A Comparative Study on the Moral Judgment Level Among Asian Students

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ABSTRACT: Integrity is a lot like the weather: everyone talks about it, but no one knows what to do about it (Carter, 1996). Indeed, Integrity is frequently seen in management literature and is on the rise. However, the confusion on this term remains as observed by Palanski (2007): First, little agreement in the literature on the meaning of integrity (Becker, 1998; Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2002). Integrity is frequently vaguely defined and often overlaps with other terms as morality, ethics, conscientiousness, honesty, and trustworthiness (Lowe et al., 2004). Second, in spite of its popularity as a normative descriptor, there is actually little extant theory about integrity in the management literature. The confusion and disagreement about the term likely contribute to the third problem: relatively few empirical studies concerning integrity. This exploratory study attempts to identify the moral judgment level of today's youth using multidimensional scales developed by (Nunnally, 1969; Churchill, 1979; and Campbell and Fiske 1959). Normative philosophies shall be employed to test their significance. Normative philosophies are idealization and accordingly make stronger statements about *what ought to be* rather *what actually is* (Reidenbach and Robin, 1990). However, in most cases *what is* does not really conforms to *what ought to be*? Questionnaires shall be distributed to senior students who are in the areas of Accountancy, Business, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Nursing. Data gathered shall be analyzed using statistical methods. A significant contribution of this paper is to provide a prelude on the current moral judgment level of the youth.

[Peter Ma Salva, He - Jason Huang, Chun – Tsai Lin]. A Comparative Study on the Moral Judgment Level Among Asian Students. Report and Opinion 2011;3(3):55-63]. (ISSN: 1553-9873). <u>http://www.sciencepub.net</u>.

Keywords: Moral Integrity, Moral Judgment and Values

Introduction

Integrity

Integrity and ethical behavior is a topic that is receiving so much attention among scholars and practitioners as evidenced by the numerous literature published in the recent years. However, the term is inadequately defined. Typical definitions are morally inclined, but not everyone agrees on what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, ethical or unethical. Becker (1998) and Parry and Proctor (2002) have explicitly called for more clarity on about the meaning of integrity. Given this problem on definition, Audi and Murphy (2006) suggested that any discussion on integrity should begin with a clarification of what one means by integrity. Palanski and Yammarino (2007) comprehensive review on the various meanings of integrity in management literatures identified five general categories as follows: wholeness, consistency of words and actions, consistency in adversity, being true to oneself, and moral/ ethical behavior.

Integrity and Moral Judgment

A great deal of the ethics literature in management has focused on the area of moral judgment, included here are the most ubiquitous association with integrity. Rest et. al. (1999, p.101) defines moral judgment as "judging which action would be most justifiable in a moral sense." Kohlberg's (1969) research on a cognitive developmental approach to socialization is relevant to this area. As Rest et. at. (1999) note, Kohlberg's work was largely based on making moral judgments according to the principals such as maximizing utility (e.g. Mills, 2003) or obeying universal imperatives (e.g. Kant, 2003) and not according to virtue or character. Carter (1996) posited that moral deliberation is a critical aspect of integrity. Olson (1998) demonstrated the empirically that moral deliberation vis-à-vis integrity is distinct from the Kohlbergian concept of moral judgment. Thus, there is empirical evidence that moral judgment is distinct from integrity.

Kohlberg's Model of Moral Reasoning

Lawrence Kohlberg's (1969) six-stage model of moral development is a widely used approach to

examine variation in moral reasoning among individuals. The model represent a developmental hierarchy of underlying conceptual bases that people draw on when judging what is the morally right thing to do in a given situation. Kohlberg identified three levels and six stages in the process of ethical judgments. The first level is the Pre-conventional Level. At this point an individual is said to see things as how it is cascaded by his elderly as right or wrong. The sense of relativity to one's self interest would normally prevails The second level is the Conventional at this stage. Level, where reasoning is based from conformity of social norms. At this point an individual realizes that individuals may have different opinions. However, if each individual would keep an open mind and some degree of rationality, then individual differences can be minimized. The third level is the Post-conventional Level, where reasoning is based on universal ethical principles which is underpinned in the notion of justice.

Kohlberg's (1969) model has been used to provide a theoretical foundation for an understanding as to how managers approach different ethical dilemmas (e.g. McDonald & Pak 1996; Snell 1996; Weber & Green 1991). However, the model received some criticism in the literature (Snell 1996). First, it has been criticized for its preoccupation with justice. Some scholars argue that universal caring and love may be as worthy a force in ethical reasoning as justice (Snell, 1996). Second, it has been criticized for lacking logical connection to actual decision making because it was concerned with what 'ought to be done' and ignored 'what people will actually do'. Third, it was criticized for having a "Western" culture bias. Regardless of this criticism, Snell(1996) and McDonald & Pak (1996) found Kohlberg's six-stage model can be used to portray the ethical reasoning of Hong Kong Managers.

Methods

Sample and Data Collection

A total of 1200 questionnaires were distributed to junior and senior students in the fields of business, nursing, engineering, arts and sciences. 868 questionnaires were completed yielding an 88.0% response rate. 39.5% of the respondents were male and 60.5% were female. Respondents were distributed from different areas of discipline: 55.7% in business, 29.7% in nursing, 10.0% in arts, 0.08% in sciences, 0.30% in architecture and 0.10% in engineering. The respondents were predominantly Filipinos and Catholics.

Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire using moral dilemmas adapted from Kohlberg (1969) and

Reidenbach and Robin (1990) was used in this study. The three dilemmas were outlined as follows:

- Š The first dilemma reflects on the morals, in which a Man with a dying wife stole a medicine to save his wife.
- S The second dilemma reflects on the behavior integrity. A car owner had repeated have to bring his car to the dealer for repairs and each time the dealer would make some adjustments. At the time the warranty period of the said vehicle come to an end, the dealer charges the customer for the full amount.
- Š The third dilemma reflects on the principle of courage.

Data Analysis

Multidimensional scales that were redeveloped by Reidenbach & Robin (1990) will be used in the data analysis. This method follows the earlier procedures introduced by Nunnally (1967), Churchill (1979), and Campbell and Fiske (1959). A 33-item scale was initially developed (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1983; De George, 1986; Donaldson & Werhane, 1983; Hoffman & Moore, 1984) following five ethical theories: Justice Theory, Relativism, Deontology, Teleology-Egoism, and Teleology-Utilitarianism. Each moral philosophy has a conceptual core, but certain aspects of each philosophy may embrace similar Reidenbach & Robin (1990) has terminologies. streamlined the 33-item scale to 8-items by eliminate overlapping terms leaving those ideas and concepts which are central to the identified philosophies.

Dimension one - a broad-based moral equity dimension.

According to Reidenbach and Robin, Dimension one is the most complex of the three ethical dimensions. It is suggested that the dimension be broken down into four (4) items: Fair/ Unfair, Just/ Unjust, Acceptable/ Unacceptable to my family, and Morally/ Not morally right describes a broad-based, moral equity dimension. The use of the term moral reflects the meaning ascribed to it by Tom Beauchamp (1982, p.5)

In its broadest-based, and most familiar meaning morality is concerned with many forms of belief about right and wrong human conduct. There normative beliefs are expressed through such general terms as 'good,' 'bad,' 'virtuous,' 'praiseworthy,' 'right,' 'ought,' and 'blameworthy.'

This broad dimension is dominated by two items clearly associated with notions of the moral philosophy of justice: fair and just. In addition, it contains what has been classified as deontological item (morally right/ not morally right and a relativistic concept (acceptable/ not acceptable to my family). There are however some questions as to how clearly deontological the notion of 'morally right/ not morally right' actually is in its everyday usage. Its classification as a deontological item comes from a more theoretical interpretation made by the judges and may not reflect its more popular meaning. Consequently, it may represent a broader based notion of good and bad and may depict a more ecumenical concept of ethics than is suggested by its deontological classification. The same argument might be made for the item 'acceptable to my family' which the judges classified as relativistic in a philosophical sense. Evidently, the respondents ascribed in a different sense to the item, incorporating it within the more fundamental notion of moral equity along with the ideas of fairness and justice.

Embedded in this dimension appears to be basic, almost fundamental decision rule for evaluating the moral content of business situations. Decisions are evaluated essentially in terms of their inherent fairness, justice, goodness and rightness. Moreover this dimension incorporates the idea of family acceptance. By extension, Redenbach and Robin suggest that this dimension relies heavily on lessons from our early training that we receive at home regarding fairness, right and wrong as communicated through childhood lessons of sharing, religious training, morals from fairy tales and fables.

Dimension two - a relativistic dimension.

Dimension two is comprised of two items: Traditionally acceptable/ Unacceptable and Culturally acceptable/ Unacceptable. This according to the judge' consensus categorization of concepts suggests a relativistic dimension. This dimension seems to be more concerned with the guidelines, requirements and parameters inherent in the social or cultural system than with the individual considerations. These items suggest that the social and cultural systems are important in helping us define our ethical beliefs. These beliefs are relativistic in the sense that beliefs are subject to the dictates of society. It would seem, however, that the social system parameters implied in this dimension go beyond a purely legal structure of society to include a traditional, historical, and culturally learned understanding of "how the game is played." By extension, it is suggested that this is a dimension that one acquires later in the development stages as the individual experiences adequate and sufficient social intercourse to develop greater understanding of cultural and traditional norms. Depending on the universality of this dimension, it may account for different ethical evaluation of business activities across cultures and subcultures. Trevino (1986) acknowledges the impact of culture on the ethical behavior of managers. Her propositions are limited to organization rather than societal impacts but nonetheless define the relationship between culture and ethical behavior.

The relationship between one's social environment and the ethical evaluative process is made more manifest in the Hunt and Vitell Model (1986) which posits an indirect relationship between cultural influences and evaluative norms. The finding in this instance suggests that beliefs about what is culturally and traditionally acceptable play a more direct role in the evaluative process. Ferell and Greham (1985) treat the social and cultural environment as exogenous in their model. The presence of this dimension within the evaluative structure of individuals would suggest at least a partial re-specification of their model concerning the role that the society and culture play in the ethical evaluative process. That is, society and culture both play a determinant role and an evaluative role.

Dimension three - a contractualism dimension.

Dimension three, is comprised of the items: Violates/ does not violate an unspoken promise and Violates/ does not violate an unwritten contract is purely a deontological dimension wherein notions of implied obligation, contract, duties and rules are present. This dimension resembles mist closely the idea inherent in contractualism, most specifically the idea of a "social contract" that exists between business and most of the society. Most, if not all, business exchanges incorporate either implicit or explicit promises or contracts. Business exchanges involved a quid pro quo wherein one party is obliged to provide a product, service, employment, or perform some action in return for something of value. Individuals appear to take this idea of exchange one step further to include an ethics of exchange. This broadened view of exchange includes obligations which may go beyond a purely economic nature and include notions of fair play, truth telling duty, and rights. Violation of these implicit ideas would result in the condemnation of the exchange process or at least part of the process as unethical.

Results

The data for this particular study was generated from 1056 students from the Philippines and Taiwan. 869 are Filipinos, 175 Taiwanese, 3 Mainland Chinese, 3 Korean, 2 Vietnamese, 2 Malaysian, 1 Burmese and 1 South African. Data collected such as gender, age, year level, field of study, nationality and religion were recorded and were used to analyze vis-àvis with Reidenbach and Robin's multi-dimensional scale. The instrument specifically used for this study has a high alpha rating of 81% The Moral Judgment Index (MJI) is computed at 4.79 and 4.31 respectively. These numbers indicates that there is a slight difference with the moral judgment level among Filipinos and Chinese respondents. Statistically speaking, having an F-value of 24.69 at (P < 0.05) level signals that there is a probably difference between the variables. Trevino (1986) acknowledges the impact of culture on the ethical behavior of managers. Hunt and Vitell Model (1986) posits and indirect relationship between cultural influences and evaluative norms. The findings here, suggests that beliefs about what is culturally and traditionally acceptable playa more direct role in the evaluative process.

Discussion

Can moral judgment provide reasons for action? Moral judgment can be seen in two ways. At one hand if moral judgments are to be evaluated, and genuine disagreements between people exist, it cannot be simply an expression of personal likes or dislikes. On the other hand, if moral judgments are to have some connection with behavior which we acknowledge that they do have, then they must be intimately related to a person's like or dislikes. Philosophers have concluded from this that although moral judgments are not simple expressions of likes or dislikes they are, ultimately, based on the individuals likes or dislikes.

However, this does not resolve the problem. If this were a correct account of the matter then in engaging in a moral dispute it would be like trying to persuade someone else to like the same things that what the others did. Wrestling with a moral problem would not be trying to get what was really right or wrong but only what was right and wrong with reference to something, which would mean, in the final analysis, trying to get at what one most liked and Moreover, moral philosophy could not disliked. concern itself with discussing what is right and wrong with the aim of coming to some sort of conclusion (since no conclusion would be possible), but with analyzing concepts and establishing the validity of the arguments. Indeed, many moral philosophers have seen the subject in this way and, perhaps as a consequence, have not seen moral philosophy as an important subject.

The unexamined assumption led to their being a problem of motivating behavior that accords with a moral judgment is this: it is only ones desires, ones likes and dislikes provide the individual with reasons for action. What can we say about this assumption? Certainly, likes and dislikes do provide reasons for action but equally so do moral considerations. It may be true that one might not have any particular desire to please someone yet the fact that he or she would appreciate courteous behavior gives one a reason for being courteous; One may desire something which one can acquire only be lying and so cheat another person out of it, yet the fact that lying and cheating are wrong gives a reason not to lie and cheat.

The response to the suggestion that "my desires can conflict with what I think I ought to do may be to claim that in fact one have two competing desires." On the one hand one may have the desire to acquire whatever it is that one wants to acquire and on the other hand one have the desire to do what one think is morally right. Whether or not one lie and cheat will depend on which of these desires is stronger. What, however, can be the justification for this claim? The experience of choosing between what one want to do and what one think "I ought to do" is not the same experience as choosing between two things one want to do; to treat both as cases of choosing between desires obliterates an important distinction. Perhaps we imagine some law-like relationship between desires (or preferences) and behavior. However, if this is the case, then 'desire' (or preference) is being used in a technical sense and not in the sense that the word is normally understood - which means that the explanatory force of 'desire' or 'preference' is different.

The main connection, at this point, is that, in addition to likes and dislikes, which certainly give a reasons for doing some things and not doing others, what is morally good or bad also provides reasons. There are similarities between moral evaluations (or judgments) and other evaluations: there are certain facts about, say action, or a type of action, which make it a good action rather than a bad one - for example, that a person is being hurt, being deprived of a possession or being lied to are all facts about an action which make it wrong. However, where moral evaluations differ from other evaluation is that the former case the existence of facts which make the action good or bad also provides me with reason for doing or not doing it, irrespective of my likes or dislikes.

Actually, of course, things are not quite simple as this. First, It is rather important to assume whether that moral judgment action is right or wrong. This assumption, that moral judgment is about actions, makes it easier to move to the conclusion that moral judgment provide reasons for actions. Yet there are other types of moral judgments where the link with actions is not nearly so direct, for example, judgment about a person's character. One might also include here judgments which involve actions that are heroic or saintly, in other words, actions which one can not reasonably expect of a normal person (including oneself). In case of judgment about character, there are reasons for actions but not reasons which apply to me. Nonetheless, there is still a link between judgments and actions, even though the link is not so direct.

The second complication concerns the strength of the reason. For example, although lying, say, is wrong, there may be circumstances where it is excusable and possibly circumstances where it is required and where the opposite would be wrong.

Hence what we should say is that, in so far as the action results in someone being hurt or is an instance of someone being lied to, etc., it is wrong, even though there may be other respects in which it is right. Thus, we need to distinguish between an action's being right overall, when everything is taken into account.

Tables							
Wholeness	Authenticity	Word/ Action Consistency	Consistency in Adversity				
Badaracco and Ellsworth (1992)	Cox et. al. (2003)	Bews and Rossouw (2002)	Duska (2005)				
Koehn (2005)	Howell and Avolio (1995)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	Mc Fall (1987)				
Lowe et al. (2004)	Peterson and Seligman (2004)	Paine (2005)	Paine (2005)				
Trevino et.al. (2000)	Koehn (2005)	Simons (2002, 1999)	Posner (2001)				
Worden (2003)	Lowe et al. (2004) Morisson (2001) Posner (2001) Yuki and Van Fleet (1992)	Tracey and Hinkin (1994) Worden (2003)	Worden (2003)				

Table 1. Palanski's Summary of Integrity Usage in Scholarly Literature

Level and Stage	Description			
Level I. P	Pre-conventional Level			
Level I/ Stage 1	Whatever rewarded is good; Whatever			
Obedience	punished is bad.			
Level I/ Stage 2	I'll do something good to you if you do			
Instrumental Egoism and Simple	something good to me. Fairness means			
Exchange	treating everyone the same.			
Level II. Conventional Level				
Level II/ Stage 3	Good is conformity to a stereotype of "good"			
Personal Concordance	people to peer approval.			
Level II/ Stage 4	Good is defined by the laws of society, by			
Law and Duty to the Social Order	doing one's duty. A law should be obeyed			
	even if it is not fair.			
Level III. 1	Post-conventional Level			
Level III/ Stage 5	Good is understood in terms of abstract			
Societal Consensus	principles that the society agreed upon. An			
	unfair law ought to be changed.			
Level III/ Stage 6	Good is understood in terms of abstract			
Universal Ethical Principles	principles whether or not societies agree with			
	them. An emphasis on human rights.			

Table 2. Komberg Six Stage Model of Moral Reasoning	Table 2.	Kohlberg Six Stage	e Model of Moral Reasoning	
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Tuble 2. Romoorg bix buge model of moral Reasoning								
				Valid	Cumulative			
		У	Percent	Percent	Percent			
Valid	Male	417	39.5	39.5	39.5			
	Female	639	60.5	60.5	100.0			
	Total	1056	100.0	100.0				

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vali d	Arts	106	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Sciences	8	.8	.8	10.8
	Architecture	1	.1	.1	10.9
	Fine Arts	3	.3	.3	11.2
	Business	588	55.7	55.7	66.9
	Engineering	36	3.4	3.4	70.3
	Nursing	314	29.7	29.7	100.0
	Total	1056	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.	Respondents	Profile	by Gender.
rable 5.	Respondents	rionic	by Ochuci.

Table 4. Respondents Profile by Field of Study.

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vali d	Filipinos	869	82.3	82.3	82.3
	Taiwanese	175	16.6	16.6	98.9
	<i>Chinese</i> (Mainland)	3	.3	.3	99.1
	Korean	3	.3	.3	99.4
	Vietnamese	2	.2	.2	99.6
	Malaysian	2	.2	.2	99.8
	Burmese	1	.1	.1	99.9
	South African	1	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	1056	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Respondents Profile by Nationality.

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vali	Catholics	759	71.9	71.9	71.9
d	Protestant s	111	10.5	10.5	82.4
	Buddhist	30	2.8	2.8	85.2
	Taoist	44	4.2	4.2	89.4
	Others	5	.5	.5	89.9
	Atheists	107	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	1056	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Respondents Profile by Religion.

Construct	I: The	Broad-based	Moral Eq	uity
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- Construct Š Just/Unjust
- Š Fair/ Unfair
- š Morally Right/Not Morally Right
- Acceptable/ Not Acceptable to My Family Š

Construct II: The Relativist Construct

Culturally Acceptable/ Not Acceptable

Š Š Traditionally Acceptable/ Not Acceptable

Construct III: The Social Contract Construct

- Š Violates/ Does Not Violate An Unwritten
- Contract
- Š Violates/ Does Not Violate An Unspoken Promise

Table 7. Reidenbach and Robin's Multidimensional Ethic Scale

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
ſ	.808	.807	6

Table 8.	Reliability	Test on I	Reidenbach	and Robin'	's Multidimensional	Scale.
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		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	<u>`</u>	9330.605	1055	8.844	-	515
-			1055	- · -		
Within People	Between Items	698.562	5	139.712	82.313	.000
	Residual	8953.438	5275	1.697		
	Total	9652.000	5280	1.828		
Total		18982.605	6335	2.996		

Grand Mean = 4.70

Table 9. ANOVA on Reidenbach and Robin's Multidimensional Scale.

	Ethnic Group	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MJ HD	Filipinos	869	4.7875	1.21297	.04115
	Chinese	187	4.3066	1.14164	.08349

Table 10. ANOVA on Reidenbach and Robin's Multidimensional Scale.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Equality of						
	F	Sig	t	Df	Sig (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std Error Difference	Interva	nfidence ll of the rence
								Upper	Lower
EVA	1.784	.182	4.968	1054	.000	.48090	.09679	.29098	.67082
EVNA			5.167	283.75	.000	.48090	.09307	.29770	.66410

Table 11. ANOVA on Reidenbach and Robin's Multidimensional Scale

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
Ethnic	Ν	Mean	Std.	Std.	Upper	Lower	Minimum	Maximum
Group			Deviation	Error	Bound	Bound		
1	869	4.7875	1.21297	.04115	4.7067	4.8683	1.00	7.00
2	187	4.3066	1.4164	.08349	4.1419	4.4713	1.00	7.00
Total	1056	4.7023	1.21410	.03736	4.6290	4.7756	1.00	7.00

MJHD	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.588	1	35.588	24.686	.000
Within Groups	1519.513	1054	1.442		
Total	1555.101	1055			

Table 12. ANOVA Descriptive on the Comparative Moral Judgment Level Among Asian Students.

Table 13. ANOVA for Moral Judgment Level Among Asian Students.

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3/22/2011