Analysis of Moral Judgements In Adolescents Utilizing the ADC model

Introduction
- Findings of neuroethics have led to new understandings of the thought processes underlying moral quandaries.
- To demonstrate the development of morality in adolescents it would be effective to utilize newer intuition-based models, like the Agent-Deed-Consequence (ADC) model.
- The ADC model postulates three factors of intuitive evaluation for steering one’s moral judgment:
  - The agent(A) factor revolves around the character of the person performing the action.
  - The deed(D) relates to the action the agent is performing.
  - the consequence(C) is the direct result of the action being performed.
- The model asserts that each of these processes function as subconscious heuristics that integrate to create a judgement of moral acceptability or unacceptability.
- Recent focuses of neuroethics research have overlooked the developmental phase of morality in favor of representative models for older subjects that can be generalized to the entire population.
- Our pilot study indicated that although adolescents (age 11-14) struggle with comprehension of vocabulary and concepts related to moral judgements, the process is still subconsciously intuitive.

Hypotheses
- We predict that the youngest group of children (age 11/12) will judge scenarios primarily based on the consequence, and that the characterization of the agent will have the least impact on judgment.
- We expect the agent characterization heuristic to develop last.

Methods
- Utilizing this model, we plan to survey twenty adolescents in each class from grades six through twelve.
  - A pilot study of 127 middle school students was conducted and analyzed for areas of survey that need improvement (see below)
  - These adolescents will respond to vignettes designed in accordance with the ADC model, and that are deemed appropriate for the age group. (Fig.1,2)
  - The survey is estimated to take an average of 1 hour and contains 130 questions
- Demographic questions for subject group include: gender, age, grade level, and socio-economic status
- Preference for Precepts Implied in Moral Theories (PPIMT) were also established as a measure of morality that can be applied to non-expert populations (Fig.3) *In order to maintain validity and improve quality of data an attention check is applied within the survey

Feedback from pilot study
- 127 middle school students (grades 6/8/ age 11-14)
- End of survey comments (Fig. 4) and initial notes taken (Fig. 5)

References

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