

## A Taxonomy of Ethical Ideologies

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Four distinct ethical perspectives are discussed: (a) situationism, which advocates a contextual analysis of morally questionable actions; (b) absolutism, which uses inviolate, universal moral principles to formulate moral judgments; (c) subjectivism, which argues that moral judgments should depend primarily on one's own personal values; and (d) exceptionism, which admits that exceptions must sometimes be made to moral absolutes. The Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ), which assesses degree of idealism and rejection of universal moral rules in favor of relativism, was developed to measure the extent to which individuals adopt one of these four ethical ideologies. The two scales that make up the EPQ were found to have adequate internal consistency, were reliable over time, were not correlated with social desirability, and were not related to scores on the Defining Issues Test. The relativism scale did correlate with scores on Hogan's Survey of Ethical Attitudes. When the scales were used to classify individuals into one of the four different ethical ideologies, predictions concerning differences in each ideology's moral judgment processes were supported.

In 1898 Sharp, an early psychologist interested in moral judgment, complained that his research was hindered by the lack of agreement among his subjects concerning what was moral and what was not. Sharp noted that even when people with apparently similar characteristics were making judgments about the same person, they still managed to sometimes reach opposite conclusions concerning the other's moral worth. Although Sharp entertained the notion that the lack of consensus that typifies moral deliberations indicates that people, including moral philosophers, are simply incompetent or careless, he preferred an individual differences explanation. A person faced with making a decision about

another's morality, bases this decision on his or her own individual system of ethics, and disagreements concerning morality must necessarily surface when personal ethical systems are different.

Recent research has supported Sharp's contention that individual variations must be taken into consideration when examining moral judgments. Although several different and equally valid approaches have been offered to describe individual differences in moral thought (e.g., Hogan, 1970, 1973; Kelman & Lawrence, 1972; Kohlberg, 1968, 1976; Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974), Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) suggest that individual variations in approaches to moral judgment may be described most parsimoniously by taking into account two basic factors. The first is the extent to which the individual rejects universal moral rules in favor of relativism. Some individuals reject the possibility of formulating or relying on universal moral rules when drawing conclusions about moral questions, whereas others believe in and make use of moral absolutes when making judgments. The second major dimension underlying individual variations in

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Table 1  
*Taxonomy of Ethical Ideologies*

Idealism	Relativism	
	High	Low
High	Situationists Rejects moral rules; advocates individualistic analysis of each act in each situation; relativistic.	Absolutists Assumes that the best possible outcome can always be achieved by following universal moral rules.
Low	Subjectivists Appraisals based on personal values and perspective rather than universal moral principles; relativistic.	Exceptionists Moral absolutes guide judgments but pragmatically open to exceptions to these standards; utilitarian.

moral judgments focuses on idealism in one's moral attitudes. To again describe the extremes, some individuals idealistically assume that desirable consequences can, with the "right" action, always be obtained. Those with a less idealistic orientation, on the other hand, admit that undesirable consequences will often be mixed in with desired ones.

When these two dimensions are dichotomized and crossed, they yield the  $2 \times 2$  classification of ethical ideologies pictured in Table 1. The taxonomy indicates that individuals may adopt one of four different approaches to making ethical judgments (situationism, absolutism, subjectivism, and exceptionism) and that inclusion into one of these groups is determined by whether a person espouses idealistic or non-idealistic values and believes moral rules are universal or relative.

Although Table 1 contains a brief description of the characteristics of individuals within each category, more detailed information about the four types can be gained by comparing each one to a specific school of thought in the philosophy of ethics. Starting with the high relativism groups, the situationists and the subjectivists, we find individuals who endorse an ideology related to ethical skepticism. In moral philosophy, a skeptical point of view recognizes that there are many different ways to look at morality, and all the varieties of skepticism seek in one way or another to criticize those who attempt to present specific ethical principles. The typology suggests that relativists can be either high or low in idealism, a distinction that carries over to moral

philosophy as well. Ethical egoism, for example, is a skeptical ethical philosophy that takes a pragmatic approach to evaluating action. The ethical egoist argues that because no moral standards are valid except in reference to one's own behavior, moral evaluations must ultimately depend on personal perspectives. Fletcher's situation ethics (1966), on the other hand, provides an example of an idealistic skepticism. Fletcher argues that morality should focus on "a contextual appropriateness—not the 'good' or the 'right' but the 'fitting'" (1973, p. 186), with all actions based on *agapé*, or love of others. Like this skeptical moral philosophy, the situationist distrusts absolute moral principles and argues instead that each situation must be examined individually.

On the non-relativistic side of the typology are absolutists and exceptionists. Absolutists tend to agree with statements that are consistent with a general approach to moral philosophy known as deontology. This ethical philosophy rejects the use of an action's consequences as a basis for moral evaluation and appeals to natural law or rationality to determine ethical judgments. In a deontological ethical philosophy, acts are to be judged as moral or immoral through their comparison with some universal moral rule that is absolute. The deontological philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that a moral principle can allow no exceptions, regardless of the consequences. For example, suppose that a physician finds herself or himself tempted to lie to a terminally ill patient about the prob-

abilities of recovery. Although the lie may have innumerable positive consequences for relatives, the doctor, and the patient, the "lie is a lie, and is in itself intrinsically base whether it be told with good or bad intent" (Kant, 1962, p. 265). Although no ethical ideology adopted by an individual may possess all the characteristics of a purely deontological approach, the absolutist's emphasis on maintaining consistency with moral principles to obtain desired goals is similar to a deontological philosophy.

The statements endorsed by exceptionists, on the other hand, are more compatible with a teleological ethical philosophy. The teleological approach proposes that the morality of an action depends on the consequences produced by it. One is ethically bound to act in a way that produces "good" consequences, and the approach is best represented by the utilitarian concept of the greatest good for the greatest number. When applied to the example of a doctor deciding whether to lie to an ill patient, the utilitarian advises that the potential benefits of the lie must be pragmatically weighed against the potential costs of the lie. The typology suggests that, like a philosophical utilitarian, exceptionists believe that absolute moral principles are important, but that one must apply these rules pragmatically.<sup>1</sup>

Although the typology of ethical ideologies may be a valid way to represent individual variations in ethical ideology, its adequacy cannot be examined until it can be operationalized. The remainder of this article describes the steps that were taken to develop a brief survey comprised of two scales (idealism and relativism) that when dichotomized and crossed identify the ethical stance of respondents. Unlike the original Schlenker-Forsyth (1977) measures, which were developed using factor analysis and were only applicable to judgments of psychological research, a measure was developed using traditional scaling methods that could be applied to all types of moral situations. After describing this scale development process and the psychometric properties of the resultant measure, the adequacy of the scales will be investigated by examining their relationship to existing indices of moral thought and their ability to predict differences in individuals' attitudes

toward contemporary moral issues, moral judgment of others, and behaviors in morally tempting situations.

### Scale Development

The goal of the current research was the development and partial validation of a measurement instrument that would facilitate the classification of individuals according to ethical ideology. The final product of the process was to be the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ), which would possess the following characteristics: (a) two scales, one to measure idealism and a second scale concerning the rejection of universal moral principles in favor of relativism; (b) high interitem consistency on each scale but broad representativeness of the desired constructs; (c) stability across time; and (d) orthogonality between the two scales.

As part of the initial scaling procedure, 65 students recruited from introductory psychology classes were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with 55 items subjectively judged to be indicants of the two dimensions of ethical ideology. These items included some that had been used by Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) but that were now reworded so that they were not specific to psychological experimentation and other items extracted from the works of prominent philosophers of ethics. Each respondent's mean idealism and relativism scores were computed using these items, and the item-to-scale-mean correlations were calculated. Although high internal consistency was desired, it was also important for the items retained in the final EPQ to tap all the relevant domains of content. Therefore, factor analysis was used in con-

<sup>1</sup> Although the comparison of each ethical ideology with a philosophical counterpart does much to clarify the nature of each position, the distinction between a philosophical analysis of a moral issue and a psychological analysis of an individual's ethical ideology should not be overlooked. Therefore, although it is heuristic to note these parallels, the comparison does not suggest that the psychological ideologies do not differ in some respects from the corresponding moral philosophies. Thus in contrast to Schlenker and Forsyth (1977), non-philosophical labels are used to represent each of the ideologies.

Table 2  
*The Ethics Position Questionnaire*

*Instructions.* You will find a series of general statements listed below. Each represents a commonly held opinion and there are no right or wrong answers. You will probably disagree with some items and agree with others. We are interested in the extent to which you agree or disagree with such matters of opinion.

Please read each statement carefully. Then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by placing in front of the statement the number corresponding to your feelings, where:

- |                         |                                |                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 = Completely disagree | 4 = Slightly disagree          | 7 = Moderately agree |
| 2 = Largely disagree    | 5 = Neither agree nor disagree | 8 = Largely agree    |
| 3 = Moderately disagree | 6 = Slightly agree             | 9 = Completely agree |

1. A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.
2. Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be.
3. The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.
4. One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.
5. One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.
6. If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done.
7. Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences of the act against the negative consequences of the act is immoral.
8. The dignity and welfare of people should be the most important concern in any society.
9. It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.
10. Moral actions are those which closely match ideals of the most "perfect" action.
11. There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be a part of any code of ethics.
12. What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.
13. Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic; what one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person.
14. Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to "rightness."
15. Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.
16. Moral standards are simply *personal* rules which indicate how a person should behave, and are not to be applied in making judgments of others.
17. Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.
18. Rigidly codifying an ethical position that prevents certain types of actions could stand in the way of better human relations and adjustment.
19. No rule concerning lying can be formulated; whether a lie is permissible or not permissible totally depends upon the situation.
20. Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action.

*Note.* The idealism score is obtained by taking the mean of Items 1 through 10. The relativism score is obtained by taking the mean of Items 11 through 20.

junction with item analysis to insure that the scales did not yield a restricted range of applicability. Principal-components factoring and orthogonal varimax rotation yielded 16 factors that accounted for 77.0% of the total variance and had eigenvalues  $\geq 1.0$ . Using this factor analysis, items were selected for scaling that sampled from as many of the different factors as possible to insure heterogeneity in content.

Based on both the item and factor analysis, 14 questions were selected for the idealism scale and 13 were selected for the relativism scale. An item was retained provided that (a) the correlation between it and the relevant

mean was high ( $r > .50$ ), (b) the correlation between it and the second scale mean was low ( $r < .10$ ), and (c) the item was representative of one of the domains of content suggested by the factor analysis. These two preliminary scales were then completed by 56 other students, along with Edwards' Social Desirability Scale (SDS; 1957). First, additional item analysis deleted any items that did not correlate significantly ( $p < .01$ ) with the overall mean for each scale. Next, the interscale correlations were computed to assess orthogonality of the measures. The correlation between relativism and idealism was .05, *ns*. Last, the correlation between each scale

Table 3  
*Summary of the Scale Characteristics of the Ethics Position Questionnaire*

Scale	Scale mean	Scale SD	Interscale correlations		Cronbach's alpha	Test-retest	Mean of item-total <i>rs</i>	Mean of item test-retest <i>rs</i>
			Idealism	Relativism				
Idealism	6.35	1.17	1.0	-.07	.80	.67	.49	.47
Relativism	6.18	1.13	-.07	1.0	.73	.66	.39	.47
<i>N</i>	241	—	241	241	241	76	241	76

and social desirability was calculated to determine if alternative measurement methods, such as forced-choice formats or item reversals, would be needed to control for respondent biases. These correlations for relativism and idealism were .22 and .18 (*ns*,  $n = 56$ ), respectively, and were not viewed as great enough in magnitude to warrant a departure from the Likert-type response format.

"Fine tuning" of the scales was attempted in the final stage of the scaling process. The items were administered to 462 students recruited from introductory psychology classes, who responded by indicating degree of agreement on a 9-point scale ranging from *completely disagree* to *completely agree*. Item analyses were performed to delete any items that significantly reduced the internal consistency of the scales or were frequently judged as ambiguous by respondents. This process was carried out twice, each time using different respondents, and when completed yielded the sixth and final version of the Ethics Position Questionnaire.

#### Scale Characteristics

The EPQ, which is presented in Table 2, is comprised of a series of 20 attitude statements, 10 concerning idealism and 10 concerning relativism. Respondents are asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each item, and the mean score of their responses to the idealism items and the mean score of their responses to the relativism items are taken to be their two EPQ scores. These scores can then be used to classify individuals as to ethical ideology. Referring back to Table 1, respondents who have high scores on both scales are situationists, and those who are high on the idealism scale but

low on relativism would be classified as absolutists. Subjects low on idealism but relativistic would be classified as subjectivists, and respondents low on both scales would be exceptionists.

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the EPQ's two scales. These indices are based on the responses of a new group of 241 psychology students who completed the instrument in their classrooms; test-retest reliabilities are based on a subsample of the original group (16 males and 58 females) that was retested two weeks later. As Table 3 shows, the scales nearly share the same mean and standard deviation, and the larger sample confirms what was indicated previously with the smaller  $n$ : The two scales are virtually orthogonal. The indices of internal consistency (which are presented in the fifth column of the table), while not overwhelming, are satisfactory, as are the test-retest reliabilities. Last, the mean of the item-to-total correlations and the mean of the individual items' test-retest reliabilities are also acceptable.<sup>2</sup>

#### Concurrent and Discriminant Validity

*Original measures of ethical ideology.*  
 Sixty-four male and 64 female introductory

<sup>2</sup> The interitem correlations, item-to-total correlations (corrected for the item itself), item means, item standard deviations, and item test-retest reliabilities for all items are available from the author. These statistics indicate that each item correlated fairly well with its respective scale mean and that individual item test-retest reliabilities were quite high. Examination of the matrix of interitem correlations and a principal-axes factor analysis of the EPQ indicated that the idealism scale was more homogeneous than the relativism scale.

Table 4  
*Correlates of the EPQ Scales*

Scale	Original idealism measure	Original relativism measure	DIT P-score	SEA	Age
Idealism	.69*	-.26*	-.01	.14	-.20*
Relativism	.06	.34*	.01	-.31*	-.25*
N	128	128	128	128	221

Note. EPQ = Ethics Position Questionnaire; DIT = Defining Issues Test; SEA = Survey of Ethical Attitudes.

\*  $p < .05$ .

psychology students completed the EPQ and several other measures of moral thought. These 128 subjects were selected from the larger sample of psychology students mentioned above. Using these responses to the EPQ, the 64 highest and lowest scorers on the idealism and relativism scales were identified, contacted, and asked to complete additional measures. Table 4 contains the correlations between a number of other measures related to ethical judgment processes and the EPQ. The first two columns present the correlations between the two EPQ scales and the original measures reported by Schlenker and Forsyth (1977). Both of the scales correlated significantly ( $p < .05$ ) with the corresponding "parent" scales, attesting to the successfulness of the attempt to generalize the original measures.

*Moral maturity.* No significant relationship between the EPQ scales and Kohlberg's (1968, 1976) stages of moral "maturity" was anticipated. Although both approaches are concerned with individuals' ethical perspectives, Kohlberg's approach distinguishes between respondents by examining the extent to which they rely on self-generated ethical values that emphasize certain crucially important issues, such as human rights and the value of life. The EPQ, on the other hand, takes advantage of completely different criteria—idealism in evaluating consequences and moral relativism—when describing variations in moral thought. Unlike the stage approach, the EPQ taxonomy does not determine whether or not the values held by the individual are self-generated. Conversely and unlike the EPQ approach, Kohlberg's stages do not consider the extent to which these values

are idealistic, situationally specific, or viewed as relevant only to one's own personal moral perspective. To give an example, an individual who displays postconventional moral reasoning as classified by Kohlberg's stage approach could endorse any one of the four different moral positions suggested by the EPQ.<sup>3</sup> Because of these differences between the stage approach and the EPQ taxonomy, it was predicted that no relationship would be obtained between stage of moral "maturity" as assessed by the short form of the Defining Issues Test (DIT; cf. Rest, 1973; Rest et al., 1974; Rest, Turiel, & Kohlberg, 1969; Rest, Note 1) and the two scales of the EPQ.

Table 4 contains the correlations between the EPQ and the P-score, which Rest (Note 1) contends is best for correlational analyses since it summarizes the extent to which an individual's responses to moral dilemmas display reasoning typical of Kohlberg's postconventional level of morality. The discriminant validity of the EPQ is attested to by these correlations, which indicate that neither idealism nor relativism were related to P. To further investigate the lack of relationship between the EPQ and DIT, 128 subjects who fell into one of the four ethical ideologies of the EPQ typology were also classified accord-

<sup>3</sup> All the ideologies of the EPQ do, in a sense, accept certain principles, which can be distilled down to nothing more complicated than *There are moral absolutes, Exceptions are tolerable, Look to the specifics of the given situation, and Consider the action from your own ethical viewpoint.* Although the content of the principles determines the individual's ideology, the reasons for accepting the principles determine his or her stage of moral development.

Table 5  
*Ethical Ideology and Contemporary Moral Issues*

Topic	F	p	Sex	Ethical ideology			
				Situationists	Absolutists	Subjectivists	Exceptionists
Test-tube babies	4.28	<.05	M	2.8 <sub>b</sub>	6.2 <sub>a</sub>	4.4 <sub>ab</sub>	4.3 <sub>ab</sub>
			F	4.1 <sub>b</sub>	4.3 <sub>b</sub>	3.9 <sub>b</sub>	4.4 <sub>ab</sub>
Mercy killing	6.69	<.05	M	2.7 <sub>c</sub>	6.0 <sub>ab</sub>	3.7 <sub>bc</sub>	4.4 <sub>abc</sub>
			F	4.6 <sub>abc</sub>	3.8 <sub>bc</sub>	3.7 <sub>bc</sub>	6.2 <sub>a</sub>
Marijuana use	3.67	= .06	M	2.0 <sub>a</sub>	4.7 <sub>a</sub>	2.8 <sub>a</sub>	2.5 <sub>a</sub>
			F	3.6 <sub>a</sub>	3.7 <sub>a</sub>	3.2 <sub>a</sub>	4.2 <sub>a</sub>
Homosexuality	5.15	<.05	M	2.2 <sub>b</sub>	5.3 <sub>a</sub>	4.2 <sub>ab</sub>	4.0 <sub>ab</sub>
			F	3.1 <sub>b</sub>	3.0 <sub>b</sub>	2.5 <sub>b</sub>	3.3 <sub>ab</sub>
Abortion	10.97	<.05	M	2.5 <sub>b</sub>	7.4 <sub>a</sub>	3.5 <sub>b</sub>	3.2 <sub>b</sub>
			F	3.8 <sub>b</sub>	3.2 <sub>b</sub>	3.7 <sub>b</sub>	4.8 <sub>b</sub>
Cell sizes			M	6	9	14	13
			F	20	24	18	11

Note. M = male, F = female. Higher scores indicate greater moral condemnation. Means (for any single item) without a common subscript differ at the  $p < .05$  level, by Duncan's new multiple-range test.

ing to stage of moral development (Stage 3, 4, 5, 6, or unclassified). Analysis of the joint frequency distribution based on ethical ideology and DIT stage revealed no significant relation between the two measures;  $\chi^2(12) = 14.48$ ,  $p = .30$ .

*Survey of Ethical Attitudes.* Although the EPQ was uncorrelated with Kohlberg's stages of morality, the relativism scale of the EPQ does share a common conceptual foundation with another frequently used measure of moral thought: Hogan's Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA; 1970, 1973). Paralleling the EPQ's distinction between rule-universalism and relativism, Hogan contrasts individuals who follow an "ethics of responsibility" with those who endorse an "ethics of personal conscience." Like the rule-universalists, high scorers on the SEA emphasize the importance of societal regulatory standards that define responsibilities and duties. Individuals who receive low scores on the SEA, on the other hand, endorse a relativistic position that emphasizes conscientious behavior fitted to the specific situation. Given the conceptual similarities linking the two approaches, a significant correlation between the relativism scale of the EPQ and Hogan's SEA would yield convergent validation for the EPQ.

As predicted, idealism was unrelated to SEA scores, but relativism was negatively correlated with the measure (see Table 4). Thus

relativistic individuals who express a disbelief in the possibility of formulating universal standards of morality also tended to adopt the ethics of personal conscience. Joint frequency analyses and analysis of variance using the four-level classification of the EPQ supported this conclusion.

*Age.* Age information was recorded for 221 of the total sample of 241 students. These people ranged in age from 17 to 42, with a mean age of 21 and standard deviation of 3.9 years. As shown in Table 4, age was related to both idealism and relativism. The correlations indicate that, as would be expected, older individuals were less idealistic and less relativistic.

### *Predictive Validity*

*Attitudes on contemporary moral issues.* Forty-two male and 73 female college students were asked to indicate agreement (again using the EPQ format) with 11 statements concerning contemporary moral and legal issues such as the artificial creation of human life, mercy killings, marijuana use, capital punishment, Nixon's pardon, homosexuality, obeying the 55 mph speed limit, and abortion. Responses to these items were submitted to a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  least-squares analysis of variance, with idealism (high or low), relativism (high or low), and sex of respondent as the independent variables. Multivariate analysis of

variance using Pillai's trace as the approximation to  $F$  revealed both a main effect for sex and a three-way interaction of idealism, relativism, and sex;  $F_s(11, 92) = 2.19$  and  $2.28$  (respectively),  $p < .05$ . The main effect for sex reached univariate significance on only the compliance with the 55 mph speed limit item, with females claiming to be more obedient than males;  $F(1, 106) = 5.73$ ,  $p < .05$ . The respective means were 5.2 and 4.2.

The  $F$  ratios and means for the 5 items for which the triple interaction reached univariate significance are presented in Table 5. Each of the five interactions follows a similar pattern, indicating that in general, male absolutists tended to take more extreme positions on each of the issues, particularly in comparison to male situationists. More than respondents within each of the other ethical categories, male absolutists felt that test-tube creation was immoral, that mercy killing should not be tolerated, and that marijuana use, homosexuality, and abortion were wrong. Situationist males, however, were the most liberal, particularly in regard to euthanasia.

**Moral judgments.** Forsyth (1978) presents evidence suggesting that the ethical ideology people adopt influences their moral judgments. In this research, the 128 college students previously classified according to ethical ideology read brief, one sentence to one paragraph descriptions of a sequence of actions that culminated in positive outcomes, negative outcomes, or a mixture of both positive and negative outcomes. After reading a scenario, subjects were asked to rate the morality of the actor on 12-point Likert-type scales ranging from *moral* to *immoral*. When these judgments were analyzed, absolutists were found to differ from the other judges in terms of the extremity of their reactions. Although none of the evaluators were very favorably disposed toward an actor whose behavior yielded both good and bad consequences, absolutists were significantly harsher in their appraisals. They attributed more responsibility to the person, evaluated the action less favorably, and condemned the morality of the wrongdoer more so than the other judges (all  $ps < .05$ ). Exceptionists, on the other hand, tended to be the most forgiving judges.

Differences between the two groups became even more apparent when the described actor broke a moral standard. As predicted, absolutists were strongest in the condemnation of an action that ran counter to a common moral norm, such as lying or theft, even when positive consequences resulted from the moral indiscretion. Subjectivists, on the other hand, actually judged the actor who produced a positive outcome by violating a moral standard more favorably than the actor who produced a negative outcome by following a norm. They also considered the liar who produced positive consequences to be as moral as the truth-teller who produced these same consequences.

Just as absolutists only occasionally allowed positive consequences to sway them from a negative evaluation of the liar or thief, subjectivists only rarely allowed information about moral norms to influence their consequences-based moral judgments. Like the subjectivists, situationists' moral judgments were tempered by the quality of the consequence produced by the action so that they blamed an actor who violated a moral norm less when the actor produced a positive outcome by doing so. The positivity of the exceptionist, however, disappeared when an action ran counter to a moral standard.

**Moral behavior.** Although the EPQ typology is based on individuals' acceptance of a given ethical position and thus should be closely related to moral judgments, the relationship between ideology and behavior is more tenuous. Although much research will be needed to empirically define the relationship between ideology and moral behavior, one study recently completed indicates that ethical ideology does not predict moral behavior (Forsyth & Berger, Note 2). In that investigation, subjects from each of the four groups were placed in a testing situation and tempted to cheat. The results indicated that no ethical category was overrepresented or underrepresented in the 36% of the subjects who did cheat by using the answer key.

Although the harsh absolutist judges were just as likely to break a moral rule as were the relativistic subjectivists, subjects in the four groups did tend to react to cheating differently. For absolutists, the more they



cheated, the more negatively they rated themselves on a subsequently administered self-concept scale. Subjectivists also devalued themselves, but the extent to which they cheated was also significantly correlated with fear of detection. Exceptionists, surprisingly, reported greater satisfaction the more they cheated, and situationists reported some satisfaction but some self-condemnation as well. Although these findings are more suggestive than conclusive, they do indicate that although members of the four groups may not act differently in a moral situation, the consequences of immorality in terms of self-satisfaction and guilt may be different for individuals who endorse different ethical ideologies.

### Discussion

The essential problem concerns the variability that typifies moral judgments. Given the same information about the same actor and the same behavior, two individuals who agree when discussing politics, religion, art, literature, and so on can still manage to reach opposite conclusions when a moral judgment is to be made. The typology of ethical ideologies explains this variation by suggesting that in general people take particular stances regarding ethics and that the position taken will influence the judgment reached. Once this premise is introduced, what remains is to identify the important ideologies and develop a device that will accurately and reliably measure any given person's ethical stance.

Two different kinds of evidence lend support to the two-by-two typology based on the EPQ. First, the four ideologies that the EPQ measures are consistent with the major philosophical schools of ethical thought, including deontological, teleological, and skeptical perspectives. At the very least, the typology seems to adequately describe variations in the ethical reasoning displayed by philosophers, and hence may also describe the ethical ideologies of "naïve" philosophers who must find answers to ethical questions. Second, empirical evidence also supports the recommended idealism-relativism classification system, which was derived in prior research using factor analysis (Schlenker & Forsyth, 1977).

The question of the EPQ's adequacy as a

measurement device is more complex. First, standard scaling practices were carefully followed throughout its development, which utilized item analysis and factor analysis. Second, the two scales of the EPQ possess adequate psychometric properties, including moderately high internal consistency, reliability over time, only small correlations with a measure of social desirability, and orthogonality to one another. Third, the correlates of the EPQ scales attest to the accuracy of the current interpretation of its meaning. Fourth, the lack of relationship between the EPQ and Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning (Rest et al., 1974) is evidence of the measure's discriminant validity and suggests that the two conceptualizations of individual differences in moral judgment are focusing on different things. In contrast to Kohlberg's model, the EPQ does not classify ethical ideologies solely on the basis of their "principledness" and therefore recommends itself as a more general typology. In addition, since the model does not focus on moral "maturity" and is based on a more psychometrically adequate measurement device, the idealism-relativism classification may be more usefully applied than Kohlberg's model when the focus is on the moral judgments of adults. Last, when the EPQ was used to separate individuals into the four ethical ideologies, these individuals were found to differ on contemporary moral issues, moral judgments of others, and reactions to their own moral failings.

Overall then, this research recommends the model as a useful perspective for the further study of moral evaluations. Although the measure itself appears to be adequate, much more research is needed to clarify the typical characteristics of individuals who endorse the different ethical ideologies, to more fully describe the impact of ideology on moral judgments, and also to extend these judgmental differences to behavioral variations. Future work should also be directed toward integrating the research with other areas of psychology, including responsibility attribution, legal judgments, conformity, and obedience.

Despite the relevance of moral judgment to an understanding of a wide variety of interpersonal behaviors, relatively little research has directly examined the process, since psy-

chologists have frequently assumed that such judgments are specific to situations and to individuals. The ethical ideology typology, however, by specifying which characteristics of the individual's ethical system must be measured if variations in moral judgments are to be understood, provides a possible answer to the problem and hopefully will stimulate more in depth research into the psychological bases of moral judgments.

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