2002

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        University of Notre Dame   D. Narvaez   Recent advances in moral

psychology: Theory, research and application

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Recent Advances in Moral Psychology: Theory, Research, and Application

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[Day 1: Theory and Research in Moral Judgment]

Session 1: The Defining Issues Test

The Defining Issues Test (DIT) is a paper-and-pencil measure of moral judgment derived from Kohlberg's theory that presents 12 issues after a hypothetical dilemma for a subject to rate and rank in terms of their importance. The DIT measures development in conceptualizing about how it is possible to organize cooperation in a society.

Validity for the DIT has been assessed in terms of 7 criteria (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1998 cite over 400 published articles): (1) Differentiation of various age/education groups: studies show that 30% to 50% of the variance of DIT scores is attributable to level of education. (2) Longitudinal gains: increase in scores on the DIT is one of the most dramatic effects of university education. (3) The DIT is significantly related to cognitive capacity measures of Moral Comprehension ($r = .60s$), Recall and reconstruction of Postconventional moral argument, Kohlberg's measures. (4) The DIT is sensitive to moral education interventions. (5) The DIT is significantly linked to many "prosocial" behaviors and to desired professional decision making: one review reports that 37 out of 47 measures were statistically significant. (6) The DIT is significantly linked to political attitudes and political choices: in a review of several dozen correlates of political attitude, the DIT typically correlates in the range, $r = .40$ to .60. (7) Reliability: Cronbach alpha is in the upper .70s / low .80s. Test-retest is about the same. Further, the DIT shows discriminant validity from verbal ability/general intelligence and from Conservative/Liberal Political attitudes--that is, the information in a DIT score predicts to the 7 validity criteria above and beyond that accounted for by verbal ability or political attitude. The DIT is equally valid for males and females.

Open Lecture: Incorporating cognitive science into moral psychology

Cognitive science has uncovered a wealth of information about how people process social information and relate to one another. Moral psychology must incorporate these new understandings into theory and research, particularly because so much of the new knowledge addresses areas long studied by morality researchers, such as decision making. For example, in decision making a stronger emphasis must be placed on implicit processes and automaticity.

Applied moral psychology (e.g., moral education) incorporate constructivist learning principles, the nature of novice-to-expert learning, the automatic implicit processes of learning, and the importance of involving the different memory systems of the body. Research methods should also be expanded to include methods used in information processing (e.g., reaction time to stimuli presented on computer screen), artificial intelligence (e.g., computer simulation), and neuroscience (e.g., FMRI of moral decision making), expert problem solving (think aloud case solving).

There are two fundamental assumptions in cognitive psychology: One, information processing depends on internal mental representations. That is, individuals represent the world internally in a physical (neuronal) and mental way. Second, these mental representations undergo transformations. The representations are transformed by experience (e.g., expertise, culture-specific emphases), maturation (e.g., memory development), and time (e.g., forgetting). Cognitive psychology studies the manipulation of mental representations (what creates or doesn't create them, what affects them, etc.). Several core ideas are discussed in relation to moral judgment including modern schema theory, the frequency of automatic decision making, and implicit processes as the default mode of human information processing.

[Day 2: New Directions]

Session 1: Neo Kohlbergian Theory

Kohlberg's work in moral judgment development has been criticized by philosophers and psychologists alike. Criticisms from psychologists that are addressed are: (1) Kohlberg focused on only one piece of morality in terms of processes (moral judgment) and in terms of issues (justice). (2) Kohlberg's dilemmas don't cover all moral situations and are hypothetical. (3) Kohlberg's hard stage model is too strict. (4) Kohlberg overextended Piaget's operations to moral thinking. (5) Kohlberg method is dependent on verbal expressiveness. (6) There is little evidence for high stage thinking. (9) Kohlberg underestimates children's moral capabilities. (10) Kohlberg confuses two domains: convention and morality. (11) Culture overwhelms developmental differences in morality. Criticisms from philosophers will be addressed briefly as well.

Building on Kohlberg's core assumptions (a focus on cognition, personal construction, development, judgment, and the conventional to postconventional shift in reasoning), the neo-Kohlbergian model of moral judgment addresses the criticisms of psychologists and philosophers. It is based on data gathered over 30 years with the Defining Issues Test. The DIT offers a means of measuring moral judgement that fits with current views in cognitive science. The DIT analyzes responses as activating three schemas, and the scores represent the degree to

which a subject uses the Personal Interest, Maintaining Norms, or Postconventional Schemas. The DIT is particularly adept at capturing the shift in thinking capacity during adolescence from a Maintaining Norms orientation (need for norms, society-wide view, uniform categorical application, partial society-wide reciprocity, duty orientation) to including the Postconventional orientation (appeal to an ideal, shareable ideals, primacy of moral ideal, full reciprocity, rights orientation).

Session 2: Moral text processing

A 16-year-old gunslinger named "Doug," who performed nine drive-by shootings in his hometown of Omaha in one year, considers the films "South Central" and "Boyz 'N the Hood" to be affirmations of his aspirations and lifestyle (Hull, 1993).   In contrast, most viewers of these films absorbed explicit lessons about which behaviors and life choices to avoid.   What are the factors that lead to these radically different understandings of the same video text?   Why are the `take-home' moral lessons so distinct? Combining methods and theory from two research areas, discourse comprehension and moral judgment, a research program is summarized that examines moral thinking using methods such as narrative recall, multiple-choice moral theme extraction, thinking aloud while reading, and probing for inferences while reading on computer. These studies offer a new approach to uncovering how people process moral events in discourse such as written and visual texts, persuasive messages, and real-life events. Findings suggest that comprehending moral texts relies not only on general reading skills but on moral development as well. For example, those with less moral development do not understand the themes of moral stories as intended.

Why be concerned about individual variability in the interpretation of texts?   Often, those who create texts have a message they want to convey to the audience or reader.   When the theme and main points of a writer, a movie director, a journalist, or a teacher, do not match the knowledge structures held by the reader, viewer, or student, the message sent will not be the message received.

[Day 3: Beyond Moral Judgment]

Session 2: A skills-based approach to moral education

I describe the Ethical Expertise model of character education.   First, we adopt a skills-based understanding of moral character. Persons of good character have better developed skills in four areas. For example, experts in the skills of Ethical Sensitivity are better at quickly and accurately 'reading' a moral situation and determining what role they might play. Experts in the

skills of Ethical Judgment have many tools for solving complex moral problems. Experts in the skills of Ethical Motivation cultivate an ethical identity that leads them to prioritize ethical goals. Experts in the skills of Ethical Action know how to keep their "eye on the prize," enabling them to stay on task and take the necessary steps to get the ethical job done. Our approach to character development, then, insists on a wholistic understanding of the moral person. It insists on an understanding of character as a set of component skills that can be cultivated to high levels of expertise.

Second, to help children develop character skills in the way that experts do, we adopt a scientifically-based, cognitive approach to learning and teaching that assumes that children actively construct representations of their worlds. Best practice instruction provides opportunities for students to develop more and better organized representations and the procedural skills required to use them. Third, our model insists that character development be embedded within academic instruction, for this is the only way character education can be sustained. Fourth, character should be taught across the curriculum in every subject and activity, for character skills are required not in isolation but throughout every encounter in life. Fifth, our model opens character education to greater accountability, in the sense that skills are teachable and progress toward mastery can be measured. Sixth, a curricular approach to character education must be intentional and must be in collaboration with "community voices."

[Day 4: Psychologizing Morality]

Session: Educating moral intuition

Experts-in-training develop accurate intuitions about solving problems in a domain. To develop expertise, one must master the syntax of the domain and focus on critical features during extensive practice. This requires learning conceptual tools and general principles that enable one to detect meaningful patterns and solve problems (Abernathy & Hamm, 1995). Further, experts practice important routines over and over, attending to critical elements, usually under the guidance of someone more expert who can provide the right feedback, and who models expert problem-solving (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Roemer, 1993).

An expert differs from novices in three significant ways. First, there are differences in the size, complexity, organization and accessibility of knowledge schemas (Chi, Glaser & Farr, 1988; Sternberg, 1998). Second, experts see the world differently than do novices (Neisser, 1967). Their deep and vast pattern matching capabilities allow experts to notice things that novices miss. Experts also possess well-developed sets of procedural skills. Unlike novices, experts

know *what* knowledge to access, *which* procedures to apply, *how* to apply them, and *when* it is appropriate (Abernathy & Hamm, 1995).

Moral expertise requires developing intuitions in four areas: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, ethical action. The basic features and skills of each area are presented.