

TABLE 14.2

Levels of Prosocial Behavior

<p>Level 1: Hedonistic, self-focused orientation. The individual is concerned with his or her own interests rather than with moral considerations. Reasons for assisting or not assisting another include direct personal gain, future reciprocation, and concern for the other based on need or affection. (Predominant mode primarily for preschoolers and younger elementary school children.)</p> <p>Level 2: Needs-based orientation. The individual expresses concern for the physical, material, and psychological needs of others even when those needs conflict with his or her own. This concern is expressed in the simplest terms, without clear evidence of self-reflective role taking, verbal expressions of sympathy, or reference to such emotions as pride or guilt. (Predominant mode for many preschoolers and many elementary school children.)</p> <p>Level 3: Approval and/or stereotyped orientation. The individual justifies engaging or not engaging in prosocial behavior on the basis of others' approval or acceptance and/or on stereotyped images of good and bad persons and behavior. (Predominant mode for some elementary school and high school students.)</p>	<p>Level 4a: Self-reflective empathic orientation. The individual's judgments include evidence of self-reflective sympathetic responding or role taking, concern with the other's humanness, and/or guilt or positive emotion related to the consequences of one's actions. (Predominant mode for a few older elementary school children and many high school students.)</p> <p>Level 4b: Transitional level. The individual's justifications for helping or not helping involve internalized values, norms, duties, or responsibilities. They may also reflect concerns for the condition of the larger society or refer to the necessity of protecting the rights and dignities of other persons. These ideals, however, are not clearly or strongly stated. (Predominant mode for a minority of people of high school age or older.)</p> <p>Level 5: Strongly internalized stage. The individual's justifications for helping or not helping are based on internalized values, norms, or responsibilities; the desire to maintain individual and societal contractual obligations or improve the condition of society; and the belief in the rights, dignity, and equality of all individuals. This level is also characterized by positive or negative emotions related to whether or not one succeeds in living up to one's own values and accepted norms. (Predominant mode for only a small minority of high school students.)</p>
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Adapted from Eisenberg (1986)

(Level 2). (For example, they may indicate that Eric should help because the other boy is bleeding or hurt.) Such recognition of others' needs increases in the elementary school years. In addition, in elementary school, children increasingly express concern about social approval and acting in a manner that is considered "good" by other people and society (e.g., they indicate that Eric should help "to be good"; Level 3).

In late childhood and adolescence, children's judgments begin to be based, in varying degrees, on perspective taking (Level 4a—e.g., "Eric should think about how he would feel in that situation") and morally relevant affect such as sympathy, guilt, and positive feelings due to the real or imagined consequences of performing beneficial actions (e.g., "Eric would feel bad if he didn't help and the boy was in pain"). The judgments of a minority of older adolescents reflect internalized values and affect (Levels 4b and 5) related to not living up to those values (e.g., self-censure).

In general, this pattern of changes in prosocial moral reasoning has been found for children in Brazil, Germany, Israel, and Japan (Carlo, Koller, Eisenberg, Da Silva, & Frohlich, 1996; Eisenberg, Boehnke, Schuhler, & Silbereisen, 1985; Fuchs, Eisenberg, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Sharabany, 1986; Munekata & Ninomiya, 1985). Nevertheless, children from different cultures do vary somewhat in their prosocial moral reasoning. For example, older children (and adults) in some traditional societies in Papua New Guinea exhibit a higher level of moral reasoning than do children in the United States (Eisenberg, 1986).

To measure a child's prosocial moral reasoning, a researcher presents the child with a story that reflects a prosocial moral dilemma. In response to the story about a child on the way to a party who sees an injured boy, a typical response of many 9- or 10-year-olds is, "Help because the boy's leg is hurt and he needs to go to a doctor."



TABLE 14.1

Kohlberg's Levels and Stages of Moral Reasoning

Preconventional Level

Stage 1: Punishment and Obedience Orientation. At Stage 1, what is seen as right is obedience to authorities. Children's "conscience" (what makes them decide what is right or wrong) is fear of punishment, and their moral action is motivated by avoidance of punishment. The child does not consider the interests of others or recognize that they differ from his or her own interests. Examples of reasoning for (pro) and against (con) Heinz's stealing the drug for his wife are as follows:
Pro: If you let your wife die, you will get in trouble. You'll be blamed for your wife's death.
Con: You shouldn't steal the drug because you'll be caught and sent to jail if you do. If you do get away, your conscience would bother you thinking how the police would catch up with you at any minute (Kohlberg, 1969, p. 381).

Stage 2: Instrumental and Exchange Orientation. At Stage 2, what is right is what is in one's own best interest or involves equal exchange between people (tit-for-tat exchange of benefits).
Pro: If you do happen to get caught, you could give the drug back and you wouldn't get much of a sentence. It wouldn't bother you much to serve a little jail term, if you have your wife when you get out.
Con: He may not get much of a jail term if he steals the drug, but his wife will probably die before he gets out so it won't do him much good. If his wife dies, he shouldn't blame himself, it wasn't his fault she has cancer (Kohlberg, 1969, p. 381).

Conventional Level

Stage 3: Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity ("Good Girl, Nice Boy") Orientation. In Stage 3, good behavior is doing what is expected by people who are close to the person or what people generally expect of someone in a given role (e.g., "a son"). Being "good" is important in itself and means having good motives, showing concern about others, and maintaining good relationships with others.
Pro: No one will think you're bad if you steal the drug, but your family will think you're an inhuman husband if you don't. If you let your wife die, you'll never be able to look anybody in the face again.
Con: It isn't just the druggist who will think you're a criminal, everyone else will, too. After you steal it, you'll feel bad thinking how you've brought dishonor on your family and yourself; you won't be able to face anyone again (Kohlberg, 1969, p. 381).

Stage 4: Social System and Conscience ("Law and Order") Orientation. Right behavior in Stage 4 involves fulfilling one's duties, upholding laws, and contributing to society or one's group. The individual is motivated to keep the social system going and to avoid a breakdown in its functioning.
Pro: In most marriages, you accept the responsibility to look after one another's health and after their life and you have the responsibility when you live with someone to try and make it a happy life (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987b, p. 43).
 In the revised coding manual, Colby and Kohlberg (1987b) provide virtually no examples of Stage 4 reasoning supporting the decision that Heinz should not steal the drug for his wife. However, they provide reasons for not stealing the drug for a pet: Heinz should not steal for a pet because animals cannot contribute to society (p. 37).

Postconventional or Principled Level

Stage 5: Social Contract or Individual Rights Orientation. At Stage 5, right behavior involves upholding rules that are in the best interest of the group ("the greatest good for the greatest number"), are impartial, or were agreed upon by the group. However, some values and rights, such as life and liberty, are universally right and must be upheld in any society, regardless of majority opinion. It is difficult to construct a Stage 5 reason that justifies not stealing the drug.
Pro: Heinz should steal the drug because the right to life supersedes or transcends the right to property (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987b, p. 11).
Pro: Heinz is working from a hierarchy of values, in which life (at least the life of his wife) is higher than honesty. . . . Human life and its preservation—at least as presented here—must take precedence over other values, like Heinz's desire to be honest and law abiding, or the druggist's love of money and his rights. All values stem from the ultimate value of life (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987b, p. 54).

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles. Right behavior in Stage 6 is commitment to self-chosen ethical principles that reflect universal principles of justice (e.g., equality of human rights, respect for the dignity of each human being). When laws violate these principles, the individual should act in accordance with these universal principles rather than with the law.

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