

Moral development

Overview

- ▶ Moral development is the same as cognitive development (stages) and is linked to it.
 - ▶ Piaget (1932)
 - ▶ Kohlberg (1963)
- ▶ Moral reasoning is seen as “universal” and is also related to equilibrium and decreasing egocentrism.
- ▶ Gender and morality is complex, Gilligan (1982).
- ▶ More recent research: Nelson (1980)
- ▶ Implications for educators and researchers

Piaget & Moral development

- ▶ Extensive discussions with children on the rules of playing marbles and through discussion of hypothetical situations.
- ▶ Rules form the essence of moral development.
- ▶ Those under 5 had no rules at all.
- ▶ Those aged 5-10 had rules, which were seen as fixed and passed down from an external authority.
- ▶ By aged 10 children had own rules, adapted from mutual consent.

Piaget: Moral Development

Moral reasoning develops through childhood due to disequilibrium and decreasing egocentrism.

Stage 1.

Pre-moral: 0 – 5 years. Little understanding of rules as children can't carry out complex mental operations. Behaviour is regulated from outside the child (Sensorimotor & Pre-operational)

Stage 2.

Heteronomous/Moral realism: 5–9 years. Rules are rigid and given by adults/God. Rules tell you what is right or wrong. Consequences dictate the severity of a behaviour, not the intentions (Pre-operational & Concrete Operational)

Stage 3.

Autonomous morality/Moral relativism: 10 years upwards. Emphasises co-operation. Rules are changeable under certain circumstances and with mutual consent. (Concrete and Formal Operational)

Stage 1:

- ▶ As a child has limited conception of other people's thoughts and cannot carry out complex mental operations, s/he cannot have a sense of morality.
- ▶ Little or no understanding of rules or morality
- ▶ Behaviour is regulated from outside of the child.
- ▶ Sensorimotor & Pre-operational stages.

Stage 2:

- ▶ Heteronomous = ‘subject to another’s laws/rules’
- ▶ Rules are given by adults/ God and are unchangeable and absolute (marbles!)
- ▶ A rule tells you what is right or wrong.
- ▶ Consequences dictate the severity of a behaviour, not the intentions.
- ▶ Pre-operational & Concrete Operational stages.

Stage 3:

- ▶ Emphasises cooperation
- ▶ Rules can be changed by mutual consent
- ▶ Internal morality is developed which may conflict with external rules.
- ▶ Children recognise intentions and a belief that punishment should fit the crime
- ▶ Concrete and Formal operational stages.

Piaget's Moral Stories



- ▶ **Story 1:** A little boy called John is in his 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 15 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” to the 15 cups and they all get broken!

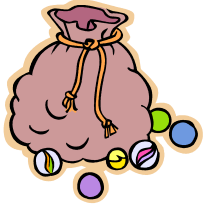
- ▶ **Story 2:** One day when Henry's mother was out, he tried to get some jam out of the cupboard. He climbed up on a chair and stretched out his arm. But the jam was too high up and he couldn't reach it and have any. But while he was trying to get it, he knocked over a cup. The cup fell down and broke.

Q: Who would a 7 year old say is naughtier - why?

Findings:

- ▶ Younger children focused on the *consequences* of behaviour –the boy who accidentally broke 15 cups was *naughtier* than the boy who broke one cup while doing something he shouldn't. They based their judgements on the *amount of damage* (Moral Realism)
- ▶ Children aged 10 and above saw the *motivation* or *intent* behind the act as important in determining naughtier – so the child who broke a cup whilst trying to steal was naughtier as his *motives were bad* (Moral Relativism)

Critiques of Piaget's theory



- ❑ Rules of **marbles** more complex than other games, making children LOOK like they cannot grasp a concept.
- ❑ Gendered – “girls’ games too simplistic”. Piaget thought that `hopscotch` not worthy of investigation.
- ❑ Game rules are **conventional** rules, *not moral* ones; Turiel (1983) moral knowledge is based on consequences for others, whereas conventional knowledge requires understanding of the social system, and children DO know the difference.



Focuses on consequences not intention

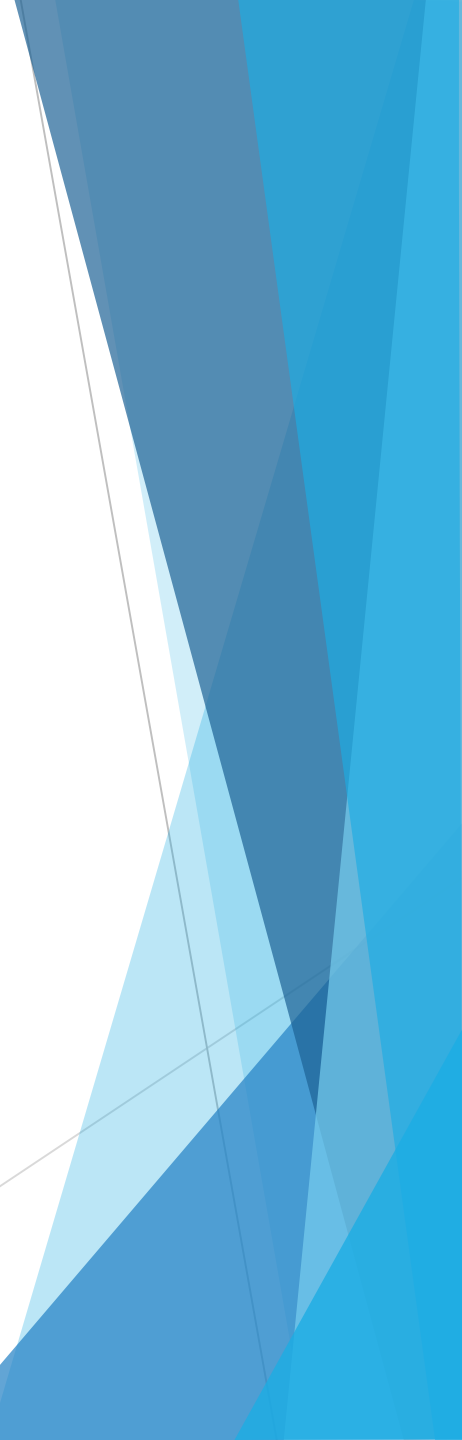
- ❑ Armsby (1971) found that 60% of 6 year olds and 90% of 10 year olds were able to see the deliberate breaking as more deserving of punishment. This suggests that they are capable of understanding the intentions behind deliberate behaviour.



Ignores cultural influences

What happens after 13?

- ❑ Piaget's moral "universals" are largely culture specific, and children in non-western cultures may develop morality in a different way. Lee et al (1997) considered the differences between attitudes to lying in Canada and China. Chinese children rated lying more negatively than Canadians as Canada has a culture of "white lies" to spare individuals' feelings whereas China is more a collective society which values behaviours for the good of the community over the feelings of the individual.

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- ▶ Piaget's model suggests that moral development is finalised at around age 13 in the formal operations stage. By contrast, Kohlberg's interviews with children and adolescents found that thinking about moral issues to continue to develop throughout adolescence and into adulthood, with later stages of moral thinking going beyond the three proposed by Piaget.

Kohlberg`s theory of moral development

- ▶ Lawrence Kohlberg developed Piaget's model of moral development based on cognitive reasoning. Like Piaget, he was more interested in individuals' *reasons* or motives in response to a moral dilemma than their actual behaviour.
- ▶ Also, again like Piaget, Kohlberg characterised moral development as *sequential* with the individual going through three levels – each having two stages that are broadly parallel to their stage of cognitive development, essentially moving from an egocentric viewpoint to one that takes into account the needs and rights of others in society.

- ▶ Kohlberg aimed for greater methodological rigour than Piaget and used a standardised interview in which individuals were asked to make a decision about a moral dilemma and provide their underlying reasons. He interviewed 72 boys aged 10-16 in Chicago, from middle and lower class families
- ▶ The most famous example is the dilemma of “Heinz” who is considering stealing a drug. Kohlberg was not interested in whether a participant thinks Heinz should or should not steal the drug, and potential punishments, but the *reason* behind their answers.

- ▶ Kohlberg argues that moral reasoning does not develop through children being taught values by parents and educators. Instead, children's social interactions stimulate mental processing.
- ▶ Thus, when our moral thinking is challenged by a problem or discussion and found to be insufficient (disequilibrium) we look for more adequate ways of solving these problems (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975).
- ▶ Omrod (2008, p 97) notes that teachers can help promote moral reasoning in classroom activities:
- ▶ 'Classroom discussions of controversial topics and moral issues appear to promote increased perspective taking and the transition to more advanced reasoning'.

- ▶ It is important to remember, however, that Kohlberg emphasises that his model is sequential (you can't skip stages) and that individuals can only begin to comprehend moral reasoning *one stage* above their current level. So, you cannot expect children at Stage 2 (relative viewpoints) to understand the rationale behind Stage 4 (following law and order). However you could develop their moral thinking by asking them to reflect on Stage 3 morality which is based on good interpersonal relationships in families and social groups.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is 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. Should the husband have done that? Why?

(Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19)

Kohlberg's Levels of Moral Development

LEVEL	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Pre-conventional physical consequences & what suits the individual	1	Punishment-Obedience
	2	Instrumental-Relativist
Conventional winning group approval, for the sake of social order	3	Interpersonal Concordance
	4	Authority & Social Order Maintenance
Post-conventional laws can be changed for the general good, defined by conscience	5	Social Contract, Legalistic
	6	Universal Ethical Principle

Pre-conventional Level

1. Punishment-Obedience

It's bad to steal...because you'll get punished (Kohlberg, 1958)

He asked first and he only stole something small and he won't go to prison.

- ☐ Egocentric
- ☐ Right or wrong depends on consequences
- ☐ Right or wrong is determined by an outside authority - punishment "proves" that disobedience is wrong
- ☐ We avoid breaking rules for fear of punishment

2. Instrumental-Relativist

Maybe they had children and he might need someone at home to look after them. But maybe he shouldn't steal it because they might put him in prison for more years than he could stand
(Colby and Kaufman 1983, p. 300 in Crain 1985)

- ❑ Different individuals have different viewpoints.
- ❑ “Right” is relative, so each person can pursue our own interests – “what’s in it for me?”
- ❑ Punishment is a risk we want to avoid.

Conventional Level

3. Interpersonal Concordance

It was really the druggist's fault, he was unfair, trying to overcharge and letting someone die. Heinz loved his wife and wanted to save her. I think anyone would. I don't think they would put him in jail. The judge would look at all sides, and see that the druggist was charging too much (Kohlberg, 1963)

- ❑ People should live up to family/ community expectations.
- ❑ “Good” behaviour = good motives: (love, empathy and compassion for others).
- ❑ We should maintain the rules that support good behaviour.

4. Authority & Social Order Maintenance

If everybody did as he wanted to do, set up his own beliefs as to right and wrong, then I think you would have chaos. The only thing I think we have in civilization nowadays is some sort of legal structure which people are sort of bound to follow
Gibbs et al., 1983

- ❑ Moral decisions take society as a whole into account.
- ❑ Laws stand above individual opinions and should be upheld unless a very good reason.
- ❑ Following the law guarantees social order.

Post-conventional Level

5. Social Contract, Legalistic

It is the husband's duty to save his wife. The fact that her life is in danger transcends every other standard you might use to judge his action. Life is more important than property. Usually the moral and legal standpoints coincide. Here they conflict. The judge should weight the moral standpoint more heavily but preserve the ... law in punishing Heinz lightly.

(Kohlberg 1976)

❑ The law forms a social contract for everyone's welfare.

❑ BUT rights like the right to life and liberty must also be upheld regardless of the law.

❑ We should change unjust laws and settle disputes through democratic means.

6. Universal Ethical Principle

Heinz should steal the drug when a choice must be made between disobeying a law and saving a life, one must act in accordance with the higher principle of preserving and respecting life
(Gross 2001)

- ❑ The law forms a social contract for everyone's welfare, but certain rights transcend law
- ❑ Democratic processes may not be enough to change unjust laws
- ❑ Civil disobedience may be the only answer.

Classify the responses to this dilemma according to Kohlberg's stages

Lydia's parents often become angry when she gets bad grades.

She has not been doing very well at school recently and is considering cheating on an upcoming test.

Should she cheat?

A = Stage 3

B = Stage 1

C = Stage 4

D = Stage 5

E = Stage 2

A. Yes, if she cheats and does well, her parents will think she is a good daughter and will be proud.

B. No, because if she gets caught she will be punished.

C. No, because cheating is against school rules.

D. No, because cheating is unfair to other students. A person should complete her own work.

E. Yes, because if she cheats and gets a good grade on her test, she may get a reward.

- ▶ Moral reasoning does not develop through parents and educators teaching values, but through social interaction stimulating mental processing.
- ▶ When challenged by a moral problem and current thinking is insufficient, we look for more adequate ways of solving these problems (**Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975**).
- ▶ BUT, remember:
 - ▶ **Sequential** (you can't skip stages)
 - ▶ Individuals can only begin to comprehend moral reasoning *one stage above* their current level.

Critiques of Kohlberg

- ▶ *Cultural bias*
- ▶ Kohlberg argues that the first five stages of his model are sequential and universal - i.e. that they are applicable to all human beings irrespective of cultural or society. This can be backed from his own research that included samples from the UK, Mexico, Taiwan, and Turkey.
- ▶ However, Snarey (1985) and Shweder (1991) suggest that Kohlberg's "universal" principles based on justice are, in fact, culturally-bound
- ▶ Snarey (1985) analysed data from *collectivist* cultures (Kibbutzim, India, Taiwan, New Guinea, Kenya) and found that the highest levels of moral reasoning was centred very much on collective happiness and communal equity (Kohlberg's model would suggest these societies do not progress further than stages 3-4).
- ▶ Shweder, (1991) went through the Heinz dilemma with Hindu villagers in India. They argued about the morality of stealing and prolonging life, though rather than relating their ideas to justice; they provided sophisticated reasons based on Hindu concepts of *dharma* (duty). This would be difficult to measure on Kohlberg's scales.

▶ *Gender bias*

- ▶ ‘Stage three... morality is a functional morality for housewives and mothers; it is not for businessmen and professionals’ (Kohlberg, 1969, p. 372).
- ▶ When Kohlberg’s method has been applied to large scale mixed gender samples, it has discovered that girls are more likely to score around stage 3, boys around stage 4 or stage 5.
- ▶ A colleague of Kohlberg’s, Carol Gilligan (1982), became interested in this finding and considered two possibilities:
- ▶ Either females’ moral development is inferior to that of males
- ▶ Or something is wrong with Kohlberg’s methodology.

- ▶ Gilligan rejected the first argument in favour of the second, arguing that:
- ▶ Kohlberg based his theory on research done with exclusively male samples.
- ▶ Kohlberg's scenarios and questions prioritised **justice** which is only *one* perspective on morality and tends to be favoured by males.
- ▶ Women are destined to score lower on Kohlberg's measures as his approach overlooks their traditional duty of **caring** for her family and others:
- ▶ ' the very traits that have traditionally defined the "goodness" of women are those that mark them as deficient in moral development' (1982: 18).

- ▶ Gilligan's argument was not that women were inferior to men in moral development, but that they *think* differently. Females' higher forms of moral reasoning emphasises connections between people, the maintenance of relationships and compassion for individuals. These are relegated to stages 3 and 4 in Kohlberg's focus on rather abstract principle of justice.

Gilligan`s model

Justice Orientation (MAINLY MEN)

- ▶ 1J Uphold moral standards and withstand pressure to deviate
- ▶ 2J Justice should be tempered with mercy. One should consider the feelings of others but principles are most important.
- ▶ 3J While there are “exceptions to the rule”, everyone is best served by obedience to universal laws.

Care Orientation (MAINLY WOMEN)

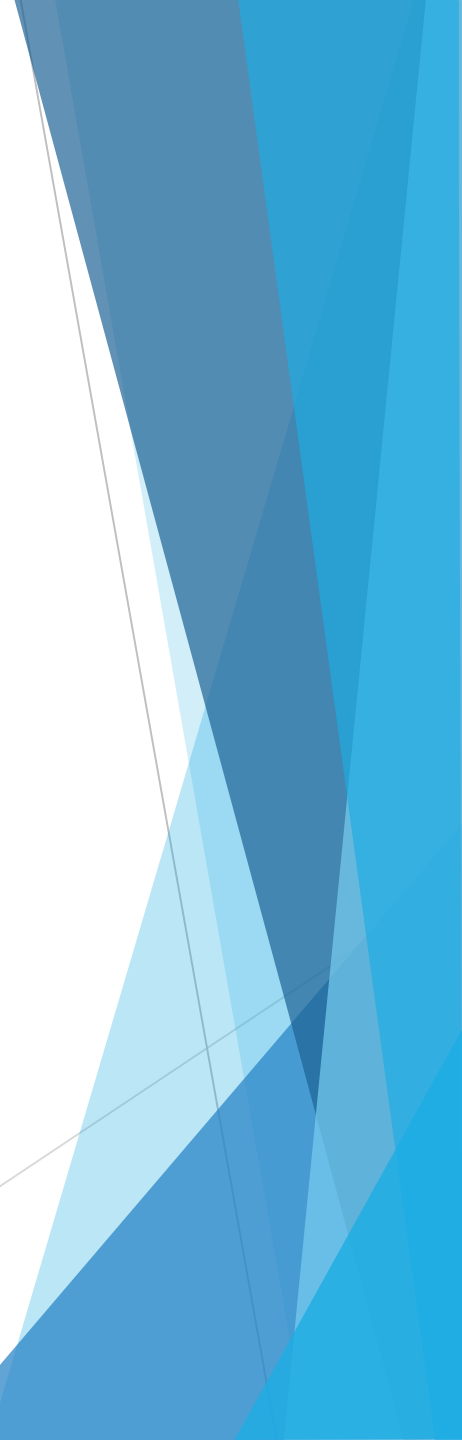
- ▶ 1C Concern with what others say and how choices might affect relationships.
- ▶ 2C Sacrificing one's own concerns to the welfare of others. Relationships are more important than conventional rules.
- ▶ 3C Attempting to apply moral rules while valuing the individual and trying not to hurt anyone, willingness to take responsibility for choices made.

Evidence for Gilligan's claim?

- ▶ Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) spoke to 80 men and women (aged 14 to 77) to consider occasions where they had to make a moral decision but were not sure of what was the right thing to do. This approach has greater ecological validity than Kohlberg's and Piaget's studies as it is dealing with real-life, rather than a hypothetical situation.
- ▶ Findings indicate that justice and care orientations are correlated to gender, with 70% of women suggesting a care orientation (or care combined with justice) to their moral dilemma, while 65% of men favoured a purely justice orientation.
- ▶ A consideration of the *type* of dilemmas these individuals discussed indicated that women focused on care dilemmas and men on justice ones.

Evidence against Gilligan's claim?

- ▶ The claim that men and women *think differently* has been challenged by Johnston (1988) and Walker (1989)
- ▶ Walker (1989) found that both males and females tended towards the ethic of care in response to personal/real life dilemmas involving someone with whom the participant had a connection or relationship. However, when asked to discuss a personal dilemma:
- ▶ females tended to discuss those of a *personal/relational* nature which lend themselves to being considered under a care orientation;
- ▶ males tended to discuss dilemmas that were more *impersonal* (e.g. being given too much change) where a justice orientation is more applicable. This is consistent with Gilligan and Attanucci's (1988) findings and with a study of the moral approaches favoured by students on an medical ethics course where 87.7% of men favoured a justice orientation, while 69.4% of females favoured a care orientation (Sanchez & Self 1995).

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- ▶ Johnston (1998) argued that although boys tend towards the justice orientation (as suggested by Gilligan), when pressed they are also able to reason from the caring orientation. Similarly girls are able to consider justice in their moral reasoning.
 - ▶ Thus, rather than thinking differently (as suggested by Gilligan) each gender can reason from *both* caring and justice orientations, but there are gender-linked *preferences* towards an orientation which may be influenced by from social expectations of what men and women should be, rather than cognitive differences.

For Discussion

- ▶ How can teachers make use of the theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Gilligan to improve how children think about moral issues?
- ▶ Can teachers make use of these theories to improve classroom relationships and behaviour?
- ▶ What are the potential ethical and methodological issues in researching people's responses to moral dilemmas? What should researchers do to overcome these?



Nelson, S.A. (1980)

Factors influencing young children's use of
motives and outcomes as moral criteria

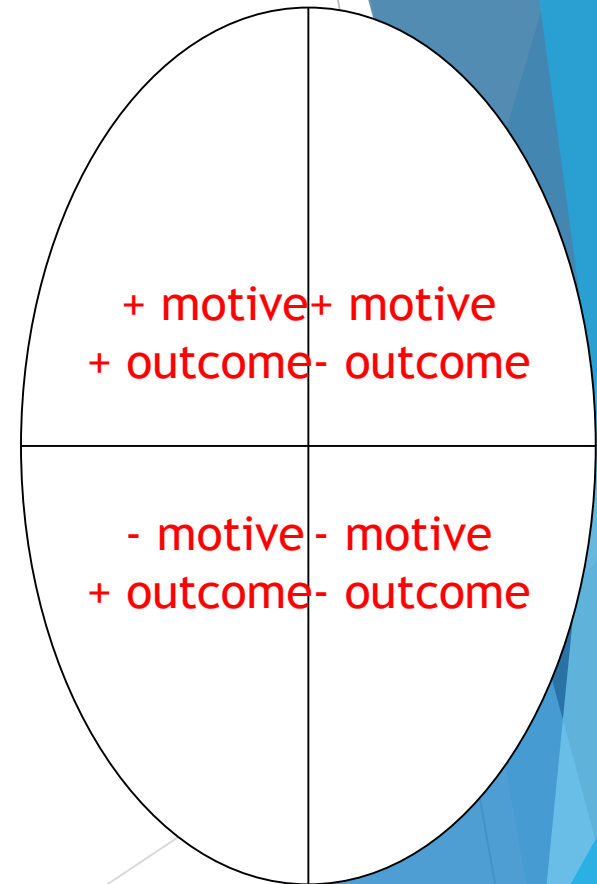
Child Development, 51, 823-829

Design - Study 1

- ▶ Sample
 - ▶ 60 preschool children mean age 3.4
 - ▶ 30 primary school children mean age 7.4
 - ▶ Gender split approximately 50:50
 - ▶ mostly white middle-class
- ▶ Parental consent given

Method

- ▶ 4 versions of a story
- ▶ Factorial design:
 - ▶ 2 levels of motive- good or bad
 - ▶ 2 levels of outcome- good or bad
- ▶ Each child heard all 4 versions of the story
- ▶ Each child in one of 3 conditions (=independent measures design)



Story example:

- ▶ This boy was playing with a ball; his friend did not have anything to play with. He wanted to throw the ball so that he and his friend could play catch together with the ball. He threw the ball. His friend did not catch the ball; the ball hit his friend on the head and made him cry.
- ▶ The 3 experimental conditions were:
- ▶ Verbal presentation only, picture-motive implicit, picture-motive explicit.

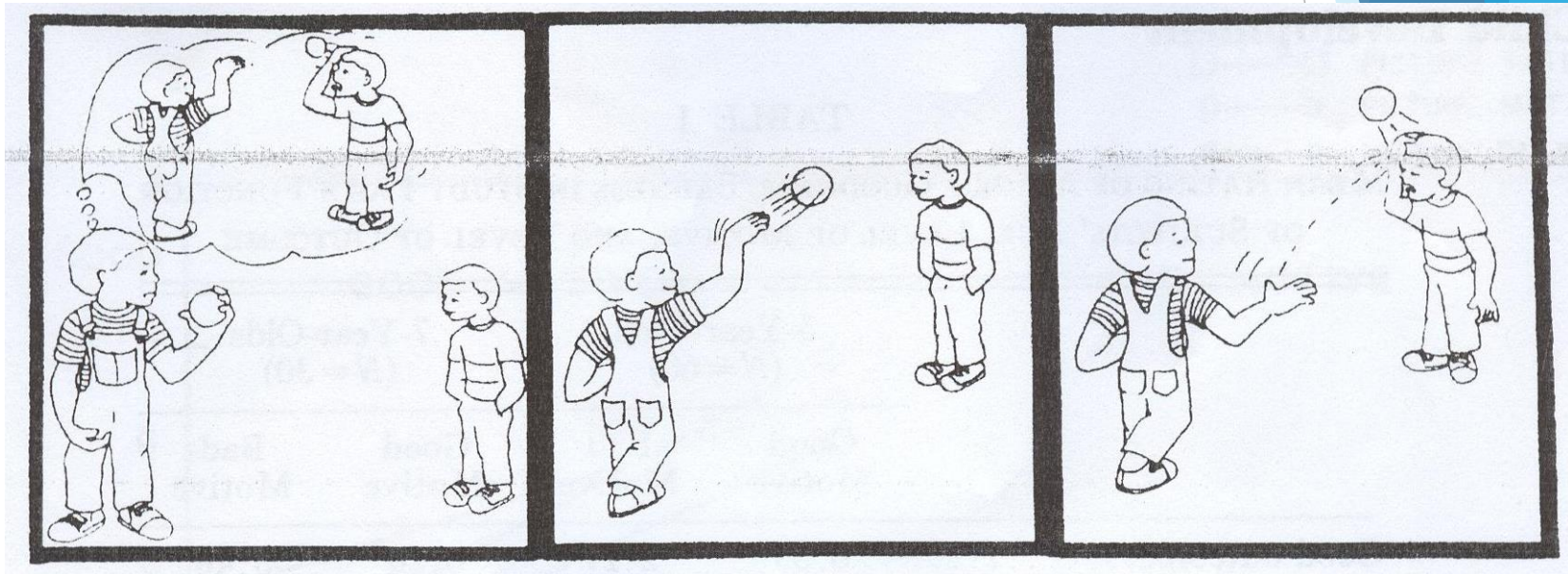
Design - Study 1

- ▶ IV: Story condition
 - ▶ One of three
- ▶ DV: rating out seven
 - ▶ Very bad (1), very good (7)



IV: story condition

- ▶ Verbal
- ▶ V+pics+implied motive (facial expressions)
- ▶ V+pics+explicit motive (thought bubble)



DV: child's judgement

- ▶ Response
 - ▶ “Is the actor good or bad?”
 - ▶ “How good/bad?”
 - ▶ → scale 1 to 7
- ▶ After the child's judgement, they were asked as they had heard it.
- ▶ Why?
- ▶ Checking for errors of valence



actly

Results

	3 year Good motive	3 year Bad motive	7 year Good motive	7 ear bad motive
Good outcome	6.55	2.27	6.20	3.46
Bad outcome	4.17	1.60	4.47	1.56

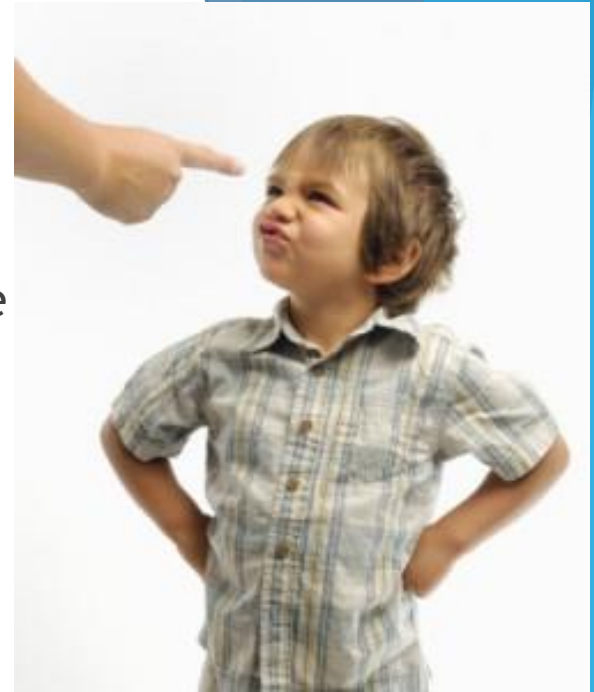
- ▶ What does this indicate?
- ▶ “Motive” is a more decisive factor in moral judgements than outcome ($p < 0.001$)

Results p827

- ▶ Children demonstrated use of **outcome for good** in all 3 conditions, but if **outcome** is **bad** and **motive** is **bad** the pictures had most effect.
- ▶ Even the 3year olds relied on **motive** more than outcome
- ▶ 40% rated the actor negatively if 1 negative cue
- ▶ 28.33% ignored the outcome
- ▶ Most 3 year olds focused mainly on VALENCE as opposed to **outcome** or **motive**

Discussion

- ▶ Do children learn the concept of bad before the concept of good? (Piaget 1932)
- ▶ Do young children define good as the absence of bad, e.g. “being good is not lying” (Hill & Hill 1977)?



Study 2 background

1. In study 1, one negative cue was sufficient to produce negative judgement.
 2. **3-year-olds'** judgements in bad motive stories were affected by motive but not by outcome.
- ▶ Was that because motive was presented first?
 - ▶ Study 2: reverse the order, i.e. present outcome first then motive

Study 2 Method

- ▶ Materials and procedure same as before
- ▶ 27 preschool girls and boys, mean age 3.8
- ▶ In all stories and conditions, outcome preceded motive

Study 2 Results

- ▶ As in study 1:
 - ▶ When one cue is negative, the other cue has less effect
 - ▶ Children made more recall errors when cues were inconsistent
- ▶ As predicted:
 - ▶ Judgements in Verbal condition were less affected by motive than picture conditions
 - ▶ So...?

Discussion

- ▶ ...what does it all MEAN?
 - ▶ moral judgement cues
 - ▶ verbal/picture & order of presentation
 - ▶ children's use of motive/outcome info
- ▶ For 3-y/o, one -ve cue → -ve judgement
- ▶ In verbal presentations it's first cue encountered
- ▶ Judgements are primed for any of -ve valence, whether motive or outcome



Evaluation

- ▶ Reliable?
 - ▶ Complicated effects but yes, replicable
- ▶ Valid?
 - ▶ Does it really measure moral judgement?
 - ▶ Is it generalisable?
 - ▶ Is it a realistic task?
 - ▶ How ethical is it: consent?

What can we conclude regarding moral development?

► Over to you...