Lesson Plan: Kohlberg and Moral Development

I. Reintroduce Kohlberg. show stages slide, (show video clip?) then raise screen. (2 min.)

II. Whiteboard activities Split class into gender groups. Show definitions slide/put up poster. (10+ min.)

   A. Activity: Ask each group to list 5 values or morals they would teach.
       What if everybody can’t agree on which values?
       What if the school board or parents object to which values you’re teaching?

   B. How Kohlberg solved the problem, by posing dilemmas and teaching moral thinking.

   C. Kohlberg offers the moral instruction equivalent of ZPD.

   D. Activity: In same groups, quickly list 3 moral dilemmas commonly found in classrooms. Do they match up in any way with the lists of values? Discuss with class and adjust lists.

IV. Why did we just do that? And why did we split into gender groups? 2-minute history

   A. White males as the model/standard in science, medicine, social science, history, lit
   B. 70s-90s Women, among others, questioned the models
   C. Women in Kohlberg (Supreme Court), Gilligan, her research
   D. The different moral voice - ethic of care, responsibilities vs. rights
   E. Be aware of research subjects, methods, biases!

V. Classroom applications. Whole group discussion. (15 min.)

   A. Opening Minds: morals instruction is part of whole-child development, collaborative learning and social justice; academic and personal success depends upon the ability to think collaboratively.

   B. Dewey and Piaget: kids need to be able to relate what they are learning to the world around them, and build off that knowledge. Moral instruction should thus be related to situations that kids could actually encounter.
Activity: ask class to generate ideas. (If we run out of time, just list the following).

C. Bullying and cliques: a common moral dilemma for kids. Involves social rules and unequal power relationships -- the opposite of collaborative learning. Teaching techniques: Using instructional dilemmas, role playing.

D. Assisting social/emotional development of certain groups of kids, especially kids on the autism spectrum, with brain injuries, ADHD or emotional disabilities. Kohlberg dilemma instruction will be especially helpful for these kids, who may be impulsive or have difficulty with social imagination, and thus a need to hear other people’s reasons for moral decisions.

E. The Just Community approach: having students work as a community to set and enforce moral expectations. This can be problematic but is a way of engaging children and giving them responsibility for their classroom setting.

Final question, if there’s time: is Kohlberg the best way to teach morals and values? What about Johnston and his reference to Nazi Germany?
Kohlberg’s
Stages of Moral Development

Moral development
- process through which children develop proper attitudes and behaviors toward other people in society, based on social and cultural norms, rules, and laws.

Morals vs. Values

Morals are more of a societal view of right or wrong.

Values are a more individual view of right or wrong.

Kohlberg

• Believed that moral growth occurs through interaction with one’s environment, and progresses through defined stages.

• Presented moral dilemmas to those he studied, determining which stage of moral development they were in, based on not their answer to the dilemmas, but the reasons behind the answer.
Kohlberg’s
Six Stages of Moral Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre-conventional</td>
<td>1. Obedience and punishment</td>
<td>Based on avoiding punishment, a focus on the consequences of actions, rather than intentions; intrinsic deference to authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Individualism and exchange</td>
<td>The &quot;right&quot; behaviors are those that are in best interest of oneself; tit for tat mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conventional</td>
<td>3. Interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>&quot;Good boy / Good girl&quot; attitude, sees individuals as filling social roles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Authority and social order</td>
<td>Law and order as highest ideals, social obedience is a must to maintaining a functional society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Post-conventional</td>
<td>5. Social contract</td>
<td>Begin to learn other’s have different values; realization that law is contingent on culture</td>
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<td>6. Universal Principles</td>
<td>Develop internal moral principles; Individual begins to obey these above the law</td>
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Kohlberg states:
- Moving through the stages is not a product of maturity.
- New forms of thinking and the movement through stages cannot be taught.

Development through stages is created from our own thinking about moral problems. Social experiences promote development, but they do so by stimulating our mental processes. Discussions and debates with others question and challenge our views and we are therefore motivated to come up with new, more comprehensive positions.
Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development

Criticism

Although there have been many studies to support Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development, some very critical problems that have been brought forward as well.

Moral Reasoning vs. Moral Behavior

Kohlberg asked his subjects to provide reasoning to his moral dilemma questions. The question is asked: does moral reasoning absolutely determine moral behavior? Take the situation of an elementary school child being asked if cheating was wrong. The student could most definitely answer that cheating is wrong, but does that guarantee that that student will not cheat given the opportunity?

We can say what we believe to be right, but can we guarantee those actions if we have never been placed in that particular dilemma / scenario?

Cultural Bias

Many critics have determined that Kohlberg’s Theory is highly western culture based. Many believe that Kohlberg’s theory does not support the beliefs and cultural values that other societies may hold in high regard. Kohlberg’s theories are based largely on a justice concept of laws and rules; other societies may not hold those laws to such a high standard and may value other concepts to a greater extent.

Gender Bias

One of Lawrence Kohlberg’s most well known critics, Carol Gilligan, argued that Kohlberg’s theory was male biased in that Kohlberg’s subject were boys. Kohlberg’s study found that men reached higher stages of moral development, based on his questioning. Gilligan argued that men and women had different sets of moral thinking, therefore allowing for the possibility that there were more ways to answer his questions. Men are more focused on justice and law, while women are more focused on caring and providing for others, actions that didn’t necessarily allow for advancement into the higher stages of Kohlberg’s Moral Development.
Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development

In the classroom

**Schools** can help students move from one developmental stage to the next by offering moral dilemmas that contradict the beliefs of their current moral stages.

**Teachers** can adjust their behavioral expectations and management **techniques** according to developmental stage for students.

**Sample Techniques:**

- Students, as a class, create classroom rules and expectations.
- Moral dilemma discussions throughout the school year as the opportunity arises
- Role Playing
- Modeling good social behavior
Implications for students with exceptionalities?

Specific learning disabilities and physical impairments
Student may progress through the stages as usual.

Autism Spectrum Disorder
Students may receive the additional support they need in improving social and developmental delays.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Students with ADHD may benefit from the opportunity to think through situations rather than simply reacting.

Criminal Disorder
Is crime a disability of moral development?
Kohlberg’s
Stages of Moral Development
Notes