

MORAL DECISION MAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNET:  
THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISENGAGEMENT

by

LAURA NUGENT

Submitted to the Psychology Department  
School of Natural and Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

December 2019

Sponsor: Kaori Kubo Germano, Ph.D.

Second Reader: Yanine Hess, Ph.D.

### Abstract

The theory of moral reasoning suggests human beings uniquely employ a higher order cognitive ability that allows the consideration of moral principles, as well as the context in which a moral dilemma exists, when making moral decisions. Moral dilemmas are called dilemmas because there are no right or wrong answers. Rather, the decision-making process in the face of a moral dilemma requires the consideration of social norms (e.g., laws) as well as human principles (e.g., what is “right” versus what is “wrong”). Modern technological change is rapidly transforming the ways in which people perceive, analyze, and interact. Internet-connected devices have broadened our social horizons by enabling us to engage globally, but has also created a ‘cyber’ space that includes distance as an inherent component of that space. In fact, some have argued that technology can create a psychological distance among those who communicate through technology. The construction of thoughts that occur at dimensionally remote points in time and space have been shown to influence one’s representation and reasoning (Lieberman & Trope, 1998). This particular distance has the capability of disrupting typical moral values to the degree that one’s moral reasoning will function differently when activated in cyberspace as opposed to face-to-face interaction. The purpose of the current study is to describe the relationship between psychological distance and moral decision making in the context of cyberspace. It was hypothesized that participants would be less likely to answer moral scenarios truthfully when asked on the online platform. Specifically, we are interested in determining whether moral reasoning processes are altered when interacting with others in cyberspace that would not otherwise occur when interacting with others face-to-face. This study did not find statistically significant differences between conditions in moral decision making.

### Moral Decision Making in the Context of the Internet: The Effect of Psychological Distance

Human behavior is largely based upon decision making, the fundamental cognitive process that we make use of to survive day to day life. To make a decision relies on a predetermined question that will result in a choice; for instance, Do I eat now or later? It is through weighing advantages versus disadvantages that individuals make decisions which result in their favor. Oftentimes the act of decision-making involves speculation beyond the goal of survival. Human beings uniquely employ a higher order cognitive ability, termed executive functioning, which assists in their daily decision making and adaptive functioning. Executive functioning enables the more nuanced decision making that is unique to human beings; namely, moral decision making.

Theories of moral reasoning suggest that individuals are guided into action by the moral principles and values they adhere to, while taking into consideration the context of the situation. There is no right or wrong in moral decision making, which is why moral dilemmas are called dilemmas. There is no factually correct answer, but there is a morally “right” answer, and determining that answer is often quite difficult. It is important to note that morality differs from ethics, which are guidelines for behavior that are based upon moral principles, and also from law, which are codified rules for behavior. Not all moral decisions require an ethical background but every ethical choice involves a moral basis. According to Ayala (2010), the human's ability to anticipate one's own consequences and thus choose his or her own actions is what allows for the capacity to make moralistic judgements.

The process underlying an individual's ability to weigh the appropriate pros, cons, and consequences to make a moral decision and produce a morally just behavior rests on the

individual's moral development. Kohlberg (1984) suggested moral development takes place over the lifespan, beginning at infancy and adherence to rules and ending in older age and adherence to higher moral principles. Ultimately, he proposed, it is through repeated experiences that humans learn and reflect upon what it means to act in a morally correct manner. Similarly, Moral Sense Theory suggests morals are built and shaped through personal attitudes, values and experiences (Eisenberg, 2000). Moral Sense Theory implies that moral development occurs through a process of continual changes and refinements over the course of a person lifetime that increases moral maturity. In fact, research indicates the more an individual understands his or her morality the more likely they are able to come a just, righteous conclusion (Chung & Hsu, 2017). It is generally acknowledged that the trajectory of moral development is similar across all normatively developing individuals, with expected individual differences in moral reasoning abilities, as with any other cognitive skill. What is interesting, however, is the within-person difference in moral reasoning; as with many human behaviors, humans vary in their moral behaviors depending on several factors.

### **Psychological Distance**

Psychological distance is one factor that may influence an individual's moral behaviors. The way in which a person is able to cognitively remove their individual self from events beyond time, space, social, and hypothetical situations is the act of psychologically distancing oneself. Mental representations of people, places, objects, and occurrences that are not in the immediate present qualify as being psychologically distant. According to Trope and Liberman (2011) the psychological process of distancing the self is extremely self-centered, as one is using their own self as an anchor. For example, in order for an eight-year-old girl to cognitively visualize herself

walking down the aisle on her wedding day, it is critical she mentally pause the present to allot all focus to transversing into the hypothetical, distant point in the future.

The construction of thoughts that occur at dimensionally remote points in time, such as the future, have been shown to influence one's representation and reasoning (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Particularly, part 1 of study 1 of their study asked participants to describe activities to be either in the near future (i.e. tomorrow) or distant timeframe (i.e. next year). The descriptive data was interpreted and coded for the purpose of determining the participants' mental representations, or level of construct. Part 2 of study 1 requested participants to choose either a high-level and low-level rephrasing of either near or distant future activities. Level of construct were assessed by which the reiteration either explained how or why the activity took place. An individual with high level construal would understand the central aspects by stating why a happening occurs. Explaining the motives for the given activity exhibits increased structured thinking by putting fourth general rationales in order to maintain the overall gist. A low-level construal thinker would explain how the happening occurs by stressing next steps. Explaining how an activity is accomplished emphasizes a contextualized, immediate train of thought with no consideration of the bigger picture. The results supported the hypothesis in which high-level descriptions were significantly prevalent in the far-future condition than in the near-future condition. Low level descriptions had the opposite effect.

The notion of high and low levels of construct stems from Construal level theory, or the comparative relationship between an amount psychological distance and the magnitude of individuals' reasoning (i.e. towards people, places, objects, and events) to be abstract or concrete thoughts. Concrete thinking refers to the thinking in literal terms to what is physically around an

individual. Low level construal thinkers endure specific, detail-oriented thoughts by which how actions take place in an increasingly concrete manner. Abstract thinking, on the other hand is related to thinking in depth; for example, a set of principles instilled at a young age from one's parents. As previously mentioned, a high-level construal thinker would understand the central aspects, the bigger picture, and why a happening takes place.

Construal Level Theory plays a vital role to understand interpersonal distance among digital devices which have broadened our social horizons by enabling us to engage globally. The Internet has also created a 'cyber' space that includes distance as an inherent component of that space in which alters the perceived distance between people who are separated by geographical space (Cummings et al., 2001). As reported by Trope and Liberman (2011) the higher psychological distance the increased level of construal being increasingly abstract. This particular distance has the capability of disrupting typical moral values to the degree that one's moral reasoning will function differently when activated in cyberspace as opposed to face-to-face interaction.

### **Effects of the Internet**

As previously discussed, psychological distances such as time and space can be both physical and hypothetical. Interestingly, distance in context of the internet falls into a gray area. The internet is a cyberspace that intertwines time, space, social aspects to produce a transit atmosphere. The repercussions of the regular usage of the Internet is unknown to whether or not it helps or harms human socialization, relationships, and decision-making. A longitudinal study conducted by Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay, & Scherlis (1998) investigated the social and psychological impact of the Internet on 169 people in 73 households

during their first 1 to 2 years regularly using the internet via personal computers. The goal of the study was to analyze the effects of Internet communication on social participation and overall psychological well-being. Results supported greater usage of the Internet was closely related with decreased communication between participants to their family and general group of friends. Furthermore, the study revealed an increase in feelings of depression and loneliness among participants. It is possible that the immense psychological distance posed in cyberspace presented problems among the participants' decision-making capabilities such as willingness to communicate and participate socially.

It has been over two decades since the Kraut et. al (1998) study. Modern technological change continues to rapidly transform the ways in which people perceive, analyze, and act in the surrounding world. As face-to-face communication decreases and internet communication increases studies have argued that technology can in fact create a psychological distance among those who regularly interact through the cyberspace of the internet. We explore the possibility that moral principles are more or less evident in judgments regarding more psychologically distant mental representations.

### **Current Research**

It is true that as social creatures we as humans have the drive to form positive impressions on one another in terms of morality (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014). It is through observing and interpreting another's actions which allows a person to determine the decency of someone. Kiesler, Siegel, and McGuire (1984) proposed differences between emails and traditional face to face communication. One example is the lack of nonverbal, verbal, and auditory cues one can observe while interacting in person; the loss of these observations raises

deficits among interpretation of social cues. Another socially negative aspect of emails is the lack of personal engagement as the conversations are produced behind screens and not between real life shared time and space.

Researchers suggest that people are more willing to engage with his or her moral principles to distant actions as opposed to near-future activities (Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2008). The question arises whether the Internet's influence on construals, in terms of moral dilemmas, will respectively affect our decision-making processes. As mentioned earlier, the Internet is a cyberspace that intertwines time, space, social aspects to produce a transit atmosphere. This study investigated whether the Internet's particular distance has the capability of disrupting typical moral values to the degree that one's moral reasoning will function differently when activated in cyberspace as opposed to face-to-face interaction. The purpose of the current study was to describe the relationship between psychological distance and moral decision making in the context of the Internet. Specifically, this study was interested in determining whether moral reasoning processes are altered when considering moral dilemma scenarios in cyberspace that would not otherwise occur when considering moral dilemma scenarios delivered by someone present in real time and space.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 30 participants (53.36% female, 46.6% male) completed both an online and an in-person survey. These participants were obtained through the Psychology Department Participant Pool at SUNY Purchase College, fellow Purchase College students, and peers; ages ranged from 20 - 26 years of age ( $M = 22.5$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). Participants identified as White/



Caucasian (87.1%), Hispanic/Latino (9.6%), and the remainder identified with other ethnicities (4.3%). All participants were eligible for this study as no one reported a previous medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## **Materials**

**The Moral Decision-Making Scale.** The Moral Decision-Making Scale (MDMS) was utilized in this study and was created by combining a moral dilemma questionnaire developed by Yoon (2011) with a Multidimensional Ethics Scale developed by Reidenbach and Robin (1990). See all four moral dilemmas in Appendix A. Participants were asked to judge the action taken by each protagonist among the four different scenarios: participants indicated how fair or not fair, just or unjust, morally right or not morally right, acceptable or unacceptable to the individual's family, traditionally acceptable or traditionally unacceptable, culturally acceptable or culturally unacceptable, whether or not the action violates an unspoken promise, whether or not the action violates an unwritten contract, and how ethical or unethical they believe the protagonist's action was. Each judgment is presented as a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating agreement with the judgment and 7 indicating disagreement with the judgment.

**The Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale.** The Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS; Leibowitz, 1987) is a 24-item measure of social preferences and anxiety. The LSAS has 2 sub-scales: The first, with 13 items, concerns performance-based anxiety, and the second, with 11 items, concerns anxiety relating to social situations. All 24 items are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = none and 4 = severe. For each item participants provided two ratings along this scale: one for the fear felt during the situations, as well as the avoidance of the situation. Respectively, the higher total scores on the fear and avoidance sub scales indicate greater anxiety

and avoidance. Scoring can further be broken down into four six subgroups: little to no social phobia, mild social phobia, moderate social phobia, severe social phobia and very severe social phobia. The LSAS was utilized in this study to assess participants' levels of social anxiety, as this might influence different decisions when deciphering moral scenarios. See Appendix C.

**The Social Desirability Scale.** The Social Desirability Scale (SDS; Crowne & David Marlowe, 1960) was utilized in order to assess whether or not an individual is concerned with social approval from others. The questionnaire consists of 33 statements that a participant either agrees with or disagrees with based on choosing either true or false; many questions appear obvious that everyone would have to agree with one specific answer over another. For example, the statement "I never lie" would be truthfully answered as "false." If answered true, one point would be added toward social desirable answering. In this way the sum of these scores would reveal whether a person aims to be socially desirable. Respectively, the higher the score the more socially desirable a person tries to be toward others. The SDS is vital in this experiment to determine whether a person distorts his or her beliefs and experiences for the purpose to be liked and judged positively. See Appendix D.

**Demographics Questionnaire.** A short demographics questionnaire will be utilized to capture important demographic information such as those required to generalize our findings to the greater population (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender, et al.) as well as important person characteristics that might influence the outcome of our results (e.g., religious beliefs, behaviors, political preferences, and cultural differences). See Appendix E. The questionnaire will specifically ask if a participant been medically diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Data from any participant who self-reports as having a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder will

not be included in the final analyses, as social deficits are core symptoms of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and would interfere with the self reporting questionnaire regarding hypothetical social situations.

### **Procedure**

The design of the study is a within-subjects design, with all participants completing an in-person visit as well as an online visit. The online portion of the study was hosted on the online survey platform Qualtrics. The order of the visits were counterbalanced in order to minimize order effects. Each participant was randomly assigned to the order in which he or she completed the survey among the two conditions: in person and online meetings. If assigned to an in-person meeting person first, the participant would be emailed a link to which they would schedule the in person meeting, including his or her participant identification number (the last four digits of their mobile number). After 48 hours since completion of the first meeting, the participant would receive a second email with an anonymous link to complete the survey on the online platform Qualtrics. Oppositely, if a participant was assigned to taking part in the online survey for the first meeting, he or she would receive an email with the anonymous link to the Qualtrics survey. There, each participant anonymously identified themselves by inputting the last four digits of his or her mobile number before beginning the survey. After 48 hours since completion of the first meeting the participant would receive a second email with a link to schedule the in person meeting, anonymously identifying themselves by including his or her participant identification number. The order of the survey was consistent between conditions: each began with two out of the four moral dilemma scenarios and questions, randomly assigned from the he Moral Decision-

Making Scale. Participants rated their agreement or disagreement 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating agreement with the judgment and 7 indicating disagreement with the judgment. Next, the Multidimensional Ethics Scale was utilized and finally The Social Desirability Scale was administered. The Demographics Questionnaire was only presented during the online meeting after survey for easier data collection. The in-person survey took no more than 13 minutes while online portion of the survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Each participant was debriefed after the second meeting of the experiment; all in person debriefs were verbally explained while online debriefs were emailed to participants within 24 hours of completion.

### Results

A series of paired samples t-tests were conducted to examine differences in scores in moral scenarios that were given online and in person. Participants' scores on each of the moral scenarios, across conditions, were the dependent variables of interest. For Moral Scenario 1, there was no significant difference in scores between in-person ( $M = 4.25, SD = 2$ ) and on-line ( $M = 5, SD = 2.66$ ) sessions,  $t(12) = -0.29, p = .774$ . For Moral Scenario 2, there was no significant difference in scores between in-person ( $M = 2.63, SD = 1.52$ ) and on-line ( $M = 3.66, SD = 1.25$ ) sessions,  $t(13) = 1.01, p = 3.29$ . For Moral Scenario 3, there was no significant difference in scores between in-person ( $M = 5, SD = 3.46$ ) and on-line ( $M = 4, SD = 3.33$ ) sessions,  $t(12) = 0.06, p = .951$ . For Moral Scenario 4, there was significant difference in scores between in-person ( $M = 2, SD = 1.5$ ) and on-line ( $M = 6, SD = 2.66$ ) sessions,  $t(14) = 2.82, p = .014$ . The significance found in scenario 4 could be due to the ordinary act of the moral dilemma as it portrays an individual posting a negative product review based on an honest opinion.

This study also hypothesized participants would answer the Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale inconsistently between online and in-person meetings. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to test the same two conditions to find significance among both question types: fear and avoidance. For questions regarding fear, the strongest correlation was found,  $r(30) = .92, p = <.001$ . For questions regarding avoidance,  $r(30) = .87, p = <.001$ . It is important to note the approaching significance when comparing the The Moral Decision-Making Scale and Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale: Avoidance subsection,  $r(30) = .33, p = .079$ . Lastly, a third hypothesis was predicted that participants would answer the Social Desirability Scale inconsistently between the online and unperson conditions. Using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient the results proved to be significant,  $r(30) = .56, p = <.001$ .

### **Discussion**

The goals of this study were to better understand the differences that arise from moral decision making online verses in person. While there were no significance among the data collected from the Moral Decision Making Scale, there was significance from the Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale and the Social Desirability Scale. The Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale in particular proved to be very significant, which can be assumed due to participants answering the same questions in both conditions. The results did not reveal a perfect positive correlation which speaks to the differences to which participants chose to answer. Though the significance between these measures is somewhat predictable, there appears to be variation between participants' answers as they did not all respond in the same manner when asked the same question among the differing meeting platforms. As previously stated, the Social Desirability Scale proved to be significant; however, the results were much further away from a perfect correlation as compared

to the Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale. This sheds light on the possibility that humans are more concerned of appear with the way in which he or she appears to others when communicating online verses in-person when revealing personal characteristics.

### **Limitations**

There were a handful of disadvantages that may have altered the outcome of this study. The first limitation pertains to the online portion of the study whereas the participant had no interaction with a researcher. Participants with questions regarding how to answer certain questions and prompts would have gone unanswered as opposed to the in person meetings. For instance, many participants asked for further specification on the definition of “just” in the The Moral Decision-Making Scale questionnaire. Additionally, there was no way for the researcher to account for the environment in which the participant completed the online portion of the survey. A number of distractions may have taken place that will never be accounted for: conversations, listening to music, multitasking, etc.

### **Implications**

In order for this study to be replicated it is necessary to reorganize online portion of study to have participants in a neutral space where they would be left alone to complete the online survey in private. This would eliminate distractions and control for participants full attention while still be alone and independent from observance from the researcher. Additionally, the expansion in age range would be beneficial to exploring the possibility of generational differences. Lastly, expanding the Social Desirability Scale from TRUE/FALSE to a larger likert-type scale would prove value for a more precise rating.

Further research on this subject appears essential in the rapidly growing age of technology. Due to the convenience and instantaneous nature of smartphones, tablets, and laptops, digital communication has become more efficient in comparison to traditional face to face interaction, and thus more evident in everyday life. Young kids, too, participate online during times of critical development of their emotional and social maturity. Cyberbullying, for instance, is not limited to children; however, it is prominent among children and adolescents possibly due to the unawareness of psychological distance. Furthermore, previous research concurs moral development occurs through a process of continual changes and refinements over the course of a person lifetime; in this sense, one can say that moral reasoning is malleable (Hornsby, 2007). It is extremely relevant to not only educate youth but rather all ages of the repercussions from actions made through the internet. Ultimately, observing the relationship between humans' engagement in the moral decision making process is vital in educating safe internet practices for current and future generations of users.

### References

- Ayala, F.J. (2010). Colloquium paper: the difference of being human: morality. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 107, 9015-22.
- Chung, J.O., & Hsu, S.H. (2017). The Effect of Cognitive Moral Development on Honesty in Managerial Reporting. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145, 563-575.
- Cummings, J.N., Kraut, R., and Kiesler, S. (2001). Do we visit, call, or email? Media matter in close relationships. In *CHI'01 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 161–162.
- Eisenberg, N. (2000). Emotion, Regulation, and Moral Development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 665-97. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.665>.
- Eyal, T., Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (2008). Judging near and distant virtue and vice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(4), 1204–1209.
- Goodwin, G. P., Piazza, J., & Rozin, P. (2014). Moral character predominates in person perception and evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 106(1), 148–168.
- Hindmarch, T., Hotopf, M., & Owen, G. S. (2013). Depression and decision-making capacity for treatment or research: a systematic review. *BMC Medical Ethics*.14, 54.
- Hornsby, K. (2007). Developing and Assessing Undergraduate Students' Moral Reasoning Skills. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. 1(2) 2-18. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2007.010207>.



- Kiesler, S., Siegel, J., & McGuire, T. W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication. *American Psychologist*, 39(10), 1123–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.39.10.1123>
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages (Essays on Moral Development, Volume 2)*.
- Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being?. *The American Psychologist*, 53, 1017-31. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.53.9.1017>.
- Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (1998). The role of feasibility and desirability considerations in near and distant future decisions: A test of temporal construal theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(1), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.1.5>
- Stephan, E., Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (2011). The effects of time perspective and level of construal on social distance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(2), 397–402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.11.001>



**APPENDIX A****Informed Consent Form**

**Researchers:** Laura Nugent & Kaori Kubo Germano, Ph.D.

**Contacts:** [laura.nugent@purchase.edu](mailto:laura.nugent@purchase.edu), [kaori.germano@purchase.edu](mailto:kaori.germano@purchase.edu)

**Purpose:** We would like permission to enroll you as a participant in a research study. You will be provided with the choice to learn more details about the purpose of the experiment after the full completion of the experiment.

**Procedure:** You will read a particular scenario and complete a short multiple-choice questionnaire regarding the scenario. You will read a total of four scenarios each accompanied by its own multiple choice questionnaire. After, you will be asked to answer a short demographics survey. The study should take no longer than 15 minutes over two sessions. There will be one traditional, in-person meeting and one strictly over the Internet via Qualtrics. Each meeting will occur three days after the first meeting.

**Costs, risks, and discomforts:** There is minimal risk associated with participating in this study. This might include feelings of discomfort due to not knowing how to respond to the moral dilemmas, pressure, and anxiety. However, the risk of this discomfort arising is no more than what one might encounter when discussing this topic with a friend or in a classroom.

**Benefits and compensation:** The participation you contribute will aid research for healthy lifestyle practices. All participants will be compensated with either one credit per every half hour of participation (for eligible Purchase College students only) or at a prorated federal minimum wage rate of \$9.25 per hour (for all non-Purchase College subjects).

**Confidentiality:** Your name and other identifiers will not be used in any publication. However, the results of this study may be published in a scholarly book or journal or used for teaching purposes.

**Refusal or withdrawal of participation:** You do not have to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you can change your mind and drop out of the study at any time without affecting your present or future interactions with members of the Psychology Department and with no loss of credit for participation.

**Signature:** I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, and the possible risks as well as potential benefits that I may experience have been explained to me. All my questions have been answered. I have read this consent form. My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study. I understand that I may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board ([irb.chair@purchase.edu](mailto:irb.chair@purchase.edu)) if I experience any problems during this experiment or have concerns about the ethics of this research.

By checking this box you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

**APPENDIX B****The Moral Decision-Making Scale****Scenario #1**

One day, Tina received an e-mail from a famous online game company. According to the e-mail, the company was willing to offer her a coupon to play one of the company's well-known games for free when she simply registered on the company's website. Tina, who likes playing online games, visited the site, registered as a member, and enjoyed the game for a month. After a month, the game company sent another e-mail to Tina to make a suggestion: the company asked her to give the list of names and e-mail addresses of her friends in exchange for another free month of gaming.

**Action:** Although knowing that offering names and addresses might infringe on the privacy of others, Tina believed that it would benefit both company and the friends since the friends would be able to enjoy the game for free as well. Therefore, Tina finally gave the list to the company.

**Directions:** For each of the items below, please circle the appropriate number that you feel reflects your evaluation of Tina's decision.

Was the action **fair**?

Fair (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Unfair (7)

Was the action **just**?

Just (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Unjust (7)

---

Was the action **morally right**?

Morally right (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not morally right (7)

---

Was the action **acceptable to your family**?

Acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not acceptable (7)

Was the action **traditionally acceptable**?

Traditionally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not traditionally acceptable (7)

Was the action **culturally acceptable**?

Culturally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not culturally acceptable (7)

Did the action **violate an unspoken promise**?

Violates an unspoken promise (1)

1            2            3            4

Does not violate an unspoken promise (7)

5            6            7

Does this action **violate an unwritten contract**?

Violates unwritten contract (1)

1            2            3            4

Does not violate unwritten contract (7)

5            6            7

Was the action **ethical**?

Ethical (1)

1            2            3            4

5            6            7            Unethical (7)

**Scenario #2**

Anthony and Matthew are the students at Blue Mountain High School. They are both ardent fans of a rock band Weki, which is famous for obscene words and performance. They created an online fan club for Weki in the web server of the high school using the space given to them, in order to share the activities of the band with others. They found music clips, lyrics, pictures, and various articles concerning the band on the Internet and posted them to the club. One day, however, the manager of the school web ordered Anthony and Matthew to shut down the club, saying that part of lyrics and many pictures contain obscene content.

**Action:** Anthony and Matthew turned down the order of the manager, believing that the request infringed on the right of free speech, enumerated in the Constitution.

**Directions:** For each of the items below, please circle the appropriate number that you feel reflects your evaluation of Anthony and Matthew's decision.

Was the action **fair**?

Fair (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Unfair (7)



Was the action **just**?

Just (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Unjust (7)

---

Was the action **morally right**?

Morally right (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not morally right (7)

---

Was the action **acceptable to your family**?

Acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not acceptable (7)

Was the action **traditionally acceptable**?

Traditionally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not traditionally acceptable (7)

Was the action **culturally acceptable**?

Culturally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not culturally acceptable (7)

Did the action **violate an unspoken promise?**

Violates an unspoken promise (1)

Does not violate an unspoken promise (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

Does this action **violate an unwritten contract?**

Violates unwritten contract (1)

Does not violate unwritten contract (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

Was the action **ethical?**

Ethical (1)

Unethical (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

### Scenario #3

SFSS is a company famous for its statistical software, and the company offers products divided into one version for companies and another for students. SFSS prices the software for students at \$1, which is reasonable. The company, however, makes the students sign a pledge that they will not make any illegal copies for others in 3 days prior to the purchase, in order to protect copyright. Louis purchased the software after filling out the pledge form. One day, Patrick, who is a friend of Louis, sent Louis an e-mail that his girlfriend urgently needed the software to write a term paper but she could not buy it through legal process. Therefore, Patrick requested Louis to copy the program, although it was illegal, for the sake of his girlfriend.

**Action:** Considering that Patrick's girlfriend needed the software without delay, Louis illegally copied the program and offered it to Patrick, although knowing that he made a pledge before the purchase.

**Directions:** For each of the items below, please circle the appropriate number that you feel reflects your evaluation of Louis's decision.

Was the action **fair**?

Fair (1)							Unfair (7)
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

Was the action **just**?

Just (1)							Unjust (7)
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

Was the action **morally right**?

Morally right (1)							Not morally right (7)
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

Was the action **acceptable to your family**?

Acceptable (1)							Not acceptable (7)
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

Was the action **traditionally acceptable**?

Traditionally acceptable (1)

1            2            3            4

Not traditionally acceptable (7)

5            6            7

Was the action **culturally acceptable**?

Culturally acceptable (1)

1            2            3            4

Not culturally acceptable (7)

5            6            7

Did the action **violate an unspoken promise**?

Violates an unspoken promise (1)

1            2            3            4

Does not violate an unspoken promise (7)

5            6            7

Does this action **violate an unwritten contract**?

Violates unwritten contract (1)

1            2            3            4

Does not violate unwritten contract (7)

5            6            7

Was the action **ethical**?

Ethical (1)

1            2            3            4

Unethical (7)

5            6            7

**Scenario #4**

Linda is a junior at Muan University. One day, Linda purchased cosmetics from a famous company through the Internet and used them, but she suffered from skin trouble after a few days.

Linda notified what she had experienced through an e-mail and requested a refund, but the cosmetics company rejected the request saying that many customers did not have any problem and what normally caused most of the skin troubles were individual's diathesis.

**Action:** Linda found the answers insincere and realized the products might inflict damage on others who have particular skin problems like she does. Therefore, she posted an anonymous message on the Internet, which is somewhat exaggerated, saying that the product had serious problems and she was suffering from serious sequelae after using it.

**Directions:** For each of the items below, please circle the appropriate number that you feel reflects your evaluation of Linda's decision.

-----

Was the action **fair**?

Fair (1)

Unfair (7)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Was the action **just**?

Just (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Unjust (7)

---

Was the action **morally right**?

Morally right (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not morally right (7)

---

Was the action **acceptable to your family**?

Acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not acceptable (7)

Was the action **traditionally acceptable**?

Traditionally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not traditionally acceptable (7)

Was the action **culturally acceptable**?

Culturally acceptable (1)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Not culturally acceptable (7)

Did the action **violate an unspoken promise?**

Violates an unspoken promise (1)

Does not violate an unspoken promise (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

Does this action **violate an unwritten contract?**

Violates unwritten contract (1)

Does not violate unwritten contract (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

Was the action **ethical?**

Ethical (1)

Unethical (7)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

---









**APPENDIX D**

**THE SOCIAL DESIRABILITY SCALE**

**PART III**

**Directions:** You will be presented with a series of scenarios to which you will either agree with or disagree with by choosing either True or False.

For each statement please choose whether this is true or false regarding your persona.

	True	False
Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.		
I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.		
It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.		
I have never intensely disliked anyone.		
On occasions I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.		
I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.		
I am always careful about my manner of dress.		
My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.		
If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.		
On a few occasions, I have given up something because I thought too little of my ability.		
I like to gossip at times.		
There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.		
No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.		
I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.		
There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.		
I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.		
I always try to practice what I preach.		
I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loudmouthed, obnoxious people.		
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.		
When I don't know something I don't mind at all admitting it.		

	True	False
I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.		
At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.		
There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.		



**APPENDIX E****DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**DIRECTIONS:** Please answer each question as accurately as possible by circling the correct answer or filling in the space provided.

- 1) What is your age? (years) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What gender do you identify? (circle) **MALE FEMALE OTHER**
- 3) What is your preferred partner? (circle) **MALE FEMALE OTHER**
- 4) Where do you currently live? (City, State, zip code) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Does this differ from your childhood? (circle) **YES NO**  
If so, name your previous City, State, and zip code: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is your ethnicity? (circle)  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK CAUCASIAN/WHITE AMERICAN INDIAN**  
**ASIAN CARIBBEAN/WEST INDIAN HISPANIC/LATINO MIDDLE EASTERN**  
**NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER OTHER PREFER NOT TO ANSWER**
- 7) If you identify with a religion, please indicate HOW religious you are on a 1 - 5 scale:  
**0 = not religious at all; 5 = orthodoxy/very religious** \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Please choose one of the following that best describes your social class: (circle)  
**LOWER WORKING MIDDLE UPPER MIDDLE UPPER**
- 9) What is the highest level of education you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Are you currently a student? (circle) **YES NO** If yes, Major: \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) What is your marital status? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) With which political party in your country do you identify most? (circle)  
**REPUBLICAN PARTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY INDEPENDENT PARTY**  
**OTHER PREFER NOT TO ANSWER**
- 13) Have you been medically diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder? (circle)  
**YES NO PERFER NOT TO ANSWER**