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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL IDEOLOGY
AND JUDGEMENTS OF MORAL BEHAVIOR**

By

Aaron David Werbel

A THESIS

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL IDEOLOGY AND JUDGEMENTS OF MORAL BEHAVIOR

By

Aaron David Werbel

This study explored both the relationship of the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) with self-concept and its utility in predicting morality judgements of extra-marital behavior. A statistically significant relationship was demonstrated between self-concept and idealism and relativism. This appeared to be complex and to depend more on specific qualities of an individual's self-concept rather than a global measure of overall self-concept. While the scale's construct validity appeared supported by the results, indicating that idealism and relativism were based on a personal analysis of consequence and conformity levels within situations, a post-hoc examination showed that this was not the case. Data suggested that idealism and relativism not only were completely unrelated to this study's constructs of consequences and conformity, but that idealism and the interaction of idealism by relativism contributed nothing independently to the ability to predict moral judgements of perceived extra-marital behavior.

for Mom and Dad

without your love and support I wouldn't be
traveling along the path which I'm
so glad to be following today.

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INTRODUCTION

Moral judgement decisions have received much attention from psychologists and sociologists in the last 30 years. Rest (1979), as well as most other moral judgement theorists, recognized that moral reasoning is a complex construct and acknowledged both the existence and importance of diverse approaches to understanding the mechanisms underlying such thought. Waterman (1988) delineated four models for the empirical study of ethical inquiry. These included the following approaches: cognitive-developmental, dialectical, constructivist/interactional, and taxonomic. While this study will focus on the taxonomic approach, a brief summary of the other paradigms is useful for comparison.

The Cognitive-Developmental Approach

Piaget began his research program in moral development with a stage approach to cognitive development. He considered a child's moral judgements to emanate from cognitive maturation. With this in mind, Kohlberg (1976) developed the most widely known theory of moral development.

His intention was to build on Piaget's theory and apply moral development concepts to individuals of adolescent age. Kohlberg postulated that during a person's lifetime one may progress through as many as six different stages of moral development. He clustered these six stages into three basic levels, each containing two stages. These are the pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels. Kohlberg proposed that these levels correspond with the cognitive development of the individual and are reached in sequential fashion. The six stages put forth by Kohlberg (1976) can be summarized briefly as the following:

- Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation.
- Stage 2. Naive instrumental hedonism.
- Stage 3. Good-boy or good-girl morality of maintaining good relations, approval of others.
- Stage 4. Authority maintaining morality.
- Stage 5. Morality of contract, of individual rights, and of democratically accepted law.
- Stage 6. Morality of individual principles of conscience.

Rest (1979) provided the first extensive empirical validation for the theory put forth by Kohlberg. He summarized his findings from a comparison of 100 studies in the following three statements: Moral judgement is

developmental; the processes involved in moral judgement are cognitive and; although moral judgement is related to cognition, it is not simply the application of cognitive techniques or skills to moral questions, but a unique endeavor. In addition, Rest, with his Defining Issues Test (DIT, 1969) extended the research paradigm from adolescence through adulthood. Through extensive interviews he slightly modified Kohlberg's original six stages as follows:

Stage 1. The morality of obedience.

Stage 2. The morality of instrumental egoism and simple exchange.

Stage 3. The morality of interpersonal concordance.

Stage 4. The morality of law and duty to the social order.

Stage 5. The morality of societal consensus.

Stage 6. The morality of non-arbitrary social cooperation.

The differences between these models are subtle at best, as Rest has heavily borrowed from his mentor's prototype (Rest, 1969). One distinction emphasized by Rest is that Kohlberg assumed that the developmental stage must be considered in isolation from the content of the moral issue. Rest proposed that it is impossible to separate structure from the content of issues and norms. He

demonstrated that even Kohlberg's scoring system did not appear to differentiate between structure and content. The DIT, then, measures recognition, comprehension, and preference in moral judgements.

Gilligan's (1982) stage theory of moral development offered a solution to what she described as an inherent gender bias in Kohlberg's stages. In contrast to the ethic of justice and rights which is the underlying premise of Kohlberg's stages, Gilligan (1982) proposed an ethic of care and responsibility that is more attuned to the female experience in moral development. Gilligan's theory includes three stages and two transition periods. The first stage is characterized by preoccupation with self-care in order to insure survival. The first transition is reached when this is understood as selfish and thus criticized by the individual. The second stage is concerned with responsibility and caring for others, as one's interconnectedness with others is being formulated. The final transition period results from the disconcerting choice which must be made when two alternatives are both viewed as immoral because each will hurt someone involved. As a result the woman often chooses to avoid the decision by disregarding her own judgement and focusing on the others involved. This transition stage is characterized by a sorting out of the balance between self-minimization and care for others. The final stage is reached with an

understanding of how care can actually enhance all involved, both others and the self, and a new level of interconnection is achieved. Unfortunately some have erroneously used Gilligan's theory to promote an unbreachable line between the genders' development of moral reasoning (Waterman, 1988). Instead, both the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, while characteristic of masculine and feminine experience, can be measured in any single individual in varying proportions (Gilligan, 1982).

The Dialectical Approach

Dialectic thought can be characterized as an internal debate over authority when two courses of action are mutually exclusive. The dialectical approach, according to Waterman (1988), is illustrated by the research of Hogan. Hogan (1970) has labelled his two sources for moral decision making the "ethic of personal conscience," and the "ethic of social responsibility." He suggests that these ethical approaches are contradictory in that the former is based on a deontological¹ acceptance of natural moral law (such as thou shalt not steal), while the latter is based on acceptance of manifest law as decreed in a community's

¹Deontology comes from the Greek *deontos* which means that which is binding or a necessity. It has come to characterize theories of moral obligation or duty which are often considered divine in origin.

existing legal system and a more teleological² view of the general welfare of society.

Hogan suggested that individuals generally favor one of the two approaches to morality and that when ethical judgements from the two perspectives would result in dissenting conclusions, the one which is primary will determine the outcome of thought. In these circumstances, those favoring an "ethic of personal conscience" will choose to give precedence to an absolute moral law. Those who embrace the manifest law position will give precedence to the prevailing body of laws within the society -- the position which Hogan labelled an "ethic of social responsibility." Hogan (1970) developed the Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA) for empirical investigation of these two precepts.

The Constructivist/Interactional Approach

Unlike Kohlberg, Haan (1982) believed that *objective* principles of justice do not exist. She chose instead, to develop a theory of moral thought based on social interaction. This is the basis for Waterman's (1988) third psychological approach to studying moral reasoning -- the constructivist, interactional approach. Haan's belief was that morality judgements are not based on single,

²Teleology comes from the Greek *teleos*, meaning an end. It is a philosophy characterized by the existence of directed movement toward some definite end or ultimate purpose.

discontinuous climactic events which call for occasional moral decisions. Instead, Haan considered moral thought to be derived from a continuous cycle of dialogues held among people who desire to live in harmony with one another. She referred to this as a "morality of everyday life." Her model thus included a social interaction variable which is unique to this approach.

Haan (1982) developed a five-stage model of interactional morality based on these views. An individual's current stage of morality is based on their acceptance of equality as a moral value, their motivation to engage in mutual dialogue concerning the facts and parameters of a moral issue, and the mastery of the necessary cognitive and social skills for participation in these conversations. Given the focus on social interdependence, assessment within this paradigm must be carried out under group situations.

The Taxonomic Approach

As its name suggests, the taxonomic method is aimed at classifying various styles of moral thought processes into specific categories. The most studied of such taxonomic schemes was presented by Forsyth (1980), who preferred to explain moral judgements from an individual differences perspective. Moral reasoning, according to Forsyth (1980), is viewed as the interaction of two different personality

variables -- idealism and relativism -- each assessed by 10 questions on the 20-item Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ). Idealism is defined as the extent to which one believes that desirable outcomes will always be obtained when one follows the "correct" course of action. A person low in idealism would be akin to the pragmatist, who believes that some bad or undesirable consequences are often inevitably mixed with good outcomes. An individual high in idealism, then, can be characterized as choosing their behavior in order to eliminate negative consequences or endeavoring to promote positive interpersonal outcomes. Relativism is explained as the extent to which one rejects or accepts universal moral rules (e.g., thou shalt not commit adultery) when judging behavior relevant to moral consideration. An individual low in relativism is guided by absolute moral laws in their judgements of morality, while one high in relativism rejects these natural laws as not relevant across situations.

From the dichotomizing and crossing of the variables discussed above, Forsyth (1980) proposed a fourfold typology of ethical ideologies, drawing on various philosophical discussions of morality for additional support.

Situationists

Individuals high in both idealism and relativism reject global moral rules. They believe that positive outcomes

(consequences which they consider to be good) will follow the appropriate behavior for a situation. They look to the "contextual appropriateness" of the behavior when making a judgement as to its morality instead of some general tautology. Called situationists, these persons are bound to what Fletcher (1973) described as idealistic skepticism and make their judgements not on "the 'good' or the 'right' but the 'fitting'" (p.186), behavior for the situation.

Absolutists

The other type of ethical ideology high in idealism is low in relativism and is labelled absolutism. The absolutist, like the situationist is idealistic in believing that the correct behavior will perennially result in the best and appropriate consequences. Absolutists differ, however, in their non-relativistic belief in absolute moral principles, such as Thou shalt not steal, as a guide to defining what correct behavior entails. This ideology shares some similarities with Hogan's "ethic of personal conscience." Both are analogous to the philosophical model of deontology. Forsyth (1980) points out, however, that as these philosophical models are mainly allegorical, the absolutist may not share the extreme position set forth in deontology, but thinks similarly to the deontologist in that there exists a striving to follow moral absolutes.

Exceptionists

Those individuals low in both idealism and relativism are called exceptionists by Forsyth (1980). Individuals characterized by these descriptions are guided by natural moral rules, but also are pragmatic in their understanding that although the "correct" action was sought, both positive and negative consequences may be mixed in the results. This ethical ideology is parallel to the teleological philosophy wherein, although one accepts moral rules as guidelines, one is also bound to seek the most beneficial consequences possible. The exceptionists' moral judgements then, may be exemplified by a review of the appropriate moral law tempered by a pragmatic evaluation for the best possible consequences.

Subjectivists

Lastly, the subjectivist, is low in idealism and high in relativism. Individuals who maintain this perspective accept that both positive and negative outcomes are often mixed as results of behavior, and reject universal moral laws as guides to what that behavior should include. In general, one may say that the subjectivist utilizes personal perspectives and values when making a moral judgement. This will often result in a comparison of the consequences of a behavior but will not be of an objective nature. This ideology reflects a philosophy known as ethical egoism, in

which moral standards are not valid except in reference to one's own behavior.

Superiority of the Taxonomic Approach

There is an important distinction between Forsyth's taxonomic approach to moral reasoning and the other three presented here, with regard to the problem of scope as presented by Waterman (1988):

...each psychologist starts his or her analysis from different assumptions about what constitutes morality. Apart from the psychologists working within a taxonomic framework who do not state a preference, Hogan chose socially responsible rule following, Kohlberg selected formalized considerations of justice, Gilligan added an ethic of care and response, and Haan opted for equality as determined by particular interactional procedures. Each could find support for his or her choice in the arguments of different moral philosophers. Naturally, when these moral psychologists turn to empirical research activities, the studies that they design assess moral functioning in terms of their own particular perspective on it. But the resulting understanding of morality is rather limited in scope and unpersuasive to individuals adopting a different perspective... If someone chose other dilemmas or scored for some other concept of morality, they might reach very different conclusions about the moral functioning of those people scoring highest in Kohlberg's scheme. Similar arguments can be advanced with respect to the work of Hogan, Gilligan, and Haan. (p.292)

When asking for moral judgements of behavior, we are looking for an individual's conception of the question "What is moral?" Waterman (1988) properly cautions us about the practical worth of searching for these judgements with

measures that have an inherent bias. He appears, however, in his zeal to warn of the impossibility of both moral psychology and moral philosophy, to have forgotten his second sentence. "Apart from the psychologists working within a taxonomic framework who do not state a preference..."

If not for the taxonomic approach, Waterman's warnings may be definitive. It appears that there is one approach which does not assume a preceptive knowledge of morality. I maintain that it is not only possible, but also useful, to study moral reasoning in a manner which provides a conceptual basis for explaining the differences in individuals' judgements of behavior. Furthermore, this approach avoids value judgements regarding the "true" nature of morality.

With this in mind, Forsyth's (1980) taxonomic approach to understanding moral reasoning provides a potentially empirical conceptualization of the processes involved in an individual's moral attitudes. There are no judgements inherent in the taxonomic approach as to levels of morality or immorality embodied by the characterizations. They simply represent different styles of evaluating moral thoughts and actions. Following is a review of the research using this approach to understanding judgements of behavior.

Research Efforts with the Taxonomic Approach

Research utilizing Forsyth's (1980) Ethics Position Questionnaire for measuring these ideologies has studied their relations to three main areas: (a) moral behavior; (b) moral *judgements* of behavior; and (c) correlations with other individual difference parameters. Most directly related to my interest in moral attitudes is the second line of research. The majority of studies using the taxonomic approach have in fact involved comparisons between the different ethical ideologies' influences on an individual's moral attitude toward behaviors which are socially proscribed, or at the least, controversial.

Moral Behavior

Rest (1987), as well as others, had discussed the difficulty of predicting actual behavior from moral judgements. He suggested that the prediction is often not valid due to many other factors which influence behavior and thus alter any possible one-to-one relationships between judgement and behavior. Research using the EPQ to study moral behavior have produced similar inconclusive results (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & Nye, 1990). Main effects have consistently demonstrated the ability to predict moral judgements from differences in ethical ideology, but not the ability to successfully predict differences in moral behavior. One study did, however, report a relationship

between both idealism and relativism and the endorsement of certain action-taking steps to address unethical conduct by other professional psychologists (May, 1989).

Moral Judgements of Behavior

Studies involving judgements of ethical actions have consistently found differences between the four ideologies presented by Forsyth. His model was originally developed as part of a doctoral dissertation to study judgements of ethics in social psychology research (Forsyth, 1978). In an updated study looking at the same variable, Forsyth and Pope (1984) used the taxonomy to propose specific predictions regarding individuals' perceptions of ethical practices in various paradigms of social psychological research. Findings of this and other studies have corroborated their predictions and produced a replicable picture of each ideology.

Absolutists

In research on the viewed ethics of social psychology research, absolutists have been found to focus on the costs of a behavior, its potential psychological harm, and the riskiness of procedures -- viewing those research paradigms with the lowest amount of these in the most favorable light (Forsyth & Pope, 1984). In general, male absolutists take the most extreme positions against such contemporary moral

issues as test-tube babies, abortion, and homosexuality (Forsyth, 1980). These positions are especially extreme in comparison to male situationists. This finding is consistent with Forsyth's (1978) dissertation results, in which subjects rated the morality of an actor after reading a scenario in which actions produced positive consequences, negative consequences, or both. Absolutists were the most condemning of behavior which violated a moral norm, including the situation where positive consequences resulted from this infraction.

Similar trends also emerged from a study comparing outcome quality with an actor's responsibility for their actions (Forsyth, 1981). When the negative consequences of an actor's behavior were foreseeable (and/or intended) absolutists rated the person most harshly. This is in agreement with the theoretical position of absolutists as idealists, believing that only good outcomes should follow the correct course of action.

In a study on the integration of the quality of consequences with the conformity or violation of a moral law, Forsyth (1985) further explained the differences of the ethical ideologies utilizing three different models of information processing -- additive, averaging, and averaging

with differential weights³. Stimulus persons either conformed or did not conform with one of four moral rules regarding theft, honesty, duty, and promise. These were compared to four levels of consequences (extremely and mildly positive and extremely and mildly negative). Absolutists judgements were best explained by the differential weights averaging model. Due to their low relativism, the conformity variable had a larger main effect than did the consequence. Absolutists' judgements of actors was much stronger in the unfavorable direction when non-conformity was paired with all consequences. The only level of consequence which mediated this effect at all was an extremely positive result of the behavior.

Hershberger et al. (1982), also compared the different ideologies with each other in regard to various social norms. They suggested that their results were in direct conflict with the predictions of Forsyth's taxonomic theory. Absolutists were found to take positions contrary to social

³These models come from the information processing research of Anderson (1974, 1981, cited in Forsyth, 1985). They can be briefly explained in the following manner. The additive model intimates that information is processed by an individual in a straight linear fashion in the same way as the mathematical function of addition. The averaging model, as its name implies, suggests that information is also processed linearly, but not by simply adding chunks of information together. Instead, various pieces of a cognitive dilemma are averaged together for comparison. The third model, weighted averaging, speculates that while information is averaged together different pieces are given differential levels of importance to the cognition, and are thus weighted more heavily or lightly, as the case may be.

norms. Their opposition to the death penalty and military conscription were cited as examples of their findings contrary to Forsyth's. This is not, however, necessarily discrepant with the predictions which arise from the absolutist's low relativism. Hershberger et al. (1982) assumed that a social norm was the same as a natural moral law. This may not always be the case. While the death penalty and draft are certainly controversial issues, the prevailing social opinion does not necessarily parallel the underlying moral absolute. In both cases one can make the case for the moral law proscribing killing of any kind to explain the positions taken by the absolutists in this study.

Situationists

While situationists are high in idealism, they differ from the absolutists by also being high in relativism, or their rejection of absolute moral laws. Given the situationists' predilections toward emphasizing contextual appropriateness, it is not surprising to find that they have the most favorable reaction toward social psychology research paradigms with the fewest risks relative to benefits, focusing mainly on the best possible consequences without regard to moral rules (Forsyth & Pope, 1984).

Male situationists also appear to take the most liberal stance toward controversial issues (abortion, homosexuality,

etc.) compared to individuals falling within all the other ideologies (Forsyth, 1980). When situationists are confronted with a behavior which goes against basic moral laws, their judgements of morality appear to be mediated by the quality of the consequences resulting from the action (Forsyth, 1978). Interestingly, it has been reported that in a situation where an individual's behaviors produced extremely negative consequences, the situationists were less likely to allow justification for it and rated the action most severely (Forsyth, 1981).

Similar to the absolutists, situationists' judgements conformed to an averaging model with differential weights (Forsyth, 1985). Congruent with their difference from absolutists in relativism, the consequences had a greater impact on situationists' decisions than did conformity. Consequences thus receive more weight in the information processing model. Conformity with moral rules did, however, have some mediating effect when the consequence was only mildly positive or negative.

Subjectivists

Subjectivists are both pragmatic (low in idealism) and rejecting of absolute moral rules. With regard to the ethics of social psychology research, they tend to focus on the invasiveness of the procedure, its potential harm, and the legitimacy or justification of the design (Forsyth &

Pope, 1984). They also appear to have a higher tolerance for negative consequences than the situationists.

Other studies have demonstrated that the subjectivists give much more salience to the consequences of an action than whether or not a moral rule is broken. Forsyth (1978, cited in 1980) found that the producer of positive outcomes while breaking a moral law was rated more favorably than those who produced negative outcomes by following such laws. In addition, subjectivists saw no difference in favorability when positive consequences resulted from lying, than when the same consequences resulted from telling the truth.

Subjectivists appear to be characterized by a straight averaging model of information processing (Pope & Forsyth, 1986). Once again the consequence cue was more important in decision making than the conformity cue. Interestingly though, the perceived morality of the conforming actor was slightly less favorable when there was a mildly positive outcome than when no outcome information was given. This was also the case in the opposite direction, where a mildly negative outcome produced by a non-conforming actor, received slightly higher favorability ratings than when no outcome information was given. This would certainly attest to the appropriateness of the label given the subjectivist. These results appear less likely to be based on strictly objective information.

Exceptionists

With regard to social psychology research, exceptionists focused mainly on the paradigm's legitimacy (Forsyth & Pope, 1984). The exceptionist is low in relativism and thus accepts natural moral absolutes. Their pragmatism, however, leads Forsyth to predict that they will make exceptions based on an evaluation of the consequences. Forsyth and Pope (1984), however, found that they tended to be more inflexible than expected about moral rules.

When given a statement about the positive and negative results of a given behavior, exceptionists tended to be the most forgiving for mixed or negative consequences. However, with the addition of the violation of a moral norm, the merciful attitude of the exceptionist disappeared (Forsyth, 1978). Also in agreement with these results, when the negative consequences of an actor's behavior were foreseeable (and/or intended) exceptionists were the most willing to overlook the negative outcomes and thus rated them most favorably (Forsyth, 1981).

Finally the exceptionist has been shown to be characterized by a simple additive model (Forsyth, 1985). In this case both the conformity and consequence variables are equal in importance to the decision process. This model is simply a totalling of all variables relevant to the moral judgement. Although individuals guided by this ideology will allow for exceptions, in general the more positive the

consequences and the greater the conformity with the moral rule, the more favorable will be the morality rating.

Correlations with Individual Difference Variables

Measures used to track moral development have been correlated with various personality and cognitive variables in past research. Rest (1979, 1987) has used the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to compare moral judgements with intelligence, comprehension, and a variety of personality traits. The DIT did not correlate with any of the personality variables, although there were some positive correlations with cognitive measures. The Defining Issues Test correlated not only with verbal intelligence scores but also in the .2 to .5 range with a general IQ factor. These findings are certainly in line with the nature of Rest and Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach to studying moral judgements. The DIT is designed to pick up on the developmental trends inherent in their theory. Cognitive traits also show developmental patterns, while personality traits generally do not.

Studies with the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) have shown some correlations with personality variables. Leary et al. (1986) found that individuals high in Machiavellianism cheat more than those low in this trait only when there is rational justification for so doing. Past research has demonstrated that the Machiavellian is not

simply devoid of ethics, but rather follows a different set of ethical guidelines. Indeed, the study found that high Machiavellianism was negatively correlated with idealism and positively (although slightly less) correlated with relativism. The authors suggested that the pragmatic attitude is of greater relevance to the Machiavellian than their relativism based on the correlations.

Rim (1982a, 1982b, 1983) has authored a number of studies using the EPQ with various personality and cognitive measures. Subjects scoring low in idealism scored higher on extraversion (measured on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire), number series IQ, mechanical comprehension, form perception, and verbal IQ (as measured on the Milta Intelligence Group Test, Rim, 1982a). More specifically, those tending toward subjectivism (low idealism, high relativism) were higher in extraversion and non-verbal intelligence, while exceptionists (low idealism, low relativism) scored higher in form perception and verbal intelligence. Interestingly, those high in idealism and low in relativism scored significantly higher on the lie scale than individuals low in idealism and high in relativism. Self-monitoring also appears to be related to low idealism and high relativism (Rim, 1982a, b).

Rim (1983) suggested that individuals who are highly rated on social interest score higher in idealism and lower in relativism than individuals low on social interest. He

thus concluded that individuals of high social interest tend to be absolutists and those of low social interest lean toward situationism.

Overview of the Studies

The present research actually consists of two studies. The first of the two is theoretical in nature and explores the relationship of self-concept to the underlying scales of the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ). The second study is exploratory and is an applied study of the utility of the EPQ in predicting judgements of extra-marital behavior.

Study 1

Ethical Ideology and Self Esteem

Self-esteem is a variable which has received a considerable amount of attention in relation to moral behavior and judgements. Jelly (1986) reviewed the theories of William James and George Herbert Mead about the strong relationship between the "consciousness of self and one's ethical being." She concludes that self-esteem is related to moral action and inaction as both a source and a resultant. In support of this view, research has shown a fairly consistent relationship between self-esteem and moral behavior (Citron, 1990; Douglas, 1987; Hales, 1982). Dickstein and Hardy (1979) reported that the critical

variable for predicting good self-reported moral behavior for men and all moral behavior for women is self-esteem.

The relationship between self-esteem and moral judgements is more tenuous. It has been suggested that self-esteem is related to moral judgements from both a dialectical approach (Meacham, 1975) and from a cognitive\developmental stage approach (Maqsud & Rouhani, 1990; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). Copstead (1984) found only a slight relationship between self-esteem and the ethical judgements of normative issues made by nurses. Interestingly, a number of studies have found a slight inverse relationship between self-esteem and moral judgement (Citron, 1990; Douglas, 1987).

Sexton (1983) found a negative correlation between self-esteem and dogmatism ($r = -.35$). Dogmatism in this study was a measure of general authoritarianism. It can be described as a belief in the absolute nature of authority and intolerance of those whose opinions or beliefs are in disagreement. It would appear plausible that this may be related to the ethical ideologies, in the sense that a non-relativistic position imposes some absolute authority in the form of natural moral laws.

Hypotheses:

In this study it is suggested that self-concept will impact on moral judgements and that these judgements can be

predicted via the Ethics Position Questionnaire as intermediary. Specifically, the following two hypothesis are suggested: (1) Self-esteem will correlate positively with relativism; and (2) self-esteem will correlate negatively with idealism.

Study 2

Ethical Ideology and Extra-Marital Affairs

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between an individual's ethical ideology and their judgements of another's extra-marital involvement. Given the proscribed moral nature of extra-marital affairs it certainly seems a behavior which falls under the predictive scope of this taxonomic approach. Extra-Marital relations were chosen due to their continuing paradoxical status in society. There is little doubt that the majority of modern society seems to place great value on the institution of marriage. We seem as a society to be more or less unified in our ostracism of extra-marital sexual activity -- at least publicly. These liaisons are disapproved of by 80-98% of Americans with no differences between the sexes (Jacobson & Gurman, 1986; Magar, 1987). Yet, it is being practiced with great tenacity. In the forties, Kinsey (1948) reported 37% of men engaged in extra-marital affairs. Twenty years

later (Hunt, 1969) 41% of males and 25% of females were reported to have engaged in extra-marital sexual relationships. During this time the incidence for women remained the same for older adults, but increased in the under 25 age group. Successors to Kinsey have estimated 1980 rates of adultery to be in the range of 60-65% for men and 45-50% for women and some extreme predictions for 1990 included rates of 75% for men and 65% for women (Lampe, 1987). Of course these may be high, but there is no denying that adultery exists, behaviorally adopted by many who also claim that it is wrong.

College students have reported extra-marital sexual relations as the least favorable of a variety of alternative lifestyles (Edwards & Stinnett, 1974). Interestingly, however, 80% of the respondents to a Psychology Today survey condoned extra-marital sexual relations in certain circumstances (Athenasiou, Shaver & Tarvis, 1970). There has also been some convergence of the sexes in their perceptions of extra-marital sexual permissiveness, closing the commonly accepted gap in male and female views on this issue (Medora & Burton, 1981; Wilson & Medora, 1990). Hartnett et al. (1977) found no gender differences in attitudes toward the husband and wife regardless of who was involved in the affair. Previous research (Hartnett, Mahoney & Bernstein, 1977; Hartnett & Wollman, 1979) also found that different contextual variables seem to play a

role in the perception of the marriage partners. When the conspirator was motivated by having fallen in love with the "other," cheaters were viewed more favorably than the spouse who was left behind. Singh and Forsyth (1989) found that attitude toward extra-marital sex in general was correlated with relativism, but tempered by idealism. Specifically, increased relativism was related to increased acceptance of extra-marital sex. This relationship, however, only exists at low levels of idealism. Those who were high in idealism rated extra-marital sex more negatively regardless of their relativism scores.

Hypotheses:

The present study will be exploratory since there has been little research with the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) in this area. The levels of conformity and consequence which are manipulated in the Extra-Marital Affair Vignettes (EMAV) were designed to correspond to the formulation of the EPQ scales of relativism and idealism. As such, it is expected that idealism and relativism will not account for any additional variance in judgements of morality after conformity and consequence are taken into account. Conformity and consequence are both expected to show significant main effects.

Validity testing of the EPQ with the EMAV will be accomplished by testing two-way interactions. Conformity by

consequence should be a significant interaction, which will partial out the variance of the relativism by idealism, conformity by relativism, and consequence by idealism interactions. In addition, it is expected that the consequence by relativism and the conformity by idealism interactions will also be accounted for by the effect of the conformity by consequence interaction.

The primary hypothesis of qualitative significance is the two three-way interactions. These are conformity by idealism by relativism and consequence by idealism by relativism. Previous studies have demonstrated that the EPQ is useful in predicting judgements of morality for behavior which varies on four levels of consequences. A significant consequence by idealism by relativism interaction will confirm this finding. No studies, however, have manipulated the level of conformity beyond the dichotomy of complied or did not comply. The present study assumes that conformity with a moral precept is not necessarily dichotomous, and predicts that additional significant variance beyond the consequence by idealism by relativism interaction will be accounted for by the interaction of four levels of conformity with idealism and relativism, as demonstrated by the conformity by idealism by relativism interaction.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

The participants for this study were 522 undergraduate college students (168 males and 354 females) between the ages of 16 and 25. 84% were White, 6% Black, 5% Asian, 2% Hispanic and 3% of other ethnic backgrounds. 76.5% of the participants identified themselves as Christian, 7% Jewish, 1% Buddhist, less than 1% Moslem and less than 1% Hindu, while 11% said reported that they were deists and 3% atheists. While 98% of the participants were single, 46% were involved in a monogamous romantic relationship at the time of the study and 20% reported having had some personal experience with extra-marital sexual affairs. Of those indicating experience with affairs 54% reported that it was a friend or family member who had the affair, 24% had engaged in an affair themselves, 18% stated it was the spouse of a friend or family member, and 4% reported that their spouse had an affair. Individuals were recruited from the undergraduate subject pool at Michigan State University. Up to 22 subjects were eliminated for a number of

statistical analyses due to unreported information on some of the scales.

Measures

Ethics Position Questionnaire

As was described earlier, the Ethics Position Questionnaire is made up of two subscales, idealism and relativism. In support of these dimensions, Pope and Forsyth (1986) utilized multidimensional scaling to account for the variance of subjects' judgements of the similarity of various forms of lying. The two dimensions which accounted for a majority of the variance of judgements of morality were identified as the behavioral consequences and the actor's intentions.

Data in Table 1, (Forsyth, 1980; Forsyth, Nye & Kelley, 1988) indicate that these scales are almost orthogonal. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) is within an acceptable range and test-retest measurements (two-week interval) while low, are reported as satisfactory by Forsyth (1980). Forsyth (1980) has also reported that the individual item test-retest correlations were quite high, although he did not provide the evidence.

By measures of concurrent and discriminant validity, the EPQ performed as expected. It did not correlate with the Defining Issues Test P-score, which measures Kohlberg's post-conventional stage of moral reasoning. This was

anticipated, as an individual at the post-conventional stage may still employ any of the four ideologies.

Table 1. Scale Characteristics and Correlations of the Ethics Position Questionnaire for College Undergraduates.

Scale	Interscale Correlations		Cronbach's Alpha	Test-retest	DIT P-score	SEA	EOC
	Idealism	Relativism					
Idealism		-.07	.80	.67	-.01	.14	.53**
Relativism	-.07		.73	.66	-.01	-.31*	-.13*
N	241	241	241	76	128	128	216

(From Forsyth, 1980; and Forsyth, Nye and Kelly, 1988)

Note: DIT = Defining Issues Test; SEA = Survey of Ethical Attitudes; EOC = Ethic of Caring,

**p < .001

*p < .05

No relation was anticipated between the EPQ's Idealism scale and Hogan's (1970) Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA). As predicted, however, a modest but significant negative correlation (-.31) held between the SEA and the EPQ's Relativism scale. High scorers on the SEA endorse societal standards, while low scorers approve behaviors fitted to the situation.

Each EPQ scale also correlated significantly with Gilligan's (1982) Ethic of Caring (EOC). Given the idealist's propensity to view positive outcomes as a natural result of appropriate behavior and their endeavors to promote the welfare of others, the positive correlation

between the Idealism scale and the Ethic of Caring scale is seemingly. In addition the slight negative correlation between the EOC and the Relativism scale is explained by the possibility that individuals may consider caring for others a moral precept that should always be followed (Forsyth, Nye, & Kelley, 1988).

Extra-Marital Affair Vignettes

Sixteen vignettes (EMAV, see Appendix A) were developed by the present author for use in this study. Each portrays an individual involved in an extra-marital liaison. The vignettes differ on two dimensions relevant to Forsyth's theory. These dimensions are the level of violation of the social standard for a spouse's extra-marital behavior and the level of consequences resulting from that behavior. The levels of consequence include extremely positive, extremely negative and mildly positive and mildly negative. The levels of violation from a moral absolute include slight, moderate, very, and extreme.

The ability of the vignettes to generate responses that differ along those dimensions was tested in a pilot study. After agreement among a quorum of clinical psychology graduate students, the vignettes were presented to subjects who objectively rated the level of consequence and violation within each vignette.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale

The Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS; Fitts, 1965) addresses overall self-esteem. It contains three subscales and five external aspects of self-concept. The three internal scales are an individual's perceived identity, self satisfaction with that identity, and their perceived behavior. The five scales which make up the external facets of self-concept include the physical, moral-ethical, personal, family, and social selves. While some studies have failed to provide support for the full structure of the TSCS, limited support, particularly for the internal structure of the TSCS has been demonstrated in design appropriate confirmatory factor analysis studies (McGuire & Tinsley, 1981; Walsh, Wilson & McLellarn, 1989).

Norms for groups varying in sex, age, race, education, and intelligence have not been developed and Fitts (1965) suggested that these are not necessary as the variables do not appear to produce different scores to any significant degree. Test-retest reliability coefficients based on two-week intervals were reported as high as .92 (Walsh, 1991). Convergent and discriminant validity has been tested against the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and a variety of personality measures (Fitts, 1965).

Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale

The Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (FIS) was developed as part of the original Janis and Field Personality Questionnaire for use in studying persuasibility. It consists of 23 items concerning self-ratings of anxiety in social situations, self-consciousness, and feelings of personal worthlessness (Janis & Field, 1959). The authors reported split-half and Spearman-Brown reliability coefficients of .83 and .91 respectively. A similar reliability (.89) has been reported for a revised version of the scale developed by Eagly (Robinson & Shaver, 1973). Factor analysis has supported Janis and Fields theoretical conception of the FIS in Eagly's revision, which contains 20 of the original 23 items balanced for response bias (Fleming & Watts, 1980). This study used the original version of the scale.

With regard to overall quality, both the TSCS and the FIS have been rated among the ten best self-esteem measures (Crandall, 1973). In a multitrait-multimethod analysis of self-esteem measures, the TSCS and FIS demonstrated both high internal consistency (.93 and .91 respectively) and had a convergent validity coefficient of .65.

Procedures

The subjects completed all four measures in group sessions consisting of between 30 and 150 participants. The

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Ethics Position Questionnaire was completed first followed by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale, and finally by the morality ratings of the protagonists in the Extra-Marital Affair Vignettes. The self-concept scales were given second to allow a break in between the measures dealing with moral attitudes. All responses were anonymous, listing only age, sex, race, religion, current engagement in a monogamous relationship, respondent's marital status and whether or not the participant had any personal experience with extra-marital sexual affairs. Brief instructions, beyond those on the measures themselves, given at the beginning of the session included an encouragement to work quickly through the questions without taking too much time to ponder each one. The total time required to finish all four measures was about one and one-half hours.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Study 1: Ethical Ideology and Self-Esteem

As a review for the reader, the following hypotheses were stated for this study:

- (1) Self-esteem will correlate positively with relativism.
- (2) self-esteem will correlate negatively with idealism.

Neither hypothesis was supported by the data analysis. Correlations were calculated using the SPSS computer program and are shown in table 2.

Relativism did not correlate with either of the overall self-concept or self-esteem measures (Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (FIS), $r = .018$, $p > .5$; Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS), $r = .044$, $p > .3$). Idealism, which was hypothesized to correlate in a negative direction with self-concept, in fact demonstrated the only significant correlation with an overall self-concept rating, although this was a positive correlation (TSCS, $r = .119$, $p < .05$). While this was significant for the TSCS measure it did not reach

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients for Idealism and Relativism with Self-Concept for College Undergraduates.

	FIS	Tennessee Self Concept Scale								
	Total Score	Total P Score	Row 1	Row 2	Row 3	Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5
Idealism (N = 506)	-.07	.12†	.15‡	.04	.16‡	.04	.15‡	.11*	.11*	.09
Relativism (N = 500)	.02	.04	.03	.08	.00	.05	-.06	.06	.04	.12†

FIS = Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale; Row 1 = Identity; Row 2 = Self-satisfaction; Row 3 = Behavior; Column 1 = Physical Self; Column 2 = Moral-ethical Self; Column 3 = Personal Self; Column 4 = Family Self; Column 5 = Social Self.

* $p \leq .05$

† $p \leq .01$

‡ $p \leq .001$

Table 3. Results of Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for 501 College Undergraduates.

	SS	df	F	p
Consequences	4017.87	3, 1500	409.62	< .001
Conformity	1074.44	3, 1500	286.09	< .001
Idealism	21.19	1, 494	1.12	NS
Relativism	71.40	1, 493	3.78	< .05
Conseq x Conform	377.95	9, 4500	37.66	< .001
Idealism x Relativism	56.64	1, 483	2.99	NS
Conseq x Idealism	9.54	3, 480	0.17	NS
Conseq x Relativism	18.38	3, 477	0.32	NS
Conform x Idealism	7.66	3, 474	0.13	NS
Conform x Relativism	12.02	3, 471	0.21	NS
Conseq x Idealism x Relativism	1.06	9, 462	0.01	NS
Conform x Idealism x Relativism	5.84	9, 453	0.03	NS

significance with the FIS (and in fact the trend was in the opposite direction; $r = -.070$, $p > .1$). The TSCS allows for separation of the overall self-concept score into a variety of subscores. A number of these showed significant correlations with Idealism (Row 1, $r = .153$, $p \leq .001$; Row 3, $r = .155$, $p \leq .001$; Column 2, $r = .150$, $p \leq .001$; Column 3, $r = .113$, $p < .05$; and Column 4, $r = .105$, $p < .05$) and one, the social self-concept score was significantly correlated with relativism ($r = .117$, $p < .01$).

Study 2: Ethical Ideology and Extra-Marital Affairs

The hypotheses for study 2 included:

(1) Significant main effects will be found for consequences and conformity in predicting judgements of morality, and these will partial out the effects of the idealism and relativism variables.

(1a) Increasing conformity and more positive consequences will both be associated with judgements of greater morality.

(2) Conformity x consequence should be a significant interaction, and will partial out the variance of the relativism x idealism, as well as all other two-way interactions.

(3) Both three-way interactions will be significant predictors of judgements of morality. These are conformity by idealism by relativism and consequence by idealism by relativism.

To test the Study 2 hypotheses, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance was performed on the dependent variable judgement of morality. Two factors, consequences and conformity, were determined by the experimenter and calculated as within subjects variables, while the other two, idealism and relativism, were entered as between subjects variables (see Table 3). All observations with missing values were eliminated for the analysis, which left a sample size of 501 participants. Assumptions of homogeneity and linearity were satisfactory.

The variables were entered in a stepdown fashion in order to determine significance after those effects which were previously entered had been partialled-out. The first hypothesis stated that both the consequence ($F = 409.62, p < .001$) and conformity ($F = 286.09, p < .001$) levels of the Extra-Marital Affair Vignettes would have a significant impact on ratings of morality of behavior. This was supported by the data analysis.

Hypothesis 1a, maintained that the relationship of both the positivism of the consequences and the conformity with moral laws, with moral judgements of behavior would be in

the positive direction. This was only partially supported by correlational analyses. Conformity was strongly correlated with judgements of morality ($r = .196, p < .001$), while consequences showed a positive trend toward correlation with the judgements ($r = .020, p < .08$).

The second hypothesis, that the levels of consequences and conformity should partial out all of the effects of the idealism and relativism (as they were based on the same constructs), was partially met. The main effect for idealism was not significant ($F = 1.12$), but relativism fell into the statistically significant range ($F = 3.78, p < .05$).

The third hypothesis, that the interaction of consequences and conformity should be significant, was also supported ($F = 37.66, p < .001$), and it appeared to partial out the significance for the other two-way interactions, all of which were not significant.

The last hypothesis stated that both three-way interactions (consequence x conformity x relativism and consequence x conformity x idealism) would be significant predictors of judgements of morality. Neither of the three-way interactions, however, reached significance.

In addition to the specified hypotheses, data were collected on a number of demographic variables along with idealism and relativism. These results are presented in Table 4. While Idealism did not correlate significantly

with age, race, being in a monogamous relationship, marital status, and experience with extra-marital affairs, it did reach significance in its association with gender and religious preference ($r = -.219$, $p < .001$; $r = -.134$, $p < .01$). Relativism, on the other hand only correlated significantly with religion ($r = .171$, $p < .001$). As one would expect, a number of other demographic variables correlated significantly with each other, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Demographic Correlations with Idealism and Relativism for College Undergraduates.

	R e l a t i v i s m	A g e	G e n d e r	R a c e	R e l i g i o n	M o n o g a m o u s	M a r i t a l S t a t u s	E x t r a - M a r i t a l	A f f a i r P a r t n e r	S e c o n d P a r t n e r
Idealism	-.01	-.03	-.22‡	-.03	-.13†	-.01	.04	.03	.01	.08
Relativism	---	-.04	-.06	.05	.17‡	-.01	-.04	-.04	.02	.05
Age		---	.18‡	.11 [*]	.03	-.02	.19‡	-.06	-.13	-.17
Gender			---	.10 [*]	.09 [*]	.15‡	.33‡	.10 [*]	.10	.17
Race				---	.05	.05	.26‡	.10 [*]	.09	-.00
Religion					---	.05	.05	-.00	.05	-.04
Monogamous						---	.14†	.17‡	-.00	.19
Marital Status							---	.21‡	.10	.09
Extra-Marital Affair								---	-.04	-.02
Affair Partner									---	.49‡
Second Partner										---

See Appendix B. for full demographic questionnaire.

Note: Relativism through Extra-marital columns N = 498-514; for Affair Partner column N = 106-107, and for Second Partner column N = 46-47).

^{*}p ≤ .05

†p ≤ .01

‡p ≤ .001

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Study 1: Ethical Ideology and Self-Esteem

The first study was an attempt at predicting a relationship between self-esteem and Forsyth's constructs of Idealism and Relativism. While past studies had shown a fairly consistent relationship between self-esteem and moral behavior (see Citron, 1990; Douglas, 1987; Hales, 1982), the link between moral judgements of behavior and an individual's self-esteem or self-concept has not been substantiated. The present study does not clarify the research literature with regards to this question. The degree to which one accepts or rejects universal moral laws appears not to be related to overall self-concept or self-esteem. When the Tennessee Self Concept Scale is broken down into its eight component scores, however, the Social Self score, or the "self as perceived in relation to others," (Fitts, 1965) is weakly positively correlated ($r = .117$) with Relativism. Fitts (1965) described this score as a measure of a persons "sense of adequacy and worth in his social interaction with other people in general." This

would appear to indicate that there is some faint relationship between a person's social self-concept and their willingness to follow a relativistic approach to moral issues.

Idealism was found to correlate weakly and positively ($r = .119$) with the overall P score on the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS). This was opposite to the prediction that it would be related, but in a negative direction. Contrary to my hypothesis, this would appear to indicate that the more idealistic an individual is, the more likely they are to have a better self-concept. Once again, a post-hoc separation of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale into row and column scores may allow greater insight into which facets of self-concept are contributing to the relationship. Although Social self-concept was not significantly correlated with Idealism, five of the eight scales did reach statistical significance. Although quite weak, the strongest correlation ($r = .155$) was with that aspect of a person's self-concept that relates to how they perceive their own actions or behaviors. This suggests a link between a positive behavioral self-concept and an idealistic outlook on moral issues, rather than a realistic outlook as was hypothesized. Idealism also correlated positively with a positive self identity. It was not related to self-satisfaction with one's perceived identity. Idealism was positively correlated with self-worth in relationship to God

and being a good or bad person; a sense of self virtue separate from one's body or other people; and how an individual perceives oneself in relation to those closest to them, such as their immediate family and closest friends (Fitts, 1965).

It appears that there is indeed some relationship between idealism, relativism and self-concept. As this had not been explored previously, the present study sought to demonstrate a general overall relationship between the Ethics Position Questionnaire constructs and self-concept. Although that hypothesis was not supported in this study, post-hoc analyses of the individual subscales of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale indicate that future research may succeed by focusing on more specific aspects of self-concept or self-esteem, further elucidating the complex relationship which appears to exist.

Study 2: Ethical Ideology and Extra-Marital Affairs

The two main objectives for the second study were to provide a validity check of Forsyth's constructs of idealism and relativism and to continue exploration of the relationship between these constructs and judgements of morality beyond a two-dimensional approach to moral behavior.

Initial results appeared to support the constructs of idealism and relativism as presented by Forsyth (1980).

They were tested by developing a new scale based on varying levels of consequences of an actor's behavior and levels of conformity with the moral tenet proscribing extra-marital affairs. When the constructs were tested with regard to their predictive power over the morality judgements, consequences and conformity were entered first in a repeated measures MANOVA. They were highly significant in their forecasting value, and when followed by idealism and relativism, appeared to partial out almost all of their predictive power. Only Relativism, the more clearly and consistently defined of Forsyth's constructs, reached statistical significance. Furthermore, while the interaction of consequences by conformity was highly predictive of judgements of moral behavior, all other two-way interactions entered subsequently in the regression, including idealism by relativism, did not reach significance. This appeared to support the validity of Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire, as it was developed with regard to the differences people demonstrate in their views of consequences and conformity in ethically charged situations.

Based on post-hoc analysis it would appear that this is not actually the case. When idealism and relativism were placed into the regression equation before consequences and conformity, there was no discernible change in their significance levels. This suggested that, contrary to what

the results appear to indicate, the variables of consequences and conformity did not have an impact on the predictive power of the idealism and relativism scores, and vice versa. The most plausible explanation for these findings is that the constructs of idealism and relativism, although defined and developed with consequences and conformity in mind, are not actually related to those variables. An alternative explanation may be that the constructs of consequences and conformity used in the present study were not appropriate for validating the Ethics Position Questionnaire, though the constructs appear to have sufficient face validity based on inspection of the vignettes. Even more striking than the lack of a relationship between idealism and relativism with consequences and conformity, is that only the relativism score from the Ethics Position Questionnaire appeared to contribute to morality judgements at all. Idealism and the interaction between idealism and relativism do not reach statistical significance in impacting judgements of moral behavior. A study by Furnham and Briggs (1993) also found that ethical ideology did not add much to moral decisions regarding the construction of a fictional waiting list for patients with kidney failure and, in fact, idealism and relativism main effects did not reach statistical significance. The present study's findings also contradict another recent study in which idealism was found to be

directly related to ethical judgements, while relativism was only associated to judgements with machiavellianism as an intermediary (Bass, 1991).

The primary hypothesis of qualitative significance involved the two three-way interactions. These were consequence by idealism by relativism and conformity by idealism by relativism. This work attempted to go beyond previous studies by suggesting that not only do various levels of consequences impact decisions about morality by those already defined by high and low scores in idealism and relativism, but that conformity with moral absolutes can also be varied along numerous levels, and not merely dichotomized as "acted" or "did not act."

The present study found no significant additional predictive value for the interaction of consequence by idealism by relativism, in contrast to previous studies (Forsyth, 1981; Forsyth and Pope, 1984). It also found no significant results for the conformity by idealism by relativism interaction. These findings support the earlier stated explanation that the constructs of idealism and relativism may not assess what they were designed for, namely the relevance of conformity with moral rules and the consequences of behaviors to judgements of moral behavior.

Although Gilligan (1982) reported a significant sex difference in moral judgements, more recent studies appear to suggest that this difference is disappearing. This may

have been a result of the specific issue she was studying, namely abortion. In relation to the Ethics Position Questionnaire, Forsyth, Nye and Kelley (1988) found neither gender differences in moral judgements nor in endorsement of idealism or relativism (see also Forsyth, 1980, 1981, 1985; Forsyth & Pope, 1984). Only one study was reported which demonstrated a relationship between gender and moral judgements (Galvin, 1992). While this author reported significant results for both gender and idealism in relation to attitudes toward animal experimentation, it was not reported whether or not gender was also correlated with the Ethics Position Questionnaire constructs. The current study found that gender was significantly correlated with idealism, with women being more likely to score higher on that scale. While numerous studies have led Forsyth, et al. (1988) to suggest that "cultural changes" may have "erased the moral division between the sexes" (p. 248), it appears that there may still be some distinctions between the genders and how they go about making moral decisions. Specifically, if the construct of the idealism scale is confirmed by further research, the results of this study suggest that women are more likely to consider an action moral when it maximizes positive outcomes for the individuals involved, while men are more likely to expect both positive and negative consequences and therefore be more forgiving of the latter. This may have significant

implications for applied interests in psychology. Two specific areas in which this information would be useful are voir dire decisions in the courtroom and marital or couples therapy. Interestingly, both the idealism and relativism scores were also significantly correlated with religious preference.

Summary

This study explored both the relationship of the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) with self-concept and its utility in predicting morality judgements of extra-marital behavior. Past EPQ research has demonstrated correlations with a number of personality variables (Leary et al., 1986; Rim, 1982a, 1982b, 1983). The present study demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between self-concept and idealism and relativism. This appeared to be complex and to depend more on specific qualities of self-concept rather than a global relationship with overall self-concept. Specifically, relativism appeared to be positively correlated with a social self-concept ($r = .117, p < .01$), while idealism was associated with a behavioral self-concept ($r = .115, p < .001$) and self-identity ($r = .153, p < .001$). It was also related to moral/ethical self-concept ($r = .150, p < .001$), personal self-virtue ($r = .113, p < .05$) and family self-concept ($r = .105, p < .05$).

The second part of this thesis attempted to validate the Ethics Position Questionnaire through its predictive value in determining judgements of morality in situations varying in levels of consequences and levels of conformity with the social proscription against extra-marital sexual affairs. While this scale's construct validity appeared supported by the results, indicating that idealism and relativism were based on a personal analysis of consequence and conformity levels within situations, a post-hoc examination showed that this was not the case. Data suggested that idealism and relativism not only were completely unrelated to this study's constructs of consequences and conformity, but that idealism ($F = 1.12$, NS) and the interaction of idealism by relativism ($F = 2.99$, NS) contributed nothing independently to the ability to predict moral judgements of perceived extra-marital behavior. Of the Ethics Position Questionnaire, only relativism reached statistical significance in its relation to moral judgements ($F = 3.78$, $p < .05$).

The present findings call into question the validity of the constructs of idealism and relativism as personality variables useful in predicting moral judgements of behavior. Further testing may provide answers regarding whether the inability of this study to demonstrate a relationship between the consequences and conformity levels of behavior with idealism and relativism was a result of the Ethics

Position Questionnaire or poor validity in the Extra-Marital Affair Vignettes. The present research attempted to study these constructs without dichotomizing the data to avoid losing power. It was considered that while this seems the most appropriate method for analyzing such data, some may suggest that dichotomizing the data and categorizing subjects into Forsyth's taxonomy of absolutist, situationist, subjectivist and exceptionist would reveal statistically significant results. If true, this would imply that the constructs of idealism and relativism have predictive value toward their end-points, but not for those individuals producing average scores. In other words, it is possible to predict moral judgements of behavior when idealism and relativism act as trait characteristics for an individual but not for the majority of people who fall more toward the middle of the scales. This analysis was completed to test such a possibility. The results did not favor such an explanation of the constructs. Participants were considered high on relativism or idealism if they scored in the top third of the possible points and low if they scored in the bottom third. Once again consequences and conformity reached statistical significance as predictors of judgements ($F = 31.6, p < .001$; $F = 12.6, p < .001$, respectively) as did their interaction ($F = 2.95, p < .01$). Also, as with the previous analysis, only Relativism managed to reach statistical significance in predicting

judgements of behavior ($F = 8.8$, $p < .01$), while Idealism and the interaction between them did not. The three way interactions of interest also failed to reach significance in this analysis.

It is possible, given the low predictive ability of the idealism and relativism scores, that variables such as marital status, religious preference, and experience with extra-marital affairs may prove valuable in determining how one makes value judgements of others' behaviors, specifically extra-marital behaviors. Although marital status did not correlate with the Idealism and Relativism scales in this study, this may have been due to the low percentage of married participants. While the relevance of the young sample may be questioned as to its appropriateness with the issue of extra-marital affairs, it was chosen because the current work studied attitudes toward those involved in extra-marital sexual affairs and not the beliefs of those who have engaged in them. It may of course be interesting, although beyond the scope of this study, to explore attitudes among a larger population of married participants.

One final possibility is that the issue of extra-marital sexual affairs itself is resulting in the poor predictive ability of the Ethics Position Questionnaire. The EPQ has not shown consistent forecasting ability in judgements across moral issues. It is possible that the

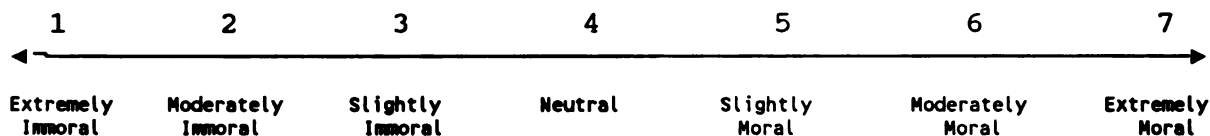
paradoxical nature of extra-marital affairs in our society, with such an overlap between those who believe it is wrong and those who participate in the practice, limits the usefulness of this tool in predicting an individual's analysis of morality. Both extra-marital affairs and judgements of morality are issues worthy of continued study, as our society seems faced by a resurgence of religious fundamentalism and a struggle between moral codes based on religious doctrine and the tenets of humanitarianism.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXTRA-MARITAL AFFAIRS VIGNETTES

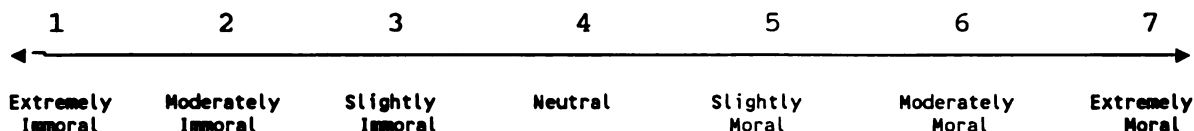
Instructions: In each of the following situations one of the spouses in a marriage has become involved in some type of relationship outside of their marriage. This involvement has also resulted in some type of consequence for the marriage. Please rate your opinion of the behavior of the spouse who participated in the incident described. Use the following scale for your judgements, and place the number corresponding to your evaluation in the space to the left of the situation.



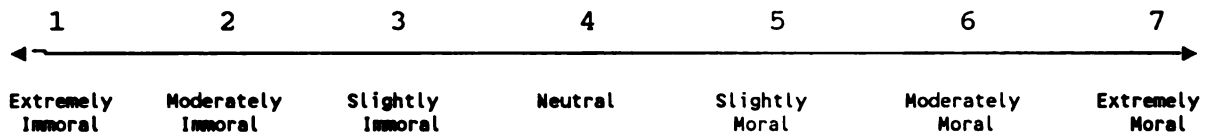
- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | 1. D. had sexual affairs with lots of different partners, some of them lasting for as long as 6 months. D.'s spouse never found out about the affairs and their marriage was not affected. |
| _____ | 2. M. went out with a co-worker one night for dinner and it turned into an all night sexual encounter. M. decided that was enough, and never fooled around again. M.'s spouse found out about the one nighter, and was crushed. A fair and cordial divorce ended the marriage. |
| _____ | 3. C. was in an abusive marriage. C. met many people through work and began having many short term affairs with different partners. After realizing that a better life could be had, C. left the abusive marriage. |
| _____ | 4. A. enjoyed the company of a particular friend. One night they found themselves making out and moving toward intercourse. A. decided not to continue and left. Although A. couldn't believe it, a year later during a routine physical, tests came back HIV positive. A.'s spouse contracted the AIDS virus from A. |

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 ←----->
 Extremely Moderately Slightly Neutral Slightly Moderately Extremely
 Immoral Immoral Immoral Moral Moral Moral

- _____ 5. V. was particularly happy with married life. The two of them did almost everything together. One night V. came home late after spending time with a friend. V's spouse was visibly upset, but after explaining that the friend simply needed to talk about a financial problem everything was fine.
- _____ 6. R. began making out with an acquaintance one evening. Although it could easily have continued, R. decided not to "go all the way." R.'s spouse found out about the making out, and felt betrayed. The marriage unraveled and ended in a fairly amicable divorce.
- _____ 7. B. was in an abusive marriage. As an escape B. slept with many different partners. These affairs lasted for varying lengths of time, some as long as 7 or 8 months. Eventually B. realized life could be better and left the cruel marriage.
- _____ 8. H. was at an office party and wound up in bed with a co-worker. H. never fooled around again and H.'s spouse never found out about that night. The one-nighter had no effect on their marriage.
- _____ 9. During marriage N. participated in many short term affairs with multiple partners. After a few years N. started feeling sick and doctors discovered the AIDS virus. N.'s spouse was also tested and was HIV positive.
- _____ 10. K. often went to the movies, bars or bowling with friends and coworkers. K.'s spouse didn't like this and made no bones about it. When K. came home after one late night at the bar, they got into a fight. K.'s spouse slammed the door to the bedroom and K. spent the night on the couch.



- _____ 11. E. had the opportunity to meet many people through work and travel. E. became involved in many short term affairs with numerous different partners. E.'s spouse never found out about the affairs and their marital relationship didn't change.
- _____ 12. G. met a friendly co-worker for drinks one night and they ended up in a hotel room sleeping together. G. never fooled around again. Later as standard procedure for a promotion G. took an AIDS test. It was positive. G.'s spouse was also infected with the HIV antibodies.
- _____ 13. Q. felt that something was missing from marriage. One evening Q. bumped into an ex-lover. After talking about old times they decided to get together again. When they did, they ended up spending the night together. Q. fell in love, ended up getting divorced and married the ex-lover.
- _____ 14. F. slept with many partners during marriage. Many of these affairs continued long term. F.'s spouse found out about the fooling around and couldn't forgive F. The marriage ended in a civil and courteous divorce.
- _____ 15. S. was in an abusive marriage. In a moment of escape S. made out with a friend of the opposite sex. Although S. decided not to sleep with the friend, the foreplay was enough to decide that one could do better than an abusive marriage. S. left the abusive spouse.



-
16. P. was fooling around with a friend one night. After a bit of foreplay, P. decided not to go through with sleeping with the friend. P.'s spouse never found out about the incident and it didn't have any effect on their marriage.
-
17. W. had been having an affair with the same person for two years now. They were in love but W. couldn't decide what to do. W. decided to get a divorce. When W.'s spouse found out about the affair, the simple divorce changed, and W.'s spouse demanded and received all marital assets.
-
18. T. sought out many sexual partners during marriage. One was just not enough and many of the affairs lasted for a significant amount of time. T. finally contracted AIDS from one of the partners, and T.'s spouse tested HIV positive.
-
19. J. was in an abusive marriage. One night while at an office party, J. slept with a co-worker. It never happened again, but was enough for J. to realize that there could be more to life than an abusive partnership. J. left the brutal marriage.
-
20. L. had many short term sexual affairs with different acquaintances. L.'s spouse found out about it and hoped silently that it would end. When it didn't L.'s spouse confronted L. and the marriage fell apart. It ended in a fairly courteous and fair divorce.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions by filling in the corresponding numbers on the scantron form. Remember, all information is completely anonymous.

67. Age (0) 16-17 (1) 18-19 (2) 20-21
 (3) 22-23 (4) 24-25 (5) 26-27
 (6) 28-29 (7) 30-31 (8) 32-33
 (9) > 34

68. Gender (0) Female (1) Male

69. Ethnicity (0) White (1) Black (2) Hispanic
 (3) Asian (4) Arabic (5) Other

If other please write in _____.

70. Religion -- Do you consider yourself to be:

- (0) Christian (1) Jewish (2) Moslem
(3) Buddhist (4) Hindu
(5) Deist (belief in a higher being, but no
 specific religious affiliation)
(6) Atheist

71. Are you currently in a monogamous romantic relationship?

- (0) Yes (1) No

72. Marital Status:

- (0) Single (1) Married (2) Separated
(3) Divorced (4) Widowed

73. Have you had any personal experience with extra-marital sexual affairs?

- (0) Yes (1) No

74. If you answered yes to number 73. Who had the affair:

- (0) Myself (1) Spouse (2) Friend/Family
- (3) Friend/Family member's spouse

If more than one is appropriate... use number 75 for the second response.

If more than two, choose the two most significant to you.

75. (0) Myself (1) Spouse (2) Friend/Family
- (3) Friend/Family member's spouse

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