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Moral Judgment and Student Discipline: What Are Institutions Teaching? What Are Students Learning?

Merryl Cooper Robert Schwartz

College students find themselves in conflict with their college or university when they make choices counter to the expectations of the institution. Typically, these expectations for conduct are outlined in a published code of conduct, which is, in a sense, a moral code for student behavior. "The special function of the construct of moral judgment is to provide conceptual guidance for action choice in situations where moral claims conflict," (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999, p. 499). This statement highlights the essence of a question often raised in college and university judicial affairs offices across the country—do students who violate conduct codes operate at a lower level of moral judgment than those who do not?

Purpose of the Study

To investigate the moral judgment of college students who violate campus judicial codes, a group of students who had been referred for a judicial hearing and sanction process were studied to determine the relationship between levels of moral judgment, type of discipline code violation, and selected demographic variables, e.g., age, gender, Greek affiliation, grade point average (GPA), and year in school. A second group of students who were not involved in the judicial process were examined for comparison purposes. Moral judgment scores were gathered from violators and non-violators via the Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT2; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al., 1999).

The primary research question in this

study was: What differences in moral judgment, if any, exist between those students who have violated a university conduct code and those who have not? Specific research questions included:

1. Are there differences in moral judgment among students who commit different types of conduct code violations?
2. Are the differences in judgment affected by age, class level, gender, GPA, or affiliation with a Greek-letter fraternity or sorority?
3. Are there differences in moral judgment between students who violate alcohol regulations versus students who have other types of violations?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Current research on moral action breaks the process of moral decision-making into four parts: (a) the ability to recognize a situation as having a moral dimension, (b) the ability to discern right and wrong, (c) the ability to choose a course of action among competing values, and (d) the ability to implement that choice (Rest, 1986). These four dimensions, which Rest (1986) described as The Four Component Model, represent a synthesis of processes that individuals use for moral behavior. The second component, how a person decides something is morally right or wrong, is moral judgment and is the interpretive lens for this study. Current literature identifies

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several key factors that appear to influence moral judgment among college students. These factors include age, level of education, academic performance, Greek affiliation, and alcohol use. Each factor is discussed briefly below.

Age

Thoma (1986) found that although gender differences accounted for only 0.2% of the variance in the Defining Issues Test (DIT) scores, age and education levels were 250 times more powerful in predicting moral judgment abilities ($r = .52$). Thoma's research corroborates and supports many research studies where age and education level are the most powerful correlates to moral reasoning as measured by the DIT (Rest, 1979).

Education

Rest (1986) reported that despite the strong correlation between moral judgment and age, years of formal education had the strongest influence on moral judgment development over time. However, it is unclear what pieces of a formal education experience, e.g., challenging one's views, role-taking, out-of-classroom experiences that promote reflection, and the like, most influence a person's moral judgment.

Rest (1979) reported that age and education accounted for 38–49% of the variance in moral judgment scores. Rest and Thoma (1985) used the DIT with 39 subjects in high school and then every 2 years after graduation over a 6-year period. Two groups were created: a "low" group of students with no more than 2 years of formal education beyond high school and a "high" group with 3 years or more of formal education. Several scores are generated from the DIT. The most-used score is the P index, a measure of the degree to which a participant attributes importance to principled or post-conventional moral thinking; the

higher the P score, the higher the utilization of post-conventional thinking. At high school graduation, differences in P scores representing post-conventional moral thinking between the two groups were minimal (low = P score of 33, high = P score of 37). Six years later, the low-education group P score was 34.5, and the higher education group rose to a P score of 51.

Academic Performance

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) asserted that grades are the single best indicator of adjustment to college. Although grades are limited as reliable indicators of what is learned in college, they do represent skills refined during college. GPAs of students who take the DIT have been positively correlated with moral judgment ($r = .20$ to $.50$; Rest & Narvaez, 1998).

Students involved in discipline incidents often have lower academic performance. Janosik, Dunn, and Spencer (1985) found that male offenders had lower GPAs than non-offenders. Their 6-year study found that men who were repeat offenders of a university conduct code violation had an average GPA of 2.25, significantly lower than the 6-year norm of 2.6.

Greek Affiliation

Cohen (1982) found that Greek students did not differ significantly on moral judgment scores based on gender, level of membership, or year in school from their non-Greek counterparts. Sanders (1990) administered the DIT to 195 male freshmen at the beginning of the academic year. Of the 195, 103 joined a Greek organization and 92 remained non-affiliated. A second DIT was given to the same students 9 weeks later. Non-affiliated men had higher principled moral judgment (P scores) than did the Greek affiliates.

Marlowe and Auvenshine (1982) administered the DIT to Greek and non-Greek

students at a mid-sized institution and retested them at the end of their sophomore year. No differences were found between students who became Greek affiliated and non-Greeks in the first administration. As sophomores, independent women showed the highest level of moral reasoning (P score = 43.4). Greek women were next highest (P score = 40.6), then independent men (P score = 40.2) and Greek men (P score = 38.7).

Alcohol

Alcohol use on college campuses has been a rite of passage for students for years (Jones & Kern, 1999). Recent studies on alcohol consumption cite the consequences of drinking behaviors on academic performance, e.g., missing class, performing poorly on a test or project, and even memory loss, which can negatively affect one's academic performance (Presley, Meilman, & Cashin, 1996; Presley, Meilman, & Padget, 1994; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000).

Nationally, students under the legal drinking age of 21 consume an average of 4.9 drinks per week, slightly more than students over 21 who drink 4.1 alcoholic beverages weekly (Presley et al., 1996). In 1992–1994, a total of 45,632 students across 89 institutions were surveyed on the prevalence and frequency of their alcohol and drug use. The survey found underage students who used alcohol were almost twice as likely to be in trouble with authorities, 15.4% of students under 21 compared to 8.2% of students of legal age (Presley et al., 1996).

Student Development and Judicial Offenders

Few studies have focused on outcomes of student judicial sanctions. Chassey (1999) compared levels of moral judgment for repeat behavioral offenders with non-offenders in

residence halls using the DIT (Rest, 1979). The DIT was administered to 16 females and 13 males and yielded a statistically significant difference between student offenders and non-offenders ($p < .025$) in scores. The average P score for non-offenders, indicating principled moral reasoning, was 46.50, whereas repeat offenders averaged 33.07, indicating that the repeat offenders were operating at a lower level of moral reasoning. Chassey noted that efforts to educate some repeat offenders may be futile. A P score of 33 on the DIT corresponds to Kohlberg's (1970) Pre-Conventional stage in which students egocentrically perceive morality as actions that benefit only themselves. Because such a student is operating at an egocentric cognitive level, "the only thing a student-offender may be learning in this situation is not to get caught again" (Chassey, p. 10).

Smith (1978, cited in Chassey, 1999) administered the DIT along with a "discipline interview questionnaire" to 55 college students who admitted to violating the code of conduct. Students with lower moral judgment scores were concerned primarily with the negative consequences they might experience as a result of their violations. Students with higher P scores were able to reflect on what could be learned from the incident. "The discipline experience is perceived quite differently by those at different developmental levels of moral thinking—an important distinction [for] handling campus discipline" (Smith, 1978, p. 292).

RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted at a large, public, research institution in the Southeast with a student population of 34,000 at the time of the study. The majority of the students live in close proximity to campus but not in residence halls; however, the university exercises judicial action for conduct code violations both on and

off campus. Non-residence hall cases of misconduct are referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR). Residence hall students are initially referred to a residence hall judicial process but may also be sent to the Office of SRR for violations in academic buildings or in off-campus settings.

Two groups of students were studied. One group comprised students who were found to be responsible for violating the university conduct code by the Office of SRR during a 12-week period during the fall semester, 2002. A comparison group of students who had not violated the conduct code was randomly selected from a list of residence hall students.

Participants

Students alleged to have violated the conduct code are referred to the Office of SRR through police/faculty/staff/student conduct reports. Office of SRR staff review the documentation to determine if any violations of the conduct code occurred. If a student's behavior appears to be in violation, a letter outlining the charge(s) is sent to the student, requiring the student to make an appointment for a hearing with the Office of SRR. If the student is found "responsible for a violation," sanctions are assigned and must be completed in a prescribed period of time, e.g., violators of alcohol policies are referred to an alcohol education seminar.

Twelve charge categories are outlined in the university conduct code. They include: sexual misconduct, endangerment of self or others, harassment, hazing, weapons, fire and safety, illegal drugs, alcohol, disruption, identification, property, and computer violations. Based on the annual reports compiled by the Office of SRR for the past 2 years, the five most frequently violated categories are alcohol, endangerment of others, illegal drugs, property damage, and disruption (Brown, 2001, 2002).

Students may be charged with one violation or a combination of violations. For example, a 20-year-old student, arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol and in possession of drug paraphernalia may be charged with alcohol use, endangerment, and drug violations. The lead or dominant violation, as determined by the Office of SRR, was the violation type recorded in the study. In this case, endangerment of self and others would likely be the dominant violation.

Instrumentation

The DIT, published by James Rest in 1974, was the first paper and pencil assessment tool designed to measure moral judgment stages as defined by Lawrence Kohlberg (1970). Prior to 1974, Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview, or MJI, was the primary assessment tool for moral judgment. Normative data for the DIT has been generated from 45,856 DITs scored during a 4-year period. Referred to as the "mega-sample," it was compiled by Evens in 1995. The mean P score for the mega-sample was 39.1 with a standard deviation of 14.84. This benchmark score indicated that post-conventional thinking was abundant across the sample (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, et al., 1999).

James Rest's (1970) initial introduction to moral reasoning theory was based on Kohlberg's work. But Rest wanted to develop a better instrument for measuring moral development than the extensive interview process used by Kohlberg. After 25 years of morality research using the DIT, Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al. (1999) proposed a new approach to assessing moral development. Their approach became the basis for the reformulation of the DIT into a new version, the DIT2.

Distinctions between Kohlberg's (1970) theory and the neo-Kohlbergian schema used by Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al. (1999) center around Rest's argument that moral development

occurs in a seamless progression towards higher thinking. (Rest uses the term *schema* to avoid confusion with Kohlberg's stages.) In short, one may have the ability to function at high levels of moral thinking, but people often choose to function at a lower level.

The schema is divided under three headings: personal interest, maintaining norms, and post-conventional (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al., 1999). These headings resemble Kohlberg's (1970) three groupings of stages. However, Rest argued that the interpretation of over 400 studies of moral judgment research calls for a slightly different interpretation than Kohlberg. Personal interest (Kohlberg's stages 2-3) refers to decisions based on outcomes directly affecting the person or those loved by the person. Maintaining norms (Kohlberg's stage 4) refers to the need for decisions to create social order and thereby justify codes and laws. Post-conventional (Kohlberg's stage 5-6) decisions are justified by their benefit to social values and ideals. These headings are the main categories for scoring on the DIT2.

Like the DIT, the DIT2 consists of five dilemmas. Participants are asked to rank the importance of 12 issue statements for each dilemma. The five dilemmas in the DIT2 consist of: "(a) a father contemplates stealing food for his starving family from the warehouse of a rich man hoarding food; (b) a newspaper reporter must decide whether to report a damaging story about a political candidate; (c) a school board chair must decide whether to hold a contentious and dangerous open meeting; (d) a doctor must decide whether to give an overdose of pain-killer to a suffering and frail patient; (e) college students demonstrate against U.S. foreign policy" (Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 2004, ¶2).

All completed instruments are scored by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Minnesota. Scoring

of the DIT2 classifies responses into three neo-Kohlbergian schemas: Personal Interest (Stages 2+3), Maintaining Norms (Stage 4), and Post-Conventional Schema (Stage 5+6). The schemas are closely related to Kohlberg's stages but are slightly different so as to measure how people assign rights and responsibilities through moral judgment.

N2 Index. The primary score obtained from the DIT2 to assess moral judgment is the N2 index (Rest, Thoma, Narvaez, & Bebeau, 1997). The N2 index is a new index derived from the re-formulation of the DIT2 and indicates the degree to which a person's moral judgment reaches principled or post-conventional thinking. N2 scores differ from P scores in that they utilize both ranking data and weighted rating data to produce the index. Five reliability checks, RtXRk (rank consistency), M (missing items), MISRT (missing rates), MISRK (missing ranks), and NoDif (non-differentiation of rank or rate), indicate whether a participant has provided reliable responses. If a participant does not pass all five reliability checks, the subject's responses are purged from the data.

Validity and Reliability. Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al. (1999) discussed validity and reliability of the DIT and DIT2 extensively. In a mega-sample comprising 45,856 DITs scored from 1989 through 1993, validity and reliability are consistent across age, cultural background, and region. In addition, the DIT significantly predicted real-life moral behavior, a critical measure for this study (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al., 1999). Cronbach alphas for the DIT are in the upper .70s to low .80s and test/re-test reliability is commensurate (Rest & Narvaez, 1998). The DIT2 correlates positively with the original DIT ($r = .79$). With the new scoring indexes (N2) and subject reliability checks, the DIT2 demonstrates the same validity as the original DIT.

Data Collection

Data were collected in Fall 2002 from records of students found to be responsible for a violation by the Office of SRR using the following procedure. Each student charged with an alleged violation was given a consent letter when they arrived for their hearing in the Office of SRR. The letter outlined the goal of the research project, indicating approval and support from the Dean of Students and the Institutional Research Board and asked the student to participate. At the same time, data were also collected for the independent variables, type of charge(s), age, classification, gender, GPA, and Greek affiliation, all derived with permission from university records.

Each individual student record was assigned a unique code number. This number was written on the DIT2 scoring sheet to match the DIT2 scores with the student record. Once the code number was assigned, the participant's name was no longer used. Other identifying information was shredded at the conclusion of the study.

Students willing to participate signed a consent form and were given instructions on completing the DIT2. Students were informed by Office of SRR staff that participation in the study was a separate activity from the judicial hearing process and would not influence the outcome of their hearing. Students who chose not to participate were dropped from the study.

Completed DIT2 surveys were deposited along with the signed consent form in a secure collection bin. Files for any students who declined to participate were removed. No indication of participation (or non-participation) was kept in the student's Office of SRR file. At the conclusion of the data collection, student records for any students later found to be not responsible for a violation were also removed from the study.

Comparison Group

For this study, a comparison group of non-violator students was randomly selected from the 7,000 students living in the campus residence hall system. Several assumptions were made about comparison group members, e.g., differences between students who live in the residence halls and those who live off campus are minimal. Research does indicate that students who live in residence halls may have more opportunities to interact in intellectual, social, and academic activities that foster principled moral judgment directly, such as socializing with older peers and frequent conversations with faculty (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Students living in the residence hall system represented 20.8% of the student population at the time of the study. A stratified random sampling method was used to create subgroups comparable to the sample of students under judicial review collected previously in the Office of SRR. The residence hall sample was based on class level, e.g., freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior, because years of formal education is the strongest predictor for DIT2 scores (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, et al., 1999b). Care was taken to insure that the sample of residence hall students was as close as possible to the sample of students gathered from the Office of SRR judicial hearings. For example, if 40 freshmen were included in the Office of SRR sample, the sample from residence halls should have included 40 freshmen as well.

Students were randomly selected using a random numbers table and placed into the appropriate subgroup. Random selection continued until all subgroups were filled with the desired number of participants. The records of all residence hall participants selected were checked to see if they were involved in the judicial process at the university. Those found to be under judicial review

were eliminated from the sample and a replacement was randomly selected. Information for each selected participant such as age, class rank, and GPA was obtained from university records. A unique code was assigned to each participant to match the data from the DIT2 with the independent variable data.

Data Analysis

Scoring of the DIT2 was completed by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Minnesota. Raw scores were returned on disc and in paper format. N2 scores were matched with the independent variable data to complete a data set for each participant. Descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median, mode, frequencies) were computed for both groups. Analysis of variance was utilized to compare the mean scores of groups. The level of significance chosen was .05

Descriptive Data

Of the 181 charged (SRR) students who were asked to participate, 141 agreed to complete the DIT2, a return rate of 77.9%. A total of 18 participants were removed from the study as 5 were later found not responsible for an alleged code violation, 10 were purged during the DIT2 scoring process as they did not meet reliability criteria, and 3 cases were missing leaving a total of 123 cases in the SRR group.

The SRR group was made up of 28.5% were freshmen, 35.8% sophomores, 25.2% juniors, and 10.6% seniors (Table 1). Approximately 81% were under the age of 21. Of those who violated the conduct code, 75% were male, 35% were female. Twenty-six percent of the group were affiliated with a Greek fraternity or sorority. GPAs under 3.00 were reported for 58.5%; those with GPAs of 3.00 or higher accounted for 41.5%.

Seven types of violations of a university

conduct code were represented in the sample. Alcohol violations dominated with 90 cases out of the 123. The other types of violations were illegal drugs (11), endangerment (7), property (7), harassment (3), disruption (3), and identification (2).

The comparison group of students from the residence halls initially consisted of a total of 176 students. Of these, 18 either failed to respond or were no longer living in the halls. Nine students were under judicial review and were deleted from the sample. Of the remaining 149 students, 120 completed the DIT2 for a return rate of 80.5%. Seven completed surveys were later purged due to reliability concerns leaving a final total of 113 useable responses.

A factorial ANOVA was used to examine the variance in the dependent variable, moral judgment scores, by controlling for the effects of independent variables. A 2 (age) \times 4 (class level) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (GPA) \times 2 (Greek affiliation) \times 2 (control/comparison group) factorial ANOVA was conducted. The advantage to using a factorial ANOVA was that it examined the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable (a main effect) and also examined the effects of multiple independent variables together (interaction effects; Urdan, 2001).

A two-tailed independent samples *t* test was used to assess any statistical significance

TABLE 1.
Class Levels by Group

Class Level	SRR		Residence Hall	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Freshman	35	28.5	29	25.7
Sophomore	44	35.8	46	40.7
Junior	31	25.2	27	23.9
Senior	13	10.6	11	9.7

TABLE 2.
N2 Score Group Means

Group	<i>n</i>	N2 Score	
		Mean	<i>SD</i>
SRR	123	26.1295	12.30987
Residence Hall	113	31.5763	12.10633

between the mean moral judgment (N2 scores) for the SRR and residence hall groups. Random assignment to groups was not possible for the SRR group because participants consisted of those who violated the conduct code, so a parametric test was used to analyze the data. Because the assumption of random selection could not be used for both groups, the chances of performing a Type I or Type II error increased.

RESULTS

Class years for the both groups are shown in Table 1. Just over 91% of all SRR violators were under the age of 21. Females represented 68.1% of the group; males made up 31.9% of the group. Just under 9% of the SRR group were members of a Greek fraternity or sorority. GPAs for the comparison group showed that 29.2% under 3.00, and 70.8% over 3.00.

The comparison group of residence hall (non-offender) students had a higher DIT2 N2 mean score of 31.58. The SRR group had

a lower mean of 26.13 (Table 2). Both groups had large standard deviations indicating a wide range of scores. The low standard error from the means for each group indicated that some error may have occurred when estimating the sample mean but Levene's test for equality of variances was not violated. Because the *F* ratio was not significant, the assumption of equal variances was used. The *t* for equal variances is significant ($p < .001$) at -3.423 , which is greater in size than the $\alpha = 0.01$ level minimum of 2.576 (see Table 3) and exceeds the alpha level ($\alpha = .05$). Calculated effect size was 0.442. Table 3 presents the independent samples *t* test results.

Moral judgment stage score means were explored because of the statistically significant findings for the principled judgment N2 means. The means for each group (Table 4) on Personal Interest scores (Kolhberg Stages 2 and 3) were compared using an independent samples *t* test with an alpha level set at 0.05. Although the means indicate that those students who violated the conduct code reason at a higher rate from the Personal Interest perspective, the difference between the group means was not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Table 5). An independent samples *t* test was used to compare the means between groups for the Maintaining Norms scores. The means indicate that both groups reasoned similarly in this range and differed by only one point (Table 6). Group means were not

TABLE 3.
Independent Samples *t* Test Between Groups for N2 Score ($\Delta = .442$)

Equal Variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> Test for Equality of Means				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> Difference	<i>SE</i> Difference
Assumed	.020	.887	-3.423	234.000	.001	-5.4468	1.59141
Not Assumed			-3.425	232.907	.001	-5.4468	1.59028

TABLE 4.
Group Means—Personal Interest
(Stage 2/3)

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
SRR	123	30.9065	11.88941
Residence Hall	113	27.9889	11.79032

TABLE 6.
Group Means—Maintaining Norms
(Stage 4)

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
SRR	123	34.2846	12.55856
Residence Hall	113	33.2454	12.87148

statistically significant (see Table 7).

Are there differences in moral judgment among students who commit different types of conduct code violations? The number of cases for each violation type varied from small to large (Table 8). In all but two of the violations represented, the number of cases in each cell was fewer than 10. It is commonly accepted that for an ANOVA to be meaningful, no cell should have fewer than 10 cases (Urdu, 2001). So the approach to analyzing this research question was re-evaluated and the original question became: Is there a difference in moral judgment scores between students who commit an alcohol violation and students who commit all other violations?

To answer the question, a *t* test between groups was performed. The means between each group differed by one point with the mean N2 score for alcohol violators being 26.4 and the mean N2 score for all other violations other than alcohol being 25.4 (Table 9). No statistically significant differences were found (see Table 10).

The third research question was: What differences in moral judgment, if any, exist between students who have violated a university conduct code and those who have not based on age, class level, gender, GPA, and affiliation with a Greek-letter fraternity or sorority? Table 11 shows the results of a factorial ANOVA with the alpha level set at 0.050. The overall corrected model was statistically significant at 0.035. This result indicates that one or more main or interaction effects accounted for part of the variance in moral judgment scores.

The only effect to be statistically significant at the 0.050 level was the interaction effect between age and group (0.035). However, the effect size (partial eta squared) was only 0.025. General interpretations of effect sizes less than 0.200 are to be considered small, those in the 0.250 and 0.750 range moderate, and those at 0.80 and higher large (Urdu, 2001). An effect size of 0.025 for the interaction between group and class year accounts for only 2.5% of the variance. The small effect size suggests

TABLE 5.
Independent Samples *t* Test for N2 Score—Personal Interest

Equal Variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> Test for Equality of Means				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> Difference	<i>SE</i> Difference
Assumed	.018	.892	1.891	234	.060	2.9176	1.54309
Not Assumed			1.891	232.627	.060	2.9176	1.54254

TABLE 7.
Independent Samples *t* Test for N2 Score—Maintaining Norms

Equal Variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> Test for Equality of Means				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> Difference	<i>SE</i> Difference
Assumed	.067	.796	.627	234	.531	1.0392	1.65610
Not Assumed			.627	231.215	.531	1.0392	1.65783

that the variance may be due to the sample size. Although statistically significant, the practical significance was negligible.

Three additional effects were not statistically significant: a main effect of “group” and interaction effects between “age × gender × GPA” and “class × gender × GPA.” Effect sizes were too small to interpret the interactions as practically significant. Although the overall model was statistically significant with a moderate effect size of 0.335, the interpretation of the results must be scrutinized carefully. Due to the small effect sizes, the overall model must be viewed with caution.

SUMMARY

Students who violated the conduct code

TABLE 8.

Frequencies of Violation Type

Code Violation	<i>n</i>	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Endangerment	7	5.7	5.7	5.7
Harassment	3	2.4	2.4	8.1
Illegal drugs	11	8.9	8.9	17.1
Alcohol	90	73.2	73.2	90.2
Disruption	3	2.4	2.4	92.7
Identification	2	1.6	1.6	94.3
Property	7	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	123	100.0	100.0	

reasoned at a lower post-conventional moral judgment level than students who did not violate the conduct code based on DIT2 scores. Cell sizes for some code violations were too small for statistical analysis, so violations were regrouped from seven violations into two groups: alcohol and non-alcohol violations. No significant differences were found between the two groups of violators.

A factorial ANOVA was used to examine the independent variables of age, class level, gender, GPA, and Greek affiliation for main and interaction effects on moral judgment scores. Two significant differences were observed. The overall model and an interaction effect between group and class year were statistically significant, a finding consistent with moral judgment research regarding years of formal education.

Students were similar in their moral reasoning abilities on the moral judgment schemas of Personal Interest and Maintaining Norms. However, students who violated the conduct code were distinctly different in the

TABLE 9.

Group Means of N2 Score Between Alcohol and Non-Alcohol Violations

Violation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Alcohol	90	26.3974	12.24766
Non-Alcohol	33	25.3988	12.63979

TABLE 10.

Independent Samples *t* Test for NZ Scores—Alcohol and Non-Alcohol Violations

Equal Variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> Test for Equality of Means				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2 tailed)	<i>M</i> Difference	<i>SE</i> Difference
Assumed	.305	.582	.397	121	.692	.9987	2.51381
Not Assumed			.391	55.462	.697	.9987	2.55109

principle-based moral judgment Post-Conventional Schema. Their lower mean score for post-conventional moral judgment indicates that these students utilized principled reasoning less often than other students.

CONCLUSIONS

Students who violated the university conduct code were reasoning at a lower level of moral judgment than students who did not violate the code. Variables of age, class level, gender, GPA, and Greek affiliation may have influenced this outcome but were not statistically significant for either group of students. No distinction could be made between the type of violation (alcohol vs. all other violations) for the student offender group.

Three conclusions may be drawn from this result: (a) the difference in sample size (90 alcohol violations versus 33 other violations) was sufficient to provide reliable results, (b) there was not enough variation in DIT2 scores to significantly distinguish between moral reasoning abilities of students who committed one violation over another, and (c) contextual morality may exert a stronger greater influence than accounted for in this study.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the intent of this study to provide baseline information regarding the moral judgment of student offenders. Armed with

TABLE 11.

Factorial ANOVA—Tests of Between-Subjects Effects
Dependent Variable: N2 Score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Corrected Model	12291.089	61	201.493	1.439	.035
Group	547.449	1	547.449	3.911	.050
Age × Gender × GPA	401.887	1	401.887	2.871	.092
Class × Gender × GPA	1057.677	3	352.559	2.518	.060
Age × Group	633.661	1	633.661	4.526	.035

Note. $R^2 = .335$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .102$).

such information, judicial affairs professionals might incorporate the concepts of developing moral judgment among the students with whom they work. Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, et al. (1999) concluded that “the critical characteristic of a college for promoting moral judgment seems to be a commitment to critical reflection” (p. 73). It is clear that students in this study who violated the conduct code were not functioning at the same level of moral judgment as those students who did not violate the code. Finding activities that would help students understand their responsibilities for living in an academic community, e.g., critical reflection, may be beneficial.

LIMITATIONS

Replication of the study with a larger sample and following students for a longer period of time would be helpful. Further research on violation type and moral judgment should also prove interesting. It was an early assumption that there would be variations based on violation type with moral judgment; however,

there were not sufficient numbers of various violations to populate the study enough to make valid comparisons. A longitudinal study over several semesters or even a few years would remedy this problem. Additional studies would provide a much clearer picture of moral judgment levels and the status of the moral development of student offenders. As this study provided only what might be called a “snapshot” of an on-going phenomenon, the results were limited by an examination of conduct code offenders who were drawn from only one term. More comparisons might be made with a study that extended over more cases for a longer time and might also discover some trends across the different variables. It would be interesting to see if upperclassmen are different than freshmen in terms of type of violation and/or level of moral reasoning, for example.

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