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*“In a different voice”*: Gender Differences in Moral Orientation

*“Con voce di donna”*: Differenze di genere nell’orientamento morale

*Abstract*

The studies on Kohlbergian moral judgment were criticized by Gilligan (1977), who hypothesized two different models of moral judgment: justice, specifically to male, and care, specifically to female. This moral orientation could be related to modes of self-definition. Almost forty years later, this paper will review Gilligan's theory assuming that care-based morality and justice-based morality coexist in both males and females. Additionally, the current study examined the relationship between self-concept and moral orientation in emerging adults. A sample of 100 undergraduates completed a self-administered questionnaire, which refers to three areas: self-description questions, personal moral conflict, hypothetical moral dilemma questions and moral questions. Results indicated that moral reasoning is not moderated by gender. Moreover, both males and females are endowed with aspects of care and responsibility, as well as those of and justice. Finally, emerging adults attribute moral reasoning and moral behavior to the two different moral levels.

*Keywords*: moral orientation; moral reasoning; gender differences; ethics of care.

*Abstract*

Gli studi sul ragionamento morale di Kohlberg sono stati criticati da Gilligan (1977), che ha ipotizzato due differenti modalità di ragionamento morale: l’etica della giustizia, specifica degli uomini, e quella della cura, specifica delle donne. Questi orientamenti della morale sono correlati alla struttura identitaria dei due generi. Quasi quarant'anni dopo, questo lavoro ripropone la ricerca condotta dalla Gilligan, assumendo che cura e giustizia rappresentino due modalità di ragionamento morale coesistenti nella donna come nell'uomo, non strettamente specifiche di un genere o dell'altro. Inoltre vuole

studiare la relazione tra il sistema identitario e il concetto di morale nei giovani adulti. A 100 studenti universitari è stato proposto un questionario riguardante tre aree: autodescrizione, conflitti morali personali, dilemmi morali ipotetici e questioni morali. I risultati mostrano che non ci sono differenze di genere nel ragionamento morale. Inoltre, sia maschi che femmine presentano aspetti di cura e responsabilità e aspetti riguardanti la giustizia e i valori. In conclusione, i giovani adulti distinguono nella morale i differenti livelli del ragionamento e del comportamento.

*Parole chiave:* orientamento morale; ragionamento morale; differenze di genere; etica della cura.

### *Introduction*

Several studies have attempted to investigate morality starting from moral reasoning. Piaget (1932) pioneered the study of moral judgment and Kohlberg (1969; 1976; 1984) carried on this work. Kohlberg extended Piaget's theory up to adulthood: he postulated three unchangeable and universal levels in moral reasoning – pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality – each subdivided to make six stages in all. According to him, the individual does not learn to act through moral principles until he reaches the third level of moral judgment, when he starts looking beyond convention aiming to adhere to universal ethical rules. Although Kohlberg supposed that the level of moral reasoning was dependent on having achieved a level of cognitive development according to Piaget's theory, however he stated that a high level of cognitive development did not guarantee an equal level of moral judgment. In this theoretical framework, many psychologists carried out several pieces of research (for a review, see Giammarco, 2016), part of which was particularly focused on gender differences in moral reasoning.

### *Gender Differences*

Previously Freud (1925) hypothesized a different Super-ego in male and female. This was born at the end of the Oedipus complex through the identification with the same-sex parent, the Super-ego is said to be less strict in a woman. Woman's Superego results

from an uninterrupted identification process with the mother, causing a deeper connection with its emotional origin and its less severe nature.

Studying children's games, Piaget (1932) noticed that girls had more pragmatic attitudes toward play rules than boys, they were more lenient and more likely to solve arguments among peers, making up new conflict resolution strategies.

Kohlberg (1969) identified a strong interpersonal bias in female moral judgment, while pointing out women's difficulties in transition from stage 3 – good intentions as determined by social consensus – to stage 4 – driven by authority and social order obedience. Early studies on Kohlbergian moral development reported that Stage 3 was the modal stage for females and was characterized by a desire to maintain relationships and to meet others' expectations. In opposition, modal stage for males recognized the inadequacy of this moral perspective and proceed toward higher stages where relationships were subordinated to rules (stage 4) and rules to universal principles of justice (stages 5 and 6, respectively social contract driven and universal ethical principles driven) (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969; Poppen, 1974; Holstein, 1976).

Specifically, Gilligan (1977; 1982) examined the limitations of Kohlberg's theory of gender bias. According to her, Kohlberg's starting point was wrong, questioning that his original participants were all male, and that the consequent sequence of stages reflected the development of male morality and was male-biased. As a consequence, any difference from male morality was thought to result from an atypical development. Gilligan (1977; 1982) argued for a different social and moral understanding: "deviance" of women consisted in a different morality, based on care and responsibility; whereas in males there prevailed a theoretical moral, which was a type of action based on equity. Therefore, Gilligan theorized two modes of moral reasoning: justice and care. The justice orientation, above all shown by males, is characterized by a principles equity, typical of conventional moral reasoning; the care orientation, shown especially by females, is characterized by maintaining relationships, the needs of others, and responsibility as a moral principle of nonviolence (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988).

Explaining the differences between care and justice, Gilligan focused on the relationship between conceptions of the self and conceptions of morality (Gilligan, 1988; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Lyons 1983). Gender differences in morality arise from different ways of defining the self in relation to others, resulting from two different identification experiences (Gilligan, 1982). In fact Gilligan employed the

studies of Chodorow (1978; 1989) in order to describe the concepts of the connected and separate self, using a psychoanalytic developmental account on the difference between women and men. Specifically, attachment experience is different in males and females, and consequently, relationships are different by gender. For males, separation from the mother and individuation, which are more essential for the development of masculinity, are critically connected to each other. For females, identity does not depend on the process of separation from the mother or the individuation. Therefore masculinity is defined by separation, while femininity is laid down by attachment: male gender identity is threatened by intimacy, instead, the female one is threatened by separation. (Chodorow, 1978). The experiences of attachment may be confirmed in adolescence: males are prone to resolve psychosocial crises (Erikson, 1968) through separation and detachment of self from others (separate-self), while females tend to achieve identity through connectedness and attachment of self with others (connected-self). These experiences of self-construction results in an association between moral orientation and gender (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1987). During moral development, women increase the awareness of their interconnection between rights and responsibility, while men keep putting rights first of all.

According to Jaffee and Hide's review (2000), starting from Gilligan's femininity theory the researchers have found evidence about "theory of care" and "theory of justice" (Johnston, 1988; Yacker & Weinberg, 1990), gender differences in care reasoning (Gibbs, Arnold, & Burkhart, 1984; Galotti, Kozberg, & Farmer, 1991; Liddell, Halpin, & Halpin, 1993; Garmon, Basinger, Gregg, & Gibbs, 1996; Wark & Krebs, 1996) or no gender differences (Walker, 1986; Friedman, Robinson, & Friedman, 1987; Beal, Garrod, Ruben, & Stewart, 1997). Furthermore gender differences are moderated by other variables, such as dilemma content (Wark & Krebs, 1996) and social class (Tronto, 1987; Puka, 1989; Beal, Garrod, Ruben, & Stewart, 1997). Therefore the results of Jaffee & Hide's meta-analysis (2000) did not offer strong support for the claim that care orientation is used predominantly by women and justice orientation is used predominantly by men. The theory of gender differences led to studies on gender as a predictor of moral transgression and of psychopathy (Ritchie & Forth, 2016), where the latter is seen as a disorder in the moral faculties (Maibom, 2014).

Gilligan's theory was actually deeply influenced by her own specific historical and cultural period, where women had never had a voice before, so she gave voice to them

so as to study their point of view. Recently Gilligan has added that the feminist ethic was a different voice within a patriarchal culture because it joins reason to emotion, mind to body, self to relationships, men to women, while resisting the divisions that maintain a patriarchal order (Gilligan, 2011).

### *Current study*

Even if women's condition has improved with regard to the situation as shown in Gilligan's initial work, it must be admitted that gender equality has yet to be fully achieved. Thirty years later this work of ours aims at proposing the interview as set out by Gilligan (Gilligan, Langdale, Lyons, & Murphy, 1982; Lyons, 1983), whose results have highlighted different moral and psychological tendencies between men and women. We decided to use this interview in order to remain as close as possible to Gilligan's research. Objective and hypotheses

The present research aims at studying Gilligan's moral account that describes two distinct moral orientations, i.e. men with a justice approach arising from a separate self-concept and women with a care approach arising from a connected self-concept. The position advanced here is to test if moral orientation is gendered or moral care and moral justice represent two modes of moral reasoning that coexist in both women and men.

In particular, our goals are to a) examine in depth the identity dimensions of emerging adults; b) study moral behavior and reasoning; c) understand whether different moral orientations may be related to the identity differences.

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

The sample included 100 undergraduates (50 men and 50 women) from the Universities in the Campania region, in the South of Italy. The average age of the

students was 21.5. The participants were chosen from among emerging adults, because we were interested in involving students who had already reached and gone beyond adolescence, which is a period of exploration of their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004), and thus achieving a first identity structure.

Their participation was anonymous and voluntary.

#### *Procedure*

Each participant completed a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of 13 questions which had been used by Gilligan (Gilligan et al., 1982), but we made some modifications (see Appendix A). It referred to three areas, i.e. self-description questions (3 items), personal moral conflict ones (6 items), hypothetical moral dilemma questions and moral questions (4 items). The dichotomous questions had been integrated with open-ended questions, to which each respondent could motivate their answer. In the Self-description area, the students were invited to describe themselves in order to understand their identity and relational sphere. The personal moral conflict area aimed at studying the types of conflict resolution strategies. The final area, the hypothetical moral dilemma questions and the moral questions, took into consideration morality in a narrow sense with moral evaluations and judgments.

In order to encourage a self-narrative in each participant, we decided to avoid any length and time limits whatsoever to their answers. Before interviewing the students, we collected their socio-demographic data.

#### *Data analysis*

We opted for a quantitative analysis to explore the open-ended questions. In particular, an analysis of the categorical data and a textual analysis were carried out.

#### Analysis of categorical data

In order to simplify the data, all the open-ended questions were categorized through a coding scheme (see Appendix B). The categories were created according to the thematic nuclei of the answers. They were assigned by two independent experts, and Cohen's kappa coefficient calculated for interrater-reliability was .86. After calculating the frequencies for each category, a chi-square test was performed on cases separately by gender. The data analyses were carried out by using IBM SPSS Statistics software 20.

#### Textual Analysis

The analysis of the text was carried out only on two questions belonging to two different areas. Regarding the Self-description area, the question was "How would you describe yourself to yourself?"; instead, the question on the Hypothetical moral dilemmas and moral issues area was "What does morality mean for you? You can also add an example". For both questions a Thematic Analysis of Elementary Contexts was also performed, by using the T-lab software (Lancia, 2004) to identify the dimensions of meaning and the different themes in the text.

The documents were previously handled by customizing the dictionary through two phases, i.e. the lemmatization and disambiguation of words with the same graphic form but different meanings, and the creation of uniform strings, which were recognizable by the software, for some meaningful expressions (i.e. 'personal\_interest'). Each document was coded as a gender variable. A Thematic Analysis of the Elementary Contexts allowed us to explore the corpus content through significance thematic clusters. A Cluster Analysis was carried out through unsupervised clustering (bisecting K-means algorithm). Each cluster was made up of a set of keywords, which were ranked according to the decreasing value of chi-square, and a label was assigned to each of them. The Analysis results could be considered as an isotopy map of the clusters made up of the co-occurrences of their semantic traits.

## Results and discussion

### Categorical data

#### Self-description questions

The Self-description area identified men and women identity profiles. Respondents were invited to describe themselves (question 1), to tell whether or not and how they had changed after adolescence (question 2), and, finally, to indicate a significant event that occurred in the period after their diploma (question 3; see Appendix A).

The results related in question 1 revealed a gender difference (*chi-square* = 13.927; *df* = 3; *p* = 0.003). The females' answers were characterized more by affectivity and the male ones were more oriented to the future and the achievement of objectives (see Table A.1). Unlike the men, the description that the women made about themselves was connection-oriented, more open to others, according to the connected self concept by Gilligan et al. (1982) and Lyons (1983). The connected self and separate/objective self concern relationships with others. Regarding the connected self, the relationships were described as an experience of responsibility for others, mediated through the activity of care, and grounded in interdependence. As regards the separate/objective self, instead, the relationships were described as an experience in terms of reciprocity, mediated through rules, and grounded in roles. Women tended more frequently to use characterizations of a connected self, while men preferred adopting characterizations of a separate/objective self.

In order to examine in depth the content of the answers regarding this question, a Thematic Analysis of Elementary Contexts was further carried out, as we will see in the following sections.

No gender effect occurred in answers to questions 2 and 3. Both the males and the females discussed typical situations in this age group. Regarding changes after adolescence, 78% of the students affirmed they felt different with respect to the high school. In particular, this change was characterized by aspects dealing with the subjectivity (20.5%), increased self-esteem (35.9%) and typical characteristics of "adulthood" (43.6%). Referring to the third question, about a half of the subjects related situations linked to their university and work-study problems (51%), about one quarter,



events related to emotional relationships (24%) and, finally, 17% of the participants indicated situations renamed as "life experiences", or typical events belonging to this phase, even if they couldn't be assigned to the two previous categories.

Tab. A.1 - How would you describe yourself to yourself?

	Connected self	Separate self	Separate/Connected self	%
Male	47.9	52.1	-	100
Female	70	22	8	100

$\chi^2 = 13.927$ ; d.f. = 3;  $p = 0.003$

#### Personal moral conflict

In this area, the participants were asked to recount a moment in their lives in which they were not sure about their own choice. Later on they were invited to give any information on the conflict and resolution strategies, and an evaluation on the choice made (questions 4-9; see Appendix A).

The discussion on a real-life dilemma generated by questions on personal moral and choice referred to university (41.8%) and affective issues (27.8%), i.e. the choice between working or studying (11.4%) and the less important, moral issues (11.4%). With regard to conflict, the most frequent issue concerned the difficulties related to the future (45.6%), while conflict resolution strategies were mainly focused on the actions oriented to their goals. Moreover, there were no gender differences in these strategies.

Gilligan pointed out that real-life dilemmas could be used to study morality. However, as was shown by Walker, de Vries and Trevethan (1987), real-life dilemmas often contain more relational issues than hypothetical dilemmas. During the presentation of real-life dilemma, in this current study respondents reported problems about their present life and above all issues concerning the university and the affective sphere, rather than issues linked to morality.

#### Hypothetical moral dilemma questions and moral questions

This area included: moral dilemmas (questions 10-11), the conflict between personal interest and responsibility for others (question 12) and moral concepts (question 13; see

Appendix A). The main goal was to understand the two levels of morality, i.e. moral behavior and moral reasoning. With respect to moral behavior, each student was presented with Heinz's dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981) and the dilemma of care. In Heinz's dilemma all the respondents thought that Heinz would have to steal the drug. The participants' motivations were different, but they did not differ according to gender. 40% of the respondents underlined the need to save a human life even if they had to break the law. They directed their attention to Heinz's wife and the need to protect her life at any cost. Other students (18%) tried to escape from the dilemma, by giving no resolution strategy. In this case, they suggested alternative problem-solving strategies, such as borrowing money or negotiating on the matter. Only 15% of them blamed the pharmacist of the crime committed by Heinz and just 11% referred to a moral theory, emphasizing the crime and the need to serve the sentence which committing the crime entailed.

Heinz's dilemma was used by Kohlberg to assign a moral developmental level (or moral stage) to each person. He stated that only men were able to solve the moral dilemma through logic and reason which was at a higher level of reasoning than women. Thus, men's judgment was the term of comparison to evaluate what is right or wrong, and so ignoring any intervening variable. Contrasting with Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1982), the results of the research have shown that the resolution strategies of the dilemma were "human" both in women and men.

Later on, the students were presented with the dilemma of care, where they were asked what they would have done if they were the protagonist. The dilemma involved a situation in which a person was injured in a car crash and was waiting for an ambulance. At this point, the interviewee must make a choice between two alternatives, i.e. (1) they could help the injured person waiting for the ambulance, even though they would be late for a job interview or (2) they could leave, since they were not involved in the car crash. The results underlined an important gender difference ( $\chi^2 = 10.021$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ). Table A.2 shows that 70% of the males decided not to wait for the ambulance with the injured person, with respect to 41% of the females. In particular, the participants stated that they would help the person because they consider taking care of others as being important (88.4%), while those who would have left the person alone accounted for it by saying, "His injury is not serious", "The ambulance has already been called", "If the ambulance has been called, it means that there are already other people with injured the person".

Tab. A.2 – The dilemma of care: to stay/to go away. Percentage rates

	Stay	Leave	%
Male	30	70	100
Female	58.3	41.7	100

$$\chi^2 = 10.021; \text{d.f.} = 2; p = 0.007$$

Moving on to a hypothetical level, the students were asked to declare how a person should act when personal interests and responsibility for others come into conflict. In this case, the results showed no gender effect. The majority of the respondents believed that the choice between personal interests and the responsibility for others had to be made according to the specific situation (45%); 22% of the students thought that the best way was to find a deal between personal interest and the responsibility for others (22%). Another part of the students chose to act following the principle of respect for others and therefore for society (23%). Finally, the smallest part of the students attached more importance to personal interest (10%), thus showing less trust in others. Based on these results, the behavioral choices were influenced by a strong concept of responsibility for others.

With respect to morals, the students offered different interpretations, i.e. subjective morality (41%), namely moral consciousness; respect for others (29%); universality of morals (15%), results of parental education and the environment (6%). These interpretations were not moderated by gender. Additionally, the content of the answers on morals was further investigated by the Thematic Analysis of Elementary Contexts, as we will see below.

In conclusion, the analysis of the answers to the hypothetical moral dilemma questions and moral questions had showed differences on two levels of moral, i.e. moral reason for the way a person should act, and moral behavioral choices. There were gender differences, but they only concerned the dilemma of care. However, the impact of behavioral consequences on judgments may be further influenced by the content of dilemma (Haviv & Leman, 2002).

"How would you describe yourself to yourself?"

The text corpus was characterized by 3954 occurrences, 854 distinct forms, 853 lemmas and 148 elementary contexts (e.c.). Lexical indices indicated that 64.85% of the text corpus resulted from the women's answers and 35.15% from the men's answers. Therefore, women were more likely to talk about themselves than men.

Cluster Analysis showed 5 clusters, referred to as *openness to others* (27.82%), *insecurity* (24.06%), *attention to others* (20.3%), *achievement* (16.54%) and *positivity* (11.28%) (see Fig. 1). Lemmas within the clusters and chi-square values are reported in Table A.3.

The *openness to others* cluster contained the descriptions of the emerging adults on their own relational life, drawing attention to themselves, for instance 'sociable', 'friend', 'relationship'. In the *Insecurity* cluster there occurred lemmas involving sensitivity, for example 'insecurity', 'trust'. The *attention for others* cluster illustrated the different kind of relationships which subjects were in, i.e. some lemmas are 'others', 'help', 'know', and 'sincere'. The *achievement* cluster focused on the dimension of volition, for instance 'achieve', 'stubbornness', 'aim', 'decision'. The *positivity* cluster contained lemmas that indicated a positive character, e.g. 'cheerful', 'sunny' and 'optimistic'.

The *insecurity* and *attention for others* clusters are collocated across axes at the top, whereas the *positivity* and *openness to others* clusters are collocated at the bottom of the axes with the *achievement* cluster situated in the middle of the chart. The way in which variables are oriented on axes shows that the 'female' category is mostly situated at the top of the axes, while the 'male' category is mostly situated at the bottom of the axes.

Textual analysis showed that women were more likely to describe themselves as more insecure and introspective. They talk about their relationships, share emotional experiences with others, but also have difficulty in trusting others. Furthermore, women supposed they had emotionality-oriented attributes ('empathic', 'romantic', 'goodfriend', 'insecure'). On the other hand, men described themselves as rational, and determined when they have to make a choice. They were likely to talk about themselves in a rather egocentric view, focusing on their interests and future expectations.

Regarding their relationships with others, they recalled situations of complicity with their friends.

Fig. A.1 - Self-description questions: cluster analysis

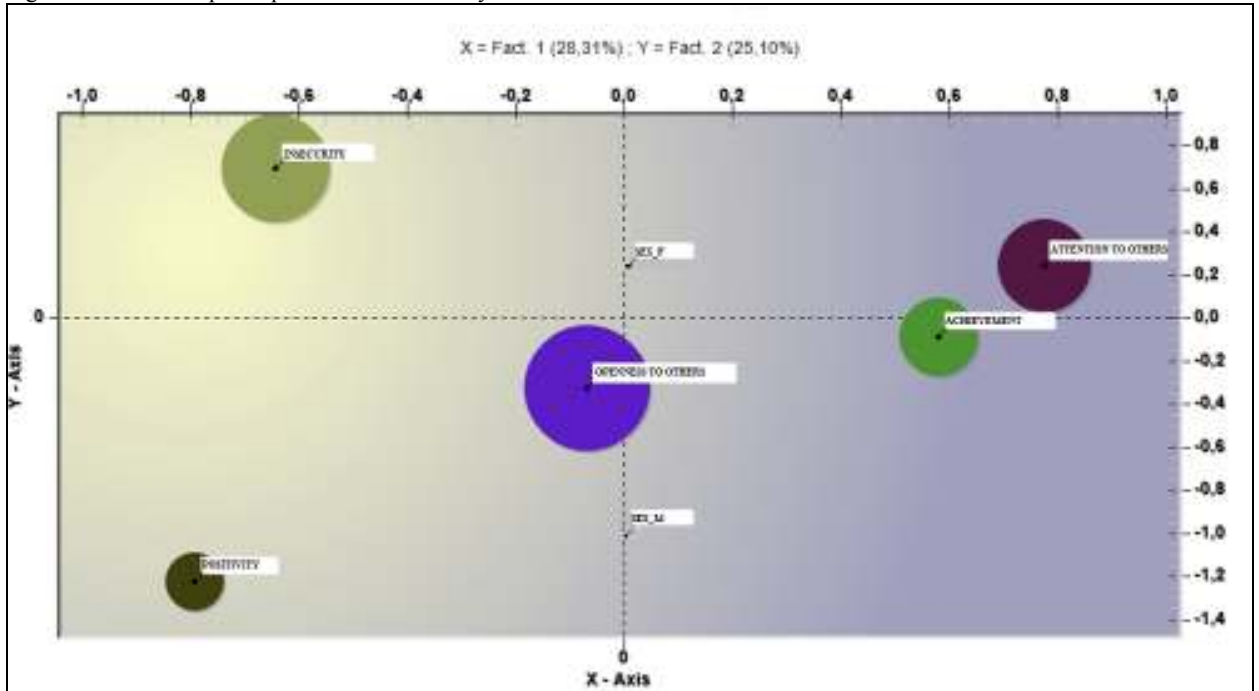


Table A.3 - Cluster, lemmas,  $\chi^2$  values and elementary contexts

Cluster	Lemmas	$\chi^2$	Elementary contexts
Cluster 1 <i>Openness to Others</i> (28.82%; 37 e.c.)	to live	21.852	<i>I am outgoing, spontaneous and touchy, and sometimes even stickler. I think with my head, not my heart. I enjoy spending time in the company and playing with my friends. I am kind and respectful. I know many people but I have just few friends. My friends must accept who I am: warts and all. (Male; SCORE: 37.87)</i>
	companionship	12.084	
	friendly	8.474	
	friend	6.893	
	to love	6.342	
	respect	6.091	
	relationship	4.029	
Cluster 2 <i>Insecurity</i> (24.06; 32 e.c.)	insecurity	27.363	<i>I have some difficult to describe myself. I feel like a person in contact with others and the context in which I am living. I have feared to meet people because I am afraid of getting disappointed and then suffering. I try to understand the person in front of me and to be less intrusive as possible. I am insecure and I do not like it. (Female; SCORE: 18.985)</i>
	to judge	18.179	
	sensibility	13.586	
	judgment	8.142	
	trouble	6.082	
	to trust	5.618	
Cluster 3 <i>Attention to Others</i> (20.3%; 27 e.c.)	others	27.551	<i>I am a sincere, altruistic (maybe also too much) person, one of the good guys, and always ready to help others. I am not egoistic and I help my friends, do my best and give them my availability as possible. I am a good confidant, I can keep a secret. I pay attention to needs of the others ever. (Female; SCORE: 61.289)</i>
	to help	23.017	
	to know	13.684	
	life	6.082	

Cluster 4 <i>Achievement</i> (16.54%; 22 e.c.)	to achieve	24.619	<i>I am stubborn and determined. I try to get all my goals. I work hard even if I sometimes realize that some goals that I set for myself are too much ambitious, however I really believe that is important to aim at the best. (Male; SCORE: 38.3)</i>
	reflective	20.492	
	stubbornness	16.375	
	strength	15.466	
	stubborn	12.676	
	aim	9.346	
	decision	9.346	
	to want	7.012	
Cluster 5 <i>Positivity</i> (11.28%; 15 e.c.)	cheerful	53.844	<i>I am a sunny, cheerful and optimistic person despite everything happened to me. The term suit best me is probably rationality, I am a person that think before to act, trying to get under control my actions. (Male; SCORE: 56.893)</i>
	sunny	25.858	
	optimistic	22.717	
	to act	17.044	

"What does morality mean for you? You can also make an example"

The corpus was characterized by 3977 occurrences, 907 distinct forms, 902 lemmas and 143 elementary contexts (e.c.). The lexical indices indicated that 56.20% of the text corpus was made up of women's answers and 43.80% by men's answers. With respect to self-description indices, the participants produced a homogeneous amount of text regardless of gender.

Cluster Analysis showed 5 clusters, named *moral choice* (27.54%), *moral behavior* (26.81%) *respect for others* (22.46%), *moral consciousness* (13.77%) and *moral rules* (9.42%) (see Fig. 2). The lemmas within clusters and chi-square values are reported in Table A.4.

The *moral choice* cluster contained lemmas concerning moral conflict resolution and therefore behavioural choices (for example, 'choose', 'own', 'misbehave'). In the *moral behavior* cluster there were lemmas such as 'action', 'value system', 'right', 'responsibility', 'personal interest', and 'context', which focused on the behavior adopted by individuals. The *respect for others* cluster concerned the social dimensions of morality, like 'society', 'respect', 'correct', and 'help' lemmas. The *moral consciousness* cluster included conceptions of moral like 'inner voice' (Carla, 21 years old), a moral precept suggested what is right and wrong ('consciousness', 'yourself', 'believe'). In the *moral rules* cluster, morals were judged as the whole rules to follow ('know', 'follow', 'rule', 'environment').

The top of the axes shows the moral reasoning level, in which the *moral consciousness*, *respect to others* and *moral rules* clusters are collocated. The *moral consciousness* and *respect to others* clusters are located close together and refer to the

internal moral, that is the result of education shared in an environment, driving human action according to mutual respect. Next to them, the *moral rules* cluster shows that subjects had a set of rules, including moral ones. The *moral behavior* and *moral choice* clusters are located at the bottom of the axes and define moral behavior level, i.e. how you should behave.

The clusters position on the axes highlights that emerging adults connect moral on two different levels, i.e. how you should behave (moral reasoning level) and how individuals actually act (moral behavior). However, taking into account the variables position on the axes, we could not note any strong gender effect. Indeed the gender variable is constantly distributed across the different clusters.

Fig. A.2 - Moral questions: cluster analysis

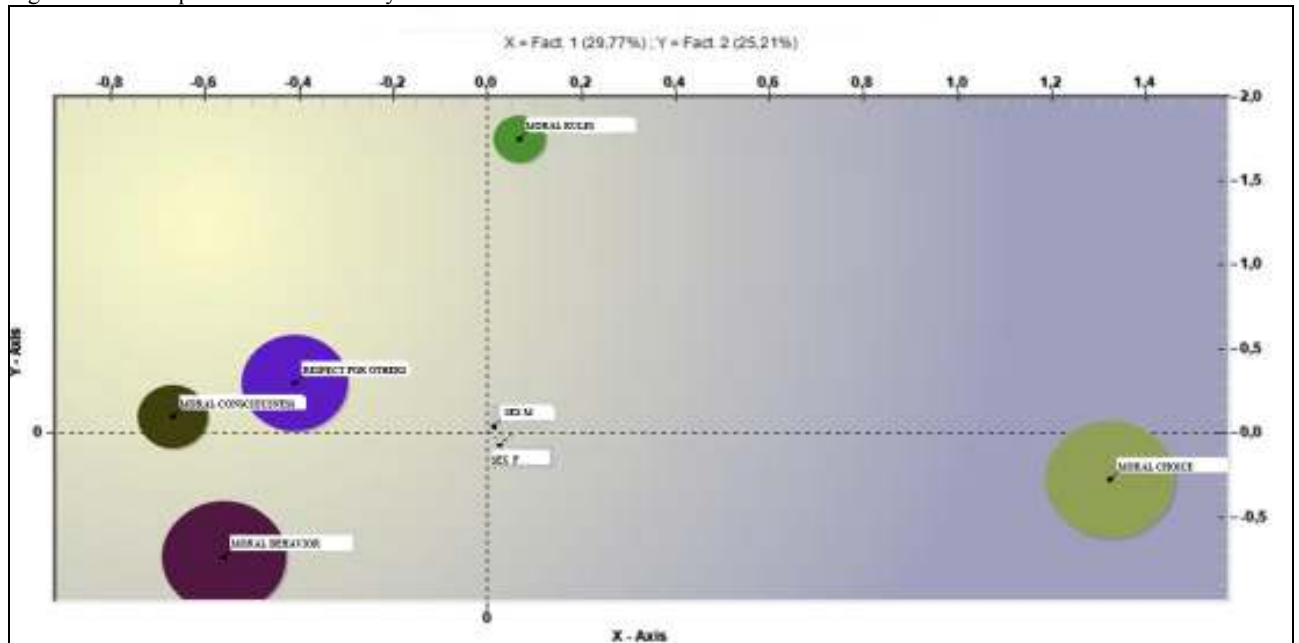


Table A.4 - Cluster, lemmas,  $\chi^2$  values and elementary contexts

Cluster	Lemmas	$\chi^2$	Elementary contexts
Cluster 1 <i>Moral Choice</i> (27.54%; 38 e.c.)	to choose choice own to misbehave	58.897 48.064 27.383 4.661	<i>Maybe also a great amount of courage because it takes a lot of courage to do the right things, to assume right and wise decisions, those that will conduct you to do the good without necessarily earning a gain. (Female; SCORE: 65.481)</i>
Cluster 2 <i>Moral Behavior</i> (26.81%; 37 e.c.)	action toward value system right responsibility personal interest context	16.211 13.756 13.612 11.826 10.475 4.571 4.484	<i>Moral is the DNA of an individual in action. It is that drives the behaviour towards yourself and to others. Acting is important pay attention on the system of values, the personal interest and the consequences of own actions. (Male; SCORE: 29.59)</i>

Cluster 3 <i>Respect for Others</i> (22.46%; 31 e.c.)	morally	14.411	<i>Moral means not judge the others but respect them, it means to limit own freedom taking into account others; it means to find the right balance and to combine at same time the own good with the collective one. (Female; SCORE: 37.87)</i>
	to judge	13.403	
	society	9.986	
	to respect	8.636	
	person	6.456	
	correct	5.528	
	to help	4.848	
Cluster 4 <i>Moral Consciousness</i> (13.77%; 19 e.c.)	consciousness	20.954	<i>Moral is the capability of each person to discriminate between right and wrong; it is to take consciousness on the value of the own way to act and own behaviour involving a conscious choice among the existing alternatives. (Female; SCORE: 71.879)</i>
	idea	19.973	
	yourself	6.87	
	to believe	6.72	
	moral concept	5.523	
Cluster 5 <i>Moral Rules</i> (9.42%; 13 e.c.)	to know	28.324	<i>Moral represents an unwritten set of rules and not imposed from outside, but the already are in each of us allowing to behave how is believed. However, I think that this situation derives from family education based on fine principles and rules which will keep the person growing in the right way. (Male; SCORE: 52.536)</i>
	to follow	16.934	
	rule	15.107	
	environment	6.151	

### Conclusion

Gilligan (1982) criticized Kohlberg's moral theory and theorized two modes of moral orientation, i.e. ethic of care and ethic of justice. According to her, males are more likely to have a justice-oriented approach, whereas females are more likely to use a care-oriented approach (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). In contrast to the moral of justice, Gilligan pointed out that the moral of care “centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules” (1982, p. 19). The moral concept is related to self-concept. As already mentioned above, gender differences arise from different ways of defining the self, i.e. connected self-concept in female and separate self-concept in male.

In this study we explored whether we could still now refer to morals as “ethic of care” and “ethic of justice”. The results showed that the care and justice orientations were not strongly affected by gender. Both categorical analysis and lexical analysis allowed us to investigate the identity system and the emerging adults’ moral concept. According to Gilligan’s identity concept (Gilligan et al., 1982; Lyons, 1983), unlike men, women’s description of themselves was connection-oriented and more open to



others, whereas men were more likely to talk about themselves in a rather egocentric view and they appeared to be more oriented towards the future.

As regards the moral concept, emerging adults attributed two different levels to moral, i.e. moral reasoning, how you should behave, and moral behavior, how individuals actually act. Results showed that there were no gender differences in moral reasoning. Indeed, we could equally find aspects of care – responsibility, respect for others, concern for others – and aspects of justice – a value system, rights, rules – for both women and men. Although the results showed a different self-concept in male and female, such differences do not affect the moral development in males and females. Morality is not gendered. We supposed that over time educational and social changes have produced a rapprochement in gender ethics, in favor of a more generally human common ethics (Parola & Donsi, 2015). However, results showed gender differences with reference to moral behavior. Women appeared to be more willing to help other individuals, and this could be interpreted as a result of inherent prosocial attitudes in women according to their identity system.

With regard to ethical behavior, we found that women more strongly internalize moral traits in their self-concepts. Furthermore, in moral behavior the perspective taken, empathy and especially sympathy can be considered measures of a prosocial disposition expected to motivate other-oriented behavior as being typically female. Research literature on the development of prosocial moral orientation in young adulthood shows gender differences in prosocial tendencies (Eisenberg, Hofer, Sulik, & Liew, 2014). Indeed, the altruistic motivation of prosocial behavior affects the emotional components, i.e. the connection between the structure of personality in different aspects and the moral conduct creates a need to transition to action. Pro-social behavior is the effect of this connection. Therefore, deep emotional differences between genders influence moral behavior, as are shown by Friesdorf, Conway and Gawronski in a recent research (2015).

Further research needs to be carried out to address some of the limits arising from this study. In particular we need to examine whether the results as shown here for the Italian undergraduate sample can be used to represent the population in Italy in general. Indeed, the socio-cultural context plays an important role because it affects the approaches to moral reasoning (Jaffee & Hyde, 2000). In conclusion, taking in account the outcome of this research, further studies of ours are already addressing the two levels of morality and so increasing our understanding of both deepening the moral

reasoning and the specific gender differences in the moral lexicon (Donsì & Parola, 2016), and studying the moral behavior to understand the variables involved in the different ways of acting as regards women and men.

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*Appendix A - Interview schedule*

Shown below are the questions. The changes in this interview with respect to Gilligan's interview (1982) are in italics:

Self-description questions

- 1 - How would you describe yourself to yourself?
- 2 - Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past, *in particular at high school?*
- 3 - *Tell me about an important event in your life which occurred after your diploma.*

Personal moral conflict

- 4 - Have you ever been in a situation where you were not sure what was the right thing to do?
- 5 - Could you describe the situation?
- 6 - What were the conflicts for you in that situation?
- 7 - What did you do?
- 8 - Did you think it was the right thing to do?
- 9 - *If you said "yes", why?*
- 9 bis - *If you said "no", what should you have done? And why?*

Hypothetical moral dilemma questions and moral questions

- 10 - "In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the

radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should husband have done that?" (Kohlberg, 1981)

11 –*Now, imagine you are in the following situation (Dilemma of care):*

*It is 8:00 am and you have an important job interview at 8:30 am. While you are driving, there happens a road accident and you decide to check if anyone is injured. You see a person slightly injured who is waiting for an ambulance.*

*Appendix B – Code scheme*



1 - How would you describe yourself to yourself?

Following categories (Gilligan et al., 1982; Lyons, 1983):

- connected self: refers to relationships, which are described as an experience of responsibility to others, mediated through the activity of care, and grounded in interdependence;
- separate/objective self: refers to relationships, which are described as experience in terms of reciprocity, mediated through rules, and grounded in roles;
- separate/connected self: refers to individuals having an equal number of connected and separate/objective characterizations.

2 - Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past, in particular at high school?

Following categories:

- subjectivity: refers to perceived change in the self (for example, changing in personality);
- increase self-esteem: refers to increase of self-esteem with respect to the high school;
- characteristics of adulthood: responsibility, independency, financial stability, take on adult roles, etc.

3 - Tell me about an important event in your life which occurred after your diploma.

Following categories:

- work-study problems: refers to problems of the students about study or work;
- relationships: refers to relationships of the students with others;
- life experiences: refers to other life events (trips, bereavements, etc.).

4 - Have you ever been in a situation where you were not sure what was the right thing to do?

Following categories:



- yes;
- no.

5 - Could you describe the situation?

Following categories:

- university;
- affective issues;
- moral issues;
- choice of whether to work or to study.

6 - What were the conflicts for you in that situation?

Following categories:

- future conflict: refers to choices of the students to be taken in the future;
- moral conflict: refers to choices of the students linked to moral;
- self/other conflict: refers to choices of the students between self and other.

7 - What did you do?

Following categories:

- goal-oriented: refers to a person who acts to achieve their goals;
- mediator: refers to a person who acts as a mediator to resolve the conflict;
- moral rules: refers to a person who acts following their own ethical and moral principles.

8 - Did you think it was the right thing to do?

Following categories:

- yes;
- no.

10 - Heinz's dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981)

Following categories:

- save a human life: refers to the fact that respondents believed Heinz would have to steal the drug to save a human life;
- other problem-solving strategies: refers to borrowing money or negotiating on the matter;
- blamed the pharmacist: refers to the fact that respondents believed that the pharmacist had committed an injustice;
- moral theory: refers to the fact that respondents believed that Heinz had to pay for his crime.

11 - Dilemma of care:

Following categories:

- stay: refers to the help of the subjects to the injured person;
- leave: refers to the fact that the subjects leave because they do not get involved in the car crash.

12 - When responsibility to self and responsibility to other are in conflict, how should the choice be made?

Following categories:

- deal: refers to deal between personal interest and responsibility for the others;
- specific situation: refers to the choice that had to be taken according to the specific situation;
- respect for the others: refers to the choice to act following the principle of respect for the others and for society;
- personal interest: refers to the choice to act following personal interest.

13 -What does morality mean for you? *You can also make an example.*

Following categories:

- subjective morality: refers to the subjective opinion of what is moral;
- universality of moral: refers to the objective moral values that are valid for everybody;
- moral consciousness: refers to internal moral principles that drive the action;
- respect for others: refers to moral as an act respecting others;

- parental education and environment: refers to the fact that the moral is influenced by family background and in particular how the impact of parental education influences their achievement.