Do ethicists steal more books?
Eric Schwitzgebel

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If explicit cognition about morality promotes moral behavior then one might expect ethics professors to behave particularly well. However, professional ethicists' behavior has never been empirically studied. The present research examined the rates at which ethics books are missing from leading academic libraries, compared to other philosophy books similar in age and popularity. Study 1 found that relatively obscure, contemporary ethics books of the sort likely to be borrowed mainly by professors and advanced students of philosophy were actually about 50% more likely to be missing than non-ethics books. Study 2 found that classic (pre-1900) ethics books were about twice as likely to be missing.

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In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle (trans. 1962) writes that the aim of studying ethics, "is not, as in other inquiries, the attainment of theoretical knowledge: we are not conducting this inquiry in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good" (p. 1103b). In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1785/1998) asserts that a philosophical understanding of morality is essential to a firm and unswerving hold upon morality, allowing one to avoid corruption by self-regarding desires and misdirection by irrelevant considerations. In *On Liberty*, Mill (1859/2003) says that ethical doctrines become largely powerless to guide behavior unless their fundamental principles are grasped and the arguments both for and against them are rigorously considered. If Aristotle, Kant, and Mill are right, a lifetime's commitment to the study of ethics should have salutary effects on one's moral behavior. Philosophical moral reflection is not, or should not be if done properly, morally inert. Ethicists, by virtue of their long study and deep appreciation of the principles of morality, will behave better than non-ethicists. Even if the study of ethics is not itself morally beneficial, one might reasonably expect that people drawn to a career teaching and studying ethics will, on average, be more deeply committed to the

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importance of morality than those drawn to other careers either within or outside of philosophy.

But do ethicists actually behave better than non-ethicists in philosophy, or than non-philosophers of similar social background? The question has never been systematically studied.

Among contemporary philosophers, Nussbaum (1997, 2007) and Moody-Adams (1997) have argued that philosophical moral reflection is a crucial part of our moral education, will tend to make us better citizens, and can give us the courage to stand up for justice. Though their arguments have *a priori* plausibility, they offer no empirical evidence in support of these claims. Posner (1999), a judge and philosopher of law, argues in contrast that academic philosophy as normally practiced "has no prospect of improving human behavior" (p. 7) since (among other things) its motivational force is feeble and it tends to traffic in rationalizations either of self-interest or of culturally derived, arational intuitions. Opinion among ordinary professional philosophers appears to be divided. Schwitzgebel and Rust (forthcoming-b) polled passersby at an American Philosophical Association meeting in April 2007 and found that although a substantial minority (especially among ethicists) expressed the view that ethicists do behave morally better on average than non-ethicists of similar social background, a majority of respondents said that ethicists do not behave better. In fact, a substantial minority of non-ethicists suggested that ethicists behave on average *worse* than non-ethicists. Anticipating the current research, several philosophers have shared with me their impression that ethics books are missing from libraries more often than other philosophy books.

In psychology, accounts of moral development that give a central role to moral reasoning, such as Piaget's (1932/1965) and especially Kohlberg's (1984), should, it seems, predict that ethicists will show excellent moral behavior, since there is no doubt that professional ethicists are champions of moral reasoning—at least in the sense of 'moral reasoning' researchers like Piaget and Kohlberg have in mind. (Accordingly, Rest [1993] found that graduate students in moral philosophy show very sophisticated reasoning about Kohlbergian moral dilemmas.) However, the nature and strength of the relationship between Kohlbergian measures of moral reasoning and real-world moral behavior remains unclear (Blasi, 1980; Colby & Damon, 1992; Emler, Tarry, & St. James, 2007; Kohlberg, 1984; Krebs & Denton, 2005; Stams et al., 2006). In contrast, accounts of moral development and behavior that emphasize emotion or intuition and downplay the importance of reasoning or explicit moral cognition (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001), might predict that skill in philosophical reasoning about ethics would have little bearing on actual moral behavior.

Although the relationship between moral behavior and a professional career in ethics remains unstudied, a number of researchers have examined the relationship between professed religiosity or religious behavior (such as church-going) and self-reported or objectively measured social deviance or criminality. An influential study by Hirschi and Stark (1969) found no relationship between high school students' self-reported church attendance or belief in an afterlife and either police

records or self-reported criminal behavior. Subsequent studies have tended to find weakly negative (often statistically insignificant) relationships between religiosity and criminality or social deviance. A recent meta-analysis (Baier & Wright, 2001) puts the median effect size at $r = -0.11$, but even this small correlation is likely to be inflated by the file-drawer effect (the fact that negative results, especially of small studies, are less likely to be published) and bias on the part of religiously committed subjects (who may suspect the hypothesis and unwittingly adjust their answers) and investigators. Also, many of the studies included in Baier and Wright's meta-analysis are only correlational and control for only a few potential confounding variables, and thus give insufficient basis for inferring a negative causal relationship between religiosity and immorality or crime. Two recent studies that attempted to get at the issue of direction of causation through temporal analysis found results in the *opposite* of the predicted directions (Eshuys & Smallbone, 2006; Heaton, 2006).

The most closely related issue on which there are considerable empirical data is the effectiveness of courses in business ethics. Research in this area generally examines the relationship between business ethics courses and either self-reported attitudes about business ethics or maturity of response to Kohlberg-like dilemmas. The results are mixed, with some studies finding that students exposed to business ethics show more ethical or more mature responses (Boyd, 1981; Glenn, 1992; Hiltebeitel & Jones, 1992; Loe & Weeks, 2000; Luthar & Karri, 2005; Murphy & Boatright, 1994) and others finding a very limited relationship (Bodkin & Stevenson, 2007; Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Duizend & McCann, 1998) or none at all (Borkowski & Ugras, 1992; Martin, 2007; Smith & Oakley, 1996; Wynd & Mager, 1989). Many of these studies, unfortunately, lack control groups or control questions. Without control questions, students can appear 'more ethical' by means of simple strategies. For example, a number of studies simply measure the degree of students' self-reported condemnatory attitudes about hypothetical violations of ethical standards (either before and after a business ethics course or in comparison with another group). Students may then appear more ethical simply by showing a bias toward regarding any presented scenario or behavior as ethically problematic—a response strategy that ethical training courses may tend to encourage but which need not show any real improvement in moral understanding. I have been unable to find any empirical studies attempting to relate business ethics instruction and real-world moral behavior.

A few researchers have examined a complementary hypothesis: that the study of rational choice theory in economics promotes selfish behavior. Frank, Gilovich, and Regan (1993, 1996) found economists to behave more selfishly in laboratory tests, in responses to hypothetical scenarios, and self-report. However, Laband and Beil (1999) found economists no more likely than sociologists or political scientists to underreport income to save on membership dues (graded for income) to professional societies; and Frey and Meier (2005) found that although economics majors at University of Zurich were less likely to give to charities than students in other majors, this tendency was present from the beginning of their education and did not increase with increased exposure to rational choice theory in class.

The present research aims to provide the first small bit of non-anecdotal, empirical data directly on the question of whether professional ethicists behave any better than non-ethicists, and thus the first direct empirical test of a model of moral cognition according to which professional philosophical moral reflection positively affects real-world moral behavior. In particular, the present research examines the theft and negligent treatment of library books. Are ethics books more, or less, likely to be missing from academic libraries than other philosophy books? I choose other *philosophy* books as the comparison class, rather than books in literature, chemistry, or some other discipline, and rather than the whole universe of non-ethics books, because it seems likely that by looking only within philosophy, the patterns of book use and the population using the books will be more closely matched, reducing the potential role of a variety of confounds.

I assume that the theft and negligent treatment of library books is, as a general rule, morally bad. Whether a book is missing for innocent reasons or instead due to negligence or theft cannot be determined from library records, but no such assessment is necessary if we assume that the rates of completely innocent loss are the same between the two groups. (I will return to some potential problems with this assumption in the conclusion.) Furthermore, most loss is not *entirely* innocent, I suspect: one can handle library property with more or less respect and care, conscientiously keep library books separate from one's personal property or mix them in. Some professors and graduate students, when they change universities, negligently or intentionally bring some library books with them. Even if a book is missing simply because it was misshelved by a patron without having been removed from the library, that reveals negligence and a disregard of most libraries' requests that patrons not reshelve books. Books specifically described in library records as having been paid for by the patron were excluded from analysis. Not all libraries display such data in their online records, but among those that do, books recorded as 'lost and paid' constituted a small proportion of the missing books.

Accidentally misshelving a book, choosing not to return a library book one notices after a move, not bothering to check out a book one has accidentally walked out with—these and the like are of course only minor faults in the grand scheme of things. Even if the results of the present research were completely decisive and free of confounds, it would be absurd to confidently draw general conclusions about the overall moral character of ethicists from such limited data (especially in light of situationist findings in social psychology, such as: Doris, 2002; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). The research reported here is intended as the first of a number of projects that will explore the moral behavior of ethicists in a variety of different ways. My collaborators and I are presently examining rates of charitable giving among philosophy students (reanalyzing the data from Frey & Meier, 2005), the voting rates of ethicists and political philosophers (Schwitzgebel & Rust, forthcoming-a), the responsiveness of ethicists and other professors to student emails, and the honesty of philosophers and other professors in reporting income to professional societies when reporting lower income will mean paying lower membership dues (extending the research from Laband & Beil, 1999). Several other studies are in various stages of design.

Two studies will be presented. The first examines the rates at which contemporary, relatively obscure philosophy books are missing from academic libraries. The second examines the rates at which classic pre-20th century texts are missing.

1. Study 1: Rates at Which Recent, Relatively Obscure Philosophy Books Are Missing

1.1. Method

1.1.1. Compiling the list of titles

To generate the list of titles to be examined, I compiled a list of book reviews published in *Philosophical Review* (a leading philosophy journal) from 1990–2001. Based on book title and author, an independent coder—an ethics professor—coded the reviewed titles as either (1) ethics, (2) non-ethics, or (3) marginal/don't know. All titles rated by the coder as ethics (144) were added to the ethics list and one-third of the non-ethics titles (155) were added to the comparison list; marginal titles were excluded, as were titles originally published before 1985. Since the focus of the study is on the behavior of professional ethicists, I further excluded all books appearing at least five times in bibliographies in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006, October), on the reasoning that these books would be more likely to be checked out by non-specialists. The final list thus contained 126 ethics titles and 149 non-ethics titles, all obscure works generally unknown outside philosophy and even within philosophy to those not specializing in the subarea. Alphabetically, the first four ethics titles are *Altruism* (Paul, Miller, & Paul); *Am I My Parents' Keeper?* (Daniels); *Animal Minds and Human Morals* (Sorabji); and *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Finnis). The first four non-ethics titles are *Abstract Objects* (Hale); *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect* (Davidson); *Appearance and Reality* (Hacker); and *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity* (Blumenthal). (The complete list is posted at http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~eschwitz/BookTitlesPP09.htm.) Although it was not possible to obtain information about the individuals checking out these books, these relatively obscure works are likely only to be known to, recommended to, and sought by specialists and students receiving advanced training in those areas.

1.1.2. The lending libraries

I examined online status information for every copy of these titles in 13 U.S. and 19 British academic library systems. The U.S. libraries included the six University of California libraries that provided online due date information (Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, and Santa Cruz) and seven other library systems chosen on the basis of their large collections, eminent philosophy departments, and easy-to-use online records (Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Michigan, Princeton, Stanford, and Texas). Satellite libraries were included if due date information was easily available alongside that of the main libraries. The British libraries were those included in the COPAC national online catalog, excluding those libraries not listing due date information. Nineteen of these British library systems had significant

holdings in philosophy: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, King's, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Sheffield, Southampton, Trinity College Dublin, University College London, University of London, and Warwick. Oxford had by far the largest of the British collections, accounting for approximately one-third of all British holdings.

1.1.3. Collecting the data

A research assistant and I collected the ethics and non-ethics data in tandem between October 17 and December 13, 2006, when all schools were in fall session. We coded each copy of each title as either *on shelf* (neither checked out nor missing), *within period* (checked out but not overdue), *overdue* (overdue by no more than one year), or *missing* (including books more than one year overdue). The following composite categories were defined for the purpose of analysis: *delinquent* (overdue or missing), *off shelf* (within period, overdue, or missing), and *held* (on shelf, within period, overdue, or missing; that is, all categories combined). I excluded from analysis books in repair, books listed as lost and paid, and books whose status was unclear.

I will use the term *books* (or sometimes, for additional clarity, *copies* of books) to refer to individual copies of books (e.g., "I excluded books in repair") or collections considered as collections of individual copies (e.g., "8.5% of all ethics books"). When I intend to refer to a class of books sharing the same title and author or aggregates of such classes, I will use the term *titles* (e.g., "I examined 126 ethics titles" and "a title-by-title analysis").

1.2. Results

Raw numbers and key percentages are listed in Table 1. Ethics books are more likely to be missing than non-ethics books both when considered as a percentage of holdings (χ^2, 1.3% missing vs. 0.9% missing, $p = 0.047$) and when considered as a percentage of books off shelf (8.5% missing vs 5.7% missing, $p = 0.03$)—the latter being probably the more valid measure, since it takes into account the popularity of the books. The odds ratio of missing as a percentage of off shelf is 1.48 to 1. In this sample, an ethics book is about 50% more likely to be missing than a non-ethics book, if it is off shelf.

The popularity of the books does not appear to play a confounding role. Ethics and non-ethics titles are checked out at very similar rates; and in any case, more popular books (defined by number off shelf not missing) are no more likely to be missing than less popular books, when measured as a percentage of books off shelf (missing as a percentage off shelf is 7.6% for less popular books [titles with 7 or fewer off shelf but not missing, accounting for 49% of off shelf] vs. 6.4% for more popular books, χ^2, $p = 0.32$). Nor are older books detectably more likely to be missing, despite presumably having had longer to disappear from the shelves (7.3% vs. 6.7% for 1993 and older [51% of off shelf] vs. 1994 and newer, $p = 0.65$); and in any case, the average off shelf but not missing ethics book is somewhat newer than the

Table 1 Data from study 1 (obscure books).

	Ethics	Non-Ethics
Titles	126	149
Holdings	4,964 (39.4/title)	5,628 (37.8/title)
Off shelf	778 (6.17/title)	910 (6.11/title)
Delinquent	94 (0.75/title)	91 (0.61/title)
Missing	66 (0.52/title)	52 (0.35/title)
Within period as % of holdings	13.8%	14.6%
Delinquent		
As % of holdings	1.9%	1.6%
As % of off shelf	12.1%	10.0%
Overdue		
As % of holdings	0.6%	0.7%
As % of off shelf	3.6%	4.3%
Missing		
As % of holdings	1.3%	0.9%
As % of off shelf	8.5%	5.7%

average non-ethics book (1993.9 vs. 1992.6), so compensating for age would, if anything, make the effect larger.

No difference was detectable in the rates at which books were merely overdue without being missing (3.6% of off-shelf for ethics vs. 4.3% for non-ethics, $p = 0.47$), but the numbers are too small for any definite conclusions.

1.2.1. Use in law

In conversation, several philosophers suggested that the effect might be driven largely by law students and professors, who presumably borrow ethics books more often than non-ethics books in philosophy and may have different library habits. The data do not bear out this hypothesis. In the U.S. sample, four law libraries were included (from the Berkeley, Cornell, Harvard, and UCLA systems). Of the 157 ethics books off shelf from these four law libraries only 11 (7.0%) are missing—lower than the overall rate at which ethics books are missing. I also generated a list of 19 'law' titles from the ethics list—titles with at least 10% of their U.S. holdings at the 4 included law libraries. These books were missing at approximately the same rate as the ethics books (8.9% vs. 8.5%). Removing them from the data set does not change the overall estimated effect: ethics books were missing at an 8.4% rate vs. 5.7% for non-ethics, for an odds ratio of 1.47 to 1 ($p = 0.04$).

1.2.2. Failure of independence?

The χ^2 tests I have been using assume the trials to be statistically independent. The present data might fail to be independent in two different and cross-cutting ways: some titles might be more likely than others to go missing. (Consider Abbie Hoffman's counterculture classic *Steal This Book* [not included in this survey].)

Also, some libraries might be more likely to have missing books—if, for example, their security is lax or if a single patron is appropriating many books. (By the way, 13 copies of *Steal This Book* are held in the selected libraries. Of the four off shelf, three are missing.) Unfortunately, standard statistical tests for independence cannot be applied here due to the small number of relevant events for each title and for the smaller libraries.

However, we can examine the data by title and by library, to see if just a few titles or just a few libraries are driving the effect. If not, it may be reasonable to conclude that the independence assumption is approximately satisfied. I calculated missing as a percentage of off shelf for all titles with at least five books off shelf across all the sampled libraries. Ethics titles are more likely to be missing, with a median of 8.3% for ethics vs 0.0% for non-ethics (Mann-Whitney, adj. for ties, $p = 0.046$).

Given a sample of only 32 libraries, many of which have only one or a few books missing, library-by-library comparisons will only be able statistically to detect large or consistent effects—especially since the data turn out to be non-parametric (with five libraries missing only ethics books and one missing only non-ethics books). Looking library by library, 12 libraries have more ethics books missing than non-ethics books and 6 have more non-ethics books missing (the remaining libraries either have one of each missing or none)—a non-significant trend (binomial test, $p = 0.14$).

No particular topical subgroup of titles stands out post-hoc as particularly more or less likely to be missing than any other—not applied ethics, nor feminism, nor meta-ethics, nor books with a demanding as opposed to a lenient ethical view. However, there are too few titles in most of these categories and too little power to test this systematically.

1.3. Discussion

These results suggest that ethics books are actually *more* likely to be missing than non-ethics books in philosophy. The effect does not appear to be driven by just a few titles or just a few libraries. With these results in hand, I decided to do a second study examining prominent pre-20th-century philosophy texts. Are classic texts in ethics also more likely to be missing than other classic texts in philosophy?

Since undergraduates likely check out a high proportion of classic titles, Study 2 is not directly a measure of the moral behavior of professional ethicists. However, it seemed advisable to confirm the trends of Study 1 on a different population of books, and it's not unreasonable to suppose (looking at my own shelves and recalling those of others) that a substantial proportion of classic text checkouts are in fact by professors and advanced students of philosophy. We cannot afford to purchase every version of every classic text—especially when those texts are regularly reissued in important new editions or translations. In any case, undergraduates reading ethics texts are presumably by virtue of that very fact engaged in more explicit philosophical cognition about ethics than undergraduates reading other sorts of philosophy,

though of course there may also be other important social, cognitive, or situational differences between the two groups.

2. Study 2: Rates at Which Classic Philosophy Texts are Missing

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Compiling the list of titles
The preliminary lists were composed of texts written before 1900 that appeared in at least five ethics bibliographies in a recent edition of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006, October) or five mind-and/or-language bibliographies (philosophy of mind and language being the only other subfield of philosophy comparable in size and scope to ethics). I removed titles prominent both in and outside of ethics (such as Hume's *Treatise*) and that normally appear anthologized with books of the other type (such as Hume's *Enquiries* and most of Plato's dialogues). To flesh out the very short non-ethics list and to compensate for the mind and language bias in that list, I perused the historical entries of the SEP and added Bacon's *New Organon* and Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. All English and original-language editions were included; so also were anthologies in which the book in question appeared as the first-listed or most prominent work, unless the anthology included both ethics and non-ethics texts. I also made a third list of Nietzsche's most prominent works. Although Nietzsche is in some sense an ethicist, he condemns conventional morality. The final list of books appears in Table 3.

2.1.2. The lending libraries
I examined the same U.S. library systems as in Study 1. The British library catalog system proved impractically unwieldy, listing, for example, over a thousand separate catalog entries for author 'Locke' and title 'Understanding'.

2.1.3. Collecting the data
A research assistant and I collected the data in late December, 2006, and early January, 2007, when most schools were between sessions, and then again in late February and early March, 2007, when all schools were in session. The Nietzsche data were collected only in March. Since undergraduates presumably borrow these books at high rates, I thought it might be informative to compare between-session and mid-session data. Books were again coded as *on shelf*, *within period*, *overdue*, or *missing*. Multi-volume works were coded separately if the library had a separate status line for each volume, unless the work was split into more than three volumes. (Some editions of Aquinas's *Summa*, for example, are divided into many small volumes.) When volume data were combined, the highest coding number of all the individual volumes was used, with on shelf being 1, within period 2, overdue 3, and missing 4.

Table 2 Data from study 2 (classic texts).

	Ethics	Non-Ethics	Nietzsche
Holdings	5,541 (462/title)	2,324 (232/title)	1,035 (345/title)
Off shelf	926 (77.2/title)	427 (42.7/title)	298 (99.3/title)
Delinquent	191 (15.9/title)	53 (5.3/title)	63 (21.0/title)
Missing	155 (12.9/title)	36 (3.6/title)	58 (19.3/title)
Within period as % of holdings	13.3%	16.1%	22.7%
Delinquent			
As % of holdings	3.4%	2.3%	6.1%
As % of off shelf	20.6%	12.4%	21.1%
Overdue			
As % of holdings	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%
As % of off shelf	3.9%	4.0%	1.7%
Missing			
As % of holdings	2.8%	1.5%	5.6%
As % of off shelf	16.7%	8.4%	19.5%

2.2. Results

As expected, a greater proportion of books was checked out in February-March than in December-January, though the effect was not large: 13.5% of ethics holdings and 15.9% of non-ethics holdings were off shelf during break, while mid-session the percentages were 16.7% (χ^2, $p < 0.001$) and 18.4% ($p = 0.02$) respectively. As is evident from these percentages, non-ethics books were slightly more likely to be off shelf than ethics books. This difference was statistically significant over winter break ($p = 0.006$) and marginally significant mid-session ($p = 0.08$). In contrast to Study 1, there are substantial differences in holdings, with ethics holdings (5541 mid-session) about twice that of non-ethics holdings (2324 mid-session).

Overall, the mid-break and mid-session data look very similar, apart from the slightly higher off shelf rates mid-session and more copies of Plato's *Republic* found mid-session (1119 vs. 884, probably due to different search strategies). The remaining analysis will treat the mid-session data only, since the Nietzsche data were only collected mid-session, and since the missing rates for the *Republic* are substantially lower mid-session, bringing them closer to the mean and thus erring on the side of statistical caution.

As is evident from Table 2, ethics books are about twice as likely to be missing in this sample as non-ethics books, whether measured as a percentage of holdings (2.8% vs. 1.5%, $p < 0.001$) or as a percentage of books off shelf (16.7% vs. 8.4%, $p < 0.001$). The Nietzsche books are also more likely to be missing than the non-ethics books (5.6% vs. 1.5% as a percentage of holdings, $p < 0.001$; and 19.5% vs. 8.4% as a percentage of off shelf, $p < 0.001$). Measured as a percentage of holdings, the Nietzsche books are more likely to be missing than the ethics books ($p < 0.001$), but by the more important measure of percentage missing among those off shelf,

Table 3 Data from study 2 (classic texts, by title).

Author, Title	Missing as % of off-shelf	Ethics/Non/ Nietzsche
[Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*]	0.0%	Non
[Frege, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings*]	0.0%	Non
Bacon, *New Organon*	3.4%	Non
Kant, *Critique of Judgment*	3.8%	Non
Descartes, *Meditations*	5.6%	Non
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*	5.9%	Ethics
James, *Principles of Psychology*	7.1%	Non
[Berkeley, *Principles*]	9.5%	Non
[Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*]	10.0%	Ethics
Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*	10.3%	Ethics
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*	10.6%	Non
Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*	11.1%	Ethics
Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*	12.1%	Non
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*	14.8%	Ethics
Hobbes, *Leviathan*	15.0%	Ethics
Plato, *Republic*	15.8%	Ethics
Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*	15.9%	Nietzsche
Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*	16.2%	Ethics
Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*	18.9%	Nietzsche
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*	21.8%	Nietzsche
Mill, *On Liberty*	23.2%	Ethics
Rousseau, *Social Contract*	23.5%	Ethics
Locke, *Two Treatises of Government / Second Treatise*	23.8%	Ethics
[Frege: *Foundations of Arithmetic*]	26.3%	Non
Mill, *Utilitarianism*	31.3%	Ethics

the difference is not statistically detectable ($p = 0.28$). Though the numbers are small, overdue as a percentage of off shelf and of holdings is fairly similar between the three groups.

All libraries have at least twice as many ethics as non-ethics books missing—but there are also twice as many ethics books off shelf within period. This was corrected by comparing the proportion, by library, (ethics books missing)/(ethics books missing $+ 2.0 *$ non-ethics books missing) vs. 0.5. The difference is statistically significant (*t* test, M $= 0.71$ vs. 0.5, $p < 0.001$). Twelve of the 13 libraries are missing a greater proportion of ethics books than expected.

By title the differences are also striking. Table 3 ranks titles by missing as a percentage of off shelf, with titles with fewer than 25 total off shelf in brackets. With the exception of Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic*, each of the 12 most-missing titles is either an ethics or a Nietzsche book. Likewise, of the eight titles least missing, only one is an ethics title. The mean percentage missing is 16.7% for ethics titles (not including Nietzsche) vs. 7.9% for non-ethics titles (odds ratio 2.1 to 1). Even with the tiny sample size (12 ethics titles, 9 non-ethics), this difference in means is statistically significant (*t* test, $p = 0.01$). The three Nietzsche titles are missing at about the same rate at the ethics titles (mean percentage missing 19.0%).

The lists can be made more comparable by cutting the outliers: books with fewer than 25 off shelf (see Table 3) and those with more than 100 (Aristotle, Hobbes, and Plato). The eight remaining ethics books have an average of 402 held, 62.5 off shelf, and 11.4 missing. The six remaining non-ethics books have an average of 329 held, 61.5 off shelf, and 4.8 missing. Missing as a percentage of off shelf on this reduced list is 18.2% for ethics and 7.9% for non-ethics, for an odds ratio of 2.3 to 1 (χ^2, $p < 0.001$). The difference in mean, title-by-title, of missing as a percentage of off shelf—18.2% vs. 7.1% (odds ratio 2.5 to 1)—remains significant (t test, $p = 0.01$). The difference in means remains if missing is calculated as a percentage of holdings (mean 2.6% vs. 1.3%, odds ratio 2.0, $p = 0.02$).

2.3. Discussion

The results of Study 2 support the conclusion of Study 1. Looking at this very different selection of books, ethics books are again more likely to be missing. The effect is so large and consistent that it shows up even in low power title-by-title and library-by-library analyses.

Unlike Study 1, the effect may plausibly be driven mainly by undergraduates. However, the small difference between mid-term and between-term checkout rates suggests that few patrons are checking these books out by mid-term and returning them at term's end, which one might expect to be a typical checkout pattern if undergraduates are borrowing the books for use in classes.

3. Concluding Remarks

These data suggest that ethics books are more likely to be missing from academic libraries than other types of philosophy books. This effect appears to hold both for obscure books likely to be checked out mostly by professional philosophers and their advanced students and for widely read classics like Mill's *On Liberty* and Descartes's *Meditations*. If these data are representative, a philosophy book not on the shelf is anywhere from 50% to 150% more likely to be missing if it is an ethics books than if it is not.

The effect does not appear to be attributable to law faculty and students, since law books and ethics books in law libraries seem to be missing at about the same rate as other ethics books. Nor does it seem that ethicists are especially more absent-minded than non-ethicists, since ethics books are no more likely to be simply overdue than ethics books. The effects show up whether the data are analyzed by book, by title, or by library. Furthermore, it does not appear that books endorsing conventional morality are less likely to be missing than books challenging conventional morality: Kant and Mill are missing as much as Nietzsche.

With respect to their treatment of library books, then, it does not appear that the people reading philosophical ethics behave any better than those reading other sorts of philosophy; indeed, the opposite seems to be the case. It surely does not follow that ethicists and their students *generally* behave the same as, or worse than, people

interested in other areas of philosophy. To draw this general conclusion would require more studies examining a diverse range of moral behavior. However, in one domain in which ethicists *could have* displayed superior conscientiousness, honesty, and concern for others' property, they failed to do so.

There are potential confounds this study cannot control. Readers might more dearly love ethics books than other philosophy books. Readers of ethics books might be poorer than readers of other philosophy books and so more tempted to theft; or they might be wealthier and so more willing to risk fines. Ethics books may take longer to read and so be more likely to leave campus; or they may be more pleasant to read and so more exposed to the hazards of the cafe, the beach, and the bedstand. They may have been more popular ten years ago than they are now. They may be more likely reported missing if a patron can't find them on the shelf. A patron's friends and spouses may be more likely to borrow them. Ethicists and their students might be busier than non-ethicists and their students. However, I see no a priori or empirical reason to accept any of these hypotheses. While it is surely the case that ethics books are assigned for different sorts of undergraduate courses than non-ethics books, the relatively obscure and technical books examined in Study 1 must be rarely if ever assigned in courses—and when they are assigned it should only be to advanced students in the subarea. Furthermore, the data run in the opposite direction of the effect that would be predicted on a model according to which philosophical moral reflection improves overall moral behavior, implying that such confounding factors must be large if ethicists are indeed generally more conscientious with their library books than non-ethicists.

Since these data pertain only to a small bit of moral behavior, they do not directly conflict with models of moral cognition that permit explicit moral cognition of the sort characteristic of professional ethicists to positively affect moral behavior under particular conditions or in particular domains. It would be a dark day for moral philosophy if it turned out that philosophical moral cognition is generally harmful. Would we then discourage the study and teaching of moral philosophy, for the good of society? I believe the following model, consistent with the data above, has some a priori appeal: explicit moral cognition is bivalent. Although in certain conditions it promotes moral behavior, in other conditions it undermines morality—for example, when it either supports or becomes rationalization, that is, the deployment of explicit reasoning to justify a pre-determined and normally self-serving conclusion. Rationalization may be especially likely when conventional norms and ordinary behavior are both morally good and contrary to self-interest—as in the case of the return of library books.

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