



### CONCEPT CHART 10.1 Kohlberg's Levels and Stages of Moral Development

|                                     | Stage of Moral Reasoning   | Arguments Favoring Heinz Stealing the Drug   | Arguments Against Heinz Stealing the Drug  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| LEVEL I<br>Preconventional Level    | <b>Stage 1:</b> Obedience and punishment orientation; behavior is judged good if it serves to avoid punishment   | Heinz should steal the drug to avoid being blamed if his wife dies.  | Heinz shouldn't steal the drug because he would be punished for stealing it if he were caught and would be sent to jail.   |
|                                     | <b>Stage 2:</b> Instrumental purpose orientation; behavior is judged good when it serves personal needs or interests   | Heinz should steal the drug because he needs his wife and she might die without it.  | Heinz would likely be sent to prison and his wife would probably die before he gets out, so it wouldn't do her or himself any good to steal the drug.                    |
| LEVEL II<br>Conventional Level      | <b>Stage 3:</b> "Good boy–nice girl" orientation; conforming with rules to impress others  | People would lose respect for Heinz if he didn't at least try to save his wife by stealing the drug.   | Heinz shouldn't take the drug because others will see him as a criminal, and that would bring shame and dishonor to his family.  |
|                                     | <b>Stage 4:</b> Authority or law-and-order orientation; obeying rules and laws because they are needed to maintain social order                                      | Heinz must steal the drug because he has a duty to protect his wife. People need to do their duty even if they might get punished for it.                                    | People should not be permitted to break the law under any circumstances. The law must be respected.  |
| LEVEL III<br>Postconventional Level | <b>Stage 5:</b> Social contract orientation; viewing rules and laws as based on mutual agreement in the service of the common good.                                  | While laws should be obeyed to maintain order in society, an exception should be made in Heinz's case because a law should not take precedence over protecting a human life. | Though Heinz faces a difficult choice, he reasons that respect for the law outweighs individual needs no matter what the circumstances.                                  |
|                                     | <b>Stage 6:</b> Universal ethical principle orientation; adopting an internal moral code based on universal values that takes precedence over social rules and laws. | Heinz would be morally wrong not to steal the drug because it would violate his belief in the absolute value of a human life.  | Sometimes doing what we believe is right requires personal sacrifice. If Heinz truly feels that stealing is worse than letting his wife die, he must not steal the drug. |

Source: Adapted from Kohlberg, 1981.



#### Concept 10.5

Though evidence generally supports Kohlberg's stage model of moral reasoning, critics contend that his model may contain cultural and gender biases.

#### Cross-Cultural and Gender-Based Research on Kohlberg's Model

Evidence supports the view that children and adolescents progress through the stages Kohlberg suggested, even if they may not reach the level of postconventional reasoning (Flavell et al., 1993; Walker, 1989). Moreover, Kohlberg's own studies of people in other countries led him to believe in the universality of his first four stages, a belief that was later supported by a review of forty-four studies conducted in twenty-seven countries (Snarey, 1985). Nevertheless, critics have challenged Kohlberg's model for both cultural and gender biases.

Critics contend that Kohlberg's model may be culturally biased because it emphasizes ideals found primarily in Western cultures, such as individual rights and social justice (Shweder, 1994). Cross-cultural evidence based on a study comparing moral reasoning in Americans and Indians showed cultural differences in the priorities placed on justice and interpersonal considerations (Miller & Bersoff, 1992). Americans placed greater value than did Indians on a justice orientation in determining morally correct choices—believing that what is just or fair governs what is right. Indians placed a greater weight on interpersonal responsibilities, such as upholding one's obligations to others and being responsive to other people's needs.

Another controversy is whether Kohlberg's model is biased against women. Interestingly, it was someone who had worked and published with Kohlberg, the