PennState
Social Science
Research Institute

Consortium on Moral-Decision Making

Who We Are

A collaborative hub dedicated to unraveling the intricate threads of ethical choices. Formed officially in 2023, the Consortium is multidisciplinary alliance of scholars, thinkers, and practitioners, we delve into the complexities of moral dilemmas, seeking a deeper understanding of how individuals and societies navigate the delicate balance between right and wrong. The Consortium builds on Dr. Cameron's years of interdisciplinary organizational efforts within the Rock Ethics Institute.

517 Moore Building
University Park, PA 16802
moralconsortium.psu.edu

What We Do



Host regular meetings among Consortium members to develop new interdisciplinary projects, such as studies, papers, and grant proposals. These meetings serve as opportunities to share research and get integrative feedback, workshop grant proposals, focus on specific research topics, or discuss how the Consortium can continue to benefit our research community.



Offer support for Consortium members to engage in research and community-building through our seed grant program, which is meant to energize and give momentum to interdisciplinary social science projects.



Encourage interaction with Consortium members, helping to identify shared points of common emphasis across departments and colleges throughout the Penn State and beyond. We help identify points of complementary methodological strengths by encouraging collaborations across disciplines who might study morality using different tools, nurturing an academic network.

Research Areas

- Empathy, Morality, and Artificial Intelligence
- Polarization and Morality
- Moral Emotions and Decisions
- Moral Interventions
- Moral Ecologies and Communities

Penn State Partners

- **Rock Ethics Institute**
- **College of Liberal Arts**
- The McCourtney Institute for Democracy
- Department of Philosophy
- Department of Psychology
- Center for Socially Responsible AI
- Institute for Computational and Data Sciences
- Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center

More on What We Do

- Organized regular in-progress research workshops
- Livestreamed external speaker events (e.g., Expanding Empathy Speaker Series)
- Hosted **5** hybrid interdisciplinary conferences (e.g., Political Divisions and Morality in 2025, Moral Boundaries and Fragmentations in 2026, and Empathy, Morality, and AI in 2024 and 2026)
- Funded **$43,000** in interdisciplinary seed grants to **36** research teams
- Supported **4** graduate students and **2** post-baccalaureate research associates
- Assisted with paper and grant development
- Cultivated strong social outreach and science communication, reaching people in over **25 countries**
- Archived all the Consortium's events on the website

Success Stories



Daryl Cameron, Consortium Director, received an ICDS Faculty Upskilling Fellowship in AI to study using large language models to facilitate empathy. He gave invited talks on empathic AI at the MPact Conference for Regional Innovation at University of Maryland, at the Mind and Machine Alignment Summit at Ohio State, and at the European Association for Social Psychology in Strasbourg, France. He also published a paper in Current Directions in Psychological Science with engineer Alan Wagner and philosopher Martina Orlandi, as well as several former students, on empathy for and from robots.



Paige Amormino, Consortium affiliate, Post-doctoral Associate in Prevention Research Center, published a paper on empathy, morality, and policymaking in Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, with Dr. Cameron and Dr. Joel Segel in Penn State's Health Policy Administration (and Director of the Consortium on Substance Abuse and Addiction).



Joshua Wenger, Consortium affiliate, published a paper on choosing to receive empathy from AI in Communications Psychology, which shows that people choose human empathy over AI empathy, but nevertheless rate AI empathy as more empathetic and validating, and presented on this work in Barcelona, Spain, and Strasbourg, France.

Highlights of the Past Year

Moral Fragmentations and Boundaries
The Consortium brought together several scholars in the social sciences and humanities to talk about different disciplinary approaches to the study of "fragmentations" and moral boundaries.



AI and Social Research: Empathic AI, Metascience, and Methodology
The Consortium hosted a two-day interdisciplinary event that brought together researchers from psychology, political science, philosophy, computer science, and related fields to explore the intersection of artificial intelligence and social research.



Moral Measures Workshop
The Consortium hosted an event for researchers to give short talks on methodology and measurement questions in the study of moral and ethical decision-making.



Consortium Director, Dr. Cameron, Featured in Several Public Science Communication Efforts
Dr. Cameron led several science communication and outreach efforts to highlight the translational value of this workgroup's efforts. He was on WPSU's Reach podcast for a discussion of empathy He was on the Maine Calling program, a live panel public radio show, on the topic empathy and society. And he took part in a short film by wildlife cinematographer about empathy for deep-sea animals and their ecosystem.



Consortium Collaborates with Transatlantic Empathy Observatory
Dr. Cameron took part in a delegation from Penn State Global and the Prevention Research Center, visiting Wilton Park in West Sussex, England for a conference event on empathy and polarization.



