

Helping Students Learn Better: Elevating Program Theory & Implementation Fidelity in a University-level Context

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Our Example: *Ethical Reasoning in Action*

- Desired Student Learning Outcome of QEP: Students will act ethically
- Major university undertaking
- Experts in ethical reasoning, philosophy, & assessment engaged in multi-year endeavor to:
 - Articulate what students need to know, think, & do to act ethically
 - Design programming to impact these outcomes
 - Assess implementation of programming
 - Design measures of these outcomes
 - Assess SLOs
 - Use results for learning improvement

} Program Theory

Ethical Reasoning in Action: QEP

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} **Implementation Fidelity**

Ethical Reasoning in Action: QEP

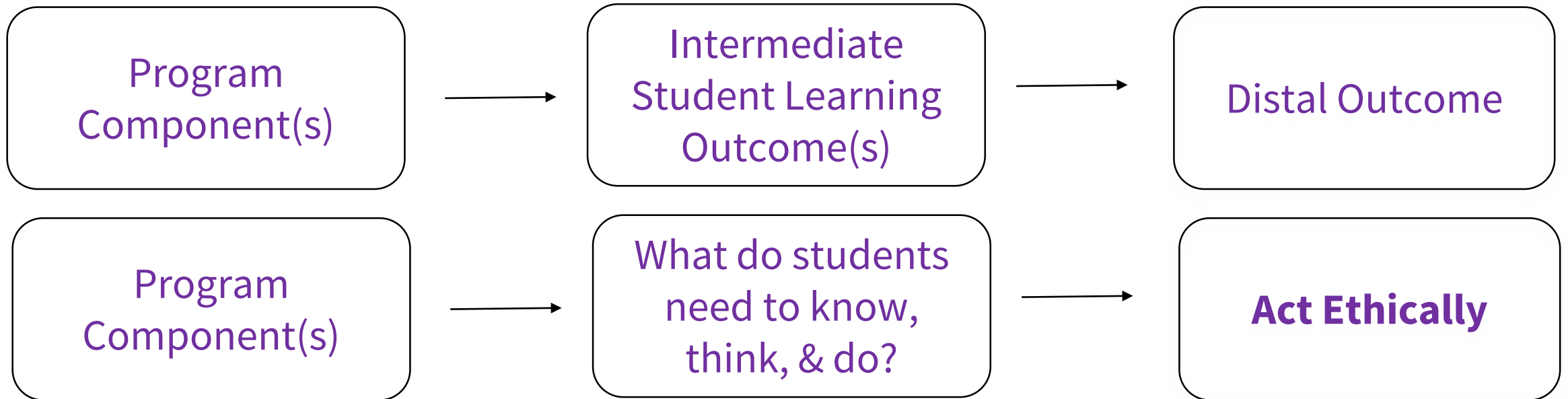
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 - Design measures of these outcomes
 - Assess SLOs (before & after students experience programming)
 - Use results for learning improvement

Outcomes Assessment

Ethical Reasoning: Program Theory

- Program Theory:

- “the construction of a plausible and sensible model of how a program is supposed to work”
- “clarifies the set of cause-and-effect relationships” believed to connect the things students do (i.e., programming) to the outcomes they are expected to achieve (Bickman, 1987, p. 5)



“**Strong**” Program Theory undergirds links with theory/research (Pope, Finney, & Bare, 2019)

Inputs

Interventions

Intermediate Outcomes

Distal Outcome

**Act
Ethically**

“Ethical Reasoning In Action” Program Theory

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Ethical Reasoning theories & research

Cognition & Learning theories & research

Program Funding for materials & leaders

Trained faculty & SA professionals to implement programming

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“Ethical Reasoning In Action” Program Theory

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Ability to Engage in a Deliberate Ethical Reasoning Process



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Ability to Engage in a Deliberate Ethical Reasoning Process



Act Ethically

Kahneman, 2011

By engaging in a deliberate ethical reasoning thought process, students' avoid a quick, default, confirmatory decision on how to behave.

"Ethical Reasoning In Action" Program Theory

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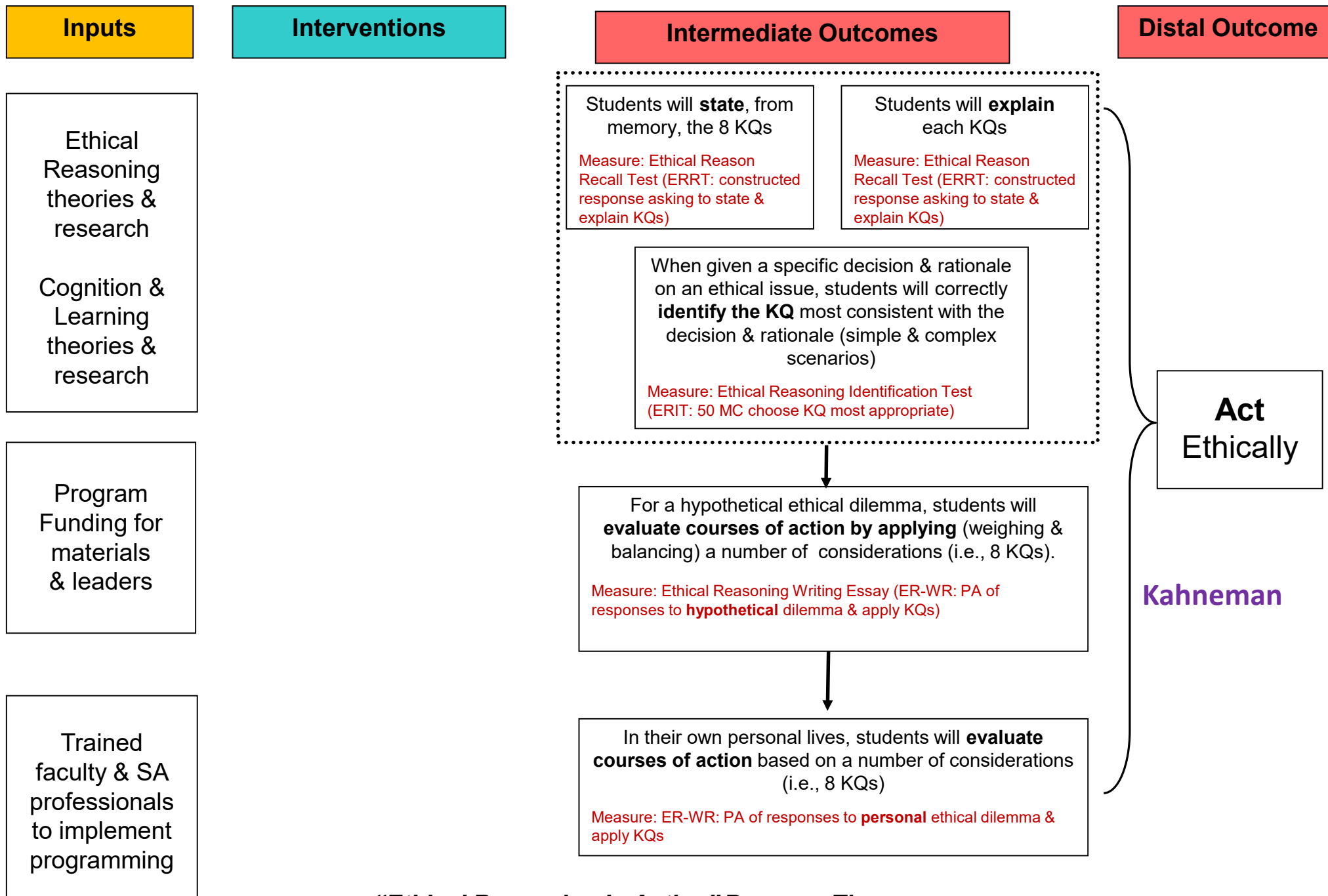
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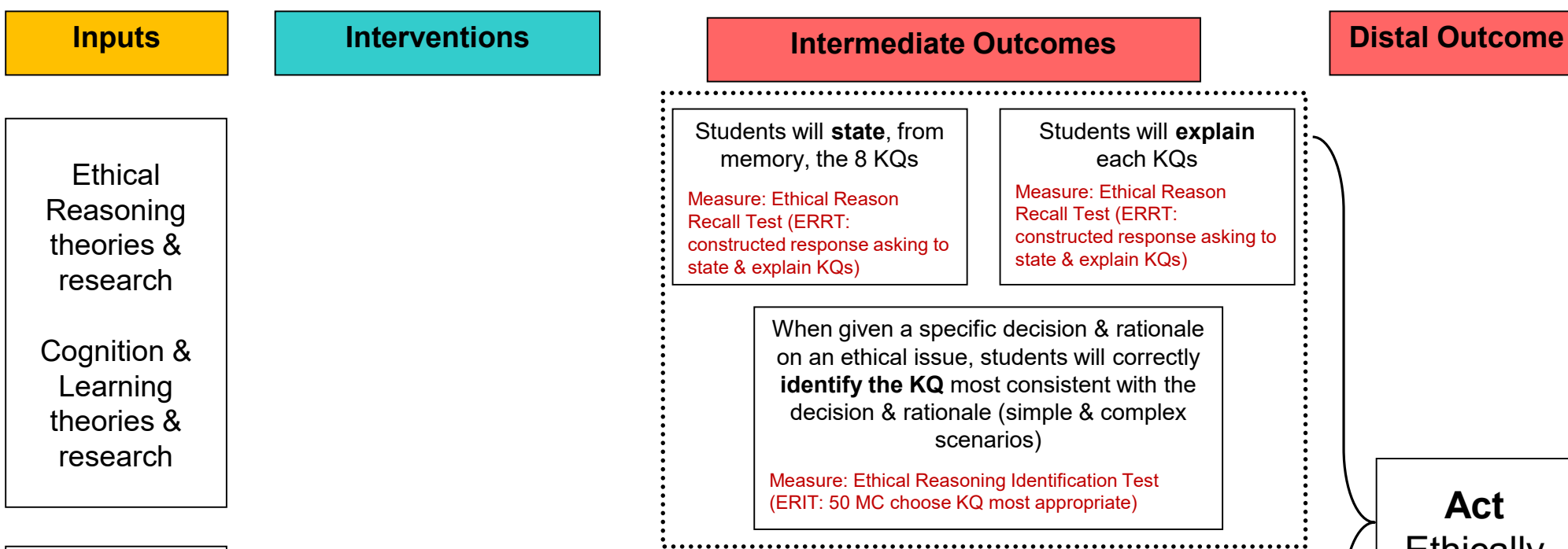
Trained faculty & SA professionals to implement programming

What key questions should I (we) use to evaluate the ethical dimensions of a situation?

- **Fairness** - How can I (we) act justly, equitably, and balance legitimate interests?
- **Outcomes** - What possible actions achieve the best short- and long-term outcomes for me and all others?
- **Responsibilities** - What duties and/or obligations apply?
- **Character** - What actions help me (us) become my (our) ideal self (selves)?
- **Liberty** - How do I (we) show respect for personal freedom, autonomy, and consent?
- **Empathy** - How would I (we) act if I (we) cared about all involved?
- **Authority** - What do legitimate authorities (e.g. experts, law, my religion/god) expect?
- **Rights** - What rights, if any, (e.g. innate, legal, social) apply?



“Ethical Reasoning In Action” Program Theory



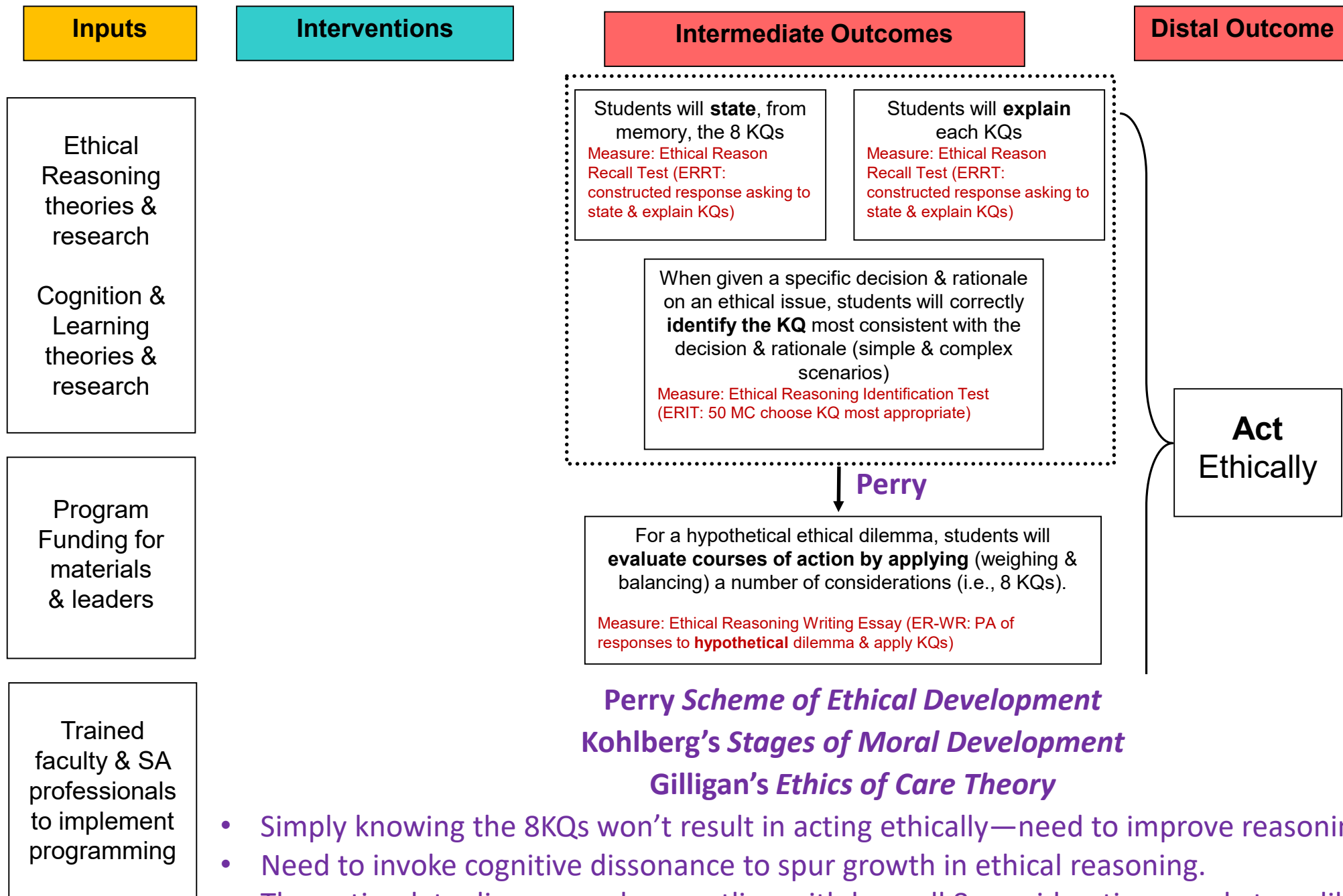
Perry's Scheme of Ethical Development

- Traditional students are dualistic thinkers conceiving ethical decisions as right or wrong
- To engage in a *Deliberative Ethical Reasoning Process*, we need to expose students to multiple considerations associated with a decision
 - Expose them to a more complicated reasoning process
- We teach them 8 considerations (8KQs)

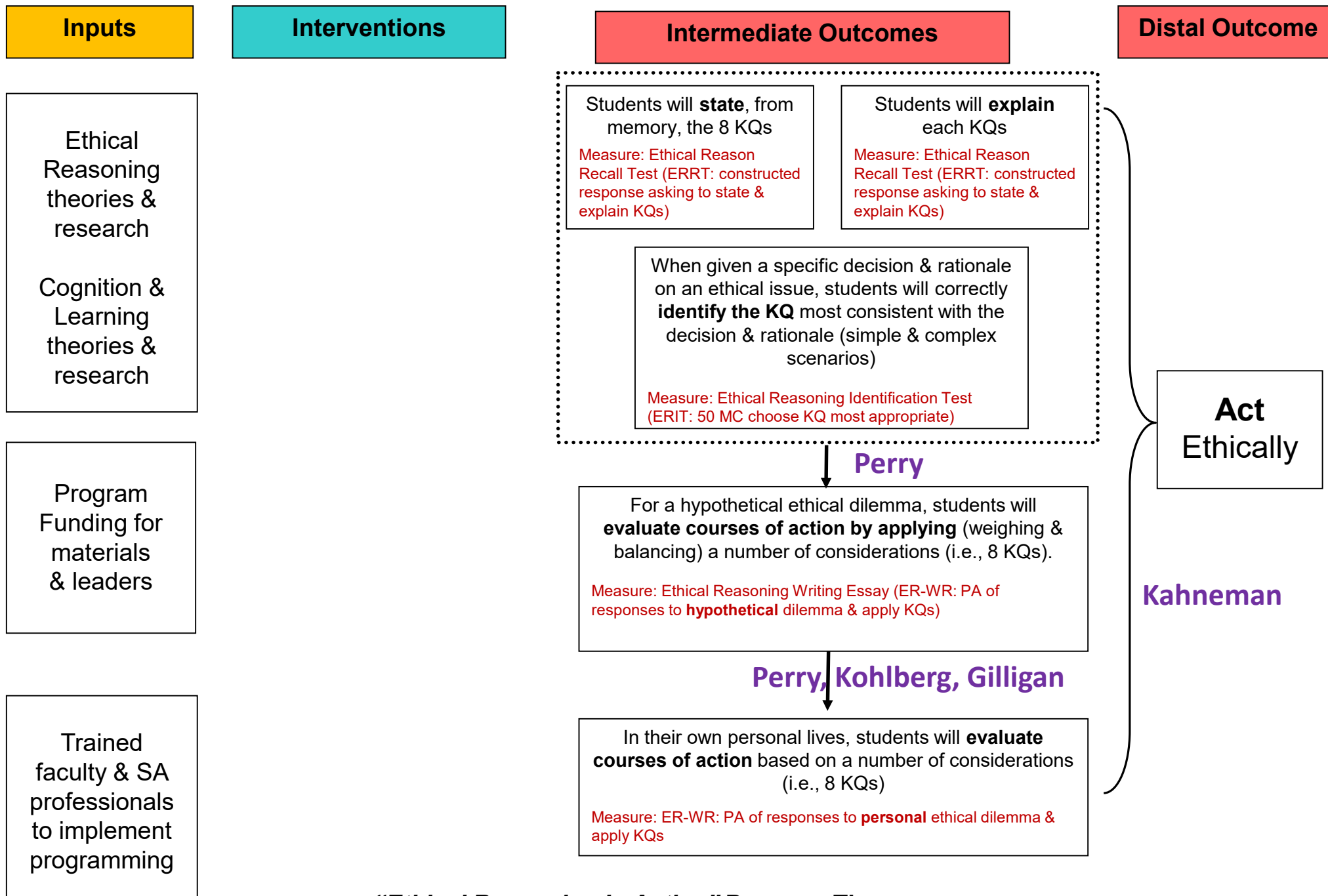
THE EIGHT KEY QUESTIONS

Fairness • Outcomes
 Responsibilities • Character • Liberty
 Empathy • Authority • Rights

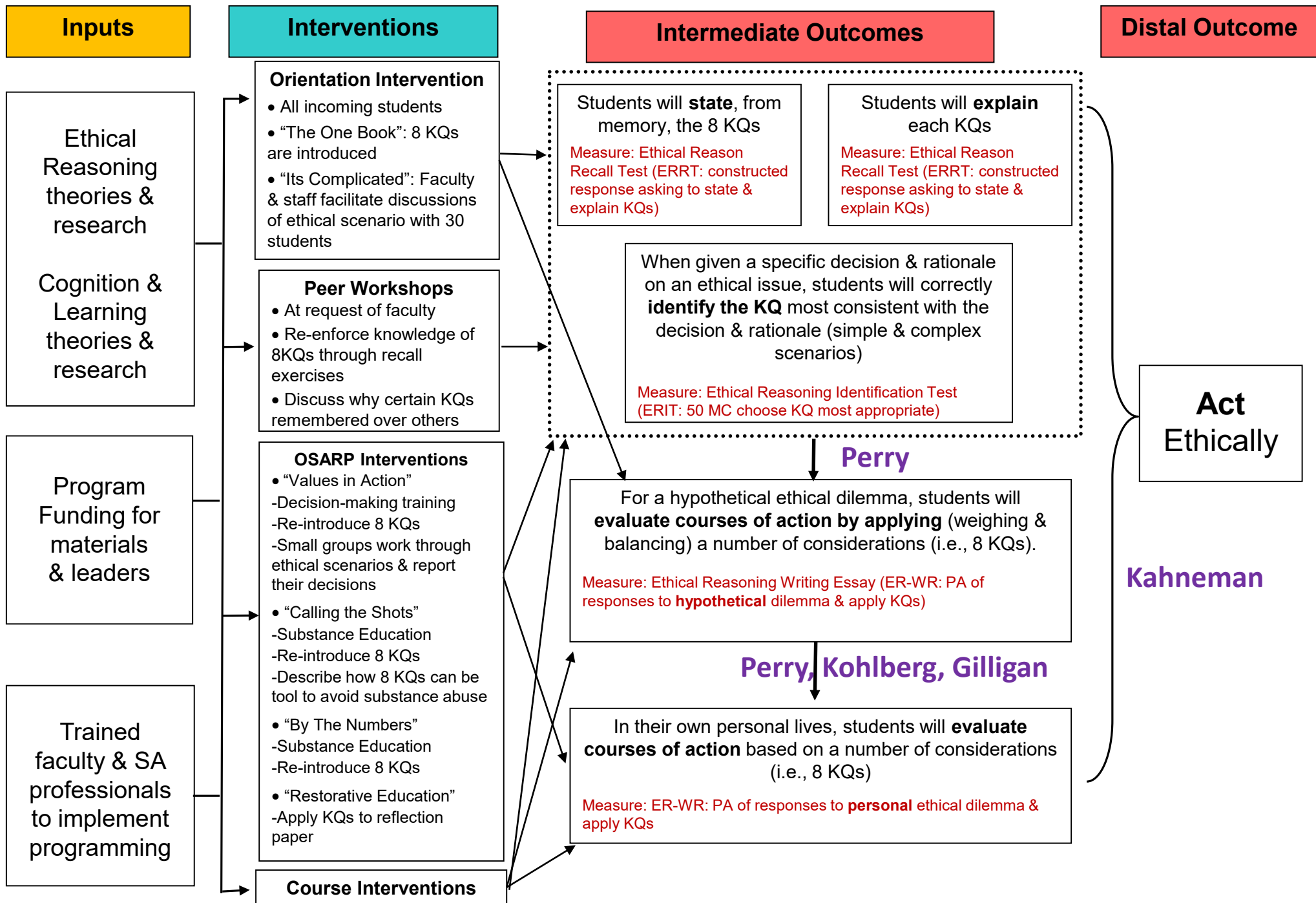
Ethical Reasoning in Action
 JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

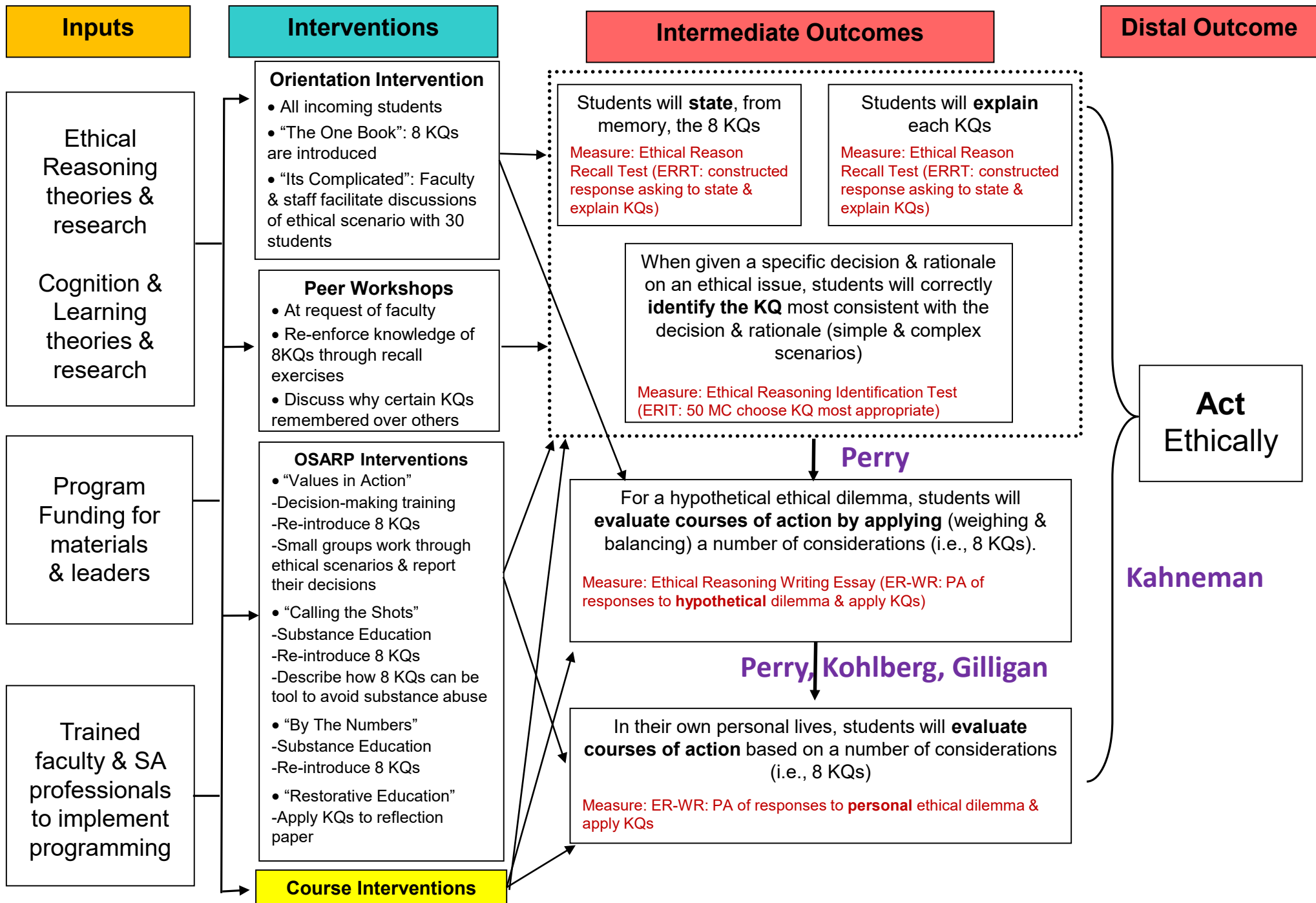


- Simply knowing the 8KQs won't result in acting ethically—need to improve reasoning *skills*.
- Need to invoke cognitive dissonance to spur growth in ethical reasoning.
- Thus, stimulate dissonance by wrestling with how all 8 considerations apply to a dilemma.



“Ethical Reasoning In Action” Program Theory





Focus on Semester-Long Courses

Faculty	# of Students	Domain	Brief Description of Course	Course Type
1	77	Health Sciences	Upper level students; Required course for major; Ethics in class title	Lecture
2	18	Philosophy	Lower level students; General Education Class; Fulfills Cluster 1 requirement; Ethics in class title	Lecture
3	7	Justice Studies	Upper level students; Elective Course	Seminar; Community Service Learning
4	7	Integrated Science & Technology	Upper level students; Elective Course	Seminar; Community Service Learning
5	42	Education	Upper level students; Course for minor	Lecture; Community Service Learning
6	40	Health Sciences	Upper level students; Required course for major	Lecture

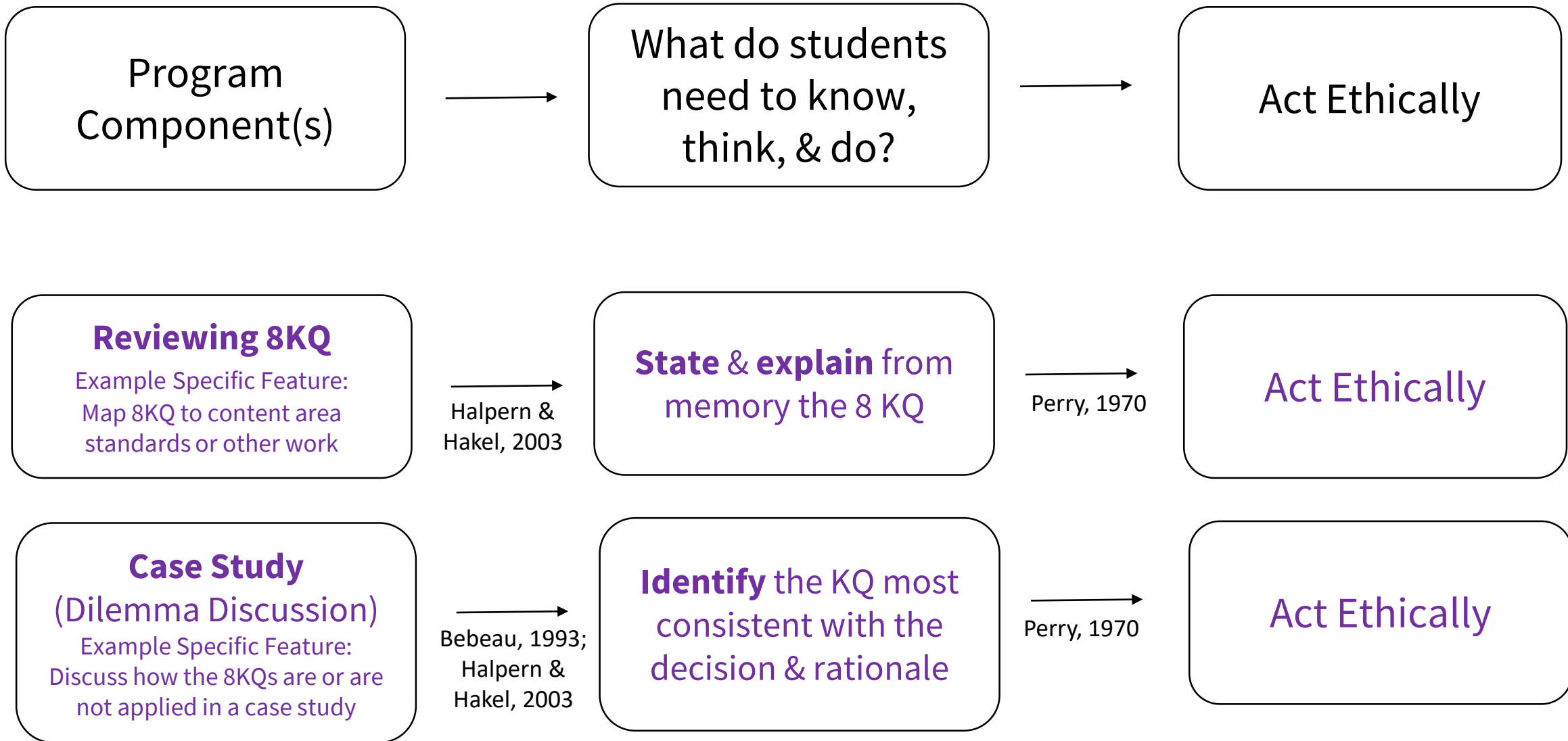
James Madison University's Ethical Reasoning Rubric

Insufficient 0	Marginal 1	Good 2	Excellent 3	Extraordinary 4	Score
A. Ethical Situation: Identifying ethical issue in its context					
No reference to decision option(s).	Implicit reference to decision options AND/OR little context given regarding decision option(s).	Explicit but unorganized reference to decision option(s) and context.	Clear description of decision option(s) and context.	Meets criteria for <i>Excellent</i> AND... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context treated with nuance Builds tension with organization and word choice. 	
B. Key Question Reference: Mentioning the 8 KQs or equivalent terms					
Reference to zero or only one key question.	Vague references to key questions OR only <u>two</u> key questions referenced.	References <u>four</u> key questions.	References <u>six</u> key questions.	References all <u>eight</u> key questions.	
C. Key Question Applicability: Describing which of the 8 KQs are applicable or not applicable to the situation and why					
No rationale provided for the applicability or inapplicability of any KQs to the ethical situation.	Provides a rationale for the applicability or inapplicability of <u>two</u> key questions to the ethical situation.	Provides a rationale for the applicability or inapplicability of <u>four</u> key questions to the ethical situation.	Provides a rationale for the applicability or inapplicability of <u>six</u> key questions to the ethical situation.	For all <u>eight</u> questions provides a rationale for its applicability or inapplicability to the ethical situation.	
SPECIAL NOTE: If author identifies fewer than three applicable KQs, then Criteria "D" and "E" can be scored no higher than (1) "Marginal"					
D. Ethical Reasoning: Analyzing individual KQs					
No attempt to analyze any of the <u>referenced</u> key questions.	Analysis attempted using two or more key questions. Typically <u>incorrect</u> ascription of the key questions to the ethical situation. Account is <u>unclear, disorganized, or inaccurate</u> .	Analysis attempted using three or more key questions. <u>Basically accurate</u> ascription of the key questions to the ethical situation. Account is <u>unclear or disorganized</u> .	Analysis attempted using three or more key questions. <u>Accurate</u> ascription of the key questions to the ethical situation. Account is <u>clear and organized</u> .	Meets criteria for <i>Excellent</i> AND... <p>Nuanced treatment of key questions, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> elucidates subtle distinctions uses analogies or metaphors considers different issues within same key question. 	
SPECIAL NOTE: If Criterion "D" is scored a 0 or 1 then Criterion "E" can be scored no higher than (1) "Marginal"					
E. Ethical Reasoning: Weighing the relevant factors and deciding					
No judgment is presented OR judgment presented with no rationale.	Uses products of the analysis and provides some weighing to make a decision. Account is <u>unclear, disorganized, or inaccurate</u> .	Conveys weighing approach using analysis products. Provides an <u>intelligible</u> basis for judgment.	Meets criteria for <i>Good</i> AND.... <p>Logically terminates in decision that will be reached.</p>	Meets criteria for <i>Excellent</i> AND... <p>Products of analysis weighed to make judgment <u>compelling</u>.</p>	

Faculty agreed students should meet **Extraordinary** standard for the intermediate outcome *"In their own personal lives, students will evaluate courses of action based on a number of considerations (i.e., 8 KQs)"*

Thus, they had to **build programming** that should support students meeting this expectation.

Articulating Program Theory



Program Component(s)

What do students need to know, think, & do?

Act Ethically

Reviewing 8KQ

Example Specific Feature:
Map 8KQ to content area standards or other work

Halpern & Hakel, 2003

State & explain from memory the 8 KQ

Perry, 1970

Act Ethically

Case Study

(Dilemma Discussion)

Example Specific Feature:
Discuss how the 8KQs are or are not applied in a case study

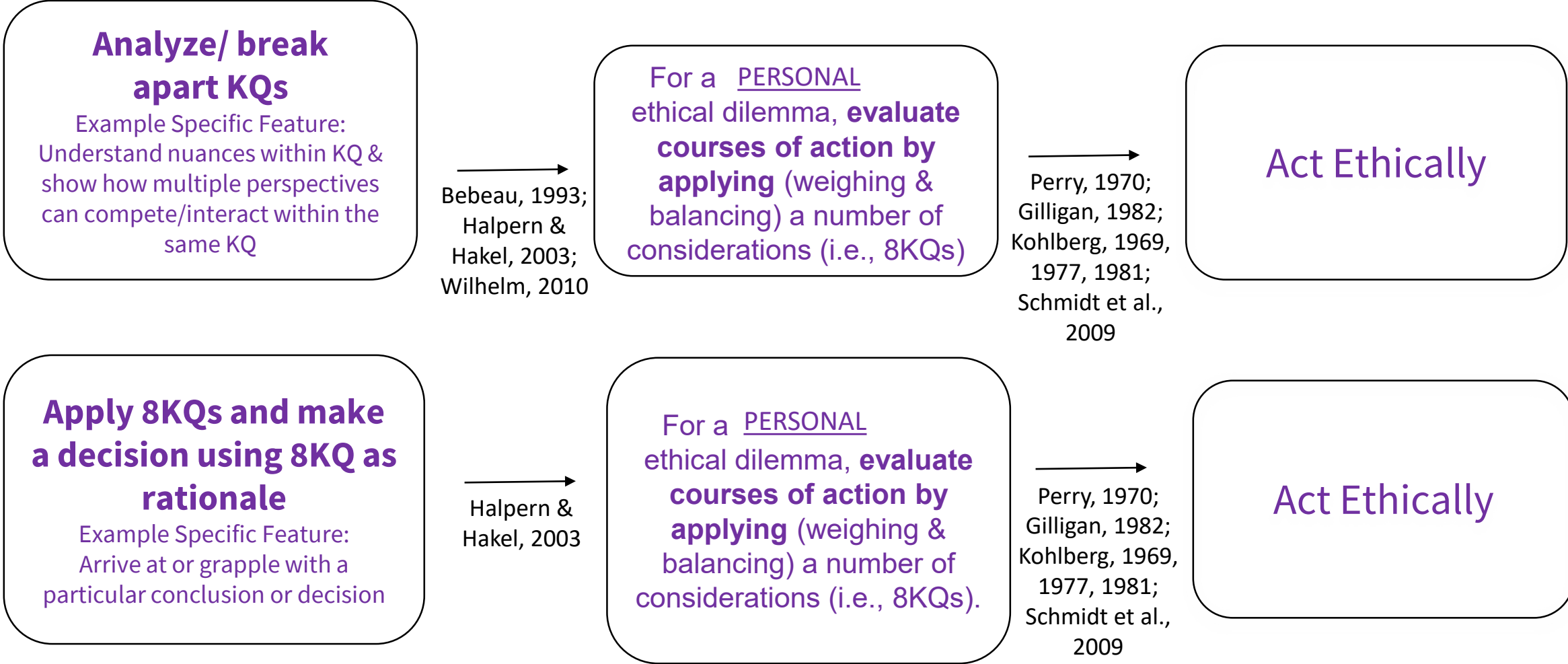
Bebeau, 1993;
Halpern & Hakel, 2003

Identify the KQ most consistent with the decision & rationale

Perry, 1970

Act Ethically

Articulating Program Theory



Snapshot of Implementation Fidelity Checklist

Program Component	Duration in min. (Actual)	Responsiveness 1 = Low (unengaged) 3 = Medium 5 = High (engaged)	Specific Features	Adherence Y/N	Quality 1 = Low (confusing) 3 = Medium 5 = High (clear)	Comments/Observations
Review 8 KQs			Elaborate or unpack each of the 8KQ (e.g., reviewing the handbook, lecturing, PPTs, video clip, discussion,)			
			Read/Review SLOs			
			Read/Review rubric			
			Students experience a “check point” to check their own knowledge of the 8KQ (maybe use Bill’s “ERIT” items?; crossword puzzle or word find; ball activity, news stories)			
			Map 8KQ to some other work (can be something disciplinary like standards or something societal like policies or media or something practical, or something personal, news stories, onto class community or rules of engagement, etc.)			
			Critique/edit/comment/annotate the 8KQ (e.g., could be wiki, could be collectively done in class, what do you like about 8KQ? What would you change about them?; collective knowledge building)			
			Provide/discuss/present example of a decision making process with AND without ethical reasoning (“ethical reasoning” is defined as being able to use 2+ KQ)			

Snapshot of Implementation Fidelity Checklist

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Case Study (Dilemma Discussion)			Review/Refresh 8 KQ			
			Identify where/how each of the 8KQ are/ are not applied within the case			
			Give/discuss rationale for how each of the 8KQ are/are not applied			
			Engage in reflection (e.g., could be formal or informal, written, oral, group, what issues did you have, what was easy/hard)			
			Identify/discuss which (if any) aspects of the case are “compelling?” To what extent or degree was the case “compelling?”			

Results of Study

- Gathered **implementation fidelity data** to better understand what intervention or program features students actually experienced
- Gathered **longitudinal outcomes assessment data** using psychometrically sound instruments to assess changes in students' learning over the semester
- **Integrated** fidelity and outcomes data:(Smith, Finney, & Fulcher, 2019)
 - Some faculty implemented the programming or intervention with higher quality
 - Students in some courses appeared to be more engaged/responsive
 - All students demonstrated improvements in their learning over time; however, students in some courses improved more than students in others
 - Courses where intervention was delivered with both **high quality** and **high student perceived responsiveness/engagement** tended to have greater learning improvement

Useful Resources

Implementation Fidelity & Outcomes Assessment for Ethical Reasoning

Smith, K. L., Finney, S. J., & Fulcher, K. H. (2019). Connecting assessment practices with curricula and pedagogy via implementation fidelity data. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44, 263 – 282.

Smith, K.L., Finney, S. J., & Fulcher, K. H. (2017). Actionable steps for engaging assessment practitioners and faculty in implementation fidelity research. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, 12, 71-86.

Program Theory

Pope, A., Finney, S.J., & Bare, A. (2019). The essential role of program theory: Fostering theory-driven practice and high-quality outcomes assessment in student affairs. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, 14, 5–17.

Implementation Fidelity

Finney, S. J. & Smith, K. L. (2016). Ignorance is not bliss: Implementation fidelity and learning improvement. *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: Guest Viewpoints*. Retrieved from <https://illinois.edu/blog/view/915/309716>

Fisher, R., Smith, K. L., Finney, S. J., & Pinder, K. (2014). The importance of implementation fidelity data for evaluating program effectiveness. *About Campus*, 19, 28-32

Gerstner, J. J. & Finney, S. J. (2013). Measuring the implementation fidelity of student affairs programs: A critical component of the outcomes assessment cycle. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, 8, 15 – 28.

Useful Resources (cont.)

Ethical Reasoning Assessment Instruments

Smith, K. L., Fulcher, K. H., & Sanchez, E. H. (2015, September). Ethical reasoning in action: Validity evidence for the Ethical Reasoning Identification Test (ERIT). *Journal of Business Ethics, 144*(2), 417-436.

Ames, A. J., Smith, K. L., Sanchez, E. R. H., Pyle, L. K., Ball, T. C., & Hawk, W. J. (2016). Impact and persistence of ethical reasoning education on student learning: Results from a module-based ethical reasoning educational program. *International Journal of Ethics Education, 2*(1), 77-96.

Sanchez, E. R. H., Fulcher, K. H., Smith, K. L., Ames, A. J., & Hawk, W. J. (2017, March-April). Defining, teaching, and assessing ethical reasoning in action. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 49*(2), 30-36.

Thank you!

Smith, K.L. & Finney, S. J. (2019, Nov). *Helping students learn better: Elevating program theory and implementation fidelity in a university-level context*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Association for the Study of Higher Education, Portland, OR.

Publication of this work:

Smith, K.L. & Finney, S.J. (2020). Elevating program theory and implementation fidelity in higher education: Modeling the process via an ethical reasoning curriculum. *Research and Practice in Assessment*, 15, 1-13.