

Values Hierarchies and Moral Reasoning

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Although Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview (MJI) (Kohlberg 1984; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) is one of the most well-known measures of moral reasoning in the field of moral psychology (Modgil & Modgil, 1988), and the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) has been utilized in well over 300 published studies examining value hierarchies (PsycInfo, 1992), there exists little information considering their relationship with an adult English-speaking sample.

Kohlberg, using the Piagetian conceptualization of stage, posits 5 empirically identified basic stages, with 4 transition points, to create a nine-point ordinal scale: 1) Heteronomy and 2) Instrumentality (the preconventional stages); 3) Mutuality and 4) Social Systems/Conscience (the conventional stages); and 5) Principled Social Contract (postconventional stage). Rokeach (1973, 1979; Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984) developed the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) to examine the relative importance of 2 sets of 18 values, "terminal" and "instrumental" values", by having subjects rank them.

Helkama (1982), with a sample of 83 adults from a semirural commune on the southeastern coast of Finland, found that subjects at stage 4 ranked "obedience" lower than subjects at stage three, and that they ranked it lower than subjects at the pre-conventional stages (1/2, 2, 2/3) ( $p=.05$ ). He additionally reported a reverse trend for broadminded ( $p=.07$ ), with the stage 4 subjects ranking it higher than the stage 3, and they ranked it

higher than did the preconventional stages. McLellan (1970), with a sample of 78 males in 7th, 9th, and 11th grades, found that "freedom" was ranked highest by stages 2 and 5; but that "obedience" was ranked highest by stages 1 and 4. Note that McLellan's study used an earlier, less reliable, form of the MJT.

In the present study participants were 54 adult college students from the Pacific northwest. They were 70% female, average age of 25 years, most of whom were either juniors or seniors. The MJT was given in its written version and the protocols were scored by the lead author, who co-taught the Harvard MJT scoring workshops 1986-1988, and has established inter-rater reliability in the 90% zone.

Of the 54 participants, 16 were coded as stage 3; 29 stage 3/4; and 9 stage 4. The main findings were positive correlations with the Rokeach values of "salvation" (+.31,  $p < .05$ ), "forgiving" (+.34,  $p < .05$ ) and "courageous" (+.29,  $p < .05$ ); and negative correlations with the values of "accomplishment" (-.28,  $p < .05$ ), "ambitious" (-.39,  $p < .001$ ), and "broadminded" (-.38,  $p < .001$ ).

Based on comparison to Helkama's (1982) and McLellan's (1970) studies, it is concluded that there is much, yet to be explained, variation among value hierarchies at various Kohlberg moral reasoning stages, across different samples. It also remains surprising to us that the value of "equality" doesn't significantly correlate with moral reasoning, as Kohlberg's theory implies an increasing importance of justice as moral judgment develops. As both Rokeach and Kohlberg demonstrate relationships

between their respective measures and behavior, an important area for further research is to study the interactive effect of specific value hierarchies and specific moral reasoning stages upon behavior (cf. Steibe & McCarrey, 1982).

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