

Ethics and Us: A Review of the Moral Psychology Field

Jillian Meyer

Committee Members: Kevin Moore (Sponsor), Ted Bitner, Mercy Corredor

What is moral psychology?

- the study of human thought and behavior in ethical contexts
- philosophy and psychology working together
- asks what people *are* doing instead of what they *should* be doing



What would YOU do?

The Trolley Problem

There is a runaway trolley barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five people tied up and unable to move. The trolley is headed straight for them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. However, you notice that there is one person on the side track. You have two (and only two) options:

1. Do nothing, in which case the trolley will kill the five people on the main track.
2. Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.



My Paper

Past

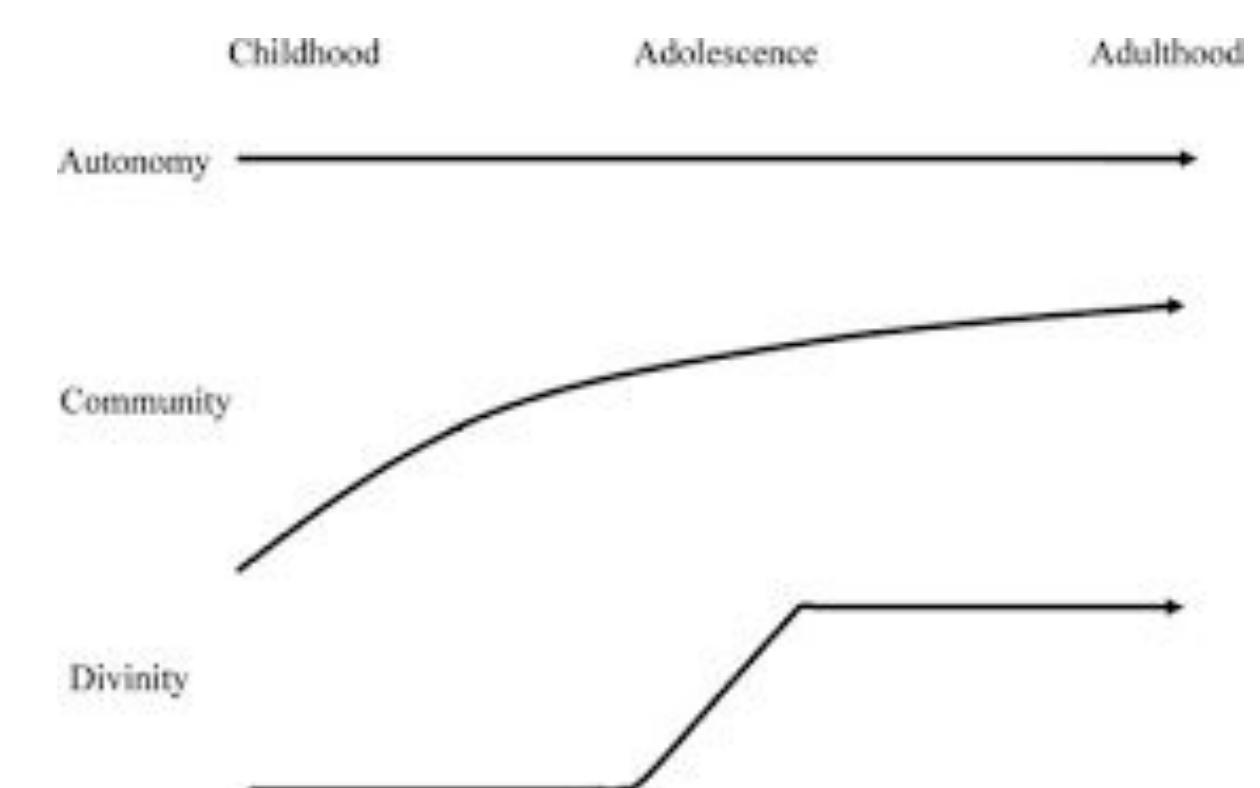
Moral psychology can find its roots in philosophy with ancient ideas of how we *should* make our moral decisions.



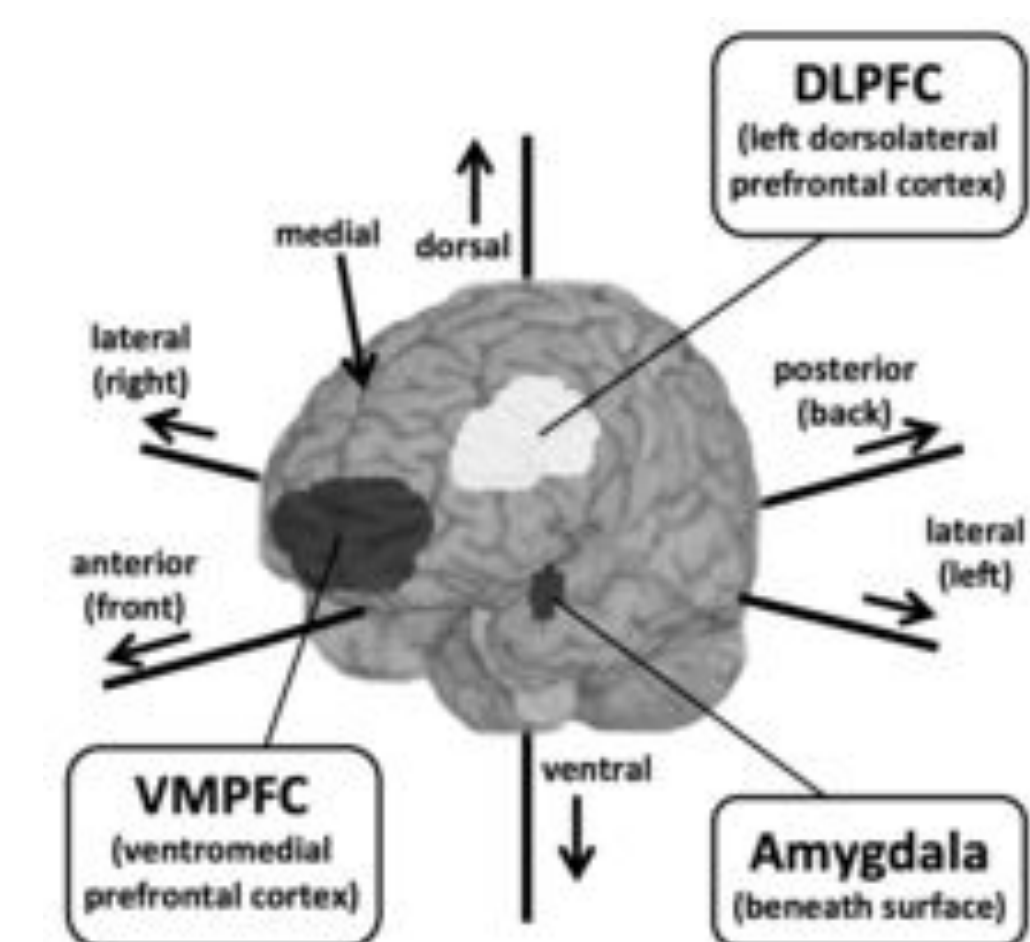
Present

The interdisciplinary nature of moral psychology allows us to better understand how we make our moral decisions.

Anthropology



Neuroscience



Evolution/Biology

	Care/Harm	Fairness/Cheating	Loyalty/Betrayal	Authority/Subversion	Sanctity/Degradation
Evolutionary Purpose	To raise children and keep them from harm	To work with others for mutual benefit	To form groups that can stick together	To create and sustain positive hierarchies	To avoid disease or other harm
Universal Triggers	When a child shows signs of pain or distress	A cheater or someone who works well with a group	An external conflict that the group has to deal with together	Someone claiming authority or submitting to another	People or animals carrying disease
Modern-Day Triggers	A cute video, an animal at a rescue shelter	Being faithful to your partner, shoplifting	Any sort of organized team	Respect in the workplace for superiors	Concepts like fascism
Typical Emotions	Empathy	Frustration, thankfulness	Pride, anger at a betrayal	Esteem, terror	Revison
Virtues Associated	Generosity, sympathy	Objectivity	Allegiance to a group	Acquiescence	Restraint, faith

Future

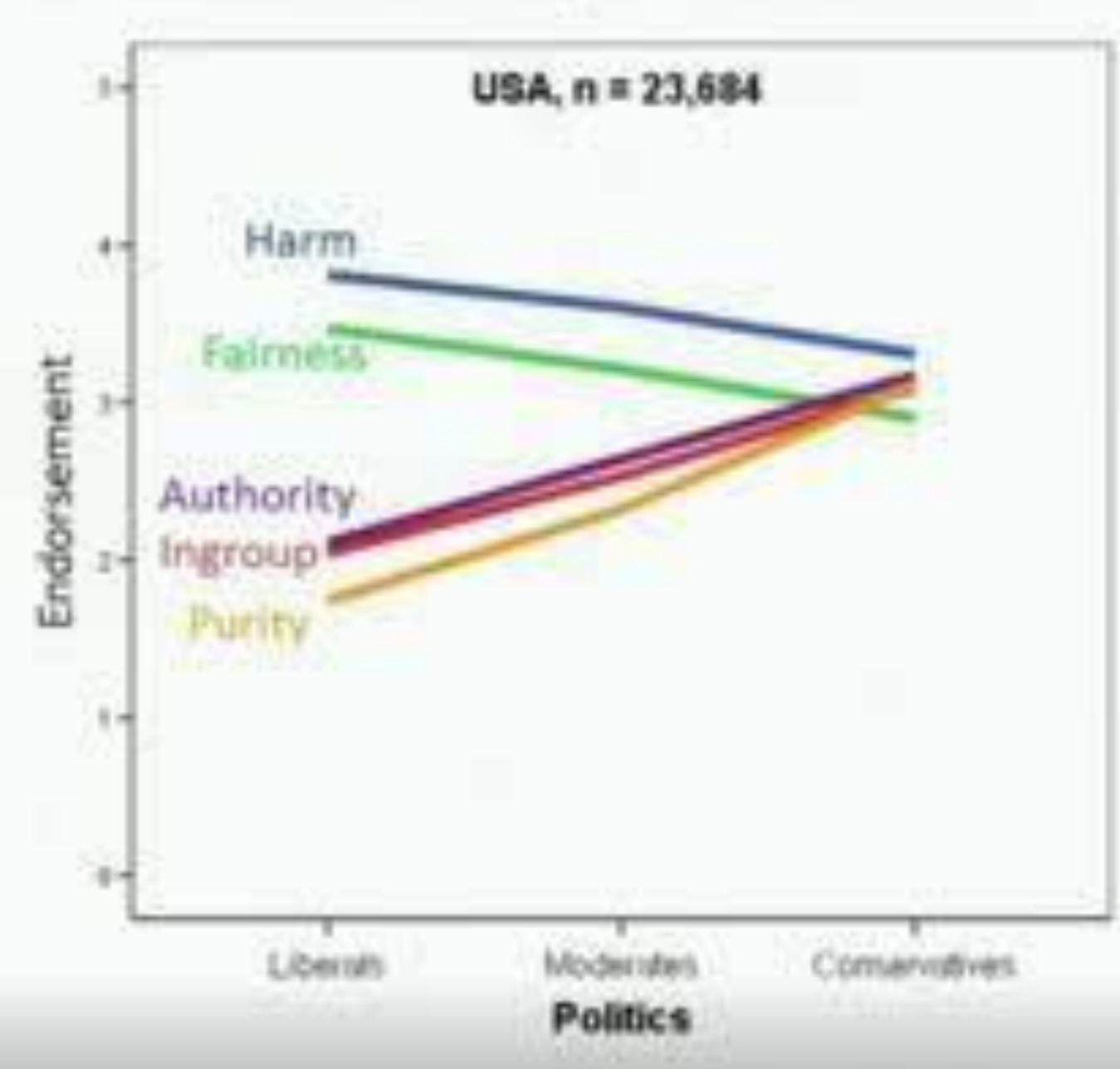
There are many directions the future of moral psychology research could go, including researching how we study morality, who studies morality, and how we use what we learn about morality.

- Moral intuition vs moral reasoning research
- Other disciplines that contribute to moral psychology research?
 - Religion
 - Economics
 - Business
- Ethics education

Why is moral psychology important?

- We can learn a lot about ourselves with the awareness of our moral systems.
- Listening to someone speak in one's second language or in a foreign accent can cause people to make more utilitarian decisions (Hayakawa et al, 2017, Foucart & Brouwer, 2021).
- Relationships with religion align with an individuals' reproductive morals (Weeden & Kurzban, 2013).
- Parenthood and parental care morals are associated with social conservatism (Kerry et al, 2022).
- Liberals and conservatives endorse different sets of morals (Graham et al, 2009).

Liberals 2 channels, Conservatives 5



The Heinz Dilemma

A woman was on her deathbed. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to produce. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's laboratory to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz have broken into the laboratory to steal the drug for his wife? Why or why not?



More Information

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

