



Youths' Everyday Morality: Understanding the Role of Values and Emotions in a Mixed  
Methods Study

Nicole Jennifer Wong Garcia

A thesis submitted to the Department of Child and Youth Study in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree in Master of Arts in Child and Youth Study

Thesis Supervisor: Michelle Eskritt

Mount Saint Vincent University

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada



## **Abstract**

This study explores how emotional intensity, and values relate to different types of everyday moral judgments in youths. A total of 81 participants, aged 16 to 24, completed an online survey which consisted of 3 measures: 4 videos for two types of moral dilemmas (2 for Care/Fairness, and 2 for Authority) from Moral and Affective Film Set (MAAFS) (McCurrie et al., 2018), items from the self-transcendence and conservation subscales of the Portrait Values Questionnaire [PVQ] (S. H. Schwartz et al., 2001), and emotional reactivity measures through 5 video stimuli. The youths provided quantitative and qualitative information for this study. Emotional intensity was found to predict Care/Fairness moral situations, whereas conservation values were found to predict Authority-related transgression. Qualitative responses highlighted different themes that relate to moral foundations, like harm, unfair advantage, and disrespect to others. On the other hand, the themes of normalizing behavior or how fair it is to judge the actions of the characters gave us a further understanding of youth's everyday morality. Finally, ambiguity was identified in the reasoning of the young people, since some condemned an action, while others justified it, thus evidencing the complexity of their moral evaluation.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Eskritt, for her support and guidance throughout this process. I am equally thankful to the member of my thesis committee, Dr. Catherine Baillie, for her feedback and essential suggestions that enhanced the quality of my work. A heartfelt thank you to Mag. Lourdes Ruda and Dr. Monica Cassaretto for helping me start this journey and contributing to my professional knowledge and curiosity.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my parents, and my sister who nurtured supported my educational endeavors from the very beginning. I would also like to thank my partner for his company and motivation during the writing of this project. Special thanks to my friends for being there anytime I needed someone to talk to despite of the different time zones.

Acknowledgement is also due to the participants of this study and Sinead Murray for their contribution and help in the development of this thesis.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	3
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	4
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>Aim and Purpose of Research</b> .....	12
<b>Research Question</b> .....	13
<b>Theoretical Framework</b> .....	13
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	18
<b>Morality</b> .....	18
<b>Values</b> .....	21
<b>Emotional Intensity</b> .....	22
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	25
<b>Research Design</b> .....	25
<b>Participants</b> .....	26
<b>Instruments</b> .....	27
<i>Demographic Information</i> .....	28
<i>The Moral and Affective Film Set [MAAFS]</i> .....	28
<i>The European Social Survey [ESS] Human Values Scale</i> .....	29
<i>Emotional film clips</i> .....	30
<b>Ethical Considerations</b> .....	31
<b>Data Collection</b> .....	31
<b>Data Analysis</b> .....	32
<i>Quantitative Analysis</i> .....	32
<i>Qualitative Analysis</i> .....	33
<b>Chapter 4: Results</b> .....	35
<b>Quantitative Results</b> .....	35
<b>Qualitative Results</b> .....	37
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b> .....	49
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	56
<b>References</b> .....	58
<b>Appendix</b> .....	70
<b>Appendix A: Consent Form</b> .....	70

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Adolescence is a curious stage of life usually distinguished by the milestones reached over childhood to adulthood, depending on the culture, and defined by biological and social role changes (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Sawyer et al., 2018). A specific transitional period that a child goes through at the beginning of adolescence called puberty, involves a hormonal cascade in which the adrenal stress hormone is activated around age 6-9 years (Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Sawyer et al., 2018; Vijayakumar et al., 2021). Research finds that in puberty, there is increased development of the amygdala, which processes emotions, and the hippocampus, which is essential for episodic memory; both of which are necessary for social-emotional functioning (Chiasson et al., 2017; Tottenham & Sheridan, 2010; Vijayakumar et al., 2021; Yang & Wang, 2017). The amygdala and the hippocampus gradually share intensive interconnections with the prefrontal cortex which is related to executive control and matures during adolescence (Caballero et al., 2016). Thus, adolescence continues until the late 20s defined by brain maturation in terms of the speed of neuronal connections and gray matter (Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Sawyer et al., 2018). In other words, adolescence is a stage of life during which there is a critical period of brain maturation (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006).

Nevertheless, adolescence is not only a time for physiological change. There is also direct and indirect development in the social, cognitive, emotional, and self-consciousness of the individual (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021). For example, it is a stage for abstract thinking skills development which includes understanding moral principles (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Paciello et al., 2013). Moral development has historically been based on Kohlberg's theory of moral development (1958,

1981, 1984), which is composed of six stages, each qualitatively more comprehensive and inclusive than the previous one. Mathes (2021) notes that Kohlberg's theory relates moral judgment to abstract reasoning; stages 1 and 2 involve doing actions to avoid punishment and focusing on self-interest, stages 3 and 4 talk about following social rules and fulfilling others' vision of right or wrong, and finally, stages 5 and 6 resembles the search for justice as a universal principle. In the last two stages, judgments are usually based on what we consider fair or harmful to welfare (Daniel et al., 2014; Hofmann et al., 2014; Killen & Dahl, 2021; Rudolph & Tscharaktschiew, 2014). Moral judgment is thought to require the ability to analyze, evaluate and judge different situations from a moral point of view to regulate our behavior (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021; Bucciarelli et al., 2008; Chiasson et al., 2017; Garrigan et al., 2018). This does not mean a person can evaluate or act with absolute certainty as to whether something is good or bad, but they can reach an assessment based on their interpretation and take into consideration that of others (Hofmann et al., 2014).

This moral judgment capacity matures with age because, as people grow older, they learn to better evaluate and consider other's cultural norms, ideas, standards, opinions, reasoning, emotions, and expectations with a more complex moral judgment; which occurs with youth population (Chiasson et al., 2017; Killen & Dahl, 2021; Rosen et al., 2016). As Chiasson et al. (2017) stated, moral judgment has been a topic studied in youth, suggesting that morality evolves from a superficial evaluation more centered on the self to a more complex analysis that includes others' perspectives.

On the other hand, several researchers have criticized Kohlberg's theory over different issues. Carpendale (2000) criticizes Kohlberg's theory for not explaining moral behavior, and that it lacks an emotional perspective to moral judgment. Researchers have argued that morality

involves not only how we treat each other, establish a sense of caring and fairness, but also feel and cope with our emotions and those of others in the context of ethics and social conflict (Garrigan et al., 2018; Malti et al., 2013, 2021; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013; Paciello et al., 2013). Additionally, this topic has been studied from a hypothetical perspective more than from a practical perspective since most research focuses on answering life and death moral situations (Chiasson et al., 2017; Garrigan et al., 2018; Paciello et al., 2013). There is no integrated framework for moral judgment development and how it's related to behavior and emotions (Garrigan et al., 2018). Therefore, although Kohlberg provided an important insight into morality, his theory does not explain it in its entirety or the complexity of moral development (Cushman et al., 2006; Garrigan et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that because of Kohlberg's emphasis on reasoning, terminology like "moral judgment," "moral cognition," and "moral reasoning" are commonly used interchangeably, as synonyms, or for various reasons depending on the author. For this reason, in this study we will use the term of moral judgment when we refer to evaluation within the "moral domain".

Haidt (2007) found in cross-cultural research that for some societies, other principles of morality, like loyalty, sanctity, authority and liberty, can be more important for moral judgments. Sverdlik & Rechter (2020) stated that most moral theories involve higher-dimensional values that focus on relationships between individuals and groups, but that does not mean that morality and values are interchangeable. They noted that morality is not always the focus of values because, although certain values may embody principles conventionally seen as moral, others may describe a societal norm or personal preference that has nothing to do with morality. Values are better described as how a person sees the world, ranging from personal or collective moral considerations to personal preferences, politics, scientific advancements, or individual identity

(Mills & Wilner, 2023). Values are influenced by complex intra and interpersonal factors like a person's culture and age (Robinson, 2013). Researchers suggested that values are trans-situational goals that might guide a person's life or social entity, evolving as we grow from children to adults (Davidov et al., 2008; Lewis-Smith et al., 2021). Eventually, by frequently expressing their position and reasoning, the adolescent's judgment and decisions may settle into a certain pattern, reflecting their values, choices, and judgment capacity (Fischhoff & Broomell, 2019; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Killen & Dahl, 2021; Rosen et al., 2016).

Along the same line, values are important for youth's development of moral judgment (Chiasson et al., 2017; Gibbs, 2013; Mills & Wilner, 2023; Paciello et al., 2013). Values have a fundamental impact on the development and expression of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and well-being, which in time facilitates their judgment and way of interpreting different situations (Lewis-Smith et al., 2021; Robinson, 2013). Moreover, the judgment and values of young people could allow them to regulate their behaviors to the point of taking responsibility for them, which at the same time builds the moral self identity (Hardy et al., 2014; Johnston & Krettenauer, 2011; Krettenauer, 2022; Paciello et al., 2013). Hertz & Krettenauer (2016) and Krettenauer (2022) described moral identity to the extent to which a person's identity is shaped by their morality and there can be developmental differences across various age periods by transforming from a child's moral identity into an adult's moral identity

Findings affirm that beliefs and values can become a guide for people when internalized and form their moral identity. However, not all behavior corresponds with a person's values (Tangney et al., 2007). Hertz & Krettenauer (2016) pointed out that values in our moral identity can be relevant to eliciting emotions that involve evaluating ourselves. Others add that values can be cognitions of what is important that provoke emotions and motivate behavior (Conte et

al., 2023; Silfver et al., 2008). Emotions may play a role in the complexity of moral judgments of youths as they can shape or help guide our decisions to avoid negative feelings or increase positive ones, thus people prioritize prominent information and reduce processing times in making judgments (Lerner et al., 2015; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013; Rosen et al., 2016; Smetana et al., 2018). Positive emotions are usually felt when a person's behavior meets or surpasses moral norms, such as assisting others or working hard to achieve a morally desirable objective (Körner et al., 2016; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013). Likewise, a huge step in interpersonal development that leads to the experiencing and expressing of love, empathy, and concern for others tends to involve how good choices can help us achieve good outcomes (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021; Krettenauer, Campbell, et al., 2013; Krettenauer et al., 2011). Meanwhile, negative moral feelings are triggered by behavior that breaches moral standards, such as lying, cheating, or neglecting to strive for a positive objective, whether through one's conduct or those of others (Körner et al., 2016; Rudolph & Tscharaktschiew, 2014). Malti & Krettenauer (2013) found that although children ages 4-5 years may cognitively understand that they have done something morally wrong, they do not necessarily feel guilt or remorse because of it, which is called the happy-victimizer pattern. As children get older, around 7-8 years, they start experiencing negatively charged self-evaluative emotions because of moral transgressions (Malti & Krettenauer, 2013; Mascolo & Fischer, 2010).

There are more emotional experiences than the type of emotion felt. We should consider other components: activation (how quick one feels), duration (how long the emotion lasts), intensity (strength of emotion), and valence (evaluated as positive or negative) (Davidson, 1998). The intensity with which we feel something may provide information about the magnitude and relevance with which we value something instead of only understanding the presence or absence

of an emotion (Körner et al., 2016; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013; Zupan & Eskritt, 2020).

Researchers found that values may act as antecedents of emotional intensity in the cases that an emotional experience happens as a response to value-relevant stimuli (Conte et al., 2023; Nelissen et al., 2007). Pletti et al. (2016) found that, when facing a moral dilemma, people tend to behave in a way that minimizes the intensity of aversive emotions. However, there could also be individual differences in the intensity of a person's emotional reactions to events (regardless of if morality is involved). Nevertheless, studies relating to morality and emotions have tended to focus on what a person does or thinks to avoid experiencing unpleasant emotions rather than how their emotional reaction may have an impact on their moral judgment (Lerner et al., 2015; Pletti et al., 2016).

In sum, morality becomes more present in youth's lives as emotions and cognitions interact dynamically in moral contexts (Daniel et al., 2014; Garrigan et al., 2018; Lerner et al., 2015). Adolescents experience an emotional change that involves both themselves and other people which can complicate how they evaluate moral situations. The purpose of the study is to investigate the connection between moral judgment and values, with an emphasis on how individual differences in experiencing emotional intensity may moderate this relationship. It is predicted that a person's values will influence their judgment regardless of age, since, as mentioned, the values by which we are guided are built over time depending on different situations, one of them being the decisions we make and how we analyze different events. Specifically, the higher presence of care and fairness values will determine that participants will judge care and fairness situations more morally wrongly than those with a higher presence of conservative values. While those with higher conservative values will evaluate authority situations more wrong than those with higher self-enhancement values. However, participants

higher in emotional intensity are predicted to exhibit stronger relationships between values and morally wrongness, than those with lower emotional intensity. Finally, I will try to understand what the youths think about how they made their judgments or what determined them.

### **Aim and Purpose of Research**

Different studies have found a relationship between moral judgment and values (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022; Paciello et al., 2013; Silfver et al., 2008; Silfver-Kuhalampi, 2008; Sverdlik & Rechter, 2020), as well as morality and type of emotions experienced (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021; Hertz & Krettenauer, 2014; Krettenauer et al., 2011; Pletti et al., 2016; Rudolph & Tscharaktschiew, 2014). Nevertheless, only a few studies focus on analyzing moral judgment, values, and emotional intensity in youths. Daniel et al. (2014) sought to find whether there was a developmental relationship between sympathy (as a moral emotion), moral judgment, and social justice values from childhood to early adolescence. Sympathy was found to predict favorable development of moral judgment, as well as social justice values. The present study differs in that the constructs of moral judgment and emotions will be analyzed separately, as well as focusing on negative emotions and the intensity experienced by the person but not on the emotional response to moral behavior.

Another strength of this study is the use of videos to measure morality judgment and emotions that includes both verbal (tone of voice, words, etc.) and nonverbal (posture, facial expressions, etc.) signals (Körner et al., 2016). This allows a better description of the scenarios, contrary to the use of vignettes where a short description of the context is given and the rest is left to the imagination, and it could be preferable for gauging emotional reaction (Körner et al., 2016; McCurrie et al., 2018). There will be better control of the stimuli provided.

Finally, the inclusion of a qualitative component in this research is significant and different from what is often seen (Lewis-Smith et al., 2021). In this way, by investigating personal reasoning or principles, we can make more sense of the motives and explanations that underline responses observed in concrete situations (Krettenauer, Campbell, et al., 2013; Krettenauer et al., 2011). This refers to the importance of conducting research with a different approach, didactic stimuli, and in a population that is not usually included.

### Research Question

How do emotional intensity and values combine to play a role in the moral judgment of a youth population?

### Theoretical Framework

Kohlberg describes three universal levels of reasoning (Pre-conventional, Conventional, and Post-Conventional), each of them is composed of 2 stages obtaining a total of six stages (see Table 1) (Carpendale, 2000; Li, 2023; Mathes, 2021).

**Table 1.** *Description of Kohlberg’s level of reasoning*

<i>Level</i>	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Pre-conventional</i>	<i>Stage 1</i>	One can be self-centered and do things to avoid punishment
	<i>Stage 2</i>	Behavior is based on self-satisfaction and rarely on the satisfaction of others
<i>Conventional</i>	<i>Stage 3</i>	Reasoning extends beyond family and friends, since one focuses on caring for the expectations that others have of one
	<i>Stage 4</i>	One must obey authority by abiding by traditions, norms, laws, among others
<i>Post-Conventional (*)</i>	<i>Stage 5</i>	People seek to satisfy themselves without interfering with the satisfaction of others, reaching a social contract with the law, state, all nations and cultures
	<i>Stage 6</i>	Universal principle of moral ethics by valuing the justice of all people

(\*) Level considered as more complex for the individual to reach because of its focus on universal justice

More recent theories seek to explain morality, but the most relevant for this thesis is Moral Foundations Theory [MFT] that tries to include morality, values, cognition, emotions, and universality in cultures. Moral Foundation Theory focuses on identifying human morals and understanding how values, norms, and behaviors may shift with time. These ‘values’ are seen as innate intuitions that cultures build on; in other words, these can be explained through the evolutionary development of humanity (Mills & Wilner, 2023). The foundations are care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression (De Giorgis et al., 2022; Graham et al., 2013; Mills & Wilner, 2023).

1. **Care/Harm:** Centers in protecting others, treating others with empathy, and is normally triggered by suffering and distress expressed by someone. Its characteristic emotions are compassion towards the victim and anger at the perpetrator.
2. **Fairness/cheating:** Focuses on gaining benefits of a partnership aligning with reciprocal altruism and is triggered by cheating, cooperation, and deception. In other words, people should get what they deserve. Its characteristic emotions are anger, gratitude, and guilt.
3. **Loyalty/betrayal:** Talks about forming cohesive coalitions that are triggered by threat or challenge towards a group. Its characteristic emotions are pride and rage at traitors.
4. **Authority/subversion:** Creates a beneficial relationship with hierarchies and is triggered by signs of high and low rank. In other words, followers should obey authorities who are effective leaders. Its characteristic emotions are respect and fear.

5. **Sanctity/degradation:** Focuses on avoiding transmitting diseases, living in a more ascetic way, and is triggered by diseased people, and immoral activities of the flesh. Its characteristic emotions are contempt, anger, and disgust.
6. **Liberty/oppression:** Centers on feelings and experiences of solidarity and is triggered by episodes of unjustified violence. Also, freedom and autonomy are moral goods.

Mills & Wilner (2023) identify some contributions of using the MFT in comparison with other theories. First, this theory has been rigorously analyzed and tested through different research studies for many years. Next, the MFT is argued to be a descriptive theory, not a normative one. This means that the theory is not applied to identify who nor what should be considered morally good, on the contrary theory looks to understand how people make their moral decisions and how they got them. Because of this, it was important for the present study to ask participants how morally wrong something is, and not if something is morally wrong or not. Graham et al. (2013) also affirms that MFT is easy to explain because the foundations are clear, which also implies that theory is possible to apply in different situations. It is important to mention that the foundations on which the necessary values for life are more easily adapted and then applied to reality.

In this thesis, I will only consider some of these foundations. Based on previous research, care, and fairness are fundamentals that are usually included in moral judgment research regardless of the theoretical approach. Authority is one of the main factors present in stages 5 and 6 of moral development according to Kohlberg's theory. Thus, for this thesis we will consider the moral foundations of Care, Fairness and Authority to be studied.

Another major theory on which this thesis is based is the Theory of Basic Human Values [BHV] by S. H. Schwartz et al. (2001) who propose that values can be organized in a “value wheel” divided into four quadrants (i.e., self-transcendence vs self-enhancement, conservation vs openness to change). The value wheel contains 10 values that focus on the major value orientation recognized across cultures (Davidov et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2013; Paciello et al., 2013). However, for practical purposes in this research, it will be presented in the form of a table (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Basic Human Values by Schwartz et al. (2001)*

Self-Transcendence	Conservation	Self-Enhancement	Openness to Change
Universalism	Tradition	Power	Stimulation
Benevolence	Conformity	Achievement	Self-Direction
	Security	Hedonism	

These values are defined in terms of their core goal:

1. **Power:** Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
2. **Achievement:** Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
3. **Hedonism:** Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
4. **Stimulation:** Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
5. **Self-Direction:** Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring.
6. **Universalism:** Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

7. **Benevolence:** Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
8. **Tradition:** Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
9. **Conformity:** Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
10. **Security:** Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.

For this study, only five of these values will be used: Universalism and Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity and Security. The first two were chosen because, from a theoretical perspective, they focus on concern for the welfare and interests' others (Davidov et al., 2008). On the other hand, tradition, conformity and security are present when the goal is to maintain a stable society, keeping a status-quo and self-restriction which would be interesting to see if it has a connection with youths which can also be related to the idea of authority (Silfver-Kuhlampi, 2008; Sverdlik & Rechter, 2020).

In sum, the Moral Foundation Theory is helpful to analyze moral values and has a theoretical overlap with the Basic Human Values Theories [BHM] because they are based on a “universal” model (De Giorgis et al., 2022; Mills & Wilner, 2023). Nevertheless, De Giorgis et al. (2022) also points out that the MFT has a more developmental perspective while the BHS explains the values from a cultural-agnostic view. Due to this relationship and complementarity between theories, it is considered relevant to keep both in mind to enrich the research to be carried out.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This thesis aims to better understand the effect that values and emotional intensity combined have on the morality of youth. The relationship between these constructs has been discussed from a theoretical point of view and therefore, I will elaborate more on evidence found by studies.

### **Morality**

Kohlberg (1969) theory of moral development was influenced by Piaget's theory (1932/1965). The latter theory focused on cognitive development, which explains how children's understanding matures from a sensory perspective, which begins at birth, to a symbolic one (2 years), then a concrete one (7 years), and finally an abstract one that could be reached from the age of 12. Piaget and Kohlberg argued that a child moves from rather rigid moral judgments (concrete / avoidance of punishment) to a more complex system that may include exceptions or particularities (abstract / justice), although Kohlberg pointed out that not everybody will reach the capacity of abstract thinking that is representative of the last stage in his theory (Carpendale, 2000). Turiel (1983) criticized both proposals arguing that children at a young age recognize that social conventions and morality should not be treated as the same concept, and they can differentiate that something may violate social conventions, but it would be wrong depending on the context (Killen & Smetana, 2008; Li, 2023). Thus, this is achieved by considering that different cultures may have diverse norms that evaluate the violation of conventions from a variety of perspectives. Social conventions are often taken as variable depending on context, as opposed to basic moral principles of justice or legal rights (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013) Turiel proposed the Social Domain Theory which suggests that, when

addressing social conflicts, children and adolescents use distinct domains of social knowledge (Malti et al., 2021). This could be evidenced in that adolescents may have a greater ability to analyze and question social and moral norms, and then adapt them or include their own (Fischhoff & Broomell, 2019; Killen & Dahl, 2021). However, this is not because they do not respect authority, but because they have the ability and knowledge to evaluate unfair dispositions and express arguments, which can eventually cause societies to change over time (Chiasson et al., 2017; Killen & Dahl, 2021).

Although the above theories may not be in complete agreement, they suggest that maturation, from childhood to adulthood, is accompanied by an increase in the capacity for abstract thinking to understand more complex information and consider different points of view on a problem (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021). Thus, for Kohlberg and Turiel, moral development can be understood as the maturation of moral judgment directed by moral principles, knowledge, and understanding; in other words, it can be expected to change as more information is gained about conditions, contexts, and the capacity to think abstractly (Garrigan et al., 2018; Killen & Dahl, 2021). Similarly, Mammen & Paulus (2023) mentioned that moral judgment can be described in broad terms as a way of thinking about what one should or should not do while taking justice, fairness, and well-being into account.

More recently, Haidt (2001) proposed the Social Intuitionist Model [SIM], a non-developmental theory, as a reaction to these rationalistic theories because they did not take into account quick intuitions that involve evolutionary-based reactions as part in our ethical thinking (Haidt, 2007; Ohreen, 2021). He thought moral judgment is based on fast and automatic intuitions that can be differentiated by our culture and context and are only later justified by reasoning (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2001; Mills & Wilner, 2023). With this in mind, Haidt

proposed certain innate and universal foundations that he found present across cultures: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, sanctity, and liberty (Graham et al., 2013). Haidt (2007) added that moral motives go beyond care and fairness and are frequently present in human intuition and then influence processes such as moral judgment. These are the pillars of the Moral Foundation Theory which will be used in this thesis to include other moral ideals that go beyond justice (individualizing and binding principles).

Considering this, moral judgment does not involve a clear separation between biological and social factors since development happens within a system and experiences shape a person's brain development (Carpendale & Hammond, 2016). Researchers have found, from a neurobiological point of view, moral judgment activates a network of brain regions referred to as the "social brain" that significantly mature both structurally and functionally throughout childhood and well into late adolescence (Blakemore, 2008; Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Chiasson et al., 2017). Evidence from cross-sectional and longitudinal research shows associations between age and moral judgment maturity level in children, adolescents, and adults, supporting the developmental trajectory of moral judgment maturity (Chiasson et al., 2017). Also, Smith et al. (2023) found that, although adolescents understand that the consequences and logic of their actions are negative, this does not imply that they stop doing something. The ability to reason morally increases with age, but that does not mean that one always evaluates situations from a moral point of view. Moreover, moral judgment may not explain the way a person is thinking or analyzing something.

## Values

Research has found that young people do not usually comment on values but when they do, they tend to see values as worthwhile, since they can motivate behavior and help prioritize (Lewis-Smith et al., 2021). Values are understood as rooted, abstract motivations that can guide, justify, and explain attitudes, norms, opinions, and actions (Davidov et al., 2008). Schwartz (1992) proposed the theory of basic human values, which contains ten core values representing the main values recognized across cultures. This theory identified four value categories found across different cultures' religions and philosophies. The four categories are openness to change, self-transcendence, conservation, and self-enhancement (Davidov et al., 2008). Research found that, while self-enhancement values (hedonism, achievement, power) justify selfish behavior and enable people to avoid interacting with others in need, self-transcendence values (i.e., universalism, benevolence) prioritize prosocial behavior and focus attention on others' needs (Davidov et al., 2008; Paciello et al., 2013; F. Schwartz et al., 2022). Robinson (2013) identified a positive relationship between the preference for values of openness to change (stimulation, self-direction, hedonism) and conservative values (tradition, conformity, security) with age in a study conducted with people between 20 and 89 years old.

Daniel et al. (2014) argued that moral emotions and cognitions are linked to the formation of values, which are crucial to the youth's developing moral identity. Krettenauer, Campbell, et al. (2013) also suggested there is a relationship between the values that adolescents consider important and their moral emotions. Similarly, Conte et al. (2023) found evidence that values can selectively predict the intensity of emotional experiences when something protects or threatens these values. Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of values during

adolescence and young people's experiences of values across contexts is currently missing (Lewis-Smith et al., 2021).

### **Emotional Intensity**

Researchers have established the important role of emotions in moral judgment (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013), which are called moral emotions; however, this does not refer to a list of specific emotions but to the emotions usually linked with a moral process. In research where participants were asked to judge whether to sacrifice one person to save others and how this is related to emotional brain activation, there were differences depending on if the dilemmas were personal or not (Olatunji & Puncochar, 2014). Some personal scenarios led participants to designate the scenario as inappropriate and show higher emotional brain activation (in the middle frontal gyrus and posterior cingulate gyrus) in comparison to the scenarios seen as impersonal which were evaluated as appropriate.

When someone does something that goes against one's morality (i.e., immoral behavior), they may feel responsible and have an emotional intensity accordingly, which could refer to the fact that a person's emotions can predict whether one views the behavior as prosocial or antisocial (Malti & Krettenauer, 2013). For example, displaying self-evaluative emotions like guilt is a key sign of someone's willingness to follow norms and regulations since it shows that a moral standard has been internalized. (Hofmann et al., 2014; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013). Additionally, some researchers categorized emotions based on their focus: self-directed emotions include feelings of shame, guilt, pride, regret, or embarrassment over one's acts or qualities; whereas emotions that focus on another person's behaviors or characteristics, such as admiration, anger, contempt, disgust or sympathy, are referred to as other-directed or observer emotions

(Eisenberg, 2000; Körner et al., 2016; Rudolph & Tscharaktschiew, 2014; Tangney et al., 2007). For example, Johnston & Krettenauer (2011) stated that failing to act morally in antisocial behavioral circumstances frequently results in adversely charged self-evaluative emotions; while in prosocial circumstances, failing to act morally is associated with less severe, negatively charged self-evaluative emotions.

Researchers have found that people may avoid uncomfortable emotions whether or not moral dilemmas are related to these emotions (Gawronski et al., 2018; Pletti et al., 2016). For example, inducing happiness in participants does not counteract the negative emotions that may arise from the possibility of causing harm to others even when, theoretically, it is expected to reduce preferences for inaction to avoid violating a moral norm (Gawronski et al., 2018). Additionally, these authors explored how emotions that are not related to a specific moral dilemma may influence a person's moral judgment and found that moral judgment did not seem to be affected by the provocation of sadness and anger. In relation to this, Lerner et al. (2015) pointed out that, theoretically, emotions with opposed valence (anger and happiness) can exert similar influences in judgments because emotions can serve an adaptive role.

Icenogle & Cauffman (2021) found that, compared to children (6–12) or adults (18–27), teenagers (13–17) were less able to suppress their fear response when making an action, which means they are less likely to ignore some negative emotions and do something against them. Similarly, these researchers found that emotionally salient stimuli can disrupt cognitive control in mid-to late-adolescents and young adults. Nonetheless, our emotions will not always lead us to act morally, since knowing our emotions and connecting them to moral knowledge is more complex than it seems.

Krettenauer, Asendorpf, et al. (2013) mentioned that in some longitudinal studies, moral emotions appear to stop predicting antisocial behavior in mid-adolescence, and they hypothesize that this could be because emotions are linked to the development of moral identity. Similarly, Malti & Krettenauer (2013) claims that moral emotions primarily reflect significant individual differences in morally relevant behavior, especially in cases where the association between moral emotion and social behavior remains constant or even strengthens with age. For these reasons, it is fair to argue that age plays a function in the relationship between moral emotions and social behavior (Krettenauer et al., 2011; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013). Age-related changes in the relation between moral emotions and behavior may be partially explained by increased emotional intensity in adolescence. Hare et al. (2008) mentioned that the subcortical limbic regions, associated with emotional experience, show heightened activity when adolescents have been exposed to both positive and negative information. People who are more emotionally reactive, who tend to experience emotions more intensely than less reactive people, and that can change how they evaluate what is good and bad stimuli (Becerra & Campitelli, 2013; Carlo et al., 2012).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Research Design**

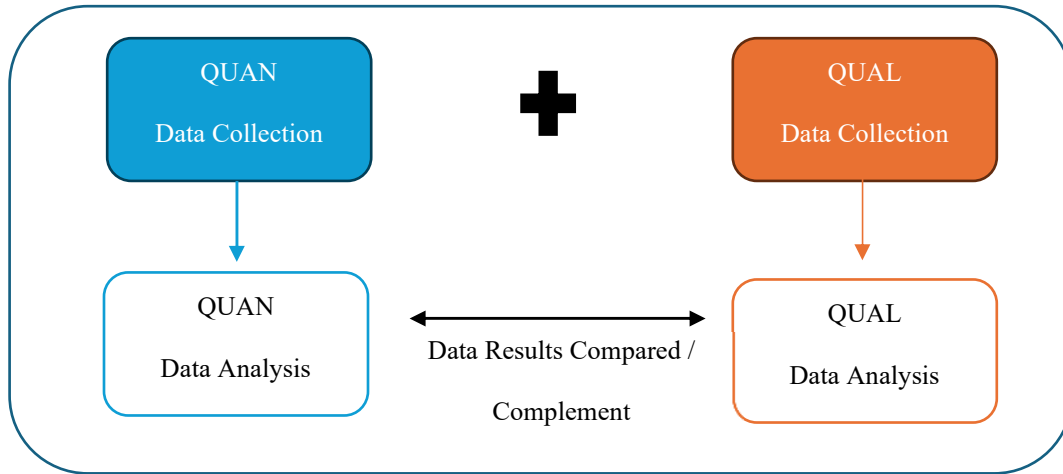
This study employed a mixed method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The quantitative aspect involved using numerical data to gather knowledge focused on the relationship between variables, hypothesis and questions, measurement and observation, and the test of theories (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). On the other hand, qualitative research provided a more complex and holistic picture of a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). In sum, qualitative data provides in-depth information about a sample, while quantitative data provides generalizations about the sample. To achieve a mixed method approach it is important to choose variables and units of analysis that are compatible and appropriate for finding an answer to the research question (Creswell, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Creswell (2009) affirms that to design a mixed method, it is important to consider three issues: priority, implementation, and integration. The term priority describes the approach that receives greater attention in a study, quantitative or qualitative. Implementation is the process of collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data in a specific order, chronologically, concurrently, or in parallel. Integration is when the quantitative and qualitative data are combined or connected, as well as the results.

There are four primary categories of mixed methods design: explanatory, triangulated, exploratory, and embedding (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). For this thesis, a Triangulation Design was used, which means the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data are at the

same time and then compared to establish if there are differences or similarities in the results (Creswell, 2009).



Note. Adapted from Creswell (2009)

## Participants

One-hundred-seven participants were recruited through social media and in psychology classes. Twenty-six participants started the survey, but their information was dropped from the analysis due to incomplete data. The remaining 81 participants ranged in age from 16 to 24 ( $M = 20.41$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ); 64 were woman; 12, man; 2, gender fluid; 1, nonbinary; 1, transgender man; 1, nonbinary and gender fluid. Also, 52 participants were from Canada; 15, Peru; and the rest from Bangladesh, Bermuda, Cameroon, China, Ecuador, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Philippines, The Bahamas, Ukraine and USA. Table 3 provides participants' ethnicity, and the highest level of education. The inclusion criterion was fluency in English and being between 16 and 24 years old.

Additionally, undergraduate students from Mount Saint Vincent University were eligible for course credit from their course professors. However, no incentives were provided to participants recruited through social networks.

**Table 3. Demographic Information**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
Ethnicity	
White (European descent)	45 (49.45%)
Latinx (Hispanic or Latin American descent)	14 (15.38%)
Black (Continental African, African Canadian, African Nova Scotian, African-Caribbean descent)	13 (14.29%)
Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Filipino, Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, or other Southeast Asian descent)	6 (6.6%)
South Asian (South Asian descent, e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	4 (4.4%)
Middle Eastern (Arab, Persian, West Asian descent, e.g., Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Kurdish, Lebanese, Turkish descent)	4 (4.4%)
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuk/Inuit, Innu Métis descent)	3 (3.29%)
East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese descent)	2 (2.19%)
Educational Level	
High school diploma or graduation equivalency	47 (58%)
University bachelor's degree	21 (25.9%)
Other – Specify	5 (6.2%)
College or CEGEP	7 (8.6%)

Note: A few participants identified with more than one ethnicity

### **Instruments**

This study collected information on participants' emotional intensity, values, and moral judgments but also the reasons that lead to certain responses. To achieve this, we applied mixed research: quantitative and qualitative. Participants completed an online survey composed of the following measures:

### Demographic Information

The participants were asked about their age, gender, country of origin, ethnicity, and highest level of education in order to have a description of the sample and do additional analysis data. Some participants answered with multiple options regarding their ethnicity.

### The Moral and Affective Film Set [MAAFS].

The Moral and Affective Film Set (McCurrie et al., 2018) consists of 69 videos that can be used to make moral judgments. Each clip in the MAAFS was validated on several dimensions: wrongness, moral foundation relevance, punishment, emotional intensity, discrete emotion, commonness, weirdness, previous exposure, humor, clip clarity, among others. Additionally, not all videos had a high score of “uniqueness”, meaning that most of the clips are suitable for studying more than one moral foundation.

The clip selection was done based on the foundations portrayed, the appropriateness of the clip content for the sample, and the length of the video. For this study we used four videos in total, one from the Care Foundation, one from the Fairness Foundation and two from the Authority Foundation. These foundations were considered for the study because care and fairness are frequently present in the understanding of moral judgment regarding the theory, while authority is a key characteristic of youth’s development.

This instrument had a quantitative and qualitative section. For the quantitative section, the participants were asked to rate each clip on the dimensions of wrongness. Wrongness was tested with the question: “How morally wrong is the behavior?” on a Likert scale from 1 (Not at all wrong) - 5 (extremely wrong). In this way, the judgment is not from a dichotomous point of view but has degrees. Thus, this provided an average of the scores obtained from the participants

for each foundation (care, fairness and authority) in order to establish two scores ranging from 1 to 5 points since care and fairness will be averaged to have one scored.

And for the qualitative section: After each moral clip, participants were asked: “*Why did you give this rating? Your response to this question will help us better understand your lived experience*” These questions gathered more information to potentially help better understand the ratings given by the participants regarding the videos and provide a more in-depth understanding about the relationship between Morality, Values and Emotions, or other aspects that were not been measure.

#### The European Social Survey [ESS] Human Values Scale.

The European Social Survey includes 21 items adapted from the 40-item Portrait Values Questionnaire [PVQ] (S. H. Schwartz et al., 2001), built from the 10 basic human values in the Schwartz theory. The ESS values scale has been administered to national samples in more than 20 countries since 2002 validating attitudes and behavior both within and across cultures (Davidov et al., 2008). The instrument uses a Likert Scale from 1 (Very much like me) to 6 (Not like me at all) to evaluate how much a person self-identifies with each of the values: universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction.

For this study, only 5 values were used: Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security. Each subscale has 2 items, for a total of 10 items. The values of universalism and benevolence were chosen since they both belong to the self-transcendence quadrant emphasizes concern for the welfare and interest of others. On the other hand, conformity, tradition, and security refer to the conservation category which centers on

maintaining a status quo in society. Thus, for this instrument the scores of the items that belong to each quadrant were averaged to have two scores.

#### Emotional film clips.

Emotion was evaluated with film clips validated to elicit subjectively experienced emotional states (Somarathna et al., 2023; Zupan & Eskritt, 2020).

The film clips compiled by Zupan & Eskritt (2020) include basic and complex emotions, equally distributed according to valence and intensity (amusement, anger, anxiety, compassion, contentment, disgust, disgust, fear, happiness/joy, irritation, neutrality, pride, relief, sadness, surprise). EmoStim by Somarathna et al. (2023) contains clips on love, warm hearted, satisfied, joy, calm, surprise, contemptuous, anger, disgust, sad, anxious, fear, guilt, and shame.

For this study, we used clips for five emotions: shame, anxiety, anger, and disgust as well as a neutral emotion. Negative emotions were chosen because they are common moral emotions, and the neutral emotion was used as a control (Zupan & Eskritt, 2020). Also, consideration was given to the content of the videos to ensure that they are age appropriate by only using clips from movies that have been rated for a public older than 14 years old (14A). Participants were asked 2 questions after each of the videos. Thus, for this measure we averaged the results from the first question across the five emotion clips (i.e., shame, anxiety, neutral, anger and disgust) to obtain an emotional intensity score, ranging from 1 to 5 points. *From 1 to 5, how strong is your emotional reaction to this video?* Then, participants will be asked, *which emotion did you experience the most strongly?* And given 5 options answers: shame, anxiety, anger, disgust or other.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study received ethics clearance by the University Research Ethics Board of Mount Saint Vincent University; participants were treated ethically according to TriCouncil ethical guidelines.

## **Data Collection**

This study focused on understanding how emotional intensity and values relate to the morality of youths. For this thesis we considered Icenogle & Cauffman (2021) delimitations of age and stage of life, 14-16 are early adolescents; 17-21, late adolescent; and 22-25, early adulthood. Additionally, the Government of Canada (2024) argues that people between the ages of 15 and 24 belong to the category of youth. Thus, taking this into consideration, our main criterion of inclusion were youths between 16 and 24 years old to have a population from early adolescence to early adulthood. There was no preference for sex or gender.

For this study, we recruited participants in psychology classes and through social media. Data was collected through an online survey. Due to the method of recruitment and data collection, we did not ask for parental consent. As a consequence, we were careful about the stimuli chosen in order to not affect the participants' vulnerability and be age appropriate. Also, 16-year-old and older could be considered mature minors.

The online survey included 3 sections, the link and QR code to this survey was posted in this media. In the first section, participants were asked to make moral judgments on four videos and the qualitative questions that involved these videos, which took a maximum of 10 minutes. In the second section, they completed the values questionnaire that contains 10 items on a 6-point Likert-Scale each, which took up to 3 minutes. Finally, in the third section, participants were asked their reaction to five videos, which took a maximum of 15 minutes.

One consideration of this study's participant pool is that some were minors. This raised several methodological and ethical issues that were resolved to ensure the study complies with accepted research practices and preserved its validity.

First, to safeguard participants, the study adhered to certain ethical guidelines. All volunteers were informed about the study's objective and asked if they would want to participate, ensuring their anonymity and maintaining confidentiality (Appendix A). In order for minors to comprehend the goal of the study and the consequences of participating, researchers made sure that informed consent is worded in an age-appropriate manner.

In addition, a thorough examination of the content in the films and other materials utilized for the study were required to ensure that the participants are not exposed to unsuitable information. During the planning and implementation stages of the study, these aspects were considered as potential limits, since they added to the complexity of the study's design and execution.

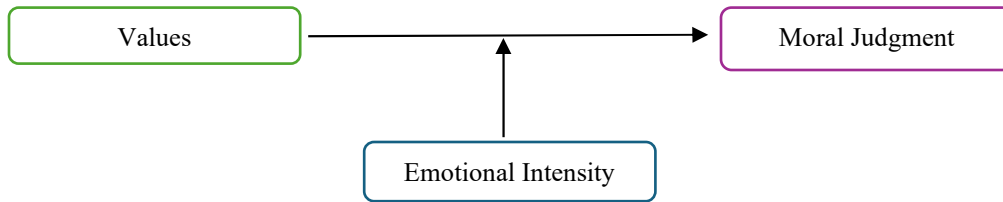
### **Data Analysis**

This study will be analyzed in two parts: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.

#### Quantitative Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics was used for quantitative analysis. The first analysis performed was Pearson correlations between the different values, moral judgment, age, and emotional intensity scores in order to identify relationships between them. Afterward, to test this model, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to detect whether emotions play a moderating role in order to predict the two different types of moral judgment scores (Care/Fairness and Authority). The predictor variables are the two types of values (self-

transcendent and conservative), the emotional intensity scores, as well as the age of the participants.



### Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis was done by following the steps proposed by (Creswell, 2009).

- a. Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis. This entails organizing the information acquired from the written interviews.
- b. Step 2. Read through all the data. The starting point is to get a general idea of the material and consider its overall significance.
- c. Step 3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process. Coding is the process of dividing up the content into textual segments or portions before giving the information context.
- d. Step 4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. A description is a thorough depiction of details about individuals, locations, or activities in a scene. Then, for a research study, use the coding to produce a limited number of topics or categories—maybe five to seven. These themes are those that emerge as key results in qualitative research and are frequently utilized to establish headings in the study's findings sections.

- e. Step 5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.
- f. Step 6. A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data. Another interpretation can come from contrasting the results with knowledge from theories or literature. In this sense, the authors propose that the results either support or contradict earlier conclusions. Additionally, it can propose additional questions that should be explored that the researcher had not anticipated earlier in the study but were brought up by the data and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

This study is carried out by a mixed method with a triangulation design. As mentioned, this refers to the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data that can then be compared. To describe the data in an orderly and clear manner, analyses are separated into a quantitative and a qualitative section.

### Quantitative Results

Table 4 presents the mean scores across the different measures. The variables of Care/Fairness, Authority, and Emotional Intensity can range from 1 to 5 points, while Self-Transcendence and Conservation can range from 1 to 6 points. In most of the scales, a variation of responses can be seen, except for the Self-Transcendence values.

**Table 4.** *Descriptive Statistics*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b><i>M (SD)</i></b>
Care/Fairness wrongness ratings	1.5	5	3.70 (.70)
Authority wrongness ratings	1.5	5	3.22 (.84)
Self-Transcendence values	4.2	6	5.21 (.48)
Conservation values	2.17	6	4.06 (.81)
Emotional Intensity scores	2.25	5	3.61 (.67)

To examine the relationship between the variables, Pearson correlations were calculated. Participants who react more emotionally, also tended to consider the transgressions towards care and fairness, and authority morals as significantly more wrong. Regarding values, the Conservation values were also significantly related to both types of wrongness judgments. Youths who value respect, impulse restriction, and prefer a stable society, also evaluate transgressions as significantly more wrong. Additionally, Self-transcendence values were

positively correlated with Conservation values but were unrelated to moral judgment. Further, no significant correlations were found between the age of the participants and the other variables.

**Table 5.** *Correlations for care/fairness and authority with self-transcendence, conservation, emotional intensity and age.*

	Care/ Fairness	Authority	Age	Self- Transcendence	Conservation
Authority	.341**	-	-	-	-
Age	.052	-.078	-	-	-
Self- Transcendence	.193	.124	.007	-	-
Conservation	.229*	.435**	-.017	.295**	-
Emotional Intensity	.405**	.257*	.044	.124	.219

\* =  $p \leq 0.05$     \*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$

Two multiple linear regressions were conducted to determine if the wrongness ratings of Care/Fairness or/and Authority were predicted by Values or/and Emotional Intensity. First, the predictor variables of Self-Transcendence values, Conservation values, and Emotional Intensity were entered into the model with the criterion variables of either Care/Fairness or Authority (See Table 6). Next, the interaction terms Emotion Intensity X Self-Transcendence, and Emotion Intensity X Conservation were entered into the model.

For Care/Fairness, the first model for the variables was significant ( $F(4, 74) = 4.330, p = .003$ ), but there was no significant change in adjusted  $R^2$  by adding in the interaction variables ( $p = .142$ ). Emotional intensity is the only significant predictor for the model of Care/Fairness.

Similarly, for Authority, the first model for the variables was significant as well ( $F(4, 74) = 4.997, p = .001$ ), but same as before, there was no significant change in adjusted  $R^2$  by

adding the interaction variables ( $p=.178$ ). Conservation value is the only significant predictor for the model of Authority. Thus, it would imply that in both models, at least one of the variables predicts them.

**Table 6.** Regression analysis for Self-Transcendence, Conservation and Emotional Intensity as a predictor for Care/Fairness and Authority

<b>Care / Fairness</b>					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>
Age	.018	.034	.055	.521	.146
Self-Transcendence	.165	.157	.115	1.052	
Conservation	.102	.095	.120	1.074	
Emotional Intensity	.357	.111	.346	3.212*	
<b>Authority</b>					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>
Age	-.021	.040	-.054	-.518	.170
Self-Transcendence	-.007	.186	-.004	-.036	
Conservation	.412	.113	.402	3.657*	
Emotional Intensity	.187	.132	.151	1.420	

### Qualitative Results

A qualitative approach was taken to understand better the reasoning behind the morality judgment of wrongness for the videos. Table 7 provides the description provided by the researchers who validated the clips.

**Table 7.** *Description and label for each moral judgment video used in the thesis.*

<b>Number + Foundation</b>	<b>Description of Video</b>	<b>Label Name</b>
Care/Fairness Video 1	A disfigured man was bullied on Instagram by the athlete Shaquille O'Neal.	<i>O'Neal Video</i>
Care/Fairness Video 2	Lance Armstrong admitted to drug cheating on National TV.	<i>Armstrong Video</i>
Authority Video 1	Children disrespect deaf mother by covering their mouths when talking between each other.	<i>Children Video</i>
Authority Video 2	A basketball player yells at his coaches in the middle of the game.	<i>Basketball Video</i>

Qualitative responses were categorized according to the Moral Foundation each video was intended to assess, i.e., issues related to the categories of Care/Fairness or Authority. In order to present the results in a more organized way, we display them in Table 8 to point out which themes were discussed in each of the videos.

Most of the videos had responses related to care, fairness, and authority. Under the category of Care, the sub-themes of harmful behavior were grouped into harming the self and harming to others, like the marginalized communities. For Fairness, the sub-themes of normalized behavior were considered for normal situations based on the context, and worse actions that could have been done. For Authority, the sub-themes of disrespectful behavior included aggressive communication, taking advantage, being taught harmful behavior and unprofessional behavior; the sub-themes of non-intentional behavior were considered: difference of ratings if they were not children, and they should be taught different as they grow.

**Table 8.** *Qualitative Themes for the videos*

	Theme	Sub-Theme	O'Neal Video (Care/Fairness)	Armstrong Video (Care/Fairness)	Children Video (Authority)	Basketball Video (Authority)
<b>Care</b>	Harmful Behavior		✓	✓		
		Harm to Self		*		
		Harm to Other	*			
	Not Intention to Harm		✓		✓	
	Lack of Empathy				✓	
<b>Fairness</b>	Unfair Advantage			✓		
	Normalized Behavior		✓	✓	✓	✓
		Assess as Normal	*	*	*	*
		Worse Actions	*	*		
	How Fair is to Judge the Action		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Authority</b>	Influence Behavior		✓			
	Disrespectful or Unfair behavior				✓	✓
		Aggressive Communication				*
		Unprofessional Behavior				*
		Take Advantage			*	
		Taught Harmful Behavior			*	
	Will Behave Better with Age				✓	
Do not know about sports					✓	

## Transgressions Involving Care

Throughout the responses, one of the main commonalities was that a famous/well-known personality was doing something that could be hurtful to himself or others. Because of this, one theme that was identified through the data was *Harmful Behavior*. This was demonstrated in different ways, one of them being harm to self, which appeared in the Armstrong Video referring to the illegal use of enhancement drugs. Some stated that since the damage was only focused on the protagonist of the video, then it is not as wrong because he didn't cause harm to others. One participant mentioned: *“This is immoral and unfair to other participants that he competes alongside, though because it didn't directly harm anyone I wouldn't rate it any higher on unacceptability”* (21-year-old participant). One participant affirmed: *“He is hurting himself but no one else”* (20-year-old participant). Other youth focused on how the harm focused on others, particularly marginalized communities. Some youths mentioned how the post was an act of bullying, which sometimes can be portrayed through memes, or how wrong it was to make fun of another person's appearance, which could be even more intense if that individual has a disability. This harm could be seen as psychological or emotional since it can include mockery but not something necessarily physical. One youth pointed out:

*“I gave that video a rating of 4 because Shaq did something deliberately cruel to someone in hopes of getting some laughs out of other people. Joking at someone else's expense is something I feel strongly about, especially regarding folks living with disabilities or other conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to these sort of jokes”.* (22-year-old participant).

The second theme present in the transgressions of Care is *Not Doing Intentional Harm*, which was evident in the O'Neal Video. Participants would comment that Shaquille O'Neal did

not necessarily have the intention to hurt Jamal or the purpose of doing something funny yet not damaging. This theme also included the evaluation or reasoning behind doing something, and because there was no direct intent to hurt Jamal, it couldn't be evaluated as wrong as other actions. One youth explained:

*“Often, memes are created and shared with images available on the internet. While these are not always ill-intentioned, the video did provide further context on the subject of the image which makes one question if our engagement with such images are entertainment or secretly mocking something we deem different”* (23-year-old participant).

Another youth mentioned:

*“I believe that something that is “very wrong” would have to have the direct intent to cause harm. I don't think that Shaq had the intention of teasing this individual, and was most likely doing it to attempt to be funny. However, the harm is absolutely there, and cannot be denied, but I cannot label it “very wrong” knowing that that was not his intention”* (20-year-old participant).

This theme was also present in the Children Video with the reasoning that the daughters might not necessarily understand or know what their behavior meant to their mother; referring to the fact that they may not yet fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. Also, some emphasized that the ratings would be different if they were not children. One youth stated: *“It's not nice to make fun of someone because they're deaf or hard or hearing. However, the children probably don't realize fully that what they're doing is wrong”* (23-year-old participant) Another youth mentioned: *“I did not give this rating a 5 because the child is 7 years old, which is likely a driving cause of her behaviour (she is young, immature, and possibly doesn't see the true harm*

*she is causing, although I believe she does know that what she is doing is not appropriate)*” (22-year-old participant).

Within the context of care, a third theme was evident, particularly in the Children Video, related to *Lack of Empathy* since the daughters are aiming to make fun of their mother and even hurt her. This behavior was seen as harsh and hostile because the children did not show remorse and seemed to have some perception of how negatively this affected their mother without necessarily considering the consequences. One participant stated: *“There is no justification for the child to feel proud for finding a way around as she is exploiting something her mother can't control”* (23-year-old participant). Another participant mentioned: *“Being respectful is very important. The attitude of those children shows very little empathy, I would even say malice”* (24-year-old participant).

### Transgressions towards Fairness

Through the responses obtained in the videos, three themes were identified for the Fairness category. The first was an *unfair advantage*, found only in Armstrong Video, as it refers to the position achieved by the athlete as a result of his use of banned substances to enhance his performance. Youths describe this as a method to get ahead of others and a form of cheating, especially since that is the reason why they are not allowed to be used. Also, they explained that, possibly, he might have felt pressure to achieve or maintain a certain professional level. One youth stated:

*“In the professional level of sports, it is a no brainer not to use banned substances to enhance performance to maintain respect and fairness for all those competing with you. Considering the stakes at hand and the amount of time and effort it takes to reach a*

*professional level, it is unfair to those who fairly contribute to the sport”*. (16-year-old participant).

Another participant added: *“Sporting events should celebrate an athlete's prowess and discipline. Although there might be pressure to succeed this could never justify the use of substances, which makes competition unfair”* (23-year-old participant).

The second theme was determined because of how the participants classified the person's actions, which was *Normalized Behavior* evident in all the videos. This was manifested in distinct ways, and in relation to the assessment of the behavior. In the O’Neal Video and the Armstrong Video, youths criticized the behavior of the character by making reference to the fact that, due to the frequency with which a transgression tends to occur, it is not necessary to severely disapprove that one person makes fun of another or drug use in sports. One participant argued: *“Because being a public figure you have to think more than twice about what you are going to post on the Internet (...) it gives rise to the general public to have those attitudes and normalize it”* (24-year-old participant). Another participant mentioned: *“I stated this was moderately wrong because, unfortunately one again this is something that is common. It should not be done as it is unfair to other people this man would go up against, but they are accessible enough for someone to get their hands on it for a reason”* (21-year-old participant). An additional participant added: *“Armstrong’s doping could be perceived as wrong because it is deceptive in nature. However, in professional sports, the pressure to compete is high and doping is common”* (23-year-old participant).

The assessment of behavior is also present in the Children Video and Basketball Video as well. Reference was made to the fact that since children were used to living with deaf parents, for them it was not something discriminatory, but a normal sign of rebellion against their parents.

One participant mentioned: *“The children are young and have had the concept of a deaf mother be normalized to them, so they likely don’t perceive their behaviour as discriminatory towards their mothers hearing impairment”* (23-year-old participant). On the other hand, the frequency with which athletes express themselves in this way in tense moments of the game is commented on, which does not necessarily make it improper. Another participant added:

*The actions of the player lie within a slight deviance of the standard culture of professional sporting, especially basketball. I did not find the players actions to deviate past those who are highly praised within the field, and such is pervasive and common within the sport. Poor emotional regulation is not to be encouraged, but it took place within a context where these actions are either condoned, or face little repercussions, this is to say it’s not malicious, just a consequence of its context.* (24-year-old participant).

An alternative way in which the normalization of the case is present is via the comparison that there are worse actions that could be done, especially from a moral point of view. In this way, there is a comparison with other possible scenarios and how that affects the ratings that the participants gave in this video. One youth affirmed: *“This happens in everyday life, people make fun of one another no matter how popular you are or well known you are. It is unfortunately common but still not okay, there could have been worse things done”* (21-year-old participant). Another youth stated: *“I personally don't think drug use is something that should be vilified, but it is absolutely morally wrong to enhance your performance in an unfair way during competition. (...) and I think there is worse things that someone could do besides something like this”* (20-year-old participant).

Youth questioned how *fair it is to judge their actions* if they have not lived or understand completely the situation. Regarding the O’Neal and Armstrong Videos, it was expressed that we

do not necessarily know the reasons that may have led the person to perform the behavior. Moreover, their honesty in the face of their actions may be something that should be recognized for its value. One youth stated: *“Shaq has no personal relationship with this person that he just immitated. They have no way of knowing whats Shaq's reason or feeling towards this behaviour was”* (21-year-old participant). Another participant argues: *“I feel like a lot of actors/celebrities are involved in these types of actions. Not many admit to this. Athletes will also take drugs to advance their performance as well”* (18-year-old participant). While in the Basketball Video, it was explained from the perspective that something could have happened earlier to provoke the conflict and therefore would make the situation understandable. One youth stated:

*It is hard to tell what the man is upset about. If he was being rude to another person or getting upset because of something that happened in the game it would be wrong, but if he was yelling because the other man had said something rude about one of the teammates for example his reaction may have been justified.* (21-year-old participant).

Also, in the Children Video, it is suggested there could be multiple scenarios which can make the situation more difficult to judge or have a definite position regarding how it transgresses morally. Another participant argued:

*We as viewers cannot know what is being whispered between the children - it might not be anything serious or worth being offended over (...) if their parents were hearing - would whispering behind their hands still be wrong? (...) there are a lot of ways that children sneak stuff past adults who don't have disabilities (...) there are too many uncertain aspects of this situation that makes it a moral grey area.* (21-year-old participant).

### Transgressions towards Authority

Within the area of authority, three themes emerged. The first related to the *Influence the Behavior* of whoever viewed or saw the post. In the Shaq Video, youth commented on the potential for fans or spectators to repeat the behavior since a well-known person is also doing it and, as a consequence, the mocking towards Jamal could be copied or intensified. One youth said:

*“I feel that morally he is very wrong because so if he makes fun of these people, it gives rise to the general public to have those attitudes and normalize it”* (24-year-old participant).

The participants also discussed the significance of *disrespectful or unfair behavior* towards the parents or the coach -the authority figure- which resulted in areas for further consideration. For example, participants discussed how the type of communication can influence their assessment. This refers to the method in which the player and coach relate to each other, as it is not necessarily the most appropriate one. One participant stated: *“I gave the rating I did because it is morally wrong to be aggressive and up in peoples' faces”* (21-year-old participant). Another participant explained:

*“I was going in between picking moderately wrong and very wrong because I think it greatly depends on what the player said and if that person truly meant it. I understand its gets hard to keep your cool when you are very passionate about something like a sport and sometimes you can not hold yourself together and exploded on someone. I really do think it depends on the mind set of the person and what their intentions truly are”* (21-year-old participant).

An additional element raised by the participants that reflects characteristics of disrespect in the Basketball Video was the presentation of unprofessional behaviors. Participants suggested that there should be expectations about how such situations should be dealt with in a sports context. One participant mentioned: *“Very inappropriate to be so upset in a public setting. I'm sure there was cursing, which is very unprofessional considering this is the athletes job, being a professional athlete”* (18-year-old participant). In the Children Video, the kids' behavior was evaluated as an intentional act that took advantage of their mother's disability. One youth responded: *“I gave the rating I did, because it is so morally wrong to take advantage of someone's disability”* (21-year-old participant). Another youth opined: *“It's disrespectful to hide what your saying from people especially if there your mother”* (17-year-old participant). In this regard, the participants questioned whether the children were taught harmful behavior and questioned the reasons why they are replicating it or if they have seen somebody else doing something similar. One youth pointed out: *“I think that they are not necessarily bad children but maybe are around people that behave such way. That though does not excuse that they are behaving badly”* (18-year-old participant). Another youth reasoned: *“The girls only made that comments because someone taught them, it's not correct said that things to someone, but the main point it's to understand that somebody has been teaching those comments and behaviors to the girls”* (22-year-old participant). Nevertheless, one participant had an opposite reasoning to this situation: *“This children's behaviour is very morally wrong especially because they have parents that are hard of hearing meaning that it is fair to assume that they have been told from a young age that these behaviours are not acceptable”* (21-year-old participant).

A final observation from the participants was focused on the age of the people in the video. For example, participants wondered if the children's behavior may *improve as they grow*

*older*, and their age is the reason they act like that. Thus, it is affirmed the importance of someone teaching them a better way to behave with their mother regarding her disability. One youth stated: *“They are children who are still learning exactly what the right/wrong things to do are sometimes. I believe children deserve a little more grace and time to understand the way their behaviour impacts people”* (23-year-old participant). Another youth mentioned: *“Teaching children to respect people no matter what form they come in is an important lesson”* (19-year-old participant).

As an interesting side note, when the youths answered why they gave that rating of wrongness for the Armstrong Video, they would add to their response that they *“do not know much about sports”* or *“do not care much about sports”*. Although these were not categorized in a theme, it was considered relevant to point out since this could have significantly affected their ratings and the reason for it. On the other hand, it was chosen not to code some themes in this study since they were making reference to other moral foundations like Loyalty that were not directly evaluated in this study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study focused on whether types of values (i.e., self-transcendence and conservation), age of the participants, and emotional intensity relate to evaluations of everyday moral situations, like Care/Fairness and Authority, in youths. In other words, the values that young people hold and the intensity with which they feel emotions can help us understand how they judge the immorality of a situation.

In the qualitative responses, the participants recognize the videos as examples of situations that can occur in people's daily lives as *Assessing as Normal* was the most consistent theme. The importance of being the only theme identified in all four videos allows us to establish this response as a midpoint between condemning a behavior or making an excuse for it. Thus, some reasons could be attributed as reproach for what the people in the video are doing. For example, doing harmful behavior, behaving with lack of empathy, having an unfair advantage over others, influencing others to behave the same way or being disrespectful towards others. Other explanations justified the conduct as no intention to harm, unfair to judge their choices, and that they will be better when they mature.

Interestingly, we can find condemning or excusable answers for both types of moral judgments, which not only refers to the moral category it transgresses but also the complexity of how the youths interpret and evaluate what happened and can sometimes be seen as ambivalent thinking. Rorty (2014) states that this ambivalence is constructive and can reveal how our reasoning struggles in a complex society with multiple and competing values, also dealing with conflicting perspectives without rushing to one judgment. Thus, neither assessment may be better than the other, and this ambivalence could be rational and favorable if the reasons are properly stated, as it can promote collective listening and reach a solution, if necessary (Cecchini, 2024;

Rorty, 2014). For example, when examining the responses in the Armstrong video, some participants responded they judged an action that I had not initially contemplated. Specifically, to the interviewee being honest about the consumption of banned substances and not only about the consumption itself. This also suggests that future studies should be precise regarding the behavior which is being evaluated.

In this thesis we aimed to confirm whether values and emotional intensity could predict how wrongly moral transgressions were scored, considering information from research findings and literature. Haidt (2001) stated that emotions can function as a strong signal that alerts us to morally relevant situations or when these are being transgressed (Eisenberg, 2000; Graham et al., 2013; Lerner et al., 2015). Nevertheless, when analyzing the models, we found that each factor forecasts different types of moral responses. Only care/fairness judgments were predicted by emotional intensity. These results are partially related to the findings of other research indicating that emotions can play a role in triggering actions like taking care and acting fairly (Daniel et al., 2014; Krettenauer, Asendorpf, et al., 2013; Krettenauer, Campbell, et al., 2013; Krettenauer et al., 2011, 2014).

An example of this emotional engagement is evident in O'Neal's Video when participants react to the situation in the clip by the type of emotional response they direct toward different characters. Some youths relate frequently with the harm done to Jamal, highlighting the insensitivity of focusing on the *"funny side of a joke"*; meanwhile, other participants argue that there is not necessarily an intention to hurt, seen through statements such as: *"not always ill-intentioned"*. Likewise, various youths reported, in the Armstrong Video, that the consumption of enhancement can give an athlete an *"unfair advantage"* over others, while other youth argue that *"he is being honest about it"* as a way to explain how he's candor may alter the situation.

Thus, the difference in perspectives suggests that emotional distress may cause youths to empathize differently since some side with one person, others with another person in the video, and a few with both; or different sides of the situation. Therefore, it might be interesting to see in future studies who people judge the wrongness of the behavior according to.

Additionally, it was found that there was an association between emotional intensity and the scores of authority wrongness even though this relationship did not hold in the regression. This could provide an explanation as to why we did not find many responses that refer to emotional intensity in scenarios that mention the moral foundation of authority. In the Children Video, the participants' responses can vary depending on perspective. Thus, the youths pointed out the daughters "*lack of empathy*" and proudness of their attitude, while others argue that the kids might not be "*intending to harm their mother*" since they don't necessarily realize the consequences of their actions.

Although emotional experiences clearly influence moral behavior, they do not always determine whether our actions will be ethical or not. Teper et al. (2015) mentions that emotional experience in moral situations can influence our ethical behavior but might not always predict what we would do. This was evident in the youths' comments on how it would not necessarily be *fair to judge the actions* of the people in the videos because one would not necessarily know what to do if one were in the situation. In most cases, participants gave this reasoning in addition to another, which could lead us to infer that young people are aware that they may want to act morally but may not do so.

For authority judgments, it was found that the data displayed an impact and a relationship between conservation values with this moral judgment. This connection was expected to occur and is partially similar to the one found by Sverdlik & Rechter (2020), where it is highlighted

that the more moral one is, the more one has conservation values. The relationship implies that respect and acceptance of others, as well as following social expectations and norms has a certain link to the fact that transgressions of everyday moral judgments of authority towards others are considered more relevant (Davidov et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2013; McNeace & Sinn, 2018; Paciello et al., 2013; F. Schwartz et al., 2022; S. H. Schwartz et al., 2001). The Children Video shows that the daughters are disrespecting their mother by taking advantage of her hearing limitation and replicating harmful behavior that might have been taught by someone else. Nonetheless, this explanation usually comes with the idea that since they are still kids, we should not judge their actions so strongly. Paciello et al. (2013) asserts that, as one gets older, adolescents begin to take more responsibility for their actions. With this in mind, one can see how the participants are, on the one hand, assigning responsibility to the children for their behavior by claiming that they are taking advantage of their mother; yet, for the most part, they take the responsibility away by claiming that they did not do it with bad intentions or that someone must have taught them. Thus, this duality of thought could be because the young people interviewed already have the capacity to recognize the responsibility of actions, as well as the complexity of the scenario, that not necessarily we have to have a villain and a victim.

As another example, the Basketball Video is described as having aggressive communication and unprofessional behavior. Therefore, it is not only important to whom this transgression is made, but also the way in which it is made. Thus, participants often describe the situation as “*getting into people's faces*” as a clear sign of disrespect. However, this reasoning is usually accompanied by the fact that it is a “*normal*” situation in sport. This may lead us to understand that while the action is clearly disrespectful, it depends on how often or how tolerated it is in that context to determine the assigned level of wrongness. Different researchers have

identified that during adolescence, the capacity for moral reasoning improves because they increasingly take into account the perspectives and feelings of others and are becoming increasingly responsible for their choices, which could be present in this situation (Chiasson et al., 2017; Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021; Paciello et al., 2013).

Besides that, it was also found that conservation values were linked to the moral transgressions of care and fairness, although this relationship disappeared in the regression. In other words, it would mean that looking for harmony in society is linked to the avoidance of people being hurt (Davidov et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2013). This could explain why there were not many responses provided by the youth about care and fairness contain references to conservation values. A few critiqued Shaquille's actions because of the *influence it could have on others to replicate his actions* which can violate social safety and make it difficult to maintain a social order (Davidov et al., 2008; McNeace & Sinn, 2018).

Thus, Killen & Dahl (2021) explains that when discussing the challenges of promoting changes to group norms that stick to stereotyped expectations, youths express deeper and detailed reasoning, which could clarify why conservation predicts moral responses to authority transgressions more consistently than the care and fairness ones. Additionally, these values might be associated with trustworthiness towards groups, which can be understood as a sign of respect, as well as helping in the forging of beneficial relationships between the hierarchies (Davidov et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2013; Sverdlik & Rechter, 2020). Youth often expressed their opinions by making references about *disrespecting* someone higher up the hierarchy.

Theoretically, it was expected that self-transcendence values would be associated with moral judgments of care and fairness, however, this was not reflected in the results. This could be explained in two ways. First, it might indicate that social norms and parameters can change

over time, which may affect how people think and act in contrast to different understanding of moral transgression like those against the welfare of others (Fischhoff & Broomell, 2019; Killen & Dahl, 2021). This possibility may be evident in the present study when interpreting the normality of certain situations for a transgression, such as teasing, or the use of illicit drugs. Thus, participants minimized the seriousness or importance of what happened, indicating no injustice had occurred that should be rectified or that there are worse things that could happen. For example, *“don't think drug use is something that should be vilified”* or that this *“happens in everyday life, people make fun of one another (...), there could have been worse things done”*. These responses show that even within people who identify as prosocial, some behaviors have become more normalized.

Another possible explanation is that there was low variability and a small range in the self-transcendence scores ( $SD=.48$ ). Youth identified themselves as people who are very concerned about their well-being or the interests of others. These values can be highly relevant for a youth population which could explain the similarities in the scores of the participants (Davidov et al., 2008; Gu & Tse, 2018; Robinson, 2013; S. H. Schwartz et al., 2001). Another result was that those who rated the care/fairness videos as more wrong also considered the lack of respect towards a hierarchy in the same way. Likewise, the categories of care, fairness, and authority are usually present together in different theories of morality in a descriptive way (Garrigan et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2013). Cingel & Krcmar (2020) mentioned that care, fairness, and authority visibility are usually more present together in childhood because of the media exposure.

Similarly, the qualitative analysis showed that some themes of care and fairness emerged in authority videos, while themes of authority were present in the care and fairness videos.

Therefore, another explanation for the relationship between wrongness scores is that even though questions were asked about videos mainly attributed to certain moral foundations, this does not mean that they are only evaluated under those criteria. In other words, when asked to explain why a behavior seems wrong to them, youths rely on a more holistic moral understanding rather than evaluating through only one perspective. This supports the idea that youths analyze a situation using their entire morality and not just a section or a part of it; confirming that it is a concept that goes beyond care and fairness (Mammen & Paulus, 2023).

Another finding was the link between self-transcendence and conservation. These values are not theoretically expected to be related because conservation values are seen as self-protective and the avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations, while self-transcendence promote openness, growth, and concern for others' well-being without anxiety (Davidov et al., 2008; S. H. Schwartz et al., 2012). However, S. H. Schwartz et al. (2012) pointed out that these values could also be categorized as social focus values since they concern the well-being of others and the preservation of established institutions. This similarity demonstrates the complexity of youth's moral and value systems and implies that valuing the status quo does not prevent empathy or altruism since, in some situations, it may even strengthen them.

Finally, the factor of age was not found to be a factor influencing both models. However, in the research conducted by Murray (2025), age was found to play a significant role as a moderator, which is related to findings that suggest moral thinking and emotions may interact proactively and have an impact on individual's development (Chiasson et al., 2017; Daniel et al., 2014). This could be due to the fact that there is not much diversity in the responses of the young people. Based on this, it is considered relevant for future research to apply these tests in younger populations, in a larger sample of younger people or from different places of origin.

## **Conclusion**

The findings showed a relationship between emotional intensity, conservation values, and different types of everyday moral judgments. However, the emotional intensity did not function as a moderator in the proposed models as expected. Instead, youths who hold a high importance on maintaining the status quo and social norms were more likely to view violations of authority as immoral. This could be because the idea that moral awareness, concerning hierarchy and group dynamics, might be increased by respect for social order. Also, emotional intensity across videos and participants often varied depended on which character or action they focused on. Youths evaluated moral transgressions according to their own interpretations and empathy towards a particular person in the video, which is evident by some actions being defended and others criticized. Even though it was expected that youth who identify with self-transcendence values would evaluate care and fairness transgressions as more wrong, this was not found in the results. This could be due to the similarities in the participants' value scores or current cultural norms.

By focusing on scenarios that may arise in day-to-day situations - and not life and death - we gain a better understanding of the moral processing and emotions of youths for real events. While extreme moral decision events provide us with important information, they do not necessarily allow us to understand how young people judge or react on a day-to-day basis with bullying, cheating, or disrespecting parents or coaches. Although some responses were contradictory to others, this enriches the results by emphasizing the complexity in rational, of ambivalence, and how frequent this reasoning may be present in youths' daily lives. Thus, not only do we have information about what and how much youth consider to be a moral

transgression, but why and what aspects make it an immoral action. It is important to continue to conduct similar research in order to corroborate and learn more.

## References

- Bajovic, M., & Rizzo, K. (2021). Meta-moral cognition: bridging the gap among adolescents' moral thinking, moral emotions and moral actions. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 26(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2020.1867206>
- Becerra, R., & Campitelli, G. (2013). Emotional Reactivity: Critical Analysis and Proposal of a New Scale. *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 3(6), 161–168. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.ijap.20130306.03>
- Blakemore, S. J. (2008). The social brain in adolescence. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 9(4), 267–277. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2353>
- Blakemore, S. J., & Choudhury, S. (2006). Development of the adolescent brain: Implications for executive function and social cognition. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47(3–4), 296–312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2006.01611.x>
- Bucciarelli, M., Khemlani, S., & Johnson-Laird, P. N. (2008). The psychology of moral reasoning. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 3(2), 121–139. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1930297500001479>
- Caballero, A., Granberg, R., & Tseng, K. Y. (2016). Mechanisms contributing to prefrontal cortex maturation during adolescence. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 70, 4–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.05.013>
- Carlo, G., Crockett, L. J., Wolff, J. M., & Beal, S. J. (2012). The Role of Emotional Reactivity, Self-regulation, and Puberty in Adolescents' Prosocial Behaviors. *Social Development*, 21(4), 667–685. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2012.00660.x>
- Carpendale, J. I. M. (2000). Kohlberg and Piaget on Stages and Moral Reasoning. *Developmental Review*, 20(2), 181–205. <https://doi.org/10.1006/drev.1999.0500>

- Carpendale, J. I. M., & Hammond, S. I. (2016). The development of moral sense and moral thinking. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, 28(6), 743–747.  
<https://doi.org/10.1097/MOP.0000000000000412>
- Cecchini, D. (2024). Experiencing the Conflict: The Rationality of Ambivalence. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 58(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-021-09859-1>
- Chiasson, V., Vera-Estay, E., Lalonde, G., Dooley, J. J., & Beauchamp, M. H. (2017). Assessing social cognition: age-related changes in moral reasoning in childhood and adolescence. *Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 31(3), 515–530.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13854046.2016.1268650>
- Cingel, D. P., & Krcmar, M. (2020). Considering Moral Foundations Theory and the Model of Intuitive Morality and Exemplars in the context of child and adolescent development. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 44(2), 120–138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2020.1755337>
- Conte, B., Hahnel, U., & Brosch, T. (2023). From Values to Emotions: Cognitive Appraisal Mediates the Impact of Core Values on Emotional Experience. *Emotion*, 23(4), 1115–1129.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001083.supp>
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano-Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications.
- Cushman, F., Young, L., & Hauser, M. (2006). The Role of Conscious Reasoning and Intuition in Moral Judgment: Testing Three Principles of Harm. *Association for Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1082–1089.

- Daniel, E., Dys, S. P., Buchmann, M., & Malti, T. (2014). Developmental relations between sympathy, moral emotion attributions, moral reasoning, and social justice values from childhood to early adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, *37*(7), 1201–1214.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.08.009>
- Davidov, E., Schmidt, P., & Schwartz, S. H. (2008). Bringing values back in: The adequacy of the European social survey to measure values in 20 countries. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *72*(3), 420–445. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfn035>
- Davidson, R. J. (1998). Affective Style and Affective Disorders: Perspectives from Affective Neuroscience. *Cognition & Emotion*, *12*(3), 307–330.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/026999398379628>
- De Giorgis, S., Gangemi, A., & Damiano, R. (2022). Basic Human Values and Moral Foundations Theory in ValueNet Ontology. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)*, *13514 LNAI*, 3–18. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17105-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17105-5_1)
- Eisenberg, N. (2000). Emotion, Regulation, and Moral Development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *51*, 665–697.
- Fischhoff, B., & Broomell, S. B. (2019). Judgment and Decision Making. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *71*, 311–355. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010419>
- Garrigan, B., Adlam, A. L. R., & Langdon, P. E. (2018). Moral decision-making and moral development: Toward an integrative framework. *Developmental Review*, *49*, 80–100.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2018.06.001>

- Gawronski, B., Conway, P., Armstrong, J., Friesdorf, R., & Hütter, M. (2018). Effects of Incidental Emotions on Moral Dilemma Judgments: An Analysis Using the CNI Model. *Emotion, 18*(7), 989–1008. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000399>
- Gibbs, J. (2013). *Moral development & reality: Beyond the theories of Kohlberg, Hoffman and Haidt* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2024, October 1). *Age Categories, Life Cycle Groupings*. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/concepts/definitions/age2>
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–130). Academic Press Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00002-4>
- Gu, X., & Tse, C. S. (2018). Abstractness and desirableness in the human values system: Self-transcendence values are construed more abstractly, but felt more closely than are self-enhancement values. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 21*(4), 282–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12335>
- Haidt, J. (2001). The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment. *Psychological Review, 108*(4), 814–834. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X>
- Haidt, J. (2007). The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology. *Science, 316*(5827), 998–1002.
- Hardy, S. A., Walker, L. J., Olsen, J. A., Woodbury, R. D., & Hickman, J. R. (2014). Moral identity as moral ideal self: Links to adolescent outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(1), 45–57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033598>

- Hare, T. A., Tottenham, N., Galvan, A., Voss, H. U., Glover, G. H., & Casey, B. J. (2008). Biological Substrates of Emotional Reactivity and Regulation in Adolescence During an Emotional Go-Nogo Task. *Biological Psychiatry*, *63*, 927–934.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2008.03.015>
- Hertz, S. G., & Krettenauer, T. (2014). Children’s utilization of emotion expectancies in moral decision-making. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *32*(3), 367–373.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjdp.12052>
- Hertz, S. G., & Krettenauer, T. (2016). Does moral identity effectively predict moral behavior?: A meta-analysis. *Review of General Psychology*, *20*(2), 129–140.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000062>
- Hofmann, W., Wisneski, D. C., Brandt, M. J., & Skitka, L. J. (2014). Morality in everyday life. *Science*, *345*(6202), 1340–1343. <https://doi.org/10.2307/24917605>
- Icenogle, G., & Cauffman, E. (2021). Adolescent decision making: A decade in review. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *31*(4), 1006–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12608>
- Johnston, M., & Krettenauer, T. (2011). Moral self and moral emotion expectancies as predictors of anti- and prosocial behaviour in adolescence: A case for mediation? *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *8*(2), 228–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405621003619945>
- Killen, M., & Dahl, A. (2021). Moral Reasoning Enables Developmental and Societal Change. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 1209–1225.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620964076>
- Killen, M., & Smetana, J. (2008). Moral judgment and moral neuroscience: Intersections, definitions, and issues. *Child Development Perspectives*, *2*(1), 1–6.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2008.00033.x>

- Kohlberg, L. (1958). *The development of modes of moral thinking and choice in the years ten to sixteen*. University of Chicago: Unpublished doctoral dissertation.
- Kohlberg, L. (1969). Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In D. A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of socialization theory and research* (pp. 347–480). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on moral development, Vol. I: The philosophy of moral development*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *Essays on Moral Development: Vol. II. The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Körner, A., Tscharaktschiew, N., Schindler, R., Schulz, K., & Rudolph, U. (2016). The Everyday Moral Judge - Autobiographical Recollections of Moral Emotions. *PLoS ONE*, *11*(12).  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0167224>
- Krettenauer, T. (2022). Development of moral identity: From the age of responsibility to adult maturity. *Developmental Review*, *65*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2022.101036>
- Krettenauer, T., Asendorpf, J. B., & Nunner-Winkler, G. (2013). Moral emotion attributions and personality traits as long-term predictors of antisocial conduct in early adulthood: Findings from a 20-year longitudinal study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *37*(3), 192–201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025412472409>
- Krettenauer, T., Campbell, S., & Hertz, S. (2013). Moral emotions and the development of the moral self in childhood. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *10*(2), 159–173.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2012.762750>
- Krettenauer, T., Colasante, T., Buchmann, M., & Malti, T. (2014). The Development of Moral Emotions and Decision-Making From Adolescence to Early Adulthood: A 6-Year

- Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 43(4), 583–596.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-013-9994-5>
- Krettenauer, T., Jia, F., & Mosleh, M. (2011). The role of emotion expectancies in adolescents' moral decision making. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 108(2), 358–370.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2010.08.014>
- Lerner, J. S., Li, Y., Valdesolo, P., & Kassam, K. S. (2015). Emotion and decision making. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 66(33), 33.1-33.25. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115043>
- Lewis-Smith, I., Pass, L., & Reynolds, S. (2021). How adolescents understand their values: A qualitative study. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 26(1), 231–242.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104520964506>
- Li, S. (2023). Gender Differences in Moral Development and Moral Reasoning. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences EPHHR*, 8, 1146–1152.
- Malti, T., Eisenberg, N., Kim, H., & Buchmann, M. (2013). Developmental trajectories of sympathy, moral emotion attributions, and moral reasoning: The role of parental support. *Social Development*, 22(4), 773–793. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12031>
- Malti, T., Galarneau, E., & Peplak, J. (2021). Moral Development in Adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(4), 1097–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12639>
- Malti, T., & Krettenauer, T. (2013). The Relation of Moral Emotion Attributions to Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior: A Meta-Analysis. *Child Development*, 84(2), 397–412.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01851.x>

- Mammen, M., & Paulus, M. (2023). The communicative nature of moral development: A theoretical framework on the emergence of moral reasoning in social interactions. *Cognitive Development, 66*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2023.101336>
- Mascolo, M., & Fischer, K. (2010). The Dynamic Development of Thinking, Feeling, and Acting over the Life Span. In R. Lerner, M. Lamb, & A. Freund (Eds.), *The Handbook of Life-Span Development* (pp. 149–194). John Wiley & Sons.
- Mathes, E. W. (2021). An evolutionary perspective on Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. *Current Psychology, 40*(8), 3908–3921. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00348-0>
- McCurrie, C. H., Crone, D. L., Bigelow, F., & Laham, S. M. (2018). Moral and Affective Film Set (MAAFS): A normed moral video database. *PLoS ONE, 13*(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206604>
- McNeace, M., & Sinn, J. (2018). Moral Foundations Theory vs. Schwartz Value Theory: Which Theory Best Explains Ideological Differences? *The Winthrop McNair Research Bulletin, 4*(1), 6.
- Mills, B., & Wilner, A. (2023). The science behind “values”: Applying moral foundations theory to strategic foresight. *Futures and Foresight Science, 5*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ffo2.145>
- Mohd Yusoff, M. Z., Safrihsyah, S., Haji Othman, M. K., Fajri, I., Yusuf, S. M., Ibrahim, I., & Mohd Zain, W. H. W. (2022). The effect of moral reasoning and values as the mediator towards student’s prosocial behaviour. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 27*(1), 32–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2021.2021959>
- Murray, S. (2025). Predictive Power of Emotional Reactivity and Values for Everyday Moral Judgements Through Adulthood [Unpublished undergrad dissertation]. Mount Saint Vincent University.

- Nelissen, R. M. A., Dijkster, A. J. M., & de Vries, N. K. (2007). Emotions and goals: Assessing relations between values and emotions. *Cognition and Emotion, 21*(4), 902–911.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930600861330>
- Ohreen, D. (2021). The role of peers on student ethical decision making: evidence in support of the social intuitionist model. *International Journal of Ethics Education, 6*, 289–309.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40889-021-00125-3>
- Olatunji, B. O., & Puncochar, B. D. (2014). Delineating the influence of emotion and reason on morality and punishment. *Review of General Psychology, 18*(3), 186–207.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000010>
- Paciello, M., Fida, R., Tramontano, C., Cole, E., & Cerniglia, L. (2013). Moral dilemma in adolescence: The role of values, prosocial moral reasoning and moral disengagement in helping decision making. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 10*(2), 190–205.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2012.759099>
- Piaget, J. (1932/1965). *The moral judgment of the child*. (M. Gabain, Trans.). New York: Free Press.
- Pletti, C., Lotto, L., Tasso, A., & Sarlo, M. (2016). Will I regret it? Anticipated negative emotions modulate choices in moral dilemmas. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*(1918).  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01918>
- Robinson, O. C. (2013). Values and adult age: Findings from two cohorts of the European Social Survey. *European Journal of Ageing, 10*(1), 11–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-012-0247-3>
- Rorty, A. (2014). The Ethics of Collaborative Ambivalence. *Journal of Ethics, 18*(4), 391–403.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-014-9184-z>

- Rosen, J. B., Brand, M., & Kalbe, E. (2016). Empathy mediates the effects of age and sex on altruistic moral decision making. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience, 10*(67), 1–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2016.00067>
- Rudolph, U., & Tscharaktschiew, N. (2014). An attributional analysis of moral emotions: Naïve scientists and everyday judges. *Emotion Review, 6*(4), 344–352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073914534507>
- Sawyer, S. M., Azzopardi, P. S., Wickremarathne, D., & Patton, G. C. (2018). The age of adolescence. *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, 2*(3), 223–228.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(18\)30022-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(18)30022-1)
- Schwartz, S.H. (1992). Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 25*, 1-65.
- Schwartz, F., Djeriouat, H., & Trémolière, B. (2022). Judging accidental harm: Reasoning style modulates the weight of intention and harm severity. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 75*(12), 2366–2381. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470218221089964>
- Schwartz, S. H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C., Ramos, A., Verkasalo, M., Lönnqvist, J. E., Demirutku, K., Dirilen-Gumus, O., & Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*(4), 663–688. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029393>
- Schwartz, S. H., Melech, G., Lehmann, A., Burgess, S., & Owens, V. (2001). Extending the Cross-Cultural Validity of the Theory of Basic Human Values with a Different Method of Measurement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*(5), 519–542.

- Silfver, M., Helkama, K., Lönnqvist, J. E., & Verkasalo, M. (2008). The relation between value priorities and proneness to guilt, shame, and empathy. *Motivation and Emotion, 32*(2), 69–80. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-008-9084-2>
- Silfver-Kuhalampi, M. (2008). *The sources of moral motivation - studies on empathy, guilt, shame and values* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Helsinki.
- Smetana, J. G., Jambon, M., & Ball, C. L. (2018). Normative Changes and Individual Differences in Early Moral Judgments. *Human Development, 61*(5), 264–280. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26765217>
- Smith, I. H., Soderberg, A. T., Netchaeva, E., & Okhuysen, G. A. (2023). An Examination of Mind Perception and Moral Reasoning in Ethical Decision-Making: A Mixed-Methods Approach. *Journal of Business Ethics, 183*, 671–690. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-05022-9>
- Somarathna, R., Vuilleumier, P., & Mohammadi, G. (2023). EmoStim: A Database of Emotional Film Clips with Discrete and Componential Assessment. *IEEE Transactions on Affective Computing, 15*(03), 1202-1212.
- Sverdlik, N., & Rechter, E. (2020). Religiosity and the value of being moral: Understanding the meaning of morality through a personal values perspective. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 50*(2), 406–421. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2627>
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology, 58*, 345–372. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070145>
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193>

- Teper, R., Zhong, C. B., & Inzlicht, M. (2015). How emotions shape moral behavior: Some answers (and questions) for the field of moral psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12154>
- Tottenham, N., & Sheridan, M. A. (2010). A review of adversity, the amygdala and the hippocampus: A consideration of developmental timing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 3(68). <https://doi.org/10.3389/neuro.09.068.2009>
- Vijayakumar, N., Youssef, G., Allen, N. B., Anderson, V., Efron, D., Mundy, L., Patton, G., Simmons, J. G., Silk, T., & Whittle, S. (2021). The effects of puberty and its hormones on subcortical brain development. *Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpne.2021.100074>
- Yang, Y., & Wang, J. Z. (2017). From structure to behavior in basolateral amygdala-hippocampus circuits. *Frontiers in Neural Circuits*, 11(66). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fncir.2017.00086>
- Zupan, B., & Eskritt, M. (2020). Eliciting emotion ratings for a set of film clips: A preliminary archive for research in emotion. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 160(6), 768–789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2020.1758016>

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Consent Form

We are searching for participants for a study exploring how people make moral judgments. We want to know individuals' values and emotional responses might relate to their judgment of people's behaviour in everyday situations.

This survey will include three tasks. There are some questions regarding your values and details about yourself (e.g., your age and gender). We will also ask you to watch several video clips. For one set of videos, we will ask you to judge how wrong the behaviour in the video is. The other set are movie clips, and you will be asked to indicate your emotional experiences to the scenarios depicted. These videos are meant to cause negative emotions, like disgust, for some people. However, the videos are no more extreme than ones you might see in popular media like YouTube or social media. This survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

To be eligible to participate, you must be 16 years old or older. To watch the video clips, you will also need normal or corrected-to-normal vision and hearing.

There is little risk associated with participation in this study, but a possible risk is that some of the videos may make you feel uncomfortable. Remember, participation is entirely voluntary and therefore, feel free to skip any questions you do not want to answer or withdraw at any time. If you decide during the study that you would no longer want to participate, you may exit the survey. However, once you completed the survey, the researchers have no way of identifying

your data among the others. Therefore, it will not be possible to withdraw from the study after the survey is finished.

Benefits in participation would be to contribute to the expansion of knowledge around moral judgments. You will also learn a bit about how psychological research is done. For MSVU students, you may receive partial course credit at the discretion of your instructors. If you choose to withdraw you are still eligible for the course credit, but you must skip through to the end of the survey to the link back to SONA.

Data collected will be confidential and kept in secure MSVU servers. The data will be retained indefinitely under password protection with the intention that it may be shared with others upon request for additional academic purposes.

The results of the study will be shared by Nicole Jennifer Wong Garcia during her Master's thesis defense open to the public, as well as by Sinead Murray during a student research showcase to occur on April 8, 2024. The results of the study may also be described in academic publications. If participants wish to reach out to the researchers regarding the results of the study, they can contact [eskritt.lab@msvu.ca](mailto:eskritt.lab@msvu.ca).

For any questions you have about this study, you may contact the principal researcher Nicole Jennifer Wong Garcia at [nicole.wongarcia@msvu.ca](mailto:nicole.wongarcia@msvu.ca), or the co-investigator Sinead Murray at [sinead.murray@msvu.ca](mailto:sinead.murray@msvu.ca). All ethical aspects of this study have been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board, in compliance with Mount Saint Vincent University's

Research Ethics Policy. If you have concerns about the conduct of the study and wish to speak with individuals who are not directly involved in the study, you may reach out to the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board c/o MSVU Research Office, at 457-6350 or [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

By proceeding with the questionnaire and clicking “next” you’re agreeing to participate in this study. You’re confirming that you have read and understand the study and consent information provided in the previous pages, as well as the potential risks and benefits of this study, and that you may not request to withdraw your data from this study once you have completed the questionnaire.