



Gilligan's Theory

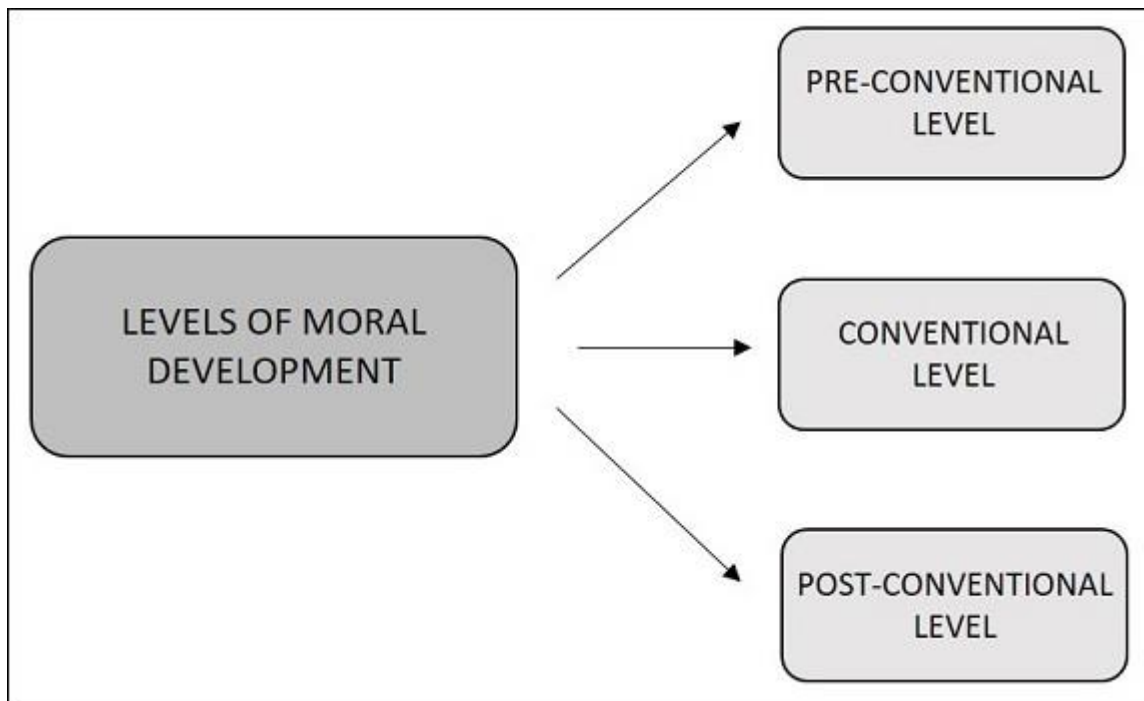
This is an advancement of Kohlberg's theory. It had been observed that Kohlberg's theory was proposed based on the moral thinking of privileged white men and boys. Hence this theory was popularized by taking both male and female thinking capabilities into account.

Carol Gilligan, a psychological theorist was born on Nov 28, 1936 in the New York city. She pursued her doctorate degree in Social Psychology from the Harvard University. Gilligan was a research assistant for Lawrence Kohlberg, but she eventually became independent and criticized some of his theories.

Gilligan's Theory

Carol Gilligan opines that **Kohlberg's** theories are biased upon the **male thinking** process. According to Gilligan, Kohlberg seemed to have studied only **privileged men and boys**. She believed that **women** face a lot of psychological challenges and they are not moral widgets. The women's point of view on moral development involves **caring** which shows its effect on human **relationships**.

Hence she proposed a theory which has the same three stages of Kohlberg but with different stages of moral development. Let us understand the stages in detail.



Though the names of the stages are the same, the stages differ in this method. The moral development in Gilligan's theory are based on pro-social behaviors such as Altruism, caring and helping and the traits such as honesty, fairness and respect.

Pre-conventional Level

- A person in this stage cares for oneself to ensure survival.
- Though the person's attitude is selfish, this is the transition phase, where the person finds the connection between oneself and others.



Conventional Level

- In this stage, the person feels responsible and shows care towards other people.
- Carol Gilligan believes that this moral thinking can be identified in the role of a mother and a wife. This sometimes leads to the ignorance of the self.

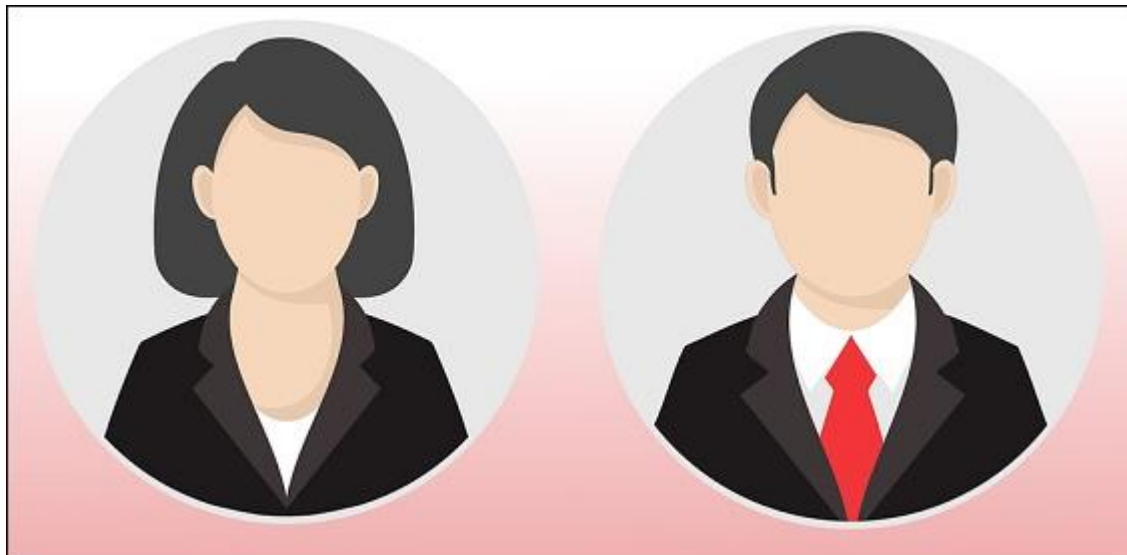
Post-conventional Level

- This is the stage, where the principle of care for self as well as others, is accepted.
- However, a section of people may never reach this level.

According to the Carol Gilligan's theory of moral development, changes occur due to the **change of self** rather than the **critical thinking**. It was stated that the post-conventional level of Kohlberg is not attained by women. But Carol Gilligan researched and found that the post-conventional level of thinking is not being easy for women to go through because they **care** for the relationships.

Levels of Thinking

Carol Gilligan states that the post-conventional level of moral thinking can be dealt based on the **two types of thinking**. Gilligan's theory is based on the two main ideas, the care-based morality (usually found in women) and the justice-based morality (usually found in men).



Care-based Morality

Care-based morality is the kind of thinking found in women. This is based on the following principles.

- More emphasis is given to inter-connected relationships and universality.
- Acting justly focuses on avoidance of violence.
- Women with this are usually interested in helping others.
- More common in girls because of their connections to their mothers.
- Because girls remain connected to their mothers, they are less inclined to worry about issues of fairness.

Justice-based Morality

Justice-based morality is the kind of thinking found in men. This is based on the following principles.

- They view the world as being composed of autonomous individuals who interact with one another.
- Acting justly means avoiding inequality.



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- Individuals with this are usually interested in protecting individuality.
- Thought to be more common among boys because of their need to differentiate between themselves and their mothers.
- Because they are separated from their mothers, boys become more concerned with the concept of inequality.

The Carol Gilligan's theory can be better understood if explained with an example.

Example of Gilligan's Theory

In order to understand Gilligan's theory, a popular example is usually considered. A group of moles give shelter to a porcupine. But they are being continuously stabbed by the porcupine's quills. Now, what should they do?



The **Pre-conventional** level of thinking states that to think for the good of oneself, either the moles or the porcupine only can live there. The other has to leave the place.

According to the **Conventional** level of thinking, which brings a transition, from self to the good of others and which might even lead to sacrifice, either the moles or the porcupine has to sacrifice and again this leads to a stage where only moles or the porcupine can live in the burrow.

According to the **Post-conventional** level of thinking, which states that the good of both the parties has to be considered, both the moles and the porcupine come to an agreement that both will have separate places in the same burrow, where they limit to behave themselves and will not cause any trouble to other. This helps both of them to live in the same place with peace.



The researchers found that the solution to this scenario is different with different individuals; gender also plays an important role. The thinkers were observed viewing the problem in two different perspectives, the care-based and the justice-based.



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In a **Justice-based perspective**, the solution to the problem is viewed as a conflict between two individual groups. Only one of them can have the property. Either moles or the porcupine will get the place in the burrow. Hence the solution to the dilemma, is not a resolution of the conflict, it is a verdict.

In a **Care-based perspective**, the approach differs. The problem is viewed as a difficult situation faced by both the parties together, rather than a fight between both of them. Hence the solution is sought in a way around the problem or to remove the problem completely. The solution may sound compromising but not damaging. The relationship will still be the same, after the resolution.

Researchers found that Justice-based perspective is pre-dominant among males while Care-based prospective is among females.