



Moral Decisions: Outcomes and Assessment

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Agenda

- Moral reasoning and moral behavior
- Psychology of morality
- Decision making: fast and slow
- Moral identity and behavior
- Neurocognitive model of moral decision making
- Implications for higher education
 - Student Learning Outcomes
 - Pedagogy
 - Assessment
- Conclusions and Questions

Moral Decisions: Outcomes and Assessment

Abstract/Premise:

- Student Learning Outcomes focus on moral reasoning
- Moral reasoning does not predict moral behavior
- Research in decision making and the psychology of morality has insights into this discrepancy
- Reasoning is only one component of decision making, and may be primarily post hoc and overstated in use
- Student Learning Outcomes, pedagogy and assessment can benefit from this research

Moral Reasoning and Moral Behavior

Graduates recognize moral issues and apply moral/ethical reasoning in decision making

- Kohlberg- moral reasoning: development and assessment Defining Issues Test
- There is a gap between moral reasoning and moral action.

Psychology of Morality

- Social intuitionist: moral reasoning is post hoc rational for social persuasion
- Moral foundations: our genetic endowment
 - Cross cultural studies
 - Studies with infants
 - Moral confounding
- Morality is for promoting group cooperation

Decision Making: Fast and Slow

- Slow: deliberate, deliberative, rational, effortful
- Fast: intuitive, rapid, effortless, associative

Blurred line between decision making and behavior

Moral Identity and Behavior

- Moral sensitivity: recognizing moral components of situations
- Centrality of moral identity as predictor of moral behavior
- Increased accessibility of moral schema, a key component in social intuitionist model

Neurocognitive Model of Moral Decision Making

- Brain injury studies and fMRI studies support dual processing models

The fast, reflexive processing is a pattern matching process involving the lateral temporal cortex, amygdala and basal ganglia and occurs at a pre-conscious level when stimuli evoke previously learned patterns, or prototypes (schema), and judgments are made based on moral rules associated with the prototype.

There is still a role for moral reasoning in the development of the prototypes.

Student Learning Outcomes

Moral reasoning is not sufficient to describe moral functioning. SLOs might include:

- Knowledge of moral standards
- Recognition of moral components of authentic situations
- Application of reasoning to complex moral situations
- Understanding moral decision making process
- Internalization of moral functioning
- Demonstration of moral behavior

Pedagogy

- Develop knowledge base
- Develop reasoning skills
- Strategies to develop schema
- Develop readily accessible moral identity

Student Learning Outcome Assessment

- Knowledge of moral standards
 - Traditional testing methods
- Recognition of moral components of authentic situations
 - Discussion of real life scenarios
- Application of reasoning to complex moral situations
 - Many available tests, e.g. DIT
- Understanding moral decision making process
 - Traditional testing methods, self-reflection
- Internalization of moral functioning
 - Centrality of moral identity scale
- Demonstration of moral behavior
 - Varied and requires innovation

Conclusions

- Moral reasoning alone is inadequate to describe moral functioning
- Most decisions are a function of intuitive, pre-conscious, associative processing
- Moral functioning is influenced by
 - Available and accessible schema
 - Centrality of moral identity
 - Recognition of moral components of situations
- SLOs, pedagogy and assessment strategies should take advantage of these advances in understanding moral decision making.

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