

## CHAPTER 1

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# IS MORALITY ALWAYS AN ORGANIZATIONAL GOOD?

## A Review of Current Conceptions of Morality in Organizational and Social Justice Theory and Research

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### ABSTRACT

Recent justice theory and research has variously proposed morality as a motive, an aspect of identity, and as a characteristic of attitudes. The current chapter provides a critical review of each of these approaches, and concludes that (a) morality plays an important role in fairness reasoning, (b) morality has ties to both prosocial and antisocial reactions and behavior, (c) it may be more useful to take an ideographic than nomothetic approach to studying morality, and (d) managing moral diversity may present greater organizational challenges than managing other kinds of diversity.

Scholars who have studied justice from the perspective of organizational behavior or social psychology have tended to focus on understanding the motivational underpinnings of a concern with justice. Some theorists claim that people care about justice because being fair and being treated fairly serves their rational self-interests if not in the short run, then in the long **one** (e.g., Leventhal, 1976; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Others claim that people care about justice because being treated fairly provides information relevant to a fundamental human need to feel valued and to belong in a group (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988). What seems to be missing from these conceptions of why people care about justice is the notion that perceptions of justice and fairness are sometimes determined and shaped by people's sense of what is moral or immoral, right or wrong.

Although more theoretical and research attention has been given to the possible roles of material self-interest and people's relational needs as core motivational foundations of what shapes or drives people's concerns about fairness, a working definition of justice and what it means to people could reasonably start with morality, righteousness, virtues, and ethics rather than with self-interest, belongingness, or other nonmoral motivations. Although morality has not been emphasized in most contemporary justice theory and research, the proposition that justice might be a moral concern is not a particularly novel one. For example, Plato's conception of individual justice was distinctively moral. Plato considered actions to be just if they sustained or were consonant with ethics and morality, rather than baser motives, such as appetites (Jowett, 1999). In addition to having strong roots in classical philosophy, the connection between conceptions of justice and morality has been a consistent theme in moral development theory and research. For example, Kohlberg's theory of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, 1973) posits that justice is the essential feature of moral reasoning, and that "justice operations" are the processes people use to resolve disputes between conflicting moral claims. From this developmental perspective, people progress toward moral maturity as they become more competent and sophisticated in their approach to justice operations.

Organizational and social psychological approaches to justice, however, only recently have begun to look seriously at the possible psychological connections between justice and morality. There are three rather different tacks to this emerging area of inquiry. Although they are similar in their emphasis on morality and share some common features, these three approaches also differ in some important ways. As is explained shortly, the first two programs of theory and research implicitly are organized around the notion that morality is likely to be an unambiguous organizational good. The third theoretical and empirical approach, although not *de facto* inconsistent with the notion that morality can have prosocial consequences, nonethe-

less also suggests that seeing issues in a moral light can have negative and potentially antisocial consequences as well. The goals of this chapter are to review the moral motivation, identity, and conviction approaches to understanding the connections between morality and justice, and go beyond virtues approaches to morality to explore a number of related questions such as whether there may be unique challenges associated with managing moral diversity.

## THE MOTIVATIONAL APPROACH

A number of researchers have argued recently that justice is more than something that satisfies other motives (e.g., one's deferred self-interests or relational needs). They argue instead that justice is inherently motivating because of its ties to morality. In short, people's concern about justice is theorized to be morally or deonically driven, and not a means to achieve other non-moral motives, such as self-interest or the need to belong (e.g., Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Folger, 1998; 2001; cf. Lerner, 2002).

Evidence against the hegemony of self-interest or relational motives comes in the form of studies that indicate that people often are willing to sacrifice some profit to punish others who intentionally violate fairness norms (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986; see also Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002). These results clearly are inconsistent with a theory that would argue that rational self-interest governs people's behavior because the majority of the participants in these studies sacrifice maximizing their own gain so that they can punish someone else for behaving unfairly. Moreover, because participants do not know each other and never meet face-to-face, it is difficult to attribute these results to something about people's need to be accepted or valued by the group. The results do make sense, however, if justice is a morally motivated response and one that at least at times will trump self-interest or one's need to feel like a valued member of a group. That said, the evidence still provides only indirect rather than direct support for a moral or justice motive.

To make the connection between morality and justice more explicit, research taking the moral motive approach has begun to explore links between people's relative degree of moral development and self-sacrificial behavior. For example, Rupp (2003) explored whether moral maturity moderated the self-sacrificial effects observed in the Kahneman et al. (1986) paradigm that allows participants to sacrifice a portion of their reward to punish others who acted unfairly in a previous round. Rupp predicted that if self-sacrificial behavior is morally motivated, then it should be more likely to emerge among those high rather than low in moral matu-

rity. Her results supported this hypothesis: People higher in moral maturity (as assessed by the Sociomoral Reflection Measure—Short Form; Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992) were more likely than people lower in moral maturity to choose the self-sacrificial option to punish someone else who had behaved unfairly (see also Greenberg, 2002, and Myyry & Helkama, 2002, for related research).

Although a step in the right direction, the results of studies that use moral development measures to make a case that a phenomenon is morally motivated are difficult to interpret because they are based on a single—and controversial—definition of what it means to be “moral” or “morally mature.” For example, the Sociomoral Reflection Measure used by Rupp (2003) was designed to assess stages of moral development defined by Kohlberg’s (1973) theory. Kohlberg’s theory proposed a hierarchical stage model of moral development. The notion is that as people grow and mature, they progress through a series of different stages of development. The sixth and peak stage of moral development is theorized to be one where people universally apply principles of justice and individual rights, independent of rule of law. Among other complaints, critics of Kohlberg’s theory object to the notion that there necessarily is a “superior” or “higher” kind of moral reasoning and argue that Kohlberg’s theoretical justification for what was considered as the pinnacle of moral maturity was guided by a specific school of Western political and moral philosophy that emphasized individual rights to the neglect of other possible conceptions of the moral good (e.g., a morality of care, Gilligan, 1982; see also Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Moreover, others have argued that Kohlberg’s theory is limited because it focuses on moral reasoning and excludes intuitive processes that may drive the majority of moral judgments instead (Haidt, 2001).

In summary, the moral motive approach to understanding the connections between morality and justice has plowed important new ground by demonstrating that there are justice-related behaviors that are inconsistent with arguments that self-interest or belongingness motives underlie people’s concerns about justice. Although there is some evidence that higher levels of Kohlbergian moral development are associated with a greater probability of responding with self-sacrificial behavior in the Kahneman et al. (1986) paradigm, it is not clear what one should make of these results given the controversy about what moral development measures really capture. Although the theoretical basis for the motive approach is strong, empirical investigations are sparse. More research is needed to test the theoretical ties between justice-related behavior and moral motives to make them more transparent and directly observable.

## THE MORAL IDENTITY APPROACH

Instead of focusing on morality as a universal motive that underlies justice judgments, the moral identity approach to understanding how morality connects with fairness addresses the likelihood that morality is more important to some people's conception of self or identity than others. More specifically, moral identity is thought to be a self-regulatory mechanism that functions in the space between moral reasoning and moral action, and individual differences in moral identity strength accounts for variability in the likelihood that people will transform action potentials associated with their moral beliefs and judgments into behavior (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003; see also Blasi, 1984, 1993). People may have identical views about what is moral or immoral but act in very different ways because they vary in the priority they attach to their morals relative to other aspects of their identity or sense of self.

Recent research has demonstrated effects of moral identity on workplace and justice-related behavior. Specifically, stronger endorsements of moral identity (i.e., favorable attitudes toward being caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind) were associated with less self-reported deviant behavior within organizations, such as taking home office supplies or massaging expense reports (Aquino, Reed, Lim, Felts, & Freeman, 2007). Moreover, strength of moral identity moderated the effects of perceived procedural and interactional justice on people's degree of organizational retaliation behavior: People low in moral identity were as likely to admit to taking home office supplies or padding expense reports even when procedural and interactional justice were both perceived to be high. People high in moral identity, however, were less likely to report various forms of organizational retaliation behavior when they felt that the organization was procedurally and interactionally fair. In sum, these results suggest that people higher in moral identity are more sensitive to being treated fairly, and therefore are more likely to adjust their workplace behavior accordingly. Unlike their low moral identity counterparts, people high in moral identity are better organizational citizens when they are treated more fairly by the organization. When people high in moral identity are treated unfairly, however, a need to restore a sense of balance appears to motivate them to behave less ethically (cf. Folger, 2001; Lerner, 1980; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Other research suggests that moral identity is not simply a static component of people's personality. Rather, moral identity is a malleable part of a person's self-schema that can be activated or suppressed by features of situations (Aquino, Reed, Lim, et al., 2007; Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). For example, Aquino, Reed, Lim, et al. (2007) assessed the effects of both chronic and primed (or state) levels of moral identity on coopera-

tion in a social dilemma game. Specifically, they measured chronic levels of moral identity 24 hours before an experimental session, and then manipulated state levels of moral identity using a priming task immediately before participants played the social dilemma game. In the priming task, participants were asked to write a brief story about themselves that included the nine words used in the Aquino and Reed (2002) moral identity measure (e.g., caring, compassionate, fair). Results indicated that higher levels of chronic moral identity and moral identity primes both were associated with more cooperation, and the priming effect differed as a function of levels of chronic moral identity. Priming moral identity did not alter the amount that people low in chronic moral identity cooperated, but people high in chronic moral identity were more likely to cooperate if their moral identity was primed than if it was not. Therefore, people appear to be differently susceptible to cues to act prosocially, and prosocial behavior appears to be a product of priming an existing predisposition to be moral.

Research on moral identity therefore suggests that both state and chronic levels of moral identity can influence cooperative behavior, as well as people's degree of sensitivity and responsiveness to being treated fairly. Despite these encouraging results, there are reasons to be concerned about the ultimate utility of the individual difference (or chronic activation) approach to moral identity. Moral identity theory is grounded in the idea that people will seek to act in ways that are consistent with their sense of self (Aquino & Reed, 2002; see also Blasi, 1984). Therefore, if one can assess what people deem important to their self-concepts, then one should be able to predict how they will act. However, for a number of reasons, there is not always a high degree of correspondence between people's moral identity and how they subsequently behave (e.g., Hartshorne & May, 1928, 1929, 1930).

One explanation for the discrepancy between people's self-rated importance of a moral identity and connections to behavior is that this approach assumes that the propensity to act morally stems from a stable individual difference variable. Measures of moral identity assess the extent that people endorse as being central to their self-concept a number of traits (e.g., being honest, caring, compassionate; Aquino & Reed, 2002; cf. Blasi, 2005), traits that many people perceive to be moral. One problem with this approach is that people will automatically appear to have a lower moral identity if their conceptualizations of what is moral or what they define as their moral identity differs from the specific traits included in the current moral identity scale, even if their commitment to their personal moral values are high and important to them. Aquino and Reed (2002) acknowledge that the measure is not likely to capture all moral traits in each person's self-concept, but they argue that the presence of some self-relevant traits should be sufficient to trigger people's moral identity because spreading activation should engage the broader cognitive network in which these traits reside. However, rat-

ing the self-importance of being someone who is “caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind” may not be sufficient to capture, or even prime through spreading activation, the full implications of what it might mean to have a strong moral identity. For example, Rest (1994) suggests that moral character involves ego strength, perseverance, backbone, toughness, strength of conviction, and courage. Blasi (2005) emphasizes will power and integrity. In short, there are a number of traits or characteristics one might use to construct a personal sense of moral identity, not all of which relate well to the “virtue” clusters used in current measures of this construct. “Toughness” and “strength of conviction,” for example, may not be primed in an associative memory network by referencing traits such as “caring,” “generous,” and “kind.”

A second problem with a trait-based measure of moral identity is that it is bound to have difficulty identifying when people are likely to perceive traits to be relevant to a given situation. Two people may agree equally that “honesty” is a desirable quality that they find to be personally important as a self-descriptor. However, those same two people may disagree about which situations require absolute honesty. Consistent with the notion that perceptions of moral relevance are more idiosyncratic than universal, very few people tend to act virtuously across all situations (Hartshorne & May, 1928, 1929, 1930). Therefore, it may not be reasonable to expect that some people are consistently more moral than are other people because they rate themselves high on the importance of a moral identity. This critique is similar to the one Kohlberg (e.g., 1970) used to argue against the “bag of virtues,” or character education approach to moral education. It also parallels modern social-cognitive critiques of trait-based personality theories (e.g., Cervone, 2004; Mischel, 1990). In summary, trait-based approaches to morality may miss important variance that could be explained by people’s moral motivations or the importance they attach to morality because (a) there may be considerable variance in how people define their personal sense of moral identity that may not be captured by measures that define moral identity for participants by referencing a small set of specific traits, and (b) there is also likely to be considerable within- and between-person variance in the relative salience of moral identity or moral motivations and concerns across given situations, even among those who rate their moral identity as generally self-important. An ideographic approach to studying moral identity may address some of these concerns.

### **AN IDEOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO MORAL IDENTITY**

The Accessible Identity Model (AIM) of justice reasoning is a more ideographic and contingent approach to understanding how and why people’s

personal sense of moral identity sometimes seems to be an important influence on justice reasoning, but other times, may not (Skitka, 2003). More specifically, the AIM posits that how people define what is fair or unfair depends on which aspect of identity currently dominates people's "working self-concepts." The notion here is that people can keep only a finite number of possible identity-relevant goals or concerns in their working memory at any given time. Therefore, people maintain a working self-concept, or a subset of the self-repertoire that is relevant to the person's goals in the current situation (Markus & Kunda, 1986; McGuire, McGuire, & Cheever, 1986; Mussweiler, Gabriel, & Bodenhausen, 2000; Showers, 2002). When moral identity concerns dominate the working self-concept, the AIM predicts that people's conceptions of fairness are more likely to be shaped by their conception of the moral good. However, people are often pursuing other identity-relevant goals, values, or concerns besides those based on a moral identity. For example, when negotiating a price on a car or one's salary, one's conceptions of fairness may be shaped more by the accessibility of justice norms stored in memory in close connection with material goals, such as the equity rule (Greenberg, 1980, 1983; Kernis & Reis, 1984). Similarly, people at times are more concerned about their status and standing in important groups, and conceptions of fairness in these contexts tend to be defined more by group than personal norms (Greenberg, 1980; 1983; Kernis & Reis, 1984), or whether people feel they are being treated with appropriate dignity and respect (e.g., Platow & von Knippenberg, 2000). Finally, other research indicates when moral concerns are especially salient, people's definitions of fairness shift again, that is, fairness is defined in terms of ends, rather than by the degree to which procedures are enacted in fair or respectful ways (e.g., Skitka & Mullen, 2002). Although the accessible identity model can account for considerable existing research (for reviews, see Skitka, 2003; Skitka & Bravo, 2005), more research is needed to put its core hypotheses to direct empirical test.

Empirical tests of the AIM would need to include a way to ideographically measure or prime moral and other aspects of identity to control which aspect of identity dominates the working self-concept at any given time. Using a small set of traits to prime moral identity is subject to the same criticism as using a small set of traits to measure this construct. An alternative that would alleviate these problems would be to allow perceivers to ideographically define what kind of traits, values, or behaviors count as moral. For example, moral identity could be primed by asking participants to write a paragraph about a time when they acted morally or felt strongly that something was morally right or wrong.

Measuring moral identity could also be done more ideographically. For example, people could be asked to list traits, characteristics, or values that represent what it personally means to them to be a moral person. Partici-

pants then could be asked the extent to which these particular traits, values, or characteristics are relevant in the specific social or organizational situation researchers wish to investigate (see Cervone, 2004, for more details about ideographical approaches to personality assessment). It seems also important not to measure the self-importance of a given identity in isolation, and to consider the salience of people's moral identity relative to other aspects of identity or identity-relevant goals in a given situation.

Another way to ideographically assess the relative salience of morality as a concern in a specific situation is to treat morality as an attitude, rather than a trait or aspect of identity. The identity and attitude approaches are not mutually exclusive because attitudes often serve an important self-expressive function (e.g., Herek, 1987). We turn next to review of theory and research that takes an attitude, rather than an identity, approach to studying the role of morality in explaining how people think about justice and fairness.

### THE MORAL CONVICTION APPROACH

The third program of research that we review here focuses on how attitudes held with strong moral conviction ("moral mandates") are different from otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes (see Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). According to this perspective, there are important differences between attitudes that reflect preferences, normative conventions, and moral imperatives (see also Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1983). Preferences are subjective matters of taste. For example, if one were to say, "Our organization values ethnic diversity, but it is okay if other organizations do not," one would be expressing a preference. If one were to say, "Organizations in our culture value ethnic diversity, but it is okay if organizations in other parts of the world do not" one would be expressing a normative convention. However, if one says, "Our organization values ethnic diversity, and any organization that does not is wrong," then one's feelings about ethnic diversity reflect moral concerns (see also Haidt, Rosenberg, & Hom, 2003). In short, the universalism proposition of our theory of moral conviction states that people perceive their moral convictions to apply to everyone, irrespective of their personal preferences or membership in a particular social or cultural group.

Skitka et al. (2005) furthermore argue that attitudes held with strong moral conviction are experienced as *sui generis*, that is, as unique, special, and in a class of their own (e.g., Boyd, 1988; McDowell, 1979; Moore, 1903; Sturgeon, 1985). Part of what makes moral convictions special is that they represent a Humean paradox (for detailed discussions, see Mackie, 1977; Smith, 1994). On the one hand, people experience moral convictions as

beliefs about the world, or recognitions of fact. On the other hand, moral convictions are motivational guides. The paradox is that recognition of fact is generally presumed to be independent of any kind of motivational force (Hume, 1888). For example, recognition that plants engage in photosynthesis has no motivational corollary or consequence. In contrast, the recognition or judgment that abortion, racial profiling, or cannibalism are wrong carries an inherent motivational component (something captured to some degree by the deonance approach reviewed earlier). In addition to the paradoxical feature of being both factual and motivational, moral convictions also provide their own inherent justification for behavior. Why must one act? Because X is wrong! Because doing Y is right! The moral conviction itself is sufficient to justify any action taken in the name of that attitude. Taken together, then, moral convictions, unlike otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes, are experienced as a unique combination of factual belief, compelling motive, and justification for action.

Skitka et al. (2005) also assert that moral attitudes are likely to have different affective signatures than otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes. People's feelings when they think about issues about which they have personal moral convictions (e.g., corporate fraud, censorship, cloning, or a host of other potential moral concerns), have quite different and distinctive ties to emotions relative to people's equally strong, but nonmoral attitudes, such as feelings about Coke versus Pepsi (a preference) or how one should dress for a job interview (a normative convention). Although these classes of attitudes are likely to be equally strong, important, certain, and central to perceivers as their moral attitudes, attitudes tied to moral conviction arouse quite different—and we think usually stronger—emotions than nonmoral attitudes.

A final distinction between moral and equally strong but nonmoral attitudes (and one of some importance for justice reasoning, as will be explained shortly) is that moral convictions are thought to be authority independent (see also Nucci, 2001; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1983, 1998). People sometimes behave in ways that might be judged as "moral" because they respect and adhere to the rules in a given context. However, obeying the rules may be simply behaving according to normative pressure and not because of any real moral commitment to those rules. For example, someone might feel that it is wrong for a 20-year-old to consume alcohol. This person's feeling about this issue would be authority dependent if it were based on a desire to adhere to the rules and legal norms of what constitutes underage drinking, or by a desire to avoid authority sanction for breaking these rules. If the rules changed, so too would this person's view about the behavior at hand. Therefore, this person's position is authority dependent. Someone whose view about this behavior was based on a sense of personal

morality, however, would still think the behavior was wrong even if the rules were changed (e.g., if the legal drinking age changed to 18).

The authority independence hypothesis of ~~Skitka et al.'s (2005) moral mandate theory~~ is inconsistent with a long history of theory and research based on various versions of legitimacy theory. Legitimacy theories predict that when an authority system is perceived to be legitimate, neither “consent of the governed” nor “benefits received” are required to justify obedience (e.g., Gelpi, 2003; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Tyler, 2006). Instead, legitimacy creates a duty and obligation to obey as an imperative that replaces personal moral standards as a guide or primary motivation (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). One major way that authorities gain legitimacy is by making decisions using fair procedures (Tyler & Rasinski, 1991), that is, procedures that are consistent, suppress bias, and provide opportunities for voice, and that treat involved parties with dignity and respect (Leventhal, 1976; Lind & Tyler, 1988).

Although there are many studies that support the notion that people generally obey and accept the decisions made by procedurally fair and legitimate authorities, until recently, few if any studies explicitly tested whether this general finding was true when authorities made decisions that were explicitly at odds with people’s morally mandated beliefs. In other words, it is one thing to accept nonpreferred outcomes; it may be another thing to accept and comply with decisions that one sees as fundamentally wrong or immoral.

A recent study using a longitudinal panel design tested the competing predictions of legitimacy and moral mandate theory in the context of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Gonzales v. Oregon*, a Bush administration challenge to Oregon’s Death with Dignity Act (a state law that allows physician-assisted suicide in that state; Skitka, 2006). Judgments of procedural fairness, trust, and legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as people’s moral mandates<sup>1</sup> about the issue of physician-assisted suicide, were collected before the Supreme Court ruled in this case. Months later when the Court announced its decision in the case (it ruled against the Bush administration, and upheld the Oregon law), the same people were surveyed again. Even when controlling for a host of other variables (e.g., degree of religiosity), results indicated that whether people’s feelings about physician-assisted suicide were morally mandated explained the vast proportion of variance in their perceptions of outcome fairness and decision acceptance of the Court ruling in this case. Surprisingly, judgments of procedural fairness, trust in the Court, and its legitimacy measured before the ruling explained no variance in decision fairness and decision acceptance post-ruling.

What may be more important is that the degree that perceivers’ felt morally mandated about the outcome of the case also affected perceptions of the procedural fairness, trust, and legitimacy of the Court after its decision

on *Gonzales v. Oregon*. People who had a moral mandate against physician-assisted suicide perceived the Supreme Court to be less procedurally fair and legitimate, and had less trust in the Court after the ruling than before (Skitka, 2006). In summary, perceptions of procedural fairness, institutional legitimacy, and related variables assessed before the Court ruling did not protect authorities from backlash when people morally disagreed with the authority's decision.

Although it would not undermine the core message of the Supreme Court study just described (i.e., that people's moral convictions about outcomes can matter in how people reason about fairness and their compliance with authorities), one could nonetheless argue that the reason why Skitka (2006) found weak effects for procedural fairness, trust, and legitimacy in the Supreme Court decision study was because people had little or no personal involvement in the case. Third-party observations of justice-related events provide no opportunity to personally experience fair procedures, which may weaken not only how effectively fair procedures can directly affect decision fairness and acceptance, but also how well it can indirectly affect decision acceptance through its effects on perceptions of institutional legitimacy (e.g., Tyler & Rasinski, 1991).

To address the question of whether moral mandate effects also emerge when people personally experience procedures, we conducted an embedded experiment in an online survey with a nationally representative sample of adults (Bauman & Skitka, 2007b, Study 1). The survey assessed people's attitudes and moral convictions associated with a number of political issues. Half the participants were told that their survey responses would be anonymously shared with their national legislators; these participants also were encouraged to write in an open-ended text box any comments they wanted to share with their legislators (i.e., their congressman, senator, the President of the U.S., and the members of the U.S. Supreme Court). The other half of the sample learned nothing about whether their surveys would be shared with anyone, nor were they given an open-ended opportunity to voice their opinions. Participants were then asked to imagine that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled today that abortion was no longer a legal option in the United States (in other words, it overturned *Roe v. Wade*) or it made a ruling that put abortion on an even stronger legal footing than it had been before.

Results indicated that the voice manipulation had the intended effect: Participants in the voice condition reported that they felt they had more voice in the legislative process than those in the no-voice condition.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, voice protected the U.S. Supreme Court from backlash among those whose position on abortion was low in moral conviction. However, voice had no effect on perceptions that procedures or outcomes were fair when people's position on abortion was morally mandated. Morally mandated

participants perceived that the Court's decision and procedures were unfair, and refused to accept the decision when it was inconsistent with their attitude about abortion; moreover, morally mandated participants perceived that the decision and procedures were fair, and embraced the decision when it was consistent with their attitude about abortion (Bauman & Skitka, 2007b, Study 1).

Taken together, these results suggest that people do not mindlessly turn over power to legitimate authorities. Instead, "consent of the governed" appears to be a dynamic and negotiated process, and people can revise their feelings about legitimate authority systems when those systems fail a moral litmus test. Support for the authority independence hypothesis of moral mandate theory has also been found in a host of studies that have tested hypotheses across a wide variety of decision-making contexts and forms of authority, in field studies as well as laboratory studies (e.g., Bauman & Skitka, 2007a, 2007b; Mullen & Skitka, 2006a, 2006b; Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Skitka & Houston, 2001).

### IS MORALITY AN UNAMBIGUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL GOOD?

Both the motive and identity approaches to understanding the connections between justice and morality are "moral virtues" theories. Morality is seen as an antidote or alternative to "baser" sentiments, motives, or aspects of personality or identity, such as unbridled self-interest (Folger, 2001; Turillo et al., 2002). However, the attitude approach to morality paints a less sanguine picture, and instead reveals that there are a number of reasons why people's sense of morality and strong moral convictions could pose special organizational challenges. When organizational policy decisions conflict with people's moral convictions, or example, the repercussions can be quite serious. Not only do authority and institutional legitimacy become significantly undermined, but people respond with a variety of other forms of backlash as well.

Recent research explored the broader organizational consequences of making a decision at odds with constituents' core moral beliefs and convictions (Bauman & Skitka, 2007a). Another goal of this research was to explore whether features of a situation that should speak to people's belongingness needs (i.e., whether treatment and procedural quality were positive or negative) would moderate the effect of moral mandates on students' reactions to a university decision about whether student fees could cover abortions at a university health center.

Students participated in the experiment 24 or more hours after completing online measures that assessed their support of or opposition to

abortion and the degree that their attitudes about abortion were morally mandated. At the experimental session, participants learned that the university had ostensibly formed a committee to decide whether student fees could be used to provide abortion services at the university health service. After reading about the processes used to make the decision as well as the decision outcome, participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their reactions.

Morally mandated participants perceived both treatment (e.g., organizational trust, respect) and the overall situation to be more unfair when the decision was inconsistent rather than consistent with their position on abortion. More important, these same students also reported stronger intentions to protest, withhold tuition, make things difficult for the university administration, and leave the university to attend a different institution than did students who did not have a moral mandate about abortion. Even extremely fair procedures and treatment did not soften the backlash that came when students believed that university authorities made a decision that was inconsistent with their moral beliefs. Moreover, the same pattern of results also emerged in a second study, when participants acknowledged that procedures and treatment were fair before they learned about the decision outcome (Bauman & Skitka, 2007a).

In summary, not only did morally mandated students feel that the committee's decision was unfair if the decision went the "wrong way," they were also high in a desire to retaliate and were prepared to leave the university because of it. These results emerged even when (a) procedures and procedural treatment were maximally fair, and (b) students had explicitly acknowledged that aspects of procedures and procedural treatment were very fair before they learned about the university's decision in the case. The organizational implications of these findings are quite clear. Should an organization make a decision or engage in behavior that its constituents find morally untenable, there is likely to be considerable backlash in the form of reduced organizational commitment and loyalty, increased anti-organizational behavior and retaliation, as well as employee turnover.

Although more research has explored how people react when authorities or organizations make morally objectionable decisions than other ways that morality could affect life in organizational settings, some recent research suggests that people's moral views can present unique challenges even in the absence of any organizational decision or action. More specifically, there is emerging evidence that people are especially intolerant of those who do not share their moral point of view, and that people find it especially difficult to arrive at procedural solutions to resolve conflict about morally mandated issues. More detail is provided below.

## THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING MORAL DIVERSITY

One implication of our working theory of moral mandates is that when people see an issue in a moral light, they feel that others should universally agree or would be persuaded to agree with their view on that issue if only they knew “the facts” available to the perceiver (the universalism proposition). One implication of this defining feature of what makes moral mandates different from otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes is that people therefore are likely to be especially intolerant of others who do not share their moral point of view. When people confront issues they see in terms of moral right and wrong, negotiation and tolerance have no room at the table: wrong is wrong.

Consistent with this idea, some of our research indicates that people do not want to work with, live near, or even shop at a store owned by someone who does not share their moral point of view on issues of the day. For example, a community sample was asked to nominate what they thought was the most pressing problem facing the nation (Skitka et al., 2005, Study 1). Participants then were asked to rate how strongly they felt about their nominated issue using traditional indices of attitude strength, for example attitude extremity, importance, and certainty (see Petty & Krosnick, 1995, for a more detailed discussion of attitude strength), and to indicate the degree to which their feelings about the issue was reflected a moral conviction. Finally, participants were asked to complete a social distance measure, a classic index of interpersonal prejudice (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Crandall, 1991). Participants indicated how happy they would be to have someone who did not share their view on their nominated pressing issue as, for example, a neighbor, someone who might marry into their family, someone they might work with, or other social roles.

Results indicated that the strength of moral conviction people reported feeling about their most important issue explained unique variance in their preferred social distance from attitudinally dissimilar others, even when controlling for markers of attitude strength. Moreover, when moral conviction was high, participants were equally likely to reject attitudinally dissimilar others regardless of whether the prospective role was intimate (e.g., friend) or more distant (e.g., the owner of a store one might frequent). In contrast, when moral conviction was low, people were more tolerant of attitude dissimilarity overall, and especially in more distant than intimate relationships (Skitka et al., 2005, Study 1). These same findings emerged in a second study that tested the same hypotheses with researcher-nominated issues (e.g., legalization of marijuana, abortion, capital punishment, and building new nuclear power plants in the United States), and even when we controlled for strength of political orientation and individual differences in the tendency to see all issues in a moral light (Skitka et al., 2005, Study 2).

To further test how intolerant people are of those who do not share their moral points of view, we then tested whether we would see similar evidence of rejection of attitudinally dissimilar others using a behavioral measure. Before the experimental session, we assessed participants' degree of attitude strength and moral conviction associated with their position on abortion. Later, participants came to the lab for a study that was ostensibly about how people get to know each other and whether this process unfolded differently when one person has "inside knowledge" about whom they are about to meet. All research participants learned that they would be meeting another research participant and engage in a brief get-to-know-you exercise. They were also told that they had been randomly selected to be the informed discussion partner in this exercise. Participants then learned that the person they were about to meet was adamantly pro-choice on the issue of abortion.

After this introduction, the experimenter escorted the participant to another room. A variety of personal effects clearly indicated someone else, who apparently had stepped out of the room, ~~took that one chair~~. The experimenter feigned surprise at the missing "other participant" when entering the room. After suggesting that the real participant grab another chair from a stack of chairs against the wall, the experimenter left the room allegedly to look for the other participant. After waiting enough time for the participant to be settled, the experimenter returned and measured how far the real participant placed his or her chair relative to the chair that ostensibly would be occupied soon by a pro-choice person. As in the social distance studies described above, results indicated that moral conviction explained unique variance in the physical distance people maintained between themselves and a pro-choice target, an effect that was significant even when we controlled for a variety of other indices of attitude strength. People who opposed abortion and whose attitude was high in moral conviction (i.e., whose attitude was morally mandated) maintained greater distance from the target than those whose opposition was not as strongly rooted in moral conviction. Although not as strong of an effect, people who supported legalized abortion and whose attitude was high in moral conviction sat closer to the target than those whose support was not as strongly rooted in moral conviction. In other words, people were more repulsed by morally dissimilar others than they were attracted to morally similar others (Skitka, et al., 2005, Study 3).

In summary, the social and physical distance studies support one implication of the universalism proposition of ~~moral mandate theory: People are less tolerant of attitude dissimilarity on morally mandated issues than other issues about which they feel strongly but are not morally mandated.~~ Moreover, effects of moral conviction on intolerance were not something

that could be explained by or reduced to other aspects of attitudes, such as their extremity, importance, certainty, or centrality.

Although the results of the social and physical distance studies suggest that differences in moral beliefs are not well tolerated by people, and that moral conviction predicts variability in intolerance unaccounted for by non-moral aspects of attitudes, this research did not directly test whether moral diversity was any more or less likely to be difficult to manage than other kinds of diversity. We review research that addresses this question next.

### **IS MORAL DIVERSITY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER KINDS OF DIVERSITY?**

Although not many studies have addressed the question of how tolerant people are of moral diversity, there is some scattered evidence that people respond differently to different kinds of diversity, and that they are more sensitive to whether people share their moral beliefs than whether others share their race or ethnicity. For example, Rokeach and Mezei (1966) found that white and black participants preferred to spend their coffee breaks with discussion group members (confederates) who shared their beliefs but not their race more than members who shared their race but not their beliefs, even at a time when race relations presumably were much more tense than they are today (see also Anderson & Cote, 1966).

Recent research arrives at similar conclusions. Fraternity members, for example, valued diversity in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and religion in their membership more than diversity of opinion on moral politics (Haidt et al., 2003, Study 1). Additional comparisons of men, women, whites, blacks, and Asian students each revealed a similar order of preferences for working with diverse others: All groups were happy to interact with demographically diverse others, but were reluctant to work with morally dissimilar others (Haidt et al., 2003, Studies 2 and 3).

In summary, although more research is needed, moral diversity appears to be a more difficult interpersonal challenge for people than demographic diversity. Moreover, other research indicates that all forms of conflict are higher in morally diverse workgroups and that moral conflicts are especially resistant to resolution.

### **MORALITY, CONFLICT, AND BARRIERS TO PROBLEM SOLVING**

Although there is not a great deal of research on the question of moral diversity, what research there is suggests that it is associated with greater

personal and intraorganizational conflict than other kinds of diversity. For example, value diversity correlated more strongly than social category (e.g., ethnicity or gender) or informational diversity of workgroups (e.g., the degree that people had varying levels of information or expertise) with all forms of conflict at work, ranging from personality conflicts to task-related conflicts, such as disagreements about who should do what or the best way to accomplish work-related tasks. In other words, as value diversity in a given workgroup increased, so did levels of all forms of workplace conflict (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). In addition to leading to greater conflict, higher levels of value diversity in these groups were also associated with lower levels of performance and efficiency (Jehn et al., 1999).

Although the Jehn et al. (1999) study suggests that moral diversity could present unique managerial challenges, not all values are necessarily connected to people's conceptions of morality. Recent research, however, more directly tested whether the findings of Jehn et al. were really due to something specific about and unique to moral diversity. Specifically, Skitka et al. (2005, Study 4) examined people's behavior in small, attitudinally heterogeneous groups. Participants were prescreened for whether they had a moral mandate on the issues of abortion or capital punishment. To be eligible to participate in the study, prospective participants had to have a moral mandate about one, but not both, of these issues (where having a moral mandate was defined as having an extreme attitude that was also high in moral conviction). In an additional condition of the experiment, participants had to have an extreme attitude, but low moral conviction about whether there should be mandatory testing as a graduation requirement, in addition to having a moral mandate about either abortion or capital punishment.<sup>3</sup> Based on their responses on the prescreening measure, we invited four participants with heterogeneous<sup>4</sup> attitudes to come to the lab, that is, we invited two participants who were on one side of a morally mandated issue and two participants who were on the other side of that issue. Participants were unaware of anything about other group members' attitudes or anything about the criteria used for selection into a specific group.

Upon arrival at the lab, groups were charged with the task of developing a procedure that could be used to resolve either their morally mandated issue (e.g., group members were morally mandated about abortion and were asked to discuss procedures to decide—once and for all—whether abortion should be legal in the United States), an issue that many people view in moral terms but the participants did not (e.g., group members were morally mandated about abortion, not morally mandated about capital punishment, and were asked to discuss procedures to decide—once and for all—whether capital punishment should be allowed in the United States), or an issue about which people often feel strongly but tend not to see in moral

terms (e.g., group members had a moral mandate about abortion or capital punishment and were asked to discuss procedures to decide—once and for all—whether there should be mandatory testing as a graduation requirement). Groups were told that group discussion could end when they either (a) came to unanimous agreement about a procedure to resolve their assigned issue, (b) came to unanimous agreement that they would never agree on a procedure to resolve their assigned issue, or (c) they timed out before coming to consensus about either a or b. This admittedly very complicated experiment allowed us to test whether there was something special about the effects of diversity of moral beliefs about a specific issue that could not be reduced to something about the kinds of people who have moral mandates, or something about attitude strength rather than moral conviction.

Results indicated that group processes and climate were quite different in morally mandated heterogeneous groups that discussed procedures to resolve their morally mandated issue than the other group discussion conditions. Heterogeneous groups that discussed procedures to resolve their morally mandated issue (a) were least likely to unanimously agree to a procedural solution to their assigned problem, (b) were lowest in reported good will and cooperativeness toward their fellow group members, and (c) were seen as much more defensive and tense by third-party observers who were blind to the experimental conditions, than were groups in the other configurations. By way of contrast, the groups who discussed procedures to resolve something they felt strongly but not morally about reported the greatest degree of cooperation and good will, and also were seen by third-party observers as the least tense and defensive. In summary, trying to develop procedural solutions to resolve diversity of moral opinions was difficult, awkward, and painful, but trying to develop procedural solutions to resolve diversity of strong but nonmoral opinions was experienced as fun and interesting (Skitka et al., 2005, Study 4). The contrast between the moral mandate and strong attitude conditions therefore provides quite persuasive evidence that there is something uniquely challenging about trying to resolve moral differences.

In summary, the results of the group study indicated that even when participants were blind to each other's attitudes on an issue they each saw in a moral light, conflict and difficulty in developing procedural solutions for that issue nonetheless emerged. However, moral diversity in groups did not impede developing procedures to resolve other kinds of problems or disagreements, at least in the one-shot group encounter studied by Skitka et al. (2005, Study 4). Future research is needed, however, to explore what happens when people are aware of the diversity of moral opinions in their workgroup when they are working to resolve nonmorally mandated conflicts. For example, people who work together for longer periods of

time are likely to be aware of areas of moral disagreement, that could in turn affect how they perceive each other as well as their expectations about whether they can effectively resolve unrelated conflicts. People may assume that because they disagree about fundamental issues of right and wrong that they also are unlikely to agree or be able to see eye-to-eye on nonmoral issues or questions.

## CONCLUSION

Our review indicates that there is increasingly persuasive evidence that people's conceptions of morality can play an important role in how and why they think about fairness. Among other things, morality (a) appears to motivate people to punish others who behave unfairly, even if doing so comes at some personal cost; (b) can lead people to behave ethically when they are treated well by authorities, but also can lead people to act in counter-normative ways when they are not treated well; (c) can sometimes trump the usual buffering effects of authority or institutional legitimacy on people's perceptions of fairness and willingness to accept authority's decisions, leading instead to significant backlash; and (d) can be associated with increased conflict and difficulty in problem solving. None of these findings negates previous research that has found that people's justice-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can also be influenced—sometimes strongly so—by self-interest or variables that enhance people's sense of status or other relational needs. Rather, this research indicates that justice theory and research is incomplete if it does not also take into consideration the possible role of people's moral concerns and how these shape perceptions of fairness and related behavior. One important goal of future research will be to explore more thoroughly the contingencies regarding when people's sense of justice is more likely to be primarily shaped by rational self-interest, relational needs, or moral concerns (for efforts in this direction, see Heuer & Stroessner, 2003; Schroeder, Steel, Woodell, & Bembenek, 2003; Skitka, 2003).

Much of the research we report has focused on the effects of moral disagreement on politicized issues, such as abortion, the death penalty, or euthanasia. It is important to remember, however, that these issues merely represent a conveniently studied subset of potential moral attitudes and beliefs. Our theory describes characteristics that should apply to *all* attitudes people personally associate with moral conviction, not just the handful we happened to study here. Therefore, our results should generalize to issues that arise more frequently in organizational life. For example, the demands of a job frequently impinge on family life. Persistent requests to sacrifice family time to complete work responsibilities could cause subordinates to perceive their manager to be morally suspect. Alternatively, people may

perceive executives who appear to maximize their self-interest rather than pursue a prosocial mission of the company to be immoral. In either case, we expect that moral judgment will produce a cascade of effects that are consistent with our theory. When people perceive actions—any actions—to have moral implications, they will universally hold people accountable, be motivated to act and feel justified for doing so, feel strong emotions, and make these judgments autonomously.

Some of the research reviewed in the current chapter also points to the importance of asking, rather than assuming people see a given situation as relevant to their personal definitions of morality. Although researchers often assume some issues globally evoke moral reactions or sentiments (e.g., Hillygus & Shields, 2005), our research reveals that there is considerable individual variation in the degree that people report that their position on various issues—including such polarized topics as abortion and gay marriage—reflect their core moral convictions. In a similar vein, there are weak correlations in people's self-reported moral convictions across issues (Skitka et al., 2005), suggesting that the degree to which people see issues in moral terms does not reduce to a stable individual different variable, such as moral identity.

In this chapter, we also attempted to balance the notion that morality is an organizational good by highlighting a potentially hidden cost of morally motivated judgment and behavior. Moral universalism and absolutism can present organizational hazards by engendering intolerance, conflict, and punitiveness. For example, one could focus on a virtuous interpretation of the Kahneman et al. (1986) finding that people were willing to take a monetary loss to punish someone who had behaved unfairly, that is, that research participants behaved selflessly to promote the greater good. One could also interpret people's behavior in this context, however, as irrational and wasteful or inappropriately vengeful and punitive, even if it was morally motivated. After all, the end result was a solution that was less integrative (i.e., people acted to decrease the size of the pie that both players took home) and perhaps inappropriately punitive given that the other player had not done any harm to the person who levied the punishment in the first place.

Along similar lines, other research reviewed here suggests that people are more intolerant of moral than other kinds of diversity, and that higher levels of moral diversity are associated with increased interpersonal and workplace tension and conflict (e.g., Haidt et al., 2003; Jehn et al., 1999; Skitka et al., 2005). Although some very recent research has begun to examine that processes that underlie these effects (Bauman & Skitka, 2007a; Mullen & Skitka, 2006a), future research should build on this work and attempt to discover ways to temper moral conflict.

Finding ways to deal with moral conflict is especially important given the current state of the world, and because a now rather substantial amount of research indicates that morality is a boundary condition on one of the most successful approaches used to avoid and resolve conflict. Although considerable research has demonstrated that people are more willing to accept nonpreferred outcomes if procedures are perceived as fair (see Tyler & Smith, 1998, for a review), these effects do not emerge as strongly or at all when people's outcome preferences are morally mandated. A host of both field and laboratory studies demonstrate that fair treatment and decision-making procedures do not buffer institutions or authorities from backlash when they make decisions that are at odds with perceivers' sense of fundamental right and wrong. People reject decisions that are inconsistent with their moral point of view, and in addition, both the procedures and the authorities or institution that yielded them are subsequently seen as less legitimate. People are willing to protest, subvert, or even leave organizations when they believe that the organization does not share their core moral values (Bauman & Skitka, 2007a).

In a world that is becoming increasingly global in scale, people will be forced to interact with others who do not necessarily share their value systems. As a result, it will be increasingly important to identify potential pitfalls caused by discrepancies in moral worldviews. It is dangerous, however, to make assumptions about what individuals are likely to believe based solely on their backgrounds. Cultural differences are best conceptualized as frequency distributions rather than as means (see Brett, 2007). Irrespective of whether the central tendency regarding a value or belief differs across two cultures, there is considerable variability in the values or beliefs that individuals within a culture endorse. Therefore, it is even more important to take an ideographic approach to morality when multiple cultures are involved. Irrespective of culture, however, learning more about how morality promotes prosocial and normatively positive behavior in organizations clearly will continue to be an important effort. However, learning more about the psychology of morality and how and why it leads to seemingly intractable intolerance and conflict is equally important, and should lead to greater insight into how to resolve moral disagreements and differences.

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## NOTES

1. It will be recalled that we conceive of moral mandates as attitudes held with strong moral conviction. To avoid potentially confounding moral conviction measures with structural indices of attitude strength, we generally operate moral conviction in terms of responses to a single face-valid item, “To what extent are your feelings about X a reflection of your core moral values and convictions?” (on a 5-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much”) or responses to a 7-point agree–disagree item, “My feelings about X are deeply rooted in my core moral values and convictions.” A discussion of the con-

struct and discriminant validity of this operationalization of moral conviction is provided in Skitka and Bauman ([in press](#)).

2. Numerous studies, both in the lab and in the field, have found voice effects even when people have no direct control over the ultimate decision made (e.g., Folger, 1977; Kanfer, Sawyer, Earley, & Lind, 1987; LaTour, 1978; Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990; Lind, Kurtz, Musanté, Walker, & Thibaut, 1980; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1996; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985).
3. These issues were selected based on pilot testing that indicated that the abortion and capital punishment attitudes were sufficiently uncorrelated so that we could identify people with a moral mandate on one but not the other issue, and because about equal proportions of our subject pool supported or opposed these issues. Similar pilot testing indicated that mandatory testing as a graduation requirement was an issue that students in our subject pool felt strongly about on both sides, but was not an issue they tended to see in a moral light.
4. Other conditions of the study also investigated problem solving in groups that were homogeneous in attitude composition. See Skitka et al. (2005, Study 4) for more detail.

AU query:  
Please add Rest (1994) to Refs.