

Moral Disengagement Working Group



Shelley Hymel, Andy Horne, William Porter, Gary Ladd,
Becky Ladd, Sheri Bauman, Eveline Guzwiler-
Hellenfinger, Carolyn Edwards, Dorothy L. Espelage,
Melissa Holt, Tracy Vaillancourt, Dewey G. Cornell

Conceptualizations of Moral Disengagement



- What does moral disengagement look like in children?
- Do kids have morals to disengage from?
- What kinds of moral values do kids have that are important and related to aggression?
- Why do kids see transgressions as more acceptable when they are talking about their own experiences versus hypothetical scenarios?
- How does educational policy and fragmented curriculum impact the development of moral disengagement?
- What about the role of psychopathy?

Morality - Components



- Universal vs. Particularistic vs. Relativistic
- Self-enhancement
- Religious values
- Context
- Value System
- Justification
- “What is in it for me?”
- When it is right from wrong? When is it empathy or perspective-taking? Or personal distress?
- Imposed morality

Theories



- Domain Theory
 - Do kids see aggression/bullying as a moral issue? NO
 - Do they see it as a conventional norm issue? YES
- Ego-centric
- Bandura's conception
- Nancy Eisenberg's study – intervention after moral episode
- Role of Emotions
- Role of Construction, Co-Construction, and Deconstruction
- Social-Interactional Theory

James Rest's Model of Acting Morally



- Moral sensitivity (interpreting situation... being or becoming aware that there is a moral problem when it exists)
- Moral judgment (judging which action would be most justifiable in a moral sense)
- Moral motivation (degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action, valuing moral values over other values)
- Moral character (persisting in a moral task, having courage, overcoming fatigue and temptations..)
- Rest et al. (1999), has never been tested empirically

Skills & Appropriate Use of Skills



- The connection between skills & appropriate use of these skills?
- Skills & behavioral level vs. deeper levels of morality (self, identity, internalized values)
- How does educational policy and fragmented curriculum impact the development of moral (dis)engagement? -> the role of context & climate
- Do we design programs to specifically define bullying as a morality issue? Do we agree that bullying is immoral?

Methods



- Qualitative methods
- Ethnographic & narrative approaches
- Use of technology to assess and track moral disengagement
- Identify situations and then interview kids after?
- Experience Sampling Methods
- “Reporter Game”
- Essays, case studies, focus groups
- Essays, scenarios in holocaust museum
- Administrators’ interview

Methods



- Comic Strip Methodology – “put thoughts in bubbles”
- Computer games
- Experimental designs to assess cognitions, emotions, behaviors, social comparisons, & different forms of bullying

Next Steps



- Who in the moral area would be interested in aggression and bullying?
- AERA 2011 Vancouver Program: Roundtable, Interactive Symposium
- Invite: Melanie Killen, Murray Close, Larry Walker, Dan Lapsley, Tina Malti, Monika Keller
- Monographs on narrative:

Wainryb, C., Brehl, B., & Matwin, S. (2005). Being hurt and hurting others: Children's narrative accounts and moral judgments of their own interpersonal conflicts. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 70 (Serial No. 281).

Multi-site Pilot Study Plan



- Use narrative approach to elicit stories from the perspective of bully, victim, and bystander. This will be followed by semi-structured interview to obtain data re emotions, cognitions, moral perspective (is this right or wrong)?
- Also gather data from student, peer nom, and teacher report on typical bullying role of student.
- Goal is for each member of group to conduct interviews with three classes (4th and 5th grade).
- Goal is to have data by AERA, at which time we will discuss coding.
- Potential difficulties (ethical issues, training etc.)