

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications from CYFS

Children, Youth, Families & Schools, Nebraska
Center for Research on

2009

Preconventional Morality

Maria Rosario T. de Guzman

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, mguzman2@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cyfsfacpub>



Part of the [Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons](#)

de Guzman, Maria Rosario T., "Preconventional Morality" (2009). *Faculty Publications from CYFS*. 8.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cyfsfacpub/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Children, Youth, Families & Schools, Nebraska Center for Research on at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications from CYFS by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Maria Rosario T. de Guzman
Department of Child, Youth, & Family Studies
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Published in David Matsumoto, ed., *Cambridge dictionary of psychology*
(Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p 396.

preconventional morality

n. In Kohlberg's theory of moral development, this is the first and lowest level of reasoning, characterized by egocentric concerns and a focus on concrete consequences of actions. Two stages compose this level of moral reasoning. In stage 1, obedience/punishment orientation, children base their moral judgments on avoidance of physical punishment and unquestioning obedience to authority figures, particularly because of their ability to mete out physical punishment. In stage 2, individualism and exchange, also called instrumental relativism, children begin to understand that people hold multiple perspectives but judge morality of actions in terms of the practical benefits that can be gained by those behaviors. For instance, children will judge that actions are appropriate if concrete gains can be obtained. Children ages 4 to 10 are often considered to be in this level of moral reasoning. — MRTG