Introduction

Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) developed and tested a theory of moral development by asking people to solve moral dilemmas. Kohlberg analyzed the responses to these dilemmas categorizing them according to stages of moral development. He found that a person's idea of morality changes as the person matures. Kohlberg's categorizations were an attempt to describe these changes in terms of developmental stages. However, according to C. Gilligan (1986), Kohlberg's stages are biased against women because the higher levels of moral development in Kohlberg's system are concerned with "justice" which Gilligan claims is a male virtue. Gilligan argues that women are less concerned with justice than with caring (Gilligan, 1982).

Although moral development continues to be a topic of interest, recent research has focused on factors that influence moral choices. The assumption behind this line of research is that moral people sometimes fail to make the same moral choices (C. Daniel Batson and Elizabeth R. Thompson, 2001) even when they have achieved the same level of moral development: two people with the same level of moral development might respond to a dilemma in different ways. For example, consider a dilemma in which people with the same level of moral development are asked to give money to one and only one of two charities. One of the charities is set up help to help rehabilitate drug addicts who are child sex offenders and the other to care for and feed abused and abandoned dogs. A certain percentage of the people will chose to give to the rehabilitation charity and a certain percentage to the dog charity even though all of the participants in such a study might have the same level of moral development.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the possibility that people who have the same level of moral development might apply whatever moral principles they have in different ways depending on the specific circumstances surrounding the moral dilemma. In this study we asked students who presumable have the same level of moral maturity to read a story about a theft and then asked them if they would report the thief to the authorities. In one story, the thief was described as a neighbor. In another version of the story the thief was described as a close relative.

REFERENCES FOR PAPER:


Carol Gilligan .. wrote a chapter in a book titled "Profile of Carol Gilligan". The chapter (pp. 488-491) appeared in a book edited by Sandra Scarr, R.A. Weinberg and A. Levine.
titled "Understanding Development". The book was published by Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich in New York, NY in 1986.

Carol Gilligan wrote a book titled "In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development" published in 1982 by Harvard University Press in Cambridge MA.

The journal article "Why Don't Moral People Act Morally? Motivational Considerations" was published Current Directions in Psychological Science in 2001, Vol no. 10, pps. 54 to 57. The authors were C. Daniel Batson and Elizabeth R. Thompson.