An Exploratory Study of the Relationship between Moral Development and Communication in Small Groups

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION IN SMALL GROUPS

by

Beth Hartman Ellis

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Western Michigan University
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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION IN SMALL GROUPS

Beth Hartman Ellis, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1985

This study explored the differences in communication between groups comprised of persons in different stages of moral development. Hypotheses were developed related to the task dimension and the process dimension of group discussions. These hypotheses were based on the appropriateness of the content of the communication in the groups to stages within Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Trends in the direction of the hypotheses were found in analyses of utterances of the individuals in the group.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Drs. Steve Rhodes, Jim Jaksa and Ernie Stech for their help and guidance in this project. I would like to thank Kristopher and Kara Ellis for their patience.

Beth Hartman Ellis
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A primary focus of group communication scholars is the ability of a task group to arrive at an effective decision. One of the factors that contributes to an effective decision is the communication of the group members. The importance that effective decision making and group communication has for many areas cannot be overstated. From family interaction to state and national policy issues, the impact of group decisions on individual and societal life is substantial. Therefore, the need for continued study and research into group decision making and communication processes is necessary.

Although numerous variables that affect the decision making process have been studied, one variable that has not been the focus of previous research is that of the group members' moral development. When people in a group interact on value laden issues, differences in ethical positions or levels of moral development may have a distinct bearing on the communication of the group. Hirokawa (1982) supports this possibility when he states that "it is possible that morality affects interpersonal decisions" (p. 141). He also has stated that the work on moral development and communication has been a neglected area of research.

During the past 15 to 20 years, research in the field of moral development has been dominated by Lawrence Kohlberg (1984). His determination of an individual's level of moral development is from a
cognitive developmental perspective. His stage sequence perspective is based upon justice which, according to Kohlberg, is the most essential structure of morality. Moral situations are conflicts of perspective. Justice principles are concepts that are used for resolving the conflict. In Kohlberg's formulation, justice is the equilibrium of social actions and relations.

Kohlberg (1984) presents research on groups and morality when he discusses the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War years. The purpose of relating the horror of the murders was to inform the reader that individual moral action can be a function of group norms and affect group decision making processes.

Kohlberg, Scharf, and Hickey (1972) conducted a study exploring the moral atmosphere of a group in a prison. After analyzing the responses of the inmates in a group moral discussion, they found that the inmates' judgments and reasoning appeared to be higher about hypothetical dilemmas rather than real prison dilemmas. This study suggested that a stage of moral atmosphere in a group environment might be different from an individual's own moral stage.

Higgins, Power and Kohlberg (1984) studied the moral interview responses of high school students. The purpose was to analyze the moral atmosphere of the collective norms of a democratic alternative high school and a regular high school. In relation to stealing, the authors found that the collective norms of responsibility and trust developed over time in the alternative school, advancing the moral atmosphere of the group.

Gibbs, Arnold, Ahlborn, and Chessman (1984) utilized the
Sociomoral Reflection Measure and the Dilemma Decisions Survey in a dilemma study involving juvenile delinquents. After eight weekly discussion sessions, significant gains in individual sociomoral reasoning were found.

The research noted above is primarily concerned with how group morality affects the individual. The Kohlberg studies focused on established groups. The longevity of the group was sufficient for collective norms to be identified by the members. Because of the community, cohesion and solidarity of these established groups, a moral atmosphere developed and was identifiable. Gibbs et al. (1984) similarly focused on an established group: incarcerated delinquents.

Research is not available in regard to how individual morality may affect communication in a zero history group. One possible area of study related to group communication theory is to examine the relationship of individual morality to communication in a task discussion group.

Statement of the Problem

The current study explores whether differences in communication occur between groups comprised of individuals at different stages of Kohlberg's sequence in moral development. Specifically, the question is: Will there be differences in what people have to say to one another between task discussion groups consisting of persons in a lower stage of moral development as opposed to groups made up of persons in a higher stage?

Due to the lack of research in the area of morality and
communication, this study was exploratory in nature. The small sample size prohibited drawing strong conclusions; however, the analysis of the discussions between individuals at different stages showed trends that warrant further empirical research.

Summary and Preview

Thus far, this chapter has argued that individual moral development may have a bearing on communication in a small group. Chapter II discusses the literature related to group decision making as well as moral development. Chapter III reviews the methodology and design used to explore the question. Chapter IV gives the results of the study, and Chapter V draws conclusions from the results as well as giving direction for further research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter reviews selected studies in the group communication literature related to communication and decision making. It also discusses Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, with the final section of the Chapter restating the need for the current study.

Group Communication

Research in the field of small group communication encompasses a wide range of study. From Hare's (1952) often cited study on interaction and consensus in groups to Bell's (1983) work on conflict and linguistic diversity, the literature has varied from specific experimental studies to criticism of methodology and theory. Even though the range is broad, many group studies have focused on decision making (Bell, 1979; Hirokawa, 1983; Hirokawa and Pace, 1983; Kabanoff and O'Brien, 1979). A primary focus of the decision making literature in small groups is the effect of communication variables on group outcome (Gouran, Brown, and Henry, 1978; Knutson, 1972; Leathers, 1972; Spillman, Bezdek, and Spillman, 1979).

The present study is concerned with a group discussion and how the communication of the group might be affected by individual moral development and judgment. As previously mentioned, inherent in much
of the research on small group communication is an emphasis on decision making. Gouran (1974) states that the decision making process of groups provides a unique situation in which communication researchers can add to the understanding of human behavior. Given the major focus of communication variables and decision making in small groups, the following literature review will similarly focus on research pertaining to communication and decision making in small group settings.

The first set of studies reviewed focus on various communication variables and how they affect group outcome. The second group of studies concerns the literature that focuses on consensus in groups.

Communication Variables and Group Outcomes

Leathers (1972) found that groups experiencing high quality communication produced solutions that were qualitatively superior to groups experiencing communication of average quality. The quality of communication was determined by the feedback of the group. A nine-dimension, seven point Feedback Rating Instrument (1971) was utilized to measure the quality of feedback. The direct relationship of quality communication of a problem solving group and quality of the product outcome was encouraging.

Gouran et al. (1978) focused on perceptions of behavior in decision making groups. The results of the research indicate that such behaviors as introducing relevant issues, amplifying ideas and documenting assertions had a greater effect on perceptions of quality of the communication in the group than did individual member
involvement. In addition, they report that procedural behaviors such as maintaining goal orientation and pursuing issues systematically also had a greater weight on perceptions of quality as opposed to behavior focused on improving the socio-emotional atmosphere of the group.

Hirokawa (1980) states that effective task discussion groups interact on procedural matters more than ineffective groups. He also found that effective groups consistently spent more time on procedural issues. Group members who attempt to establish criteria for proceeding with the discussion may have a greater chance of reaching a quality solution. Employing the NASA Moon Survival problem as the decision task, Hirokawa analyzed interaction patterns of effective and ineffective groups. Effective decision making groups were characterized by a specific two behavior pattern of interaction that was not found to the same extent in the ineffective groups. The emphasis on the sequencing of the verbal behaviors in the effective groups as opposed to the frequencies of verbal behaviors produced suggests that additional research in this area needs to further identify and verify the communication behavior patterns.

It is apparent from the summary of the previously mentioned studies that the nature of the group discussion can affect the quality of the decision. In addition to variables affecting group outcome a number of studies have dealt with various aspects of communication in small groups.

Gibb (1961) states that members of small groups that had a
defensive climate experienced greater distortion of messages. He also found that groups that had difficulty focusing on messages were inept in perceiving the motives and emotions of others in the group. The difficulty in decoding messages would not be conducive to productive decision making.

Prentice (1975) states that there is a significant increase in non-fluency among group members who were the target of trust-destroying communication. The decrease in fluency could have implications on the group outcome. The result would be less opportunity for feedback, which as Leathers (1972) determined, is related to quality communication and quality of product. Not only could the non-fluency affect a decision, but the tension and subsequent inflexibility of the persons who had their trust destroyed may affect the decision by promoting a defensive group climate (Gibb, 1961).

Daly, McCroskey, and Richmond (1977) demonstrated a positive relationship between vocal activity and desirable perceptions of the communicator in small group interaction. The specific variables studied were credibility, attraction and power influence. Further research would be necessary to determine the nature of the relationship between vocal activity and perceptions of the communicator on decision making.

Consensus in Small Group Decision Making

The type of communication produced in small groups has been of interest to researchers. The vocal activity of the group members as
well as the atmosphere of the group could have a bearing on the discussion process as well as the solution outcome. Communication variables and the discussion process have also been discussed as they relate to group problem solving. In addition to these categories of group research, there is another body of literature involving the ability of the task group to come to consensus.

Consensus has been regarded as one of the most important goals of group discussion (Phillips, 1963). Group communication scholars assume that consensus decisions will be of higher quality than non-consensus decisions. In addition, it has been found that group members will be more satisfied with consensus decisions (Hirokawa, 1982). Task groups that come to a consensus have a tendency to produce higher quality decisions due to the "positive feelings" (Hirokawa, 1980, p. 409) that will be associated with group members as well as to the group decision (Hoffman, 1965).

There has been a considerable amount of research on consensus. For example, Hare (1952) found that groups of twelve members did not reach as high a level of agreement as groups consisting of five members. Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) found that the type of group conflict affects conditions associated with consensus. They analyzed substantive and affective conflict. Substantive conflict was described as "intellectual opposition among participants" and affective conflict was defined as "tension generated by emotional clashes aroused during the interpersonal struggle involved in solving the group's agenda problems" (p. 380). In comparing low and high consensus groups, the authors state that the utilization of facts by
group members made a significant difference. The groups that had more expertise available and used it were groups in which substantive conflict ended in more consensus. The affective groups had no unique conditions effecting group consensus. However, Guetzkow and Gyr note that group members reduced tendencies to disagreement by developing interpersonal isolation.

Destephen (1983) studied the interaction patterns between high and low consensus groups in the initial and final stages of task performance. She found that communication differences did exist in both the content and relational levels in the initial stage of both high and low consensus groups. Interestingly, low consensus groups had a tendency to perpetuate clarification sequences whereas high consensus groups tended toward clarification and interpretation.

The content level of communication was significant in the interactional patterns of high consensus groups during the initial and final stages of task performance. Agreement was found to be more likely in the initial meeting of the group. An interpretation/interpretation/agreement sequence was characteristic of the early stages of development. Significant differences were found on the content level between the first and last meetings of low consensus groups. Destephen (1983) states that there seems to be a shift from agreeing with explanations to expressing opinions about the explanations.

This research suggests that some types of interaction patterns are characteristic of high consensus groups. Some of the patterns that emerged characterized the initial meetings of high consensus
groups and the final meetings of low consensus groups. A subsequent question to Destephen's research might involve the time factor. Given more time, it may be possible that the low consensus groups could raise their consensus level.

The opinion of other group members was the focus of the research by Shelley (1960). The members of thirteen girls' clubs rated their group on its effectiveness by ranking three or more group members who did the most in helping the group attain its goals. Status consensus or the agreement about the rankings by group members constituted the criterion used by the authors in establishing ranking.

In addition to interaction patterns, the opinion of other group members, the type of conflict and group size, affective and cognitive attributes of individual group members as predictors of group structure have been studied. In fact, Cragan and Wright (1980) state that "the orientation consensus research represents by far the most coherent and consistently investigated relationship in the speech communication small group literature" (p. 208).

Gouran (1969) found that statements of consensus groups will be higher in orientation than statements of non-consensus groups on questions regarding policy. Gouran defined orientation behavior as when a group member makes helpful suggestions, tries to resolve conflict or presents facts relative to the group goal. Groups who achieve consensus will exhibit more of these types of statements.

Knutson (1972) followed up Gouran's research with a study of the effect of orientation behavior on the consensus of small groups. He found that groups consisting of an individual high in orientation
behavior will be closer to consensus on questions of policy than groups in which no orientation behavior occurred. On the basis of this study, Knutson also found that the greater the total orientation behavior by a group, the greater the possibility of a group reaching consensus.

Gibb (1961) discussed how individual defensiveness can effect the nature of the small group. He states that defensive behavior occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group. The energy involved in defending oneself detracts from productive energy to the group problem. Gibb states that defensive behavior predisposes the group member to defensive listening. The defensive listener is less able to concentrate on messages and is less able to accurately perceive the values and emotions of the sender. The implications of defensive behavior in relation to effective groups are clear. Common sense dictates that the possibility of arriving at a consensus lessens in groups where individual members exhibit a defensive style of behavior and communication. It also seems that defensive behavior may predispose a group toward substantive and affective conflict (Gustkow and Gyr, 1954). The greater the conflict, the less the chance of the group achieving consensus. However, the degree of conflict here is quite relevant. A highly cooperative group may not produce a stimulating environment to the end that idea development may be stifled. Janis (1972) hypothesized that an abundance of cooperation may not necessarily be in the best interest of a decision making group. The result being a "groupthink" phenomenon.
How groups engage in orientation, manage defensive behavior and conflict, and how or if they achieve consensus all have a point of common interest, the interpersonal dynamics of the group. For example, why do certain members of groups make orientation statements? Why does a "groupthink" phenomenon occur? It is possible that prior personality and cognitive development may play a distinct part in how an individual communicates and responds to decision making in a group environment.

Moral Development

The development of individual morality may have a distinct bearing on interpersonal decision, and therefore on group interaction. (Hirokawa, 1982) An individual's system of values and norms will likely emerge during interpersonal interaction. Attitudes are derived from basic and fundamental principles that a person has developed over time. This is not to say that growth cannot occur; new attitudes and values can emerge in adult development. However, the process can take time and encounters with new or different norms and value systems may not always be available to stimulate thinking.

It is argued here that an individual's basic value system is derived from membership in groups such as the family, school, church, socioeconomic class, and geographical region. The internalization of roles and rules of the family weave the fundamental fabric of the individual's morality. This value system will emerge in communication during a group discussion.

In attempting to define moral orientations, it is first helpful
to identify four groups of primary categories which are recognized by some philosophers to be the basic orders of morality. These decisional strategy orientations (Kohlberg, 1984,) are as follows:

1. Normative order:
   This orientation is to prescribed rules and roles of the social or moral order. The basic considerations in decision making center on the element of rules.

2. Utility consequences:
   This orientation is to the good or bad welfare consequences of action in the situation for others and/or the self.

3. Justice or Fairness:
   This orientation is to the relations of liberty, equality, reciprocity and contract between persons.

4. Ideal-self:
   This orientation is to an image of self as a "good self" or as someone with conscience and to the self's motives or virtue. (p. 183)

While an individual can use all or one of these orientations, there are philosophers who argue for the dominance of one orientation. The normative order is stressed by Piaget (1965). Dewey (1932) emphasizes the welfare consequences to others. Kohlberg (1984) identifies morality with justice.

Kohlberg (1984) states that the justice order can encompass all of the four previously stated orientations. His formulation of morality is individually oriented, and is based upon a cognitive-developmental sequence. This approach presupposes that each individual experiences a developmental transformation of cognitive structure that is the result of interaction between the individual and the environment.

The development of the cognitive structure as well as the development of the social structure is directed toward an
equilibrium. Kohlberg states that justice is an equilibrium and is
the "distribution of rights and duties regulated by concepts of
equality and reciprocity." (1984, p. 184)

Cognitive structures change through transformations of cognition
as a result of the processes of assimilation and accommodation. The
individual develops a knowledge or schema to gain cognitive understand­
ing of objects or events that are encountered in the
environment. Assimilation is the process by which new experience is
understood or incorporated into the existing structure or schema. In
accommodation, the new experience or material does not "fit" or
cannot be incorporated in the existing structure (schema) and
necessitates a change in cognitive structure. Through this cognitive
restructuring or transformation, in conjunction with the physical
maturation of the individual, comes the process of the sequence of
stages. Each stage is a cornerstone for the next and provides a
cognitive prerequisite for further cognitive development. Stages are
not skipped or passed over and are a function of cognitive transfor­
mations rather than simply accumulated knowledge or information
(Piaget, 1965).

Kohlberg's stages of moral development are based on the
cognitive stage approach formulated by Piaget. Kohlberg asserts that
moral judgment is cognitive because "it involves an increase in the
child's knowledge of the content of conventional standards and values
of his or her group (1984, p. 41). The moral judgments change in
cognitive form with an increased awareness of reciprocity and
equality and considerations of intention. The consideration of
intention, as opposed to physical consequences in judging the badness of action, is an example of cognitive form in moral judgment. Kohlberg (1984) states that in ten cultures studied, every class and sex group experienced age trends toward intentionality with increasing age. This cultural universal trend is age-related to moral judgment with a cognitive base.

Also inherent in Kohlberg's theory of cognitive judgment are motives in moral action. For example, the motives of the pre-conventional (Stages 1 and 2) level are the avoidance of punishment and a desire for reward or benefit. The conventional level (Stages 3 and 4) motives are anticipation of disapproval by others or guilt over harm done to others. The post-conventional level (Stages 5 and 6) encompasses a concern for respect to self and others (i.e. a concern for viewing the self as consistent and rational).

According to Kohlberg's formulation, morality is based on cognitive development that is a function of such concepts as motives, intentionality and age-development. Table 1 contains a classification of moral judgment into levels and stages of development.

As previously mentioned, Kohlberg's theory is based in part on Piaget's stage approach to development. In understanding moral stages, it is helpful to understand stages of logical reasoning based on the theory by Piaget. Piaget (1967) defined the intuitive, the concrete and formal operational stages of logical reasoning that an individual must go through. In relation to moral stages, for example, an individual in the Piagetian stage of concrete thought can make logical inferences which correspond to the pre-conventional
### Table 1
Classification of Moral Judgment Into Levels and Stages of Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Basis of Moral Judgment</th>
<th>Stages of Development</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Moral value resides in external, quasiphysical happenings in bad acts, or in quasiphysical needs rather than in persons and standards.</td>
<td><strong>Stage 1:</strong> Obedience and punishment orientation. Ego-centric deference to superior power or prestige, or a trouble-avoiding set. Objective responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Moral value resides in performing good or right roles, in maintaining the conventional order and the expectancies of others.</td>
<td><strong>Stage 2:</strong> Naively egotistic orientation. Right action is that instrumentally satisfying the self's needs and occasionally others'. Awareness of relativism of value to each actor's needs and perspective. Naive egalitarianism and orientation to exchange and reciprocity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Moral value resides in conformity by the self to shared or sharable standards, rights, or duties.</td>
<td><strong>Stage 3:</strong> Good-boy/nice girl orientation. Orientation to approval and to pleasing and helping others. Conformity to stereotypical images of majority or natural role behavior and judgment by intentions. <strong>Stage 4:</strong> Authority and social order maintaining orientation. Orientation to &quot;doing duty&quot; and showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. Regard for earned expectations of others. <strong>Stage 5:</strong> Contractual legalistic orientation. Recognition of an arbitrary element or starting point in rules or expectations for the sake of agreement. Duty defined in terms of contract general avoidance of violation of the will or rights of others, and majority will and welfare. <strong>Stage 6:</strong> Conscience or principle orientation. Orientation not only to actually ordained social rules but to principles of choice involving appeal to logical universality and consistency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kohlberg, 1967, p. 171
level in Kohlberg's schema. Similarly, low formal operations are a prerequisite for conventional morality. However, it should be noted that an individual may be quite intelligent, reasoning abstractly at the highest level of formal operational thought, yet function at a Stage 3 or 4 level of morality. Advanced moral reasoning depends on advanced logical reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984). Several characteristics concerning the moral stages are imperative to the understanding of moral development. The stages are structured wholes, or organized systems of thought. Individuals are consistent in their level of moral judgment. The movement through the stages is always forward. One cannot reach a higher stage without progressing through the stage preceding it. This is applicable to all cultures. The stages are "hierarchical integrations" (Kohlberg, 1977, p. 54). This refers to the concept that thinking at higher stages is inclusive of lower stage thinking. As one stage ceases to resolve a moral dilemma, the following stage will become increasingly attractive.

A final consideration in assessing the theory by Kohlberg is the unifying construct of role-taking. Role-taking or the concept of sociomoral perspective refers to the point of view the individual takes regarding social facts and sociomoral values. Research concerning the role of empathy or role-taking is found elsewhere. For example, in a study of the relationship between moral and cognitive development and dimensions of delinquency, Jurkovic and Prentice (1977) found that psychopathic and to a lesser extent, neurotic delinquents were deficient in role-taking when compared to sub-cultural or non-delinquents. Hickey (1972) found that reciprocal
role-taking was necessary for conventional moral reasoning and concluded that cognitive maturity was an excellent predictor of moral development in delinquents.

In relating role-taking or social perspective to levels of moral judgment, Kohlberg (1984) postulates the following:

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Moral Judgment</th>
<th>Social Perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Pre-conventional</td>
<td>Concrete individual perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Member of society perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Post-conventional</td>
<td>Prior to society perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, the unifying characteristics of the Stage 3 person is the social perspective; a shared viewpoint of the participants in a relationship. An individual operating at Stage 3 of the conventional level will subordinate individual needs to the needs of the group or shared relationship.

The development of morality as advanced by Kohlberg (1984) logically incorporates the elements of cognition and role-taking. The theory is based on these primary concepts. It is from this perspective that the relationship to communication in a group setting will be drawn.

Relationship of Moral Development to Communication in Groups

Group communication can be influenced by many factors. As noted in this chapter, the quality of communication in the group, the level of group trust and orientation behaviors are three such factors. It
was also posited in this chapter that an individual's sociomoral perspective may be another determinant of the communication in the group and of the subsequent decision. In assessing this possibility, two dimensions of the question should be considered simultaneously: 

(1) Are there differences in what people have to say in discussion groups composed of persons in different stages of moral development? 

(2) If there are, what does Kohlberg's theory say about why these differences exist?

The understanding of the interpersonal world, and therefore small group interaction will be enhanced by the knowledge of the stage of moral development. Gibbs et al. (1984) state that:

In general, moral-cognitive stages can be considered to make a functional contribution to the direction and reactions of a person's ongoing behavior. A moral stage is essentially a cognitive schema that relates to overt situational behavior both on the short term scale of single episodes and on the long term scale of series of episodes. The predominant moral-cognitive schema influences an individual's selection, anticipation and interpretation and evaluation of a situational event. (p. 38)

It has also been posited that advanced moral reasoning is dependent on advanced logical reasoning. In other words, an individual operating at a higher stage of moral development will have a greater degree of cognitive complexity. A cognitively complex individual, one who is able to engage in high levels of formal operational thought, will consider all situational possibilities. The ability and need to think abstractly may predispose a person in higher stages of moral development to honestly consider all implications of a decision making task.

The result of considering various options may be evident in the communication of persons engaged in a group discussion. The result
is a greater likelihood for questioning and debating, which would affect decision making. The ability to reach a decision may be hampered or impeded in groups composed of persons in higher stages of moral development. In part, this may be due to the desire to consider all options in a decision making task.

The current study addressed the differences in communication between groups comprised of individuals in different stages of moral development. Specifically, the question was: Will there be differences in what people have to say between task discussion groups consisting of persons in Kohlberg's conventional Stage 3 as opposed to groups made up of persons in Stage 4?

Summary and Preview

The preceding literature review has focused on communication in groups and on Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Group communication can affect the discussion process and the subsequent decision. It is proposed that individual morality may influence the communication of a task group discussion. The nature of the influence will be evident in the analysis of transcripts of the group discussions. Chapter III reviews the design and method that was operationalized to explore the question of communication differences of persons in different stages of moral development.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter II presented a review of the small group communication literature, specifically those studies concentrating on communication variables that affect making a decision in a group. A theory of moral development as formulated by Lawrence Kohlberg was also presented.

The purpose of the current study was to analyze communication differences between homogeneous groups of Stage 3 and Stage 4 persons. In assessing differences between the two sets of groups, two stages of research were necessary. The first stage involved the determination of individual level of moral development. This was done by administering the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure (SROM) to a sample of 198 students at a mid-western university.

The second stage of the research involved the formation of tasks discussion groups. The groups were tape recorded for a scheduled 20 minute discussion. It was from an analysis of these group discussions that the results were derived. A detailed explanation of the methodology follows.

Subjects

Subjects were obtained for the study by having faculty give permission to use students in their classes (see Appendix A). A
brief typed summary of the prospective study was mailed to each professor in the Communication Department who taught during the Spring term (see Appendix B). A response form was included with the summary on which the professor indicated his/her willingness to help out by making students in the class available to the researcher (see Appendix B). Six professors with one or more sections of undergraduate and graduate communication classes indicated that they would make class time available so that students could complete the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure (Gibbs, Arnold, Morgan, Schwartz, Gavaghan, Rick, and Tappan, 1984).

The SROM was administered to all students in the available classes. Thus, a total of 198 students completed the questionnaire that measured Kohlberg level of moral development. Of the 198 students that completed the SROM, 125 were female and 73 were male. After scoring the protocols, 43 were found to be invalid, three students were not available for a group discussion and one protocol was returned without a name. Therefore, 47 questionnaires were not available for use.

Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure

As stated previously, the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure was used to assess individual level of moral development. The SROM was developed to provide a multiple-choice measure of moral reasoning. Prior to the development of SROM, the measures of moral reasoning were the Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM) (Gibbs & Widaman, 1982), the Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) (Colby, Kohlberg,

The MJI requires workshop training and individual interviewing for effective use. The SRM was designed for self-training and group administration. Both the MJI and SRM are based on the Kohlbergian theory of moral stages. The DIT provides a measure of moral reasoning, however it has been criticized as addressing what people recognize in moral argument (Gibbs et al., 1984). Therefore, it may be inappropriate to assume that the DIT measures justification in the same sense (Kohlberg) that the SRM and MJI do. The SRM was chosen for the current study in assessing moral judgment because it has been found to have substantial concurrent validity with the SRM and MJI.

The SRM uses moral dilemmas as do the SRM and MJI. However, the SRM consists of multiple-choice selections in response to the dilemmas rather than oral or written responses. The two dilemmas that are utilized in assessing moral judgment are: (1) the dilemma in which Heinz is forced to steal a drug to save his wife's life because of a druggist's greed in overpricing the drug and (2) the dilemma in which Joe's father demands that Joe give us his $40.00 savings so that he can go on a fishing trip with friends. There are 10 multiple choice responses to the Heinz dilemma. The dilemma of whether or not Joe should give his father the money is followed by six multiple choice questions. (See Appendix C for the complete SRM questionnaire.)

The multiple choice questions on the SRM consist of five options that are representative of Kohlberg's sociomoral Stages 1-5.
A sixth option on the questions consists of a pseudo-meaningful and sophisticated sounding justification that is not related to one of Kohlberg's stages.

Each protocol was scored to determine the individual's global stage. The four steps of scoring an individual questionnaire are:

1. Determining protocol eligibility;
2. Computing the mean stage of the options selected as "close";
3. Computing the mean stage of the options selected as "closest"; and
4. Determining global stage through the use of a simple formula.

The SRM has been found to have substantial concurrent validity with the SRM and M3I (Gibbs et al. 1984). Two limitations were found in applying the SRM to specific populations. The first limitation is to grade school students and the second limitation is to juvenile delinquents. These limitations do not affect the use of the SRM in the current study.

The SRM provides an objective index of reflective sociomoral reasoning that is reliable and valid for high school as well as college or adult subjects (Gibbs et al. 1984). It is because of the high levels of test-retest, internal consistency and objective nature that the SRM was used in measuring subject moral judgment.

Group Formation

As discussed previously, 198 students completed the SRM which assessed Kohlberg's stage of moral development. Forty-seven of the protocols were not available for use. The 151 valid protocols were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Number of protocols</th>
<th>Percentage of the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3(2)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(4)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(5)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Within each stage (2, 3, 4) there are two substages. The number in parentheses e.g. 3(2) indicates the substage.*
scored for global stage. Table 2 indicates the number of protocols in each stage and the percentage of the total. The majority of the 151 subjects obtained a global score indicating a Stage 3 or Stage 4 level of moral development. Therefore, the formation of discussion groups was composed of individuals in Stage 3 and Stage 4 levels.

All 151 students indicated on the SROM availability for a group discussion. The two factors used in determining student selection for discussion groups were similar SROM scores of students in the same classroom. Six triad groups comprised of Stage 3 individuals and six triad groups comprised of Stage 4 individuals were formed. The groups met for a 20 minute tape recorded discussion.

Group Composition

As was noted previously, six triad groups in Kohlbergian Stage 3 and six triad groups in Kohlbergian Stage 4 were formed. Student availability in the same classroom as well as similar SROM scores were the two factors used in the development of the groups. (See Appendix D for individual SROM scores by group and stage).

Group 1 was composed of two females, ages 21 and 20 and one male, age 22. The second group was similarly composed of two females ages 28 and 23 and one male, age 21. Group 3 was composed of two males, both age 20 and one female age 21. Group 4 was also composed of two males, ages 22 and 23 and one female, age 20. The fifth group was composed of three females, ages 23, 24 and 21. The final group in Stage 3, Group 6, included two males, ages 22 and 20 and one female. There was no age available for the female in Group 6.
Stage 4 was similarly made up of six triads. The seventh group was comprised of three females, ages 31, 23 and 27. Group 8 included two females, ages 23 and 34 and one male, age 30. The ninth group was composed of three females, ages 27, 21 and 20. Three females, ages 34, 42 and 35 made up the tenth group. Group 11 included two males, ages 25 and 30 and one female, age 22. The final group, Group 12 was made up of two females, ages 28 and 34 and one male, age 23.

Discussion Task

To insure maximum opportunity for discussion, a task question was given to each of the 12 groups. Therefore, it was important to differentiate between types of tasks. Bochner (1974) states that a discussion task requires a group to work with issues. Hackman (1968) states that a discussion task asks questions of "should...or what changes" as opposed to a "how to" of a problem solving task (p. 164).

In addition to answering questions that assessed moral judgment on the SROM, students answered five Likert-type questions to determine individual opinion on five current controversial issues. The reason for assessing student opinion was to insure diversity of attitude for the second stage of the research; the 20-minute group discussion. The following questions were used:

1. The sooner abortion is outlawed, the better.
2. Capital punishment is morally wrong.
3. President Reagan should immediately send U.S. troops to Nicaragua so communism will not spread.
4. Every American should send at least $5.00 to help feed
starving Ethiopians.

5. Even though it costs a lot of money, U.S. industry should have stringent regulations to minimize pollution.

The question indicating the most student diversity was the question on abortion. A task question relating to abortion was then developed. The task question is as follows:

According to the law of the State of Michigan, Medicaid (state aid for medically needy low-income persons) pays for abortions. A state task force considering a change in the law has asked your group to develop five guidelines specifying who may or may not qualify for Medicaid payment for abortions.

It was clarified for each group that patient income should not be an issue in the discussion. A determination of Medicaid eligibility specifies income requirements. Instead, the groups were told to focus on such aspects as age of the patient, parental consent, etc. Each group was given 20 minutes in which to discuss the above question. The results of the length of each group's discussion are presented in Chapter IV.

Discussion Analysis

The purpose of the current study was to explore communication differences between homogenous groups of Stage 3 and Stage 4 persons. The stimulus for the investigation was a group discussion focusing on a task question. The groups were asked to develop 5 hypotheses specifying who may or may not qualify for a Medicaid abortion.

To analyze the communication of the six triad groups in Stage 3 and the six triad groups in Stage 4, hypotheses were developed. The hypotheses are predictive statements that were formulated based on
the appropriateness to Kohlberg's Stage 3 and Stage 4 levels of moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, there should be differences in moral reasoning between the two stages. These differences should be manifest in the communication of the discussants in the groups.

Hypotheses were developed for two dimensions of the group discussion. These two dimensions were: (1) discussion and comments relative to developing the specified five Medicaid hypotheses in the task question and (2) discussion and comments relative to the interaction of the group process. The discussions were analyzed based on individual utterances. Gouran and Baird (1972) define the basic unit of communication behavior as an individual statement that is the continuous flow of language by a discussion participant to the point at which another participant initiates a continuous flow of language or the point at which he/she terminates the thought the has been developing and begins expressing a new thought. The current study uses the same definition of an utterance.

The task hypotheses for Stage 3 and Stage 4 were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Stage 3 groups will show a greater concern for the individual than will Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 2: Stage 3 groups will show less concern for societal problems than Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 3: Stage 3 groups will show a greater concern for the immediate physical and therefore concrete effects of the "patient" than Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 4: Stage 3 groups will show a greater concern with maintaining specific social relationships than Stage 4 groups.
Hypothesis 5: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for general social needs beyond those of the individual than Stage 3 groups.

Hypothesis 6: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for law and legalities than will Stage 3 groups.

Hypothesis 7: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for the right of others to have individual freedom of choice.

The group process hypotheses were as follows:

Hypothesis 8: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more seeking acceptance than Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 9: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more presenting of ideas without raising opposing perspectives.

Hypothesis 10: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more examples of agreement than Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 11: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more instances of talking in specifics about people and giving examples than will Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 12: Stage 4 groups will exhibit more examples of having a wider range of ideas specific to the task.

Hypothesis 13: Stage 4 groups will exhibit more examples of stated task guidelines.

These hypotheses were the basis for an analysis of the six Stage 3 and six Stage 4 discussion groups. After reading the transcripts, certain words and/or phrases emerged that aided in coding and counting the number of occurrences of specific language in the groups. Chapter IV presents the specific language and the coding
Summary and Preview

This chapter has presented the method of initial subject selection and the questionnaire used to assess individual level of moral judgment. Discussion group formation was also described as well as the hypotheses used to code transcripts of the task discussion. Chapter IV gives the results of the analysis of the transcripts and Chapter V discusses the conclusions that may be drawn from the results as well as directions for further research.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the communication differences in a task group discussion that is comprised of individuals either in Kohlberg's Stage 3 or Stage 4 system of moral development. It was noted in Chapter I that the current study was exploratory in nature. The intent was to describe what was found in analyzing specific language in the transcripts of the discussions. The current chapter discusses the results of the analysis of the tape recorded discussions. The chapter begins with the results of the length of discussion groups, followed by a presentation of the specific language used in analyzing the transcripts and the number of occurrences of that language in Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

Length of Discussions

It was stated in Chapter III that each task discussion group was told that they would have 20 minutes in which to develop five hypotheses pertaining to qualifications for Medicaid abortions. Three Stage 3 groups did not utilize the 20 minutes allowed, but instead chose to end the discussion. Group 1 discussed the task for seven minutes, Group 2 for 17 minutes and Group 4 for ten minutes. The remaining three groups in Stage 3 had discussions of 20 minutes as did all the groups in Stage 4.
The following section of the chapter presents the hypotheses, the specific language that was coded and tables indicating the number of occurrences of the particular language in the Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

The hypotheses were developed prior to listening to the taped recorded discussions or reading the transcripts. After reading the transcripts specific language emerged that was used in analyzing the group communication differences.

Hypothesis Stage 3 Groups

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis: "Stage 3 groups will show a greater concern for the individual rather than others than will the Stage 4 groups," stems from Kohlberg's social perspective of Stage 3. The Stage 3 person sees things from the point of view of shared relationships between two or more individuals rather than from the viewpoint of institutional wholes (Stage 4). It was reasoned therefore, that in terms of a discussion regarding the development of hypotheses for Medicaid abortion recipients, there should be a greater concern with the individual in the task instead of a group of persons or society as a whole.

To analyze the discussions regarding this first hypothesis, the following words and phrases were coded: "mother," "she," "her," "parent," "girl/woman," "you," "they."

The primary focus was a search for any language differences between Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups. Therefore, as long as the
concern for the individual in the task was coded once in a complete
utterance, it was unnecessary to code every instance of further "she"
or "her" in the same utterance. The coding of "you" and "they" was
included when it was clear that the words were in reference to the
individual in the task, i.e., the abortion recipient. For example,
an excerpt from Group 3 (Stage 3) is as follows:

Yah, just like you have to have parental consent if you're
under a certain age or something.

Like what if a lady's age is like 27, she's not a minor and she
wants to, she has a bad job and she wants to go in for one and
get it state funded, should she or shouldn't she? And And
there's nothing really wrong with her.

The first example presents an indication of the type of utterance
which utilizes the word "you," but clearly is spoken in reference to
the individual in the task, i.e., the Medicaid abortion recipient.
The second example with the focus on "she" is also clearly referring
to someone seeking an abortion. Although several instances of "she"
occur in the utterance, the entire utterance is counted only once for
coding purposes under the first hypothesis, which is concern with the
individual in the task. Similarly, the first example with a focus on
"you" is counted only once for coding purposes under the first
hypothesis.

Table 3 presents the results of the number of instances that
concern with the individual in the task (hypothesis #1) was found.
All instances in Stage 3 discussion groups are reported as well as
all instances in Stage 4 discussion groups. The comparison allows
assessment of the communication differences between the two sets of
groups.
Table 3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>Group 4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Group 5</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>
Hypothesis 2

The second task hypothesis is: Stage 3 groups will show less concern for societal problems than Stage 4 groups. Kohlberg (1984) stages that the Stage 3 person does not yet consider a generalize system perspective. It was reasoned that the Stage 3 groups will not be as concerned with the general welfare of individuals in society. Content of the Stage 3 discussions revealed a concern with the financial implications for the State with little concern for quality of life. This orientation for a lack of concern for quality of life indicates that the Stage 3 groups do not want to pay taxes to help in improving the quality of life for medical recipients. Therefore, the following phrases were coded as an indication of a lack of concern to the welfare of the individuals in society.

"Medicaid shouldn't always pay for it."
"The State shouldn't have to take care of it."
"Free ticket/free ride."
"Government funded everything."
"Waste of tax dollars."

Generally the above phrases were the most frequently occurring; however, the specific language may vary. Anytime the concept of concern for money as opposed to life was expressed, it was coded once. Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups were coded for comparisons of these phrases. Table 4 presents a tabular illustration of the differences found in the two sets of groups.

Hypothesis 3

The third task hypothesis is: Stage 3 groups will show a
Number of Occurrences of Phrases Such as: "Medicaid Shouldn't Always Pay for it," "Waste of Tax Dollars," "the State Shouldn't Have to Take Care of it," "Free Ticket, Free Ride," for the Second Task Hypothesis: Stage 3 Groups Will Show Less Concern for Societal Problems Than Stage 4 Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Group 3</td>
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<td>Group 4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Group 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>33</td>
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greater concern for the immediate physical and therefore concrete aspects of the abortion recipient than the Stage 4 groups. It was reasoned that a Stage 3 group discussing Medicaid abortions will not think beyond the current dilemma of the prospective "patient." Therefore a Stage 3 group will not be concerned with possible later ramifications to the abortion patient. The concern of a Stage 3 group is the "concreteness" of the immediate consequences and circumstances.

The coding of the third hypothesis was a search for language relating to later effects on the Medicaid abortion recipient, whether physically and/or emotionally. Specific phrases such as the following were used for coding. The following example is from Group 7. Each phrase or thought is counted once in the number of occurrence in each group: "But they don't realize what they are doing to their bodies."

The Stage 3 groups should have a lack of this type of language. Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups were analyzed for comparison purposes. Table 5 presents the results of the comparisons.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth task hypothesis is: Stage 3 groups will show a greater concern with maintaining specific social relationships than Stage 4 groups.

It is important to the Stage 3 person to "be good" and to keep mutual relationships such as trust, loyalty, respect and gratitude. Kohlberg states that a Stage 3 person has a need to live up to what
Table 5

Number of Occurrences of Phrases Such as: "But They Don't Realize What They Are Doing to Their Bodies." Hypothesis 3: Stage 3 Group Will Show a Greater Concern for the Immediate Physical and Therefore Concrete Effects of the Abortion Recipient Than Stage 4 Groups.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Group 5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

0 2
is expected by people close to the person, particularly in the role of daughter, sister or friend. It was reasoned that the Stage 3 groups will have a greater tendency to focus on specific social relationships. The language used to analyze the fourth hypothesis was as follows: "parents," "boyfriend," "husband," "daughter."

To be coded under the fourth hypothesis, the specific words had to be used in the discussion in conjunction with the Medicaid recipient in the task. In other words, the coding of "parents" had to be expressed in the discussion in the context of talking about the woman/girl receiving an abortion. For example, the following excerpt is from Group 3 (Stage 3):

That's true, it should be combined income because if the parents,...let's say a kid goes in there, a 16 year old who doesn't want their parents to find out but yet their parents make $50,000 a year. Then she shouldn't get a State funded abortion.

It is clear that this utterance is concerned with parents' income, and knowledge of the abortion. This example was coded once in Hypothesis 4. Table 6 presents the differences in language regarding specific social relationships in Stage 3 and Stage 4 discussion groups.

Hypothesis Stage 4 Groups

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 is: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for general social needs beyond those of the individual than the Stage 3 groups.
Table 6


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

42
The system perspective of a Stage 4 person indicates that a priority is placed on maintaining the society. To avoid a breakdown in the system, the task Stage 4 person will express concern for adopted or abused and neglected children in the current context of the abortion task discussion.

The following excerpt from Group 9, a Stage 4 group, presents an example of the type of language that was coded.

It's illegal for a white couple who are mostly on the list for adoption to adopt a black baby. And so there's a lot of minority kids to adopt.

And so they're saying, Oh yah, there's a lot of parents that want these babies. Well they want babies, but they want 6 month old white babies. They don't want kids that are 3 and 4 years old and are neglected.

The above example clearly indicates a concern for those of society who are neglected. It is reasoned that society may suffer if the primary needs of a group of people are not met. Therefore, the Stage 4 person will be more concerned with a group of neglected persons, bearing in mind the ramifications to society if such a group continues to be neglected.

Table 7 presents a comparison of Stage 4 and Stage 3 groups in the number of occurrences of utterances that express a concern for a group of persons in society such as show in the example above.

**Hypothesis 6**

The sixth hypothesis is: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for law and legalities than will Stage 3 groups. According to Kohlberg, the Stage 4 person is concerned with upholding the law.
Table 7

Number of Occurrences of Phrases Such as: "There's a Lot of Minority Kids to Adopt, and They Don't Want Kids That are 3 and 4 Years Old and Neglected," for Hypothesis 5: Stage 4 Groups Will Show a Greater Concern for General Social Needs Beyond Those of the Individual Than Stage 3 Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

0 14
Adherence to the law is always maintained except in rare instances where it conflicts with other social duties.

The Stage 4 discussion groups will be more concerned with laws and legalities. Consequently, there should be greater instances of this particular type of language in the Stage 4 groups as opposed to the Stage 3 groups.

The words used to analyze hypothesis six are: "law," "judge," "court," "legalities."

Each instance of occurrence of the specific words noted above was counted once. Table 8 gives the results of the number of occurrences of language associated with laws and legalities in the Stage 4 and Stage 3 groups.

Hypothesis 7

The seventh hypothesis is: Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for the rights of others to have individual freedom of choice. The social perspective of a Stage 4 person considers individual relations in terms of place in the system. A Stage 3 person is concerned with shared feelings and agreements that take priority over individual interests. A Stage 4 person should be more aware of the necessity for the system to run smoothly. The individual in society must be able to function and make contributions to the system. In order for this to be accomplished each individual must be able to make choices. Whereas a Stage 3 person has a need to be a good person in one's own eyes and those of others, a Stage 4 person understands the need to meet one's defined obligations.
Table 8


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is reasoned therefore, that a Stage 4 discussion group will express a greater concern for individual freedom of choice. Specifically, the words/phrases used to analyze the discussion are: "Someone's choice," and "I can't make a decision for someone else." Each occurrence of a phrase indicating that the speaker feels he/she cannot make a decision for someone else or expresses concern for individual choice was coded once. The phrase expressing concern for choice had to be associated with the task of developing hypotheses for the task and relative to abortion. Table 9 presents the results of the actual number of occurrences in the Stage 4 and Stage 3 discussion groups.

Comparisons on Group Process for Stage 3 Groups

A discussion of the second dimension of the analysis of the group discussion will follow. This dimension focuses on the relational level of the group members. Six hypotheses were developed for the Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

Hypothesis 8

The eighth hypothesis is: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more seeking acceptance than Stage 4 groups. Kohlberg states that the Stage 3 social perspective is that of a participant in a shared relationship or shared group. The Stage 3 person is primarily concerned with agreements and expectations that supercede individual interests.

It was therefore reasoned that the Stage 3 discussion groups should exhibit more statements relative to seeking acceptance with
Table 9

Number of Occurrences of Phrases Such as: "Someone's Choice, Can't Make a Decision for Someone Else" for Hypothesis 7: Stage 4 Groups Will Show a Greater Concern for the Rights of Others to Have Individual Freedom of Choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Group 7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Group 2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Group 9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Group 10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Group 11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Group 12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 19
other group members. The specific words/phrases used to analyze this aspect of the discussion were: "What do you think?," "Do you agree?," and "Is that right?."

The phrases must always be in question format. Each expression (or phrase) of seeking acceptance is counted once.

It was not necessary for this second dimension regarding member relations to be associated with only the task of developing hypotheses for Medicaid abortions. Many times, the discussion centered on issues other than the task. In several instances of the relation hypotheses, codings were inclusive of all discussions, whether they were related to the task at hand or not.

For example, an excerpt from Group 6, (Stage 3) will illustrate the point:

So you got all these Yuppies that are going to want to raise families.

There is nothing wrong with the baby boom because all the kids are going to families.

So do you think some sort of law should be passed then?

It appears that the previous excerpt of conversation is not focused on the task of developing Medicaid guidelines. However, the instance of "So do you think" is still coded for Hypothesis 8. It is irrelevant whether this relational aspect is pertinent to the task of developing guidelines. Table 10 gives the results of the number of occurrences of this type of phrase in the Stage 3 and Stage 4 discussion groups.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 is: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more presenting of
Table 10

Number of Occurrences of Phrases Such as: "What do You Think?" "Do You Agree?" for Hypothesis 8: Stage 3 Groups Will Exhibit More Seeking Acceptance Than Stage 4 Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ideas without raising opposing perspectives.

The Stage 3 person is preoccupied with interpersonal conformity and expectations. Keeping mutual relationships is important to a Stage 3 person. It is likely that a Stage 3 group member will be reluctant to bring up opposing issues. The primary concern in Stage 3 group will be to maintain a "status quo" atmosphere.

An analysis of the ninth hypothesis is a count of the number of opposing perspectives raised. The opposing statement must always come, at the most, two statements after the original statement. The opposing perspective can pertain to the discussion task of developing guidelines or can pertain to the mechanics of how to approach the task, or as previously mentioned, can pertain to any other discussion topic.

The following examples will illustrate the point. The first example is from Group 8 (Stage 4).

Original Statement: "Right, so I'm just saying do we choose to combine the two?"

Response: "I'd prefer to leave it separate."

The second example is also from Group 8 and illustrates a broader interaction.

"Do you want to say only people who are raped can have an abortion?"

"Oh, I don't."

"See, I don't. I don't know how you feel. You're saying that any woman who chooses to have an abortion should have that right to have an abortion?"

"I guess she has that right. I'm not sure she has the right to be paid by Medicaid. There's a difference between the moral right and the right of payment."
"But if they cannot pay for it themselves, who else is going to?"

"But those guidelines are determined by Medicaid already."

"Okay, so I don't understand your point."

The statements with an * are those that are coded under Hypothesis 9. Each statement of an opposing perspective is counted once.

The Stage 3 groups will have less of these types of interactions, than the Stage 4 groups. Simply stated, the Stage 4 group members are more free to express their individual opinions even if it opposes the opinion or statement of another group member.

Table 11 presents the results of the number of occurrences of opposing statements. A comparison is presented of both Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

**Hypothesis 10**

The tenth hypothesis is: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more examples of agreement than Stage 4 groups. The rationale for this particular hypothesis is similar to Hypothesis 2. The Stage 3 groups are concerned with interpersonal conformity. Therefore, it seems that there should be more agreement in a Stage 3 group as opposed to a Stage 4 group.

To analyze the occurrence of agreement in the groups, two dimensions of agreement were coded. The first dimension is coded specifically with a single phrase or word. The following words and phrases will illustrate this type of agreement: "I agree," "Correct," "Right, yah, that's true," "Exactly." The word "yah" when spoken singly was
Table 11

Number of Occurrences of Statements of Opposing Perspective for Hypothesis 9: Stage 3 Groups Will Exhibit More Presenting of Ideas Without Raising Opposing Perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
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<td>Group 1</td>
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<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
not coded as agreement. It was unclear as to whether this was in fact an instance of agreement or a method by which the conversation was kept going. Also not coded as agreement was the word "good" uttered singly. Although "good" is stronger than "yah" in terms of indicating agreement, it was necessary to have further clarification as to what "good" referred to. For example, these excerpts from Group 12, a Stage 4 group, will illustrate when "good" was coded as agreement: "I almost think after legality we should look at the health or medical consideration." "Good, I think that's real good." It is clear that the second statement is in agreement with the first. The second statement is counted once as the first dimension (a) of agreement.

The second dimension of agreement that was coded in the group discussions was in the form of paraphrasing, or a single agreement word followed by paraphrasing or expansion. This second form of agreement (b) had to be within two statements of the original statement with which Person B was agreeing.

For example an excerpt from Group 3, a Stage 3 group, will illustrate the second dimension of agreement. "She doesn't have a job or anything. Then her husband...they should pitch together. So it can't be really what you make yourself."; (Response/Agreement) "That's true, it should be combined income because if their parents...let's say a kid goes in there, a 16 year old who doesn't want their parents to find out." The Stage 3 discussion groups should exhibit a greater number of agreement statements than the Stage 4 discussion groups. Each utterance of agreement counts once. The response/agreement noted above would be coded as one "b" (or second dimension) type of
agreement. The number of instances of agreement in both the first
dimension (a) and in the second dimension (b) are presented in Table
12. Occurrences are counted in all Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

**Hypothesis 11**

Hypothesis 11 is: Stage 3 groups will exhibit more instances of
talking in specifics about people and will give more examples than
will the Stage 4 groups.

To analyze Hypothesis 11, the concept of "concreteness" is used.
The specifics used to code the concrete aspects of the discussion are:
Proper names, locations or specific examples. The following example
from Group 4, a Stage 3 group, will illustrate an example of a guideline
coded as concrete. "Yes, it is, because my dad's a doctor and
he has some patients that are on Medicare and Medicaid and it's like a
lot of hassles are involved but... ." This utterance is coded as one
instance of concreteness. This type of specific example will be found
to a greater extent in Stage 3 discussion groups. Table 13 presents
the number of instances of occurrence of concreteness found in the
Stage 3 and Stage 4 discussion groups.

**Comparisons on Group Process for Stage 4 Groups**

Two hypotheses were developed for the Stage 4 groups regarding
group process. These were: The Stage 4 groups will exhibit more
examples of having a wider range of ideas specific to the task; and
The Stage 4 groups will exhibit more examples of stated task
Table 12

Number of Occurrences of Agreement Phrases, (a) Single Agreement Words Such as: "Right," "Exactly," "Yah," "That's True." (b) Paraphrasing or Expansion. For the Tenth Hypothesis: Stage 3 Groups Will Exhibit More Examples of Agreement Than Stage 4 Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>a-1 b-2</td>
<td>Group 7</td>
<td>a-6 b-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>a-7 b-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>a-14 b-9</td>
<td>Group 9</td>
<td>a-1 b-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>a-11 b-9</td>
<td>Group 10</td>
<td>a-4 b-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>a-12 b-13</td>
<td>Group 11</td>
<td>a-4 b-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>a-4 b-6</td>
<td>Group 12</td>
<td>a-3 b-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a=45 b=46: 91

a=25 b=33: 58
Table 13

Number of Occurrences of Concreteness Such as Proper Names and Specific Examples. Hypothesis 11: Stage 3 Groups Will Exhibit More Instances of Talking in Specifics About People and Will Give More Examples Than Will Stage 4 Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
guidelines. The first of these hypotheses (12) is presented as follows.

**Hypothesis 12**

Hypothesis 12 is: Stage 4 groups will exhibit more examples of having a wider range of ideas specific to the task.

In order to affirm this guideline, it was necessary to count the number of new ideas expressed in the group discussions. For example, the following ideas for stipulating qualifications for Medicaid recipients were raised in Group 12, a Stage 4 group: age, marriage, length of pregnancy, health, rape/incest, counseling, education, and quality of life. Each new idea was counted as one instance of an occurrence. Table 14 gives the number of occurrences of new ideas relative to the task of developing Medicaid guidelines for Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups.

**Hypothesis 13**

Hypothesis 13 is: Stage 4 groups will exhibit more examples of stated task guidelines.

To measure the fourth factor, the number of specifically stated guidelines were counted. For example, in Group 2, a Stage 3 group, the following example is counted as an indication of number of guidelines developed: "We have to come up with five guidelines, no more." "We have __ of them so far." In measuring the quality of guidelines developed by the groups, the diversity of guidelines in Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups are compared. It seems that a broad range of diversity
in the number of guidelines would create a greater chance for quality guidelines regarding who may or may not qualify for Medicaid abortions. The communication of a greater range of ideas may stimulate thinking and therefore the discussion, with a greater chance to finalize the best qualifications.

Table 15 presents the number of guidelines as well as the diversity of the guidelines. A "0" in relation to number of guidelines indicates that there was no specifically stated number in the discussion transcript. The measurement of diversity is a count of the range of ideas as presented in Hypothesis 12 (Table 14).

**Summary and Preview**

This chapter has presented the number of occurrences of words and/or phrases in the six triad Stage 3 groups and the six triad Stage 4 discussion groups on the basis of this study, the majority of the hypothesis appear to have been supported. Therefore, the question posed at the beginning of the thesis is supported; there are communication differences between groups of persons in different stages of moral development.

Chapter V discusses the strengths and limitations of the study and presents recommendations for further research.
Table 14

Number of Occurrences of New Ideas Expressed in the Discussion for Hypothesis 12: Stage 4 Groups Will Exhibit More Examples of Having a Wider Range of Ideas Specific to the Task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 71
Table 15

Number of Occurrences of Specifically Stated Task Guidelines (Quantity) and of Guidelines (Quality) for Hypothesis 13: Stage 4 Groups Will Exhibit More Examples of Stated Task Guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Group 8</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Group 10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 71
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter I of this thesis noted that a few studies (Gibbs et al., 1984; Higgins et al., 1984; Kohlberg, 1984) have been conducted regarding how group morality affects the individual. The results of the studies suggested that individual behavior, perception and moral judgment can be affected due to the moral atmosphere of the group. However, no research is available on how an individual's morality might be related, if at all, to communication in zero-history groups. Hirokawa (1982) has stated that morality may be related to communication and interpersonal decision making and that this has been a neglected area of research. If group communication theory is to be advanced, then research is needed on how individual morality may affect communication during a group discussion.

The first chapter also pointed out that the current study is exploratory in nature. Therefore, the conclusions put forth in this chapter are only indicative of trends that were found. It is hoped that further research will include a larger sample as well as a stringent statistical measurement so that definitive conclusions might be possible.

Chapter II focused on the research related to group communication and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. It was pointed out that the primary focus of group communication studies has been on decision
making and how the communication of the group affects decision making and problem solving. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development was reviewed. His extensive research in the area of moral judgment, reasoning and development has made his stage-sequence approach a dominant conceptualization.

A primary argument in this thesis has been that an individual's level of moral development is a force guiding interpersonal communication interaction. Destephen (1983) states that in the results of her high/low consensus group study, the most interaction sequence differences occurred in the first group meeting. She observes that her findings "add credence to past research which altered the group composition on the basis of members' personality traits" (p. 361). An individual's morality or role-taking ability is a part of his/her personality structure.

The approach in this study is based on an individual's level of moral development. As such it offers an alternative perspective to the study of communication differences in a group discussion.

To assess possible group communication differences, an analysis was performed on transcripts of tape recorded discussions between homogeneous three person groups in Kohlberg's Stage 3 or Stage 4 levels of moral development. An attempt was made to assess differences on the content and relational aspects of the discussions. The specific method of subject recruitment, group formation, group composition and the task question were reported in Chapter III. Chapter IV presented the method of analysis used to determine if communication differences did exist between the discussion groups in
Stage 3 and the discussion groups in Stage 4. The number of occurrences of specific language of persons in the groups was presented in Chapter IV, Tables 3-15. These tables indicate that on the majority of the task questions, the groups did vary in the number of occurrences of particular language.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the strengths and limitations of the study, provide an interpretation of the results, and give direction for further research.

Strengths and Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. The first is the exploratory nature of the study. A primary purpose was to see if further investigation and research were warranted in the area of morality and group communication. To assess this possibility, it was necessary to explore several possible directions to determine which ones might be worth pursuing. Therefore, the study is suggestive rather than definitive.

A second limitation is the lack of quantitative measurement. The development of the guidelines and the results was based solely on the author's interpretation. All scoring was done by the author from the specific words and phrases that emerged while reading the transcripts.

A third limitation is the small sample size. The six Stage 3 groups and the six Stage 4 groups were not sufficient in number to allow for statistical comparison. Thus, the current study may not be representative of a wider population.

In spite of the limitations, there is one strength worth noting.
The major strength is that an analysis of communication from a moral development standpoint goes beyond the issue of simply addressing communication differences, but also addresses the aspect of why such communication differences might occur.

**Interpretation of the Results**

Chapter IV reported the occurrences of the specific language used in determining the differences between Stage 3 and Stage 4 discussion groups. To analyze the possible differences in communication, it was necessary to conceptualize Kohlberg's descriptions of the stages into hypotheses. After reading the transcripts, specific words and phrases were applied to the hypotheses for use in differentiating communication between the groups.

Regarding the number of occurrences reported, the third task Stage 3 hypothesis; a tendency to be concerned with the immediate need of the Medicaid recipient (Table 5) and the third task Stage 4 hypothesis; a concern with specific social relationships (Table 6) do not appear to reflect any differences in that language.

The remainder of the hypotheses show that there seems to be a difference in the number of occurrences of some types of language used by the two sets of groups. Tables 3-15 in Chapter IV presented individual groups counts as well as stage totals.

Several trends seem to emerge in the task dimension of the group discussions. The Stage 3 groups appear to be less concerned with the welfare of Medicaid recipients than the Stage 4 groups. The Stage 3 groups have a greater number of occurrences of phrases related to
Medicaid being a "waste of money" (Table 4). Considering the fact that Medicaid helps in paying medical expenses for the underprivileged in society, it seems that in this particular task discussion, the Stage 3 groups are not as concerned with the medical welfare of the poor.

Another indication of this trend is seen in Hypothesis 5; Stage 4 groups will show a greater concern for general social needs beyond those of the individual than will the Stage 3 groups (Table 8). The Stage 4 groups have a greater incidence of statements concerning a group of children and/or neglected persons in society. There was not a single occurrence of such a phrase in any of the Stage 3 groups.

It is interesting to note that the number of occurrences of phrases concerning an individual's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion were greater in Stage 4 groups. The Stage 4 groups had 19 occurrences of phrases related to choice, whereas the Stage 3 groups had 3 such occurrences.

According to Kohlberg's (1984) theory, a Stage 4 person will be more concerned with laws and the legalities of a system perspective. The Stage 4 groups in the current study had twice as many occurrences of this type of language than the Stage 3 groups (Table 9). This appears to support Kohlberg's view of a Stage 4 orientation. In describing a Stage 4 person, Kohlberg states "Laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases." (p. 175)

Table 3 shows the number of occurrences of words such as "you," "they," "she," "her," etc. for the first hypothesis; concern for the individual in the task. The greater number of occurrences in the
Stage 3 groups seem to suggest a couple of possibilities. First, it appears that the Stage 3 groups did have a tendency to focus on the individual in the task, however, if this is the case, it seems that the Stage 3 groups would also be concerned with specific social relationships. Table 6 indicates that there are a greater number occurrences of words pertaining to specific social relationships in the Stage 4 groups.

In relation to this hypothesis, the Stage 3 groups had a greater tendency to use language such as "you" and "they." In describing a Stage 4 response to a question, Kohlberg (1984) emphasizes the words "we" and "our" in his explanation of the response. Kohlberg states, "This concern for the good of society arises from his (the respondent) taking the point of view of 'us members of society'." (p. 177) To further substantiate this trend, it would have been helpful to count the occurrences of the words "we" and "our" in the Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups. These words reflect a member-of-society Stage 4 perspective, therefore, a greater occurrence of these types of words in a Stage 4 group could give further validity to this type of communication difference between Stage 3 and Stage 4 group discussants.

The second dimension of the group discussions attempted to focus on how the group communication might affect the nature of the interaction of the group members. The most noteworthy aspect of this dimension is reflected in Tables 12 and 13. Both hypotheses measured the amount of group agreement. The Stage 4 groups had a lesser number of occurrences of agreement and a greater number of opposing perspectives than the Stage 3 groups. Again, it is important to note
that this suggests the possibility of a trend. Further empirical research focusing only on agreement in Stage 3 and Stage 4 groups is necessary.

It is worth noting that the Stage 4 groups produced a greater quantity of ideas specific to the task of developing Medicaid hypotheses. The Stage 4 groups collectively developed a greater number of new ideas for the task question than did the Stage 3 groups.

Several aspects of the results have been discussed. The remainder of this chapter gives recommendations for further research.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

This study offers a different basis from which to investigate communication in groups. A factor that may impact group interaction is the individual's level of moral development. The history of an individual's past experiences with role-taking, accommodating and assimilating new schema is evident in communication behaviors. For example, a Stage 3 person may be prone to express agreement language. The effect of such language on the discussion may result in the group reaching a decision in a shorter time period. This could be positive or negative depending on the nature of the task and amount of time available to reach a decision. Further research should be directed toward verifying the Stage 3 agreement trend.

The Stage 4 groups seemed to be freer to express individual opinions. This could well have implications for decision making. The freedom to express an opinion in a group discussion may make debate a greater likelihood, in which case, the group would take a longer time
in making a decision. A discussion involving consideration or questioning of issues may produce a better or higher quality decision. A higher quality decision may be related to idea generation. In this study, the Stage 4 groups expressed a greater number of ideas for the task question than did the Stage 3 groups.

It would be interesting to apply interactional or relational analysis to groups such as the ones in the current study. It may be possible that through these types of analyses, insight could be gained as to the one-up and one-down type of control in a Stage 3 and Stage 4 group. On the basis of this study, the Stage 4 groups might have a greater incidence of control modes of interaction than the Stage 3 groups. This is in keeping with Kohlberg's theory of Stage 3 persons tending toward interpersonal conformity. Thus, research directed to assessing relational control could be productive.

Hypothesis 11 predicted that the Stage 3 groups would exhibit more examples of talking in specifics about people and examples than would the Stage 4 groups. This hypothesis was not supported. The Stage 4 groups had a greater tendency to speak in specifics and give examples during the discussion. It seems that the ability to be specific in a discussion can aide in clarifying the topic. This may be related to the cognitive complexity of a Stage 4 person. As stated previously, advanced moral reasoning depends on advanced logical reasoning. Then persons in Stage 4 groups therefore should be cognitively more complex than the persons in the Stage 3 groups. Further research could be directed to verifying if persons in higher levels of moral development use more examples during a discussion.
The task question of the current study was a controversial issue. It may be that only value-laden issues such as abortion, capital punishment, etc. produce the types of trends seen here. However, given that the individual's level of moral development generally remains the same in adulthood, the possibility of individual morality affecting other types of discussions is probable. To fully assess this possibility, group discussions on areas not related to values are needed. For example, it would be interesting to note if any differences in communication exist in a problem task as opposed to an issue task.

Research directed to groups composed of persons in varying levels of moral development may provide insight into group process. It would be interesting to see if a group member in the highest level of moral development would dominate and emerge as the group's leader. Again, this could be assessed with a discussion of problem or issue tasks.

Kohlberg's theory is based on work with individuals. This study has focused on individuals in Kohlberg's stages and how those individuals communicate in a group discussion. Chapter I of this thesis noted that some research has been conducted on morality and established groups. It would be interesting to see in a zero-history group, if the group's moral atmosphere remained consistent with the individual's stage. It may be that the group atmosphere, depending on the discussion issue and situation, could be higher or lower than the stages of the individuals in the group. The effects lowered morality in a group discussion and group decision could be determined.

On the basis of this study, it appears that many areas of group
communication research as they relate to the individual morality would be productive. However, as stated previously, it is necessary for these future studies to employ reliable statistical procedures.

Summary

Several directions for further research are apparent. The Stage 3 groups seemed to use language that was individualized to the person in the discussion task. This is evidenced in Table 3 by the greater number of occurrences of words such as "you," "they," etc. Additional research should focus on whether Stage 4 groups would use language such as "we" and/or "our." The use of words such as "we" in a group discussion may relate to a feeling of group solidarity or cohesion. Shaw (1976) states that in a study by French (1941) an analysis of verbatim remarks in organized and unorganized groups indicated that in the organized groups there was a greater usage of "we" as opposed to "I." This finding supported the interpretation that organized groups were more cohesive than unorganized groups.

The greater use of language related to "law" in the Stage 4 groups is consistent with Kohlberg's Stage 4 orientation. A greater preoccupation with legality in a group discussion may affect the discussion process and the decision. For example, in a discussion on the draft, a Stage 4 person may gravitate toward the ramifications of disobeying the law, whereas a Stage 5 person may focus on a principled response of the ramifications of war and killing. Obviously a discussion between a Stage 4 and Stage 5 person on this issue could result in debate and possibly conflict.
It appears that further research may be warranted in the area of group communication and group member morality. However, in order for research to be productive, it is necessary to reduce many of the broad concepts and ideas of this study to manageable units in investigation. The challenge lies in assessing which of these might prove to be of value and in structuring a study that would be subject to the rigors of statistical analysis.
Appendix A

Letter to Research Participant

May, 1985

Dear Potential Research Participant:

As a part of my thesis for a master's degree in communication at Western Michigan University, I am conducting a research investigation.

Researchers in the field of small group communication have identified consensus as a factor to be strived for in a decision making group. Scholars have studied individual characteristics as they relate to group decision making. One characteristic that has not been researched is the individual level of moral development.

The first stage of this research involves participant completion of the Socio-moral Reflection Objective Measure. This is a multiple choice questionnaire that assesses individual level of moral development. The questions are based on the cognitive developmental stage concept formulated by Lawrence Kohlberg. The levels are the pre-conventional (stages 1 and 2), the conventional (stages 3 and 4) and the post-conventional (stages 4 and 6).

The second aspect of the investigation involves participation in a 30 minute group discussion. The determination of individual participation in the group discussion will be assessed by the student's level of moral development. Volunteers will be grouped homogeneously into one of the three previously mentioned levels. There will also be a control group and a heterogeneous group composed of individuals in all levels of moral development.

The purpose of the research is to determine if a relationship exists between individual level of moral development and achieving consensus in a small group discussion. I will be predicting that persons in higher levels of moral development will have greater difficulty reaching consensus.

Please be assured that the data collected will remain anonymous. The only purpose for identification is to group participants according to moral stage.

Thank you for your time. I greatly appreciate your help in enabling me to conduct this research for the completion of my degree.

Sincerely,

Beth Ellis
CAS Graduate Student

BE/jz

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INFORMED CONSENT

As a participant in this project, I hereby consent to complete the attached questionnaire. I understand that I may be asked to participate in the 30 minute group discussion.

I also understand that I am not required to respond to the attached questionnaire or participate in the group discussion, and have the right to decline participation in the project.

I realize that the results of the questionnaire will not be identified with me personally and that the data generated by this project will remain confidential with regard to my individual participation.

Signed: Name ______________________________

Date ______________________________
M E M O

TO: CAS FACULTY
FROM: Beth Ellis
DATE: April 30, 1985

I am a CAS graduate student seeking undergraduate students to participate in my Master's Thesis research. The subject of my thesis is the individual level of moral development in relation to achieving consensus in small groups.

I am using Lawrence Kohlberg's Pre-conventional, Conventional and Post-conventional stages of moral development. The level of moral development of each student will be determined by the use of the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure (Gibbs, 1984).

For stage two of the project, students will be grouped homogeneously into one of Kohlberg's three stages. There will also be a control group and a heterogeneous group composed of all stages of development. Five volunteers will comprise each of the five groups.

The groups will be given a subjective moral issue to discuss and will be told to reach consensus. I will be predicting that the subjects in higher stages of moral development will have greater difficulty reaching consensus than those in lower stages of moral development. Consensus will be determined by the use of an objective measure.

The Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure takes approximately 50 minutes to complete. Stage two, the small group discussion, will take 30 minutes. Due to the amount of time involved for the student, an incentive would be a good motivator. I would like to suggest extra credit to provide this motivation.

I will need at least one hundred students to complete the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure. If you would be willing to use class time for students to complete the questionnaire, please so indicate on the attached form. The group discussion stage of the project will not involve class time. Students will be required to meet at a later date for this.

After the data is collected, I would be willing to discuss Kohlberg's theory as well as the nature of the research with your class. Thank you for your consideration. Please use the attached form to indicate your willingness to participate. I will be contacting you soon regarding your response.
Appendix B

RESPONSE FORM

Professor_____________________

Class__________________________

Day & Time______________________

_____ Yes, I would be willing to give extra credit to students for participation in your research.

_____ Yes, I will allow class time for completion of the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure.

_____ No, I cannot give extra credit to students for participation in your research.

_____ No, I cannot allow class time for completion of the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure.
Social Reflection Questionnaire

Instructions

In this booklet are two social problems with questions for you to answer. We are asking the questions not just to find out your opinions about what should be done in the problems, but also to understand why you have those opinions. Please answer all the questions.

Professor_____________________
Class__________________________
Telephone # where you can be reached during the day________

Name: _________________________
Age: ___________________________
Sex (circle one): male/female

I can be available for a 30 minute video-taped group discussion on the following days: (Please check)

Monday morning _______ afternoon _______
Tuesday _______ _______
Wednesday _______ _______
Thursday _______ _______
Friday _______ _______
Problem One

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the 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 wanted people to pay 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 the druggist wanted. Heinz told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or to let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No. I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So the only way Heinz could get the drug would be to break into the druggist's store and steal the drug.

Heinz has a problem. He should help his wife and save her life. But, on the other hand, the only way he could get the drug she needs would be to break the law by stealing the drug.

What should Heinz do?

should steal/should not steal/not sure (circle one)

Why?

Let's change things about the problem and see if you still have the opinion you circled above (should steal, should not steal, or not sure). Also, we want to find out about the things you think are important in this and other problems, especially why you think those things are important. Please answer all the questions.
1. What if Heinz's wife asks him to steal the drug for her? Should Heinz:

steal / not steal / not sure (circle one)?

1a. How important is it for a husband to do what his wife asks, to save her by stealing, even when he isn't sure whether that's the best thing to do?

very important / important / not important (circle one)

1b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is important for a husband to do that. What reason would you give? Is any of the following reasons close to the one you would give? (If a reason is too hard to understand, seems silly, or makes no sense, just circle "not close," or "not sure.")

a. because it's his wife, and she told him to do it, so he should do what she says.

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because he married her and if he didn't want to help her, why did he marry her in the first place?

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because they may have formed together a deep mutual commitment.

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because the husband is expected to help his wife through sickness and health.

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because he cannot recognize her without acceptance.

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because he has accepted a responsibility as her husband.

   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

1c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

   a  b  c  d  e  f (circle one)

2. What if the person dying isn't Heinz's wife, but instead is a friend (and the friend can get no one else to help)? Should Heinz:

steal / not steal / not sure (circle one)

2a. How important is it to do everything you can, even break the law, to save the life of a friend?

very important / important / not important (circle one)

2b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is important for you to do that. What reason would you give? Is any of the following reasons close to the one you would give? (Treat these questions just as you did the last one. If a reason is too hard to understand, seems silly, or makes no sense, just circle "not close," or "not sure.")
a. because your friend may have done things for you, so you should do a favor for the friend if you want your friend to help you in the future. 

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because a friendship must be based on mutual respect and cooperation.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because it's your friend, who might be an important person.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because you would feel close to your friend, and would expect that your friend would help you.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because you and your friend may have developed a total commitment to one another.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because the first requirement of affiliation is a relationship.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

2c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

a b c d e f (circle one)

3a. What about for a stranger? How important is it to do everything you can, even break the law, to save the life of a stranger?

very important / important / not important (circle one)

3b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for you to do that. What reason would you give?

a. because you should always be nice.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because life is the precondition to existence.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because the stranger needs the drug, and anyone wants to live.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because other rights or values should not take priority over the right to life.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because life is sacred, and should be the basis for laws anyway.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because life is precious, and it's inhuman to let anyone suffer when their life can be saved.

close / not close / not sure (circle one)

3c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

a b c d e f (circle one)
4b. Let's say you had to give a second reason why it is important to do everything you can, even break the law, to save the life of a stranger. What reason would you give?
   a. because the stranger should have a chance to live, too, and might save your life some day.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because the stranger could be an important person, who owns a lot of property.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because a stranger's life should not be judged to be "worth" less than anyone else's life.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because the contract of life surpasses that of death.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because the right to life transcends the right to property.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because how would you feel if you were dying, and a stranger didn't help you?
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

4c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
   a b c d e f (circle one)

5. What if the druggist just wants Beinz to pay what the drug cost to make, and Heinz can't even pay that? Should Heinz?
   steal / not steal / not sure (circle one)

5a. How important is it for people not to take things that belong to other people?
   very important / important / not important (circle one)

5b. Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important for people not to do that. What reason would you give?
   a. because stealing is bad, and you will go to jail if you steal.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because it is selfish and heartless to steal from others.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because stealing gets you nowhere, and you are taking too much of a risk.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because character must constitute legal procedure.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because living in society means accepting obligations and not only benefits.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because acceptance of the property right is fundamental for any society.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

5c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
   a b c d e f (circle one)
6a. How important is it for people to obey the law?
very important / important / not important (circle one)

6b. Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important to obey the law. What reason would you give?
   a. because otherwise everyone will be stealing from everyone else, and nothing will be left.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because breaking the law would create a hierarchy.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because the law is ideally founded upon universal human rights.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because the law is for you to follow and you should always obey it.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because laws make society possible, and otherwise the system would break down.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because otherwise the world would go crazy, and there would be chaos.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

6c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
a b c d e f (circle one)

7. What if Heinz does steal the drug? His wife does get better, but in the meantime, the police take Heinz and bring him to court. Should the judge:
   jail Heinz / let Heinz go free / not sure (circle one)

7a. How important is it for judges to go easy on people like Heinz?
very important / important / not important (circle one)

7b. Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important for judges to go easy on people like Heinz. What reason would you give?
   a. because she's his wife, and she told him to do it, so he did what she said.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because the judge should understand that the husband acted out of love, and not out of selfishness, to save her life.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because in any society, the primary function of the law should be to preserve human life.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because the judge would have done it, too, if he needed to get the drug to keep his wife from dying.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because justice should be tempered with mercy, especially where a life is involved.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because the foundation for personal conviction transcends life.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

7c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
a b c d e f (circle one)

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8a. How important is it for judges to go easy on people who have acted out of conscience?
very important / important / not important (circle one)

8b. Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important for judges to go easy on people who have acted out of conscience. What reason would you give?

a. because he couldn't help it, his conscience was too strong for him.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
b. because conscience is predicated on leniency.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
c. because his conscience told him to do it, so he had to do it.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
d. because, in this case, the husband's conscience may be consistent with the common morality.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
e. because the act of conscience affirmed a fundamental right.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
f. because otherwise he wouldn't have been able to live with himself, knowing that he could have saved her and didn't.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)

8c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
a b c d e f (circle one)

9b. Let's say, instead, that you had to give a reason why it is not important for judges to go easy on lawbreakers who have acted out of conscience. What reason would you give for sending lawbreakers who have acted out of conscience to jail?

a. because your conscience is only your mind, so you don't have to do what it says.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
b. because the subjective nature of conscience is one reason why there must be standard laws.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
c. because you should be able to handle your conscience.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
d. because conscience isn't always right, you could have a warped mind.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
e. because although Heinz was right to affirm life as a prior right, he must still see the viewpoint of the courts.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
f. because conscience cannot be equated with belief.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)

9c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
a b c d e f (circle one)
10. What if Heinz's wife never had cancer? What if she was only a little sick, and Heinz stole the drug to help her get well a little sooner? Should the judge:

Jail Heinz / let Heinz go free / not sure (circle one)

10a. How important is it for judges to send people who break the law to jail?
very important / important / not important (circle one)

10b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for judges to send people who break the law to jail. What reason would you give?
a. because if you take a risk and get caught, then you go to jail.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
b. because Heinz must have known that what he did was wrong.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
c. because Heinz must be prepared to be held accountable for his actions.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
d. because Heinz's case is a liability.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
e. because if one agrees to have law, one must also agree to have law enforcement.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)
f. because Heinz stole something, and stealing is bad.
close / not close / not sure (circle one)

10c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

a b c d e f (circle one)
Problem Two

Joe is a fourteen-year-old boy who wanted to go to camp very much. His father promised him he could go if he saved up the money for it himself. So Joe worked hard on his paper route and saved up the 40 dollars it cost to go to camp and a little more besides. But just before camp was going to start, his father changed his mind. Some of the father's friends decided to go on a special fishing trip, and Joe's father was short of the money it would cost. So he told Joe to give him the money Joe had saved from the paper route. Joe didn't want to give up going to camp, so he thinks of refusing to give his father the money.

Joe has a problem. Joe's father promised Joe he could go to camp if he earned and saved up the money. But, on the other hand, the only way Joe could go would be by disobeying and not helping his father.

What should Joe do?

should refuse / should not refuse / not sure (circle one)

Why?

Let's change things about the problem and see if you still have the opinion you circled above (should refuse, should not refuse, not sure). Also, we want to find out about the things you think are important in this and other problems, and especially why you think those things are important. Please answer all the questions.
1a. How important is it for parents to keep their promises about letting their children keep money?

very important / important / not important (circle one)

1b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for parents to do that. What reason would you give?

a. because parents should never break promises.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because the parents want the children to keep promises, so the parents should keep promises, too.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because children, no less than parents, are individuals with the fundamental human rights.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because if the parents act selfishly, the children would lose faith in them.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because parents who abuse their authority are not worthy of their children's respect.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because contracts necessitate promises between parents and children.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

1c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

   a b c d e f (circle one)

2b. What about keeping a promise to a friend? Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important to keep a promise, if you can, to a friend. What reason would you give?

a. because your friend may have done things for you, and you need friends.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because society must be based on trust.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because otherwise that person won't be your friend again.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because affiliation is the essence of friendship.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because otherwise you would lose trust in each other.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because keeping a promise upholds the other person's fundamental value.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

2c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

   a b c d e f (circle one)
3b. What about keeping a promise to a stranger? Let's say you had to give a reason why it is important to keep a promise, if you can, to a stranger. What reason would you give?
   a. because otherwise the stranger will find out you were a tattletale and beat you up.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because then you can be proud of yourself, and keep from giving the impression that you are a selfish person.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because you just might run into that person again some time.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because it is important for the sake of your own integrity as well as the respect of others.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because the stranger's claims are just as important as those of any other individual.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because there is no interaction without affiliation.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

3c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
   a b c d e f (circle one)

4. What if Joe's father did not promise that Joe could keep the money? Should Joe:
   refuse / not refuse / not sure (circle one)

4a. How important is it for parents to let their children keep earned money, even when the children weren't promised that they could keep the money?
   very important / important / not sure (circle one)

4b. Let's say you had to give a reason why it is IMPORTANT for parents to do that. What reason would you give?
   a. because the child worked for the money, so it's his and he can do whatever he wants with it.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   b. because without the individual there can be no commitment to parents or to children.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   c. because the child deserves it after so much sacrifice, and taking the money would be cruel.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   d. because the child's moral rights are of equal value to his parents'.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   e. because if his money is taken, the child may cry.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)
   f. because the child accepted a responsibility, and has a right to a fair return for his effort.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

4c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:
   a b c d e f (circle one)
5b. Let's say you had to give a SECOND reason why it is important for parents to let their children keep earned money, even when the children weren't promised that they could keep the money. What SECOND reason would you give?

a. because the child will be sad if they take the money.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

b. because without money the child can't have any fun.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

c. because the child's rights are tantamount to promises.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

d. because that way the child can achieve personal development as an individual.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

e. because that way the child can develop a sense of self-sufficiency and responsibility.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

f. because otherwise the child may just become lazy and selfishly take from others.
   close / not close / not sure (circle one)

5c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

   a  b  c  d  e  f  (circle one)

6. What if the father needs the money not to go on a fishing trip, but instead to pay for food for the family? Should Joe:

   refuse / not refuse / not sure (circle one)

6a. How important is it for children to help their parents—even when it means that the children won't get to do something they want to do?

   very important / important / not important (circle one)

6b. Let's say you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for children to do that. What reason would you give?

   a. because the parents may have done lots of favors for their children, and now they need the children to return a favor.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

   b. because sometimes a contract between individuals must be broken for the sake of the common good.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

   c. because filial relationships transcend the family.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

   d. because children should always obey and help their parents.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

   e. because the children should realize how much their parents have sacrificed for them.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

   f. because the family must come before individual wishes where the family unit is at stake.
      close / not close / not sure (circle one)

6c. Of all the above reasons, the reason which is the closest to the reason that you would give (or the least far off from the reason that you would give) is:

   a  b  c  d  e  f  (circle one)
Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

1. The sooner abortion is outlawed, the better.
   Strongly Agree____  Agree____  Disagree____  Strongly Disagree____

2. Capital punishment is morally wrong.
   Strongly Agree____  Agree____  Disagree____  Strongly Disagree____

3. President Reagan should immediately send U.S. troops to Nicaragua, so Communism will not spread.
   Strongly Agree____  Agree____  Disagree____  Strongly Disagree____

4. Every American should at least send $5.00 to help feed starving Ethiopians.
   Strongly Agree____  Agree____  Disagree____  Strongly Disagree____

5. Even though it costs a lot of money, U.S. industry should have stringent regulations to minimize pollution.
   Strongly Agree____  Agree____  Disagree____  Strongly Disagree____
## Individual SRM Scores by Group

<table>
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## Appendix E

### Conversion of SRM Score to Global Stage

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


