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PARADIGM ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MORAL BEHAVIOR: AN EMPIRICAL BATTLE ROYAL

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The horrors of the Second World War blindsided social scientists, along with most everyone else on the planet. Faced with more than 60 million casualties, the use of nuclear weapons on civilian populations, and especially the Holocaust—all carried out by modern nations—the social sciences were vastly underequipped to explain, let alone suggest prophylaxes for, such atrocities. World War II demanded (and still demands) a credible psychological explanation and a lesson learned that will prevent a repeat. In response, social scientists grappled with the challenge of explaining both heinous behavior (by the likes of Hitler and Eichmann) and heroic behavior in defiance of authority (by the likes of Schindler and Bonhoeffer). Both dispositional and situational explanations came to the fore.

From a dispositionalist perspective, personality psychologists (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) advanced the notion of the authoritarian personality, which explained people's frequent complicity in the callous agendas of authoritarian regimes. In a somewhat similar vein, developmental psychologists (e.g., Kohlberg, 1964) advanced the possibility that immature moral reasoning explained these complicit behaviors, with developmentally advanced individuals more likely to challenge the dictates of authorities whose edicts were at variance with concern for human dignity.

In contrast, from a situationalist perspective, Arendt's (1963) commentary on Eichmann, the architect of the Holocaust, claimed that Eichmann (and most other Nazis) were not psychopathic monsters; instead, these perpetrators were ordinary people, caught in the wrong place and at the wrong time—yielding the "banality of evil" epithet. Early systematic evidence regarding the power of the situation was provided by Milgram's (1974) research demonstrating people's ready obedience to authorities who commanded harm to others and by Zimbardo's prison experiment (Zimbardo, Banks, Haney, & Jaffe, 1973) in which participants quickly embraced the malevolent roles to which they had been randomly assigned.

Differences between dispositionalism and situationalism are not superficial or trite. This distinction cuts to the heart of what we mean by morality, to our understanding of the processes that drive moral behavior, and to the implementation of preventive or corrective interventions. For example, the dispositionalist perspective prescribes the socialization of moral character in individuals, whereas the situationalist perspective calls for selecting and constructing contexts that bring out individuals' humanity.

The specific question we address in this chapter concerns the source of moral heroism. Is moral action set in motion primarily by situational factors operating on otherwise ordinary people, or do some aspects of individuals' character interact with opportunity to initiate and perpetuate a moral career? Later in this chapter, we put predictions emerging from these situationalist and dispositionalist perspectives "into the ring" and referee an empirical battle royal to see which of the various contenders contribute to our understanding of moral heroism. The research involves an examination of the psychological functioning of moral exemplars—people who have engaged in extraordinary moral action that has real-world significance—in comparison with that of ordinary people. Our intent in this chapter is to shed new light on the processes that give rise to moral heroism.

Before attending to this specific question about the sources of heroism, however, we undertake a wider angle examination of the relationship between moral psychology and the real-world problems it aims to explain. Moral psychology is fundamentally an applied discipline: Real-world social issues are the standard to which the discipline's methods and data ought to be held to account. To transform chaotic social problems into empirical questions, researchers, by necessity, impose a degree of order on a domain, yielding methodologies, measures, and research designs. This imposed order, and the paradigmatic assumptions it entails, also needs to be scrutinized relative to the gold standard of real-world social relevance. The assumptions we make in defining the parameters of the moral domain and in establishing how morality works have significant implications for the directives we derive for improving the human condition. How well these assumptions allow us to tap the moral psy-

chological phenomena of interest is the question that frames the first part of this chapter, to which we now turn.

PARADIGM ASSUMPTIONS

As with all approaches to knowing, taken-for-granted assumptions underwrite the scientific method. These assumptions are in the very fabric of inquiry, often reflected in methodological approaches. Initially, such premises are often scrutinized and adopted on the basis of their intuitive appeal, but not all commonsense ideas turn out to have merit. Revisiting these assumptions in light of updated theory and evidence is crucial for scientific progress.

In this section, we take up this vital task by revisiting two paradigmatic assumptions that frame research on moral behavior: (a) that the laboratory provides a lens on the moral world and (b) that all people function according to the same psychological processes. Although our stance on these theses is critical, our intent is not to reject them unilaterally, but rather to move toward a more balanced synthesis. To forecast what will come after, we review a recent study of ours that illustrates some of the key points.

Assuming the Lab to Be a Lens on the Moral World

Motivated by an enormous social problem—the evils of the Third Reich—Milgram (1974) set out to test the possibility that the potential for evil is within all of us and can be exposed by the "right" situational presses. Part of the brilliance of Milgram's work was the control he exerted over situational forces, moving the setting from the European death camp to the American research lab while presumably holding the qualities and processes endemic to the pressure-to-obey phenomenon constant (albeit in a different degree), thereby establishing a valid analog. This move set up the first questionable paradigmatic assumption we wish to address—that laboratory research is sufficient to yield a veridical account of morality in the real world.

The lab analog experiment is uniquely efficacious in isolating variables and assessing causality. The problem, however, is that the qualitative differences between the social reality the lab is meant to simulate and the lab itself often draw the inquiry away from the phenomena of interest in significant ways. The norm for the lab-based researcher is merely to assume that one's setting has external validity, rather than to demonstrate it. We offer two reasons to doubt that a lab setting is good enough, standing alone. Laboratory experimentation is often limited by (a) the use of a single, overconstrained behavioral measure and (b) reliance on abstract vignettes removed from everyday experience. Each is discussed in turn.

The first concern revolves around reliance on one-off, peculiar, overly constrained (either/or) scenarios in lab settings to make inferences about patterns of behavior in the real world. Undergirding this method is the assumption that one-off behaviors extrapolate to real-world patterns of behavior in a simple, additive fashion and that the processes at play remain unchanged. Irrespective of how clever the behavioral test and how much ecological validity attends it, singular assessments of behavior cannot definitively tap a domain as complex and multifaceted as morality. In any given scenario, context is a stronger press than disposition in eliciting behavior (Fleeson, 2004). For this reason, relying on one-off behaviors as a portal to real life leads to a fundamental attribution error flipped on its head—an overestimation of the power of the situation on behavior. Drawing conclusions about individuals' functioning from a single assessment of behavior makes no more sense than making inferences from a single questionnaire item—each method is unreliable (Epstein, 1983).

Aiming to isolate phenomena, researchers are prone to devise somewhat peculiar and overly constrained assessments of moral functioning that are remote from everyday moral experience. Such assessments include Kohlberg's (1984) Heinz dilemma (stealing a miracle drug to save one's wife), Haidt's (2001) moral dumbfounding dilemma (having sex with one's sibling), Greene's (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001) trolley dilemma (pushing a fat man off a bridge to save five other people from an out-of-control trolley), and Pizarro's (Pizarro, Uhlmann, & Bloom, 2003) causal deviance scenario (attempting to murder someone whose demise is caused instead by the would-be-victim's fluky heart attack).

These assessments place participants in an overly constrained situation, facing a dichotomous decision (e.g., push vs. don't push). Researchers deliberately disallow the alternatives that would otherwise come to mind for participants. But the tendency to accept dualisms (e.g., win/lose) as opposed to seeking higher, integrative forms of social interaction (e.g., win/win) is an important developmental difference (Perry, 1970). And although these assessments may isolate psychological processes, they do not remotely model the kinds of moral problems people more typically confront in everyday life. When this degree of abstraction is combined with a constrained response format, little insight regarding real-world moral functioning is likely to be gained. Our point is that only by aggregating responses across situations and sensitizing our methods to the ways in which individuals shape (e.g., select, explore, construe) the situations they face can a researcher capture a phenomenon in its real-world form.

As an example, Haidt (2001) attempted to show that affective intuition is what primarily drives moral judgment and that reasoning plays only an after-the-fact rationalizing and social persuasion role. To arrive at this conclusion, Haidt relied on an imaginatively concocted incest dilemma to which most

respondents reacted by asserting that incest is wrong but without being able to provide a convincing reason for this judgment given the constraints of the scenario. The point Haidt was trying to make was not confined to this specific vignette, but was generalized to everyday sorts of moral scenarios. Incest is not, however, the sort of issue with which most people are faced. What, then, happens when individuals are faced with real dilemmas? Do they rely purely on intuitive processes or some interaction of intuitive and rational ones (Narvaez, 2008; see also Chapter 4, this volume)? Haidt's artificial methods distance his data from this very real question.

A gold nugget in Gilligan's (1982) critique of moral psychology was her skepticism concerning such constrained dilemmas and her advocacy for assessing moral judgment more naturalistically, tapping moral problems from individuals' own experience. For whatever reason, her advocacy has not gained much of a foothold in the field despite evidence indicating that reasoning about real-life moral conflicts better predicts everyday moral behavior than does reasoning about hypothetical dilemmas (Trevethan & Walker, 1989; Walker, Hennig, & Krettenauer, 2000). Perhaps the degree to which an individual is invested in a moral issue moderates the processes used to resolve it. This much is speculative; until researchers who explore moral functioning include realistic problems, speculative it will remain.

Assuming Homogeneity in the Face of Developmental Variability

Another paradigmatic assumption to which we draw attention asserts that people are psychologically "cut from the same cloth," uniformly operating by the same moral psychological processes. This assumption is manifest in the frequent reliance on a single kind of research participant (e.g., undergraduate students garnering course credit), a lack of consideration for individual differences, and a homogenizing "people" label. Diversity among people is ignored and sacrificed to error variance. But at what cost? A high one, we contend.

To illustrate what is lost when individual differences are ignored, we return to Milgram's (1974) paradigm-establishing obedience-to-authority studies. The received wisdom from these studies was a confirmation of the banality of evil view, a not-so-subtle nod to the power of the situation; dispositional differences were largely dismissed. In the classic manipulation, a majority of participants administered electrical shocks "to the limit." A common reading of this finding is that all participants responded similarly, with the difference between continuing the experiment and quitting being a matter of chance (left to the error variance bucket). But, as it turned out, those who shocked to the limit and those who quit were not all the same; interactions lingered in the mist.

In an important but rarely cited study, Kohlberg (1984; then Milgram's colleague at Yale University), interviewed some of Milgram's participants to

assess their stage of moral reasoning. Developmental level was powerfully predictive of behavior—almost none of the lower stage participants (14%) quit the experiment, but almost all of the higher stage participants (83%) defied the authority. In the appendix to his book, Milgram (1974, p. 205) dismissed these data as being merely suggestive. On the contrary, Kohlberg's data entirely reverse the moral of the Milgram study, that evil is fundamentally banal. A conclusion that better represents the data holds that situational pressures can elicit evil only in some people.

In terms of which dispositions should we distinguish people? The answer depends on many factors, much beyond the scope of this chapter. But we do present a menu of dispositional courses worth considering. McAdams's (1995) personality template highlights multiple levels of personality, all of which should be assessed if we are to begin to (really) know a person. The typical assessment of personality is along the lines of dispositional traits (e.g., the Big Five); these are descriptive assessments of individuals' past behavior that tend to be relatively stable over the life course. But traits do not tap the intrapsychic processing that energizes and causes future behavior through motivation and the desire for a coherent sense of self (John & Robins, 1994; McAdams, 1992). To tap these causal aspects of personality, McAdams pointed to characteristic adaptations such as goal motivation and integrative life narratives that capture individuals' construction of identity and personal meaning. The argument here is to consider the various parts of individuals' uniqueness in an attempt to get to know the whole person.

Our preference (or paradigmatic assumption) on this matter is to focus not on just any individual differences, but on those that develop. We focus on development because of its conceptual and practical significance: It can inform an understanding of the sequence of development, define its endpoint (i.e., maturity), explicate the processes of acquisition, and specify optimal means of intervention in real-world settings. Failure to consider developmental level can contribute to fallacious inferences about moral functioning.

To illustrate, consider a hypothetical study of competitors in a winter Olympic event, such as snowboarding. If performing a study on efficacy in snowboarding with a sample composed solely of novices first trying their hand at this sport, the conclusions drawn regarding strategies and processes governing performance would lead to myopic conclusions about snowboarding (e.g., "Despite trying not to, just about everyone falls down"). Olympic athletes function differently from novices—both quantitatively (e.g., speed) and qualitatively (e.g., processing different kinds of information). Ignoring this difference and sampling at random would render a sample constituted almost entirely by novices and lead to the aforementioned bleak conclusions about "people" and the snowboarding domain.

For this story to become a proper analog to the moral domain, one needs to assume that (a) a particular moral function is difficult but adaptive to perform well, (b) people can change in their ability to perform that function, and (c) these changes tend to follow some developmental pattern. These points have been well argued and demonstrated for several aspects of moral functioning that develop (see Walker & Frimer, in press, for a review), but most demonstrably so for stage of moral reasoning, a variable that cleanly differentiated Milgram's shockers from his quitters. The take-home message is thus again modified to read "evil is banal for the developmentally immature."

This critique applies to developmentally homogenizing research both old and new. By not considering developmental level, many researchers arrive at skewed conclusions about moral functioning. Consider, for example, the implications of Haidt's (2001) conclusions about the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding. Do experts hold to a moral judgment even when reason dictates a change of tune? This is a highly consequential question; Rawls (1993), in his influential *Political Liberalism*, argued that a civil society requires citizens to be "reasonable" with their opinions, which includes a readiness to change one's position when good reasons so dictate. Bracketing the aforementioned limitations of Haidt's study, do we conclude from his demonstration that "people" rely primarily on intuition, or do we conclude that parents, teachers, and other societal leaders have educational work to do? Perhaps both.

As another example, Skitka and Morgan (2009) reported evidence regarding the apparent evils associated with steadfastly holding moral convictions. Colby and Damon (1992) argued that moral maturity entails not only certainty in conviction but also open-mindedness to differing ideas. Might Skitka and Morgan's findings highlight the woes of moralistic dogmatism (which may be a developmental stepping-stone)? We believe so. Our point is that research based solely on people of one developmental level will, at best, offer a constricted account of moral processing. Instead, we advocate considering developmental variables germane to the situation and choosing research designs that entail comparison across developmental levels. In sum, we contend that individual differences, particularly of the developmental kind, have much to contribute to our understanding of processes of moral functioning and that the frequent homogenization of people entails conceptual costs.

THE SOURCE OF MORAL HEROISM

Having examined paradigmatic assumptions underlying some of the methods of moral psychology, we now turn to a specific question—the source of moral heroism. The purpose of this exploration is to test competing claims

regarding this important issue but, in so doing, also illustrate our key points about paradigmatic assumptions. Moral heroism is the rather neglected positive side of morality, a qualitatively different form of moral action than the resolution of circumscribed moral quandaries. The challenge of living a life of moral heroism is an underdetermined, supererogatory problem for which many options are available—achieving a morally exemplary life certainly does not reduce to resolving some kind of dualistic dilemma.

So what, then, drives the heroic deeds of moral heroes like Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Oskar Schindler? To frame this question, we revisit the person versus situation debate. Is moral action fueled purely by potent life circumstances dealt to an "ordinary" person? Or does some aspect of the individual's personality react with an opportunity to ignite a moral career? The latter, interactional claim can further be broken down into differing perspectives on the nature of moral personality.

To summarize what is to come, we begin by setting up four competing predictions about the source of heroism. We then step outside the lab to assess the personalities of individuals who have lived by high moral codes. Our methodology entails a broadband assessment of psychological functioning, and our person-level analysis allows for the study of lives rather than being restricted to the study of variables. Because our moral exemplars will also be compared with ordinary people—in essence, experts versus novices—we have clear intimations of developmental variability. Finally, the predictions of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Owen Flanagan, and Philip Zimbardo will "get in the ring" and clash for the explanatory title, battle royal.

Situationalist Perspective

People who commit "moral failures" often externalize responsibility for their actions (Bandura, 2002), and those who engage in moral heroism similarly disavow praise. Do these claims capture the psychological reality of moral behavior? Are moral (and immoral) behaviors fundamentally banal? The *situationalist perspective* identifies the cause of moral behavior purely in features of the situation, denying any causal significance for dispositional factors.

Among psychologists, perhaps Zimbardo (2004, 2007) has been the most vocal and radical proponent of this perspective, arguing by analogy from the Stanford prison experiment (Zimbardo et al., 1973):

> The banality of evil is matched by the banality of heroism. Neither is the consequence of dispositional tendencies. . . . Both emerge in particular situations at particular times, when situational forces play a compelling role in moving individuals across the line from inaction to action. (Zimbardo, 2007, p. 275)

Philosophers have more typically aligned with the dispositionalist perspective on moral character, but recently some (Doris, 2002; Harman, 2009) have expressed sympathy with the situationalist perspective, contending that ethical theory can and should abandon the notion of moral personality but somehow retain the notions of agency and moral responsibility. Thus, the core empirical claim of the situationalist perspective denies the causal operation of dispositions in producing moral heroism and asserts the instigating role of situational factors.

Dispositionalist Perspective

The *dispositionalist perspective* emerges from ethical frameworks that identify the source of moral behavior in human character. Difficulty arises, however, when trying to identify theorists who advance the simplistic view that dispositions ubiquitously and solely cause moral behavior, without reference to the situation. The classic Aristotelian view and many so-called dispositional accounts are, in actuality, context sensitive, consisting of if–then conditionals. Dispositionalists agree among themselves on the causal role of virtue but diverge in their understanding of its nature. Whereas some define a single ideal type of moral personality—either entailing the embodiment of the full complement of virtues or focusing on a single superintending virtue—other theories advance a variety of moral personality types.

The Aristotelian tradition in moral philosophy (Aristotle, 350 BC/1962) characterizes the morally excellent person as possessing the full array of virtues. This view posits that the virtues entail a functional, psychological interdependence: A person cannot really possess any one cardinal virtue without also embodying the others. Although a timeworn view, it has also received contemporary endorsement (McDowell, 1979; Watson, 1984). Unpacking this view within the realm of the empirical, the claim is that moral heroes exhibit high functioning across the full gamut of virtues (i.e., morally relevant personality variables).

A different formulation of the dispositionalist perspective contends that the morally excellent person is guided by a single, general-purpose moral principle or algorithm (not the complete array of virtues). Enlightenment-era philosophers, in particular, held that some single superintending deliberative principle is not only necessary but sufficient for dictating the morally good life, solving moral problems, and compelling moral behavior. This zeitgeist sidelined a characterological basis for morality and championed a rationalistic one, as illustrated by Kant's (1785/2002) categorical imperative and Bentham's (1789/1970) utilitarian rule. This formulation is illustrated in contemporary moral psychology by Kohlberg's (1981) advocacy of the principle of justice as that superintending algorithm and Gilligan's (1982) popularization of the

ethic of care. Regardless of which moral algorithm takes center stage, this formulation of the dispositionalist perspective implies an empirical claim of homogeneity among moral heroes, with their adaptive similarity defined by one superintending psychological function.

Although moral philosophers have typically been advocates of a singular moral archetype, more recently some (Flanagan, 1991) have embraced the notion of plurality in moral ideals. Thus, a third formulation of the dispositionalist perspective posits varieties of moral personality. Folk conceptions of moral functioning (Walker & Hennig, 2004) indicate that people attribute a range of psychological profiles to moral exemplars. And within moral psychology, theorists have argued for the existence of different ethical frameworks; for example, Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park's (1997) ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. Thus, the fundamental empirical claim of this perspective is that multifarious moral personalities are evident, each embodying a somewhat different and partial set of virtues.

THE EMPIRICAL BATTLE ROYAL

In a recent study (Walker, Frimer, & Dunlop, 2010), we tested competing claims about sources of moral behavior by assessing the psychological functioning of a sample of moral exemplars. Our 50 participants were recipients of a national award for their moral action through the Canadian honors system; half received an award for bravery in risking their lives to save others, and half received an award for long-term volunteer commitment in providing care, community service, or humanitarian relief. These are behaviors with real-world significance. One of the additional design features of this study was the inclusion of individually matched comparison participants drawn from the general community (ordinary people in contrast to developmentally advanced exemplars).

Rather than asking these participants to resolve hypothetical dilemmas, our method involved starting from their real-life experiences. To provide a comprehensive assessment of psychological functioning, we used measures at each level of personality description (including personality inventories and an extensive life-review interview), relying on McAdams's (1995, 2009) threefold taxonomy of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life narratives. In our analyses, we tapped a total of 13 variables that had been implicated in previous research as being relevant to the topic at hand.

Variables assessed at the level of dispositional traits included the interpersonal circumplex dimensions of dominance and nurturance, as well as the conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience factors of

the five factor model (Wiggins, 1995). At the level of characteristic adaptations, goal-oriented motivation was assessed by relational, generativity, and self-development strivings (Emmons, 1999). Structural–developmental variables also reflect the characteristic adaptations level and were assessed by stage of moral reasoning development (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) and by epistemic development (Fowler, 1981). The third level of personality description, integrative narratives of the self, was assessed in the context of a life-review interview that was coded for motivational themes of agency and communion (McAdams, 1988), as well as for *redemption sequences* (McAdams, 2006), or the tendency to construe positive benefit out of some negative event.

A simple comparison of the personalities of exemplars versus comparison participants would allow us to differentially test the situationalist and dispositionalist perspectives. But to simultaneously test the claims of the three dispositionalist formulations, we allowed the exemplars to form clusters of like-natured individuals—to let exemplars of a feather flock together (so to speak). How many clusters would emerge? As a reminder, the situationalist perspective makes no predictions about the number of clusters but claims that members of each cluster would be indistinguishable from their matched nonexemplars. In contrast, the three dispositionalist accounts uniformly predict differences between exemplars and comparisons but differ in the number and nature of the clusters. The Aristotelian unity-of-the-virtues formulation predicts one cluster, exemplary on all variables; the Kantian single-algorithm formulation also predicts a single cluster, but exemplary on only one variable; and Flanagan's varieties formulation predicts multiple clusters, each with its respective signature personality profile.

Our analytic strategy was to conduct a (person-level) cluster analysis of the sample of moral exemplars, clustering in terms of all variables rendered by the broadband assessment of personality. A three-cluster solution was found to best fit the data, favoring the varieties perspective over the other two dispositional accounts. Note that the cluster procedure did not simply split the sample in terms of the nature of the award (brave vs. caring)—three, not two, clusters were found, and both brave and caring exemplars populated each of the clusters. Once the clusters were derived, we assessed which variables defined each cluster.

The first cluster was defined by themes of communion in life stories, goal motivation entailing relational and generativity strivings, and the trait of nurturance. Hence the label *communal* seemed appropriate for this cluster. About three quarters of the people in this cluster were caring exemplars.

The second cluster was defined quite differently: by the structural–developmental variables of epistemic development and moral reasoning, self-development strivings, and the trait of openness to experience. Emphasis on sophisticated, reflective judgment and concerns with self-development

suggested the label *deliberative* for this cluster. This cluster was balanced in terms of caring and brave exemplars.

The third cluster had low scores on many personality variables relative to the other clusters (scoring lowest on most variables and highest on none). Across the broadband assessment of personality, this cluster was consistently unremarkable in comparison with other exemplars, and so the label *ordinary* seemed apt. About three quarters of the exemplars in this cluster were brave awardees.

With the varieties perspective outpredicting its dispositional perspective counterparts, we now turn to the dispositionalist versus situationalist claims. Once the exemplar clusters were identified, each cluster was then contrasted with its associated comparison participants to determine whether and in which ways each exemplar cluster might be exemplary (recall that the situationalist perspective predicts the null here). The exemplars in the communal and deliberative clusters scored higher than comparison participants on the personality variables that distinguished them from other clusters. Interestingly, exemplars in these clusters also scored higher than their comparison participants on several other personality variables, indicating that their personalities were anything but banal. The situationalist perspective does not predict the existence of these two clusters. In contrast, analyses indicated that the 13 personality variables collectively did not significantly discriminate the cluster of "ordinary" exemplars from their comparison participants at all, confirming the banality of this cluster.

TO THE VICTORS GO THE SPOILS

Our objective was to contrast four competing perspectives on the sources of moral behavior by examining the psychological functioning of real-world moral exemplars. Analyses discriminated three varieties of moral personality (communal, deliberative, and ordinary), buttressing two of these contenders.

Support for the dispositionalist perspective was garnered from the finding that two of the three exemplar clusters evidenced highly adaptive levels of certain aspects of personality. The communal and deliberative clusters were defined by different sets of personality variables—themes of social interdependence versus themes of thoughtful meaning making and personal growth, respectively—reflecting distinct moral ideals. This evidence undermines the notion that moral excellence can and should be evidenced by a single moral ideal, as claimed by two different formulations of the dispositionalist perspective. Although both clusters evidenced adaptive personality functioning on several variables in contrast to comparison participants, both patterns fell well short of the comprehensive array posited by the unity-of-the-virtues doctrine, and

there was no evidence of a single superintending moral principle or virtue that was characteristic of moral exemplarity. Thus, we conclude that the notion of a "one size fits all" type of moral excellence does not accord with our data.

The finding of three moral personality types is consistent with the dispositionalist perspective in explaining moral behavior. However, the varieties perspective hardly predicted that one variety would be an empty set. By default, the existence of this ordinary cluster gives some credence to the situationalist perspective (Doris, 2002; Zimbardo, 2007).

Ultimately, the perspectives in contention here entailed causal predictions. How might we explore these causal predictions given the limitations of correlational data? On occasion, some extraordinary moral action can be evoked from ordinary people provided the right convergence of situational factors. But which heroic action might this be? Recall that the ordinary cluster was composed predominantly of brave exemplars who had engaged in one-off heroic rescues. In many emergencies, situational factors can be powerfully compelling, and dispositional factors may be less consequential for action. The single rescue of the brave awardees is similar (in number) to single behaviors assessed in lab settings. If only one-off behaviors (viz., bravery) had been considered in this study, an erroneous conclusion—one overattributing the source of moral action to the situation—would have ensued. Flawed conclusions about the source of moral behaviors may arise from paradigm assumptions espousing the observation of one-off behaviors.

In contrast, most of the exemplars in the other two clusters were caring awardees with long-term commitment to volunteer service. This type of enduring behavior requires considerable lifestyle change and continuity of purpose, the maintenance of which may entail a mature source of moral motivation. That is, ordinary people may be competent to enact a one-off moral behavior but less well-equipped for a "moral career."

Given the correlational nature of the data, however, a challenge can be mounted to the dispositionalist claim of a causal moral personality that is operative in the moral career. In our study's design, the psychological functioning of moral exemplars was assessed subsequent to their extraordinary moral behaviors and consequent recognition. A situationalist could contend that contextual factors were responsible for the moral behaviors (of those people in the communal and deliberative clusters) and that self-perception processes later created a personality description to match the behavior in retrospect, reformulating attitudes and personality to accord with self-perceived, past behavior. In this view, then, personality is analogous to a documentary without a causal mechanism for future behavior; in the competing dispositionalist perspective, the metaphor for personality would be an operator's manual wherein personality is functionally guiding behavior (see Walker & Frimer, 2007, for further discussion).

Although this challenge is plausible, the present data present difficulties for a usurping personality-as-documentary explanation. One is that self-perception processes are more likely instigated when internal cues are ambiguous in the face of relatively unimportant issues regarding the self (Baumeister, 1998). Aspects of moral character hardly qualify on that count. The second difficulty is that if people do indeed construe their personality to reflect behavioral manifestations, then differences between exemplar and comparison participants should be more pronounced on transparent, past-behavior-documenting types of personality (e.g., self-ratings on personality traits) than on more subtle, motivational assessments (e.g., structural–developmental and life-narrative interviews).

The present data do not conform to that pattern: Individuals in the communal and deliberative clusters evidenced the opposite pattern (with stronger effects on the interview measures than on the personality inventories), and individuals in the ordinary cluster did not differ from their comparison participants in self-ratings of personality traits at all. These findings suggest that the operative aspects of personality for moral behavior are located in the patterns of meaning making and identity that individuals construct in the context of life events rather than in decontextualized personality traits. Similar notions are posited by authors of other chapters in this volume: authentic morality based on attachment security (Chapter 14, this volume), integrated moral motivation (Chapter 13), and moral integrity (Chapter 9), among others.

That tentative conclusion is suggestive; the correlational nature of the present data do not readily allow for arbitrating between the documentary and operator's manual depictions of personality, particularly because in this case personality was assessed subsequent to engaging in significant moral behavior and receipt of public recognition for it. Because the sorts of personality implicated here are not readily manipulated, this empirical impasse warrants prospective longitudinal studies to identify personality precursors to long-term patterns of moral behavior.

Life narratives are about the individual in context, Person × Situation interactions encoded and internalized into self-defining stories. This Person × Situation encoding is illustrated by a serendipitous finding from an earlier analysis of this data set (Walker & Frimer, 2007), which revealed that caring exemplars were more likely to report suffering the death of a child than members of their matched comparison group. Usually, the death of a child causes self-focused despondency and anger, but it appears that these exemplars exhibited a distinctly different pattern, a kind of posttraumatic growth "on steroids" (see also Chapter 17, this volume). To address this question properly, both personality and situational data are needed; a limitation of the present study was the absence of direct assessments of situational pressures.

Our battle royal did not yield a single victor, but two—both situationalist and dispositionalist perspectives were vindicated in nuanced ways. The synthesis we endorse holds that a solitary focus on the situation or personality is misguided if one is interested in an accurate test of moral functioning. Fleeson (2004) similarly argued that both sides of the debate are right in some respects: The situationalist perspective is right about momentary behaviors; the dispositionalist perspective is right about behavioral trends. The typical dispositional focus of personality psychology can complement the situational focus of social psychology. However, the challenge for both disciplinary perspectives is to be more broadly based in their assessment of moral behavior rather than relying on one-off behavioral assessments in the lab or on descriptive trait inventories. Our proposal contends that lab experimentation should be balanced with real-world observation of socially significant affairs and that morally relevant aspects of personality should be tapped across all levels of personality description. Different methodologies should be mutually informative. Multiple lenses on the same phenomena contribute to a more comprehensive understanding, whereas divergent findings across methodologies harken our attention.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we refereed a battle royal between competing perspectives on the source of moral heroism. We will consider this exercise a triumph if our process and findings increase the field's focus on functional interactions between persons and situations, as well as encourage the careful scrutiny of paradigmatic assumptions.

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