-stage moral reasoning as readily as lower-stage reasoning.
- (3) Hypotheses (1) and (2) interact, so that subjects maximally accept into their own thinking moral reasoning one stage above their dominant stage.

Subjects were 11 male and 11 female children between the ages of 10½ and 12 ¼, as well as 12 male and 11 female children between the ages of 13 ⅓ and 14½. As was the case in Turiel's (1966) study, three types of moral advice to solve moral dilemmas were used (+2, +1 and -1). Unlike the Turiel experiment, however, subjects were exposed



to all three types of advice. The subjects were required to evaluate the advice in terms of their preferences. The findings from this part of the experiment supported hypothesis (1). In order to test hypothesis (2), the subjects were asked to recapitulate the different types of advice given after each dilemma. The results supported the hypothesis. Hypothesis (3) was tested by requiring the subjects to supply their own moral reasoning in response to each moral dilemma. As hypothesis (3) predicts, subjects tended to use moral reasoning one stage above that used in the pretest.

Apart from the smallness of the sample, this study has a number of other weaknesses. Unlike the Turiel (1966) study, Rest, Turiel and Kohlberg's (1969) study did not feature a control condition. The conclusions drawn about hypothesis (3) are therefore open to question. Secondly, the advice which the subjects were required to evaluate varied in terms of its cognitive complexity: the lower stage advice was more cognitively simplex than the higher stage advice. The experimenters were therefore assuming a relationship between cognitive complexity and morality. This is an unjustified assumption. The philosopher Bentham, for instance, espouses a philosophy of hedonism which bears a strong resemblance to stage 2 morality; however, no-one could say that Bentham's philosophy is cognitively simplex. The fact that the experimenters have assumed that the moral stages may be graded in terms of the degree of cognitive complexity inherent in each, casts doubt on the validity of the findings based on hypotheses (1) and (2).

The most recent investigation into the hierarchical nature of Kohlberg's stages has been conducted by Rest (1973). Like the study by Rest, Turiel and Kohlberg (1969), this study was primarily interested in preferences and comprehension of moral stages. The subjects were 47 12th graders. The following were the main findings:

#### Comprehension

- (1) If a subject showed good comprehension of a given stage, he almost always comprehended the preceding stages. This was

taken as evidence for the hierarchical structure of the moral stages.

- (2) There was a fairly close relationship between the highest stage which a subject comprehend and his own stage of moral judgment. Half the subjects, however, could comprehend moral arguments one or more stages in advance of their own stage.

#### Preference

- (1) Of the comprehended stages, subjects tended to prefer the highest comprehended stage.
- (2) When asked to rank moral arguments at all the stages in terms of preference, subjects almost invariably ranked the arguments in the descending order of their stage number, viz. 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

As was the case in the Rest et al (1969) study, the statements which were used to test subjects' comprehension varied in complexity. The finding (1) above for comprehension was therefore almost a forgone conclusion. Because the stage statements were graded in terms of complexity, finding (2) above for comprehension offers some support for concluding that cognitive complexity is correlated with moral stage usage. There is no guarantee however that similar findings would be obtained from a sample of older subjects (say those over the age of 30). The fact that there appears to be a reversion to lower-numbered stages (in particular, to the stages of conventional morality) indicates that in older subjects the preferred stage of moral reasoning need not be the highest stage which they are capable of comprehending. Like Bentham, they may be able to develop a lower stage of morality to a high degree of sophistication and complexity. This argument would have it that, in terms of their potential for generating cognitively complex arguments Kohlberg's moral stages (with the possible exception of stage 1) may not be distinguished.

Rest's (1973) data on stage preferences indicates that the subjects did not evaluate the statements in terms of the quality of the moral arguments. The fact that they preferred moral statements that they were not even:

capable of comprehending attests to this. The subjects were probably using complexity as a criterion for ranking the statements.

### 7.2.2. A criticism of Kohlberg's theoretical justification of the moral hierarchy

In his highly theoretical work, Kohlberg (1971) offers a detailed justification of his hierarchical model of morality. In this scholarly treatment of the subject Kohlberg takes his six stages one by one and gives closely reasoned logical and philosophical arguments in favour of ordering the six stages into an invariant hierarchy.

These arguments may be criticized on two different counts. First, the fact that an argument makes philosophical and logical sense does not mean that it makes psychological sense. It has been pointed out previously that the lower stages are capable of supporting highly complex moral arguments. It would be presumptuous to claim, for instance, that the stage 4 arguments of a political conservative are inferior to or less complex than the stage 5 arguments of a liberal. To make such a distinction would be to make a value judgment.

This last comment brings us to the second point of criticism, namely that Kohlberg (1971) has made use of subtle value judgments in his efforts to justify the moral hierarchy. This is most clearly seen in the ordering of the two principled stages. Kohlberg, being a deontologically orientated philosopher who has taken inspiration from Kant, has made the value judgment that the ethics of deontology is superior to that of teleology, for he has ordered the deontological stage 6 above the teleological stage 5. In other words, by ordering stage 6 above stage 5, Kohlberg has implicitly made the statement that the ethics of means is preferable to the ethics of ends. Stage 4 morality is also a teleological ethic which Kohlberg has seen fit to order below stage 5.

The weaknesses in Kohlberg's arguments in favour of a hierarchy are particularly evident for the upper three stages. It is possible to argue that the lower three stages are less complex or inferior to the upper three on the basis that the lower three stages do not encompass all

people in their moral solutions. Stage 3 for instance is primarily a morality of personal relationships and stage 2 is a morality of egoism. Kohlberg has argued from the theoretical point of view that moral statements may be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they embody the structural features of truly ethical statements. The two main structural features are universalism and prescriptiveness. It seems impossible, however to say that the upper three stages are ordered by these criteria without resorting to value judgments. A sophisticated stage 4 moral argument may contain just as many universal and prescriptive arguments as a stage 6 moral argument.

At some points, Kohlberg's value judgments blatantly show. This is the case, for instance, when in the description of stage 6 morality Kohlberg momentarily abandons his structural approach and specifies the actual content of some of the main stage 6 principles.

Kohlberg has based almost his whole theory of morality on cognitive factors; in particular he has claimed that moral development is dependent upon cognitive development. This chapter has been at pains to point out that this claim has yet to be proved, particularly in the case of adults. Environmental factors have been ignored almost totally by Kohlberg. According to him, the environment has no direct influence on an individual's morality, but influences it indirectly by affecting cognitive development. Many theorists would hold that Kohlberg is drastically underplaying the effect of the environment on morality.

It is possible, however, to take a stance different from Kohlberg's and anchor at least some of his stages to environmental phenomena rather than cognitive and structural phenomena. There are various social institutions which may be related to these stages and which may determine the stability and internal cohesiveness of these stages. Stage 3, for instance is related to the social institution of the family, stage 4 to the social institutions of authority and law and order (police, government, etc.) and stage 5 is related to the social institution of democracy. Stages 1 and 2 which are characterized by egocentrism, appear not to be

related to a social institution, but to the self. A social institution which might be related to some degree to stage 2 is the institution of business. Stage 6 poses a problem, for it is a highly "personal" stage, being based on conscience. The only apparent social manifestations of conscience are the Church and various benevolent societies.

Kohlberg's (1968, 1969, 1971) cross-cultural data lends support to this "environmental" interpretation, for the universality of the moral stages appears to depend on the universality of the institutions to which they are attached. Stage 5 morality, for instance occurs very infrequently in cultures which do not have a firmly established democratic institution.

One last point concerning Kohlberg's theory will be dealt with. This concerns the validity of conceptualizing morality in terms of discrete stages. Loewinger (1966) has stated that the hierarchical stage model is probably a first approximation to the true state of affairs. Kohlberg (1971) on the other hand regards the stage model as fully adequate. According to him, moral development proceeds discretely because each stage has its own structure held together by a characteristic form of internal logic. For this reason, Kohlberg regards transitional stages to be unstable, but in practice it appears that transitional forms of moral reasoning occur quite frequently.

It is a purely academic pursuit however, to deliberate over whether moral development is a discrete or continuous process, for there is no way at present of assessing moral reasoning along a continuously variable dimension. As assessment is one of the main aims of this study it is necessary to conceive of morality in terms of a set of discrete stages.

## 8.0. THE AIMS OF HYPOTHESES OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are twofold: the construction of an instrument to assess moral reasoning and the testing of Kohlberg's theory insofar as it claims that the six stages of morality are ordered into a hierarchy dependent on cognitive complexity. As these are two rather divergent aims, it would be as well to deal with them in separate subsections.

### 8.1. The Construction of an Instrument to assess Morality

The basic aim of this study is to assess morality as a cognitive, reasoning phenomenon. Although it is possible to argue that morality is more than a purely cognitive phenomenon, it has been decided to limit the study to this field, for the study of morality in other areas presents numerous difficulties. Most of these difficulties have been mentioned in previous chapters.

Of the approaches available to assess morality from a cognitive point of view, Kohlberg's appears to be the most satisfactory. Reasons in support of this point of view are given below:

- (1) Kohlberg's system of stages is comprehensive, but does not appear to make over-fine distinctions as Loevinger's system does.
- (2) The stages are clearly and exhaustively described.
- (3) There is a comprehensive scoring guide.
- (4) Sixteen years of research have gone into the development and refinement of Kohlberg's techniques.
- (5) The stage taxonomy is backed by a comprehensive theory.
- (6) Of the cognitive-developmental theories Kohlberg's follows a structural approach most rigorously.
- (7) Kohlberg's theory forms the basis of most contemporary research.

Despite the fact that 16 years of refinement have gone into Kohlberg's assessment methods, there remains room for several improvements.

Dilemmas will be retained as the basic means of assessment, for they appear to offer the richest source of stimulation for eliciting moral reasoning.

The projected refinements will be dealt with in the following subsections.

#### 8.1.1. Controlled content

Kohlberg's dilemmas were created before he split up the moral domain into issues and systems. Consequently the content of each of these dilemmas is an uncontrolled hotchpotch of issues and systems. Since he has elaborated his theory, Kohlberg has not updated his dilemmas to deal with the task of assessing diverse domains of morality. He has been forced to devise a number of rather unsatisfactory ways of scoring and handling data on issues and systems because the original set of dilemmas are not up to the new demands placed upon them.

It is possible that Kohlberg's issues and systems are not meaningful or important areas of moral concern for South Africans. One of the first tasks of this study will therefore be to sample the domain of moral concern in South Africa and to partition this domain into a set of constructs which may be compared with Kohlberg's systems. These constructs will be used as the basis for the construction of dilemmas. The dilemmas will hence have a controlled system content and will be specialized, each dealing with a very limited number of systems. The set of dilemmas will be designed so that each system receives an equal representation. This is a particular weakness of Kohlberg's present system.

Care should also be exercised in the asking of questions after each dilemma. The questions should be constructed according to some strategy which is uniform for all dilemmas.

#### 8.1.2. The Realism of the dilemmas

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the realism of the dilemmas may have an effect on the quality and quantity of the responses. Following the prediction of projective theory that material which is removed from the individuals everyday experience enhances projection, the

following hypothesis will be set:

### Hypothesis I

Unrealistic types of dilemma situations will lead to a greater richness of response than realistic or "everyday" types of dilemma situations.

Some measure of "richness of response" will be needed. A possibility is the number of "moral" words used in the response.

#### 8.1.3. The Endings of the dilemmas

Kohlberg has been inconsistent in the way in which he has ended his dilemmas. In most cases the story ends after the "hero" has made a decision and followed a course of action. In a few instances the dilemma ends with the "hero" still undecided as to which course of action to take. For reasons which were stated in the previous chapter, the second type of ending appears to be preferable. In this study, therefore, all dilemmas will end with the "hero" still undecided as to which course of action to take.

#### 8.1.4. The Consistency of moral reasoning within systems

Once a set of systems has been identified by empirical means, it is to be expected that, within each system, an individual will always use the same stage of moral reasoning. This constitutes hypothesis II:

### Hypothesis II

Within each system, subjects consistently use the same stage of moral reasoning.

If hypothesis II is not satisfied, the implication is that morality is too situation-bound a phenomenon to permit measurement.

It will be possible to measure the reliability of the measuring instrument by including what might be called "parallel" dilemmas, i.e. dilemmas with identical system content.

## 8.2. The Testing of the Hierarchy of Moral Stages

Once the assessment instrument has been constructed, it will be possible to undertake the second part of the study, namely the testing of Kohlberg's claim that his six stages are ordered according to a criterion of



cognitive complexity. This study will test for the relationship between cognitive complexity and moral reasoning using a sample of subjects who are over the age of 30. All research to date has used samples of children or youths; virtually nothing is known about the moral functioning of individuals whose morality may be thought to have stabilized; in particular, nothing is known about how cognitive complexity relates to moral stage usage in these individuals. However, considerations which were mentioned in the previous chapter have led to the formulation of hypothesis III:

### Hypothesis III

In a sample of subjects over the age of 30, cognitive complexity is not related to the stage of moral reasoning.

In actual fact, this study will concern itself with more than the relationship of cognitive complexity to morality; a whole battery of cognitive measures will be selected so that an exhaustive investigation of the role played by cognitive variables in morality may be undertaken.

If hypothesis III is confirmed, then two possible conclusions can be drawn: Either there is no hierarchy of cognitive complexity inherent in the six stages, or the moral stage which individuals habitually use does not always coincide with the highest stage of which they are capable, a phenomenon which may be due to environmental influences.

In order to decide which of the two above possibilities is true given the confirmation of hypothesis III, subjects will be administered a test of moral stage comprehension. Moral statements at various moral stages will be administered to the subjects and their comprehension of these moral statements will be tested. If it is found that subjects comprehend moral statements up to and including their own stage but not beyond it, then there is evidence for concluding that the second possibility is true. Any other result would tend to confirm the notion that the six stages are not ordered according to a criterion of cognitive complexity.

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