Carol Gilligan criticised Kohlberg’s theory of moral development as she believed that the stages were too male orientated and that as women process morality differently, they are seen as inferior on his scale as they remain at stage 3, good boy/good girl, as women aim to please other people and not themselves. In short term longitudinal study, Gilligan used unstructured interviews with 29 pregnant women, aged 15 – 33 years. The women were all attending pregnancy counselling services and were faced with the real-life dilemma of whether or not to have an abortion. She asked each woman about her situation and recorded their responses. This study is high in ecological validity as the women were in a real life situation and their responses were true to their own thoughts and beliefs. Eisenberg’s use of the birthday party scenario had less ecological validity as, although the situation is a possible one for the children to have found themselves in, they were still detached from the main protagonist and could have responded based on what they thought was the right thing to do and not what they would have actually done in the situation.

Gilligan concluded that women use a morality of care, which means they focus more on what other people think and feel and how their actions have wider consequences; whereas men use a morality of justice in which they focus mainly on what rules have been broken and if the law has been compromised by their actions. She developed a 3 level process in which women progress from level 1, self interest where only their own interests and needs are acknowledged, through level 2, self sacrifice where the welfare of others is put before herself to level 3, non-violence, at this stage the importance is placed on not hurting anyone through their actions.

Gilligan’s study was criticised for being too female orientated as the partners of the women at the abortion clinic were not asked about their reasoning and therefore the results are misrepresentative. Gilligan and Attanucci’s study was an interview in which people recalled situations from their own past where they were faced with a moral dilemma and were asked whether or not they believe they did the right thing or not. The results supported Gilligan as it was found that 35% of women and only 2% of men use a morality of care and 29% of women and 65% of men used a morality of justice. This however could also be used to disprove Gilligan as it shows that men and women use both the morality of care and justice. One study which supports this is Walker who supports Kohlberg and conducted research into whether there are any sex differences in moral reasoning and concluded that there is no notable difference, both men and women use...