

## Facilitating Moral Maturity:

### Integrating Developmental and Cultural Approaches

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**Abstract:** This study integrates developmental and cultural approaches to student development and finds that millennial college students are responsive to moral formation. A particular challenge to prosociality among contemporary generations is growing up within a cultural context that aggrandizes a self-focus during emerging adulthood. Businesses are increasingly integrating spirituality at work, in part because of the benefits religiosity has in developing prosocial behaviors. However, businesses and universities can have concerns about explicitly engaging religiosity. We thus study a pedagogical approach that engages religiosity to investigate whether this promotes prosocial moral values. Employing a mixed-methods design, we analyze quantitative and qualitative changes in students completing a management education course with this pedagogical approach and compare their changes over time to a control group completing conventional ethics courses during the same time period. Findings indicate that prosocial development is possible during college and that explicit attention to diverse religious views aids moral development.

**Keywords:** religiosity; values; ethics; morality; management education; diversity

Businesses are increasingly integrating spirituality at work in order to obtain its proposed benefits (Bandush & Cavanagh, 2010). Scholars theorize and find that benefits of engaging spirituality at work include greater organizational citizenship (Brotheridge & Lee, 2007) and commitment (Vandenberghe, 2011; Bell-Ellis et al., 2015), improved organizational fit (Afsar & Rehman, 2015), higher sense of meaning and purpose (Drive, 2007), increased employee engagement (Saks, 2011), decreased work-related stress and exhaustion (Arnetz et al., 2013), improved career development (Duffy et al., 2010), better corporate performance (Fry et al.,

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2010), more connection to work and to others, and superior ethics and virtue development (Bandush & Cavanagh, 2010). Despite this growing body of literature, questions remain about how best to prepare future employees to engage their spirituality at work, especially in diverse organizations with multiple religious traditions (Exline & Bright, 2011; Lund et al., 2015).

Moreover, social science studies find contemporary young people, including college graduates, to be low in critical thinking skills (Arum and Roksa, 2010) and high in moral relativism (Smith and Snell, 2009). Religion and spirituality can be one bulwark against moral relativism. However, many businesses and secular universities share concerns regarding whether to engage religiosity and spirituality in any explicit way. For example, Bandush and Cavanaugh (2010) state that, “business, still aware of the potential problems a particular spirituality may create when promoted on the job, has struggled with exactly how to develop and manage workplace spirituality” (p. 222). Likewise, Smith and colleagues (2011) find young people to be morally adrift and state that “the adult world that has socialized these youth for 18 to 23 years has done an awful job when it comes to moral education and formation” (p. 60). The researchers continue by saying that “colleges and universities appear to be playing a part in this failure as well, sending many, and probably most, of them out into the world without the basic intellectual tools and basic personal formation” (p. 61).

Thus, along with Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang (2014), we argue that management education needs to facilitate moral maturity. Accomplishing this requires educators to apply life course approaches (e.g. Arnett 2015) to understanding business education as part of a dynamic developmental process. Yet life course development perspectives are rarely integrated in management education. To address this dearth, we here integrate the central findings of life course studies. The life course perspective asserts that emerging adult college students are not

fully pre-formed and can develop in their moral maturity. Yet questions remain regarding how to operationalize moral maturity. Notably complex in operationalizing moral maturity is the fact that engaging religiosity and spirituality does not necessarily result in positive outcomes, and has in some cases contributed to negative outcomes, such as discrimination or exclusion (Schaeffer & Mattis, 2012; Krishnakumar et al., 2015)

Additionally, cultural studies contextualize college students in the U.S. as within a cultural milieu that presents diverse and often conflicting moral values, which often result in emerging adults deciding that the only value they can clearly prioritize is self-gain. However, concern for others is one common correlate of religiosity (Day, 2005), and there is repeated evidence that prosociality is linked to religiosity (Saroglou et al., 2005; Ahmed, 2009; Johnson et al., 2013). In fact, studies of religious versus non-religious contexts find that prosocial values are universal but that deeper motivations to act in prosocial ways are stronger in religious contexts (Groen, 2007) and that the integration of moral values into work fundamentally alters it (Paterson et al., 2013). Thus, we are interested in whether integrating a life course and cultural approach – which takes religiosity and spirituality seriously – improves management education. Specifically, we investigate the research questions: (1) Do moral values change during emerging adulthood? and (2) Does explicitly engaging religiosity in management education improve prosocial moral development?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Within the U.S. context, at least, life course developmental scholars identify the life stage of the college years as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015). In response to elongated durations spent transitioning to adulthood, emerging adults tend to be self-focused during this life stage, while they continue to explore their identity in formation. Moreover, while morality in general is

commonly considered to involve a focus on benefiting others, contemporary American cultural structures mostly promote moral orientations that are focused on self-gain (Smith and Snell, 2009). For this reason, moral exemplars are those who overcome the tension between agency and communion by integrating prosocial motives with self-oriented actions (Frimer et al., 2010). Thus, a central puzzle motivating this study is how to facilitate emerging adults in developing prosocial orientations in their moral values.

A basic premise of the social psychological study of moral action is that cognitive dissonance between one's valued ideals and observed actions motivates the moral reflection that undergirds ethical decision-making (Festinger, 1985; Aquino & Reed, 2002). To experience dissonance, it is necessary to have a relatively coherent sense of moral identity that directs actions across different situations (Tavory, 2011; Navarez et al., 2006). Only with a degree of clarity regarding one's moral values can one have the courage to act upon values (Gentile, 2010). However, moral messages in contemporary U.S. society come from diverse sources that are often contradictory (Jensen, 2008). Additionally, the social structures surrounding adulthood transitions are disjointed, with increasing geographic mobility, job churning, and marital turnover as a few of the examples that impart emerging adults with less than coherent socialization prior to college (Colter et al., 2015; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007).

Moreover, younger generations, e.g. Millennials, are found to have decreased levels of organizational commitment (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Indeed, Konstam (2014) reported that many managers of Millennials describe younger generations as having less loyalty to organizations, resulting in less investment in efforts to benefit others at work, or the organization. For example, one employer described generational differences by stating:

I see a significant difference between my mindset and the mindset of people I supervise

between 25 and 35. One of the most significant things that I find real interesting [is the mindset of] I am going to do my best every day. I showed loyalty. My approach differs greatly from how they [Millennials] think. (Konstam, 2010, p. 10).

Since loyalty to an organization is a key ingredient in exerting prosocial actions in the workplace, younger generations may be less apt to exhibit other-orientated values. This is particularly the case when young people view themselves as only temporarily within any one particular organization and thus may protect themselves from investing too heavily in others within that organization, under the assumption that they may not know them in a year. Viewed from a different perspective, this difference may not be due to generational character differences but rather a result of the elongation in life course development and delays in maturation (Arnett, 2015).<sup>1</sup> We thus investigate the effectiveness of an effort to develop students' moral maturity.

### **Challenges to Management Education**

Business education exists within an increasingly complex social context (Geh & Tan, 2009), requiring educators to teach students critical thinking skills that enable deeper reflection, courage, and cultural awareness (Adler, 2016). Business schools, especially those with an emphasis on management education, are often expected to provide guidance around moral reasoning (Gentile, 2010; Comer & Vega, 2011; Meisel, 2013). Yet there are challenges in addressing ethical issues while developing student awareness of diverse perspectives on morality, as it is possible to undercut the kind of conviction needed to motivate moral action (Nelson et al., 2012; Rutherford et al., 2012). Addressing these complexities requires advancing beyond disciplinary silos in order to investigate, with interdisciplinary approaches, the complexity of ethicality in a globalizing world (Arkivou & Bradbury-Huang, 2015; Kenworthy, 2013; Giacalone, 2007). However, many management scholars are skeptical that business

education can adequately rise to the challenge (Crossan et al. 2013; Bergman et al., 2010; Locke, 2006; Ghoshal, 2005; Giola, 2002).

One of the challenges is the centrality of business as the source of ethicality, with an inadvertent emphasis on individual self-gain as the motivator for social action. For example, Giacalone and Thompson (2006) are critical of standard approaches in business education for teaching students that by promoting business interests they advance their own best interests. In this sense, moral values are centrally placed on what brings personal gain. Moreover, business education appears to contribute to increasing this self-gain focus, rather than reducing it (Gioia 2002, 2003; Neubaum et al., 2009; Audi, 2009; Wang et al., 2011), even though this is less desirable than managers making decisions with concern for others in mind (Priem & Shaffer, 2001). Taken together then, these findings indicate the need for improvement in business education developing moral maturity through enhancing an emphasis on other-orientations. While many strides have been made to improve the prosocial focus of business schools, more can and needs to be done. That said, many opportunities for continued improvement exist.

### **Opportunities to Improve Moral Management**

Business schools are well poised to further improve efforts to foster moral maturity among student, for a number of reasons. First, there has been a shift across generations, with younger managers increasingly emphasizing moral values (Weber 2015). Moreover, fostering a sense of “moral imagination” in individuals has been found to result in positive moral judgment at work, a desirable outcome for businesses (Godwin, 2015; Bartunek, 2014). Likewise, developing a moral identity has positive organizational outcomes for businesses (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007), and fostering moral awareness has positive benefits for life and work experiences (VanSandt et al. 2006; Reynolds, 2008). Certain business course approaches – such

as social entrepreneurship and service learning – effectively aid students in developing a sense of their moral and social identity, foster their cognitive development, increase their personal insight, and result in more efficacious enactment of moral identities in workplaces (Smith & Woodworth, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Thus, business schools need to meet the demands of the workplace by offering management education that attends to moral values.

Gentile’s (2010) *Giving Voice to Values* approach assumes students’ moral values are coherently established (i.e., they know what their view of right and wrong is) and focuses on practicing the articulation of those values. As opposed to the view that students arrive at college with their moral character fully formed, developmental scholars find that emerging adulthood – the life stage of most college students – is a time of continual development when advanced capacities for morality mature (Padilla-Walker 2016; Jetha & Seaglowitz, 2012; Lahat, Helwig, & Zelazo, 2013). Emerging adult moral reasoning tends to shift from a view of doing good as undesirable to understanding prosocial actions as desirable. Both emerging adults and their parents view becoming less self-oriented and developing greater consideration for others to be a central criterion for adulthood (Nelson & Barry, 2005). Thus, business education has opportunity to facilitate prosocial morality (Hanson & Moore 2014), especially since emerging adults are still at a formative and malleable point within their life course developmental processes.

### **Developing Prosocial Moral Reasoning**

Aligning with developmental scholars, we define developed prosocial moral reasoning as entailing epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal awareness (Magolda & Taylor 2016; Kegan 1994). Understanding oneself involves reflection across all three of these dimensions. Maturing emerging adults give conscious consideration to the source of their knowledge claims (epistemological maturation). They also relate to adult mentors and peers who help to both

challenge and support their value systems (interpersonal maturation). As emerging adults reflect upon the epistemological and interpersonal domains, they gain a greater sense of their own identity (intrapersonal maturation). They either further engrain pre-held values or they reevaluate prior values and internalize new values. In either case, *maturing* emerging adults gain a greater awareness of their moral orientations and how these are positioned relative to others. Thus, it is their increased attention to others, and their diverse views, which facilitates personal awareness.

Prosocial development is aided by pedagogical approaches involving moral education, in which moral exemplars provide the relational context to understand diversity of views and also challenge the students' growth relative to prior moral positions (Liddell & Cooper, 2012; Cunliffe & Eirksen, 2011; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Also critical is exposure to multiple views that challenge moral exclusivism (Merino, 2010), promote respect of culturally and religiously diverse perspectives (Stewart et al., 2008), invite critical questioning and genuine dialog (Akrivou & Bradbury-Huang, 2015), engender morally mature capacities, such as appreciative listening for workplace conflicts (Schippers et al., 2014) and reflexivity on personal moral positions through intensive writing assignments on the basis of moral decision-making (May & Pauli, 2002) within diverse social contexts (Nelson et al., 2012). Thus, pedagogical approaches that contain these elements – through a focus on prosocial moral development – are well poised to facilitate prosocial moral reasoning among students.

However, a central challenge inhibiting educators from more adequately developing prosocial moral reasoning is misunderstandings of developmental processes. Views on facilitating development during emerging adulthood often focus on self-authorship as enabled by questioning authority and distancing from social influences (Magolda & Taylor, 2016; Tanner 2006). This effectively positions autonomy as a higher value than interpersonal learning. “To

each his own” is already a mantra to many millennial emerging adults (Smith et al., 2011), but studies find that other-orientations are crucial for moral maturity (Frimer et al., 2010). Likewise, Eisenberg’s (2002) study of moral reasoning skills defines seven of eight skills as entailing focus on others, with only one moral reasoning skill involving intense self-focus (Eisenberg et al., 2002). Moreover, young people consider their moral exemplars to be people who have more themes of other-orientation than self-focus (Dunlop, Walker, Matsuba, 2012; Walker & Frimer 2007). Thus, most young people enter college with an intense self-focus and are motivated by personal gain, but cognitively and morally mature emerging adults develop greater balance of their self- and other-orientations. Synthesizing these studies, we assert that management education needs to facilitate the development of greater balance between self and prosocial gains (Schwartz, 2012). This is especially relevant when educating Millennials.

### **Facilitating Millennial Moral Management**

Facilitating moral management among Millennials presents an interesting puzzle for business educators, as the millennial generation has mostly been understood to have narcissistic, self-focused moral tendencies (Twenge, 2013a). Yet controversy exists over these claims (Arnett, 2013; Arnett et al. 2013; Twenge, 2013b). Moreover, the large and growing body of literature on emerging adulthood and changing adulthood transitions indicates the need to understand Millennials not through generational personality characterization but instead through a life course and cultural perspective. Doing so reveals that Millennials are merely the first generation to transition to adulthood with the elongated life course development process that includes emerging adulthood (e.g. Arnett, 2016; Waters et al., 2011; Settersten et al., 2005). Joining these literatures, we here bring insights from developmental and cultural approaches on prosocial moral maturity to management education. This study examines how business education

can facilitate prosocial moral reasoning among millennial emerging adults. We describe and investigate a pedagogical approach to facilitating students in developing their moral capacities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Pedagogical Approach**

This study investigates a particular pedagogical approach, called “Authentic Leadership in a Multi-Faith Workplace.” The goals of the course that were guided by this pedagogical approach are to intentionally guide students in five central activities: 1) self-reflection on personal values; (2) practice in articulating personal values, orally and in writing; (3) appreciative listening to truly hear the values of others; (4) applying moral values in navigating workplace conflicts and (5) interactions with others who hold diverse cultural and moral values, especially as related to different faith and non-faith traditions in undergirding moral values at work. The pedagogical approach of this course is to view moral maturity as facilitated by a dynamic process of relationship building, being presented with challenging situations and diverse views, and promoting self-reflection. The intended result of the course is increased moral reasoning, as evidence by greater articulation of moral values and increased attentiveness to and respect for others and their diverse views.

Central to the course was an emphasis on having students clearly articulating their moral values in ways that are authentic to oneself (Groen, 2010) and also are respectful to others (Schaeffer & Mattis, 2012), as a means of developing effectiveness as a workplace team member (Duffy et al., 2010). Guest speakers discussed how their diverse moral values and faith traditions, including atheism, guided specific decisions that they had to make at work, including finding or creating workplaces cultures that are consistent with their sense of meaning, purpose, and life goals. The mid-term assignment required students to draft a value statement of their three to five

top values, and then to describe how they would apply these values in repairing and restarting a toxic team dynamic. Another primary assignment of the course was drafting a personal mission statement, which was introduced early in the semester and refined through four drafts, each requiring more concise language and greater prioritization of goals. The final exam required students to write a final 300-word personal mission statement, beginning with naming their top three to five values and briefly describing what each value meant to students in non-cliché terms. In addition, students wrote a final class reflection essay that described how they arrived at that personal mission statement, and what elements of the course and other key experiences shaped it.

Also of importance in the pedagogical approach was the instructor role modeling to students a willingness to (a) discuss moral values and (b) engage with diverse perspectives on moral values without requiring agreement. Most discussions during the course centered around the guest speakers, and how they addressed questions of meaning, purpose, and life goals within the context of the wide range of religious and moral views held by the guest speakers. From the first day and on several occasions afterward, the instructor reminded students that the goal of the course was for students to develop their own moral orientations. Students were encouraged to regard the views shared throughout the semester by the instructor and guest speakers as stimulating inputs that did not require personal agreement. Rather, students were urged to learn to use appreciative listening and other techniques to deepen their understanding of other moral viewpoints, to show respect for others holding different views, and to reflect upon them as a means for refining the articulation of their own views. This approach was informed by a national study that found college students to be open to engaging in an opportunity to exploring their own belief and value framework with faculty members, when they feel allowed to draw their own conclusions without pressure to assume prescribed values (Astin & Astin 2008).

## **Theoretical Approach**

This study was conducted in 2015 at a large public university in the middle of the U.S. This geographical location has a cultural context that combines influences from the South with those of the Midwest and North. We thus require cross-cultural morality measures and rely upon those originally developed by Shweder and colleagues (1997), with remaining contemporary relevance (e.g. Guerra & Giner-Sorolla, 2010). We hypothesized that the majority of students in this context would evidence a developmental process akin to the one theorized by Jensen (2008), in that we expected to find students holding a variety of ethics. Specifically, we theorized that some students would evidence an Ethic of Autonomy, while others would evidence an Ethic of Community or an Ethic of Divinity. Table 1 summarizes these ethics, with the emphasis being on the moral rights of individuals (Autonomy), moral responsibilities to groups (Community), or efforts toward moral purity (Divinity). In diverse cultural contexts, constellations of each of these three ethical orientations exist across groups of individuals.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

Combining cultural and developmental lenses, we examine the theory shown in Figure 1 (Jensen, 2008: 302), which depicts that – during the transition between adolescence and adulthood – there is an expectation that those with an Ethic of Autonomy will remain stable over time. Alternatively, individuals with an Ethic of Community are expected to show slight increases in the same life stage, whereas individuals with an Ethic of Divinity are expected to show more marked increases as they transition into adulthood. In conceptualizing how these ethics will be evidenced, we depict in Figure 2 our own representation of the theory. This figure is in essence a cross-section of the first figure, representing our theory of operationalization in the linked squares and representing Jensen’s theory of developmental changes through shading.

Based on these theories, we test the expectation that individuals with an Ethic of Autonomy will maintain that ethic stably during emerging adulthood, whereas those with an Ethic of Community will evidence a steady increase of the ethic and those with an Ethic of Divinity will evidence a sharp increase in the ethic during emerging adulthood. Combining this with the pedagogical approach, we expect that – if effective – explicit attention to moral values during college will accelerate these changes, even within a relatively short duration of a single semester.

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

[Insert Figure 2 About Here]

### **Methodological Approach**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that triangulates quantitative and qualitative data over time to assess between-group and within-group changes. The triangulated data include: (1) nationally normed quantitative data for local sample at Time 1 analyzed relative to nationally representative data that is subsampled to create a regional comparison, in order to assess location-specific particularities of the sample; (2) longitudinal quantitative data for between-group comparisons between a treatment and control group, in order to assess self-selection differences at Time 1 between groups and measure relative change as an indicator of effects of the treatment (i.e., taking a class informed by the pedagogical approach described above); and (3) longitudinal qualitative data for within-group explanations for T1-T2 changes.

*Control Group.* The control group was sampled from classes that were selected based on their similarity to the treatment group, in terms of having upper-division students in a small class that focused on critical thinking and writing skills. To limit possible spuriousness due to self-selection into courses based on time of day or instructor, we sampled students from three courses, at three times of day and with two different instructors. These courses were traditional

business ethics courses and were only known at the outset of the study to vary from the treatment course in terms of the added pedagogical content described above, that is focusing on clarification and articulation of moral values, within the context of exposure to diverse religious and non-faith perspectives on values in work. Table 2 displays their size and demographics. In comparing the treatment and control groups at Time 1, also using small sample t-tests, the treatment group was statistically significantly more likely than control group to rate their religious faith as important in their daily lives. No other demographic differences were found.

[Insert Table 2 About Here]

## **Data & Measures**

*University Student Survey Data.* The data for this study were collected from University students at the beginning of the semester (Time 1) and at the end of the semester (Time 2), providing a longitudinal study to assess changes over time. The quasi-experimental design of the study compares survey results for students in the class of interest (i.e., the treatment group, described in the pedagogical approach section) to three traditional business ethics courses (control group). Survey data were collected across all enrolled students in the treatment and control group classes (n=110, response rate of 97 percent).

*NSYR Survey Data.* Nationally normed survey questions from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR; see Smith & Denton 2005) were included in the University student survey in order to compare national benchmarks to the University student sample. Small sample t-tests were analyzed, comparing group means for a regional subsample from the nationally representative NSYR data and the University student sample. The comparable local sample was selected based on living in the same region of the country as the location of the university, being enrolled in college, and being 20 or more years of age (n=315). A slight statistically significant

difference was found by gender, with 54 percent of the University student sample being female, as compared to 46 percent of the local sample from NSYR. The nationally representative regional subsample and the local samples were similar in terms of their religious affiliation with major denominations. The largest difference is that the University student sample was less likely to agree that religion is a private matter at Time 1 than was the regional subsample from NSYR.

*University Student Survey Measures.* The primary survey measures of interest for quantitative portion of this article are two questions designed to assess moral orientations of students, and which align with the three ethics described by Jensen (2008). The first question assessed “Moral Source” by asking students: “If you were unsure of what was right or wrong in a particular situation, how would you decide what to do? Would you most likely...(a) do what would make you feel happy, (b) do what would help you to get ahead, (c) follow the advice of a parent or teacher, or other adult you respect, or (d) do what you think God or the scripture tells you is right?” (for more information on this measure, see Vaisey & Lizardo, 2010; Vaisey et al., 2009). Given the self-focus of both the first two response options, we collapsed these to represent an Ethic of Autonomy. We consider the third response to represent an Ethic of Community, and the fourth to represent an Ethic of Divinity.

In addition, we analyze another measure that assesses “Self-Gain” alone, without providing students the ability to select among other options and instead measuring the degree of intensity. This survey question asks students to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement: “Regardless of concerns about principles, in today’s world you have to be practical, adapt to opportunities, and do what is most advantageous for you.” Responses are collected via a five-point Likert scale response, ranging from strongly agree as low to strongly

disagree as high. We view this as assessing disapproval of self-gain across ethic groups.

Descriptive statistics for both these moral values measures are included in Table 2.

*Qualitative Analysis.* In addition, we analyzed qualitative data from the treatment group. The sources are: (1) value statements drafted midway through the semester, (2) personal mission statements drafted at multiple times during the semester and revised based on instructor feedback and further personal reflection, and (3) student class reflection essays completed at the end of the semester which indicate what, if any changes, students experienced from the class. Data were coded in NVivo via abductive analysis (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The codebook for the qualitative analysis is included in the appendix.

## FINDINGS

### Quantitative Results

*Moral Source.* We begin by presenting results for the survey question assessing the moral source that students rely upon in making moral decisions, in order to assess the theoretical expectation that students evidencing an Ethic of Autonomy remain fairly stable over time, whereas increases are expected in Ethics of Community and Divinity. To begin then, we assess the descriptive statistics regarding changes over time. The net (i.e., treatment and control groups combined) Time 1 and Time 2 frequency distributions for this question were similar, with 29.5 percent of students selecting self as the moral source at Time 1 and 29.5 percent selecting this source at Time 2. Likewise, 29.5 of students selected others as the source of moral decision making at Time 1, compared to 27.8 percent at Time 2. The most marked difference, though still small, was for selection of God as the moral source, which was reported by 41.0 percent of students at Time 1 and 42.6 at Time 2.

In actuality, there was more movement within categories than this net frequency distribution reveals. Of the students selecting self as their moral source at Time 1, 27.8 percent changed to others at Time 2 and 16.7 percent changed to God as moral source at Time 2 (whereas 55.6 percent stayed with self as moral source). For students selecting others as their moral source at Time 1, 38.9 percent changed to self as moral source at Time 2, and 11.1 percent changed to God as moral source at Time 2 (whereas 50.0 percent stayed with others as moral source). The moral source with the least amount of change was God, with only 4.0 percent of the students selecting God as moral source at Time 1 changing to self at Time 2 and 12.0 percent changing to others as moral source (whereas 84.0 percent stayed with God as moral source).

In further investigating stability or changes over time in sources of reliance for moral decision-making, and calculating whether these differences are statistically significant, we analyzed multinomial logit regression models that estimate each of the outcome measure response options for moral source: self, others, and God. We estimate these models with the God moral source response as the baseline to which the other two response options are compared. The models include lagged dependent measures for Time 1 responses, in order to control for initial student responses. These are included in the model as dichotomous variables, with the reference group of God as moral source to which self and other sources are compared. Also included in the model is a dichotomous variable representing whether the student was enrolled in the treatment course or the control group courses. Table 3 displays the results.

[Insert Table 3 About Here]

Table 3 shows the results of the multinomial logit regression model and indicates that students in the control classes who answered at Time 1 that they make moral decisions by relying on others were statistically significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more than twice as likely to change to making

moral decisions by relying on their self at Time 2 than to change to relying on God. Students in the control classes who answered at Time 1 that they make moral decisions by relying on their self were statistically significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more than three times as likely to change to making moral decisions by relying on others at Time 2 than to change to relying on God. Viewing these results from another angle, students in the treatment class were statistically significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) *less likely* than the control group students, net of their own Time 1 response, to report at Time 2 that they make moral decisions by relying on their self. In other words, treatment group students were more likely to report that they rely on God at Time 2 than to report they rely on Self at time 2, relative to themselves at Time 1 and relative to control group students at Time 2. However, the net prosociality gain is obscured in this metric, due to the forced choice options. We thus turn next to an evaluation of the self-gain measure alone.

*Self-Gain.* Next we present results of the self-gain question. At Time 1, 3.7 percent of students strongly agreed with the self-gain statement, 8.3 percent agreed, 12.8 neither agreed nor disagreed, 39.5 percent disagreed, and 35.8 percent strongly disagreed. Inconsistent with the developmental expectation that an Ethic of Autonomy would remain stable, the overall movement at Time 2 was toward greater agreement, with 3.3 percent strongly agreeing, 16.4 percent agreeing, 14.8 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 34.4 percent disagreeing, and 31.2 percent strongly disagreeing. In analyzing change over time on this measure, we find that 58.3 percent of those who agreed at Time 1 were stable in agreeing at Time 2, whereas 8.3 percent became neutral and 33.3 percent moved toward disagreement. Of those who were neutral at Time 1, 11.1 percent changed to agreeing compared to 50.0 percent changing to disagreeing, and 16.7 percent remaining neutral. Of those who disagreed at Time 1, 87.2 percent were stable in disagreeing by Time 2, with 7.7 percent changing to neutral and 5.1 percent to agreeing.

We further investigated these changes by estimating ordered logit models with the agree-disagree scale responses for self-gain at Time 2 with a lagged dependent variable of the same measure at Time 1, along with the dichotomous measure of whether students were enrolled in the treatment or control group courses. The results indicate that, net of their initial responses at Time 1, students in the treatment class are statistically significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more likely than their control group peers to disagree with the self-gain statement at Time 2 ( $b = 1.335$ ). Thus, more of the movement detected over time between Time 1 and Time 2 for greater disagreement with the self-gain statement was a result of changes for students in the treatment group.

### **Qualitative Results from Treatment Class**

*Moral Orientations.* To exemplify the different moral orientations, we begin by presenting a student quote that represents each of the three ethicalities. First, here is a male student who evidenced an Ethic of Autonomy: “I make my wagers based on how I feel about my decisions afterwards. I have my own moral compass, and I don’t feel that I have to answer to anyone but myself at the end of the day.” In contrast, here is a female student who represents an Ethic of Community: “I value being able to be dependable and selfless toward other people. I look to serve my family in addition to my close friends who I also call family.” Another clear representation of the three ethicalities, here is a male student evidencing an Ethic of Divinity: “I will strive to have these values and goals embedded in every aspect of my everyday...I have found my values in my faith, and have designed my goals to come from my values.” Throughout the course of the semester, many of the students evidenced gaining greater attention to, concern for, and respect of others, resulting in many students moving beyond self-gain values. While the students initially evidenced fitting into one or the other categories, as was the expectation, their lack of stability in an Ethic of Autonomy was counter theoretical expectation.

*Beyond Self-Gain.* Mirroring the quantitative findings on the second measure, regarding self-gain, there were several instances in the treatment group student essays in which students specifically referenced moving beyond self-gain as their sole moral value. For example, one female student said: “Seeing this everyday will also make me remember what is important in my life. It’s not the money, the fake friends, or being a workaholic. What is important in my life is my values, which I always must try to put first.” Similarly, a male student said: “Instead of choosing the decisions that makes the most sense financially, he [referring to one of the guest speakers who affected this student] makes his decisions based on the person and whether or not he can trust them. I will try and adopt this line of thinking when I have to make key decisions. He has proven that it is a system that can work if done properly.” Likewise, another female student said: “I desire fair monetary compensation for work that I may do well, but it will [should] not infringe on my desire to have time with my friends and family and to live an environmentally clean life.” Along the same lines, another male student said: “Doing what others expect (including suggested career or location moves) may bring material rewards, but if I find no self-worth in my decisions, there will probably be little true meaning.” Combined, these student responses indicate a desire to move beyond self-gain as their moral value, and some of the students indicate that the class contributed to their realizing this. In other words, the first quantitative measure forces students to select only one source of moral authority, whereas the second quantitative measure allows an assessment of net change to self-gain orientations alone. The qualitative results corroborate the findings of this second quantitative measure, that students in the treatment group change to having less emphasis on self-gain during the semester.

*Other-Attention.* Further supporting the second quantitative measure, and providing somewhat contradictory evidence to the first quantitative measure, many of the treatment

students described gaining greater attention to the values of others through the appreciative listening techniques they learned during the class and practiced with each other and with guest speakers in the class. This provides some evidence that the course increased their prosociality. While we do not have comparable qualitative data for the control group, the increase in their agreement with the quantitative self-gain measure provides evidence that, in contradistinction to conventional business education, the pedagogical approach of this course appears to be effective in developing greater concern for others. For example, one female student reported:

Listening to all the guest speakers throughout the semester and using appreciative listening with them, I was able to hear and understand all of their different lives and religions, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and more. I never put much thought into different religions before. It was very rewarding listening to these people and seeing the passion in their eyes as they spoke of their own faith and how they lived in ways which was different than mine. This formed my mission statement by opening my eyes to the fact that there is more out there in life than just following the basic path and I realized there are many ways people can be happy and happiness can take the form in any situation or lifestyle.

Likewise, a male student in the class said: “The teachings from class taught me how to successfully accomplish appreciative listening. With these teachings, I was able to listen to what the guest speakers had to say from a different point of view.” He continued later in his essay by stating: “With a solid understanding of my own perspective in life, I will be able to adapt to changes and understand the perspectives of those I encounter in order to enhance our relationship and work towards common goals together. Life is a team effort; to do anything great it will require the help of others.”

Whereas many students at the beginning of the semester assumed the students shared the same values, seeing moral homogeneity as the default, one of the female students reported this by the end of the semester: “Being able to collaborate and discuss with my peers and seeing what their top values were was very interesting to me because we all had different ones. We talked about what they were and how important they were to each one of us.” Continuing this impact, a male student reported how he thinks the class will affect his future workplace experiences:

Through my career, it’s important for me to further understand everyone’s different worldview and cultural backgrounds.... It’s essential to not be judgmental and continue to demonstrate a sense of hope and morality in helping others to succeed and achieve one’s organizational goals together instead of ignoring each other. By working together, it helps me to learn, grow, and network with one another.

Another male student similarly expressed how he thinks the course will aid him in the workplace by saying: “Respect is crucial within any kind of relationship including the ones between team members. If the members simply treat each other with respect it will help quickly eradicate some of these hostile tensions and help people work together. When people feel respected by one another they can more easily receive and give ideas and constructive criticism.” Together, these student essays indicate that the course aided their development of increased attention to others, by truly hearing and appreciating their distinct moral values and treating them with respect.

*Value Tradeoffs.* Across the qualitative quotes included here, and many more not included, it is apparent that one of the key contributions of the personal mission statement revisions was forcing students to make tradeoffs, having to prioritize different sets of values that cannot all be held in reality to the same degree. For example, students would initially list that they want to work hard, make a lot of money, have a good family life, and take care of their

community. These all sounded like excellent values, but they also initially appeared to be clichés and somewhat superficial. Most adults actually struggle to balance those priorities. Throughout the semester, the instructor challenged students to reflect upon how to enact these values, perhaps at the expense of another value. For example, it was also clear that many students were affected by guest speakers, such as one who mentioned that as a landlord he made a decision to let some of his tenets stay for free during economic downturn when they were short on cash, trusting them to repay later. This challenged many of the students to consider how to balance the good of the community with making money.

*Career Impacts.* One of the goals of the course was to develop greater ability to articulate moral values in order to become a more effective team member in culturally and religiously diverse workplaces, e.g. to help a diverse group discover their shared values. Though this study did not directly investigate career impacts, many students discussed potential career impacts of the course. For example, one female student described the impact of writing her personal mission statement:

I plan to use my mission statement by referring to it to guide my decisions when I am placed in an uncomfortable or conflicting situation where the answer is not always obvious....I've also seen a mission statement being used in an interview, so I will keep one on hand anytime I have an interview to show future employers who I am, what I value, and what I am on a road to accomplish.

Likewise, a male student talked about the benefits of the mission statement for job interviewing:

I feel that this mission statement has given us a leg up going into job interviews. We now have a specific purpose and direction and know how to articulate it effectively. If someone asks me what my goal in life is or what I am trying to do I will confidently

answer using direct quotes from my mission statement. I also know for sure a few make or break attributes of the type of job that I am looking for and will always be looking for. One of the male students reflected on the outcome of discussing tradeoffs between values, saying: Another similar discussion that influenced my mission statement was the topic of work-life balance, something my parents never had. I knew I didn't want my children to ever feel second to work as I did as a child. My mission being to build a family and career, it became clear to find the perfect balance between being a father, husband, and leader. Combined, the student essays articulated a number of ways the course is likely to continue to impact them as they transition into workplaces and carry forward their clarified values.

## **DISCUSSION**

In summary, the findings indicate that both (a) reports of moral sources relied upon in decision-making and (b) degree of emphasis on self-gain were not static over time. Within a single semester, some students changed their responses on these questions. This finding supports the theory articulated by Jensen (2008), that cultural orientations to moral decision-making change over time. Contrary to the idea that students come to college with their values fully formed and remain fairly static in those pre-conceived value systems throughout their business education, we find that students can and do change over time. This is true of all students in the study, regardless of whether students participated in the treatment course. Thus, this study confirms that adopting a developmental approach in management education is appropriate.

However, it is also important to note that the direction and intensity of these changes differed somewhat from what Jensen theorized. Rather than the static line displayed in Figure 1 for the Ethic of Autonomy, we found the greatest degree of change in the extent to which students emphasized self-motivated values. Students in the treatment group reported less

emphasis on self-advantage as primary. Treatment group students evidenced the sharp increase in an Ethic of Divinity that Jensen theorized, but the control group students did not, instead showing an increase in an Ethic of Community and an Ethic of Autonomy during the same time.

Durkheim ([1912] 2008) theorized that focus on the divine was ultimately another means of being prosocial, by emphasizing supra-individual, extrinsic abstract ideals, and that participating in divinely-inspired rituals and practices enhanced the social fabric by preventing individuals from focusing purely on self-gain. Because unabated motivations for personal benefit are detrimental to social goods, an emphasis on an Ethic of Community or an Ethic of Divinity ultimately helps to limit purely self-motivated actions. In this sense, they are both prosocial orientations, with the source of moral orientation being something external to the individual. In fact, because both an Ethic of Community and an Ethic of Divinity share in common a prioritization of moral values for extrinsic goods, they are both forms of ethical decision-making that deemphasize self-gain as the primary motivation. With this theoretical explanation and the results across the quantitative and qualitative measures regarding self-gain, the treatment course can be understood as having facilitated development of prosocial orientations.

Moreover, moving beyond clichés to more thoroughly developed moral reasoning appeared to be a primary benefit of the course. Additionally, many of the students described gaining greater cultural awareness, no longer assuming cultural homogeneity, and recognizing a false pretense that everyone is on the same page in holding the same implicit values. Instead, they gained attentiveness to value diversity. While it is beyond the purview of the current study to investigate workplace outcomes, many students forecasted career impacts of participating in this course. Treatment group students reported learning how to work with people who hold different views from their own, a skill that workplaces need. Though we do not have direct

workplace measures, it is logical that students gaining greater moral clarity can result in having deeper wells of courage upon which to draw in giving voice to their values in the workplace (Gentile, 2010). First they need to better understand their values, and then they can voice those values at work. This indicates that a study of workplace outcomes is warranted.

### **Limitations & Future Studies**

While this study capitalizes on the opportunities to improve moral management education by incorporating a developmental and cultural approach to moral maturity, there are a number of limitations worth addressing in future studies. First, the sample for the study is relatively small and not nationally representative. We have restrained the negative impacts of this limitation by including nationally normed survey measures that allowed evaluation relative to a comparable sample drawn from representative study. Doing so revealed that the local courses have more female students than a national subsample would lead us to expect, and this impacts the generalizability of findings. However, as many localized studies lack a national comparison, we gain the unique ability to examine potential for regional biases in the study sample, thereby having a greater ability to be mindful of known limitations than many existing studies. In this way, the methods employed offer a model for future studies.

Nevertheless, improvements upon the current study include replicating the design among a larger and more nationally representative sample, or replicating the localized design across a variety of regional locations, especially with greater gender balance. It is worth noting that the pedagogical approach of this study could also be replicated and adapted to other cultural contexts. Replicating the pedagogical approach of this study would necessitate altering the emphasis and approach to align with the cultural context, either in different regions of the U.S. or globally. One way to understand the purpose of the course, according to the findings presented

here, is that it promotes less ethnocentrism, by exposing students to the existence of multiple belief systems and inviting them to consider the ways the ethical decision-making students take for granted may unintentionally exclude a more diverse perspective in the workplace.

For example, a manager raised in the middle of the U.S., within a cultural context that is strongly patterned by Christianity – regardless of whether the manager of interest was explicitly raised in a religiously attending Christian family – may blatantly eat a beef sandwich in the presence of an officemate who is a practicing Hindu. If the Hindu were to express a desire not to be near the smell of the beef sandwich, the unexposed manager of interest may react in a way that could unintentionally disrespect the religious beliefs of his or her officemate. After completing this course, students would be less inclined to miss the potential religious significance of this encounter, and – we would hope – be more likely to ask the officemate what bothered him or her about the sandwich, and the manager of interest would be prepared to have an explicit and respectful conversation about religious diversity.

This is an issue that could be particular to certain regions of the U.S., especially such as the Christian-infused south. However, nearly the inverse of the above scenario could be the case within a company located in India, for example, in which a burgeoning manager who is a practicing Hindu may benefit from exposure to business leaders who were raised in a Christian culture in order to understand why his or her officemate enjoyed playing on his or her computer overtly Christian music in the month of December, as the Christmas season approaches. Despite this potential for adaptability across cultural contexts, we caution that changes would need to be made to adjust the course to those different cultural contexts. In summary, aspects of the pedagogy of this course are more broadly generalizable, while the particular implementation style will need to be altered to appropriately fit within different cultural contexts.

Second, our mixed-methods design allows for a triangulation across approaches: quasi-experimental treatment and control groups, quantitative survey measures to assess changes over time, and qualitative analysis of student written contributions. While this combination of methods is a strength, it also necessitates less in-depth analysis within each of the data types. Future studies could investigate each of these methods in further depth. For example, the minor self-selection biases between the treatment and control groups in this study could be improved in an experimental design that randomly assigned participants to control or treatment groups, increasing the internal validity. Another approach to future studies would be to collect qualitative data from the control group for comparison. Third, this study had a relatively short duration of time for observed changes: a single semester. A fruitful approach for future studies is to extend the duration. Especially promising is to continue the longitudinal data collection toward tracking students beyond graduation into direct measurement of workplace outcomes. Studying workplace outcomes would also help to limit potential for social desirability in course essays.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, this study advances management education by incorporating developmental and cultural approaches in facilitating moral maturity. Developing moral maturity requires integration of a life course approach that views emerging adults as in a dynamic stage of life, rather than as pre-formed individuals. It also requires overtly addressing the religious and cultural beliefs that shape moral decision-making. We thus investigated whether business education can facilitate Millennials in developing their moral reasoning for diverse workplaces. We find support for the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach investigated in this study. Specifically, we recommend that management education include: interactions with moral exemplars who address diverse religious views on how to enact values at work; appreciative

listening to guide students in hearing moral values; self-reflection on personal values, especially with challenges to evaluate tradeoffs among valued ideals; practice articulating personal values in groups of peers; and application of value articulation toward navigating workplace conflicts.

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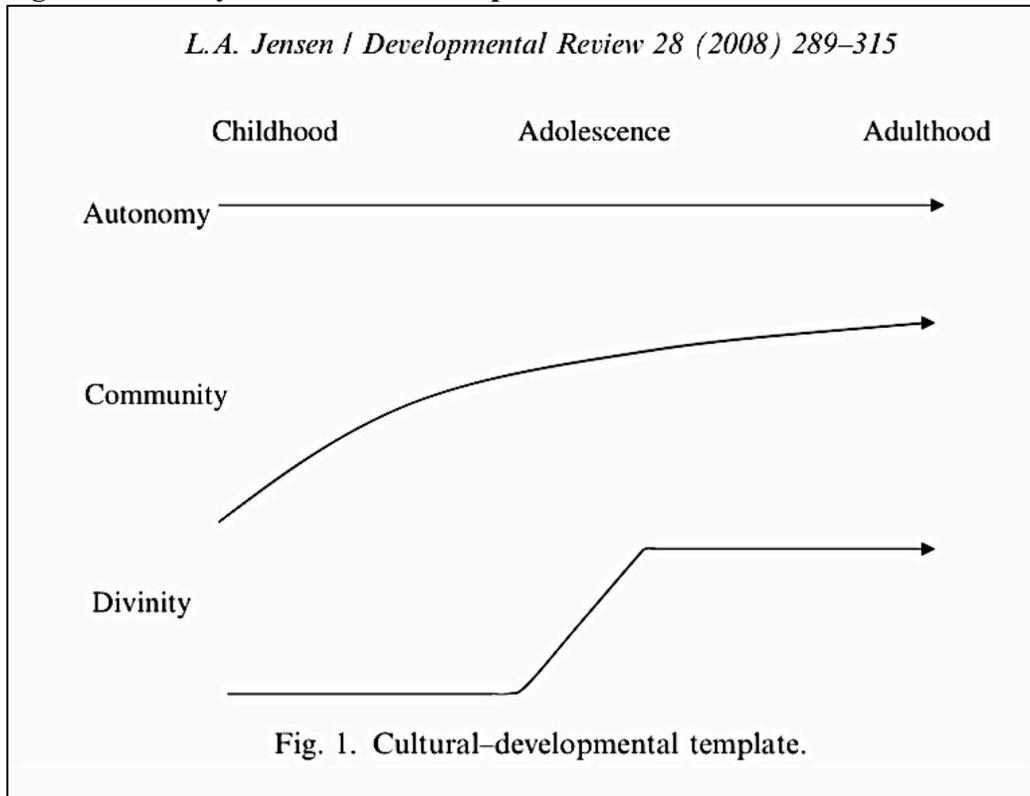
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**Table 1. Three Cultural Approaches to Moral Values and Ethical Orientations**

<b>Ethic of:</b>	<b>Moral Values and Ethical Orientations:</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>	Focuses on “the interests, well-being, and rights of <i>individuals</i> ...virtues such as self-esteem, self-expression, and independence.”
<b>Community</b>	Focuses on “social <i>groups</i> ...roles and positions...duties to others...virtues such as self-moderation and loyalty toward social groups and members.”
<b>Divinity</b>	Focuses on “people as spiritual or religious entities... <i>divine</i> ...moral purity...virtues such as awe, faithfulness, and humility.”

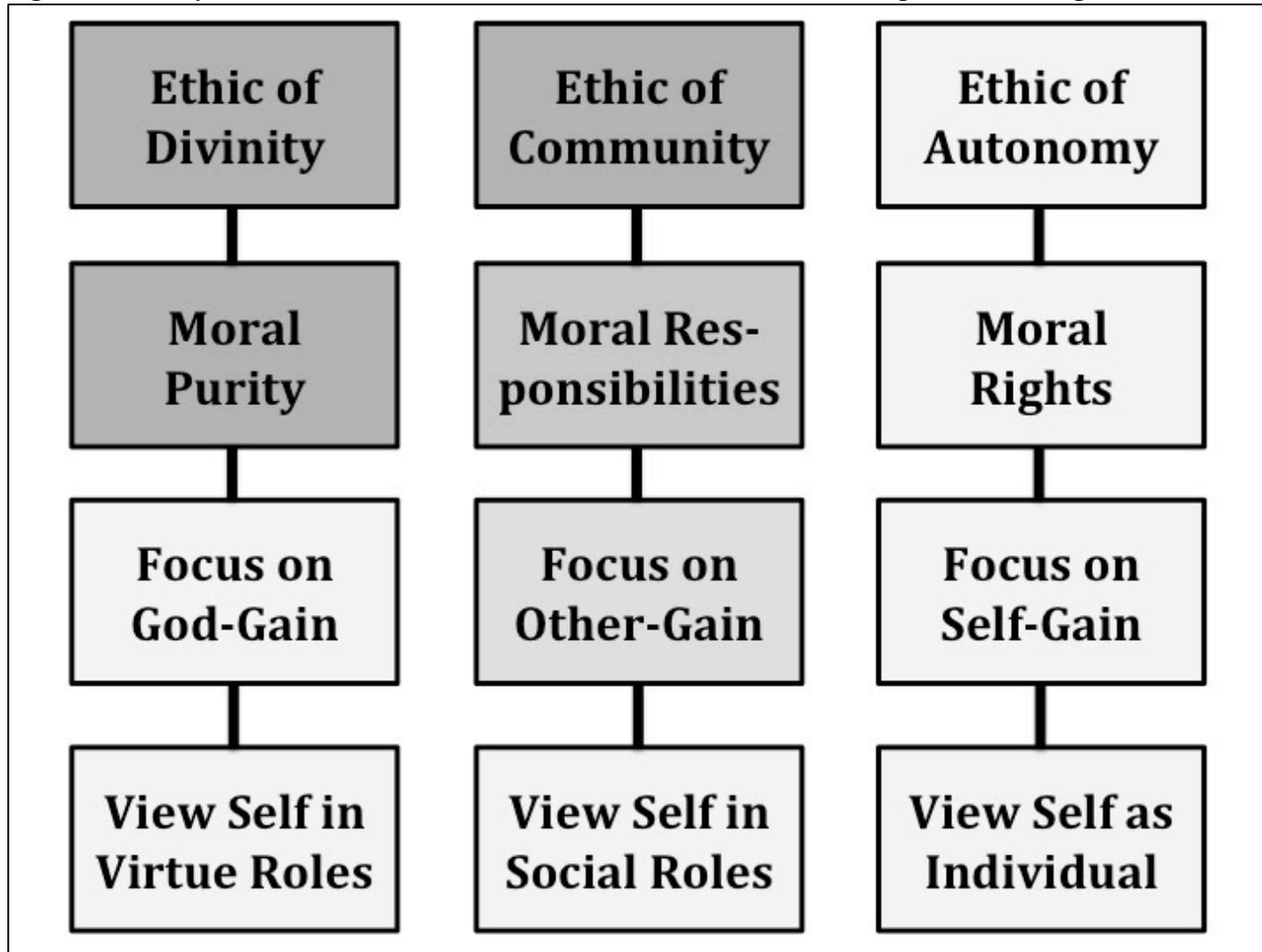
Source: Jensen (2008, p. 296).

**Figure 1. Theory of Cultural Development Process for Ethical Orientations**



Source: Jensen (2008, p. 302).

**Figure 2. Theory of Cultural Ethical Orientations and Life Course Developmental Changes**



*Source:* Author creation, adapted from Jensen (2008). Highlight intensity represents developmental changes.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Treatment-Control by Time 1-Time 2**

<b>Demographics (n/%)</b>	<b>Treatment Group Time 1</b>	<b>Control Group Time 1</b>	<b>Treatment Group Time 2</b>	<b>Control Group Time 2</b>
<b>Size</b>	28 100.0%	82 100.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Age</b>				
20-21	19 67.86%	55 67.07%	N/A	N/A
22-23	7 25.00%	21 25.61%	N/A	N/A
24 or older	2 7.14%	6 7.32%	N/A	N/A
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	14 50.00%	43 52.44%	N/A	N/A
Male	14 50.00%	39 47.56%	N/A	N/A
<b>Moral Values</b>	<b>Treatment Group Time 1</b>	<b>Control Group Time 1</b>	<b>Treatment Group Time 2</b>	<b>Control Group Time 2</b>
<b>Moral Source</b>				
Self-Autonomy	25.00%	36.59%	16.00%	38.89%
Others-Community	21.43%	31.71%	20.00%	36.11%
God-Divinity	53.57%	31.71%	64.00%	25.00%
<b>Self-Gain (mean)</b>	2.8620	2.71429	3.12000	3.16667

*Source:* Author calculations.

**Table 3. Multinomial Regression for Moral Source**

<b>How Decide</b>	<b>T2 Self</b>	<b>T2 Others</b>	<b>T2 God*</b>
<b>Ethics</b>			
T1 Self	4.377*** (1.295)	4.398*** (1.348)	-----
T1 Others	2.217* (1.01)	3.256** (1.026)	-----
T1 God (referent)	-----	-----	-----
Treatment	-1.929* (0.923)	-1.453 (0.889)	-----
Constant	-1.127 (0.692)	1.656 (0.817)	-----

*Source:* Author calculations.

*Notes:* Values are coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses. \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

**Appendix. NVivo Codebook for Qualitative Analysis of Course Impacts**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sources</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Created On</b>
Impact	24	89	Apr 27, 2016, 6:03:13 PM
Impact-Beyond Gain	1	2	Apr 27, 2016, 12:34:46 PM
Impact-Cultural Awareness	14	17	Apr 27, 2016, 12:44:37 PM
Impact-De-stress	3	4	Apr 27, 2016, 12:46:08 PM
Impact-Other Concern	12	14	Apr 27, 2016, 12:37:36 PM
Impact-Purpose	10	11	Apr 27, 2016, 1:03:18 PM
Impact-Reflection	22	41	Apr 27, 2016, 12:27:19 PM
Impact-Values	1	3	Apr 27, 2016, 12:26:08 PM
Work-Difference	22	48	Apr 27, 2016, 12:25:14 PM

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<sup>1</sup> For our purposes, Millennials refers to the first generation of young people who transitioned into adulthood with the elongated life course development process through emerging adulthood prior to young adulthood. We thus view the more important characteristic being the age and life stage of young people, rather than the generational label that is most often used in public discourse. We here are focused on college students who are in their 20s.