

Morality and Me: An Investigation of a Moral Framework for College Students

Jillian Meyer
Sponsor: Ted Bitner

Introduction

- When faced with a moral dilemma, two people might make opposite decisions based on their personal moral values.
- While two people may come to the same conclusion in a moral dilemma after considering different moral dimensions, two people may come to the opposite conclusion in a dilemma after considering the same moral dimensions.
- With a better understanding of how people make moral decisions, we can see other perspectives more clearly and engage in positive moral discourse.

Literature Review

- Kohlberg (1958) and Gilligan (1982) studied the moral reasoning of people through different stages of moral development.
- Moral psychologists are studying how people use different moral values and foundations to navigate moral decisions (Haidt and Joseph, 2007; Shweder et al, 1997).
- Some researchers with similar methodologies are studying how high schoolers make moral decisions (Shelton & McAdams, 2012).

Methodology

- Online survey with 136 participants (Google Forms LLC, 2022; Prolific, 2023).
- Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire asked participants what they would do and why in ten moral dilemmas.
- The Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions were used to code reasoning responses from participants.
- Moral reasoning responses were coded with the Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions to see what moral considerations U.S. college students turn to in moral dilemmas.

Future Research

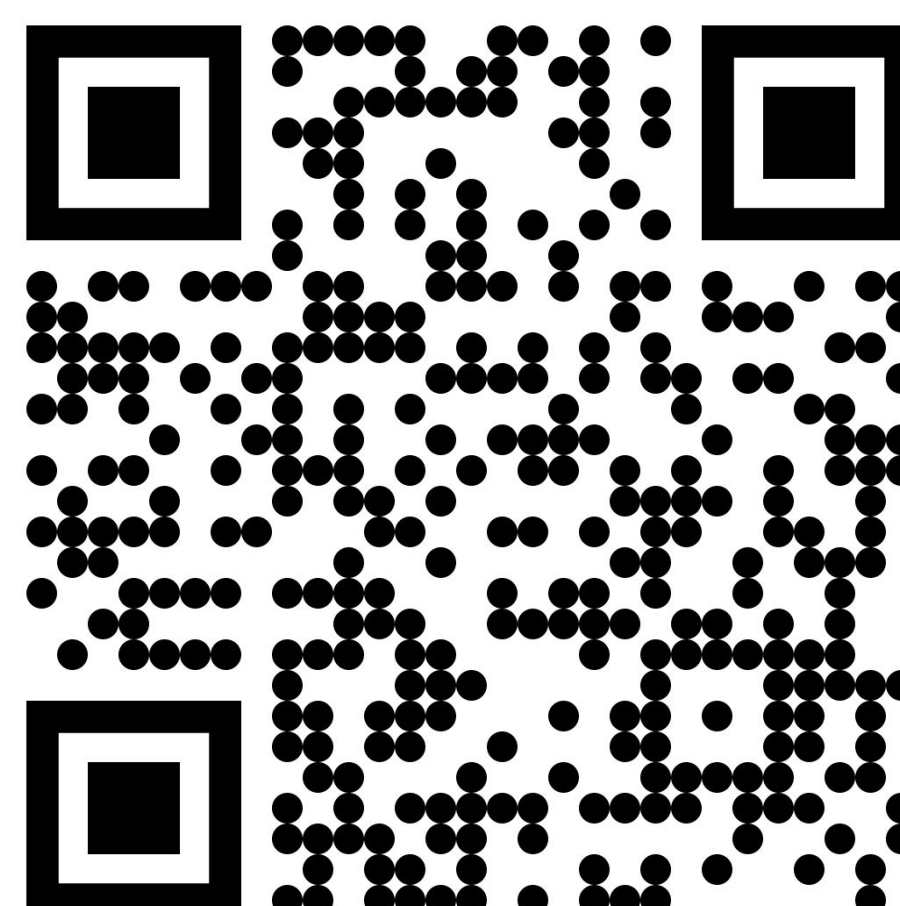
- Moral dimensions for other populations (high schoolers, adults, college students in other countries, etc.).
- Moral values that people base moral decisions on (justice, care, sanctity, respect, etc.)
 - Universal moral values
 - Moral values that differ cross-culturally
- Start with asking college students about common moral dilemmas to ensure their relevancy

More Information

Further questions can be sent to Jillian Meyer at jillianleemeyer@gmail.com.

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How do YOU make moral decisions?



Note: This quiz is still a work in progress and has not undergone proper reliability and validity tests.

The Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions

Consequences: By considering the consequences, people evaluate the different outcomes of an action, and possibly the extent of happiness or harm an action may cause.

Intentions and motivations: This moral dimension is a very personal one, as it considers what the individual wants and what they are personally motivated to do in a moral situation.

Principles and rights: Many people base their moral decisions off of their own foundational principles of what they believe is right and wrong. These principles come from many different places, be it religious principles, legal laws, or philosophical rights.

Care and relationships: This dimension considers the nature of the relationships involved, and asks whether how one acts in a moral situation is dependent upon the people involved and their relationship to the moral agent.

Virtues: This moral dimension is another that focuses on the individual and asks what a morally good, or virtuous, person would do. The focus is shifted here from the action to the individual, asking not what a good action would be, but rather what a good person would do.

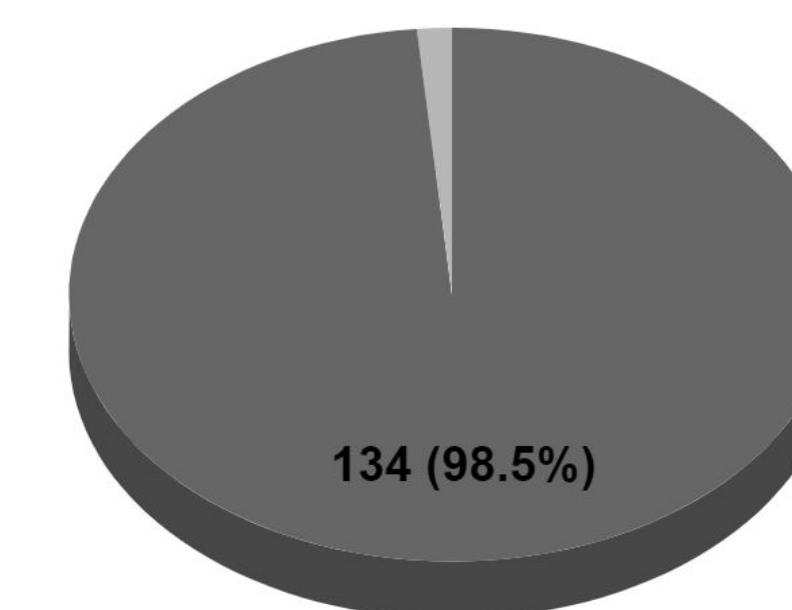
Fairness: We emphasize fairness a lot in life, whether it be large-scale fairness like political or social inequality, or small-scale fairness such as that feeling we get when a broken vending machine takes our money without giving us our snack.

Results

- The most cited moral dimension overall was consequences ($n = 576$, 44.2%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 415$, 31.8%).
- Question 4: Your professor assigns your class a hundred pages of reading in two days. The text is small and not written clearly, so this reading will surely take you hours and you may not understand much of it anyway. Your classmate finds a summary of the reading online, written much more clearly. Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?
 - The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 97$, 74.6%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 20$, 15.4%).

Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?

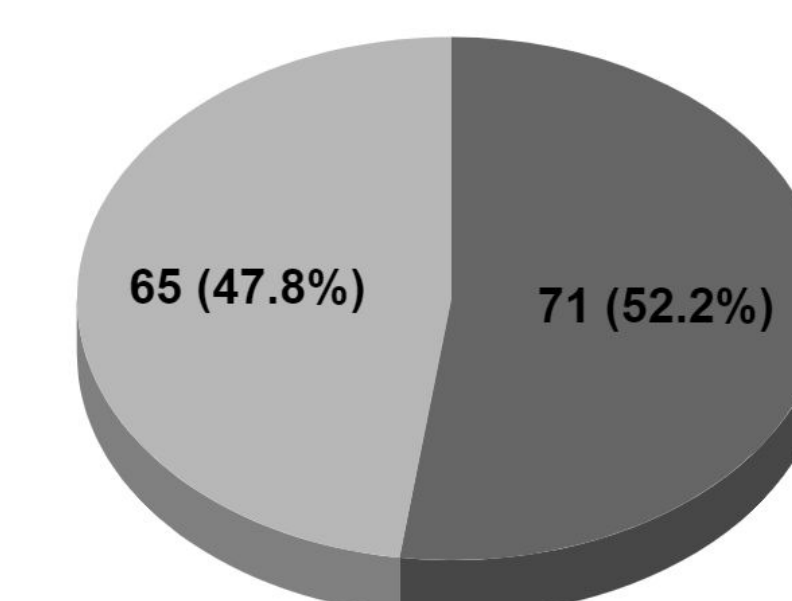
● Yes ● No



- Question 8: You really do not feel like going to class and think that getting some more sleep would be the better option for you. You consider emailing your professor saying you have COVID symptoms so you are not penalized for skipping class. You feel like skipping class to get more sleep would be better for you overall, but you don't want to be penalized for missing class. Do you write your professor the COVID email?
 - The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 64$, 51.6%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 54$, 43.5%).

Do you write your professor the COVID email?

● Yes ● No



Discussion

- College students reasoned through the consequences of the moral dilemmas more often than any other moral dimension, suggesting that college students equate good consequences with good moral actions.
- Many students also relied on their own personal intentions and motivations to make moral decisions in the dilemmas.
- This study was limited by the demographics of the participants, especially with an overrepresentation of Asian participants and an underrepresentation of conservative participants.

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