MEN'S MORAL REASONING
IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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An Abstract

presented to the

Graduate and Research Council of

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by Douglas L. Libby, Jr.

December 1987

Abstract

Research in men's moral development was conducted,
utilizing Abell's (1986) Men's Moral Thought in
Responsibility stages. Abell's stages are an adaptation of
those presented by Kohlberg and Gilligan; however, she
focused upon men's sensitivity and connectedness in
relationships. An instrument design similar to Rest's
Defining Issues Test was incorporated for collecting data.
Age and education have previously been identified in
Kohlbergian research as the two variables most correlated
with higher levels of moral reasoning. These two variables
were analyzed in this project. Men ages 18-25 were compared
with men over age 30; those with a high school education
were compared with those with at least three years of
college experience. An analysis of variance indicated
education was a significant factor in men responding in a
more sensitive and connected manner to the dilemmas
presented. These findings are consistent with previous
research.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Douglas L. Libby, Jr., entitled "Men's Moral Reasoning in Intimate Relationships." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Susan Kupisch
Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

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INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Within the past two decades, much has been written about moral development. Initially, research was conducted by Piaget and Kohlberg. Subsequently, studies were expanded into the realm of women's moral development by Gilligan (1977) and Lyons (1983). Recently, Abell (1986) proposed hypotheses about men's moral development within significant relationships. Abell's (1986) scales are similar to the Kohlberg and Gilligan scales; however, they particularly focus upon sensitivity, responsibility, connectedness, and empathy within intimate relationships.

This study uses Abell's (1986) scales to test men in several "realistic" dilemmas. The men were required to make forced choices corresponding with three of Abell's five moral developmental stages. The paper flows through a natural progression. It details definitions of moral development, the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, the adaptation of Gilligan (1977) and her work with women's moral decision making, and the latest revision of Kohlberg's scales presented by Abell (1986).

A study of this nature furthers our understanding of men's cognitive and moral development. We should be able to better understand what influences traditional masculine

identity. The study focuses upon the variables of age (experience) and education, since these were identified by Piaget, Kohlberg and Rest as the most influential variables in attaining higher stages of moral development. It is noted, however, that there may be other variables of importance which influence cognitive/moral development in maintaining equally satisfying relationships.

A study of men's moral and cognitive development in relationships highlights important new concepts as it focuses on men's cognitions, sensitivity, responsibility and connectedness in establishing relationships in family units. This study attempts to identify men's cognitions which influence their behaviors in establishing such relationships. It identifies congruencies between those cognitions and Abell's stages of moral development. Additionally, a study of this type, expanded and validated, could be used in combination with other marital satisfaction indices as a predictor of marital or relationship style and satisfaction. As such, it could be used in pre-marital counseling to help couples identify their preferred relationship style and to help them make better choices in the type of person with which they wish to have a relationship.

Review of the Literature

There are many definitions of moral behavior or morality. In order to gain a beginning position, we look at Webster's (1973) definitions, some of which are listed here: "relating to principles of right and wrong," "ethical judgments," "capable of right and wrong action," "a doctrine or system of moral conduct," "particular moral principles or rules of conduct" and "conformity to ideals of right human conduct" (p. 748). These provide a basic understanding of moral thought and behavior although they do not address action as it applies to our own subject- ivity in specific situations.

Rest (1983) listed six ideas which have been used by psychologists as criteria for judging a person's level of morality. They are "behavior that helps another human being, behavior in conformity with social norms, the internalization of social norms, the arousal of empathy or guilt or both, reasoning about justice and putting another's interest ahead of one's own" (p. 556). Rest indicated none of the criteria are sufficient to give an understanding of it.

The history of moral development leads us to the father of cognitive development, Piaget. While Piaget studied and developed his theory of cognitive development, he elaborated upon a loose fitting, two stage theory of moral

behavior that relies upon the child's (ages 4-7) respect for the authority that the adult holds. The child regards the adult as wiser, more powerful, and superior to self. He also usually has admiration, affection, and fear for the adult (Rest 1983). Piaget's (1932-1965) second stage is more abstract and deals with moral autonomy. It corresponds roughly to ages eight to adult. Here the individual is learning about the underlying structures of social knowledge. He/She is learning social rules which govern activity, learning to cooperate and attain mutual goals, and working out contracts and promises. Piaget emphasized that these learning situations are ideally interacted within a peer oriented environment.

Kohlberg (1969) was heavily influenced by Piaget's stages of moral development. Kohlberg's scales of moral development were expanded and more detailed. His central theme as Piaget's, was justice. They focused upon the logic of action and people's rights.

Kohlberg's assessment technique consisted of presenting hypothetical moral dilemmas to his subjects after which he conducted an indepth interview to assess the level of moral reasoning used to solve the dilemma. The most famous dilemma used by Kohlberg was the Heinz Dilemma. In this dilemma Heinz faces the problem of possibly having to steal an expensive drug from a local pharmacist. Heinz's wife is dying and needs this drug to save her life. Heinz cannot

afford this drug and the pharmacist will not lower his price. The question then is "what should Heinz do?" Kohlberg listened to the provided solution and tried to elicit the subject's underlying reasoning for his/her solution to Heinz's dilemma. He then matched the subject's reasoning criteria with the appropriate stage of his moral development theory.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is divided into three levels: Preconventional, Conventional, and Postconventional. There are two stages per level with the second stage, the transition stage, being more advanced and forming the basis for the next level.

Level I Preconventional Morality: Stage 1 Obedience and Punishment Orientation. At this stage, the child or immature adult sees morality as external to themselves. They are told how to act and believe they must behave in the prescribed manner. Power is perceived as outside of the self; rules are handed down and must be unquestioningly obeyed. At this stage of thinking, the person would respond "it's wrong" or "it's against the law" without questioning why an act is right or wrong. To them the fact they are punished proves they are wrong. Hence in the Heinz dilemma the person would not consider or do anything authority says is wrong.

Level I: Stage 2 Individualism and Exchange. The person recognizes there is not just one viewpoint of right

or wrong. On any given subject or action the individual is capable of seeing different points of view although it is believed one should pursue his/her individual interest. At this stage, punishment is a risk the individual wishes to avoid. The basic philosophy is a fair exchange in situations such as, "If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," or "an eye for an eye." People at this stage are still thought to be preconventional because they act as isolated individuals, not as productive concerned members of a family or society. Stealing may be considered, not for a moral reason, but because it would fit Heinz's best interest.

Level II Conventional Morality: Stage 3 Good Interpersonal Relationships. At this stage, individuals see morality as more than self interest and negotiated deals. The beliefs are that one should live up to societal and family standards and behave in an appropriate manner. This entails having good motives and interpersonal feelings such as empathy, love, trust, honesty, and positive regard for others. The person at this stage is concerned with what is "good" or seemingly right. Behavior may be expressed against someone who is seemingly perpetrating a moralistic wrong but who is within the boundaries of the law. As such, a person at this stage would believe Heinz would be correct in stealing the drug for his wife. He would reason Heinz was concerned for his wife, loved her and did not

wish for her to die. The druggist would be viewed as greedy, selfish, and only interested in profit even though he is within the boundaries of the law. This is considered conventional morality as it assumes anyone would be right to do what Heinz did (Kohlberg, 1963)

Level II: Stage 4 Maintaining the Social Order. Individuals are more concerned about society as a whole. They understand social order needs to be maintained; hence, they believe in performing one's duties, obeying laws, and in having respect for authority. They fully understand the concepts of stage three, but they are concerned with what would happen to society if everyone began breaking laws because they felt they had a good reason. They understand society could not function properly in this manner as there would be chaos. These people "have a conception of the function of laws for society as a whole" (Colby & Kohlberg, 1983, p. 27). They think from a full-fledged member-of-society perspective. At this stage, Heinz may express his sorrow and the seemingly unfairness to his wife's situation, but he would believe the laws were good for society as a whole and accept its ruling.

Level III Postconventional Morality: Stage 5 Social Contact and Individual Rights. While a smooth functioning society is good, these people ask "what makes for a good society?" They are capable of stepping back from societal norms and in a theoretical way consider the rights and

values a society ought to uphold. They believe people should enter into a social contract where rights, liberty, and life would be protected and procedures for changing unfair laws would exist. In response to the Heinz dilemma, these respondents would say they do not generally favor breaking laws but the wife's moral right to live must be protected as all life must be protected. Hence they generally defend Heinz's theft. They tend to understand and believe morality and rights take priority over some laws. They often reason, for example, that property has little meaning without life. They are trying to determine logically what a society ought to be like (Kohlberg, 1981)

Level III: Stage 6 Universal Principles. Though Stage 5, respondents believe in individual rights and in settling disputes through a democratic process, the results may not always be just. Hence Kohlberg's conception of Stage 6 justice follows from the philosophers Kant and Rawls as well as civil rights leaders Ghandi and King. To these people justice requires observation in an impartial manner of the claims put forth by each of the parties involved in confrontation. The basic dignity of all the individuals is respected and the universal principles of justice apply to all. In actual practice, this requires decision making to be done while placing oneself in the place of the other individuals involved within the situation. This allows one

to see all points of view and impartiality is maintained. If this is done, the druggist in the Heinz dilemma would recognize life must be valued over property as he wouldn't wish to place himself in the wife's place with property valued more than he is worth.

In the 1980's, Kohlberg ceased scoring his subjects at stage 6. He did not find subjects who consistently scored at this level and he concluded his interviews did not consistently distinguish between stage 5 and stage 6. One issue which distinguishes between stage 5 and stage 6 is civil disobedience. People at stage 5 would be hesitant to commit civil disobedience; at stage six when justice and individual rights are violated, breaking the law seems more justified.

A significant development within the area of moral development was the designing of the Defining Issues Test (DIT) by James R. Rest. Rest wished to design a more easily administered and objectively scored assessment method of moral development which would yield high correlations comparable with Kohlberg's rating system.

Rest (1983) reported there are well over 1000 studies using various versions of Kohlberg's test and the DIT. This constitutes the largest body of research in the area of moral development and judgment.

The DIT uses six moral dilemmas, including Kohlberg's Heinz dilemma. After the subject reads the dilemma, he/she

must rate 12 issue statements. There are two issue statements corresponding to each stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Rest requires the subject to rate each statement on a five point scale from highest agreement to lowest agreement. Once the subject has rated the 12 statements, he/she must rank the four most important statements. Along with the ratings and rankings, a P index (Principled Considerations) is also attained. This is the percentage of top rankings a subject gives to stage 5 and 6 items (Rest 1983).

Rest (1983) pointed out there can be advantages and disadvantages to every assessment method. While this method of assessment is quicker than Kohlberg's interview method, there are several threats to the internal and external validity of the DIT. First, subjects can randomly check off items without even reading the assessment material. Second, the subject may pick out the more complex items without ever actually understanding the items. Finally, the subjects may try to fake high because they do not have to justify their answers.

Due to these disadvantages, Rest employed features which were designed to counteract these problems. First, a consistency check is used between the rating and ranking to ascertain if the subjects are checking items in a meaningless pattern. It is assumed the subject will basically score at the same stage with each of the

dilemmas. If the scoring patterns are inconsistent, the questionnaire is discarded. Second, Rest uses M items which are nonsensical statements designed to sound impressive but in fact do not mean anything. There are two M items with each dilemma. If too many M items are chosen throughout the questionnaire, it is discarded.

As developmental theorists point out, one of the most important variables in developmental change is age. Consequently, researchers look for cross-sectional age trends. This can be observed in Piaget's comparison of younger children to older children, Kohlberg's studies and DIT research which compared junior high school, high school, college and graduate students. Rest (1983) reported that various studies using the DIT found age/education accounting for 38% to 50% of the variance, while other studies have yielded .60 to .70 correlations. Rest noted adults who are not in school tend to stay at the same stage level when tested in longitudinal studies. A small portion of subjects move downward (7%). More dramatic change is noted over periods of four years or more (1983).

Many criticisms have been noted concerning Kohlberg's theory. Hogan (1975) believed Stage 3, Conventional Morality, should be the highest stage people should attain while higher stages should not be considered nor encouraged. He believed it is dangerous for people to

place their principles above society's laws. Such thinking could cause societal unrest and upheaval.

Kohlberg believed his moral stages to be universal and invariant for all cultures. The research he and others conducted in various countries tended to support his belief. However, Simpson (1974) believed Kohlberg's stage model is culturally biased and is based on Western philosophies. This criticism may have some merit as researchers have found various cultures which develop to Stage 3 and proceed no higher.

Critics also question what Kohlberg's moral judgement interview reveals about real life decision making. Studies comparing students' responses on Kohlberg's dilemmas and their reason for involvement in protest found little correspondence (Hogan 1975). People from all stages were found willing to protest. Although they expressed higher moral reasoning in choosing solutions for the dilemmas, their reasoning for social protest corresponded to lower stages.

Finally, and most important to this paper, Gilligan proposed another criticism which indicates women apply their moral development in a different manner. She used Kohlberg's six stages of moral development and applied them to women in real life situations, as opposed to Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas. She found women were more concerned with care and response to others. Their concern did not

appear to be based on rights, but rather upon how the other person involved may feel and respond to the situation. Gilligan believes caring and empathy go beyond justice and rights for females.

In her study, Gilligan (1977) conducted research with women who were making a real life decision. She interviewed women who were facing the moral dilemma of aborting a pregnancy. In applying Kohlberg's stages to issues facing women, she modified the stages to more directly apply to womens' moral reasoning.

Level I: Orientation to Individual Survival. At this stage, the individual centers on the self with the primary issue being survival of the self. The person will typically solve her problem by stating "I don't want it" and does not believe there is a right decision. The question of a right decision would only emerge if her needs came into conflict, which would force a decision concerning which need would take precedence. At this stage, there is a lack of personal power. A pregnancy, for example, is viewed as a constraint or hinderance.

The First Transition: From Selfishness to Responsibility. Here the individual begins to experience attachment or connectedness with others. At this stage, the female begins to assume adult and parental roles which includes the responsibility and care of another person. A woman at this stage is initially attracted to the idea

of having someone to love, care for and alleviate their loneliness. As she begins to consider the aspects of responsible care for another person, she begins to realize she has to care responsibly for herself. The decision focuses upon what she would like to do and what she should do.

The Second Level: Goodness as Self-Sacrifice. The woman at this level, according to Gilligan (1977), "validates her claim to social membership through the adoption of societal rules" (p. 496). She has made the transition from selfishness to a responsible member of society. The conventional woman at this level proclaims her worth by utilizing her ability to care for, be sensitive to, and understand others. The conflict to a woman at this level arises over the unwillingness to hurt someone. She does not wish to hurt other individuals but neither does she wish to hurt herself. She frequently comes into opposition with significant others in making her decision, which leaves her believing any decision is equally unsatisfactory. Someone will be hurt and the woman must choose the victim. As the heading of this level indicates, the woman typically portrays her goodness through self-sacrifice, doing as significant others request. By giving to important others, she exemplifies her love although she is not responsible for her own needs.

The Second Transition: From Goodness to Truth. The
individual begins to consider the relationship between
herself and others. She begins to think in terms of being
selfish again. Honesty or truth are considered; she
questions whether it is selfish or responsible to include
her own needs in solving her dilemma. She considers the
intention and consequence of all points of view and bases
her decision on her conclusions. "Thus she strives to
encompass the needs of both self and others, to be
responsible to others and thus be good but also to be
responsible to herself and thus to be honest and real"
(Gilligan 1977, p. 500).

The Third Level: The Morality of Nonviolence. At this
level the woman asserts the belief she should be committed
to nonviolence or not hurting anyone. The belief is she
should be responsible to herself and others and the
occurrence of the pregnancy or dilemma itself precludes a
nonviolent resolution. However, now she must make a
decision which is best or least nonviolent to all parties
concerned, immediately and in the future. Gilligan (1977)
states, "care then becomes a universal obligation" (p.
504). Her future actions must be responsible between self
and others. Responsibility is asserted in making sure a
similar situation does not arise again because she will not
allow herself to hurt someone again.

Lyons (1983) elaborated the contrast in her study

indicating that, although Kohlberg has identified moral developmental patterns in justice, he had not expanded his theories of moral development and their connection with the understanding of relationships which she believed central in conceptualizing morality. Lyons (1983) maintained there are two modes of relating to people: 1) separate/objective which is maintained by Kohlberg's theory of "rights" and "justice", and 2) connected, which is based in care and response.

Subsequent research has not supported Gilligan's arguments of a difference between men and women's moral reasoning. This may be due in part to her choice of subject matter which required women to observe their dilemma from the viewpoint of caring, sensitivity and connectedness. Empirical research since the time of Gilligan's study reveals little evidence of women scoring lower than men on Kohlberg's system especially when education and occupations are controlled (Rest, 1983).

Abell (1986) has taken these theories of moral development one step further in order to look at men's connectedness, sensitivity and responsibility towards women. Like Kohlberg and Gilligan, Abell (1986) devised a three level theory of men's moral responsibility to women. Her stages are based on Gilligan (1977) and Lyon's (1983) view of responsibility to self and others. Her three levels are similar to Kohlberg's and Gilligan's in that

there are transitional stages between Levels 1 and 2 and 3. Generally the focus is the self at Level 1 and continues to primarily be on the self at Level 2. Gradually it changes at transition 2 and is on both self and others at Level 3.

Individuals can be stuck at any stage and possibly regress at times depending on the situation and the stressors involved. However, the stages should coincide with cognitive development initially and with educational level at later stages. The earlier stages should coincide with cognitive development experienced in childhood through adolescence. Levels 1 and 2 should be experienced and attained by the completion of the adolescent stage.

The indepth descriptions of Abell's three levels and the transition stages are as follows:

Level 1 Preconventional. Typically at this level, the male is in a "power down" situation in that power lies outside himself. His initial focus is on survival of self. Other important people, usually parents, have the power and make the important decisions. There are limitations as to what the individual can do. If the male does make decisions, they are made impulsively and the effect of their actions on others are not considered. Feelings are usually not communicated or there are feelings of isolation. Pleasing important people plays the major role in decision making (Abell 1986).

Transition 1. In this transition, the focus is upon the

self, although there is a beginning separation or freeing of oneself from the dominating influence of others. At this stage, the male, typically an adolescent, begins to assume responsibility for himself and makes decisions which form his identity. More power is assumed and is experienced through aggression, competition, and mastery. This stage would be equivalent to Erikson's stage of Identity vs. Defusion (1968). "Speaking for oneself without consideration of the effect upon others is the hallmark of this stage" (Abell, 1986, p. 21).

Abell (1986) stated that in this transition the male believes that he is expected to be powerful in society, which is a part of the established belief system, so he experiments with power interpersonally. Since the majority of males at this level are, in fact, subordinate to others, a basic incongruity exists. Hence the male exerts power over someone less powerful, usually a young woman, who also tends to support that power.

As the male is forming his identity, his focus is primarily on himself and he is not aware of the consequences of his decisions upon others. He may frequently find himself in conflict with others in relationships and his idealized self is challenged as he gains experience. This causes him to consider what others are thinking and feeling. It will begin to cause an acceptance of differentiations although the focus will stay

primarily on the self in relationships.

Level 2 Conventional: Stage 3. At this level, the male assumes responsibility for the care and protection of others (Abell, 1986). It would seem there is a sense of being more connected to others. However, care and protection are applied to traditional male roles. The men provide materially and protect in an aggressive sense. The emphasis is still on the self, as well as on work, competitiveness, and money. The importance of others is still secondary, and there is little demonstration of affect.

Intimacy is a crisis at this stage, according to Abell (1986). Strengthening connectedness can be enhancing but it may also be threatening and overwhelming. "The emphasis on competition with other men and achievement in work seems to prohibit the demonstration of caring". (p. 23).

The emphasis of power and dominance in relationships is the hallmark of Level 2. The man is more powerful and dominant as head of the household and is seen as making decisions on behalf of others. The wife may even be seen as a possession or subservient, "thus the consequences of decisions upon others and actions taken as a result of the decisions are not fully considered nor understood" (Abell, 1986, p. 23). Such attitudes can also lead to violence within families. The greater the power differential, the more likelihood of abuse.

Transition 2: Stage 4. In this transitional stage
between the conventional and postconventional stages, the
process of reflection about self, one's values, and
intimate relationships with others commences (Abell, 1986).
Here the male's awareness increases as well as his
expression of feelings. His capacity to understand the
feelings and perspectives of others increases, and this
allows him to begin to assess the effects of the
consequences of his choices upon others. These new
abilities allow him to consider the effects on others
before he made choices also. A sharing of power begins to
emerge and decisions are discussed and more often shared.
The concept of power also takes on new connotations as
power becomes more internal and personal rather than
positional. "There is less importance placed on
controlling others" (p. 26).

Level III Postconventional: Stage 5. In this final
stage, "the responsibility felt to self and others in close
personal relationships is considered equally" (Abell, 1986,
p. 26). The re-evaluation and definition of the self in
context of societal values continues to take place.
Connectedness between oneself and others increases and
decisions are made considering all members of the family.
The worth of others is equal to one's own worth and there
is an awareness of the interdependence of their lives. The
male at this level exemplifies an equal sharing of power,

mutual respect, a true sharing of feelings and an acknowledgement of the needs of others as being equal to his own.

The male at Level 3 "exemplifies an androgynous person. The demonstration of compassion and care is infused with equal respect, which is part of equality in power and the sense of the worth of others being equal to one's own worth" (p. 27).

Presentation of the Problem

In conducting research on these stages, Abell proposed to conduct clinical interviews as did Kohlberg and Gilligan in their respective studies. She proposed to question men on the most difficult decision they've made within intimate relationships of their lives. In this manner, she could obtain large amounts of data from each male which might be indicative of the moral responsiveness stage they have attained. However, the method is time consuming as well as difficult to standardize.

The author of this paper developed a test which is similar in design to Rest's DIT research, as an attempt to develop an easier method of assessment. Real life situations were used which presented a moral dilemma for the male concerning his intimate relationship. There were forced choice issue statements which correspond to Abell's stages.

In keeping with research results previously attained by

Kohlberg and Rest, the factors of age and education were investigated as they relate to response levels. Two hypotheses are proposed. First, age will be a significant factor in men attaining higher levels of moral reasoning. Second, men with higher levels of education will attain significantly higher scores of moral reasoning on Abell's moral responsibility stages.

METHODOLOGY

The Subjects

The subjects were obtained from the mid-south in the Hopkinsville, Kentucky region. There were 120 subjects from two area colleges as well as businesses and civic groups. Males of various ages with a high school education were obtained from factories, businesses, civic groups and public service and maintenance crews.

The Instrument

The instrument consisted of three dilemmas similar to actual situations experienced in most intimate heterosexual relationships. After reading the dilemma, the subject read three separate clusters of three statements each. Each of the statements corresponded to one of Abell's (1986) three levels of men's moral thought in responsibility. All three levels are represented in this study to show direction consistent with age and education as factors related to moral developmental stages. Stages two and four, which are transition levels, were omitted for simplicity. The subjects were requested to indicate the most important statement, in solving the dilemma in each of the three separate clusters. The subject received a score for each dilemma. It was expected the subject would consistently

choose the statements which corresponded to his own cognitions.

A question asking for the subject's solution was requested at the end of each dilemma. These answers were not quantitatively analyzed in the data. They may be used in future research. At the end of the three vignettes, a question asking the subject to rate the satisfaction of their current intimate relationship was provided. This rating was on a nine point scale from least satisfied to very satisfied.

The Procedure

The subjects completed questionnaires in small groups or alone. They were requested to sign an agreement for participation form, informed their answers were to be confidential and instructed to not sign their questionnaire. They were directed to identify strongly with the male in the dilemma and to be as honest as possible in choosing the statements which would most accurately correspond to their cognitions and action.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

An analysis of variance in a two x two design was used in analyzing the data. The men were separated into cells consistent with their age and educational level. The cells were: 18 to 25 year old males with a high school education or less; 18 to 25 year old males with at least three years of college, 30-year-old males or older with a high school education or less, and 30-year-old males with at least three years of college. The subjects received a score for each dilemma as well as an overall score combining the scores of all three dilemmas. Each of the statements were weighed with the higher stage statements receiving the greater weights. The statements which received the number one ranking were scored and combined for the score for the dilemma.

A significant difference at $p < .05$ was not in evidence between age groups when the data was subjected to an analysis of variance. The mean for group A1 (18 to 25 year olds) was 39.367; the mean for group A2 (30 plus year olds) was 40.50.

A significant difference, $p < .05$, was evident between the education groups. The mean for the high school group (B2) was 36.933; the mean for the college group (B1) was 42.933.

A post hoc analysis for interaction between AB indicated there was no significant difference between the interaction groups.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

DISCUSSION

The results of this research supported the hypothesis that education is significant in attaining higher levels of moral reasoning in intimate relationships. This is consistant with previous research conducted by Kohlberg and Rest. According to Rest's DIT research, adult groups with comparable educational levels attain similar scores irrelevant of their age. Among adults it appears moral reasoning is more highly correlated with education, whereas age trends are associated with children and adolescents. Rest (1983) indicated after adults finish formal education they seem to plateau and maintain the same level of moral reasoning as they become older. The results of this research further indicate this may be true. The levels of moral reasoning chosen in solving the dilemmas were consistent and nonsignificant in both the high school groups and college groups despite their age differences. It is suggested the educational process allows the individual access to varied philosophies, opinions and facts which may challenge and facilitate change in cognitions that then may be translated into higher levels of moral reasoning and behavior in relationships.

The results of the research may lead one to the assumption that more highly educated men are more sensitive, empathetic, connected, respectful of self and others, equal minded and more of an androgynous person. The more highly educated men in this

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study consistently chose level three solutions to the dilemmas which exemplified the above-mentioned attributes. Men who had obtained a high school education or less, frequently chose answers where they would maintain power and control in a situation. They see themselves primarily as providers and protectors, frequently make decisions with little consideration for others, and have less of an awareness of other's emotional needs or desires.

While the results of this research are consistent with previous research and indicate education facilitates higher moral cognitions in relationships, it does not give an indication of men's behavior in actual relationships. A flaw in this type of research is that men can choose the socially desirable response without indicating their actual behavior. Abell's research methods of interviewing each subject, while much slower and more tedious, may result in lower and more realistic scores for men in general.

Future research should include Abell's transition Stages 2 and 4 which were eliminated in this study. The inclusion of these stages would help to more accurately dentify the stage of an individual's level of moral responsibility as well as help eliminate the choosing of the more socially desirable level three responses. This may lead to a lowering of group scores and possibly identify some age trends which were not significant in this study.

SUMMARY

A study was conducted utilizing Abell's (1986) Men's Moral Thought in Responsibility stages. Abell's stages are an adaptation of those developed by Kohlberg and Gilligan; however, she focused on men's sensitivity and connectedness in relationships. The variables age and education were controlled as they have previously been identified as the two variables most correlated with higher levels of moral reasoning. An instrument similar to Rest's Defining Issues Test was incorporated in collecting data from 120 men. An analysis of variance of the data indicated a college education was significant in men responding to higher levels of moral reasoning.

TABLE 1

The Labels, Means and Significance
of the Groups in Mens Moral Reasoning

Cell Label	Mean	Significance
30 Plus Years	40.500	No Sig. Difference
18-25 years of age	39.367	No Sig. Difference
College Education	42.933	Significant Differ.
High School Educ.	36.933	p < .05

TABLE 2

The Analysis of Interaction Between Groups
for Moral Reasoning

Label	Mean	Significance
30 plus yrs., col. ed.	43.467	No Sig. Difference
18-25 y.o., college ed.	42.400	"
30 plus yrs., h.s. ed.	37.533	"
18-25 y.o., h.s. ed.	36.333	"

TABLE 3

Summary of Analysis for the Study of
Mens Moral Reasoning in Intimate Relationships

Source	SS	df	Ms	F	P
Total	3847.467	119			
A (Age)	38.533	1.	38.533	1.638	0.200
B (Educ.)	1080.000	1.	1080.0000	45.910	0.000
AB (Age & Ed)	0.133	1.	0.133	0.006	0.938
Error 1	2728.800	116.	23.524		

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ADDENDUM

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The purpose of this investigation is to research men's moral reasoning in relationships. Your responses are confidential. At no time will you be identified nor will anyone other than the investigators have access to your responses. The potential hazards which may occur from participation are not significant as based on previous moral development research. The demographic information collected will be used only for purposes of analysis. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to terminate your participation at any time without any penalty.

The scope of the project will be explained fully upon completion.

Thank you for your cooperation.

I agree to participate in the present study being conducted under the supervision of faculty member of the Department of Psychology at Austin Peay State University. I have been informed, either orally or in writing or both, about the procedures to be followed and about any discomforts or risks which may be involved. The investigator has offered to answer any further inquiries as I may have regarding the procedures. I understand that I am free to terminate my participation at any time without penalty or prejudice and to have all data obtained from me withdrawn from the study and destroyed. I have also been told of any benefits that may result from my participation.

_____
Name (Please Print)

_____
Signature

_____
Date

QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS

Please read the stories and following groups of statements carefully. You are requested to rank the statements in each group from "most important" to "least important." Rank the "most important" statement as a "1" and the "least important" as a "3." Please try to identify strongly with the male in the story and respond as you honestly feel to the statements. At the bottom of the page please give your solution to the problem if you feel your solution is more appropriate. Your responses are confidential. Please do not sign your questionnaire. You are only requested to provide your age and educational level.

Age_____

Education_____

WORK

Robert and Judith have both established successful careers with progressive companies. They are still growing personally and professionally and are looking forward to a very comfortable life together. They talked and agreed previously that if their companies expanded and required one of them to move the other would go along with the move especially if it would be beneficial to their family. Judith's advertising company has offered her a promotion, doubling her salary, though she must be willing to move 1,500 miles to the southwest. Robert is now quite confused as to what to do. He enjoys working for his company, likes the area of the country he is in and has a very good salary. His company is putting pressure on him to stay, promising him a promotion and raise within the next two years.

_____ 1. Is it important for Robert to maintain silence concerning his feelings, since his wife is excited about the move. He also remembers his promise to be willing to move?

_____ 2. Is it important for Robert as man of the household to assume total responsibility for care and protection of the family and make the decision?

_____ 3. How important is it for Robert to re-evaluate himself, consider his agreement with his wife and consider her feelings and needs?

_____ 4. Is it important for Robert to recognize that traditionally, ultimately he has the most responsibility in providing for his family?

_____ 5. Is it important for Robert to consider his wife's career as important as his own in relation to the family?

_____ 6. Is it important for Robert to quickly decide to go along with his wife's career promotion? This would allow him to put the past behind him, not think about it, and concentrate on a new job?

_____ 7. Is it important for Robert to consider all options and the effects of those options on all members of the family equally?

8. How important is it for Robert to simply consider the survival of the family? Judith will be making a large salary and they will be comfortable.

9. How important is it for Robert to recognize his career and his monetary potential will be most important as his family grows?

How would you solve this problem?

CHILDREN

Peter and Jane have been married for 17 years and have three children. He has always described Jane as pushy and demanding. Jane's biggest request over the years has been that Peter take active control of the family. Jane expects her husband to set rules for the children, make them responsible for their actions, and discipline them for their inappropriate behavior. Peter believes the children should be left alone and they will turn out alright. This difference in parenting styles has been the source of extreme marital difficulties. Peter has always covered for the children when they got into trouble and has always picked up after them. The children have learned to effectively play one parent against the other. Recently the eldest child, a 14-year old male, has been expelled from school several times for acting out in class, making threats, and for fighting. He is facing several beyond parental control charges and has just been arrested for shoplifting in excess of $100. He will be going to court soon, will face sentencing and probable removal from his home. Peter believes he is still philosophically correct in his parenting style although he is beginning to have some small doubts. What are the issues facing Peter in solving this conflict of parenting styles with his wife?

_____ 1. Is it important for Peter to face the facts of his son's behavior, admit his wife was correct and do things her way?

_____ 2. Is it important for Peter to take complete control of his family and inform them of the way things are going to be in the future?

_____ 3. How important is it for Peter to re-evaluate himself and his parenting styles and in conjunction with his wife make mutual decisions concerning the children?

_____

_____ 4. How important is it for Peter to assume his role as head of the household and begin to make decisions and implement stability?

_____ 5. Is it important for Peter to consider as many parenting styles as possible and share his thoughts with the whole family and allow their input in developing rules, regulations and consequences?

_____ 6. How important is it for Peter to reserve his decision and go along with the court's recommendation?

7. Is it important for Peter to consider each member of the family equally in making decisions?

8. Is it important for Peter to make a quick decision and proceed on from this situation?

9. Is it important for Peter to make his own decisions and not consider other demands and wants as these have previously contributed to family conflict?

How would you solve this problem?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please rate your satisfaction in your current relationship.

Not
Satisfied

Very
Satisfied