



## Chapter 4 – The Developing Person

1. Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development: 1) *Sensorimotor stage* – this stage occurs from birth to about two year old and is when infants know the world mostly through their senses and motor activities (e.g., using their hands to put objects in their mouth); 2) *Preoperational stage* – this stage occurs from 2 to around 7 years old and is when children learn to use language but cannot comprehend concrete logic (e.g., unable to understand that changing the shape of an object does not affect its original mass or volume); 3) *Concrete Operational stage* – this stage occurs from about 7 to 12 years of age and is when children begin to understand simple concrete logic such as changing an object's shape does not affect its original mass or volume; *Formal Operations stage* – this stage occurs at around the age of 12 and represents the period when young adults begin to understand and use formal logic as well as to think abstractly (e.g., developing a strategy to win a game).
2. Kohlberg's theory of moral development consists of three stages: *Preconventional morality*, *Conventional morality*, and *Postconventional morality*. An example of *Preconventional morality* is when children obey rules either to avoid punishment or to gain rewards (e.g., cleaning their bedroom in order to gain the reward of going to the ice cream store). *Conventional morality* is when an individuals behavior adheres to social norms and laws (e.g., finding a lost wallet on campus and returning it to its owner or dropping it off at the lost-and-found office). *Postconventional morality* is obtained by those who develop abstract reasoning of formal operational thought and is characterized by individuals who subscribe to people's agreed-upon rights or develop their own ethical principles about what's right and wrong.
3. Studies around the world reveal that human cognition everywhere unfolds basically in the sequence Piaget proposed. However, today's researchers see development as more continuous than did Piaget. By detecting the beginnings of each type of thinking at earlier ages, they have revealed conceptual abilities Piaget missed. Moreover, they see formal logic as a smaller part of cognition than he did.

Research confirms that children in various cultures progress from the level Kohlberg called preconventional into the stages of his conventional level. However, the postconventional level is more controversial. It appears mostly in the European and North American educated middle class which prizes individualism – giving priority to one's own goals rather than to group goals. Thus, Kohlberg's postconventional morality stage doesn't seem to apply well to communal societies such as in Asia and the Middle East where individualism is counter to the social norm.

As with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development appears to apply well to various cultures up until the onset of adolescence. However, after adolescence, Erikson's stages of moral development appear to vary somewhat depending on what culture is being observed and, to some extent, which gender is being evaluated. Both men and women develop their social skills in part from the culture they are raised in and the

cultural influence matters especially when comparing social development in individualistic societies (e.g., North America and Europe) and communal societies (e.g., Asia).