



Values and Teen Volunteerism around the World

A Report to the Institute for Global Ethics

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The Survey

In the autumn of 2001, questionnaires designed by the Institute for Global Ethics in consultation with the Shinnyo-En Foundation were distributed to teenage students attending schools in Thailand, Guatemala, and Canada. The surveys were in English, and based on studies of values and ethical decision making the Institute had performed in a variety of settings since the early 1990s. The innovation in this survey was the opportunity to nearly simultaneously gain responses to the same questionnaire from students in far-flung parts of the globe in order to see if they view their ethical environment differently.

The questionnaire included: (1) a variety of questions about the students' moral values, including the relative importance of various values and the role those values should play in their daily lives; (2) an opportunity to identify "ethical role models" who offered the students good lessons in telling right from wrong; (3) four ethical dilemmas in which students chose the resolutions they felt they were most likely to choose in real life, and the ethical reasoning behind those choices, (4) a section in which students associated specific moral values with a variety of community service activities, (5) questions about the amount and type of volunteer work students do, and (6) ordinary demographic questions.

The Respondents

A total of 619 students completed the questionnaire. (Actually, 620 completed questionnaires were received, but one appears to have been completed by a 42-year-old Canadian teacher, and is omitted from these analyses.) Table 1 shows how they break down between the three countries.

Table 1. Responses from different countries		
Country	Number	% of Total
Canada	194	31.4
Guatemala	257	41.5
Thailand	168	27.1
Total	619	100

Age

The median age range of all respondents was 15. Table 2 reports the age breakdown by country and overall. The youngest respondent was a single 12-year-old, and next youngest were ten 13-year-olds. The oldest respondents were nineteen 18-year-olds. Since so few respondents were younger than 14 or older than 17, the youngest

respondents are grouped with the 14-year-olds and the oldest with the 17-year-olds in all subsequent analyses. Thailand produced the youngest respondents, and Guatemala the oldest.

Table 2. Age of Respondents				
Country	Number (%)			
	14 and below	15	16	17 and above
Canada	80 (42.1)	52 (27.4)	33 (17.4)	25 (13.1)
Guatemala	14 (5.5)	60 (23.5)	90 (35.3)	91 (35.7)
Thailand	84 (50.9)	52 (31.5)	24 (14.6)	5 (3.0)
Total	178 (29.2)	164 (26.9)	147 (24.1)	121 (19.8)

Sex

Just over 60 percent of the respondents overall were women. This disproportion was due almost entirely to the inclusion of a girls' school in Vancouver, Canada, which resulted in over 85 percent of that country's responses coming from girls. Aside from that school, the sexes were more or less equally represented. Table 3 reports the breakdown in each country by sex.

Table 3. Sex of Respondents		
Country	Number (%)	
	Female	Male
Canada	162 (85.3)	28 (14.7)
Guatemala	139 (54.9)	114 (45.1)
Thailand	76 (46.1)	89 (53.9)
Total	377 (62.0)	231 (38.0)

There are *very* few Canadian boys among these respondents, so to the extent that we test for differences in other responses by sex, we cannot say with confidence that any such differences exist in Canada—we have too few responses from Canadian boys to be sure.

Households

The respondents were asked several questions about their home lives, including how many people lived in their homes and how many of those people were children. Household sizes ranged from one (only one Guatemalan student answered this way—a 16-year-old girl) to 16 (another Guatemalan respondent, a 15-year-old boy). The average size of the students’ households was just under five. Eight students reported no one under 18 living in their homes, including one apparently confused 14-year-old Canadian. One student—the Guatemalan boy in the largest household—reported 13 children living at home.

Generally, Canadians had the smallest households and Guatemalans the largest.

Church Attendance

As a rough indicator of the extent of respondents’ religious background, the students were asked if they had regularly attended religious services as children. Table 4 reports the responses to this yes or no question.

Table 4. Church Attendance: “Did you regularly attend religious services while you were a child?”		
Country	Number (%)	
	Yes	No
Canada	94 (49.2)	97 (50.8)
Guatemala	192 (75.3)	63 (24.7)
Thailand	83 (50.6)	81 (49.4)
Total	369 (60.5)	241 (39.5)

Guatemalan students were much more likely than others to have attended church as children. There was no relationship between sex and church attendance in any country.

Employment

Students were asked if they had a job apart from going to school. Just over 90 percent of the students reported no job, with Canadians slightly more likely than either other country’s students to have jobs (about 12 percent of Canadian students have jobs).

College Plans

Students were also asked if they plan to go to university. Fully 600 of the 619 students answered yes, only three said no, and nine did not know their plans. Our further findings are probably generalizable to the college-bound population of teens in these countries more than to the teenage populations as a whole.

Volunteer Work

The questionnaire included a variety of questions about the volunteer activity of students. One basic question asked if students performed any volunteer work regularly. Table 5 reports the responses to this question, and shows that students in Thailand were much less likely than their counterparts in Canada and Guatemala to be regular volunteers. While regular volunteer work was never reported by a majority of respondents in any country, in Thailand over 70 percent of students reported no regular volunteer work.

Table 5. Volunteer Work: "Do you perform any volunteer work regularly?"		
Country	Number (%)	
	Yes	No
Canada	91 (48.1)	98 (51.9)
Guatemala	117 (46.1)	137 (53.9)
Thailand	47 (28.3)	119 (71.7)
Total	255 (41.9)	354 (58.1)

Students who reported attending church services as children were no more likely to be volunteers now than students without a history of church attendance, and boys and girls did not differ in their likelihood of volunteering.

Older respondents in Canada and Thailand were more likely than younger respondents to be volunteers. The students from Thailand tended to be younger than the others (see Table 2), so we compared students of different ages and found that in fact older students from Thailand were as likely to volunteer as older students from the other countries. Younger students from Thailand were less likely to be volunteers than younger students from Canada and Guatemala, but this does not appear to discourage them from becoming volunteers as they get older.

The 255 students who reported at least some regular volunteer activity were asked how often they volunteer and what sort of volunteer work they do. These questions were open-ended, but responses were coded into rough categories, summarized in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. Type of Volunteer Work (19 did not respond)				
Type of Activity	Number (%)			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Child care	33 (38.4)	22 (20.2)	12 (29.3)	67 (28.4)
Community service	11 (12.8)	44 (40.4)	0 (0)	55 (23.3)
Special events	10 (11.6)	4 (3.7)	3 (7.3)	17 (7.2)
Clubs (e.g., Scouts)	5 (5.8)	8 (7.3)	3 (7.3)	16 (6.8)
Hospital	5 (5.8)	7 (6.4)	3 (7.3)	15 (6.4)
Religious	10 (11.6)	5 (4.6)	0 (0)	15 (6.4)
Home chores	1 (1.2)	9 (8.3)	4 (9.8)	14 (5.9)
Environment	2 (2.3)	3 (2.8)	3 (7.3)	8 (3.4)
Elderly	3 (3.5)	4 (3.7)	0 (0)	7 (3.0)
Other	6 (7.0)	3 (2.8)	13 (31.7)	22 (9.3)
Total	86 (100.0)	109 (100.0)	41 (100.0)	236 (100.0)

Table 7. Frequency of Volunteer Work (70 did not respond)				
Frequency of Activity	Number (%)			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Every day	1 (1.5)	7 (8.1)	3 (8.8)	11 (5.9)
More than once a week	4 (6.2)	6 (7.0)	2 (5.9)	12 (6.5)
Once a week	24 (36.9)	11 (12.8)	13 (38.2)	48 (25.9)
More than once a month	11 (16.9)	3 (3.5)	6 (17.6)	20 (10.8)
Once a month	10 (15.4)	9 (10.5)	4 (11.8)	23 (12.4)
More than once a year	3 (4.6)	38 (44.2)	3 (8.8)	44 (23.8)
Once a year	1 (1.5)	2 (2.3)	2 (5.9)	5 (2.7)
Rarely	11 (16.9)	10 (11.6)	1 (2.9)	22 (11.9)
Total	65 (100.0)	86 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	185 (100.0)

Over a third of students who do volunteer work do it on at least a weekly basis, and over 60 percent of volunteers perform at least once a month. However, a large percentage of volunteers failed to answer this frequency question, perhaps because they were reluctant to report how infrequent their “regular” volunteer work was, so it may be that these frequency figures are overestimates of the work done by the students who reported that they do at least some volunteer work. (It is not impossible that the nonrespondents do as much or more work as the respondents, but that is not the most likely reason for such a high nonresponse rate to a question like this.)

Values

Students were presented with a list of 14 values and instructed to select the five values that are most important to them in their daily life. The values, and the frequency with which they were chosen in each country, are reported in Table 8.

Table 8. Moral values chosen by students as important to them. (Figures are percentages of respondents choosing the value.)

Value	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Respect	73.2	76.7	82.7	77.2
Freedom	65.5	42.0*	67.9	56.4
Responsibility	53.6	61.9*	44.6	54.6
Truth	60.3	35.0*	60.1	49.8
Fairness	48.5	28.8*	56.0	42.3
Generosity	34.0	38.1	25.6*	33.4
Compassion	43.3	13.2*	32.7	27.9
Sincerity	18.6	41.6*	14.9	27.1
Perseverance	14.9	38.1*	10.1	23.3
Honor	16.5*	25.7	25.0	22.6
Tolerance	23.7	20.2	22.0	21.8
Humility	7.2	36.6*	10.7	20.4
Social Harmony	20.1	11.7*	31.5	19.7
Reverence for Life	7.7	10.1	10.1	9.4

There are numerous statistically significant differences in the value choices of the students from the three countries. In only one case, that of Respect, is a value chosen by more than 50 percent of each population—that is rare in the experience of the Institute, but a survey of teens in various countries is unique in the Institute’s experience. Guatemalan students are particularly likely to differ significantly from their counterparts in Canada and Thailand. For the values Freedom, Truth, Fairness, and Compassion, we find that Canadians and Thais do not differ much from one another in their frequency of choosing these values, but in each case Guatemalans are much less likely to choose these. Conversely, for the values Responsibility, Sincerity, Perseverance, and Humility, Guatemalans are significantly more likely to choose these values than the other two nations’ students, and Canadians and Thais are still fairly equally likely to choose these. The three countries differ significantly from one another regarding Social Harmony: the Thai students were most likely to choose this, significantly more than the next-most-likely students from Canada, who in turn were significantly more likely to choose this value than the Guatemalans. Canadians and Guatemalans were about equally likely to choose Generosity, and both were more likely to choose this than Thais. For only three of the fourteen values were there no significant differences between the countries: Respect, Tolerance, and Reverence for Life.

It is difficult to argue that there is a core of values that extends across all three countries’ students beyond Respect. But if one focuses only on the Canadians and Thais, it appears that there is substantial agreement about the importance of Freedom and Truth as well. If one focuses on the Guatemalans only, core values of Respect and Responsibility are clear, but no other value is chosen by more than 42 percent of Guatemalan students.

This lack of a distinct core of values is substantially different from what is usually observed in IGE studies of adults in a variety of contexts and countries. But if teenagers already had the same values, and shared a core of values, as adults, we might not find it

necessary to keep them in schools. A survey of adults in these countries might well show greater agreement on core values.

Nonetheless, the distinctions do exist. I consulted with a Guatemalan graduate student at the University of Southern California who, in addition to her personal familiarity with Guatemalan culture, has conducted extensive focus groups with Central American residents of Los Angeles about social issues in their community. She was not surprised by the relative prominence of Humility and Responsibility among the Guatemalans; she characterized Central Americans as unwilling to call attention to themselves and eager to demonstrate respect and empathy for others. She was somewhat surprised at the low number of choices of Social Harmony among Guatemalans, and Compassion (although the possible connotation of pity associated with compassion might account for this), but otherwise not too surprised by this pattern of responses.

Responsibility is frequently among the core values of adults surveyed by the Institute for Global Ethics, but is only chosen by a bare majority of Canadians and over 60 percent of Guatemalans; fewer than half the of the Thai students chose Responsibility. But this seems like a value classically associated with maturity. It may well be that adults all over the world are more likely to recognize the importance of this value than their children, but Guatemalans have a cultural predisposition toward emphasizing this value.

Truth is another value that often appears in the core values of adult populations: chosen by more than 70 percent of adults in Illinois, for instance, and by nearly 80 percent of the global workforce of an insurance company's management in the late 1990s, and rated quite highly by adults in Arizona's Maricopa County in 2001. While an intuitive connection might be argued between adulthood and responsibility, it's not as intuitively clear why adults would be particularly sensitive to the relative importance of truth.

While there are a few values that are not chosen as frequently as adults tend to choose them, this is not compensated for by the extraordinarily frequent selections of other values in their place. Instead, it is more accurate to say that these teens simply don't have as clear a core of values as adults tend to have. Perhaps adulthood is, itself, partly a process of entering a consensus about what is important in life.

There was no significant relationship between being a volunteer and placing more importance on particular values.

Most Important Values

After selecting from the list the five values that were most important to them, the students were asked to pick the one value they considered most important of all. These selections are reported in Table 9.

Table 9. Moral values chosen by students as *most* important to them. (Figures are percentages of respondents choosing the value.)

Value	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Respect	32.5	25.7	33.3	29.9
Freedom	9.3	9.9	14.5	10.9
Truth	17.0	6.7	9.7	10.8
Perseverance	4.1	12.6	2.4	7.2
Fairness	7.7	3.6	10.3	6.7
Responsibility	3.6	9.1	4.2	6.0
Tolerance	5.2	4.3	4.8	4.7
Sincerity	1.5	8.7	1.8	4.6
Humility	.5	9.9	1.2	4.6
Compassion	6.7	.8	5.5	3.9
Social Harmony	4.6	.8	6.1	3.4
Honor	3.6	4.7	.6	3.3
Reverence for Life	2.1	2.0	3.0	2.3
Generosity	1.5	1.2	2.4	1.6

Respect is the one value that is chosen as most important by more than 25 percent of each country's students, continuing its status as the one value each country chose with equally high frequency. Once past Respect, however, the choices for most important value quickly reflect the tendency for one country to differ from the others, either by choosing a value more frequently or less frequently than the other two countries.

Differences in the values chosen by boys and girls were examined, but few overall differences were noted. Boys were more likely to choose Honor than girls. Most significant differences were within certain countries, but even those differences were few. In Guatemala, boys were more likely than girls to choose Humility and Freedom, and girls more likely to choose Generosity and Sincerity. In Thailand, girls were more likely than boys to choose Social Harmony, and boys were more likely to choose Fairness. (There were too few boys in the Canadian group to make any meaningful comparison between boys and girls there.)

Differences in value choices were also examined in the different age groups, and were also few in number, and limited to Canada. Older children in Canada were more likely than younger Canadians to choose Honor and Tolerance. Age did not distinguish value choices in Guatemala or Thailand.

We find no association between these four age groups (essentially 14, 15, 16, and 17-year olds) and their tendency to choose Responsibility, which might seem to weaken the argument that responsibility is acquired with age. But it could be that age alone is not what raises the importance of responsibility in adult populations; perhaps it's being out of school that adjusts one's priorities. Since by definition none of these respondents is out of school, and only a small percentage of these respondents expect to be out of school anytime soon (over 90 percent expect to attend university), they may not yet be contemplating responsibility in an adult manner.

Ethical Role Model

Students were asked to name a person who they considered an especially good teacher of right and wrong, and to explain how they knew about this person. An assortment of different kinds of people were identified in response to this question, described in Table 10. The most common choice was a person related to the respondent, often a parent or other close relative, although Thai students were less likely to choose family members than students from Canada or Guatemala. Conversely, Thais chose friends nearly twice as often as Canadians, and four times as often as Guatemalans.

Table 10. Types of Ethical Role Models				
Type of Model	Number (%)			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Family member	119 (65)	189 (75)	62 (46)	370 (65)
Friend	16 (9)	10 (4)	23 (17)	49 (9)
School (teacher or administrator, e.g. librarian)	25 (14)	18 (7)	25 (18)	68 (12)
Religious figure	2 (1)	10 (4)	8 (6)	20 (3)
Media or pop culture (e.g., athlete)	16 (9)	24 (9.5)	18 (13)	58 (10)
Club or camp counselor	4 (2)	1 (.5)	0 (0)	5 (1)

It is perhaps noteworthy that religious figures are among the least likely to be chosen in the role of ethical role model. Media figures and athletes are chosen nearly three times as often as religious figures, and Canadians are particularly unlikely to choose religious figures (only two Canadians did so). The combination of family and school relationships account for over three-quarters of the ethical role models in the lives of these students overall, although in Thailand one would have to add friends to cross the 75 percent mark.

Moral Boundaries

Values in Daily Life

Having expressed their value priorities, students were asked how important their values are when it comes to making decisions concerning various day-to-day activities. This is a way of gauging the extent to which students feel that there are spheres of life where their

values play a smaller role than in others. Responses to these items are reported in Table 11.

Table 11. Importance of Values in Day-to-Day Life. Responses could range from 1 (Not at all important) to 6 (Very important).				
Activity	Average			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Getting a job	5.01	5.13	5.15	5.09
Spending time with friends	5.05	4.81*	5.11	4.96
Doing school work	4.75	4.82	4.44*	4.70
Recreation	4.47	4.70	4.64	4.61
Doing chores at home	4.01	4.20	3.65*	3.99
Shopping	3.27	3.65*	3.33	3.44

The average responses show that generally the students believe their values should play an important role in nearly all aspects of their daily lives. On a six-point scale, the average score is never lower than 3 in any country for any activity. Getting a job was rated particularly high in this regard, closely followed by time with friends. It is noteworthy that while 90 percent of the students had no job, they consider their values important when it comes time to get one. Presumably all these students have friends, however, and are more capable of evaluating the importance of their values when spending time with those friends than they might be where jobs are concerned. The high scores for jobs, in other words, do not appear to be simply due to lack of familiarity with the working world; the familiar world of friendships appears to draw closely equivalent high scores.

There are some significant differences between countries, however. Guatemalans consider their values slightly less important when spending time with friends than others (but still score highly on the six-point scale), and consider their values more important when shopping. Thais consider their values of somewhat less importance when doing schoolwork and doing chores at home.

Comparisons by sex showed two significant differences. Girls rated the importance of their values more highly than boys for shopping and time with friends. As with national differences, these differences were statistically significant (which means that they probably exist in the population as a whole) but fairly small in size (which means that, while real, they may not be obvious in daily life).

Age was not correlated with students' ratings of their values' importance in these activities.

The value choices of students were related to their ratings of the importance of their values in daily life, but not in a particular pattern.

1. Students who chose Freedom were more likely to consider their values important when spending time with friends, but students who chose

- Responsibility considered their values less important when spending time with friends.
2. Students who chose Freedom, Humility, or Tolerance rated their values less important while doing schoolwork.
 3. Students who chose Responsibility rated their values more important while doing chores at home.
 4. Students who chose Responsibility rated their values less important while engaging in recreation.
 5. Students who chose Respect (i.e., most students) tended to rate their values more important when getting a job. Students who chose Compassion or Generosity rated their values less important where jobs are concerned.

Students in each country consider their values of general importance in their daily lives, particularly when spending time with their friends. (Employment is not a part of daily life for the vast majority of these students.) They do distinguish somewhat between activities, but their scores across the board show that we did not ask them about any activities where values were not of at least some importance to them.

Shared Values

Another way that people might perceive the moral boundaries around them is the extent to which they believe that other people would choose the same values they did from the list of values.

Students were asked whether they believed that various people in their lives would answer the questions about values the same way they themselves had. Responses to these questions are reported in Table 12.

Table 12. Perceptions of shared values: “If we asked the people on the list below to answer the questions you did about values, do you think their answers would be just like yours, or very different from yours?” Responses could range from 1 (Very different from mine) to 6 (Exactly like mine).				
Group	Average			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
The “ethical hero” you described	5.08	5.23	4.86*	5.08
Your parents/guardians	4.48	4.85*	4.32	4.59
Your best friends	4.63	4.49	4.54	4.55
Your teachers at school	3.80	4.13*	3.63	3.89
The rest of the kids in your school	3.38	3.19	3.40	3.31
The leaders of your country	3.61	2.76*	3.27	3.17
Your country’s army	3.46*	2.60	2.98	2.97
The police in your town	3.74*	2.40	2.87	2.94

Respondents from the various countries do not differ significantly in their estimation of the similarity between their own values and those of their peers, both their friends and the other kids in their school. Not surprisingly, students feel that their friends are more likely to share their values than are other kids in their school. Role models receive the highest scores in each country, but this too is not surprising because the basis of the choice of a role model is based on teaching values.

There are statistically significant differences between countries in each of the other groups, but some are more noteworthy than others.

We see that Canadians give the police and army significantly higher scores for value similarity than do either Guatemalans or Thais. We also that Canadians' scores average above the midpoint of the scale for police, and close to the middle for the army, while both Guatemalans and Thais average below the scale's midpoint. Guatemalans report significantly less confidence than do Canadians and Thais that their country's leaders share their values. Here, too, Guatemalans' average score is below 3 on a six-point scale. The sort of distribution of responses that produces an average below the midpoint—when compared to that which produces an average above the midpoint—indicates a general sentiment toward the lower side of the scale. Guatemalans demonstrate less confidence that official institutions such as government, police, and the army are staffed by people who share their values than do Canadians. Thais express similar doubts about their police and army.

While Guatemalans gave their parents somewhat higher scores—from a statistical standpoint, significantly higher scores—than did the other students, the difference does not indicate a fundamental difference in feelings toward the Guatemalan students' parents. The average score for Guatemalans is between 4 and 5 on a six-point scale, as are the scores in the other two countries. Guatemalans also give their teachers higher marks for value similarity than do students from Canada and Thailand. In the case of parents, the gap between Guatemalan students and Thais (who had the lowest average score) was only half a point on the scale, and in all cases the averages are above the midpoint of the scale. In other words, while these differences are statistically significant and informative about some national differences, they are not as fundamental as the difference in perception regarding official institutions described above.

Girls gave significantly higher scores for their parents, role models, best friends, national leaders, and police than did boys. While statistically significant, the differences are usually small—the largest is a difference of .4 (in the case of police) on the six-point scale. Boys *never* had an average score higher than girls—statistically significant or otherwise.

Older students gave their parents, teachers, and ethical heroes somewhat higher scores than did younger students. Younger students gave higher scores to their peers, police, army, and national leaders.

Generally, students distinguish between other children (their friends and classmates), various government bodies (such as police and leaders), and adults (such as their parents, teachers, and most ethical role models). Their evaluations of other children are most similar. Their evaluations of government officials are most diverse from country to country.

Values and Community Service

Students were given a list of different activities that represent types of community service. For each, they were asked to choose a value from the list of 14 that they thought was most closely related to that activity. The most frequently chosen values associated with each activity are reported in Table 13.

Table 13. Values associated with community service: “Which one of the values you chose . . . is most closely related to that activity?”				
Activity	Value (% choosing that value)			
	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Volunteer work in a hospital	Compassion (45)	Generosity (32)	Compassion (29)	Compassion (28)
Helping family at home	Responsibility (40)	Responsibility (51)	Responsibility (33)	Responsibility (43)
Taking care of younger children	Responsibility (44)	Responsibility (36)	Responsibility (35)	Responsibility (38)
Helping preserve the environment	Respect (36)	Responsibility (29)	Respect (24)	Respect (26)
Volunteering to clean up a public place, like a park or plaza	Generosity (21)	Generosity (26)	Generosity (17)	Generosity (22)
Sharing your things with friends	Generosity (39)	Generosity (35)	Generosity (30)	Generosity (35)
Helping older people	Respect (34)	Generosity (23)	Respect (42)	Respect (31)
Helping other students with their school work	Generosity (28)	Generosity (36)	Generosity (22)	Generosity (30)

Three things are particularly noteworthy about the associations between activities and values in Table 13. One is how few values are chosen most frequently in each country. A total of four of the 14 values are ever chosen: Compassion, Generosity, Respect, and Responsibility. In Guatemala, the most frequent choice was always either Generosity or Responsibility.

Another noteworthy aspect of the choices students made is how frequently students from various countries agree about the value chosen most frequently. For five of the eight

activities, the most frequently chosen value is the same in each country. In the other three cases, at least two of the three countries share the same most frequently chosen value.

Finally, it is interesting to compare the values that students associate with various volunteer activities with the values that they chose as important to them, particularly as *most* important to them (see Table 9). Students in all three countries chose Respect more frequently than any other value and most often as their most important value. But Respect is only highly associated with two of the activities in Table 13, environmental preservation and helping older people. Responsibility, which appears closely associated with two other activities, is chosen fairly frequently by students, but not nearly as often overall as Respect (and less than 10 percent of the time as a most important value). Generosity and Compassion are very rarely chosen as the most important value by these students; in fact, Generosity is *least* frequently chosen as most important. It appears that while students can agree substantially as to which values are associated with these activities, they do not see their own values as frequently associated with voluntary community service activities.

There is a clear tendency for students who chose a value as among their five most important to associate that value with one or more of the volunteer activities. For instance, while only six Canadians selected Reverence for Life to be associated with hospital volunteer work, five of those six had selected this value among their five most important. Thus, there is not a complete disconnect between students' own values and those they associate with community service, particularly on an individual level. But overall, the most frequent associations do not match the most frequent value choices of students.

To further probe the implications of the values that students associated with these activities, we compared the associations of students who do some type of volunteer work with those of students who do none. There was no significant difference in the values associated with a given activity by students who volunteer and those who do not.

Ethical Decision Making

Students were presented with four scenarios that describe opportunities to make ethical decisions. After a brief description of a situation, students were asked to choose one of four resolutions to the dilemma (at least one of which was clearly wrong to do), and then to choose an explanation for their choice from one of three classic philosophical positions. After that, students were asked to select the resolution that they believed most of the other students at their school would choose in response to this dilemma.

The philosophical positions from which students could choose to explain their choice of a solution included a utilitarian approach ("This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people"), a principle based on the categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant ("This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences"), and the Golden Rule ("This is the way I would want to be treated in such a situation").

The Broken Window Dilemma

You and your best friend are playing soccer and your friend accidentally breaks a window in your house. After your friend goes home, your parents come home and see the broken window. They are very angry, and they say that there will be serious consequences for whoever did this.

Students presented with this dilemma were offered four potential solutions to this situation and asked to select the one closest to the action they would take. The responses are reported in Table 14.

Table 14. Resolutions to the Broken Window Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Tell them it was your friend	51%	56%	36%	49%
Tell them that you broke the window	28%	38%	38%	35%
Tell them you don't know	20%	5%	24%	15%
Tell them it was someone you don't like	1%	2%	1%	1%

Very few students chose the most morally indefensible option—to blame a completely innocent person for the broken window. While a clear majority of Canadian and Guatemalan students preferred to tell the truth, Thais were more likely to choose to take the blame personally and protect their friend. Overall, most students narrowed their choices to the options that reflect the ethical confrontation at the heart of this dilemma: telling the truth versus being loyal to one's friend. By accepting blame oneself, one can be loyal and responsible while not being exactly honest. By telling the truth, one can be honest and responsible but not necessarily loyal. The other two options are much harder to defend in terms of values.

Students explained their decisions with a variety of the available choices. Table 15 reports their choices of philosophical decision principles to explain the resolution they chose to this dilemma.

Table 15. Decision principles for the Broken Window Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each principle.				
Principle	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people	36%	26%	40%	33%
This is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences	31%	40%	27%	34%
This is the way I would want to be treated in such a situation	33%	34%	33%	33%

Within each country there is a good deal of variation, and enough variation between countries (particularly between Guatemala and Thailand in their slight preferences for the utilitarian and categorical imperatives, respectively) to produce as near equal an overall distribution of choices as possible. For all practical purposes, the total sample from all three countries is equally divided between the three choices.

The choice of a resolution was related to choice of decision principle. Just over 80 percent of the respondents who resolved the dilemma by telling the truth explained their decision through Kant's categorical imperative: This is what everyone should do, no matter the consequences. Also noteworthy is that just over half of the students who chose to claim responsibility themselves explained this through the Golden Rule: This is how they would like to be treated themselves. There was no particular resolution associated with the utilitarian principle.

Boys and girls were not significantly different in their likelihood of choosing either their resolutions or their decision principles for this dilemma.

Table 16 shows how students felt that other students in their classes would resolve this dilemma.

Table 16. How would others resolve the Broken Window Dilemma? Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.

Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Tell them it was their friend	25%	28%	31%	28%
Tell them they broke the window	6%	12%	7%	9%
Tell their parents they don't know who did it	64%	54%	57%	58%
Tell their parents it was someone they don't like	5%	6%	5%	5%

It is common for Institute respondents to choose very different resolutions to dilemmas for others than are chosen for one's self. Often the choices for others favor much more passive approaches, and this is found among these students. In each country, over half of the students believe that others like them (i.e., the other students at their school) would say they don't know who broke the window. Those picking the resolution of taking blame for the friend are cut to one third or less of the numbers in Table 14. The least difference is in the truthful resolution, where numbers remain quite consistent.

While boys and girls did not differ significantly in their choices of their own resolutions, they did differ somewhat in how they thought others would act. Boys were more likely to believe that others would tell the truth, and girls more likely to believe that others would claim that they did not know who broke the window.

Values were sometimes related to choices of resolutions to this dilemma. Students who chose Fairness were more likely to choose to tell their parents that they don't know who broke the window. But students who chose Humility tended to avoid that resolution in favor of either telling the truth or taking personal responsibility.

The Found Money Dilemma

You and your best friend are walking through the market. Your friend finds some money (15 Canadian dollars, 500 Thai Bahts, 100 Guatemalan Quetzels) on the floor and picks it up. Just then you hear a young woman asking other people if they have seen the money she dropped.

Students' choices to resolve this dilemma are reported in Table 17.

Table 17. Resolutions to the Found Money Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Ask your friend to tell her, but accept whatever the friend decides	61%	68%	45%	60%
Go and tell her that your friend has the money	34%	26%	39%	32%
Stand and wait to see if the woman asks you, and tell the truth if she does	5%	5%	10%	6%
Walk away quickly	0%	2%	7%	2%

The most popular choice in each country was to leave the dilemma up to the friend, after asking the friend to let the woman know the money has been found. Thais were significantly less likely to prefer this resolution than students from the other countries, and Thais were most likely of the three to choose to tell the woman themselves about their friend's find. All of the students who chose to walk away quickly were boys, as were a disproportionate amount of those who chose to stand and wait.

Decision principles for this dilemma are reported in Table 18.

Table 18. Decision principles for the Found Money Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each principle.				
Principle	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people	21%	25%	29%	25%
This is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences	34%	34%	33%	33%
This is the way I would want to be treated in such a situation	46%	42%	39%	42%

In each country there is at least a slight preference for the Golden Rule as a principle to explain their decision, but almost precisely one third of respondents in each country choose the categorical imperative, too. Like with the first dilemma, there is considerable variation in choice of resolutions, but in this case there are no significant differences between students from the different countries.

As with the Broken Window Dilemma, those who chose the resolution most committed to honesty—telling the woman that their friend has the money—were more likely to choose the categorical imperative than the Golden Rule. Students in both dilemmas might feel that these honesty-oriented resolutions are the most difficult to rationalize except by strict application of a rule.

On the whole, students were slightly more likely to choose the same principle to explain their decision in both dilemmas, but there was considerable movement from one principle to the next. As the Institute for Global Ethics has frequently found in similar surveys, people seem quite comfortable applying different decision principles to different situations.

Whereas boys and girls did not differ in their choice of resolution principles in the first dilemma, boys were more likely to favor a utilitarian approach to the Found Money Dilemma, while girls were more likely to choose the Golden Rule.

The resolutions students thought others would choose are reported in Table 19.

Table 19. How would others resolve the Found Money Dilemma? Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Go and tell the woman that their friend has the money	8%	6%	16%	9%
Ask their friend to tell her, but accept whatever the friend decides	42%	28%	37%	35%
Walk away quickly	29%	48%	37%	39%
Stand and wait to see if the woman asks them, and tell the truth if she does	22%	18%	10%	17%

Once again, we see that respondents believe that others are more likely to take a passive approach than they themselves are, but here the most striking increase is in the number of people who are presumed to walk away quickly. Only 2 percent of the respondents chose this resolution for themselves, but nearly 40 percent choose this for others! This gives their schoolmates significantly more credit for being honest in this situation, but that is only in comparison to the relatively poor expectations of the other countries' students with regard to their fellow students.

The Shoplifter Dilemma

You and your parents are in the market. You see a poor person stealing food. The person sees you and begs you not to tell anyone.

The Institute for Global Ethics has presented this basic dilemma in a variety of adult surveys, but the situation is quite different when the confrontation is between an adult and a teenager than between two adults. Responses from the students appear in Table 20.

Table 20. Resolutions to the Shoplifter Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Never tell anyone	47%	49%	57%	50%
Wait until the person has gone away, then tell the shopkeeper	38%	26%	32%	32%
Tell the shopkeeper about the person right away	14%	22%	9%	16%
Shout so everyone in the market can hear you and help catch the person	1%	3%	2%	2%

As in the Found Money Dilemma, the most frequently chosen resolution is the same in each country—never telling anyone. In previous Institute for Global Ethics surveys of adults, the option of doing nothing (an equally passive option) is rarely chosen by more than 15 percent or so of respondents. For teens, it may be more difficult to choose a more confrontational or active resolution, since they may feel more at risk of retaliation from an adult. On the other hand, it is very common for adult respondents to believe that *other* adults would do nothing. Perhaps these teen respondents feel more comfortable than do adults in admitting that they themselves would do nothing in this situation, since teens may feel less responsible for enforcing criminal law in this sort of situation.

In any event, whatever it is that makes this option attractive to these teens is not related to their nationality. Where the other options are concerned, the relative favor shown by Canadians for telling the shopkeeper after the person has gotten away, as well as that shown by Guatemalans for telling the shopkeeper right away, are both statistically significantly different from the choices of the other countries.

Despite that, note that from top to bottom, each country's students' most-to-least frequently chosen options are ranked in the same order. The same was true of the Found Money Dilemma, but not the Broken Window Dilemma. This sort of finding shows not only agreement about the most popular choice in this case, but also about the general attractiveness of each of these resolutions.

There is no connection between the values and the resolutions chosen by students to this dilemma, nor do boys and girls differ in their likelihood of choosing a resolution.

The decision principles chosen for this dilemma are reported in Table 21.

Table 21. Decision principles for the Shoplifter Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each principle.				
Principle	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
This decision would produce the best	43%	42%	38%	41%

outcome for the greatest number of people				
This is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences	20%	29%	17%	23%
This is the way I would want to be treated in such a situation	37%	29%	45%	36%

As with earlier dilemmas, respondents do not appear as unanimous in their choice of a decision principle as in their choice of a decision. The differences between the countries—for instance the relative preference of Canadians and Guatemalans for a utilitarian principle in this case, and of Thais for the Golden Rule—are statistically significant. The overall distribution of responses to this item are less evenly divided among the three choices than in the first two dilemmas, but are still substantially spread among the three philosophical positions.

As the distributions of choices shift from dilemma to dilemma, it is clear that some students—in fact a substantial minority—are choosing a decision principle to suit the situation, not employing the same principle in every situation. This is what the Institute has found in surveys of adults. In fact, the Institute for Global Ethics has never found evidence that adults tend toward strict application of a single principle in all dilemmas. The ability to suit principle to situation appears to be learned early.

Boys and girls do not differ in their likelihood of choosing one or another decision principle, and students’ values are not related to their choice of a principle.

The resolutions students believe others would choose are reported in Table 22.

Table 22. How would others resolve the Shoplifter Dilemma? Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Never tell anyone	63%	56%	56%	58%
Wait until the person has gone away, then tell the shopkeeper	25%	19%	23%	22%
Tell the shopkeeper about the person right away	8%	18%	15%	14%
Shout so everyone in the market can hear you and help catch the person	4%	7%	7%	6%

If students differed from adults in their choice of a passive approach to this dilemma, their beliefs about how others would react are very similar to adults. As the Institute has found in surveys of adults, a clear majority of students believe that others would choose to say nothing. In adult samples, this belief about others is usually in stark contrast to the adults’ choice of a more active intervention in the situation. In the case of the students, of course, it shows a belief that other teens would act as they would.

Although boys and girls did not differ in their own resolutions, they did differ in their choice of a resolution for others. Boys were a bit more likely than girls to believe others

would tell the shopkeeper right away or shout to get attention, and girls were more likely than boys to believe that others would tell the shopkeeper after the person had gone. Students' values were not associated with their choice of others' resolutions.

The Cheating Child Dilemma

You see a younger person cheat in a game that you are watching. You know that if you tell the other players they will be very angry and punish the cheater.

This dilemma hinges on a choice between justice and mercy. The resolutions offered allow students to attempt to finesse this situation somewhat. The choices students made are reported in Table 23.

Table 23. Resolutions to the Cheating Child Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Tell the other players so they can punish the cheater	13%	16%	23%	17%
Talk to the cheater quietly and threaten to tell the others if it happens again	72%	63%	63%	66%
Go punish the cheater yourself, without explaining to the other players why	1%	7%	2%	4%
Do nothing	15%	15%	11%	14%

Again, there is a clear favorite among the resolutions, that of granting some mercy while warning that this quality is not limitless. Over 60 percent of students in each country select this resolution. Canadians are particularly likely to choose this resolution. While few students endorse the most justice-oriented choice—that of telling the players so they can deal with the cheater—Thais are more likely than the other children to choose this.

Neither the students' values nor their sex were associated with their selection of resolutions to this dilemma.

Table 24 reports the decision principles chosen to explain resolutions of this dilemma.

Table 24. Decision principles for the Cheating Child Dilemma. Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each principle.				
Principle	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people	56%	44%	46%	48%
This is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences	17%	24%	28%	23%
This is the way I would want to be treated in such a situation	27%	32%	27%	29%

This is the first dilemma in which the utilitarian principle is the most frequently chosen in each country. That may be because this dilemma describes a situation in which a larger number of people are immediately involved, and everyone involved is a child. Finding a solution that allows all of these parties to be satisfied may be of heightened importance in this circumstance. There is no significant difference between the countries in the students' choices of principles, although the relatively low prevalence of Canadians' choices of the categorical imperative approaches significance.

Students who chose Honor among their five most important values were less likely than others to choose the Golden Rule. That was the only value that was associated with these choices, and there was no difference between boys and girls in the choice of resolutions.

People who had chosen the most justice-oriented resolutions—telling the other players or administering punishment themselves—were most likely to choose the categorical imperative as the principle to explain their choices.

Students' beliefs about others' choices are reported in Table 25.

Table 25. How would others resolve the Cheating Child Dilemma? Figures are the percentage of each group choosing each resolution.				
Resolution	Canada	Guatemala	Thailand	Total
Tell the other players so they can punish the cheater	33%	53%	43%	44%
Talk to the cheater quietly and threaten to tell the others if it happens again	31%	14%	27%	23%
Go punish the cheater yourself, without explaining to the other players why	8%	8%	9%	8%
Do nothing	29%	25%	21%	25%

In adult samples, the most ordinary choice for how others would behave is the most passive possible choice. In this dilemma, that would be to do nothing. However, the most frequently chosen choice in every country among the students is a fairly interventionist action: telling the other children. Guatemalans were particularly likely to believe that

others would follow this course, particularly as opposed to believing that others would talk to the cheater quietly.

Values and gender are not related to students' beliefs about others' behavior in this situation.

Dilemma Overview

Overall, it is striking how few national differences there are between the choices made by the students in response to these items, even while there is considerable difference in the kind of choices students make, particularly in the decision principles they choose. That is, students do not all agree on how to explain the choices they make, but their disagreement is rarely closely related to their nationality, and neither are their choices of resolutions. The various statistically significant relationships between responses and nationality do not describe huge discrepancies. Instead, they usually highlight moderate differences that may well reflect some cultural differences, but do not separate children from the different countries in any obvious, profound way.

The dilemma that produced the greatest consensus in resolutions was the one that involved only children—the last dilemma involving cheating in a game. In the other dilemmas there was greater diversity of resolutions chosen. It could well be that as children all over the world contemplate situations familiar to them and involving peers, they share an understanding of how they prefer to resolve such situations.

Furthermore, like adults, these young respondents prefer active resolution to the dilemmas, even if (like adults) the students believe that their peers might be more passive than they themselves would be in some situations. We ask how people believe others would resolve these dilemmas because the “third person” response may provide some insight into the respondent's own realistic estimate of his or her own action. Whether that is what these questions tap into or not, the responses do shed light on how respondents believe dilemmas such as these are most often settled in the world around them. Adults believe that others are rather reluctant to “get involved” when a situation calls for an ethical decision. Children share that tendency to a large—though not matching—extent.

But to whatever extent children resemble adults in their perception of the decisions that others would make when confronted with these dilemmas, we return to the small national differences in these responses. The greatest disagreement among the students from the three countries in response to how others would resolve a dilemma was in the Found Money Dilemma. In the other three dilemmas, the students from different countries did not differ much, particularly when active versus passive choices were concerned. In many ways, the Found Money Dilemma is the most complex of the four, because the students have to influence someone else's decision—the friend who found the money. In the simpler cases, children from very different parts of the world anticipate very similar behaviors from their peers.

It is also striking how infrequently boys and girls differ in their approach to the dilemmas and the decision principles in these countries. We must be reluctant to extend any conclusions to Canadian boys (having so few in the sample), but certainly there are few differences noted between teenage boys and girls in Guatemala and Thailand. This might surprise those boys and girls.

Conclusion

The students from Canada, Guatemala, and Thailand who completed this survey share a strong preference for Respect as a value, but they do not agree on a core of values beyond that to the same extent as adults in other studies conducted by the Institute for Global Ethics. Whether this is due to cultural differences that will persist into these students' adulthood or to an aspect of youth that will diminish as these children mature is not known.

The values these students claim as most important to them are not often the values they associate with community service volunteer activities. To the extent that one would wish to appeal to students to volunteer more frequently for community service, it may be necessary to either tie such appeals to dimensions of respect, or to try to persuade students that such values as generosity and compassion should be of greater importance to them. Both are possible; that is, creative messages can argue for a connection between respect and various service activities, and it is possible to change people's value priorities through persuasive arguments.

These students look to their families and friends as role models for ethical living. Religious figures and pop culture figures are notably less influential than others with whom these students interact on a daily basis. This suggests other strategies for teaching the value of community service. Where families are concerned, it may be more effective to organize opportunities for families to work together on volunteer activities rather than to appeal to people individually. If these teens see their parents, aunts and uncles, and cousins respond to a call to service, they may find this more influential than a media campaign or an exhortation from the pulpit. Where friends are concerned, another collective approach is to encourage students to assemble small groups of volunteers rather than to sign on to an effort one by one. This, too, offers peer role models a chance to exercise their influence.

The lack of consistent and profound differences based on nationality has been emphasized in this report, but it is worth remembering a few things about this sample of students. The first is that, despite their geographical separation, all of these students are studying in English at schools that may differ from other schools in their home country in a variety of ways. This may give these students more in common with each other than other Thai, Guatemalan, and Canadian students would normally have. Secondly, the report's low number of surveyed Canadian boys represents a gap in our understanding of how teen boys in a relatively affluent Western country might respond to these questions.

Any opportunity to gather data from teens who do not share such similarities would provide a welcome check of the present findings.

Another helpful possibility for further research would be the comparison of these responses to those from adults in these countries—perhaps even from the parents of these children. Hypotheses about the likelihood of these students gaining greater consensus about certain values, for instance, could be tested with such data.

Those caveats aside, there is a rich collection of findings in this study. Additional qualitative data in the questionnaire, such as students' descriptions of the behaviors they associate with their most important value and their thoughts on why the person they identified makes a good ethical role model are not addressed in this quantitative analysis, but may well shed further light on the findings reported here.

As always, there is more to learn.