

The development of prosocial moral reasoning and a prosocial orientation in young...

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



The paper “ Development of Prosocial Moral Reasoning and Prosocial Orientation in Young Adulthood by Eisenberg" is an intriguing example of an article on social science. This study is important because it adds a valuable voice into the debate of the stability in the differences in altruistic personality. An informed voice such as the one that results from this study serves to clarify the many misconceptions surrounding the topic of prosocial behavior. People continue to hold varying views about the most effective ways of researching the behavior and its basis. This study article adds an important dimension of the role of reasoning to prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al 58).

The purpose of the study

Eisenberg and her colleagues sought to find out the mean-level change that takes place in the life of an individual at early adulthood when developing prosocial moral reasoning. They sought an understanding of the point at which an individual's needs and desires clash with those of others especially when there are few formal obligations, dictates from authorities and prohibitions. The researchers endeavored to check for concurrent interrelation prevailing among different elements of prosocial functioning. To check for this, they used the different measures of prosocial orientation and prosocial moral reasoning. They had a goal of examining whether certain prosocial orientation indices between ages 19/20 anticipate the prosocial function of persons between ages 17/28. They examined whether certain prosocial orientation indices between ages 25/26 affect the exhibition of

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prosocial functioning in persons of ages 31/32 (Eisenberg et al 58).

Method and a summary of results

The study used a sample size of thirty-two made up sixteen males and sixteen females. The participants were recruited from Euro-American, non-Hispanic, and Hispanic populations. These participants had been studied for fourteen times from preschool through to their adulthood. Prior studies on these participants were labeled from T1 to T14. The current study limited itself to the findings of studies T13 and T14. They used these studies but with the recognition of the findings of earlier assessments. The study used the descriptive statistics of self-reports, parents' reports and preschool observations of prosocial behavior and orientation. Questionnaires helped in data collection (Eisenberg et al 62).

The research studies between T6 and T8 presented participants with a 23-item self-report form to capture acts of altruism. Participants in research studies between T10 and T14 were required to fill a 14-item scale. T13 and T14 captured time spent volunteering at non-profit organizations, amounts donated to charity and the number of charities to which participants donated. Researchers used studies T9 to T12 to examine how much participants considered others in their behavior. A five-point instrument with a seven-item subscale helped researchers measure participants' level of suppressing aggression. Instruments assessing for participants' care-orientation and social responsibility was administered to participants at T10

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to T14. Empathy-related prosociality was measured using a seven-item subscale and a twenty two-item scale for children (Eisenberg et al 62).

Results

There was an evident increase in stereotypic PMR with the advancement in age but other PMRs did not change. Men are generally high on hedonistic PMR and needs-oriented PMR but age is a cause of variance in the latter but not in the former. Women rate high in stereotypic PMR and internalized PMR and age is a cause of variance in both. Women have higher composite PMR scores than men do. PMR has high inter-individual and mean-level stabilities. There is a significant relationship between friend-reported prosocial behavior, self-reported sympathy, and mother-reported behavior in adolescence (Eisenberg et al 66).

Discussion and conclusion

Increase in stereotypic reasoning through participants' mid-twenties agrees with the belief that young adults act consciously of normatively appropriate behavior. Consideration of normatively appropriate behavior is due to engagements in work and parenting. Stereotypic reasoning is seen in prohibition-oriented moral reasoning that dominates adult behavior. The stability of internalized/self-reflective other-oriented reasoning for persons in their twenties and thirties is as a result of the completion of education (Eisenberg et al 65).

The decline in hedonistic PMR in men is due to increased maturity, responsibilities of parenting and adult relationships. Feminine roles and socialization of girls could be the reason for high PMR in women between T13 and T14. Varying current and prior prosocial orientations are responsible for differences in PMR among adults. Stabilizing adult life patterns emanate from individual differences in PMR. The relationship between PMR and sympathy in adolescence confirms that other-oriented emotion and cognition are important to PMR. Stability in prosocial tendencies in persons between adolescence and mid-20s is supported by friend and self-reports. The lack of relationship between PMR and volunteer and donating shows that these behaviors have multiple causes (Eisenberg et al 67).

Thoughts and lessons

The study was conducted in a credible way and the findings are largely reliable despite the limitations of the study. The sample size was rather small and although it sufficed the purpose of the study, perhaps it would have revealed stronger findings had it been larger. I have learned that prosocial behavior is not as random as I have always thought it to be. There are explanations to the disparities evident in the way different persons perceive and demonstrate prosocial behavior.