Personal Moral Philosophies and Moral Choice

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The moral choices and post-transgression reactions of individuals who adopted varying personal moral philosophies were examined in an experimental setting that permitted the manipulation of the salience of moral norms and the nature of the consequences of one's actions. As predicted, the two situational variables had a strong impact on moral action; only 50.0% of the subjects chose to violate a moral norm when that norm was salient and they would personally benefit by their actions; this percentage increased to 76.2% in the other conditions. Personal ethical philosophies also influenced moral choices and post-transgression reactions, for more of the idealistic subjects chose to act immorally relative to the low idealists (91.66% vs 70.83%), and subjects who were low in both idealism and relativism were less likely to transgress a moral norm if they personally would benefit. The results lend support to the proposed interpersonal model of morality, particularly as applied to post-transgression reactions. © 1990 Academic Press, Inc.

Contemporary analyses of moral phenomena have increasingly emphasized the impact of interpersonal processes on individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions in morally toned situations (Hogan & Emler, 1978; Hogan, Johnson, & Emler, 1978; Waterman, 1988). Haan (1978; 1986;

Haan, Aerts, & Cooper, 1985), for example, argues that individuals' moral behavior varies because interpersonal demands vary across situations. Haan feels that moral action is "informed and influenced by variations in contexts" and by individuals' "own strategies of problem solving" when they confront a moral dilemma (Haan, 1986, p. 1282). Similarly, Kurtines, by asking individuals to predict how they would behave in various social roles, found that individuals' use of principled moral reasoning varied across these role-settings (1984, 1986). His findings prompted him to conclude that "the most critical conceptual limitation of individualistic orientations is their inability to provide a theoretically meaningful account of the effects of situation-related variables on decision making" (1986, p. 790).

The current research tested one such interpersonal model of morality. This model assumes that individuals' moral beliefs, attitudes, and values comprise an integrated conceptual system of personal ethics. This integrated system, or personal moral philosophy, provides guidelines for moral judgments, solutions to ethical dilemmas, and prescriptions for actions in morally toned situations. In describing individual differences in personal moral philosophies, Forsyth (1980, 1985) focuses on two dimensions: relativism and idealism. First, individuals differ in their acceptance of universal ethical absolutes. At one end of the continuum, highly relativistic individuals espouse a personal moral philosophy based on skepticism. In contrast, people who are low in relativism argue that "right" actions are those that are consistent with moral principles, norms, or laws. Second, a fundamental concern for the welfare of others lies at the heart of some individuals' moral codes, but others do not emphasize such ideals; the former assume that we should avoid harming others, while the latter assume harm will sometimes be necessary to produce good.

These two dimensions, relativism and idealism, were initially identified in an exploratory study of individual differences in judgments of psychological research (Schlenker & Forsyth, 1977). They parallel, however, distinctions made by other theorists and researchers (Boyce & Jensen, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Haan, 1978; Hogan, 1973; Kohlberg, 1983; Piaget, 1932). Hogan (1973), for example, distinguishes between an "ethics of personal conscience" which is inner-focused, and an "ethics of responsibility," which concentrates on societal regulatory standards that define duties. Gilligan (1982, p. 65) in her analyses of sex differences in moral thought, notes that females' "hope that in morality lies a way of solving conflicts so that no one will be hurt" (concern for positive consequences), while males' moralities tend to stress the rational application of principles (Forsyth, Nye, & Kelley, 1988). Kohlberg (1963, 1983) concentrates on differences in principled thought, but he also notes that most moral

dilemmas occur when "acts of obedience to legal-social rules or to com-
mands of authority conflict with the human needs of welfare of other
individuals" (1963, p. 12). Indeed, Kohlberg and his colleagues, recog-
nizing the importance of variations in relativism, recently revised the
scoring system for the Moral Judgment Interview (Candee & Kohlberg,
1987). The new system not only classifies individuals as to stage of
development, but also degree of relativism within a particular stage.

Previous investigations of predictions derived from the two-dimen-
sional model of personal moral philosophies indicate that individuals who
differ in relativism and idealism divaricate when making moral judgments
(Forsyth, 1985), evaluating contemporary moral issues (Forsyth, 1980),
attributing responsibility after wrongdoing (Forsyth, 1981), and judging
the ethics of psychological research (Forsyth & Pope, 1984; Schlenker
& Forsyth, 1977). Researchers have also reported theoretically predicted
correlations between idealism, relativism, and other individual differ-
ences variables, including machiavellianism (Leary, Knight, & Barnes,
1986), Hogan's ethics of responsibility (Forsyth, 1980), and Gilligan's
(1982) "ethic of caring" (Forsyth et al., 1988).

The link between moral philosophy and moral choice, however, is less
certain. In one laboratory study subjects were tempted to cheat on a
difficult task when the experimenter left them alone with the answer
key. Thirty-six percent of the subjects cheated, but idealism and rela-
tivism were not systematically linked to this behavior. A second attempt
to test resistance to moral temptation that used a confederate who pres-
sured the subject into cheating obtained an 83% compliance rate, but
again the two dimensions failed to predict who would succumb to the
temptation (Forsyth & Berger, 1982).

In explaining these results, an interpersonal model of morality suggests
that personal moral philosophies influence action only when these values
are readily available to serve as cognitive and behavioral guides (Endler,
1982; Mischel & Peake, 1982; Snyder, 1982). At the personal level, moral
values vary in clarity, prominence, and degree of internalization. At the
situational level, certain environmental factors, such as the salience of
moral norms or the severity of the consequences produced by actions,
similarly work to increase or decrease the availability of personal moral
values. As Schwartz explains, "if a person construes a decision he faces
to be a moral choice, relevant moral norms he holds are likely to be
activated and to affect his behavior. When he fails to perceive that a
moral decision is at stake, however, particular moral norms are unlikely
to be activated" (1968, p. 355).

These hypotheses were tested in a situation similar to that used in
studies of conformity and obedience to authority (Milgram, 1974). After
assessing personal moral philosophies in an unrelated context, subjects

who could be classified as either high or low in idealism and high or low in relativism were asked to tell a confederate who performed well on an intelligence test that he performed poorly. In making this request, the experimenter emphasized that the information was simply a form of feedback (nonsalient moral norm) or that the information was a lie (salient moral norm). In addition, one half of the subjects were led to expect they would benefit if they lied (they would receive a bonus of three dollars) or the test-taker would benefit from the lie (his grades would improve).

We predicted interactions involving the two personality factors and the two situational variables. At minimum, we expected that individuals who adopt personal moral philosophies that emphasize the importance of moral rules should be least likely to engage in immoral behavior when moral rules are made salient in the situation. In contrast, since idealism stresses the need to achieve positive, humanitarian consequences, we assumed that individuals who accept these ideals would be more likely to engage in immoral behavior if such behaviors are the means to help others.

We also predicted that individuals who adopt varying personal moral philosophies would react differently to their own transgressions. Klass (1978), after reviewing a number of previous studies of individuals' feelings of guilt, shame, and self-esteem after breaking moral norms, concludes that "the same overt action seems to make some people feel better and others feel worse, and for still others, has no effects" (p. 766). The two-dimensional model of personal moral philosophies accounts for these divergences by suggesting that individuals who emphasize obedience to moral norms (low relativists) but nonetheless find themselves acting contrary to a salient moral norm should display much more negative post-transgression reactions than other subjects. We also predicted that idealistic individuals who achieve positive consequences for others should display more positive affective reactions following their transgression.

METHOD

Subjects

The 63 women and 49 men who participated were selected from a larger group of approximately 650 introductory psychology students. The sample included 26 blacks, 85 whites, and 1 Asian student. They ranged in age from 18 to 38, with an average age of 21. Experimental sessions were conducted by one of seven experimenters, who ran one subject in each cell of the full factorial design. Two experimenters were males.

Procedure

Selection of subjects. Subjects were selected on the basis of their scores on the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ). This questionnaire, as well as several others, was admin-

istered during a regularly scheduled class period. The EPQ consists of two 10-item scales that measure idealism and relativism. Items such as "A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree" and "If an action could harm an innocent other then it should not be done" comprise the idealism scale, while the relativism scale includes such items as "Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to 'rightness' " and "What is ethical varies from one situation to another." Evidence indicates that both scales are internally consistent, stable over time, orthogonal to one another, and only slightly correlated with social desirability (Forsyth, 1980; Forsyth et al., 1988).

For all items, subjects indicate degree of agreement or disagreement using a 9-point scale ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree." Thus, scores on both scales can range from 10 to 90. Subjects who scored above or below the medians for both scales (57 and 59 for idealism and relativism, respectively) were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the study. Although some individuals had already completed the number of studies required for class, most of those contacted agreed to participate.

During the initial telephone conversation experimenters told subjects that they had been randomly selected for a study titled "Understanding IQ." All subjects were told the study involved watching another person take part of an actual IQ test:

> Two people will be participating during each session: one person—like yourself— will be the observer, but the other person will be taking the test. The other subject will be arriving about 25 minutes before you to take the written portion of the IQ test, so it is important that you get to the room on time.

Those who agreed to participate were given an appointment, and reminded to be on time.

Instructions to subjects. When subjects arrived for their session, they were seated in a small research room equipped with a color video monitor. The monitor displayed a 21-year-old male working on a written task. The sound was turned off.

Subjects were given written and verbal instructions that stated researchers often ask laypersons to observe the administration of a psychological test, and then give their impressions of the test and the individual who took the test. These instructions went on to suggest that this approach was being used in the current study to gather validating information about a frequently used test of intelligence:

> We are asking you to help us by serving as such an observer. The individual on the closed-circuit television monitor is finishing the motor-skills and written portion of an IQ test in another room, and after being given a short break will be given the oral part of the test. We want you to watch as the individual takes this part of the test, and then give us your impressions by filling out a short questionnaire form.

If subjects had any questions, they were answered by paraphrasing the written set of instructions. Subjects also signed an informed consent form, and were given a credit slip stating they had participated.

Stimulus tape. After giving subjects their instructions, the experimenter increased the volume on the monitor and stated "You can begin your observations as soon as they are ready in the next room." Bogus labels on the monitor and the coaxial cables feeding into the monitor indicated that input was coming from a closed circuit camera rather than a videotape player. In actuality, however, subjects watched a carefully rehearsed recording of an intelligence testing session. During the first few minutes of the tape the test-taker seemed to work on paper-and-pencil measures. Then the tester, a 24-year-old white female,

entered the room, collected the materials, and explained the interview portion of the test would be starting shortly. While conversing informally with the tester, the test-taker remarked that he felt nervous about the test: "I never really knew what my IQ was, so this is pretty important to me. I just don't know what I'll do if my score is low." The tester then explained that "many people score very well, in the 120s and that others do very poorly, as low as 80 or 90," but that he should just relax and do the best he can. This information was included to create the impression that the subject did not know his IQ score.

The orally administered test included items examining vocabulary, memory, and analytic reasoning. The test-taker answered most of the questions correctly, and only rarely said he did not know an answer. Also, at two points during the tape the experimenter—who remained in the room with the observing subject—remarked that an answer was a good one. For example, after the memory test the experimenter remarked "14 out of 20, that's very good". The test-taker's answers and the experimenter's remarks were included to make certain the subjects would be left with the impression that the test-taker had, in actuality, a better-than-average IQ.

Perceptions of the test-taker. At the conclusion of the oral portion of the test, the experimenter turned off the monitor. To remain faithful to the cover story and to verify that subjects felt the test-taker was relatively intelligent, subjects were given a short questionnaire that measured their perceptions of the test-taker. This questionnaire asked subjects to rate the test-taker's performance on a 7-point scale from "extremely poor" to "extremely well," and to give a yes-no answer to the question "Do you think the person you observed is intelligent enough to finish college?"

Manipulations of situational variables. Once they finished their rating, the experimenter asked subjects if they would be willing to give the test-taker feedback about his performance:

> The last thing I want you to do is to meet briefly with the other subject. You see, we aren't just studying perceptions, but also how people react to finding out what their IQ scores are. In this case, we want the information to come from a peer, another student like yourself. So I would like to take you to the test room, where you can talk to the other subject about his test score.
>
> However, one thing that is important is what you tell the person. We are looking at how people react to finding out their IQ is low, so you need to tell the other subject that his IQ score is about 80. Although the way you phrase it is up to you, he needs to be told "you missed more questions than most college students would, and I estimate your IQ is only about 80." You should add that you are surprised that anyone with such a low IQ could get into college, and that you doubt he will be able to graduate.

The experimenter then gave the subject an instruction sheet that described how to give this information to the test-taker.

The experimenter went on to explain that a research group would be studying the person over the next few weeks to see what impact IQ information like this has on his attitudes towards school, grades, and test scores. By varying the phrasing of this explanation, both the salience of moral norms (salient versus nonsalient) and the consequences of the action (positive consequences for self versus other) were manipulated. First, the action was described as "a lie" in the *salient moral norm condition* and as "feedback" in the *nonsalient moral norm condition*. Second, subjects who were assigned to the *positive consequences for self condition* were told:

Before you agree to tell this lie [give this feedback] to the subject, I want to explain that this research is supported by an academic grant, so we can pay you a small sum of money. If you tell the lie [give the feedback], I will give you $3.00.

Subjects assigned to the *positive consequences for other condition* were told:

Before you agree to tell this lie [give this feedback] to the subject, I want to explain that this research is supported by an academic grant. Our previous research has shown that when students are told they have low IQs, their grades usually go up. It seems to be a form of "reverse psychology" that motivates people to show that the IQ information was wrong. So, if you tell the lie [give the feedback], the subject's grades will probably get better.

Following the manipulation, all subjects were told "Whether or not you tell the lie [give the feedback] is up to you, but, as I said, for the project we need the information to come from a peer like yourself rather than a psychologist. So, what is your choice?" If subjects hesitated or refused, the experimenter used a series of prods:

Prod One: Are you sure? It will only take a minute.
Prod Two: I really need a peer to give the feedback, and you are the only student here.
Prod Three: It is essential that he gets this feedback. Are you sure you can't give it?

Dependent Variable Measures

Moral choice. Subjects who agreed to give the false information immediately or in response to the prods were designated liars, and those who refused even after the prods were designated nonliars.

Post-transgression reactions. After subjects either agreed or refused, subjects were asked to rate themselves on 17 5-point bipolar adjectives. These adjectives, which were drawn from Forsyth and Berger (1982), tapped three general reactions following moral transgression: overall self-rating (e.g., good-bad, positive-negative, friendly-unfriendly), morality (e.g., honest-dishonest, moral-immoral), and tension (e.g., relaxed-tense, calm-nervous). By averaging these self-ratings together, three scales with high levels of internal consistency (all αs > .91) were created.

Attributions. Explanations for the choice made were measured by including the following statement on the bottom of their self-rating questionnaire: "On the back of this sheet, please explain—in two or three sentences—why you agreed to, or refused to, give the information to the person you observed."

Checks of the manipulations. When subjects finished writing their statements, they were then given a short questionnaire assessing their perceptions of the experimental setting.

Debriefing

All subjects were debriefed immediately after participation using techniques developed in earlier studies of reactions in morally tempting settings (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth, Pope, & McMillan, 1985). This approach uses a funnel debriefing procedure that begins by asking subjects if they have any questions or require any extra information. If the subjects make no response they are told that previous subjects had asked about the need for the questionnaires (or some other aspect of the experimental setting). Through similar prompts—which generally stimulate subjects to divulge any suspicions they may be feeling—subjects are guided into an analysis of the necessity for withholding information

during some experiments. Several examples are presented, such as bystander intervention studies, as the experimenter elicits agreement that misinformation is sometimes necessary. Next, the specific deceptions in the current study are noted, and the necessity for these procedures is reiterated. At this point the experimenter reassures subjects that their behaviors said nothing about their "moral character." Subjects are told about previous studies of the large impact of situational factors on behavior, and their own reluctance to proceed with the experiment is noted. Lastly, when subjects agree to lie, their actions are likened to a mild social infraction, as when an individual watching a large group of people cross the street against the flashing "Don't Walk" sign decides to cross as well.

After subjects are sworn to secrecy the experimenter then asks them if anyone had spoken to them about the experiment. The experimenter explains why secrecy is so important, and why violations of this secrecy can damage the outcome of the project. Lastly, after repeated attempts to prompt the subjects to admit any prior knowledge of the research, they are asked to leave their name and address if they wish to receive a copy of the findings.

From an ethical perspective, these procedures have proven to be highly effective. They successfully eliminate subjects' concerns over the procedures, and restore them to their "preexperimental state." All subjects expressed retrospective approval of the research, and a number of participants requested copies of the conclusions. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, these methods also insure the integrity of the experimental paradigm. The funnel approach gains subjects' confidence and cooperation, to the extent that they do not discuss the research with others.

RESULTS

No sex differences were obtained in preliminary analyses. Therefore and unless otherwise noted, the analyses reported below are based on a 2 (idealism: high vs low) × 2 (relativism: high vs low) × 2 (salience of moral norms: lie vs feedback) × 2 (consequences: self vs other) factorial design. Post hoc tests, when appropriate, were carried out using Duncan's multiple range test.

Manipulation Checks

Perceptions of performance. To verify that subjects thought the test-taker was above average in intelligence (making the negative feedback a lie) they rated his performance on a 7-point scale from "extremely poorly" (1) to "extremely well" (7). Nine subjects (8.04%) felt that the test-taker's performance was "average," but the rest of the subjects felt he performed above average (43.75%), very well (38.39%), or extremely well (9.82%). These ratings did not vary across conditions.

The salience of moral norms. The last questionnaire completed by subjects included the item "Would it be a lie to tell the subject that he has low IQ?" The endpoints of this 9-point scale were labeled "lie" (1) and "not a lie" (9). ANOVA yielded a significant main effect for salience of moral norms, $F(1, 95) = 6.67$, $p < .02$. The mean rating in the lie condition was 2.2, and the rating in the feedback condition was 3.2, indicating greater salience in the lie condition.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF SUBJECTS (IN PARENTHESES) WHO AGREED TO PERFORM AN
IMMORAL BEHAVIOR BY CONDITION AND BY PERSONAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY

		Positive consequences for oneself		Positive consequences for other person	
Idealism	Relativism	Lie	Feedback	Lie	Feedback
High	High	57.1 (4)	85.7 (6)	85.7 (6)	57.1 (4)
High	Low	71.4 (5)	100.0 (7)	85.7 (6)	85.7 (6)
Low	High	28.6 (2)	71.4 (5)	71.4 (5)	71.4 (5)
Low	Low	42.9 (3)	42.9 (3)	71.4 (5)	85.7 (6)

The only other significant effect was a two-way interaction of relativism and consequences, $F(1, 95) = 5.24, p < .03$. When the action benefited the subject, the high and low relativists' responses did not differ; the mean ratings were 3.2 and 2.8, respectively. However, when the action benefited the test-taker, high relativists were more likely to label the feedback a lie; the respective means were 1.7 and 3.1. Although not predicted, this effect may reflect high relativists' willingness to admit that they will violate everyday moral norms if such a violation will lead to positive consequences for others.

Consequences of the action. The subjects also answered the item "Would telling the subject he has a low IQ have positive consequences for you or for the subject?" with endpoints labelled as (1) "positive consequences for me" and (9) "positive consequences for subject." The main effect for consequences was significant, $F(1, 95) = 25.90, p < .001$. The mean ratings in the self and other conditions were 4.9 and 6.3, respectively.

The three-way interaction of relativism, consequences, and norm salience (which qualified a two-way interaction of relativism and norm salience) was also significant, $F(1, 95) = 7.10, p < .01$. Inspection of the means suggests that high relativists thought the test-taker would be most benefited in the feedback/other condition. Low relativists, in contrast, thought the test-taker would be most benefited in the lie/other condition. This result probably reflects the low relativists' desire to explain away their willingness to lie by citing the value of the consequences.

Moral Choice

Overall, 79 of the 112 (70.5%) subjects agreed to lie, but a χ^2 test suggested that the frequency of lying was linked to both situational and personality factors, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 25.79, p < .05$. Looking first at the two personality variables, Table 1 indicates that individuals who

TABLE 2
SELF-RATINGS BY CONSEQUENCES AND PERSONAL MORAL PHILOSOPHIES

	High idealism		Low idealism	
Consequences	High relativism	Low relativism	High relativism	Low relativism
General self-evaluation				
Self	$3.35_{a,b}$	$3.27_{a,b}$	$3.77_{a,b}$	$3.27_{a,b}$
Other	3.91_a	3.23_b	$3.32_{a,b}$	$3.62_{a,b}$
Morality				
Self	$3.28_{a,b}$	3.05_b	$3.77_{a,b}$	$3.43_{a,b}$
Other	3.98_a	3.09_b	$3.36_{a,b}$	$3.72_{a,b}$
Tension				
Self	$2.97_{a,b}$	$3.04_{a,b}$	$3.07_{a,b}$	$3.08_{a,b}$
Other	2.32_b	3.30_a	$3.22_{a,b}$	$2.62_{a,b}$

Note. Higher scores indicate more positive self-evaluation, more positive moral evaluation, and more tension, respectively. For any single measure, means that share the same single letter subscript do not differ ($p < .05$).

differed in idealism displayed differences in willingness to lie, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 5.62$, $p < .05$. Collapsing across relativism, more of the high idealists (78.6%) than the low idealists (62.5%) lied, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 5.24$, $p = .05$. Turning to the situational factors, Table 1 also shows that fewest subjects agreed to lie in the lie/self condition. While an average of 77.4% of the subjects assigned to the other conditions agreed to lie, only 50.0% of the subjects agreed to lie when the moral norm was made salient and they were offered three dollars, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 7.57$, $p < .01$.

The predicted interaction effects, however, were relatively weak. Overall, the high idealists generally lied no matter what the salience of the moral norms or the nature of the consequences, the χ^2s$(1, N = 28)$ for the salience × consequences contingency table for these two groups of subjects were 2.33 and 2.80, respectively. In contrast, low idealists who were high relativists displayed a marginal tendency to refuse to lie in the self/lie condition, $\chi^2(1) = 3.50$, $p < .10$. And those subjects who were low in both idealism and relativism were most influenced by the nature of the situation; they were less likely to lie if they personally would benefit; $\chi^2(1, N = 28) = 8.35$, $p = .01$.

Post-Transgression Reactions

The self-ratings of subjects who agreed to tell the lie were examined in a series of post hoc analyses. ANOVAs revealed significant three-way interactions of consequences, idealism, and relativism on the general

evaluation scale, the morality scale, and the tension scale: $Fs(1, 62) =$ 5.12, 4.02, and 5.08, respectively; $ps < .05$. The means shown in Table 2 follow a similar pattern for all three dependent variables. When the action benefited the subjects themselves, no differences due to personal moral values were obtained. When the action benefited the test-taker, however, subjects who were both highly idealistic and relativistic rated themselves very positively, especially in comparison to the high idealists who were low in relativism.

Attributional Reactions

The attributions made by subjects who agreed to tell the lie were content analyzed. First, any statements that referred to more than one cause for their behavior were broken down into several distinct segments that could be coded separately. Next, two trained raters, working independently, classified the 131 attributions into one of the six general categories shown in Table 3. Four of these six categories pertained to the cause of their choice, and included personal curiosity, belief that the lie would help the test-taker (or, at minimum, would not harm him), desire to assist the experimenter, and acknowledgment of a duty to obey the requirements of the subject role. The remaining two categories were used to identify expressions of guilt or trepidation or uncodeable statements. The coders agreed on 92.5% of these classifications, and disagreements were resolved through discussion.

The three most frequently mentioned attributions for lying were a desire to help the test-taker (23.7%), a desire to help the experimenter (22.9%), and personal curiosity (16.0%). Fewer than 10% of the subjects' statements admitted any guilt or wrongdoing, but this low rate may have occurred because subjects were asked to discuss causes rather than feelings. Last, none of the subjects stated that they were coerced by the situation or that they were not responsible for their actions.

The reasons subjects gave varied depending on their degree of idealism and the type of consequences (self vs other) produced by their actions; $\chi^2(5, N = 131) = 28.29, p < .01$. Table 4 indicates that (a) personal curiosity was cited more frequently by subjects in the self condition rather than the other condition; $\chi^2(1, N = 21) = 6.66, p < .01$; (b) 25 of the 31 (80.6%) help-the-test-taker explanations were mentioned by subjects in the other condition; $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 15.63, p < .001$; (c) 43.3% of all explanations that mentioned helping the researcher were used by high idealists in the self condition, but this explanation was used by very few of the low idealists in the consequences-for-other condition; $\chi^2(1, N = 30) = 4.18, p < .05$; (d) no differences were noted in the use of duty explanations or in admissions of guilt/trepidations.

Degree of relativism and the salience manipulation had little systematic

TABLE 3
CODING CATEGORIES AND EXAMPLES OF SUBJECTS' EXPLANATIONS OF THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS

Coding category	Examples
Personal curiosity	I agreed to tell the student I observed because I would be interested in how he would react to me after I give him the feedback. I would also like to watch his expression because he was nervous before he took the test.
	I agreed to lie to the subject mainly to see the reaction from him.
Lie would help test-taker (or not be harmful)	I agreed to do this section of the experiment because I was told that what I'm doing won't hurt the young man's grades.
	I agreed to give the information about the person I observed because I believe that it will help the person to strive even harder to do better work. If he thinks that he's not doing very well probably he will start to do even better than he is probably doing now.
Lie would help the researcher	I agreed to give the information because I feel that by my participation I am contributing to help others better understand the way people act and/or react.
	I just wanted to help the Psych. Dept. in their research, to find out if what they say about reverse psychology is true.
Sense of duty	I feel that I should continue with the experiment because the experiment requires that a student tells the other student the results.
	People are needed for these studies to make the studies. When I agreed to the experiment, I felt I would do what I was asked.
Admission of guilt or trepidation	I will agree [but] I believe this study may discourage the student.
	I agreed to do this experiment because I feel that it would be beneficial to the experiment itself. I do feel very bad about deceiving the other participant but I know it is the only way that results will be obtained.
Other	Well, it was not for the money. . . .
	I understand what the researchers are doing and I have had some experience in this before. I find it an interesting experiment and would like to know the outcome.

impact on the use of these different types of explanations. High relativists used more "help the experimenter" and "help the test-taker" explanations in the lie condition than in the feedback condition, $\chi^2(1, N = 61) = 4.73$, $p < .05$, but no other effects were noted.

DISCUSSION

An interpersonal model of moral choice and reactions following transgression was supported, but only in part. Situational factors clearly

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF SUBJECTS (IN PARENTHESES) WHO GAVE EACH
TYPE OF EXPLANATION

Type of explanation	Positive consequences for oneself		High idealism	Low idealism
	High idealism	Low idealism		
Personal curiosity	8.4(11)	3.8(5)	1.5(2)	2.3(3)
Help other person	1.5(2)	3.1(4)	8.4(11)	10.7(14)
Help experimenter	9.9(13)	4.6(6)	6.1(8)	2.3(3)
Sense of duty	5.3(7)	1.5(2)	3.8(5)	2.3(3)
Admission of guilt	3.8(5)	0.8(1)	0.8(1)	3.1(4)
Other	6.9(9)	0.8(1)	3.8(5)	4.6(6)

moderated the impact of personal moralities on reactions after having
transgressed, but situational factors and personality factors influenced
the decision to tell a lie independently. At the situational level, only
50.0% of the subjects agreed to lie when they were offered $3 and were
told that they would be lying rather than giving feedback; this percentage
increased to 76.2% in the other three conditions. At the personality level,
the relationship between idealism and action was particularly strong.
Surprising, even though high idealists espouse a philosophy that con-
demns harming others, they were more likely to agree to lie than the
low idealists. Although high idealists strongly endorse such beliefs as
"One should never psychologically or physically harm another person"
and "It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others," nearly
92% agreed to tell a total stranger that his I.Q. was so low that he needed
to drop out of college.

Why did high idealists agree to lie? Although additional research is
needed to explain this unexpected result, the current study attests to a
"hypocrisy effect" that may be obscuring the link between moral values
and moral choice: People who say they are the most morally upright
may be most likely to fall prey to temptation. The free-response data,
however, suggest that subjects may have been trying to help the needy
experimenter. The greater compliance rates among high idealists, viewed
from this perspective, are consistent with their greater concern for others'
well-being. Their choice to help the experimenter at the risk of the
confederate's well-being, however, seems somewhat short-sighted.

Rather than behaving hypocritically, however, the impact of high ide-
alists' moral values on their moral actions may have been overwhelmed
by the powerful social situation in which they found themselves. A
number of theorists now believe that individuals with different person-

alities seek out, create, or evoke different interpersonal situations (Diener, Larsen, & Emmons, 1984; Emmons & Diener, 1986; Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Applied to moral choices, individuals who are idealistic may generally avoid situations that will force them to choose between failing to meet a commitment and harming another person. When forced into this ordinarily avoided situation, the high idealists responded by following the orders of the experimenter.

The current study raises other interesting points as well. First, in previous research individuals who were both idealistic and nonrelativist derogated themselves following a transgression, and this result was replicated in the current study. However, as an interpersonal model suggests, this effect held only when the action benefited the test-taker. Apparently the highly idealistic, low relativistic subjects' insistence that moral principles be obeyed undermined any positive feelings that should have resulted from helping another person.

Second, although a number of researchers have reported differences between men and women in the moral realm, no differences were obtained in the current work (Brabeck, 1983; Bussey & Maughan, 1982; Ford & Lowery, 1986; Pratt & Royer, 1982). Possibly, when moral choices in a gender-neutral setting are examined (as in the current study), sex differences become negligible.

Third, the reluctance of subjects to blame the experimenter for their choice is intriguing, and needs further clarification. Previous studies, such as Milgram's (1974), found that individuals who have been subtly coerced into obedience to an authority attribute some or all of the blame to their superior. Such attributions serve as excuses that minimize their openness to subsequent penalty (Snyder, Higgins, & Stucky, 1983). Subjects' explanations, which can be viewed as self-presentational tactics (Johnson & Hogan, 1981), focused instead on factors that justified their choice, such as the positive consequences that would result from lying to the test-taker. Speculating, it is possible that individuals in a moral dilemma prefer to justify their actions rather than excuse them (Darley & Zanna, 1982).

In closing, an important difference between previous work on personal moral philosophies and the current study should be noted. In the past, individuals were typically classified into one of four moral "types" based on their responses to the Ethics Position Questionnaire (e.g., Forsyth, 1980). While this classification approach adds clarity to the theoretical meaning of the two dimensions and highlights the hypothesized interactive nature of the dimensions, the typological approach assumes discontinuity (where none may exist) and may reify complex processes through labeling. The two-dimensional model, however, is not fundamentally a typology approach. At core, the theory only argues that

individual differences in morality are, in part, based on relativism and idealism. Therefore, rather than classifying as to moral "type," the current research took a dimensional approach to describing personal moral philosophies. The types discussed in earlier work are a logical extension of the fundamental hypothesis of the model, but they are not essential to the theory's validity.

Overall, then, these results confirm the value of an interpersonal approach to moral thought, feeling, and behavior. While the two-dimensional model examined here takes neither a cognitive-developmental approach nor a social learning theory approach to morality, this social psychological model is consistent with prior theorizing in several areas. Despite the use of differing terminology, investigators have repeatedly contrasted moralities based on rules with moralities based on consequences. The many differences that separate these various conceptions of moral thought should not be underemphasized, but their convergence on these two themes is noteworthy.

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