

I believe there are levels within Kohlberg's six stages of moral development that can be attached to political leaders and their actions. I don't believe, however, that any really become self-actualized through Kohlberg's theory.

While I believe politicians start out wanting to make a difference in society, they often seem to use their power to influence in their own best interest. This speaks directly to both Stages 2 & 3, learning to satisfy one's own needs and conforming to stereotypical roles. This can be seen in many of the ethics violations and political scandals surrounding today's leaders. Many of which are a result of looking out for one's own self-interest. How many people can look at any politician and say that have no doubts about his/her integrity? This seems to be the new norm (i.e. stereotype) for politicians.

Today's politicians seem to believe actions in their public life are somehow separate from their private life. I think many believe they are living a moral life because they make this distinction. Hence it would seem that they reach Stage 4 until those two worlds collide. Both Former NY Governor Spitzer and John Edwards are examples that demonstrate what I mean.

The preamble of our constitution – promote the general welfare – is the basic ideal of Stage 5. I believe that even today's leaders will still agree with this basic philosophy of our founding principles. However, again, most do not actually get there. This can be seen in the money contributed to campaigns by lobbyists or PACs, which override what is best for the majority.

I also don't believe most politicians reach Stage 6. I find it near impossible for politicians to ever reach this stage. Basically, they need to act on something because it is right or most just. The challenge is that many feel pressured by their parties, contributors and constituents to make the decision that is right for their own group. Often what is right for each of these groups' conflicts with one another resulting in not making the "right" decision.