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correlation vs. causation

CAN WE BE SURE THAT A CAUSES B?

they don't, they may be at risk for later psychological conditions marked by confusion regarding identity (such as borderline personality disorder, which we'll encounter in Chapter 15). For Erikson, the successful resolution of each stage holds crucial implications later on down the line. If we don't solve the challenges posed by earlier stages, we'll experience difficulty solving the challenges posed by later stages. **Explore**

Although Erikson's theorizing has been influential, the research basis for many of his claims is slim. There's not much evidence that there are exactly eight stages or that we pass through them in the same order. There's some evidence that individuals who don't successfully negotiate the early stages of development, like identity versus role confusion, experience more difficulty with later stages than do other individuals (Vaillant & Milosky, 1980). Although consistent with Erikson's model, these findings are only correlational. As a consequence, they don't demonstrate that problems with early stages *produce* problems in later stages, as the post hoc fallacy reminds us.

Emerging Adulthood. Until recently, developmental researchers regarded individuals under 18 as adolescents and those over 18 as adults. Most psychological research is based on adults between 18 and 22, especially those in college (Henrich et al., 2010). But scientists have increasingly recognized that many changes in identity and emotional development distinct from later adult experiences occur in early adulthood. Researchers now define the period of life between 18 and 25 as **emerging adulthood**, during which many aspects of emotional development, identity, and personality become solidified (Arnett, 2004).

Many emerging adults struggle to figure out their identities and life goals, "trying on different hats" in an effort to see which one fits best. Psychologists call this process *role experimentation*. We may juggle "nerdy," "cool," and "jock" friends at varying times, scope out different potential majors, and even explore alternative religious and philosophical beliefs. Our identities undergo a variety of important changes over the course of emerging adulthood as we acquire the opportunity to fine-tune the fit between who we are and who we want to be.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: KNOWING RIGHT FROM WRONG. Children begin to develop ideas of right and wrong as toddlers and preschoolers. But *moral dilemmas*—situations in which there are no clear right or wrong answers—arise much more frequently in the teen and young adult years. Should I lie to my parents about where I've been so they don't worry about me? Should I avoid my nice but nerdy friend so that my popular friends will like me better? The approach we adopt to these and other moral problems changes over the course of development.

Children's Moral Development. There's good reason to believe that we can trace the roots of our moral understanding to *fear*. In infancy and childhood, we associate right with reward and wrong with punishment, so we learn not to do bad things to avoid punishment. Over time, our fears become internalized. We come to fear not merely the recriminations of our parents and teachers, but the recriminations of our own moral sensibilities (Lykken, 1995). As Freud (1932) observed, we become afraid of ourselves (Freud called guilt "moral anxiety"). Indeed, one of the best predictors of the strength of children's sense of morality is their level of fear years earlier (Frick & Marsee, 2006; Kochanska et al., 2002).

Piaget believed that children's moral development, like other aspects of their development, is constrained by their level of cognitive development (Loevinger, 1987). For example, he argued that children in the concrete operational stage tend to evaluate people in terms of *objective responsibility*—how much harm they've done. As they approach formal operations, though, they tend to evaluate people in terms of *subjective responsibility*—their intentions to produce harm (Piaget, 1932).

If we ask a six- or seven-year-old who's more to blame, (a) a child who accidentally knocks over 20 kitchen plates in his parents' cabinet or (b) a child who purposefully knocks over 10 kitchen plates because he was hopping mad at his parents, she's more likely to say (a), because it produced more damage. In contrast, a 12- or 13-year-old is more likely to say (b), because it was intentional. With age, children become better able to understand that there's more to personal responsibility than the sheer amount of damage one has wrought. Whether they mean to inflict damage also counts.

emerging adulthood

period of life between the ages of 18 and 25 during which many aspects of emotional development, identity, and personality become solidified

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Kohlberg and Morality: Finding the Moral High Ground. Lawrence Kohlberg extended Piaget's thinking to identify how morality unfolds across the life span. He studied how morality changes with development by exploring how participants wrestle with moral dilemmas. Because Kohlberg's moral dilemmas don't have clear right or wrong answers, he didn't score the answers based on what participants judged to be morally right or wrong; he scored only the *reasoning processes* they used to decide what was right or wrong. For Kohlberg, what matters are the underlying principles that people invoke to solve moral problems.

We'll explain this point using one famous moral problem developed by Kohlberg. Consider Heinz's dilemma and think about how you'd handle it.

Heinz and the Drug

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 was charging 10 times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$400 for the radium and charged \$4,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about \$2,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, having tried every legal means, Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug.

Question: Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not?

After testing many children, adolescents, and adults on this and other dilemmas, Kohlberg (1976, 1981) concluded that morality develops in three major stages. We can see these stages, along with sample answers to the Heinz dilemma that go along with them, in **TABLE 10.3**. The first level, *preconventional morality*, is marked by a focus on punishment and reward. What's right is what we're rewarded for; what's wrong is what we're punished for. The second level, *conventional morality*, is marked by a focus on societal values. What's right is what society approves of; what's wrong is what society disapproves of. The third level, *postconventional morality*, is marked by a focus on internal moral principles that transcend society. What's right is what accords with fundamental human rights and values; what's wrong is what contradicts these rights and values. Kohlberg believed the sequence of these levels was invariant, although he acknowledged that different people pass through them at different rates. In fact, Kohlberg's research indicated that most adults never get past conventional morality to achieve postconventional morality.  **Watch**

Criticisms of Kohlberg's Work. Kohlberg's work has been enormously influential; his research has shed light on the development of morality and informed educational efforts to enhance people's moral reasoning (Kohlberg & Turiel, 1971; Loewinger, 1987). Still, Kohlberg's findings have met with more than their share of criticism; we'll examine five criticisms here.


1. **Cultural Bias.** By and large, studies have confirmed Kohlberg's claim that people pass through his levels in the same order, regardless of their country or culture of origin (Snarey, 1982). But some critics have accused Kohlberg of cultural bias, because people from different cultures tend to achieve different scores on his moral development scheme. For example, people from individualistic societies often score somewhat higher than do those in collectivist societies (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990). Still, as we learned in Chapter 9, group differences don't always indicate bias, so the meaning of this finding is unclear.



Another moral dilemma, in this case adapted slightly from one of Kohlberg's: Imagine you've just learned that one of your next-door neighbors, whom you've known for many years as an extremely kind and caring person, is wanted for an attempted murder she committed as a young woman three decades ago (this scenario describes Sara Jane Olson, ex-member of a violent revolutionary organization, shown here with her daughter). Would you turn her in to the police? Why or why not?

TABLE 10.3 Kohlberg's Scheme of Moral Development and Sample Explanations. Kohlberg scored the reasoning processes underlying the answer to the Heinz dilemma, not the answers themselves.

LEVEL	HEINZ SHOULD STEAL THE DRUG BECAUSE ...	HEINZ SHOULD NOT STEAL THE DRUG BECAUSE ...
Preconventional Morality	He can get away with it	He might get caught
Conventional Morality	Others will look down on him if he lets his wife die	It's against the law
Postconventional Morality	The protection of human life is a higher moral principle that can overrule laws against stealing	Doing so violates a basic social contract needed to preserve civilization: Thou shalt not steal

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Carol Gilligan suggested that women's more caring orientation may affect their responses to moral dilemmas. Yet, women appear to score just as highly as men on Kohlberg's moral development scheme.

Know this especially well

2. **Sex Bias.** Kohlberg's student Carol Gilligan (1982) broke from her mentor to argue that his system was biased against women. For Gilligan, Kohlberg's scheme unfairly favors males, who are more likely than women to adopt a "justice" orientation based on abstract principles of fairness, whereas women are more likely than men to adopt a "caring" orientation based on concrete principles of nurturance. Yet despite gender differences in strategies toward moral problems, there's little evidence that men score higher than women on Kohlberg's scheme (Moon, 1986; Sunar, 2002).
3. **Low Correlation with Moral Behavior.** Scores on Kohlberg's scheme are only modestly related to real-world moral behavior (Krebs & Denton, 2005). For example, the correlation between Kohlberg's levels and moral behavior, such as honest and altruistic actions, tends to be only about .3 (Blasi, 1980). Kohlberg argued that his moral development system *shouldn't* correlate highly with real-world actions, because it measures people's thinking about moral problems, not their moral behaviors. People may perform the same behaviors for very different reasons: A person may steal a coat from a store because he wants to add it to his fashion collection or because he wants to keep his freezing children warm in the winter. Still, this kind of reasoning raises problems for the falsifiability of Kohlberg's system. If the scores in this system correlate with behavior, they provide evidence for it; if they don't correlate with behavior, they don't necessarily provide evidence against it.
4. **Confound with Verbal Intelligence.** Responding effectively to Kohlberg's moral dilemmas requires some basic smarts. But that fact should make us a bit uneasy, because Kohlberg's scheme may be measuring people's ability to understand and talk about problems in general rather than moral problems in particular (Blasi, 1980). There's only one way to rule out this possibility: measure verbal intelligence in the same study as we measure moral development, and see whether it washes out the findings. Some studies have found that intelligence may explain Kohlberg's findings (Sanders, Lubinski, & Benbow, 1995), but others have found strong relations between scores on Kohlberg's scheme and moral behavior even after taking intelligence into account (Gibbs, 2006). The issue remains unresolved.
5. **Causal Direction.** Kohlberg's model assumes that our moral reasoning precedes our emotional reactions to moral issues. Yet in some cases, our emotional reactions to morally laden stimuli, like photographs of assaults on innocent people, occur almost instantaneously (Luo et al., 2006). Moreover, we can know something is wrong without being able to explain why; for example, many people "know" intuitively that incest is immoral but can't offer a reason (Haidt, 2007). These findings suggest that moral reasoning may sometimes come after, rather than before, our emotional reactions.

falsifiability

CAN THE CLAIM BE DISPROVED?

ruling out rival hypotheses

HAVE IMPORTANT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE FINDINGS BEEN EXCLUDED?

correlation vs. causation

CAN WE BE SURE THAT A CAUSES B?

■ Life Transitions in Adulthood

As we "emerge" into full-blown adults, many aspects of our lives begin to stabilize, but others begin to change even more dramatically. These changes tend to be associated with major transitions in lifestyle or societal status, such as shifting from student to wage earner, entering a serious relationship, or becoming a parent. Many of these transitions are wonderful experiences, but they can be stressful. We often think of adults as following a predictable life trajectory: attending college in the late teens and early twenties, getting that first job after graduation, falling in love with someone of the opposite sex, getting married, having children, watching them grow up, and growing old gracefully while rocking on the front porch. In reality, we vastly overestimate how many of us adhere to this tidy stereotype of the road of life (Coontz, 1992). Many college students are in their late twenties, thirties, or forties, attending school while maintaining a job, and have families who are financially dependent on them. Many family units consist of single parents, same-sex parents, unmar-