



An Ethical Profile: How Family and Background Influences Decision-Making in Rehabilitation Counseling

Adrienne Robinson, Ed.D., CRC

Assistant Professor, School of Education, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, School of Education-Graduate Programs, 1200 North University Avenue, MS 4927, Pine Bluff, AR 71601, United States.

Article Details

Article Type: Review Article

Received date: 08th December, 2022

Accepted date: 28th December, 2022

Published date: 30th December, 2022

***Corresponding Author:** Adrienne Robinson, Ed.D., CRC, Assistant Professor, School of Education, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, School of Education-Graduate Programs, 1200 North University Avenue, MS 4927, Pine Bluff, AR 71601, United States.

Citation: Robinson, A., (2022). An Ethical Profile: How Family and Background Influences Decision-Making in Rehabilitation Counseling. *J Rehab Pract Res*, 3(2):139. <https://doi.org/10.33790/jrpr1100139>

Copyright: ©2022, This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

An ethical profile provides an overview of how an individual reconciles decisions. This profile is influential for rehabilitation counselors and their decision-making in professional practice. Reviewing background, including family history, along with their decision-making style among other areas is vital to a counselor's development of professional ethics. The article examines the history of ethics. Furthermore, it delves into how ethics can assist in providing socially just and equitable services and practices. By reviewing an ethical autobiography and personal decision-making style along with understanding a genogram, one can understand the influence on overall ethical development.

Keywords: Decision-making, Ethical, Genogram, Ethics

Introduction

Decision making by definition is the process of preparing an option or a course of action over other alternatives on the basis of given criteria or strategies [1]. The aim of decision theory traditionally has been to understand how agents pursue goals in the face of options [2]. Early decision-making theorists concerned themselves with the nature of an ideal decision-maker under conditions of uncertainty [3]. Decision-making involves deep-rooted cognitive tasks including human thoughts, reasoning, past experiences, as well as reactions to the external world, which include the possible future orientations, and the psychological consequences for the decision-makers [4].

Social Cognitive Theory is essential to ethical decision-making as it assists with understanding decision-makers' processing [5]. The processing can be viewed as a series of actions or steps that will assist the individual(s) in making a decision. There are three important constructs in Social Cognitive Theory that interact to influence behavior, and in the case of this article, ethical decision-making.

The constructs are personal factors (i.e., cognition, previous experience), environmental factors (i.e., safety, access to resources), and aspects of the behavior itself (i.e., competence with the behavior, outcomes achieved). One's moral judgment (evaluation), whether based on emotion (feel), intuition (sense), moral reasoning (reflect), moral rationalization (justify), and/or moral consultation (confirm), may then lead to moral intention (commitment), which may then lead to ethical or unethical behavior (action) [6].

Ethical Profile

Ethics represent aspirational goals or the maximum or ideal standards set by the profession [7]. When narrowly defined according to its original use, ethics is a branch of philosophy that is used to study ideal human behavior and ideal ways of being. An ethical profile provides an overview of how an individual reconciles decisions. The ethical profile details the individual's understanding of ethics, along with the normed definition. In addition, it will construct the use of ethics in personal and professional life. This profile is significant to the framework of a counselor's ethics and decision-making.

When making ethical decisions, ask yourself these questions: Which values do I rely on and why? [8]. To make sound ethical decisions, it is necessary to slow down the decision-making process and engage in an intentional course of ethical deliberation, consultation, and action [9]. An ethical profile is influential for rehabilitation counselors and their decision-making in professional practice.

Ethical Autobiography

An autobiography is a firsthand account of one's own life. An autobiography should include all the most important details of your life story. A self-aware autobiographer will take stock of specific moments in their own life that may be interesting to themselves but not to an audience of strangers. There are two parts to the ethical autobiography: (1) evaluating where you have been and (2) determining what has influenced you along the way. Key elements can include, (a) a description of your personal ethical (origin) story: values, etc. (b) ethical experiences/dilemmas, and (c) professional life decision-making. It is important to reflect critically upon your values (and sense of personal/professional ethics) and how the developed perspectives created your ethical framework. A counselor's personal/professional ethics assist in guiding sound decision-making, particularly when faced with difficult dilemmas. The ethical autobiography should be utilized as a roadmap for your ethical path. The ethical path should serve as a landscape that provides real-world examples of areas of challenges and tools for handling future issues.

Decision-Making Style

Ethical decision-making is not solely a cognitive process that follows distinctly outlined and predictable steps [8]. Cognitive

processing is a general term to describe a series of cognitive operations carried out in the creation and manipulation of mental representations of information [10]. Cognitive processes may include attention, perception, reasoning, emoting, learning, integrating, disruption and manipulation of stored information, retrieval, and metacognition [10]. Everyone has a unique style of ethical decision-making that reflects their early and ongoing experiences with moral values and issues which has been influenced and shaped by parents, relatives, peers, and valued adults in their lives, such as teachers.

A Social Constructivism Model of Ethical Decision-Making in Counseling

The model is based on constructivist philosophy. It emphasizes constructing ethical knowledge through professional relationships. The model shares some aspects with the feminist model but centers primarily on the social aspects of decision-making in counseling [11]. The social constructivism approach places the decision in the social context itself, not in the hands of the decision maker; decision-making becomes an interpersonal process of "negotiating," "consensualizing," and "arbitrating" [11].

The model contains five steps: The initial step is the acquisition of information from all involved parties, with the acknowledgment that individual perspectives on the matter will vary. The next step is to consider the relationships of all persons involved, with an eye to identifying conflicting opinions or adversarial postures. The third is to conscientiously survey applicable codes of ethics, examine the professional literature on the topic under consideration, and engage in consultation with esteemed colleagues whose perspective, by

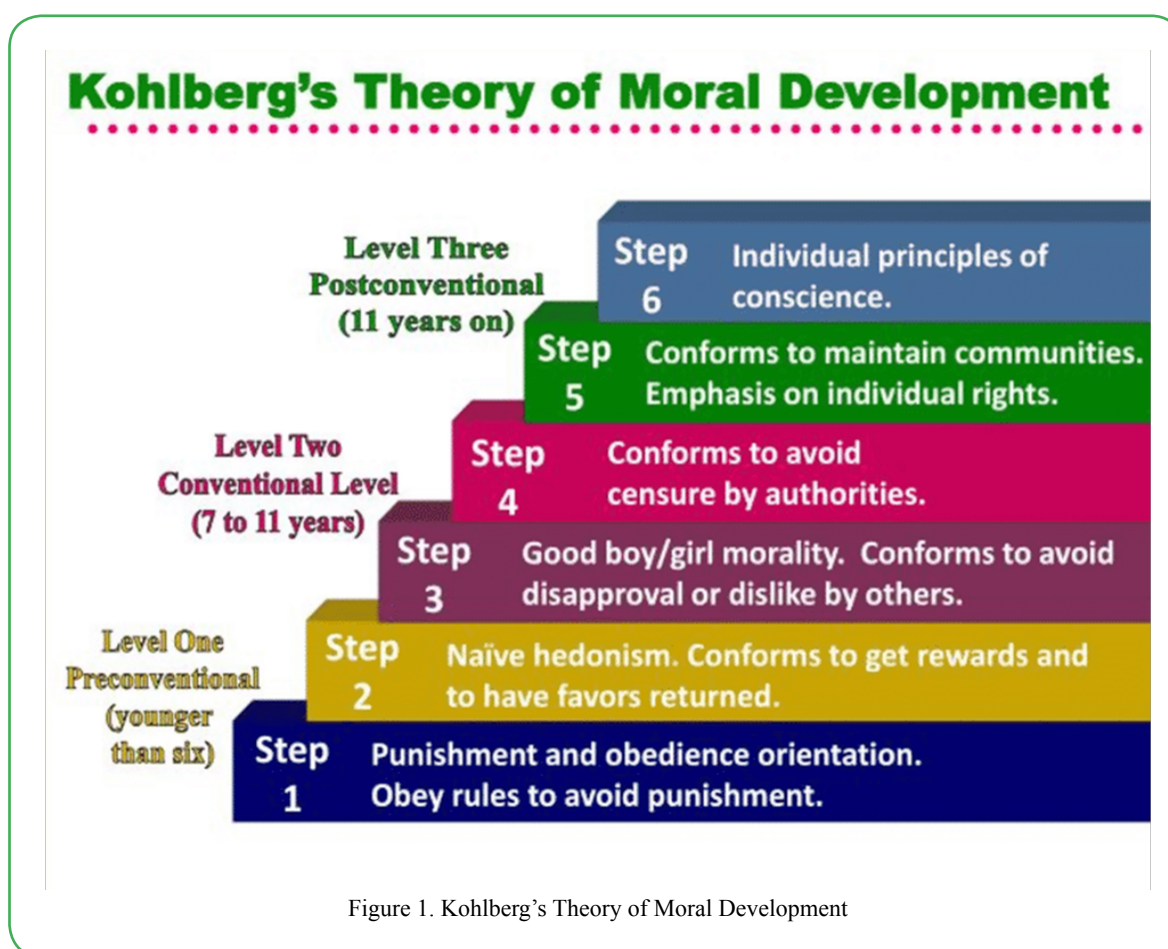
virtue of personal values and professional experience, is likely to broaden one's own. Fourth, where disagreement or conflict arises, negotiation is in order. The goal and final step is for all parties to arrive at a "reasonable consensus" [11] as to the appropriate and ethical course.

Ethical Development and Models

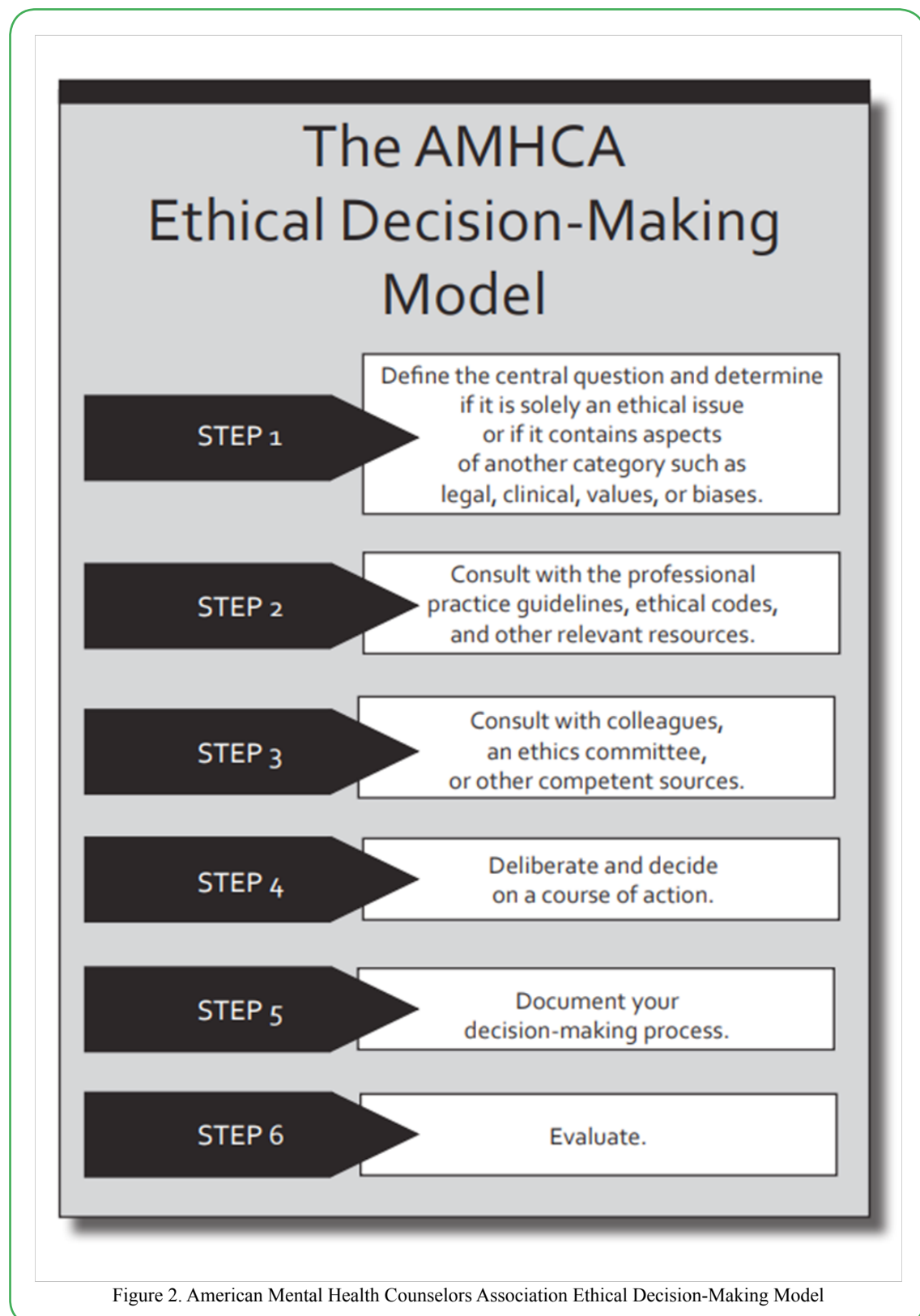
A central part of ethical decision-making is to review your development through the process. Paul and Elder [12] believe that ethical judgment and decision-making are the necessary skills for living and building a society based on ethics.

Earlier, ethical decision-making as a cognitive process was discussed. A theory that is linked to cognitive development and assists in understanding ethical processes is Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. Kohlberg [13] suggested that people navigate through these stages in a fixed order and that moral understanding is linked to cognitive development. The theory's research utilized Piaget's [14] method of interviewing children about moral dilemmas. The research gave way to three levels of moral development. Each of the levels is comprised of two stages, summing up to six stages.

New and experienced counselors would benefit from a model that is theoretically grounded and accessible, considers relevant literature, is widely germane, and addresses the intricacy of decision-making in practice [15]. See Figure 1 for Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. See Figures 2 and 3 for the infused model from Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development and the American Mental Health Counselors Association Ethical Decision-Making Model.



Note. L. Kohlberg, 1977.



Note. American Mental Health Counseling Association, 2020.

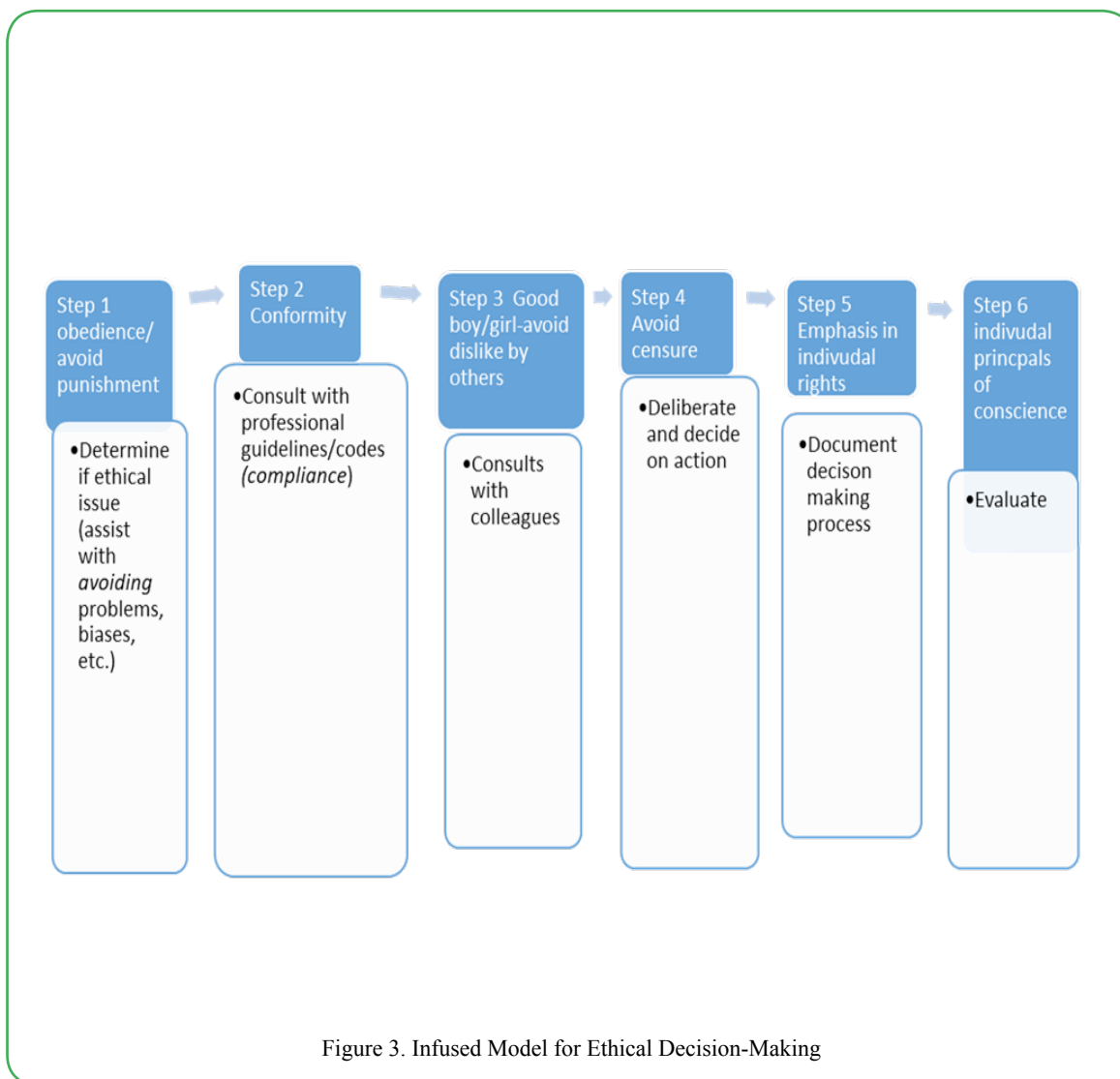


Figure 3. Infused Model for Ethical Decision-Making

Note. Components of L. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (blue) with AMHCA Ethical Decision-Making Model (white) developed by Adrienne M. Robinson, 2022

The Intersection of Decision-Making and Metacognition

Historically, metacognition was rarely taught in higher education [16]. Metacognition is “any knowledge or cognitive activity that takes as its object or regulates any aspect of any cognitive activity” [17]. Research on metacognition has its roots in two distinct areas of research: developmental psychology and cognitive psychology. Metacognitive research in the area of developmental psychology can be traced back to the theory proposed by Jean Piaget [14] and Lev Vygotsky [18]. However, metacognitive research in a pure form did not emerge until the 1970s, when Flavell [17] and colleagues investigated children's knowledge of their own cognitions.

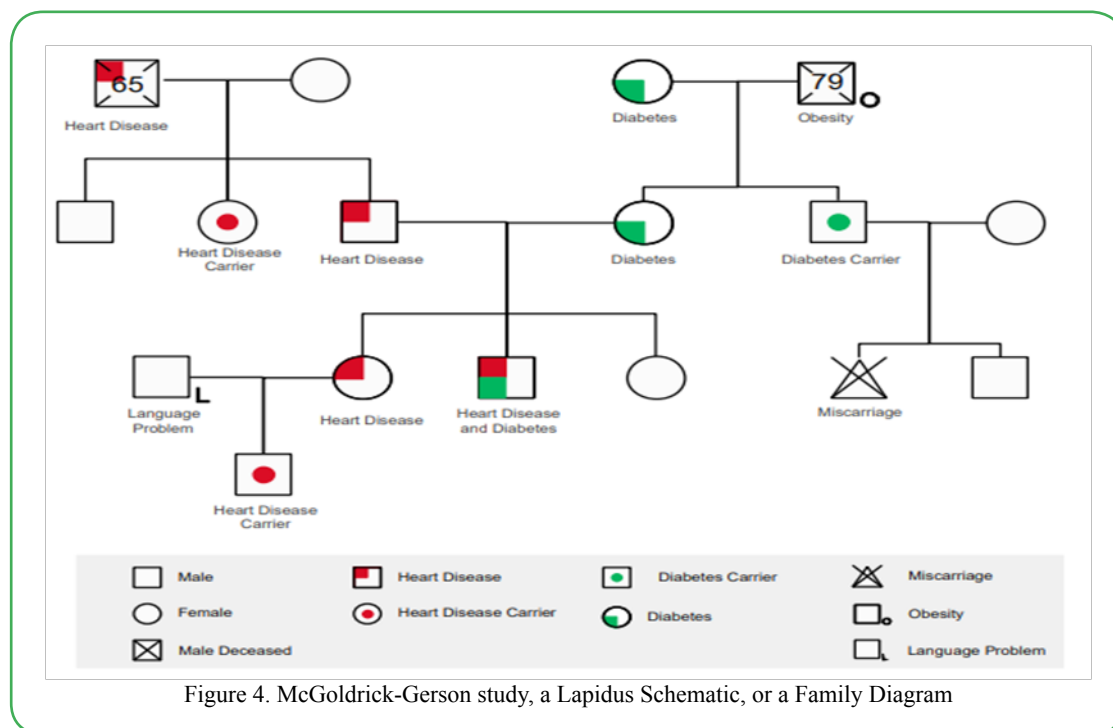
Metacognition is a type of higher-order thinking in which the thinker has active control over the process [19]. It involves knowing when you know, knowing when you don't know, and knowing what to do when you don't know. It is also called “cognition about cognition,” which plays a top-down regulation role in various

cognitive processes, such as learning, memory, decision-making, and other high-level cognition [20,21,22]. The process of thinking and metacognition can be effective in reasoning and decision-making [23].

Review of a Genogram

A genogram (also known as a McGoldrick-Gerson study, a Lepidus Schematic, or a Family Diagram) is a pictorial display of a person's family relationships and medical history [24]. It goes beyond a traditional family tree by allowing the user to visualize hereditary patterns and psychological factors that punctuate relationships. It can be used to identify repetitive patterns of behavior and to recognize hereditary tendencies.

Unbeknownst to the untrained eye, the genogram can assist with looking at decision-making patterns. It can be a great addendum to a decision-making model. See Figure 4 for the McGoldrick-Gerson study, a Lepidus Schematic, or a Family Diagram.



Note. A pictorial display of McGoldrick-Gerson study, a Lapidus Schematic, or a Family Diagram

Conclusion

Albert Einstein once said: “We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

It is important that counselors appreciate that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model of decision-making. As stated earlier in the article, the importance of reviewing background, including family history, along with their decision-making style among other areas is critical to a counselor’s development, especially in the area of professional ethics. Additionally, counselors do well to engage in continuous self-examination, consider contextual factors when working with clients, and enlist clients as collaborators in the therapeutic process. Kleitman and Stankov [25] suggested that metacognition enhances social and emotional skills and makes an individual more efficient in interacting with the environment and social situations.

Decision-making is a process involving choices. The more deeply we understand decision-making and along with the integration of cognitive activities and patterns, like metacognition and genograms, the better we can refine processes and models.

Competing interest: The author declares that they have no competing interests.

Reference

- Wilson, R. A., & Keil, F. C. (2001). *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*. MIT Press.
- Hagen EH, Chater N, Gallistel CR, Houston A, Kacelnik A, et al. 2012. Decision-making: What can evolution do for us? In *Evolution and the Mechanisms of Decision Making*, ed. P. Hammerstein, J Stevens, pp. 97–126. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Oppenheimer, D. M., & Kelso, E. (2015). Information processing as a paradigm for decision making. *Annual review of psychology*, 66(1), 277-294.
- Pramanik, Auditi. (2019). Decision-Making: A core problem of social cognition. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(2).
- Bandura, Albert. (1977). Bandura, A., 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Schwartz, M. S. (2016). Ethical decision-making theory: An integrated approach: *JBE. Journal of Business Ethics*, 139(4), 755-776. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2886-8
- Remley, T. P. (1996). The relationship between law and ethics. In B. Herlihy & G. Corey, (Eds), *ACA ethical standards casebook* (5th ed.) (pp. 285-292). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association
- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., Corey, C., & Callanan, P. (2015). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions* (9th ed.). Stamford, CT: Brooks/Cole
- Barnett, J. E., & Johnson, W. B. (2010). *Ethics desk reference for counselors*. American Counseling Association.
- Krch, D. (2011). Cognitive Processing. In: Kreutzer, J.S., DeLuca, J., Caplan, B. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Clinical Neuropsychology*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79948-3_1443
- Cottone, R. R. (2001). A social constructivism model of ethical decision-making in counseling. *Journal of Counseling Development*, 79, 39-45.
- Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2009). Critical Thinking: Ethical Reasoning and Fair-minded Thinking, Part I. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 33(1):38-9.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. (1984). *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages (Essays on Moral Development, Volume 2)*. Harper & Row.
- Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ling, T. J. & Hauck, J. M. (2016). The ETHICS model: comprehensive, ethical decision-making. *VISTAS* 2017, 18.

16. McKeachie, W. J. (1988). The need for study strategy training. In C. E. Weinstein, E. T. Goetz, and P. A. Alexander (Eds.), *Learning and study strategies: Issues in assessment, instruction and evaluation* (pp. 3–9). New York: Academic Press.
17. Flavell, J. H. (1992). Perspectives on perspective taking. In H. Beilin & P. Pufall (Eds.), *Piaget's theory: Prospects and possibilities*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
18. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
19. Sunder Kala Negi, Yaisna Rajkumari, Minakshi Rana. (2022). A deep dive into metacognition: Insightful tool for moral reasoning and emotional maturity, *Neuroscience Informatics*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuri.2022.100096>.
20. Son, L. K., & Metcalfe, J. (2000). Metacognitive and control strategies in study-time allocation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 26(1), 204–221. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.26.1.204>
21. Metcalfe, J. (2002). Is study time allocated selectively to a region of proximal learning? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 131(3), 349–363. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.131.3.349>
22. Ariel, R., Dunlosky, J., & Bailey, H. (2009). Agenda-based regulation of study-time allocation: When agendas override item-based monitoring. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 138(3), 432–447. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015928>
23. Kamali F, Yousefy AR, and Yamani N (2022). Explaining Metacognition in Moral Reasoning: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Iranian Medical Council*, 5(1):96-110.
24. Eshtehardi, K.K., Gasbarrini, M.F. (2019). Genogram in Couple and Family Therapy. In: Lebow, J.L., Chambers, A.L., Breunlin, D.C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49425-8_351
25. Kleitman, S. & Stankov, L. (2007). Self-confidence and metacognitive processes. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 17(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2007.03.004>.