Moral Foundations as Ethical Codes in a Brazilian Context

Los fundamentos morales como códigos éticos en un contexto brasileño
Fundamentos morais como códigos éticos no contexto brasileiro

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Abstract

We present a survey of Brazilians on their adoption of a set of ethical rules, the moral foundations. The aim of the study is to characterize the profiles of a sample of adults in terms of their reliance on moral foundations, under the assumption that each moral foundation represents an ethical code, considering social variables such as gender, schooling level, and religion. Ethical rules consist in associations of evaluative assessments with systems of practices concerning social relationships, while ethical codes are those rules legitimated by communities' conventions. We administered an adapted version of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire to 936 adults in public places. Results from cluster analysis revealed the existence of two broad response patterns that we interpreted as ethical codes, a liberal ethic that prioritizes the individual, associated with higher educational levels, and a pluralistic code that values both individual and group relations, linked to lower schooling. Brazil's history of inequity and authoritarian relationships explains apparent contradictions in the individualizing pattern, the modernization of the pluralistic code, and their ideological conflict. The discussion focuses on possible interpretations of the identified codes, commenting on the specificity of the study and limitations of usual survey strategies.

Keywords: Morality; ethics; social psychology; moral foundations.

Resumen

El estudio presenta una encuesta con brasileños sobre la adopción de un conjunto de reglas éticas, los fundamentos morales. El objetivo del estudio fue caracterizar los perfiles de una muestra de adultos en cuanto a su dependencia de fundamentos morales, bajo el supuesto de que cada fundamento moral representa un código ético, teniendo en cuenta variables sociales como género, nivel de escolaridad y religión. Las reglas éticas son

asociaciones de evaluaciones valorativas con sistemas de prácticas concernientes a las relaciones sociales, mientras que los códigos éticos son reglas legitimadas por las comunidades mediante convenciones. Se administró una versión adaptada del *Cuestionario de Fundamentos Morales* a 936 adultos en lugares públicos. Los resultados del análisis de conglomerados revelaron la existencia de dos patrones de respuesta amplios que interpretamos como códigos éticos, una ética liberal que prioriza al individuo, asociada a niveles educativos superiores, y un código pluralista que valora las relaciones tanto individuales como grupales, vinculada a la escolaridad inferior. La historia de desigualdad y relaciones autoritarias de Brasil explica las aparentes contradicciones en el patrón individualizador, la modernización del código pluralista y su conflicto ideológico. La discusión se centra en las posibles interpretaciones de los códigos identificados, comentando la especificidad del estudio y las limitaciones de las estrategias habituales de encuesta.

Palabras clave: moralidad; ética; psicología social; fundamentos morales.

Resumo

Apresentamos uma enquete feita com brasileiros sobre a adoção de um conjunto de normas éticas, os fundamentos morais. O objetivo do estudo é caracterizar o perfil de uma amostra de adultos quanto à dependência de fundamentos morais, partindo do pressuposto de que cada fundamento moral representa um código ético, levando em consideração variáveis sociais como gênero, escolaridade e religião. As regras éticas consistem em associações de avaliações avaliativas com sistemas de práticas relativas às relações sociais, enquanto os códigos éticos são essas regras legitimadas pelas comunidades por meio de convenções. Administramos uma versão adaptada do *Questionário de Fundamentos Morais* a 936 adultos em locais públicos. Os resultados da análise de cluster revelaram a existência de dois padrões de resposta amplos que interpretamos como códigos éticos, uma ética liberal que prioriza o indivíduo, associada a níveis de escolaridade mais elevados, e um código pluralista que valoriza as relações individuais e grupais, vinculadas a baixos níveis de escolaridade. A história da desigualdade e das relações autoritárias no Brasil explica as aparentes contradições no padrão individualizante, a modernização do código pluralista e seu conflito ideológico. A discussão centra-se nas possíveis interpretações dos códigos identificados, comentando sobre a especificidade do estudo e as limitações das estratégias habituais de inquérito.

Palavras-chave: moralidade; ética; psicologia social; fundamentos morais.

We report here an investigation on the adoption of ethical codes by Brazilians from a countryside middle-sized city. The aim was to characterize the profiles of a sample of adults in terms of their reliance on moral foundations, under the assumption that each moral foundation represents an ethical code. In the profiles, we considered social variables such as gender, schooling level, and religion. Through such description, we sought to interpret each ethical code in terms of the social and historical conditions of Brazilian society that might explain such patterns, also discussing general issues related to moral foundations as ethics and the investigation of ethics in social psychology research through questionnaires.

Before describing the study, we must define the conception of ethics that we are working with and justify our operationalization of ethical codes through the set of moral foundations. We also need to review studies on people's reliance on moral foundations.

Ethical codes

The roots of the word ethics (from the Greek *ethos*) and moral (from the Latin *moris*) refer to a culture's set of habits, customs, and values (Marcondes, 2007). The use of different words commonly differentiates Ethics as a prescriptive philosophical discipline about how people should act in their relationships with others, while moral is employed

for the study of actual cultural norms. We adopted the second sense and gave preference to the term ethics to designate a rule legitimated by a community, defining the right ways to act regarding other people; hence, referring to ethics and morals interchangeably.

There might be some overlapping involved in the concepts of ethics and values. In social psychological theories, the latter are often beliefs that ways of conduct, goals or life conditions are preferable to others (e. g., Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992), and the issue of right and wrong ways to act, essential to ethics, has much in common with the evaluation of preference and desirability typically associated with values. It is thus necessary to differentiate the concept of ethics adopted here from that of values. We will deal with a framework in which both are related through a general concept of values that is broader than the ones from other social psychology theories.

We took values as the association of evaluations —in terms of positive or negative, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, and so forth— with objects of experience. This conception was inspired by Morris (1964), a semiotician according to whom we can infer values from actual behavior —as when we conclude that someone who eats a kind of food often values it positively or identify values in concrete or abstract objects such as a large house, a professional degree, or the concepts of independence and freedom—.

On the sense assumed here, an ethic is a specific case of the concept of value, with a few restrictions. First, it is necessarily social. While a value, in the broad conception presented, might consist of an appraisal of an object or experience by an individual, an ethic is a collective principle elaborated, shared, and legitimated by a community. Second, instead of an evaluation linked to any possible object of experience, the object in question involves actions relative to social relationships, i.e., interactions with other people. An ethic is practical; it concerns how we get along with others, either

directly or indirectly —if, for example, something that we do has an impact on other people, as in stealing an object might produce harm to a person or throwing a national flag to the ground might be considered offensive—. Therefore, a goal or a thing, in themselves, do not involve an ethic if social relationships are not at stake.

Third, we restrict ethics evaluations to matters of conduct being right or wrong. To consider a course of action as right may be somewhat stronger than considering a practice to be desirable, acceptable, or more generally good, for challenging it implies that an action is wrong, constituting an offense or violation of a norm to a community. In ethical terms, each community classifies actions as right, wrong, or irrelevant —the latter possibility covers practices that are not pertinent to ethical rules, such as matters of opinion that do not violate moral values—. We would like to make it clear that our emphasis is on a description of the ethical rules of groups rather than an analysis of universal ethical principles.

An ethical rule, then, is one legitimated by a social community establishing the correlation of a class of actions related to social relationships with an evaluation in terms of whether it is right or wrong. Adding the previously given specifications, each ethical rule may be stated as a proposition in which the quality of right and wrong is assigned to the description of an action. The ethical rule is a relation in which a linguistic expression or image designating a social practice concerns the social practice class as an aspect of reality (object) and is associated with the quality in question.

If publically known and recognized, whether actualized in thought or registered in text, the ethical rule is a code. In the words of the present framework, a code is, thus, thought generated, maintained, and recognized by social convention, a social interpretation rule for pertinent situations in everyday life.

Such notion of code is clearly very general, covering all varieties of knowledge created and

legitimated by groups, such as social representations, ideologies, shared values, and the like. For our purposes, we will call an ethical —or moral— code a broader, hierarchically superior rule that makes it possible to classify broad sets of actions as right or wrong, according to a general principle. The ethical code operates as a premise or set of premises, whereas particular rules are conclusions or consequences from it. As an example, the ethic of universal individual rights conceives all people as equal. According to that principle, we should treat each other reciprocally and fairly. That code, with the premise that all people are worth the same and have the same rights, guides the understanding of many actions as fair and desirable, such as keeping promises, designing impersonal laws, or distributing rewards from work, such as salaries, according to proportional efforts by people. According to the same premise, cheating and lying are wrong.

The understanding of morals as universal justice was the main influence on Kohlberg's (1992) moral development psychology. The author's work links moral development to cognitive capacities that become sophisticated through the course of life. During childhood and adolescence, people would guide moral judgment first by means of the effects of authorities like parents and the law and would later attain internalized general principles promoting balanced relationships between themselves and others, regulated by equity and respect to individual rights, regardless of external sanctions. Gilligan's (1982) studies provided a complement to Kohlberg, an ethic of bonding and of community responsibility, directed to the care of others and interpersonal connection.

Other scholars expand the view of morality beyond that ethic. Shweder et al. (1997) conceive morals based on individual rights as an ethic of autonomy typical of Western societies with an aim at protecting the person and its freedom. Their research on Indian communities revealed other moral codes, which conformed to traditional values.

An ethic of community stresses hierarchy and the interdependence of people in their networks, safeguarding society and valuing family relationships and leader-led relations. Social duties and bonds unite, as superiors must be respected and obeyed but, in turn, must protect subordinates and groups. A third ethic, divinity, relates to the sacred, preserving traditions, connecting to the spiritual world, and repealing degradation.

Concerning everyday life, international studies have pointed out that developed countries follow more the rights-based autonomy ethic, whereas people from developing countries or minorities within Western countries give importance to the other ethics as well (Guerra & Giner-Sorolla, 2010; Haidt et al., 1993; Vasquez et al., 2001). There is support to diverse conceptions of what is right or wrong linked to specific communities.

Such conception is more compatible with our views of ethical codes and their social and cultural nature. What might account for the apparent specific ethic universality is its prevalence on a given culture and the academic and ideological consensus underlying the legitimacy of values supported by the code. If our aim is to evaluate patterns of intertwined ethical codes, it is preferable to take a plurality of moral systems into account.

Moral Foundations as Ethical Codes

We chose to characterize five ethical codes that have relevance in various cultural contexts: the moral foundations. According to the moral foundation's theory, a few fundamental ethics guide societies. They are innate to mental modules that helped humanity survive. Their nature is that of psychological primitives that respond to adaptation needs linked to specific emotions (Haidt & Joseph, 2008). The main function of morality would be to suppress selfishness and make cooperative life in society possible (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010).

Moral foundation theory asserts most moral judgments derive from automatic intuitions, by means of fast, unconscious processes, due to evolutionary selection. Deliberate moral reasoning would take place at a later moment with a justification purpose (Haidt, 2008). The primacy of those innate characteristics is revised during cultural socialization. Social learning on how to act correctly happens through narratives shared by communities, signaling the particularity of each culture, formulating, diffusing, and cultivating sets of virtues as valued personal traits and social skills (Haidt & Joseph, 2008).

There are five moral foundations supported by research meeting criteria such as being common in people's judgments, generating automatic affective assessments, and enjoying wide cultural diffusion and sharing (Graham et al., 2013). Their names identify each main characteristic goal and the transgression opposed to it. The care-harm foundation is associated with kin selection or the favoring of people with family ties to spread genes. It responds to the need for protection and nurturing of the young and close ones that are hurt. Close people or children in suffering generate compassion leading to their protection as well as to the disapproval of harm doers. Care-harm covers the content of Gilligan's care ethic. The fairness-cheating foundation manages cooperation with strangers, enabling mutual benefit from joint actions and encouraging interpersonal trust. Reputation is built and socially communicated from the analysis of collaboration and cheating. Its foundation is based on the principle of reciprocal altruism and corresponds to the concerns on justice and rights. The associated virtues are justice, honesty, and trustworthiness (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2008). Fairness-cheating expresses Kohlberg's morals (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010).

Whereas the mentioned foundations refer to the level of individual interactions, the others are related to community cohesion and functioning. They are ethics conveying collective obligations (Graham et al., 2013), close to Shweder et al. (1997) morals of authority and divinity. The loyalty-betrayal foundation is based on tribalism and intergroup competition, aiming at favorable outcomes to the groups to which people belong and promoting cooperation within them. The respect for duties from community membership is key, and virtues such as self-sacrifice and loyalty are cultivated. The authority-subversion foundation expresses obligations associated with the existence of hierarchical relationships that demand respect and obedience, as well as the performance of social roles and their duties. Finally, the sanctity-degradation foundation was probably developed to deal with contamination by germs and parasites through the avoidance of contact with waste and sick people. The targets of rejection seem to have been generalized to external practices, ideas, groups, and things considered impure or indecent, eliciting disgust. Some virtues are temperance, devotion, and cleanliness (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2008).

Moral foundations theory is a broad theoretical framework to explain human morality that connects cultural aspects to biological and evolutionary processes. The list of five foundations is not exhaustive; authors admit the possibility of its expansion (Graham et al., 2013). While we will not deal with assumptions related to the biological origins and mechanisms underlying the theory, the five moral foundations will suffice as a recognized list of comprehensive ethical codes to guide an exploratory investigation of their adoption.

There are empirical results concerning the reliance on moral foundations in different cultures. Haidt et al. (1993) studied American and Brazilian participants. The former perceived violations of autonomy ethics, which is very similar to the fairness foundation, as immoral, but it was not the case for transgressions in terms of community and divinity, analogous to the authority and sanctity foundations. In contrast, Brazilians evaluated violations of all three ethics as immoral. Similar

disparities were observed in studies with American and Philippine samples—Americans following autonomy only, Filipinos endorsing all three (Vasquez et al., 2001) —and with British and Brazilian participants— British relying on autonomy, Brazilians with balanced assessments (Guerra & Giner-Sorolla, 2010).

In the study by Haidt et al. (1993), there were also differences regarding socio-economic status, as lower status participants relied more on community and divinity, while high status ones restricted themselves to autonomy. With an American sample of undergraduates, Horberg et al. (2009) observed that lower socio-economic status students disapproved more acts that violated purity—a previous name for sanctity. Studies with non-university samples had divergent results. Van Leeuwen et al. (2014) found small associations of higher class with lower care and fairness scores, while Miles (2014) found no relationships between schooling, income, and moral foundations.

Haidt et al. (2009) characterized over 20 thousand Americans in four response patterns to a questionnaire on moral foundations. The patterns were related to political positions: A group that relied predominantly on care and fairness, which presented a secular liberal political profile; a second cluster with moderate scores on all five foundations with conservative positions, and another two groups with predominant care and fairness foundations but intermediate distributions on the binding ones.

Gloria Filho and Modesto's (2019) study had Brazilian undergraduate and social media samples with participants between 20 and 30 years of age, where most were women and highly educated participants. Results pointed out a pattern close to the secular liberal profile in Haidt et al.'s (2009) study. The scores on morality were higher for care and fairness, the individualizing foundations, and lower for the binding ones—loyalty, authority, and purity, suggesting compatibility with a view characterized as Liberal in American studies.

However, the samples covered predominantly highly educated and younger participants, reflecting a very specific insertion in Brazilian society.

DaMatta (1997) suggests that Brazil lives a dilemma brought about by abrupt and imperfect modernization, which would explain an incomplete adoption of Western liberal values. With a past of economic exploitation, slavery until the late nineteenth century, and periods of political dictatorship in the twentieth century, Brazil is defined by pronounced racial and class inequalities (Costa Ribeiro, 2006). Although Brazilian culture comprises hierarchy and authoritarian relationships, an established ideology of class conciliation based on the miscegenation of Brazilian peoples and alleged warm and positive cultural personality traits denies the deserved importance of social hierarchy and conflict. This makes the problem elusive and difficult to address (Schwarcz, 2019; Souza, 2015).

Religion also contributes to the ethical codes of Brazilians. There is a Catholic tradition, originated from Portuguese colonization, combined with a rise of protestant Pentecostal creeds amidst the working class that reinforces group bonds and promotes a traditional lifestyle as a strategy to maintain social status (Arenari & Torres, 2012).

With the present inquiry, we aimed at broadly characterizing the ethical codes of middle-size countryside city Brazilians. We operationalized the ethical codes through patterns of reliance on moral foundations. The strategy employed by Haidt et al. (2009), which consisted in grouping profiles of individuals according to their higher or lower adherence to moral foundations, was the inspiration of our empirical research. Nevertheless, after reviewing moral foundations theory and research results guided by the approach, we must make it clear that we adopted moral foundations as a set of empirically supported ethical codes rather than an investigation aligned with the assumptions and theoretical statements of moral foundations theory.

In this study, we took moral foundations patterns as a superordinate code managing the ethical

codes relative to the foundations simultaneously. The description of superordinate codes, in terms of social position variables, namely schooling level, gender, and religion, provides support to explore those codes and interpret them, raising premises and consequences. Thus, we employed descriptive quantitative techniques to have a broad overview of possible patterns; from there, we interpreted their social history and possible implications according to the social conditions associated with each pattern.

Method

To get a diverse group of participants to characterize moral foundations as ethical codes, we carried out a survey in public places of various neighborhoods from Uberlandia, a city in the countryside of Brazil with around 700.000 inhabitants. It is a middle-size city in Minas Gerais, a state in the South-east region. The study was carried out according to Brazilian laws on research ethics from Brazil's National Health Council Resolution n. 510 of April 7, 2016. The project was approved and registered by the Research Office of the Federal University of Uberlandia. Potential participants were informed that their results would be anonymous and that they could interrupt their participation at any moment.

Nine research assistants interviewed Uberlandia residents in late 2018 and early 2019 with an adapted version of the second part of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011), which had been translated to Brazilian Portuguese by Silvino et al. (2016). There were fifteen sentences covering moral judgment assertions related to the five foundations. Participants indicated the extent of their agreement with each sentence with the options "disagree," "partially disagree," "partially agree," "agree," and "do not know." Sentence contents are presented in Table 1 in the original English version. Data collection happened in public squares and streets. During office hours,

the research team invited passers-by to participate, providing oral responses at the site. Interviews lasted 10 minutes on average.

The participants were 936 adults aged between 20 and 45 years (mean = 27.9). There were 512 women (54.8 %), 34.4 % of participants had attended Elementary or Secondary school, and 56.6 % were attending university or had concluded a university course at the time (56.6 %). Concerning religion, 37.6 % were Catholics, 23.6 % were Evangelic (Protestants), 13.6 % were Spiritists, 11.5 % were Atheists, and 13.7 % followed other creeds.

Instead of working with numeric scores for each foundation, as is more usual in similar quantitative studies, we chose to merge disagreement ("disagree," "partially disagree") and agreement ("agree," "partially agree") responses. Our interest was to work with proportions of agreement or disagreement responses for each isolated sentence. The "do not know" responses had very low proportions —4.3 % or lower, and lower than 1 % for 10 sentences— and were not considered for analysis.

We carried out cluster analysis to group participants according to their multivariate response patterns related to moral foundations sentences. Cluster analysis calculates distances between cases (participants) and obtains discrete groups (clusters), which are each closer to a typical observation in each group. Thus, we treated each cluster as a pattern indicative of an ethical code, i.e., a set of simultaneous rules regarding the right ways to act.

Results

The metric for the dissimilarity matrix submitted to cluster analysis was Gower's (1971) distance, suitable to the treatment of nominal (categorical) data as were our disagree-agree responses. It handles missing data well. Silhouette width plots (Rousseeuw, 1987) informed the decision to generate two clusters. The algorithm of choice

Table 1.
Sentences related to the moral foundations and abbreviations

Moral foundation	Abbreviation	Sentence
Care-harm	suf.	Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.
	ani.	One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.
	kil.	It can never be right to kill a human being.
Fairness-cheating	law.	When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.
	req.	Justice is the most important requirement for a society.
	chi.	I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.
Authority -subversion	res.	Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.
	rol.	Men and women each have different roles to play in society.
	sol.	If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty.
Loyalty-betrayal	pro.	I am proud of my country's history.
	fam.	People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.
	tea.	It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself.
Sanctity-degradation	dis.	People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.
	unn.	I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.
	cha.	Chastity is an important and valuable virtue.

Source: Graham et al. (2011).

was PAM—partitioning around medoids (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 1990). The analysis was carried out in the R statistical environment (R Core Team, 2020) by means of the cluster package (Maechler et al., 2018). The preliminary analysis indicated a two-cluster solution. Table 2 presents the descriptions of each cluster regarding response proportions (disagree – D or agree – A) and table 3 regarding social characteristics.

The two clusters have similar sizes, with Cluster 1 accounting for 55% of the participants in the sample. Five of the six sentences related to care-harm and fairness-cheating have agreement rates of 80% or higher. However, the separation of sentences seems to be justified as less than half of the participants from Cluster 1 agreed that the

inheritance of resources by rich children is wrong when compared with poor children inheriting little or nothing. From the sentences related to the binding foundations, there is high agreement only for the importance of being a team player versus expressing oneself, relative to loyalty-betrayal, but respect for authority as something that must be taught to children and the moral disapproval of disgusting acts are valued at a noteworthy level.

Overall, Cluster 1 reveals an ethical code that is compatible with the Western ideal of care and fairness, with some additional tones—such as praise of authority and collective mentality—that might signal the traditional values expected from a hierarchical Brazilian culture. There is a higher proportion of participants relying on that code with

at least some university education. A higher proportion also declared to be an Atheist or Spiritists.

Cluster 2 evidences a code that takes into account elements from all foundations. Ten of the fifteen assessed sentences had an agreement of 80 % or more. Aside from the same sentences related to care-harm and fairness-cheating that were validated by Cluster 1 participants, respect for authority and soldier obedience to a superior are highly considered, as are support to wrong family members, preference for team play, and moral disapproval of disgusting actions. Although with lower agreement rates, more than half of the participants from Cluster 2 also agreed that rich children's inheritance was unfair, that men and women should perform different roles, that unnatural acts are wrong, that chastity is a virtue, and that they were proud of Brazil's history. There are highly regarded principles from the five foundations and at least a majority agreement for all sentences.

Cluster 2 participants followed a multiple code with some attribution of importance to all the moral principles investigated. While care-harm and fairness-cheating sentences still have high approval, there is medium or high approval for sanctity-degradation, authority-subversion, and loyalty-betrayal at the same time. It is a complex code, suggesting that in different situations contrasting guidelines may be applied: morality seems to be multifaceted for the participants relying on it. Compared with the participant profile from Cluster 1, Cluster 2 has a higher proportion of people with less education, attending up to secondary school, and Christians (Protestants and Catholics).

Table 2.
Proportions of responses to Moral Foundations Sentences

Moral foundations	Abbreviations	Cluster 1		Cluster 2	
		D %	A %	D %	A %
Care-harm	suf.	12	88	7	93
	ani.	7	93	5	95
	kil.	18	82	13	87
Fairness-cheating	law.	5	94	3	97
	req.	20	80	10	90
	chi.	54	48	32	68
Authority-subversion	res.	31	69	6	94
	rol.	88	12	38	62
	sol.	67	33	18	82
Loyalty-betrayal	pro.	69	31	36	65
	fam.	74	27	16	84
	tea.	18	82	10	90
Sanctity-degradation	dis.	41	59	14	86
	unn.	79	21	26	74
	cha.	85	15	32	68

Table 3.
Proportions of responses according to social charactersitics and cluster

Social Characteristics	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Gender		
Male	226 (44 %)	197 (46.8 %)
Female	288 (56 %)	224 (53.2 %)
Schooling		
Elementary/Secundary	139 (27 %)	267 (63.4 %)
University	376 (73 %)	154 (36.6 %)
Religion		
Atheist	90 (18.1 %)	14 (3.4 %)
Catholic	162 (32.6 %)	179 (43.8 %)
Spiritist	73 (17.7 %)	141 (8.6 %)
Protestant	88 (14.7 %)	35 (34.5 %)
Other	84 (16.9 %)	40 (9.7 %)
n	515	421

Discussion

In this section, we interpret the observed results, trying to make sense of the research conditions that originated them and of the social and historical conditions of Brazilian society that might explain them. We must emphasize that we outlined the possibilities that emerged from the exploratory nature of the study, which are not directly derived from the results, warranting further studies to confirm them or not.

We identified two shared ethical code patterns in our study, opposing an understanding of morality as a domain relative to individual justice and well-being to a multidimensional ethic that ponders individual rights and collective values. Haidt et al. (1993) and Guerra and Giner-Sorolla (2010) identified ethical positions marked by the reliance on plural moral principles. Nonetheless, we must recall that Gloria Filho & Modesto's (2019) moral foundations study pointed out to a dominant individual rights ethic.

This might be explained by sampling choices. Our sample is not statistically representative, nor did we make use of inferential statistics, which would have been questionable in the case of non-probabilistic sampling, according to Berk and Freedman (2003). Notwithstanding, the interviews in public places allowed an expansion of the relevant population in a Brazilian context. In presenting two ethical code patterns distributed between roughly half of a reasonably numerous and diversified group of participants, we sustain that both codes are legitimated in our research context.

What both patterns reflected in the clusters seem to mirror is the history of values in Brazilian culture. Brazilian society was an agrarian economy for centuries with plantation slavery and political monarchy, first a colony, and later an independent Empire. With the late abolishment of slavery, the proclamation of the Republic, and the World Wars, Brazil had a fast transition to industrialization, brought about by the substitution of imports due to the collapse of economies affected by WWII and

the rise of liberal values. The change was dramatic, originated from strong influence and pressure from developed countries. Liberal values and ethics promoting the impersonal individual and universal rights suddenly had to coexist with traditional ones stressing social networks, interdependent relationships, and communities. As mentioned earlier, DaMatta (1997) describes a culture with partial incorporation of the liberal ideal. Although some authors question DaMatta's (1997) praise of the Liberal model (e. g., Souza, 2015), he seems to be correct in identifying incongruences in values, and such incompatibility is portrayed in the results presented in this study.

Let us analyze the interpretation processes made possible by the two codes. The individual rights code advocates a separation of morality and identification of such domain with the preservation of the subject, the individual. The ideas that every person is of equal worth and that the integrity of the person should be protected from others are the main principles that guide the emerging code. Actions and beliefs that affect those rights are considered pertinent for moral judgment, while others are placed outside ethics. This corresponds to considering issues dealing with the rights and duties of the person as a matter of right or wrong, and spirituality, groups, and hierarchies as a matter of opinion. This is the case in research on norm violations with groups that rely on autonomy ethics alone or the higher scores of fairness and care foundations in most participants in the international literature reported.

Although care and fairness focus on different understandings of what morality is, they are ultimately compatible since both foster the same purpose: the individual, while the binding foundations preserve social relations. In this sense, the ethics of care and fairness are close to Rokeach's (1973, pp. 7-9) classical social psychological definition of instrumental values, i.e., desirable modes of conduct, whereas the cultivation of the individual as a general aim is close to a terminal value,

a desirable end. The primacy of the individual is a common premise from which derive the ethical codes of care and fairness: to ensure that the preservation of the individual is attained, people should maintain reciprocal, fair relationships and avoid inflicting harm on others. We can go far enough as to say that they are complementary. Thus, the well-documented and frequent high reliance on both moralities would consist in an ethical code of two combined morals.

Another point that must be addressed is the meaning of justice. Most studies with international samples reveal high acceptance of the idea that people should be treated fairly, that is, with justice. Nearly all of our participants consent to the importance of fair laws and justice in society, but there is a noticeable division in the agreement with a sentence related to children's inheritance more in line with necessity concerns. This might indicate divergence or openness regarding the interpretation of what is fair, implying that there is no specific, precise morality regarding justice but considerable space for differences. That points to a particularity and a limitation of the quantitative research strategy with questionnaires: by equaling responses to the same sentence, we lose the many meanings associated with it, adaptable to particular contexts and needs.

The agreement among participants of the individual rights-cluster code with sentences stressing the importance of teaching respect to authority to children and prioritizing team action over individual expression suggests that perhaps the attachment to the ethic in question is influenced by other cultural views that pervade Brazil, in a detour from the liberal standard. A broad research program by Hofstede et al. (2010) has characterized Brazilian culture as hierarchical and collectivistic, based on representative questionnaire surveys. The afore mentioned history of centuries of asymmetric social relations and authoritarian governments left a legacy of perceived normality that left its traces in popular thought. Differently from studies

in developed countries with liberal groups, the Brazilian supporters of a liberal ethic apparently do not see a contradiction with the content of the two sentences related to authority and the primacy of groups over individuals. One may question if the pattern implies a different view of fairness and care in a way that contrasts with liberal ethics from developed countries, if in certain situations, justice morals are secondary when compared with the support of one's group, or if the understanding of justice is not the same as that which is usual in other countries. With our data, we cannot reach a precise conclusion.

There is a predominance of participants with higher levels of schooling in the cluster when compared with an inverted proportion in the second one. The individual rights code manifests the cultural influence of Liberal ideology conveyed through school education. In many countries, schooling and social class go together, as richer families can afford to keep children away from the labor market at early ages, investing in their formation, which will later be converted into cultural credentials that result in better-paid work. In Brazil, such contrasts are striking. A survey showed that the income of people who had completed university studies was three times that of people who had only attended secondary school and more than six times that of people with no formal instruction (IBGE, 2019). The reliance on the individual rights code corresponds to social positions with higher levels of formal education and arguably more favorable economic conditions, though we did not assess income. It stands in contrast with the code that prevails among less-educated participants.

The second ethical pattern is a code that weighs not only relationships between individuals but those with communities as well. There is a high reliance on content from the binding foundations, which have in common the understanding that the group is a source of morality. Authority and loyalty relate to group values, to the maintenance of hierarchy within and allegiance to groups. People

belong to many groups, identifying with some more strongly: family, friends, nationality, ethnicity, and others. While those foundations are usually regarded as general mental modules, mechanisms to be applied to specific groups, in our perspective, we are more interested in the assumption that each group relevant to a person is associated with ethical rules of authority and loyalty, with varying strength. In practical terms, to identify a tendency to rely on hierarchy and loyalty, in general, might not be as important as describing the relevance of particular group memberships to people together with a tendency to attend to group-based rules, linked to a history of social relations. Specifically concerning the sentences related to loyalty, we found reference to family and to a vague collective dimension, but that is far from the assessment of loyalty ethics related to specific groups. In some cultures, the family might be a priority, whereas, in others, the State or one's social class might occupy privileged positions.

In terms of moral foundations theory, sanctity is an ethic explained by the development of the emotion of disgust, which is an operator against contamination by agents or materials, preventing disease transmission and health problems: the avoidance of raw foods, rotting corpses, body residuals and animals with habits linked to those elicitors. With cultural changes, the habits and rituals enforcing hygiene and the preservation of the body were associated with religion and popular tradition, justifying the foundation's name (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Graham et al., 2013). It is as if religion and spirituality operate as a partial vehicle for dealing with disgust and its role in the species. Shweder (1990), on the other hand, focuses directly on the spiritual nature of the self as a principle to direct moral acts, and thus practices threatening a supposed sacred or natural order of things to be avoided due to the subversion of that spiritual connection.

More in line with Shweder (1990), we understand the ethic of sanctity or divinity as regulation

involving an individual's relationship with a transcendental, spiritual reality, be it a supreme being, great force, or natural principle. We identified three classes of ethics regulating conduct in the form of general premises, depending on the types of relationship maintained by individuals: the relationships of an individual with other individuals, the relationships between an individual and the communities that he or she belongs to, and the relationship of an individual and a spiritual sphere. However, spirituality is concretely experienced, at least concerning the norms related to practices, by means of one's relationship with a community defined by it, such as the Church, mystical and religious groups. Those communities function as proxies of the divine, and the relationships with them resemble a special case of relationships with communities, with the difference that sanctity morals refer to the rules directly associated with spiritual practice, rather than the importance of the community connection covered by loyalty and authority. We are thus interested in sanctity as essentially related to a relationship dimension distinguished from other relationships with communities and individuals, as cultures developed the spiritual sphere. We acknowledge that there is a limitation in employing the sentences related to sanctity foundation to assess the relationship with the spiritual dimension. They mentioned practices that do not entail that relationship directly.

The second pattern is a code that highly values content from the five moral foundations or, in our terms, ethics addressing relationships with other people, communities, and spirituality. That is the profile observed by Haidt and Graham (2007) in political conservatives. Their domain of morality is broader, a denial of the narrower view that equals morality with justice and concerns regarding inter-individual relationships. The plural ethical code bears in mind the three instances of social relationships rather than a single one. In this multiple ethic, different situations imply different ethical issues, and one or another of those instances might be deemed more relevant and guide moral judgment. At this point, we face some possibilities to account for the concrete application of ethical rules related to the code.

A first possibility is a well-defined separation of moral domains and their pertinence. If that is the case, each moral relationship has a clear, privileged application field that does not enter in conflict with the others. For instance, a situation of theft or dishonesty would be treated according to principles of fairness, insubordination would be the subject of rules related to group hierarchy and roles, and respect to religious rituals would be a matter of an ethic of the spiritual. For the followers of the individual rights code, this seems to be the case, with a precise demarcation of what is moral —threats to individual integrity— and what is not —other issues—.

The existence of sharp borders of moral coverage might be a possibility within the multiple-relationship ethic, but the description and criteria defining the borders themselves are the phenomenon of interest to be explained. Different cultures have different criteria placing those lines due to their unique histories. In a secular state, a discussion on abortion is likely to be considered a matter of public health and personal freedom, framed under individual rights concerns. In Brazil, with a strong Christian background, that issue mobilizes religious judgment for various groups.

A second possibility regarding the concrete application of the ethical codes is the existence of a clear hierarchy in the values associated with moral principles. Again, for the individual rights code, such hierarchy is straightforward, as an individual integrity premise defines the moral domain completely. For a multiple ethics code, a hierarchy would mean that, in spite of declaring the importance of aspects from all the assessed morals, one or two of them would prevail over the others. Concrete situations force people to choose one principle over the other when they are not compatible, although the same person might find different principles important. A person who

endorses both fairness and loyalty ethics, when having to decide if a loved family member should be punished for a crime that he or she has indeed committed, would have to choose one. Therefore, the reliance on the two ethics would be replaced by a preference by one of them.

Another related point is the stability of a hierarchy of ethical principles. The reliance on an ethic in a particular situation might be stable, similar to a value system as proposed by Rokeach (1973, p. 5), "an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence [i. e., values] among a continuum or relative importance." If we consider the multiple ethic, it is likely the supremacy of one's group or the glorification of a deity become central to the subordination of other principles, at least in key situations. When morality is matched with absolute values, an apparent multiplicity of principles is dissolved in a hierarchy when the prioritized principles are in question. Thus, a person who declares high support for the ethic of care might neglect it when faced with a situation calling for allegiance to a community with which he or she identifies strongly, related to an ethical priority of group loyalty.

Alternatively, the reliance on an ethic in a given situation might be determined by one's needs or goals within that situation. In the example of the crime committed by a family member, the family relationship might be more important to a person than the respect of a law system, and the event would be considered unimportant. On the other hand, one's reputation might be in jeopardy, and the family member would thus not be spared of reproach. In any case, the results from a standard survey reflect the particular event of questionnaire completion, in which research participants usually give their opinions in terms of general, abstract assessments not actualized in concrete situations of their lives involving acts of people with whom they have different kinds of relationship. As such, those results are to be considered as concrete events

in themselves, events of research participation that suggest general, decontextualized trends, but that might be justifiably contradicted by other concrete everyday situations. Pairwise comparisons might help to identify the relevance of each ethic, asking participants to choose one principle over the other in a given situation.

A third point resumes the unavoidable openness of meaning related to the ethics that was briefly discussed regarding the individual rights code. Is the fairness advocated by multiple ethic people the same as the one recognized by adepts of a strict individualistic ethic? Nothing prevents the former to consider fair what conforms to group norms or divine justice. In that case, the difference in meaning would solve apparent contradictions in an otherwise harmonious hierarchy. Again, by analyzing solely the agreement with separate questionnaire sentences, we cannot affirm that the fairness of both ethics is the same.

The possibilities outlined above in terms of the actualization in concrete situations of multiple ethics are not exclusive. They might operate simultaneously, and of course differently, across community members. The identification of an ethical code through a statistical profile implies that there is some similarity at the first level of interpretation but does not entail uniformity in the application of those rules, as the interpretation process takes place amongst the experiences of each person and interacts with situational factors.

After developing a few possibilities to make sense of the two broad ethical codes, how can we situate them within the particular Brazilian research context? We would like to propose an interpretation that identifies a cultural war resembling the current American conflict between liberals and traditionalists, who oppose views on several lifestyle issues (cf. Hunter, 1991). In Brazil, a past and present of agrarian tradition, a late and incomplete democracy, religious practices, and social inequality resulted in strong inertia of values giving legitimacy to power relations, which is present in the multiple, plural

ethical code. Education and class positions operate with the diffusion of liberal and humanist values and the ethic of individual rights and justice. In an inquiry with a representative sample of Brazilian adults, A. Almeida (2012) identified an association of higher education with the acceptance of egalitarian points of view, diversified sexual behavior, and the rejection of authoritarian and traditional values and practices resembling the content of the binding foundations.

A higher presence of Atheists among participants from the individual rights code also evidences a dissociation from religion practices goes together with a reliance on liberal ethics. Nevertheless, individual rights principles are balanced with the approval of some elements related to the importance of one's group and authority. Whether it is an ongoing process of traditional ethics replacement or a particular combination adapting some fairness aspects to make it more compatible with traditional thinking, in some sort of conciliation, is the subject of further investigation.

Likewise, the multiple ethic pattern is associated with participants with less education, perhaps giving importance to other sources of knowledge, less influenced by the diffusion of values and practices by the formal school system. The higher proportion of Protestants, among which Neopentecostal churches are particularly strong, also indicates the relevance of group and spiritual morals. R. Almeida (2019) observed an association of Protestants with conservative political opinions. As discussed previously, a higher identification with communities might explain the reliance on ethics focusing on group relationships.

However, the multiple ethic code is also characterized by high agreement with fairness and care sentences. We understand that as the apparent integration of such principles in a traditional way of thinking. The incorporation might be justified by the positive connotation of progress and modernity associated with Liberal ideology and discourse. Yet, as discussed, a possibility is that different

meanings are given to individual rights principles in order to constitute an ethic that is subordinated to community preservation norms. It then resembles modern Liberal thought, to some extent, but is, in fact, a new, updated, "modernized" traditional point of view. If that is the case, then the multiple ethic consists in a reformulated form of knowledge that takes some of the essential, consensual, and unavoidable dimensions of contemporary debate into account in its own way, feeding off some selective and compatible meanings from Modern ideology and promoting conflict, regarding the legitimacy of definitions on fairness, well-being, and justice. It is a revitalization of traditional thought, giving it strength to contend with liberal ideology, levelling the field. In a society like Brazil's, both ethical codes are intertwined, as some concession is given from either. On the part of the multiple ethic, there is partial recognition of individual rights, albeit in a different interpretation; on the part of the individual rights code, the society's group-relationship past is still deeply ingrained, legitimating collective bonds.

Like cultural wars worldwide, the results from the survey suggest that Brazil is going through its own conflict between the ethic of the person and the ethic of the group. In other words, it is the face-off involving individualism and collectivism, though not a general, collective entity linked to society in general but rather the collective of one's own community. One the one hand, in some respects, a concern with the whole of society might be associated with some Liberal varieties. On the other, while the ethic of group relationships may oppose cultural values that have shaped the pillars of democracy and social welfare, at the same time, they might represent cultural resistance against the homogenization of values brought about by modernization, which suffocates traditional modes of being. In such ideological conflict, education seems to be a promoter of the ethic of individual rights, but educational contents may change, and the dispute challenging scientific

knowledge and questioning the discussion of hot social issues might result in an inversion of that connection.

In terms of the relevance of the reported study to descriptive research on ethical codes, arguably the main contribution is in the effort to explore the relationship of the observed patterns with an interpretation based on an understanding of the social conditions involving participants —schooling and religion— and their relationships with the history and characteristics of Brazilian society. We believe that the interpretation of psychological processes of meaning gains much when it considers societal dimensions. As such, we understand that the study is aligned with the main principles of social psychology if such discipline is defined by the study of the relationships between individuals and society. Finally, concerning the contribution to moral foundations research, while we acknowledge that we adapted the instrument and some conceptions according to our interests in investigating the adoption of ethical codes in Brazil, the results join other international studies providing data to characterize moral foundations in different contexts.

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